



Stateless Kurds Conflict

Human Rights Council

1. Introduction

- History of the Committee

The Human Rights Council is one of ten United Nations Treaty Bodies. This committee is dedicated to monitoring the correct implementation from the states of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. In this committee, states debate human rights concerns and examine reports and rules on individual communications related. It is an inter-governmental body within the United Nations system made up of 47 States responsible for the promotion and protection of all human rights around the globe.

The United Nations Member States, are elected by the General Assembly for three years and hold responsibility for the promotion and protection of all human rights around the globe. Its foundation in 2006 was the result of a reform process in the UN and represented the replacement of the Commission on Human Rights (CHR). Since then, it has been addressing situations of reports of human rights violations and making recommendations on them. UNHRC's duty entails responding to urgent human rights situations by addressing issues regarding accountability and liability for violations of international human rights and humanitarian law as well as serving as a general forum for debate and dialogue on all human rights issues. To strengthen its efforts, the Human Rights Council cooperates with non-governmental organizations and national human rights organizations as well as other civil society actors.

2. History and Description of the Issue:

- Definitions

The following are key terms to better understand the topic and have substantive debates. **Kurds:** Kurds or Kurdish people are an Irenic ethnic group native to a mountainous region of Western Asia known as Kurdistan, which spans southeastern Turkey, northwestern Iran, northern Iraq, and northern Syria. **Stateless nation:** an ethnic group or nation that does not possess its state and is not the majority population in any nation-state. The term "stateless" implies that the group "should have" such a state. **Minoritization:** the verb used in the social sciences to critically describe the processes which create inequity between groups in a given country. It refers to the relationship between the dominant group which identifies with national identity is more supported by the country's political, social, and economic systems, and less powerful communities whose interests are not as well-served by them. **Shia and Sunni Muslims:** Shia and Sunni Islam are the two major denominations of Islam. They chose sides following the death of the Islamic prophet Muhammad in AD 632.

35 million Kurds can be found across 4 different countries, about 12-15 million are in Turkey, 6-9 million in Iran, 5 million in Iraq, and 2 million in Syria. Being minorities in all 4 countries. The Kurds are the world's largest stateless ethnic group in the world. Kurdish people have their language along with different dialects, a great majority are Sunni Muslims, yet other religions like Yazidis, Alevis, and Christianity coexist. Ethnically they are not Arabs or Turks, they descend from mountain peoples.

What unites Kurdish people besides language and religion is their history. In 1150 a Sultan named Sanjar created a province named Kurdistan, overtime the Kurds developed a desire to be a united people. In the 19th the first uprisings are seen seeking autonomy from Constantinople, which sprang up sporadic insurgent movements until World War One, and the defeat of the Ottoman Empire. Which for the Kurds was a cause for celebration. However, in the 1920 Treaty of Sevres that dissolved the Ottoman Empire, the plan for an autonomous Kurdistan fell through. Not only this but later in the Treaty of Lausanne, between Turkey and its allies, an autonomous Kurdistan was no longer mentioned. All four countries and the entire international community including the United States have outright opposed the possibility of independence through a referendum. Yet, the vote has deep symbolic significance for the region's Kurds and could lead to further unrest. The Kurds continued to claim independence, even through suffering and waves of oppression.

- **Kurds in Turkey:**

Almost half of the region's Kurds live in Turkey, where they have endured years of marginalization and oppression to the point where the Kurdish language was banned until the 1990s. In response to uprisings in the 1920s and 1930s, many Kurds were resettled. The Turkish state suppressed a few Kurdish uprisings in the early years of the republic, after the breakdown of the Ottoman Empire. Recently, the Kurdistan Workers Party, or PKK,

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has been pursuing a three-decade uprising. The battling has taken numerous lives since 1984.

Since coming to control in 2002, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's administration has made changes that have improved the minority gathering's privileges and even started harmonious converses with the PKK. However, the delicate harmony measure imploded in 2015, reigniting the bloody clash in Turkey's dominating Kurdish southeast area. Around twelve officials from Turkey's favorable to Kurdish ideological group, who have been accused of being part of the political wing of the PKK, have been imprisoned on terror-related charges. The party denies connections to the PKK, which is viewed as a terrorist group by Turkey and its Western partners.

- **Kurds in Syria:**

Syria's Kurds, who make up 10% of the nation, were just conceded the privilege of citizenship in 2011 when President Bashar Assad looked to prevail upon them at the beginning of the uprising against him. Syria's Kurds have long been suppressed and denied basic rights. Some 300,000 have been denied citizenship since the 1960s. The principal Syrian Kurdish party, known as the PYD, has profited from a peace settlement with Assad since the early months of the war, when the Syrian armed force pulled out from a large part of northeastern Syria to fight revolts in the rest nation, permitting the Kurds to cut out a zone of self-sufficiency.

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The PYD's armed wing, known as the YPG, later extended that territory by engaging the Islamic State group with the help of U.S. airstrikes. They are presently the fundamental component of the U.S.- backed Syrian Democratic Forces, which has driven the jihadist group Islamic State (IS) from northern Syria and is currently combating the radicals in their accepted capital, Raqqa. Turkey sees the YPG as an expansion of the PKK and sent soldiers into Syria a year before to fight the Islamic State group and to stem the Kurds' development. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan cautioned of a similar intervention because of the response to the referendum in Iraq, saying "We could show up abruptly one evening."

