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Iraqi Kurds Deliberately Destroying Arab Villages

By Jason Ditz
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With villages on the front lines endlessly changing hands between ISIS and the Kurdish Peshmerga in northern Iraq, the Kurds have at times seen these villages as a liability, forcing them to spread their forces thinner to defend, and widening the front lines.

A new report from Amnesty International, however, suggests the Peshmerga's "solution" to this problem is increasingly to just burn Arab villages they capture to the ground, expelling the population, and accusing them of being "pro-ISIS."

If they weren't pro-ISIS before, burning their villages to ground certainly is going to do the trick, and the Amnesty report suggested thousands of homes have been destroyed to make sure that the displaced have no homes to return to.

Incredibly, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) doesn't appear to be denying the report at all, insisting simply that in expelling the Arabs "we are taking back some of what was ours," with officials openly talking about chasing enough Arabs out of the area around Sinjar to ensure that after the war it is dominated by Kurds and Yazidis exclusively.

Of course, the mass destruction of civilian homes and the forcible transfer of populations are both huge violations of international law, but the KRG appears to believe that, so long as they are at the fore of the ISIS war, they can get away with about anything.

The ISIS war has served as an opportunity for the KRG to dramatically expand its territory across Iraq. In the wake of the fall of Mosul to ISIS, the Peshmerga quickly moved in to oil-rich Tikrit, and KRG officials have ruled out ever returning the city to Iraq.

The expansion of the KRG's territory seems to be setting the stage for the Kurds to secede outright from Iraq after the war, and with the US throwing an ever-growing array of weapons at the KRG "to fight ISIS," they are also laying the foundation for an independent Kurdistan, and one which seems to be increasingly centered on the notion of ethnic cleansing.