

Transcript

00:00:00 Speaker 1

To open tonight's session, how delighted I am to see you and how you are the lucky ones.

00:00:08 Speaker 1

We have an exceptional speaker tonight and we're talking about truly one of the best books I've read all year.

00:00:16 Speaker 1

I received Joost's book in the post about 10 days ago and I thought, oh, let's see what he's on about and read the opening page.

00:00:27 Speaker 1

And I was hooked from the first page.

00:00:29 Speaker 1

I just couldn't put it down.

00:00:30 Speaker 1

And it's not because it is a happy story.

00:00:35 Speaker 1

It is a very unhappy story.

00:00:36 Speaker 1

It is a very horrible story.

00:00:38 Speaker 1

But it is told with a humanity and a compassion and a care for the people who figure in the story that makes you appreciate that you are in the hands of a master.

00:00:51 Speaker 1

So Joost Tilterman is

00:00:53 Speaker 1

a very famous man who has worked with some of the most influential human rights and research groups publishing on the world.

00:01:05 Speaker 1

So Human Rights Watch in the 1980s and 90s.

00:01:08 Speaker 2

In the 1990s.

00:01:10 Speaker 1

And then?

00:01:11 Speaker 2

Al-Haq in the 1980s.

00:01:13 Speaker 1

Al-Haq.

00:01:13 Speaker 1

Oh, you were also with Al-Haq?

00:01:14 Speaker 3

Five years.

00:01:16 Speaker 1

Which gives you very good West Bank street cred.

00:01:21 Speaker 2

A little bit.

00:01:22 Speaker 1

And then, of course, the International Crisis Group.

00:01:24 Speaker 1

And our talk tonight draws on a book which Eusta's written in a literary vein that draws very much on the live history novel that Dave Eggers has pioneered so effectively in his books like What Is the What

00:01:46 Speaker 1

about survivors of the Sudanese Civil War, Zaytun about a Syrian-American immigrant in New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, where you take real stories, where your curiosity is driven by the lived experiences of individuals who have been exposed to extraordinary events.

00:02:05 Speaker 1

But you recognize what you do is a fiction to the extent that you put words in their mouth.

00:02:10 Speaker 1

Here we have the added benefit, of course, of the fact that so often

00:02:14 Speaker 1

when Just was interviewing people that he spoke to, he was taking notes of what they said so that he could use their testimonial for the reports that he would do for the future use of his work for International Criminal Court or International Court of Justice trials.

00:02:32 Speaker 1

So there was a reason to record the voices written, which lends to a lot of the spoken words in this book, the veracity that would say this is not a novel.

00:02:43 Speaker 1

But

00:02:44 Speaker 1

To tell the story in three dimensions requires a certain amount of imagination, as well as the notes that you had in your diary.

00:02:53 Speaker 1

Frankly, while anyone can take good notes, it's just a particular gift to be able to then weave a story with very different voices, to write it in such an engaging prose that your humble moderator today, as I said, picking up the book and just reading the first page, you get a sense of what you're up to.

00:03:14 Speaker 1

it wouldn't stop until I finished the last page.

00:03:16 Speaker 1

So whether we call you Mr.

00:03:19 Speaker 1

Vost or Mr.

00:03:21 Speaker 1

Vist, a character who appears frequently in the pages of the book, I would like to welcome you, Joost, to the Middle East Center to discuss the resurrected and the unfound campaign in northern Iraq.

00:03:35 Speaker 1

So will you please join me in the warmest welcome?

00:03:42 Speaker 2

Thank you so much, Eugene.

00:03:44 Speaker 2

I have nothing to say.

00:03:47 Speaker 1

Thank you all for coming.

00:03:48 Speaker 1

We hope you enjoyed tonight's episode.

00:03:49 Speaker 2

But I'll take questions.

00:03:53 Speaker 1

So what we decided to do tonight is to run the session as a discussion, a conversation.

00:04:00 Speaker 1

And if along the way,

00:04:03 Speaker 1

You're really impatient to ask your own.

00:04:05 Speaker 1

Just put a hand up and we will pause and recognize you.

00:04:08 Speaker 1

Otherwise, I will hand over to you after we had about 30 or 40 minutes to talk from the front of the room.

00:04:13 Speaker 1

So, enormous welcome.

00:04:15 Speaker 1

Thank you so much.

00:04:17 Speaker 1

Let's just start with the beginning.

00:04:20 Speaker 1

We know precious little about you, your life, and what led you to pursue the work in such dangerous corners as you did.

00:04:28 Speaker 1

So could you just give us a little sense of how you came to be drawn into working in the Middle East?

00:04:32 Speaker 1

on human rights issues.

00:04:35 Speaker 2

Marriage.

00:04:37 Speaker 2

I was married to an American who wanted to study in Cairo for a junior year abroad program.

00:04:44 Speaker 2

And so I went along.

00:04:46 Speaker 2

And then I never left.

00:04:49 Speaker 2

We got divorced shortly after.

00:04:53 Speaker 1

Sorry about that.

00:04:54 Speaker 2

No, not at all.

00:04:56 Speaker 2

I'm very happily married, but not to her.

00:05:04 Speaker 2

at AUC, where I got a job teaching for a year, composition for first year students, essay composition, Freshman comp.

00:05:15 Speaker 2

Freshman comp.

00:05:18 Speaker 2

My best students were not the Egyptians, because the Egyptian students went to Egyptian universities, not the AUC, unless they were a business major.

00:05:27 Speaker 2

But they were Ethiopians,

00:05:31 Speaker 2

under the regime, the Mengisto regime, and Palestinians from the West Bank.

00:05:37 Speaker 2

Now, I couldn't go to Ethiopia because the Mengisto regime, but I was able to go to visit them after the course was over, after the school year was over in the West Bank.

00:05:48 Speaker 2

And I was hooked.

00:05:50 Speaker 2

I was, you know, I was fascinated.

00:05:53 Speaker 2

And I was at the University of California, Santa Cruz, preparing my doctoral dissertation on Latin America

00:05:59 Speaker 2

And I just went like that and said, forget Latin America.

00:06:04 Speaker 2

I'm going to do it on Palestine.

00:06:05 Speaker 1

And what year did you wind up in the West Bank?

00:06:07 Speaker 2

So that was in 1983, the, no, was it?

00:06:14 Speaker 2

Yeah, maybe for a week or so in like May or June 83.

00:06:19 Speaker 2

And then I went back in 84 in order to do my doctoral research.

00:06:26 Speaker 2

And he ended up working for Al-Haq for five years.

00:06:29 Speaker 1

So you were there from 84 to 89?

00:06:31 Speaker 2

To 90, yeah.

00:06:32 Speaker 1

With the outbreak of the Intifada.

00:06:34 Speaker 2

Yes, I was there.

00:06:36 Speaker 2

And fortunately, what happened in the Intifada was they approved my thesis, which not every PhD candidate can say.

00:06:47 Speaker 2

How?

