2021 marks the 33rd anniversary of the Anfal Genocide. The Anfal campaigns were a series of operations launched by Saddam Hussein against mostly rural communities in the Kurdistan region of Iraq, between February and March in 1988. Enacted as a “final solution” against a rebellious Kurdish population, this series of campaigns took the lives of 180,000 unarmed civilians, culminating “the world’s first chemical assault against non-combatants” in Halabja on March 16 of that year. It took about two years to prepare, organize and implement these operations, with their phases that included aerial bombing, ground attacks and chemical weapons. Many of the survivors were arrested, and transferred to concentration camps in the South of Iraq. The men, women and children interns were separated, with teenage and adult males pulled aside and executed. These victims were regularly shot with firearms, and were buried with bulldozers, most of them alive. The Iraqi Government officially recognised these crimes against humanity as genocide and only a few European states had these discussions in their parliaments. Many states avoid acknowledging the Anfal Campaigns as constituting genocide with official statements at the governmental level and by doing this, they avoid legal liability for selling arms and chemical weapons to the Ba’th regime under Saddam Hussein’s rule (Unrepresented Nations and People’s Organization). Many Kurds believe that justice has still not been served. No formal apology has been made and no fair compensation mechanism was put in place. During the last years, the Kurdistan Regional Government has been trying to internationalise these issues and seek recognition at the international level through diplomatic channels and diaspora support. It can be argued that lack of genocide recognition at the global scale also contributed to future mass atrocities in the region.

Two and a half decades after Anfal campaigns, the Islamic State (ISIS) launched another ‘Anfal’ in terms of its meaning, and committed genocidal massacres and other atrocities against the Ezidi people. Five thousand were killed and thousands of girls were forced into sexual slavery.

The aim of the conference, as part of our commitment to ‘Leadership for Peace’, is to readdress the legacies of Anfal on Kurdish societies and other communities in the Middle East from an interdisciplinary perspective. It seeks to reflect on lessons learned from the past, and to re-evaluate the challenges of and responses to the mass atrocities in the Middle East today. It also seeks to ask questions about the extent to which the memory of past massacres have contributed to policies, practices and initiatives that aim to provide greater resilience against the risk of future atrocities. In that sense, we are interested in understanding the politics behind the commemoration of the Anfal genocide. We also welcome presentations on the recent mass atrocities in the region including the Ezidi
Genocide. Our aim is to bring scholars from different strands together to discuss the politics of genocide recognition and denial as well as questioning genocide prevention mechanisms and the silence of the international community during mass atrocities. We are also interested in exploring locally-driven initiatives that promoted social cohesion and dialogue. We welcome academic presentations on Anfal and Halabja which poses an analytical discussion about the legacies of these traumatic events on Kurdish society and politics today, or comparative studies which engage in an insightful discussion in order to help us better understand the important issues such as victimhood, resilience, accountability and reconciliation that are integral to understanding the long-term impact of genocides. The papers may also address different forms of transitional justice and truth-seeking mechanisms put in play by elites as well as local populations. We invite scholars of various disciplines to reflect on these issues based on their research from a variety of fields including political science, sociology, psychology, criminology, international relations and history. We are also open to submissions of interest from journalists and practitioners. We plan to have a roundtable session dedicated to non-academic presentations.

Potential themes are listed below. However the organisers are open to other themes as well:

- Anfal/Halabja genocides and their enduring impact today
- The Ezidi genocide and its impact on the Ezidi community and beyond
- Gendercide in Kurdistan
- Collective memory: Institutions and Agency
- Accountability, international arrest warrants for perpetrators and ending impunity
- Genocide commemoration as a preventive strategy
- Dark Tourism
- The ecocide process in Iraqi Kurdistan and its implications
- The Faili Kurds’ genocide in Iraq, its causes and consequences.
- Epistemic injustice, commemoration and oblivion
- Genocide commemoration as a preventive strategy
- The impact of genocide denial (still considered as 10th stage of genocide/risk factor for future genocide)
- Local and/or governmental preventive initiatives in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq
- Epistemic injustice, commemoration and oblivion

Please submit your 200-word abstract with your full contact information, title and institution to the email address below by 31st March. Selected paper holders will be notified in mid-April.

The conference will take place online and the language will be in English.

The organisers will select papers to be included in a special issue at the end of the conference.

Please submit your abstract to the organizers: Ibrahim.Sadiq@soran.edu.iq, Bahar.Baser@coventry.ac.uk and Stephen.McLoughlin@coventry.ac.uk