# The Kurdish Reawakening in Syria

by Gary C. Gambil

Syrian President Bashar Assad has finally managed to suppress the wave of Kurdish riots that erupted throughout the country in mid-March, but the young dictator was deeply unsettled by his country's worst outbreak of ethno-sectarian violence in two decades. Although fueled by popular frustration in the Kurdish community, the riots were not an entirely spontaneous eruption, but a politically timed initiative to pressure the Assad regime in the face of heightened Syrian-US tensions and Iraqi Kurdish political gains.

Predominantly Kurdish regions in Syria

## Background

Kurds are a predominantly Sunni Muslim, non-Arab ethnic group with a distinct language and history dating back thousands of years. Prior to the twentieth century, most Kurds were ruled by a patchwork of autonomous principalities subject to the Ottoman Empire and Persia. After World War One, the Kurds were divided among four independent countries. Today, an estimated 20 to 25 million Kurds comprise roughly 18% of the population in Turkey, 23% in Iraq, 10% in Iran, and 10% in Syria, with much smaller minorities in Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Lebanon.

Unlike their brethren in Turkey and Iraq, Syria's roughly 2 million Kurds inhabit several non-contiguous regions. Around 30% of the Syrian Kurdish population lives in the highlands northwest of Aleppo, known as Kurd Dagh (Mountain of the Kurds). The Ain al-Arab (Kobani) region, where the Euphrates enters Syrian territory, is home to roughly 10%, while 40% lives in the northeastern half of the Jazeera governorate. The remainder is settled in urban neighborhoods around the country, such as the Hayy al-Akrad (Quarter of the Kurds) suburb of Damascus.

Most Kurds in Jazeera are descended from refugees who fled across the border from Turkey in the 1920s, while the inhabitants of Kurd Dagh trace their lineage back many centuries; Hayy al-Akrad is said to have been settled in the twelfth century by the families of Kurdish warriors under the command of Saladin (himself a Kurd) during his jihad against the Crusaders. Generally speaking, "new generation" Kurds have retained their native language (Kirmanji), dress, and customs, while "old generation" Kurds have become much more Arabized. Tribal identification is strong in both communities.

During the French mandate period in Syria (1920-1946), Kurds were allowed to organize politically and permitted to publish books and periodicals in their own language. Distrustful of the majority Arab Sunni population, the French authorities recruited disproportionate numbers of Kurds (as well as Christians and heterodox Muslims) into the police and military. A Kurdish nationalist movement, Khoybun, emerged in the 1920s and vigorously lobbied for greater cultural and political autonomy, but most of its demands (e.g. the establishment of Kurdish language schools, recognition of Kurdish as an official language, and the appointment of Kurdish administrators in Kurdish areas) were rejected by the French and one of its leading figures, the poet Osman Sabri, was sent into exile in Madagascar. While French relations with the Kurds soured, Arab and Kurdish Syrians maintained relatively peaceful relations during this period and the two communities joined together in agitating for Syrian independence.

Beginning in 1956, however, a succession of Arab nationalist regimes came to power in Damascus

and began suppressing the Kurdish minority. Teaching of the Kurdish language was outlawed and Kurdish media outlets were closed. The discovery of major oil fields in the Kurdish heartland (Qarah Shuk, 1956; Suwaydiyah, 1959) contributed to government paranoia about Kurdish separatism. Tensions worsened after Syria joined Egypt in forming the United Arab Republic (UAR) in 1958. The UAR regime fired hundreds of Kurdish military officers, including the army chief of staff, Gen. Tawfiq Nizamaddin, and closed police and military academies to Kurdish applicants.

The Kurdish community initially responded to steadily growing government repression with a show of political unity. In 1957, the Kurdish Democratic Party of Syria (KDPS) was founded by a broad coalition of prominent Kurdish intellectuals calling for recognition of Kurdish national rights and an end to the marginalization of Kurds in the administration. Over the next few years, the KDPS recruited thousands of members and began developing a sophisticated political organization. In 1960, however, the government launched a massive crackdown, arresting KDPS Secretary-General Nurredin Zaza and other key leaders of the group. Under the weight of severe government repression, the party quickly fragmented.