00:06:49 Speaker 2

Because I had been describing, not knowing that there would be an Intifada,

00:06:53 Speaker 2

how labor organizations and women's organizations were organizing themselves in order to, under the, they couldn't be PLO, but they were PLO.

00:07:07 Speaker 2

But how they were organizing as a resistance to the occupation in political ways, not physical, not violence.

00:07:15 Speaker 2

And then when the Intifada broke out, the heads of these organizations turned out to be unified leadership of the Intifada.

00:07:22 Speaker 1

But you remember how restrictive Palestinian political expression was.

00:07:26 Speaker 2

Very, yes.

00:07:27 Speaker 1

Not being allowed to show a flag.

00:07:29 Speaker 1

Do you remember how they would take donkeys and put a flag on its back and send it through the village to do the demonstration for the event?

00:07:38 Speaker 1

But you weren't really allowed to say Palestine.

00:07:41 Speaker 2

No, Palestine.

00:07:44 Speaker 2

You couldn't be a member of the PLO, of course.

00:07:46 Speaker 2

But then each PLO faction had its own trade unions and women's committees and medical relief committees.

00:07:52 Speaker 2

And everybody knew what they were.

00:07:55 Speaker 2

Of course, the Israelis knew very well.

00:07:58 Speaker 2

But anyway.

00:07:59 Speaker 1

And with Al-Haq, what was your work?

00:08:01 Speaker 2

So with Al-Haq, well, I was first I was the databases coordinator because they needed to organize the material.

00:08:09 Speaker 2

and the Dutch are very organized.

00:08:12 Speaker 2

And then I became the research coordinator after my predecessor left during the First Intifada.

00:08:21 Speaker 2

And so, but it was a Palestinian organization, Palestinian-run organization, and everything was done in Arabic.

00:08:29 Speaker 2

I had to, my Arabic is from being in meetings at Al-Haq, because if you wanted to participate, you had to, you better learn.

00:08:39 Speaker 1

And this got you interested in the law as well.

00:08:42 Speaker 2

Yes, and in international humanitarian law.

00:08:46 Speaker 2

And generally the application of law as a way of resisting, in this case, a military occupation or oppression or whatever you want to call it.

00:08:55 Speaker 2

Lawfare in that sense as resistance.

00:08:58 Speaker 1

And was there anything that you witnessed during the Intifada itself that sort of contributed to your engagement with the legal side of

00:09:06 Speaker 1

Let us say that Palestine Israel calls.

00:09:08 Speaker 2

Well, I worked on house demolitions as research and deportations.

00:09:13 Speaker 2

I worked on, did forensic research.

00:09:15 Speaker 2

We brought forensic experts from England and other places to come and exhume bodies killed by the Israeli army and to see what really had happened, or in Israeli prisons and what had happened to them.

00:09:30 Speaker 2

So I was involved in all of that.

00:09:32 Speaker 2

And

00:09:33 Speaker 2

And I used to, I've written a lot about that at the time.

00:09:38 Speaker 2

It was for me the formative period of my life, really.

00:09:43 Speaker 2

It's set the foundation for everything I've done since then, including the work on the Kurds.

00:09:47 Speaker 1

Well, because you will then have already come into, as it were, the violent suppression of political expression.

00:09:53 Speaker 2

Definitely.

00:09:54 Speaker 1

Because the violence of what you're going to be moving on to in Human Rights Watch and your work on UNFAL in particular.

00:10:03 Speaker 1

it's quite extreme.

00:10:05 Speaker 2

So they called me and I couldn't say no because I didn't have a job.

00:10:11 Speaker 2

So they said, do you want to go to Kurdistan?

00:10:14 Speaker 2

I said, sure, where is it again?

00:10:17 Speaker 2

I knew where it was, but I, and it had just become, had opened up after the 1991 Kuwait war.

00:10:24 Speaker 2

And so, and actually I had already been for another organization on a brief visit.

00:10:32 Speaker 2

Yes, for the Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights, yes.

00:10:34 Speaker 1

Before or after the imposition of the no-fly zone?

00:10:37 Speaker 2

No, after, everything happened after, yeah.

00:10:39 Speaker 2

Some journalists went before, like Gwen Roberts and some people, you know, moved with the Peshmerga.

00:10:45 Speaker 1

Could you just for the audience sake contextualize the no-fly zone and how this comes to be?

00:10:49 Speaker 2

Well, so there were two things that happened after the, so there was the Kuwait war.

00:10:54 Speaker 2

The United States with a coalition went into Kuwait throughout the Iraqi army.

00:11:00 Speaker 2

In that

00:11:01 Speaker 2

set of events, Iraqis rose up against the regime in the south and in the north, in the north Kurds.

00:11:10 Speaker 2

And then, but basically George H.

00:11:14 Speaker 2

Bush as president then allowed the Iraqi army to repress these uprisings, very bloody affair in the south, fairly bloody affair in the north, but they had seen what had happened in the south, so they fled.

00:11:29 Speaker 2

And

00:11:31 Speaker 2

And so the army was back, but then the United States decided that this went too far and they imposed A no-fly zone and a safe haven.

00:11:43 Speaker 2

The safe haven was only a small part of Iraqi Kurdistan, whereas the no-fly zone was just an arbitrary, well, was a whatever parallel it was on a map.

00:11:54 Speaker 2

And it covered, it included Mosul, which of course is not Kurdish,

00:11:59 Speaker 2

But it excluded Soleimaniyya, which is very Kurdish, because that was the line.

00:12:04 Speaker 2

But in the end, Saddam Hussein realized that this was too much trouble, and he withdrew unilaterally after a number of months to his own line, which became known as the Green Line, like many green lines.

00:12:17 Speaker 2

And keeping Kirkuk, which was the oil that was critical, and leaving the Kurds to stew in their own juice,

00:12:26 Speaker 2

Turkey had no love for the Kurds.

00:12:28 Speaker 2

The Iranians didn't either.

00:12:30 Speaker 2

And so they, were basically landlocked.

00:12:36 Speaker 2

And that was fine for the regime in Baghdad as well.

00:12:39 Speaker 1

It's a sort of internal prison.

00:12:40 Speaker 2

Yes.

00:12:41 Speaker 2

But we could come in as a journalist or a human rights organization through Turkey.

00:12:46 Speaker 2

We could enter by rd and see what had happened in all these years, especially in the 1980s when

00:12:54 Speaker 2

the Iran-Iraq war was happening and the Kurdish parties went into a major insurgency as the Iraqi army was tied up in the south.

00:13:02 Speaker 2

So and then when the Iran-Iraq war was coming to an end, the Iraqi army turned north and suppressed the insurgency.

00:13:14 Speaker 2

And that's when the Anfal campaign happened, which ended up being a campaign that eradicated the countryside and killed whoever still remained there.

00:13:24 Speaker 2

men, women, children.

00:13:25 Speaker 1

So Anfal is a name given to the genocide of Kurds by the Ba'athist regime.

00:13:32 Speaker 2

Which would not call it a genocide, obviously, but the Anfal campaign was the name of a military anti-counterinsurgency campaign.

