

March 16

Thu, 17 Mar 2011 00

Yesterday, March 16 we went to the city square for a day of remembrance for the victims of Saddam Hussein's gas attack on the citizens of Halabja on that date in 1988. 5000 men women and children were killed. You may recall that the Iran Iraq war was raging at the time, fueled in part by the western world's dislike of the Iranian regime. At first the Iranians were blamed for the attack but it was later learned that Hussein had used gas in Iran too. Iranian journalists were the first to discover the horrible carnage in the aftermath of the attack and terribly graphic photos of that exist to this day. The gas attack was only one part of a larger campaign called the anfal to destroy the Kurdish people and their culture. Hundreds of thousands of Kurds died in that campaign. Many more were imprisoned, tortured, and displaced to Arab towns in the south. Finally in 1991 after far too many Kurds had suffered and died the UN drove Hussein out of the Kurdish area by establishing a no fly zone.

WE were asked to speak from the podium and we did. Michele spoke for us. She noted that it had taken far too long for the world to respond to the suffering of the Kurdish people. She reminded the thousands gathered in the square of their great resilience in rebuilding after the anfal and the gas attack and promised that we would do our best to let the world know about their continuing struggle for justice.

Usually we go to the protests by bus or taxi but yesterday our translator, Muhammed, drove us because he was translating our statement to the crowd. I wondered where he might park because the whole area is very busy. He finally turned in to a back alley where several cars were already parked. Clearly there was not room for any more without blocking some one in. Muhammed just pulled in, stopped, blocking in several cars and got out of his truck. I asked, Can you stay here blocking in these cars? He laughed and pointed to the keys sitting on the seat. He had just parked his truck in the middle of a city of one million people unlocked with the keys in plain view so it could be moved if need be. Where in Canada would that be possible without donating your truck to thieves.

Love to all Allan