Anti-Kurdish repression grew harsher after the demise of the UAR in 1961 (implausibly attributed by some Arab nationalists to a "Kurdish conspiracy"). The following year, the government carried out a special census in Jazeera and revoked the citizenship of some 120,000 Kurds who could not prove that they had been resident in the country since 1945. Today, an estimated 160,000 Kurds in Syria are classified as non-citizen foreigners (ajanib) on their identity cards and cannot vote, own property, or obtain government jobs (but are not, however, exempt from obligatory military service). In addition, some 75,000 Kurds are not officially acknowledged at all and have no identity cards. The so-called maktumin (unregistered) cannot even receive treatment in state hospitals or obtain marriage certificates.

The situation worsened after a 1963 coup brought to power the Baath Party, which had been militantly anti-Kurdish since its inception in Syria in the mid-1940s.[1] The Baathist regime's paranoia about the Kurds was inflated by events next door in Iraq, where Mustafa Barzani's Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) was rebelling against the central government. Because of Barzani's close ties with many KDPS leaders, Syria's new government feared that the Iraqi insurrection would spread.

Baathist land reform programs in the 1960s were designed to politically weaken the Kurdish community by destroying the economic power of its traditional elite. According to one source, 43% of all land seized under Syria's agrarian reform laws was in the governorate of Jazeera.[2] In the early 1970s, the government began replacing Kurdish place names with Arabic names (e.g., the town of Kobani became "Ain al-Arab") and resettled thousands of Arabs in Kurdish areas bordering Turkey and Iraq. Although Syrian President Hafez Assad officially ended the so-called "Arab Belt" (al-hizam al-arabi) project in 1976, he allowed Arab settlers to remain on confiscated land and provided them with top-notch clinics, schools, and other facilities, fueling resentment among their Kurdish neighbors. While the construction of hydroelectric dams on the Euphrates brought electricity to most Kurdish villages during the 1970s, Kurdish areas remained woefully underdeveloped in comparison to the rest of Syria.

In spite of the steadily growing scale of anti-Kurdish repression in the 1960s and 1970s, political disunity within the Kurdish community rendered it unable to organize effective resistance. This was partly due to the strength of kinship ties in Kurdish society, where loyalty to tribe and clan rank higher than Kurdish (or Syrian) identity. Syrian intelligence agencies proved adept at buying off local village chiefs and turning them against each other.

Tribal leaders held less sway over the urbanized Kurdish intelligentsia, but the KDPS faced stiff competition in the cities from secular leftist groups. Deprived of educational opportunities at home, thousands of young Kurdish intellectuals joined the Syrian Communist Party (SCP) as a means of obtaining scholarships to study in the Soviet Union. Although many prominent SCP leaders were

Kurds (including its secretary-general, Khalid Bakdash), the party was staunchly opposed to official recognition of Kurdish national rights and loyal to the Assad regime.

By the mid-1960s, the KDPS had lost much of its support base and splintered into competing factions. An accommodationist faction, led by Abdul Hamid Darwish (who conspicuously was not detained in the 1960 arrest sweep), softened its political program and established close ties with the Baath Party wing of Salah Jadid, who was anxious to expand its support base in the Kurdish community. Darwish and his supporters, who later organized themselves as the Kurdish Democratic Progressive Party (KDPP), allegedly informed on their colleagues, effectively sabotaging Osman Sabri's effort to revive the KDPS in 1965. By the end of the 1970s, most politically active Kurdish intellectuals were more interested in leaving the country than in organizing a political movement at home. Thousands escaped to Europe through Syrian-occupied Lebanon (ironically, Syrian intelligence officers profited enormously from various criminal networks involved in smuggling them out).

Syrian Kurdish political activism was also deflated by the Assad regime's support for Kurdish separatist groups in Iraq and Turkey. Barzani did little to help his brethren in Syria and actively worked to undermine those, such as Sabri, who refused to disavow the KDPS political platform. Syria's decision to sponsor the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) of Turkey in the early 1980s had an even more pernicious impact. After relocating to Damascus, PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan publicly condemned the fight for Kurdish national rights in Syria and frequently repeated the Assad regime's claim that most Syrian Kurds are not native to Syria. Syrian Kurdish activists often received a hostile reception at political conferences organized by the large Kurdish Diaspora in Europe because their activities were seen a threat to the PKK.