00:13:40 Speaker 1

The Ba'athists would call it the heroic Anfal campaign.

00:13:45 Speaker 1

Of which there were eight phases.

00:13:47 Speaker 2

Eight stages.

00:13:49 Speaker 2

that moved geographically through the entirety of the Kurdistan region.

00:13:55 Speaker 1

Between which years?

00:13:57 Speaker 2

No, between which months of 1988.

00:13:59 Speaker 2

So it was from February 22nd until September 6th.

00:14:04 Speaker 1

Okay, there were no unfollowed attacks in 1987.

00:14:08 Speaker 2

No, but there were counterinsurgency efforts and villages were destroyed in 87, but 88 was when they started systematically killing people.

00:14:18 Speaker 1

And that's really where the story that you tell in The Resurrected occurs.

00:14:24 Speaker 2

Where it starts, yes.

00:14:25 Speaker 1

You're coming to Iraqi Kurdistan in the aftermath of yet another conflict, the Kuwait War.

00:14:31 Speaker 2

Yes.

00:14:31 Speaker 1

And yet another uprising by people in both Basra, the south, and Kurdistan in the north.

00:14:38 Speaker 3

Yes.

00:14:39 Speaker 1

And where this has been, as it were, neutralized by the outside imposition of a no-go zone, no-fly zone.

00:14:48 Speaker 2

No fly zone, very importantly, because the tanks and the helicopters were allowed to move.

00:14:54 Speaker 1

Helicopters were allowed.

00:14:55 Speaker 2

Yeah, they used helicopters to strafe the Kurds out of Kirkuk.

00:14:59 Speaker 3

Yes.

00:15:00 Speaker 2

Many people were killed.

00:15:01 Speaker 1

Yeah.

00:15:03 Speaker 1

And then with Human Rights Watch, you were sent on a mission to investigate.

00:15:09 Speaker 2

What had happened, because people, there had been an earlier mission by Human Rights, like a few months earlier, and there were this talk of

00:15:18 Speaker 2

180,000 people who had disappeared.

00:15:20 Speaker 2

That seemed like an enormous number.

00:15:24 Speaker 2

And so Human Rights Watch wanted to find out what had happened.

00:15:27 Speaker 2

They raised funds and then they sent one of their own, one of their researchers to Kurdistan.

00:15:37 Speaker 2

Before she left, she called me to see if I, because she was available for only for three months and she had a lot of work, but I could replace her at the end of it, which I did.

00:15:47 Speaker 2

And so her work and my work together informed the research that eventually was published by Human Rights Watch as evidence of what we said was a case of genocide and which lawyers working for the International Court of Justice later also said was in fact a winnable case before the Court of Justice had we found a government willing to take it, which was a political challenge.

00:16:15 Speaker 1

Why couldn't you find a government willing to take a case against Saddam Hussein's government?

00:16:20 Speaker 2

We found a government.

00:16:21 Speaker 2

We found maybe 2 governments, but they were not major governments.

00:16:25 Speaker 2

The Europeans didn't want to, and the other ones only wanted to do it if a European government joined.

00:16:30 Speaker 2

And we didn't want the United States to do it because of partisanship perceptions thereof.

00:16:35 Speaker 2

So we wanted neutral, sort of good credit score governments to do it.

00:16:42 Speaker 2

But in the end, the Europeans said, well,

00:16:44 Speaker 2

Iraq is under sanctions.

00:16:45 Speaker 2

This is 1990s.

00:16:48 Speaker 2

We have very small legal apartments.

00:16:50 Speaker 2

It's very expensive.

00:16:51 Speaker 2

Plus, you know, terrorism.

00:16:53 Speaker 2

They may attack us, right, or carry out attacks against us.

00:16:57 Speaker 2

Whatever reason they could come up with, but they didn't take it.

00:17:01 Speaker 2

And so the case never took off.

00:17:04 Speaker 1

Was the evidence that you assembled to prove useful in the trial of Saddam Hussein or Ali Hassan al-Majid or?

00:17:12 Speaker 2

Well,

00:17:13 Speaker 2

So after 2003, when these guys were taken, there was a tribunal in Baghdad.

00:17:23 Speaker 2

But Human Rights Watch was not there, was not invited as such.

00:17:27 Speaker 2

Of course, the Human Rights Watch report was used.

00:17:31 Speaker 2

But frankly, it wasn't a very, these were not very good trials.

00:17:36 Speaker 2

And so we took our, I mean, I was no longer with Human Rights Watch, I was with ICG, but we kept our distance.

00:17:42 Speaker 1

Yeah.

00:17:43 Speaker 1

No, I can see why you would.

00:17:44 Speaker 1

And it does come into the story.

00:17:45 Speaker 1

Yes.

00:17:46 Speaker 1

So I just thought it was really important to share with our audience a context within which the authorial voice enters the story.

00:17:55 Speaker 1

Because though you do come under many names in this book, you are ultimately referred to as a Western human rights, yeah, human rights investigator.

00:18:06 Speaker 2

Could be me?

00:18:07 Speaker 1

Your partisans talk about a Mr.

00:18:08 Speaker 1

Woost.

00:18:10 Speaker 2

Could be.

00:18:10 Speaker 1

There was also a Mr.

00:18:11 Speaker 1

Wiest.

00:18:12 Speaker 2

Maybe.

00:18:12 Speaker 1

Seemed to be the same dude, Woost and Wiest.

00:18:14 Speaker 2

You know, not in the eyes of those who were using the name, but...

00:18:20 Speaker 1

So we have before us a book which combines real-life narrative with some inventions.

00:18:28 Speaker 2

Yes.

00:18:29 Speaker 1

And let's start with the cast of The Resurrected.

00:18:34 Speaker 1

The people who give your book the title.

00:18:36 Speaker 2

Yeah.

00:18:37 Speaker 1

So who are the resurrected?

00:18:39 Speaker 2

Well, literally, I mean, is the Kurds who were captured during on file, taken to the western desert of Iraq, where they were taken to execution sites, and somehow, I would say, fairly miraculously, and not religious, survived, managed to escape.

00:19:02 Speaker 2

and then found our way back to Kurdistan, only for me to find them some years later.

00:19:08 Speaker 2

And, these guys are amazing.

00:19:12 Speaker 1

Why would finding survivors of Anfal have been of such importance for your research?

00:19:17 Speaker 1

Because you could talk to all those who had been witnesses without themselves having been arrested.

00:19:22 Speaker 2

They didn't know what happened to the ones.

00:19:24 Speaker 2

That's why, when I said earlier, the people who had disappeared, they didn't, the survivors didn't know where these people had gone to.

00:19:31 Speaker 2

There was no news about them.

00:19:32 Speaker 2

There were just rumors flying around.

00:19:34 Speaker 2

Underground prisons, this, that, the South, the South, because it had happened earlier where people were taken to the South and then after a number of years they were released.

00:19:45 Speaker 2

But now nobody came back after four years.

