

Kurdistan National Congress-KNC

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The KNC Chairman of Foreign Affairs

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The President of the United States of America
Mr Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500, U.S.A.

February 17th 2009

Dear Mr. President,

First of all in the name of Kurdistan National Congress (KNC) I send our congratulations on your election and inauguration as President of the United States of America and our best wishes for you to find strength and energy to solve the problems ahead of you. In particular we hope you will be able to promote the development of democracy in the Middle East to the extent that it also embraces the Kurdish nation's right to self-determination.

The Kurdistan National Congress (KNC), a non-party organisation based in London, was founded in 1985 with the aim of uniting all Kurdish organisations, parties and persons from all over Kurdistan under one single democratic roof so as to effectively uphold the interests and the right to self-determination of the Kurdish people in the eyes of the world.

The Kurdish nation numbers more than 40 million people and has lived in its homeland of Kurdistan for thousands of years. But since World War I Kurdistan has been split up among Turkey (Northern Kurdistan), Iran (Eastern Kurdistan), Iraq (Southern Kurdistan), Syria (Western Kurdistan), and former Soviet Union (Red Kurdistan). In consequence of this long lasting occupation and oppression by chauvinist regimes millions of Kurds were banished from their homeland or killed or became refugees living now in exile throughout the world.

With more than 40 million people the Kurds are the largest nation without a state of their own. For decades they have been trying to ensure that they are granted the basic human and civil rights to which all peoples of the world are entitled. This has been undertaken largely by peaceful and democratic means and at great personal sacrifice. All this in the face of the racist regimes in Turkey, Iran and Syria, and now again recently by Arabic desire for power in Iraq.

In Turkey with more than 20 million Kurdish inhabitants, Kurdish identity and the Kurdish language are proscribed today. Even those who are campaigning for the recognition of the Kurdish language and identity and for the civil rights of the Kurds in Turkey, only by political speeches and written articles, will be on trial for separatism and support of terrorism and punished with high fines and long prison sentences. In addition they mostly have to suffer ill-treatment in custody, often severe torture, and sometimes illegal executions by so-called „security forces“. Nobody who supports the civil rights of the Kurds in Turkey, maybe only by demonstrations in the streets, can be sure of his life. Even schoolchildren are beaten and tortured in custody and detention in Turkey and often badly hurt. Doctors are put under pressure to ignore the injuries of torture and to write false reports or none at all. The victims are even deprived of medical treatment in Turkish hospitals. A few victims are able to file a suit against Turkey at the European Court of Human Rights at Strasbourg, and every year the state of Turkey is sentenced to pay financial compensation to the victims or their families. Since the USA and the European Union still largely tolerate the oppression and persecution of the Kurds because of supposed economic and military interests there is no fundamental change in sight.

Turkey is only technically a democratic country. In reality the military still determines the direction of politics. Therefore since the creation of Turkey in 1923, the ruling slogan has remained unchanged: „One people, one nation, one language“. The resources of the country are used to oppress the Kurdish people and to destroy the homeland of the Kurds. They set fire to our forests, they prevent farmers from driving their livestock to the mountain pastures, they are building huge dams to flood large parts of the Kurdish regions and thereby destroy ancient demographic structures. Kurdish heritage and historic sites of very ancient Kurdish culture are destroyed on purpose, for instance Hasankeyf. Poverty and backwardness are the consequence for the Kurdish people. Moreover the Turkish airforce in cooperation with Iran, has for many years been flying aerial attacks in Kurdistan with internationally banned weapons, namely cluster bombs, pretending to aim at terrorist bases, but in reality to intimidate the autonomous region of Southern Kurdistan, to turn the mountains of the countryside into minefields, to terrorize the population of poor farmers and shepherds in the high mountains and to destroy Kurdistan. Sadly the Turkish air force is supported in this by the most modern reconnaissance technology from the USA and Israel. It is high time for the USA to take a stand against Turkey's inhuman policy and to work for a peaceful solution to this constantly growing conflict.

Likewise unbearable is the situation of more than 12 million Kurds in Iran. During the last years the Islamic Republic killed tens of thousands of Kurds, and other thousands in detention are badly tortured, often to death, for the purpose of oppression. The Kurdish people are deprived of their identity, their language, and their culture, and every voice of opposition is answered by terror and guns. A lot of young intellectuals, teachers, journalists, and human rights activists are in custody, badly tortured, and sentenced to be hanged in public. The children are not allowed to learn in their Kurdish mother tongue at school. Kurdish publications are forbidden, and you are in danger of your life if you work for the civil rights of the Kurds no matter how you do it. Moreover, agents of the regime of Iran are distributing narcotics in the Kurdish region to cause lasting damage to Kurdish society.

The regime of Iran intends to build an empire of Shi'a in the Middle East and to possess nuclear weapons to spread its power all over the region. Likewise it intends by special agents to win power over Iraq. Iran is a special supporter of terror organisations in the region and worldwide. Only by elimination of this murderous dictatorship, dominated by perverse religious ideas, there might begin a long-lasting peaceful development in the region, and only this way the peoples of Iran will have a chance to decide their future for themselves in a free and democratic referendum.