In the 1990s, the Baathist regime upgraded its sponsorship of the PKK and encouraged Syrian Kurds to join its ranks. After positive incentives, such as exemption from military service, failed to persuade sufficient numbers of Syrian Kurds join the PKK, the government began forcing Kurdish tribal leaders to fill a "quota" of recruits. By the mid-1990s, according to Turkish intelligence sources, Syrian Kurds comprised over 25% of the PKK's fighters.[3] The PKK became, in effect, an instrument of the Syrian government's repression of its own Kurdish minority.

## The Kurdish Reawakening

The Syrian Kurdish community began to experience a political reawakening after the Assad regime ended its support for the PKK in 1998 (under threat of war from Turkey). Following its ejection from Syria and Syrian-occupied Lebanon and the subsequent capture of Ocalan, the PKK stopped pressuring Kurdish activists to suppress criticism of the Baathist regime. Meanwhile, Assad's reconciliation with Saddam in the late 1990s strained his relations with Iraqi Kurdish leaders. Barzani, in particular, made his displeasure toward the Syrian dictator felt by quietly encouraging activists in Syria to re-organize politically. A pro-KDP group, the Yakiti Party, took the initiative in November 1999 by adopting a political platform demanding that Kurdish be made an official language, that government administration in Kurdish areas be "organized and run by Kurds," and that security in these areas be made "the responsibility of their own residents."[4]

Assad's death in June 2000 further emboldened Kurdish activists and a new generation of political groups began to proliferate. For a time, Assad's son and successor, Bashar, allowed Kurdish political organizations to organize and meet openly, permitted stores to freely distribute Kurdish books and music, and cast a blind eye toward the proliferation of private Kurdish language classes. In August 2001, two high-ranking officials of the ruling Baath Party met with a delegation of the Kurdish Democratic Alliance (KDA), which groups six Kurdish parties.

In August 2002, after it became apparent that an American war to oust Saddam Hussein was inevitable, Syrian President Bashar Assad visited the predominantly Kurdish province of Hasaka - the first time a Syrian president had done so in more than 40 years. But Assad's landmark visit did not lead to any government concessions and Kurdish political activists continued to be intimidated, threatened and detained. In December, Yakiti staged an unprecedented sit-in outside parliament and

delivered a statement calling on the Syrian regime to "remove the barriers imposed on the Kurdish language and culture and recognize the existence of the Kurdish nationality within the unity of the country."[5] Within days the authorities arrested two members of the party's political bureau, Marwan Othman and Hassan Saleh, on charges of "inciting religious and ethnic discord." In June 2003, Yakiti organized a demonstration by 200 Kurdish children and their parents in front of the UNICEF building in Damascus. Security forces dissolved the gathering and arrested seven Yakiti activists.

Behind the scenes, Othman and Saleh were subjected to the usual sort of inducements to pledge in writing to abstain from political activities. The two Yakiti leaders apparently signed the pledge, as they were released for time served after their conviction in February 2004. But they had not been cowed by their time in prison. After their release, they promptly fled across the border to Iraqi Kurdistan and vowed to continue the fight.

The Uprising

Last month's Kurdish uprising came as a surprise to informed observers both inside Syria and abroad. Although the country's young president has given a somewhat kinder and gentler face to the regime he inherited from his father, the government's legacy of brutality in the face of internal challenges to its authority is largely unshaken - its February 1982 massacre of up to 20,000 people in Hama, Syria's fourth largest city, remained deeply imbedded in Syrian popular consciousness. In light of the government's detention and alleged torture of scores of Yakiti activists in response to peaceful demonstrations over the past two years, Kurds had little reason to question Assad's willingness to crush violent challenges to his authority. The unprecedented explosion of Kurdish rioting in March could not have occurred had it not been for an extraordinary convergence of domestic and regional developments.

The riots erupted at a time when American-Syrian relations had reached a historic nadir. The Bush administration's approval of congressional sanctions on Damascus and public support for an Israeli air strike on Syrian soil in late 2003 signified a fundamental shift in US relations with the Assad regime from constructive to punitive engagement. The administration's confirmation in early March that sanctions would be imposed set off a storm of exaggerated denunciations of neo-conservative plots and predictions of impending American "aggression" in Syria's state-run media. Assad's efforts to persuade ordinary Syrians that Damascus was next on the American regime change "hit list" was a grave political blunder, for a vital component of his regime's aura of invincibility is the perception that it has international backing. For the first time in decades, Syrians could be confident that mass killings by their government would not be met with silence abroad.