00:19:47 Speaker 2

This was 1992, four years later that I interviewed people.

00:19:50 Speaker 2

And people had not come back.

00:19:52 Speaker 2

Nobody had come back except one boy had come back because he had been rescued by an Arab family, tribal family.

00:20:00 Speaker 2

And then after the uprising, the family got in touch with his Kurdish relatives and he moved back to his Kurdish relatives.

00:20:08 Speaker 2

His own family was killed, the father, mother, siblings, everybody.

00:20:15 Speaker 2

But this Arab family had treated him like their own son at great risk because clearly, you know, he wasn't meant to be alive.

00:20:23 Speaker 2

And the regime was quite brutal, as we know.

00:20:27 Speaker 2

And so I knew that there was a survivor.

00:20:30 Speaker 2

So then I started asking whoever I met, and I met lots of people, do you know any other people who have survived this?

00:20:39 Speaker 2

And sooner or later, lo and behold, somebody said, yes, I know somebody who survived this.

00:20:44 Speaker 2

He's not here, he's in another place.

00:20:46 Speaker 2

And I said, well, that's great.

00:20:48 Speaker 2

I wasn't believing it.

00:20:50 Speaker 2

But if you can bring him here, I'll pay for the transportation.

00:20:54 Speaker 2

So he said, okay, come back in two days, three days, I forget.

00:20:59 Speaker 2

And we'll get him here.

00:21:00 Speaker 2

So they brought him.

00:21:02 Speaker 2

I saw, I met him.

00:21:03 Speaker 2

He was the real thing.

00:21:05 Speaker 1

And his name was?

00:21:06 Speaker 1

In the book.

00:21:07 Speaker 2

In the book, Kawa.

00:21:08 Speaker 1

And he is one of the main characters.

00:21:10 Speaker 2

He's the main character, yes.

00:21:12 Speaker 2

I mean, one of the main characters.

00:21:13 Speaker 2

Yeah, Kawa is, he tells his story in full, yeah, about what happened to him.

00:21:20 Speaker 2

So how he was living in the, he was an army deserter.

00:21:23 Speaker 2

He had been to the south to fight against Iran.

00:21:29 Speaker 2

fled.

00:21:29 Speaker 1

So the story really begins with the Iran-Iraq war.

00:21:31 Speaker 2

It does.

00:21:32 Speaker 1

I mean, all of your protagonists have been forced into the army.

00:21:38 Speaker 2

Well, some refused to go from the beginning.

00:21:41 Speaker 2

So some served and then left, fled, you know, deserted, and others refused to go.

00:21:47 Speaker 2

They were dodging the draft, basically.

00:21:50 Speaker 2

And they all ended up hiding in the villages.

00:21:53 Speaker 1

And there's a cycle that they all have lived through.

00:21:57 Speaker 3

Yes.

00:21:58 Speaker 1

Of going into the army, being sent to the front, deserting, deserting, being amnestied, being amnestied.

00:22:05 Speaker 2

Going back to the army, deserting.

00:22:09 Speaker 2

And then, so when, during the campaign, an amnesty was announced, they didn't know if it was a true amnesty or a false amnesty, but the situation was quite desperate.

00:22:20 Speaker 2

And so they surrendered.

00:22:22 Speaker 2

Most people did.

00:22:24 Speaker 2

And these guys did.

00:22:25 Speaker 1

And once they surrendered, they found that they were not.

00:22:27 Speaker 2

That was not the Syrian's amnesty, no.

00:22:30 Speaker 2

And they were not sent back to the army.

00:22:32 Speaker 2

They were sent back, they were sent to execution grounds.

00:22:35 Speaker 2

It was a very systematic effort, rounded people up, sorting them, men from the women and children, old people, all in different categories.

00:22:44 Speaker 2

And then the men were all, the men between 15 and 65, 70, I forget, were all sent to the execution sites.

00:22:55 Speaker 2

If they were from oil-bearing areas, the women and children were also sent to the execution sites.

00:22:59 Speaker 1

Why?

00:23:00 Speaker 2

Or no population could live, ever live again.

00:23:05 Speaker 2

Near the oil.

00:23:05 Speaker 2

Near Kirkuk.

00:23:07 Speaker 2

Yes, in the rural areas of Kirkuk.

00:23:10 Speaker 2

And then the old people were sent to a prison in the south, a prison that, and they were eventually released if they survived the ordeal.

00:23:17 Speaker 1

And these are the empty houses that you described towards the end of the book.

00:23:21 Speaker 2

There are, so there were at the time, not, I don't think, they may not exist anymore, but there were some empty houses.

00:23:28 Speaker 1

That had graffiti on all the doors.

00:23:29 Speaker 1

You have a story about a door being taken down.

00:23:32 Speaker 2

Somebody saw that and yes.

00:23:34 Speaker 2

So I've not visited, so I don't know, but somebody was describing that to me and yes, at that time.

00:23:42 Speaker 1

So the first guy you meet who

00:23:45 Speaker 1

returns.

00:23:46 Speaker 1

And those who are the victims of Anfala called the Anfala Khan.

00:23:49 Speaker 2

Yes, in Kurdish, yes.

00:23:51 Speaker 1

So the idea of being a survivor, Anfala Khan is a contradiction in terms.

00:23:58 Speaker 2

Well, no, so the Anfala Khan are the survivors, but not the execution survivors, the people who were not rounded up, who somehow survived, but who are from the villages in the countryside that was destroyed.

00:24:09 Speaker 1

So they're the survivors, not the victims of Anfala or the Anfala Khan, the survivors of Anfala.

00:24:15 Speaker 2

So, there, and so that's why, until this day, we have 10s of thousands of Anfala Khan living in these resettlement camps, if they haven't been able to move to the cities.

00:24:27 Speaker 2

But then there are this very small group of about six or seven execution survivors.

00:24:32 Speaker 2

They're also Anfala Khan, but they're a special category because they actually know what had happened because they saw it, right?

00:24:39 Speaker 2

They're critical eyewitnesses.

00:24:42 Speaker 1

It might be good to actually read a little bit from the book.

00:24:46 Speaker 2

Well, let me read this story then to you.

00:24:49 Speaker 2

So based on a true story, these guys are real people.

00:24:57 Speaker 2

This guy I met at the very end after I found several other survivors and interviewed him at length.

00:25:03 Speaker 2

It was already a year later in 1993 and I found another one.

00:25:08 Speaker 2

And he was

00:25:10 Speaker 2

had gone back to his village, even though the village was totally destroyed.

00:25:13 Speaker 2

And he was living in a tent on his land in order to grow crops and to make a living.

00:25:23 Speaker 1

And he's up high, right?

00:25:25 Speaker 2

Up high.

00:25:27 Speaker 1

Up in the hills, up in the mountains.

00:25:28 Speaker 2

Well, yeah, it's not...

00:25:30 Speaker 2

Is he in a remote place?

00:25:32 Speaker 2

Remote, very remote, but hilly, not high mountains.