Equally about 3 million Kurds in Syria are suffering a lot from the racist Baath dictatorship which is supporting terror organisations worldwide just like Iran. Many thousands of Kurdish families were deprived of their Syrian citizenship decades ago. Therefore up to this day about 400.000 Kurds in Syria are completely outlawed in spite of the fact that Western Kurdistan has been their homeland for thousands of years and they were all born in that country. Their children are not allowed to go to school and are not entitled to medical care. Already in the sixties hundreds of thousands of Kurdish farmers were expelled from their villages, and their farmland was given to Arab settlers. Kurds who work for human and civil rights are taken into custody, tortured severely, and killed. Often children and young people become victims of persecution, are taken into custody and tortured, too, or shot in the streets during demonstrations. Even Kurdish recruits are tortured and killed during their military service. Thus the Kurds in Syria are deprived of their identity, and don't have any chance to advocate their rights, and they are not allowed to use their mother tongue.

After the Kuwait War in 1991, an autonomous region of Kurdistan evolved in Iraq, and part of the 7 million Kurds living in Iraq enjoyed international protection. When the Americans and their allies had liberated Iraq from Saddam Hussein's dictatorship, both ruling Kurdish parties decided to rebuild the „new“ Iraq together with the Arabs without any respect for the opinion of the Kurdish people. Though actually knowing the opposite they claim that the Kurdish people had decided to stay part of Iraq of their own free will. For a long time now these two ruling Kurdish parties have not represented the interests of Kurdish people. On the contrary their only interest consists in maintaining power which they are securing by their militias.

In 2005 there was held an informal referendum, and 97 % of those entitled to vote decided for the independence of Southern Kurdistan, because since the British created the state of Iraq after World War I the Kurds had experienced only oppression, persecution, mass murder, and even genocide.

Especially Saddam Hussein systematically destroyed all Kurdish villages and agriculture during the so-called „Anfal Operations“. He ordered hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children, to be carried off to concentration camps where they died miserably, or they were shot beside trenches dug by excavators, the women with small children in their arms, just as the Nazis did with the Jews in Germany. Meanwhile hundreds of mass graves have been found which are evidence of these atrocities.

Moreover in 1988 Saddam gave the order to attack many Kurdish places with poison gas which killed thousands of families at once, in the town of Halabja alone more than 5.000 civilians, which wounded far more people gravely, and which caused terrible genetic defects. Countless people in Kurdistan are suffering from these crimes up till today.

Therefore most Kurds in Southern Kurdistan find it intolerable to continue to share a state with those Arabs many of whom were involved in Saddam Hussein's crimes. Already influential

Arab groupings in Iraq try to restrain the very limited Kurdish power and to rebuild a Saddam-like regime. For instance, though Kirkuk at all times was a Kurdish town, the Arab dominated government of Iraq is unwilling to recognize this fact and unwilling to hold the referendum which the new constitution provides for because they are aware of the Kurdish majority in Kirkuk.

Turkey, Iran, Syria, and now again the Arab dominated government in Baghdad are working closely together to annihilate the modest success the Kurds have had in Iraq. Moreover these governments are regularly meeting to coordinate their anti-Kurdish policy to deprive the Kurds of all their rights and of any international recognition.

If the Kurds are not allowed to decide their future themselves and to enjoy human and civil rights in a democratic nation state like other peoples, there won't be any lasting peace in the Middle East.

Since an artificially created state like Iraq cannot be kept together all the time by force, and since a new dictatorship based on oppression of most of the people of Iraq, or even descending into a civil war, would be the worst for the people of Iraq after all the misery they suffered in the past, it's better to split Iraq up in three different nation states, a Kurdish one, and two Arab ones for the Sunna and the Shi'a people, because these three groups are unable to live peacefully together without obtaining nation states of their own. Vicepresident Joe Biden has for long advocated this solution, and even the Senate of the USA voted for this proposal. Besides, the continued policy of keeping the artificial structure of Iraq alive would only strengthen the power of Islamist terrorists and terrorist states like Iran and Syria. And it would create uncontrollable problems for the USA and Europe. That's true especially concerning the proposed full withdrawal of American troops from Iraq. Directly afterwards there is a real and immediate danger of Iraq relapsing into war and terror.

But if America would support the partition of Iraq and the creation of a state of Southern Kurdistan and maintain a lasting military presence there, then finally the Kurds might have a voice in the United Nations to advocate the Kurdish right to self-determination. In this manner there could grow a better chance to create democratic structures in the neighbouring states and to achieve self-determination for the Kurds. All parties involved would be the winners, because the oppression by force of a great number of citizens is swallowing up enormous resources and is hindering economic development. If it might be possible to make the now influential powers understand that only by mutual acknowledgement and peaceful cooperation a longlasting prosperity can be achieved, then lasting peace could be created in the Middle East.

On the other hand, further adherence to the doctrine of the integrity of the existing borders between states would only lead to new wars and new catastrophes for the people living there. In Yugoslavia this realization came very late, but by partition into smaller nation states a peaceful development began. Likewise the disintegration of the Soviet empire will bring long-lasting positive effects to the nations involved. Only when all nations obtain their right of self-determination, as is granted in the Charter of the United Nations, they are able to decide for themselves the nature of new alliances and build peaceful relations with their neighbours.

Not only the Kurds will be the winners if they achieve their right of self-determination and their liberty, but all those states ready to help and cooperate. Therefore we ask you: Please, keep the promise you made to the nations of the world in your inauguration speech, „that America is a friend of each nation and every man, woman, and child who seeks a future of peace and dignity“. This is exactly what we Kurds have sought for decades at great personal sacrifice and risk to our lives.

We ask you and the American people to stand by us and to support us in achieving this future of peace and dignity.

With the very best wishes for the success of your government,
Sincerely,

Bruska Ibrahim
KNC Chairman of Foreign Affairs