Syrian relations with Iraqi Kurdish leaders had also reached a new low. Assad's vigorous campaign to rally Arab opposition to Iraqi Kurdish autonomy failed to obstruct the political process in post-Saddam Iraq, while severely alienating Barzani and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) leader Jalal Talabani. Both had welcomed exiled Kurdish activists from Syria and provided them with facilities to organize politically, but were careful to not to antagonize Assad so long as negotiations over Iraq's political future were in full swing. After the approval on March 8 of an interim constitution that recognized KDP/PUK administrative and military control over Iraqi Kurdistan and gave Kurds veto power over the drafting of a permanent constitution,[6] the gloves came off and the two Kurdish leaders quietly signaled that they would not disapprove of Kurdish political agitation in Syria. The approval of Iraq's interim constitution also put to rest lingering doubts about whether the United States would abandon its Kurdish allies in the pursuit of political consensus in Iraq.

The Syrian authorities were well prepared for a resurgence of Kurdish activism. According to Kurdish sources, the Assad regime had been distributing arms to Arab settlers in Jazeera for months. An attempt by Yakiti to organize a public demonstration on March 8 (ostensibly to commemorate International Women's Day) was quickly derailed by police in Qamishli and eight of its activists were arrested. The final spark came on March 12, when fans of a visiting Arab soccer team, brandishing sticks and knives, arrived at a stadium in Qamishli and began shouting ethnic

slurs and chanting pro-Saddam Hussein slogans. When fans of the Kurdish team responded with chants praising President Bush, the two sides began to scuffle. Security forces then opened fire on the Kurdish crowd, killing six people and setting off a mass panic in which three children were trampled to death. This sparked a riot by Kurdish residents of the city, who burned cereal warehouses and destroyed scores of public busses and private vehicles. The unrest quickly spread to nearby towns, such as Hasaka and Amuda, where protestors torched the offices of the Baath Party and vandalized murals of the Syrian president and his late father. In the days that followed, the violence spread to northwestern Syria. In Ain al-Arab, rioters set fire to a government civil registry office and attempted (unsuccessfully) to free prisoners from a local jail. On March 16, thousands rioted in the city of Aleppo and the town of Afrin in the Kurd Dagh region. Protests also reached Kurdish neighborhoods in and around Damascus. Property damage was estimated at hundreds of millions of dollars.

**Kurds deface a mural of the late Hafez Assad in Qamishli.**

Shortly after the riots erupted, the regime sealed off border crossings into Kurdish areas from Iraq and Turkey and dispatched heavily armed police and military units to quell the unrest. In an eight-day period, 40 people (33 Kurds and seven Arabs) were killed, 400 were injured, and over 2,000 Kurds were arrested. Calm was restored only after tanks were sent into all major Kurdish towns. In Lebanon, security forces raided the homes of several Kurdish activists, arresting at least seven people and forcing dozens of others into hiding.

Early on in the crisis, Assad dispatched a delegation, headed by his brother, Maher, and Defense Minister Mustafa Tlass, to meet with local Kurdish leaders in Jazeera, but the regime's intent was to threaten, not negotiate. Demands by Kurdish leaders for a meeting with Assad were categorically rejected.

The Syrian government was quick to blame the riots on foreign elements. State-run media described the unrest as the work of bandits "moved by foreign hands" and saboteurs "from neighboring countries" intent on undermining the country's stability.[7] A government-appointed mosque preacher called the riots "a major plot to destabilize [Syria] from inside, after the traps from the outside, like the Syria Accountability Act and the accusations of terrorism, failed."[8] Kurds were portrayed in the media as unanimously unsympathetic to the provocateurs - Syrian television showed scenes of Kurdish crowds erupting into chants of "with our blood and souls we redeem you, oh Bashar" and repeatedly showed interviews with Kurdish villagers denying that they faced discrimination in Syria. "On the contrary, I have more than others have," one Kurd proudly declared on Syrian television.[9]

However, the magnitude and geographic dispersion of the riots belied claims that the unrest was incited by outsiders. Furthermore, unlike the November 2000 outbreak of Druze-Sunni violence in southern Syria, the Kurdish riots were highly coordinated and deeply political. Some of the destruction was spontaneous, but political considerations were evident in the selection of most buildings firebombed during the riots, such as a government-run "cultural center" in Malikiya and a three-story customs station in Qamishli (local customs collection has been the economic foundation of Kurdish autonomy in northern Iraq).