00:25:36 Speaker 2

And

00:25:38 Speaker 2

So he is talking, he had a large family, he had two wives.

00:25:43 Speaker 2

His name is Hamarahim.

00:25:45 Speaker 2

On the 4th day, they took us in trucks to a popular army base in Kirkuk.

00:25:50 Speaker 2

I'd never been this far from home.

00:25:52 Speaker 2

In fact, I'd never traveled further than Steadfastness Camp, which was nearby.

00:25:58 Speaker 2

I now wish I had settled there before on fall, but had I done so, I would have lost my home here in the village, my lands and all my animals.

00:26:06 Speaker 2

I couldn't imagine it.

00:26:08 Speaker 2

In the camps, you were not allowed to keep anything, except your family.

00:26:12 Speaker 2

At least you were allowed to keep your family.

00:26:15 Speaker 2

In Kirkuk, they put the women and children to one side and the men to the other.

00:26:20 Speaker 2

I wanted to speak to my wives and children, but from one moment to the next, they went one way and I went another, and I never saw them again.

00:26:29 Speaker 2

I'm still waiting for them to come home, but I know now where they are and they won't be coming back.

00:26:36 Speaker 2

They emptied our pockets, our watches, tractor keys, nail cutters, prayer beads.

00:26:41 Speaker 2

They let me keep my ID and money, though.

00:26:45 Speaker 2

They didn't speak to us.

00:26:46 Speaker 2

They only barked orders.

00:26:48 Speaker 2

I did what everyone else was doing, which was to sit on my hunches and wait, trying not to topple over from exhaustion.

00:26:55 Speaker 2

There were hundreds of us in one hall.

00:26:58 Speaker 2

We were hungry, thirsty, and despairing.

00:27:01 Speaker 2

We realized this was not your run-of-the-mill roundup.

00:27:05 Speaker 2

What did they do to our families?

00:27:08 Speaker 2

Two nights we stayed that way until they came and stuffed us into prison vans.

00:27:12 Speaker 2

We were ravenous and dying from thirst as we drove for hours with stops and starts.

00:27:18 Speaker 2

The last bit was on a bumpy rd.

00:27:20 Speaker 2

We heard gunfire and the rumble of tractors or bulldozers.

00:27:25 Speaker 2

It came closer and closer.

00:27:27 Speaker 2

It was then that all of us realized, I think, that what we had feared might happen was indeed about to happen.

00:27:34 Speaker 2

that this was the end of the road.

00:27:36 Speaker 2

We cried and kissed each other's beards, forgiving each other our sins, so that we could enter the afterlife with our conscience clear and our soul washed clean.

00:27:48 Speaker 2

Do not lose hope of Allah's mercy, for verily Allah can forgive all sin, we prayed.

00:27:54 Speaker 2

We sat there for an hour or so, weeping and praying, helpless, until they opened the door and dragged us out.

00:28:01 Speaker 2

None of us put up resistance.

00:28:03 Speaker 2

They took our IDs and they took our money.

00:28:06 Speaker 2

They brought some plastic wire and tied us together by our left wrists.

00:28:11 Speaker 2

There were some 30 of us, all from that one van.

00:28:14 Speaker 2

I was the last in line.

00:28:17 Speaker 2

Then they marched us to an area nearby.

00:28:19 Speaker 2

The night was pitch black and made a stand at the lip of what appeared to be a deep pit.

00:28:24 Speaker 2

Our guard stood behind us and I realized the wire was wrapped only loosely around my wrist.

00:28:30 Speaker 2

I pulled out my hand

00:28:32 Speaker 2

and realizing I was free, I bolted.

00:28:34 Speaker 2

I just bolted without seeing or thinking.

00:28:37 Speaker 2

I bolted off to the side and around the edge of the pit, away from them, and when they opened fire, moments later, I dove into the young grass and buried my face into the soft earth.

00:28:48 Speaker 2

It had a lovely smell.

00:28:49 Speaker 2

I do remember that.

00:28:51 Speaker 2

And that was it.

00:28:52 Speaker 2

I stayed there until the bulldozers turned off their headlights and the cars left the area.

00:28:57 Speaker 2

I slowly raised myself off the ground and hurried off.

00:29:01 Speaker 2

I walked for four days and four nights without food.

00:29:04 Speaker 2

I found a rusted tin can which I used to collect water from small pools that had collected the spring rain.

00:29:10 Speaker 2

I hid during the day and walked from late afternoon throughout the night.

00:29:14 Speaker 2

I headed straight for home, keeping the evening sun behind me.

00:29:18 Speaker 2

I spied Arab shepherds at times, tending their flocks.

00:29:21 Speaker 2

It was a flat plain I crossed, all grass, wheat and barley.

00:29:26 Speaker 2

I saw villages along the way, but only on the 4th day, when I was at the end of my wits, did I decide to try my luck.

00:29:32 Speaker 2

I was so hungry I could barely walk anymore.

00:29:35 Speaker 2

It was an Arab village, and when I came hobbling in, the people gathered around me and someone said, look, a Kurd who has fallen out of an airplane.

00:29:46 Speaker 2

He was beaten up and arrested, but somehow survived.

00:29:51 Speaker 1

He thought he was being funny about the Kurd who fell out of an airplane.

00:29:54 Speaker 2

He thought he was being funny.

00:29:55 Speaker 2

Yeah, that was a funny memory.

00:29:57 Speaker 1

Yeah.

00:29:58 Speaker 2

After he survived it.

00:29:59 Speaker 2

And then of course, he went to, then I met him in his village.

00:30:02 Speaker 2

He had married again, so third wife.

00:30:06 Speaker 2

And then this was 1993.

00:30:08 Speaker 2

In 1994, the Kurdish party started fighting each other and Islamists in Sulimania Halabja area were fighting with PUK there.

00:30:19 Speaker 2

And he joined PUK and he was killed.

00:30:22 Speaker 2

So that story had an unhappy ending.

00:30:24 Speaker 1

Yeah, and he's one of the minor figures in the book, but he is a testimony that reinforces the broader experience.

00:30:33 Speaker 1

And another who has a story of managing to get away from the killing grounds at just that crucial moment.

00:30:40 Speaker 1

But there are two other protagonists who are really the main drivers of your book.

00:30:44 Speaker 1

And they're people with whom you will have an enduring relationship, I assume down to the present day.

00:30:49 Speaker 2

So what happened was these people that I tracked down who had survived the executions, so I wrote up the stories and Human Rights Watch published this report.

00:31:05 Speaker 2

But then in 1996, the Iraqi army went into northern Iraq and the United States had a number of projects to rebuild the villages.

00:31:18 Speaker 2

and providing humanitarian aid.

00:31:20 Speaker 2

And so the army threatened that.

00:31:22 Speaker 2

And the United States then decided, rather than deploying its own army to fight back against Saddam Hussein, decided to evacuate all of these aid workers.

00:31:34 Speaker 2

And I happen to have a friend in the White House.

00:31:38 Speaker 2

So I contacted him and said, by the way, if you ever want some terrific witnesses in a tribunal for Saddam Hussein,

00:31:47 Speaker 2

I've got the guys for you.

00:31:49 Speaker 2

If you can help them, bring them out along with everybody else.

00:31:54 Speaker 2

And so they said yes.

00:31:56 Speaker 2

And they made it happen.

00:31:58 Speaker 2

I went down to back to Kurdistan to identify them.

00:32:02 Speaker 2

And so they settled in the United States.

00:32:06 Speaker 2

And they're living there until today.

00:32:08 Speaker 2

And I see them on a yearly basis whenever I'm in the area.

00:32:12 Speaker 1

And you had to be there to identify them as a person.

00:32:15 Speaker 1

So they.

00:32:16 Speaker 1

took your word for it, you had some great witnesses.

00:32:19 Speaker 2

Yes.

00:32:20 Speaker 1

But they wanted to make sure that those were the people who...

00:32:23 Speaker 2

There were a lot of people who wanted to leave Kurdistan at the time.

00:32:25 Speaker 1

Not surprising.

00:32:27 Speaker 2

And there were a lot of people who said they were this or that, but yeah.

00:32:31 Speaker 1

So when we first meet them, one of them is brought to meet with you.

00:32:35 Speaker 3

Yes.

00:32:37 Speaker 1

And it's not entirely sure what you're about or what this is about.

00:32:41 Speaker 2

You've never met a foreigner before, so you think immediately

00:32:46 Speaker 2

Iraqi spy.

00:32:48 Speaker 2

But then coming from America, the translator, my translator, I don't speak Kurdish, my translator was a Kurd from Erbil, a lawyer.

00:32:57 Speaker 2

So he tried to explain as well as he could that this was a genuine thing.

00:33:05 Speaker 2

You know, these were villagers.

00:33:06 Speaker 2

They had very little education.

00:33:09 Speaker 2

They were world-wise in a way.

00:33:10 Speaker 2

He had served in the army.

00:33:12 Speaker 2

But, and he very smart guy, but just didn't know anything about what happens beyond Iraq.

00:33:19 Speaker 2

And that foreigners could come after 2001, after 2008, and just start talking to people.

00:33:27 Speaker 2

that was a novelty.

00:33:28 Speaker 1

Well, and trust was in short supply.

00:33:30 Speaker 1

If you'd lived the lives of these men.

00:33:33 Speaker 2

Well, they trusted no one and they had not told their story to other Kurds in most cases.

00:33:38 Speaker 2

because they were afraid that they wouldn't be believed or, and that or that everybody would come to them saying, what happened to my relative?

00:33:45 Speaker 2

Did you see my relative?

00:33:47 Speaker 2

And so, but a foreigner was a relatively safe person to talk to.

00:33:53 Speaker 1

Relatively safe.

00:33:54 Speaker 2

Relatively safe.

00:33:55 Speaker 2

They didn't know in the end.

00:33:57 Speaker 2

It ended up okay.

00:33:58 Speaker 1

These are real characters, but to give some dramatic structure to the book, you also have some people that you invented.

00:34:08 Speaker 1

Now, we'll start with the comic side, because I'm going to say that the television program that you have invented to reach out to the Kurdish viewers with stories from the Anfalakan.

00:34:24 Speaker 1

Tell us more about where the idea came from to have this kind of reality TV presence in the book.

00:34:30 Speaker 2

So yeah, it's a TV show where, you know, these programs where maybe in situations of armed conflict or

00:34:38 Speaker 2

where you are trying to trace your loved ones who have been caught up in the turmoil.

00:34:45 Speaker 2

You don't know where they are.

00:34:47 Speaker 2

You know, the International Committee of the Red Cross may go looking for them.

00:34:50 Speaker 2

But you can also have a public program where, you know, people can call in and say, yeah, here I am.

00:34:56 Speaker 2

And so, you know, I have no way to communicate with my family, whatever.

00:34:59 Speaker 2

So I thought, well, you could have a program.

00:35:02 Speaker 2

Again, it didn't happen, but a program where the

00:35:06 Speaker 2

the people in the Kurdish cities, but were not affected by on file, could find out about their relatives.

00:35:15 Speaker 2

And there could be the television program would investigate, would give money for people to come onto the program and tell the stories that they had heard that would say something about the people who had disappeared.

00:35:29 Speaker 2

So, but the thing is, I had talked to a lot of people who had talked, who had heard stories about people who had disappeared.

00:35:37 Speaker 2

So the information that I made to go into this TV program is true information.

00:35:43 Speaker 2

Right.

00:35:43 Speaker 2

These are true stories.

00:35:44 Speaker 2

It's all rumors.

00:35:47 Speaker 2

And because the place was awash in rumors, most of them didn't check out, but that's irrelevant.

00:35:56 Speaker 2

But the idea also was that the people in the cities were totally unaware of what had happened in the countryside because Iraq was a closed society, highly autocratic, and so there was no free information.

00:36:11 Speaker 2

So everybody was talking and then embellishing, inadvertently, stories and basically going further and further away from the truth.

00:36:22 Speaker 2

if ever there was a base, a truthful basis to the story in the 1st place.

00:36:26 Speaker 2

So you hear all these stories about underground prisons.

00:36:29 Speaker 2

I never found any evidence that anybody was kept alive.

00:36:33 Speaker 1

Underground.

00:36:34 Speaker 2

In a prison.

00:36:36 Speaker 2

But plenty of people who had seen people in prison.

00:36:39 Speaker 1

But there's the tone of the TV presenter is really annoying.

00:36:43 Speaker 2

It's very obnoxious.

00:36:44 Speaker 1

And there's almost an atrocity **** quality to the way he tells these stories.

00:36:49 Speaker 1

It's exploitative of people's

00:36:51 Speaker 1

terrible experiences for almost infotainment.

00:36:55 Speaker 2

Yeah, exactly.

00:36:56 Speaker 2

Yes.

00:36:56 Speaker 2

That was the idea.

00:36:57 Speaker 1

So are you in a sense also being critical of, let us say, the way the news media addresses or CNNing?

00:37:05 Speaker 2

The whole politicization of the unfound campaign by the Kurdish leadership and by the media along with it, because the media are not independent in most cases.

00:37:13 Speaker 2

Certainly at that time they weren't.

00:37:14 Speaker 2

Now there are some independent media.

00:37:16 Speaker 2

But yeah, it was

00:37:21 Speaker 2

And until this day, on file survivors, when the situation calls for it, the Kurdish parties will bring them, not the ones in the States, but others, will put them on a stage and say, look what happened to these people.

00:37:35 Speaker 2

And they get 5 minutes to tell the story and then they move on and then at the end they're sent away.

00:37:39 Speaker 2

But they never took care of any of the on file account.

00:37:41 Speaker 2

They are sitting in these resettlement camps, basically without significant resources.

00:37:47 Speaker 2

But then whenever foreigners come, it's like, you should look at how these poor people, are doing.