Although foreign provocateurs did not directly instigate any of the rioting, the uprising was clearly encouraged by Kurds outside of Syria. Although the KDP and the PUK issued seemingly neutral calls for all sides to reject violence, both allowed thousands of demonstrators to hold anti-Syrian protests in territory under their control. In sharp contrast to the past, Kurdish communities across the globe rallied to help their Syrian brethren. In Athens, a thousand Kurds marched with candles to the Syrian embassy. In Brussels, they came with bricks and smashed the windows of Syria's embassy.

Protestors in Geneva forced their way into Syria's United Nations consulate and occupied it for an hour-and-a-half. Other major demonstrations took place in Washington, London, Paris, Berlin, and Prague. Coming at a time when Syria was lobbying for economic assistance from the European Union (EU) and striving to fend off American sanctions, the Kurdish Diaspora's collective expression of solidarity was a public relations nightmare for Assad.

The United States, for its part, condemned the Syrian crackdown. State Department Deputy Spokesman Adam Ereli called on the Syrian government to "refrain from using increasingly repressive measures to ostracize a minority that has asked for a greater acceptance and integration into Syrian life."[10] This reaction was significant, as American policymakers have long dreaded the prospect of Syria's fragmentation along ethno-sectarian lines - discouraging American words in the midst of ethnic violence in Syria would have been unthinkable a few years ago. All conceivable rationales for this response presuppose that the Bush administration does not fear the ramifications of a Kurdish rebellion in Syria - or, at any rate, is deliberately communicating this impression to the Syrians. Either way, it is clear that Assad faces the first American administration willing to threaten to the stability of Syria's Baathist regime in over two decades.

Other Arab governments, mortified by the tremors of instability in Syria, wasted no time in expressing solidarity with Assad. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), comprising Saudi Arabia and five other oil-rich Arab monarchies condemned Kurdish "acts of sedition."[11] Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, who had been originally scheduled to visit Damascus in late March, made a surprise visit to the Syrian capital on March 14.

Conclusion

Over the last several weeks, Syria's intelligence agencies have methodically interrogated over 2,000 detainees in an effort to identify and dismantle activist networks in the Kurdish community. Although most of those arrested during the riots have been released, Amnesty International reported on April 6 that "hundreds of Kurds" were still being held incommunicado by the authorities.[12] According to a joint statement issued by several Kurdish factions, at least two of these detainees died as a result of torture during their interrogation, while a third slipped into a coma.[13] On the basis of information gleaned from these interrogations, the authorities carried out a second wave of detentions during the second week of April, arresting hundreds of Kurds.

While this ongoing crackdown may debilitate Kurdish activism in the short term, there will be no return to political quietism for this embattled minority unless the current regional and international environment changes radically. The Assad regime's growing international isolation is seen by most Syrian Kurds as a historic opportunity to advance their interests. Some Kurdish leaders have hinted that they will turn to the Americans for help if the government refuses to make concessions. "The regime should not force us to be the Trojan horse," Othman warned earlier this month from exile in Iraq.[14]

Even in the unlikely event that Syrian-American détente is restored in the years to come, the political ascendance of Iraqi Kurdistan will decisively strengthen the bargaining position of Kurds in Syria. While the precise format of Iraq's power-sharing formula has yet to be determined, it is virtually certain that Iraqi Kurds will exercise de facto veto power over major government decisions. Once a fully sovereign Iraqi government takes office in Baghdad, the Assad regime cannot brutally suppress its Kurdish subjects without jeopardizing a potentially lucrative trade relationship with Iraq.

However, while external deterrents have clearly strengthened the bargaining position of the Kurdish community, this empowerment will not probably not translate into substantial political gains unless it can unite against the government. The rapid and seamless spread of rioting last month from Jazeera to other Kurdish enclaves in Syria appears to indicate an unprecedented level of popular consensus in the Kurdish community, but the Kurdish political elite remains deeply fragmented. Although the key players consulted one another during the crisis and issued a succession of joint press releases, self-interested behavior was also very evident. Since all of the main factions

ultimately aspire to become the Kurdish community's primary interlocutor in future talks with the regime, Syrian officials were able to lure some into breaking ranks with the others. Darwish's KDPP, for example, issued a statement condemning "acts of sabotage" and calling upon Kurds to "extinguish the sedition."[15] When the main Kurdish factions issued a statement declaring that there should be no public celebration of Kurdish New Year on March 21 out of respect for the dead, Syrian officials persuaded the pro-PKK Kurdish Democratic Union Party (KDUP) to hold an officially-sanctioned celebration in Qamishli that attracted several hundred participants, some of them carrying posters of Bashar Assad. Syrian media then pointed to the festivities as an indication that all was well in Qamishli.[16]

Another potentially decisive factor is the Kurdish community's relationship with the broader democratic reform movement in Syria. Many liberal reformers in Syria are staunch Arab nationalists and reflexively disdain anything that smacks of non-Arab minority separatism. Others are stridently anti-American and were horrified by the timing of Kurdish uprising. Private sector businessmen who push for greater government transparency and accountability do not typically sympathize with those who threaten law and order. It is for these reasons that supporters of the Assad regime sought to portray the violence as an Arab-Kurdish ethnic conflict, the rioters as American collaborators, and the uprising as a threat to stability. And they succeeded to an extent in so doing. While Yakiti Secretary-General Abdel Baqi Yousef pointedly emphasized that "this is a conflict with the country's political authorities, not with the Arab street,"[17] the government media did not have difficulty obtaining footage of burned-out Arab shops and protest banners praising Bush to broadcast endlessly on state television. Some opposition figures loudly complained that the Kurdish riots enabled the regime to deflect pressure to lift the 41-year state of emergency. Finding a way to advance its political interests without coming into conflict with the broader reform movement will be a daunting challenge for Syrian Kurds.

Finally, the evolution of political activism in the Kurdish community in the years ahead will greatly depend on the extent to which the Assad regime accommodates its demands. The regime is in no position to tackle economic deprivation in Kurdish areas, but most Syrian analysts expect it to grudgingly grant Kurds a limited measure of cultural autonomy and equal treatment under the law - not enough to satisfy the Kurdish community, but perhaps enough to weaken its resolve.

Notes

[1] When it merged with Akram al-Hurani's Arab Socialist Party (ASP) in 1952, the Baath refused to admit most Kurdish ASP members into its ranks.
[2] See Salah Badradin, The Kurdish National Movement in Syria (Beirut: The Kurdish Kawa Cultural Society, 2003).
[3] Turkish Daily News, 18 April 1998.
[4] Political program submitted to the third convention of the Yakiti Party in Syria, Article 4, November 1999. English translation available online at http://users.skynet.be/Yakiti/ingilizi/aboutYakiti.htm.
[5] "Kurds protest outside Syrian parliament against discrimination," Agence France Presse, 10 December 2002.
[6] Article 54 of the Law of Administration for the State of Iraq for the Transitional Period, approved on March 8, states that "the Kurdistan Regional Government shall retain regional control over police forces and internal security, and it will have the right to impose taxes and fees within the Kurdistan region." Article 61 stipulates that Iraq's permanent constitution is ratified "if a majority of the voters in Iraq approve and if two-thirds of the voters in three or more governorates do not reject it." See full text.
[7] Syrian Arab TV (Damascus), 15 March 2004. Translation by BBC World Service.
[8] "Son of Syria's Muslim leader reaches out to Kurds after clashes," Agence France Presse, 19 March 2004.
[9] Syrian Arab TV (Damascus), 15 March 2004. Translation by BBC World Service.

[10] "Washington urges tolerance on Damascus," Agence France Presse, 15 March 2004.
[11] "Clashes spread in northeast Syria, at least 30 dead: Kurdish officials," Agence France Presse, 17 March 2004.
[12] Amnesty International, Press Release, 6 April 2004. http://web.amnesty.org/library/print/ENGMDE240292004
[13] "Kurdish opposition says two die under torture in Syria, hundreds arrested," Agence France Presse, 10 April 2004.
[14] "Kurdish Unrest Spreads in Syria; Up to 15 Dead, Scores Wounded," The New York Times, 14 March 2004.
[15] Al-Hayat (London), 16 March 2004.
[16] In Lebanon, the pro-Baathist Razkari held a similar celebration.
[17] "Kurd leader says Syria waging war on Kurds," Reuters, 17 March 2004.