00:37:54 Speaker 1

And the scars they all bear from the traumas they've suffered.

00:37:59 Speaker 1

But speaking of fictional characters in the book again, there's only one character who seems to get any therapy.

00:38:07 Speaker 1

And he's not a good guy, our advisor Rafiq.

00:38:11 Speaker 1

And he also is a kind of composite character.

00:38:14 Speaker 1

So tell us about the collaborators with the regime who played their role in Anfal and where advisor Rafiq comes from.

00:38:23 Speaker 2

Yes.

00:38:25 Speaker 2

So, you know, to have an effective counterinsurgency campaign led by the army, you need people on the other side who can help you.

00:38:35 Speaker 2

So among the Kurds,

00:38:37 Speaker 2

there were tribal elements who had the disadvantage of living in the lowlands, where the army could reach easily, and who could be turned to the regime's advantage.

00:38:48 Speaker 2

And so they formed militias, armed and paid by the regime, and then put a guy at the head who was called an advisor, a consultant, whatever you want to translate it.

00:39:04 Speaker 2

And

00:39:05 Speaker 2

and they would do some of the dirty work or the easy work.

00:39:10 Speaker 2

They would be deployed to guard government buildings or the roads, and they would be the first ones to be shot by the Peshmerka because that was where the interface was.

00:39:22 Speaker 2

And so during the Anfal campaign, they played a very specific role in that the army, in order, they tried to flush people out of the countryside using chemical weapons,

00:39:34 Speaker 2

And people would then come to the road to surrender, but they surrendered to these militias because maybe they had a relative in the militias.

00:39:42 Speaker 2

It was very common, in fact.

00:39:45 Speaker 2

So they didn't necessarily trust them, but it was less bad than the regime, than the army.

00:39:52 Speaker 2

Because the regime, that would have been horrible.

00:39:54 Speaker 2

So they surrendered to these Kurdish militias, and then the Kurdish militias were under orders.

00:40:00 Speaker 2

So they handed them over to the army and then they went to the execution grounds.

00:40:05 Speaker 1

Did you meet any of these Mustashar people?

00:40:07 Speaker 2

Yes, because some of them were amnestied after the uprising.

00:40:11 Speaker 2

And so I met, yeah, some were amnesty maybe because they provided, they played two sides.

00:40:16 Speaker 2

They were also providing intelligence to the Beshmerga during the insurgency.

00:40:22 Speaker 2

Others fled to Baghdad.

00:40:23 Speaker 2

Some were killed and executed.

00:40:26 Speaker 2

But some continued to live and lived

00:40:30 Speaker 2

they were pretty wealthy.

00:40:32 Speaker 2

They were doing very well for themselves.

00:40:33 Speaker 2

How did they get wealthy?

00:40:35 Speaker 2

Business, business connections.

00:40:38 Speaker 1

In Iraq.

00:40:39 Speaker 2

And being head of a militia.

00:40:41 Speaker 2

So that wealth, they didn't give up.

00:40:45 Speaker 2

So, Iraq is a very wealthy country.

00:40:48 Speaker 1

But if we take the counselling sessions that our Mustashar Rafiq attended and refused to pay for, well.

00:40:58 Speaker 2

In order to get rich, you have to be stingy.

00:41:03 Speaker 1

But he was bearing some trauma himself.

00:41:05 Speaker 3

Of course.

00:41:07 Speaker 3

Yes.

00:41:08 Speaker 1

All victims, even those who victimize.

00:41:11 Speaker 3

Yes.

00:41:13 Speaker 1

Okay, so far this is a boy's own story.

00:41:16 Speaker 2

There's another boy, Ali Hassan Majid.

00:41:18 Speaker 2

You don't forget him.

00:41:19 Speaker 1

You know, I'm going to forget him.

00:41:20 Speaker 1

I wanted to say that you did bring women into the story.

00:41:24 Speaker 3

Yes.

00:41:26 Speaker 1

And their experiences were very distinct and no less fearful than those of the brothers, husbands, fathers, sons.

00:41:36 Speaker 1

So one woman stands out in particular.

00:41:38 Speaker 3

Yes.

00:41:39 Speaker 1

And she talks to us through her diary.

00:41:42 Speaker 3

Yes.

00:41:43 Speaker 1

Tell us more about.

00:41:44 Speaker 2

So, you know, the problem was the executions of Iris Royal men.

00:41:50 Speaker 2

So the book had to be about these men.

00:41:54 Speaker 2

And yet, of course, Kurdish society as a whole, or the rural society was traumatized, and that's of course men and women and children.

00:42:01 Speaker 2

So in order to bring in that voice which was associated with the main story, I talked to, I mean, I know all the wives of all those execution survivors, so I decided to tell the story of one of them.

00:42:23 Speaker 1

But is she for real?

00:42:24 Speaker 1

I mean, the Galavish.

00:42:25 Speaker 2

She's for real, Galavish, but the...

00:42:29 Speaker 1

Married to Carwan.

00:42:31 Speaker 2

To Carwan, yes.

00:42:33 Speaker 1

So they're a real couple.

00:42:34 Speaker 2

They're a real couple, yes.

00:42:36 Speaker 1

And her diary narrative, you made it up as a diary entry, but did it reflect things that she had said?

00:42:44 Speaker 2

Yes.

00:42:45 Speaker 1

So you were able to actually interview her as well?

00:42:47 Speaker 2

Oh, yes, she lives in Virginia.

00:42:48 Speaker 2

I see her every year.

00:42:48 Speaker 1

But it's different from interviewing her.

00:42:52 Speaker 2

No, I interview.

00:42:52 Speaker 2

No, I do interview.

00:42:54 Speaker 1

So you did.

00:42:55 Speaker 2

I can go to my friends and I still take my notebook with me.

00:42:57 Speaker 2

I can't help myself.

00:43:00 Speaker 1

Your Kurdish friends don't.

00:43:02 Speaker 2

They laugh about it because they said, there you come with your notebook.

00:43:07 Speaker 1

One of those nervous ticks.

00:43:08 Speaker 1

Yeah.

00:43:09 Speaker 1

But what is the woman's experience of Anfal as opposed to the man's?

00:43:12 Speaker 1

Because you're talking about women and children taken from the areas around Kirkuk.

00:43:16 Speaker 1

They would have been executed in exactly the same way.

00:43:19 Speaker 2

And many were.

00:43:21 Speaker 2

She was lucky.

00:43:22 Speaker 2

She was lucky because her husband sent her ahead of everybody else in order to meet her brother who was living in Kirkuk.

00:43:33 Speaker 2

And because he was living in Kirkuk, he was not targeted by Anfal.

00:43:37 Speaker 2

And they managed to meet halfway, midway.

00:43:40 Speaker 2

And of course it was a large crowd of people, it was not just one case.

00:43:45 Speaker 2

And he managed to smuggle her into the city where they had to go into hiding and they survived.

00:43:51 Speaker 2

But of course, her husband, she left her husband behind, and then he disappeared along with everybody else.

00:43:56 Speaker 2

She didn't know what happened to him.

00:43:58 Speaker 2

And then one day he shows up because he managed to escape.

00:44:03 Speaker 2

And it was a huge surprise, of course, extremely happy, euphoric.

00:44:08 Speaker 2

But in her diary, so she describes her anxieties, her fears of what happened.

00:44:14 Speaker 2

She comes back in another

00:44:17 Speaker 2

I mean, she's still the same person, but living in Virginia and talking about the whole experience of immigrating to the United States and the challenges they faced in getting

settled in a country where you don't speak the language, you have small children, and you're basically alone.

00:44:34 Speaker 2

Because the United States, it's sink or swim.

00:44:36 Speaker 2

It's not like the European welfare system.

00:44:38 Speaker 1

Well, I told you, I haven't told them, but I actually met these amazing patriated

00:44:46 Speaker 1

It would be 97.

00:44:50 Speaker 1

It was around Thanksgiving, 1997.

00:44:52 Speaker 1

And I was accompanying my mother who was working for a church-based charity that distributed food aid and also financial aid for people who were having a hard time making final month rental payments or something.

00:45:05 Speaker 1

And she's like, no, I'd like you to come with me this time because there are all these people from Iraq.

00:45:10 Speaker 1

People from Iraq.

00:45:12 Speaker 1

And

00:45:13 Speaker 1

So I made the rounds with mom to deliver off food parcels to these families that had not had long to settle into these houses in Northern Virginia that just felt underfurnished and that they were so ill-prepared, so not ready to adapt to life in America.

00:45:31 Speaker 1

They didn't speak much Arabic, so they weren't impressed with me.

00:45:35 Speaker 1

But it was an amazing opportunity to talk to these people and find out just

00:45:41 Speaker 1

Why they were there, we didn't talk about Antal.

00:45:44 Speaker 1

They didn't want to talk about Iraq.

00:45:47 Speaker 1

They were very grateful for their kindness.

00:45:49 Speaker 1

They talked about their children being in schools and how they were making progress in English that left their parents behind.

00:45:57 Speaker 1

But they were like these islands of isolated, desolate people who had connections to other families.

00:46:04 Speaker 1

They were in communications with other people who'd been settled in the region.

00:46:08 Speaker 1

But it seemed to me to be something that was very much kept under wrap, that it wasn't widely publicized.

00:46:14 Speaker 2

No, it was, yes, not by the government, yes, yeah, who resettled them, yes, it was not.

00:46:19 Speaker 1

Well, as you come to the end of your book, and then I am going to open the floor up, you do have a reflection on whether in intervening to give these survivors of an opportunity to make life in America, you had done the right thing or not.

00:46:36 Speaker 1

Would it have been better for them to have

00:46:39 Speaker 1

live their lives in their native land with their surviving family and friends and community, or whether the life in America was the better deal.

00:46:52 Speaker 1

And indeed, the book opens and closes with a kind of frightening gunpoint encounter that your survivors have in America.

00:47:00 Speaker 1

So could you just tell us from the perspective of 2016, I think is where the last of our story dates to,

00:47:08 Speaker 1

how you felt that their integration to America and your role in their transformed lives.

00:47:15 Speaker 2

Well, this was so in 1996 when these evacuations of Kurds from northern Iraq was happening with the US military.

00:47:24 Speaker 2

So I had this opportunity to include those people that I had met who would make good witnesses.

00:47:33 Speaker 2

And frankly, we didn't have much time because the evacuation was already

00:47:38 Speaker 2

winding down.

00:47:40 Speaker 2

And so, and I talked to my Kurdish friends, not so in political friends, to see if this would be well received.

00:47:53 Speaker 2

Also, at that time, we didn't have cell phones, we were talking to northern Iraq through satellite phone.

00:48:02 Speaker 2

And

00:48:04 Speaker 2

And I did, I didn't know it was to uproot people, who have grown up in villages who don't know anything about the world and settle them in a country that, is ready to welcome them but doesn't really help you much.

00:48:21 Speaker 2

It was difficult.

00:48:23 Speaker 2

So I talked to my friends and they, including a political leader in northern Iraq,

00:48:32 Speaker 2

who tracked down these people for me, because at that point I wasn't in northern Iraq.

00:48:37 Speaker 2

And he went back and found these survivors after I gave him the names and sort of their locations.

00:48:46 Speaker 2

And he sent them to the border after the agreement was reached.

00:48:50 Speaker 1

That's also a very edgy moment, this Mr.

00:48:52 Speaker 1

Murad.

00:48:52 Speaker 2

Yes.

00:48:53 Speaker 1

When you get the knock on the door and you're told to go and appear in a place.

00:48:56 Speaker 2

Yes.

00:48:58 Speaker 2

and you're going to America.

00:48:59 Speaker 1

I said, what?

00:49:00 Speaker 1

and that doesn't sound right at all.

00:49:02 Speaker 2

That's too weird.

00:49:03 Speaker 2

That's too weird.

00:49:04 Speaker 2

Yeah.

00:49:04 Speaker 2

But they, and some said yes and others said no, but then two years later did say yes.

00:49:11 Speaker 2

So they all went to the United States.

00:49:13 Speaker 2

But, you know, I didn't know if I was doing the right thing at the time.

00:49:16 Speaker 2

Now, in hindsight, I say, well, they're doing extremely well and they're very happy.

00:49:22 Speaker 2

But the thing is also, we could only bring nuclear families.

00:49:27 Speaker 2

in Kurdistan or in the Middle East or in many parts of the world, it's not a nuclear family, it's the extended family that matters.

00:49:34 Speaker 2

And then it was nuclear family, but only up to a certain age, so up to 18.

00:49:39 Speaker 2

So those who had older children, those children could not come.

00:49:42 Speaker 2

So we split families.

00:49:45 Speaker 2

So it was, and people had to decide and they had to at very short notice.

00:49:51 Speaker 2

And so I never felt good about it.

00:49:53 Speaker 2

And again, in hindsight now, people can, they travel back to Kurdistan, the families are reunified.

00:49:58 Speaker 2

So I feel good now, but at the time I didn't, really.

00:50:04 Speaker 1

It is the most touching and compelling book.

00:50:08 Speaker 1

I cannot tell you how much I enjoyed reading *The Resurrected*.

00:50:14 Speaker 1

I remember Anfal through the lens of Halamcha.

00:50:19 Speaker 3

Yes.

00:50:20 Speaker 1

And the gassing of Kurds, which was, I think, when the campaign was really brought to wider international attention.

00:50:27 Speaker 1

But it feels like a genocide that's been eclipsed by the tragedies that regions witnessed in the intervening years.

00:50:34 Speaker 1

And frankly, it's been a long time since 1988.

00:50:37 Speaker 1

That it's not forgotten through your book is a contribution of the first importance.

00:50:42 Speaker 1

And so I thank you for writing it.

00:50:45 Speaker 1

I thank you for sharing it with us.

00:50:47 Speaker 1

And I open the floor to you, dear audience.