- **Kurds in Iran**

Kurds speak to around 10% of Iran's population of 80 million individuals, with many living in the mountainous northwest regions that border Iraq and Turkey. A breakaway Kurdish republic backed by the Soviets quickly arose in the Mahabad region after World War II, and revolts broke out there in the years after Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution. A guerrilla crusade by the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan, or PDKI, proceeded for quite a long while until the gathering announced a unilateral truce in 1996.

The death of a Kurdish house cleaner at a hotel in Mahabad in May 2015 sparked turmoil, as resistance bunches claimed Iranian security played a part in it. Protests also started in Baneh in 2017 when Iranian powers slaughtered two Kurdish men.

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- Kurds in Iraq

In Iraq, the Kurds consistently fought against the government throughout the twentieth century. During the 1980s, they favored Iran against Saddam Hussein's administration in the Iran-Iraq war. As punishment, Saddam dispatched a scorched-earth campaign and chemical attacks that together led to the death of about 50,000 individuals. The U.S. forced a no-fly zone after the 1990 Gulf War that awarded the Kurds true self-rule in northern Iraq and made them an American ally. The Kurds formalized their self-sufficiency after the U.S.- invasion that overturned Saddam, and the Kurdish region arose as an uncommon example of overcoming adversity, saved from the brutality tormenting the rest of the nation.

The Kurdish self-rule zone formally makes up around 10% of Iraq's territory, with a populace of around 3 million, around 8 percent of Iraq's 37 million. Oil allowed a period of prosperity in the Kurdish district, in the middle of a troubled Middle East. However, this didn't last seeing as 4, when oil costs plunged in 2014 and the Islamic State group took over a lot of northern Iraq, coming within miles of the Kurdish provincial capital, Irbil. The U.S., its allies hurried aid to Kurdish powers, known as the Peshmerga, who were, in the long run, ready to push the extremists back with the assistance of alliance airstrikes. They held onto large territories outside their self-governing zone, which escalated a long-running regional debate with the central government. Additionally, the Kurds and Baghdad have been at odds over the sharing of oil incomes.

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- **Autonomy and Independence:**

Seeing as it was almost a century ago when the Ottoman Empire collapsed, the Kurds have been divided into 4 different groups for a while now. This meaning that the independence and autonomy the Kurds seek are focused on specific countries. This also means that each country has had its way to seek independence, whether it be through legit political parties or guerilla tactics and attacks on civilians. Thus creating another problem, disunity within the Kurds. This political, as well as cultural disunity, is seen within and across borders. Tensions between the two dominant Iraqi Kurdish political parties, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), escalated to a civil war that killed more than two thousand Kurds in the mid-1990s. The Kurds' disunity is one of the primary causes for their inability to form a state of their own

- **United Nations and Kurdistan**

As said prior, the international community including the United States and the four countries that the Kurds currently reside in have all been against the referendum that would carve a path towards Kurdistan's independence and autonomy. In 2017, the United Nations Security Council made a unanimous decision to oppose the independence vote. However, the Security Council, along with the Human rights council and other organs of the United Nations have condemned the oppression and human rights violations against Kurds.

Specifically, the United Nations Security Council Resolution 688 was adopted after receiving letters from the representatives of France, Iran, and Turkey

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“expressing its concern over political repression of the Iraqi people, including those in Iraqi Kurdistan, the Council condemned the repression and demanded that Iraq, as a contribution to removing the threat to international peace and security, and the repression and respect the human rights of its population.” This resolution was adopted in 1991, however, since then many governments have called on the international community to condemn the human rights violations inflicted on the Kurds. In 2016, Syria condemned Turkish military action against Kurdish fighters in northern Syria and described it as a violation of its sovereignty, as well as calling on the United Nations Security Council to take action.

Specifically, the Human Rights Council vowed to “work with the Government of Iraq, the government of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, local governments, national human rights institutions, and civil society to promote human rights throughout Iraq in an impartial manner” this done through the Security Council Resolution 2421 of June 2018. This resolution goes in-depth about matters concerning freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, Justice, and accountability, women's rights, and the rights of minorities. Though it is important to note that this resolution is specific to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

Aside from Resolution 688, which prompted the formation of no-fly zones in Iraq in 1991, there have been no other direct resolutions passed concerning Kurdistan. In any case, UN offices and associations have been engaged with the area for quite a while, including UNHRC, UNESCO, UNICEF, the World Food Program, the World Health Organization, and other UN bodies.⁵² These groups help to build up the Kurdistan districts in different nations and expose denials of basic liberties submitted against them.

3. International Response and Bloc Analysis

- The United States and other Western Nations:

The United States at present has two significant objectives in the Middle East: to protect dependability and guarantee access to oil. This craving to keep up security is proven by the USA's relative hesitance to uphold Arab Spring insurgencies. In the past, the US has alluded to support for the Kurds various times, (for example, after the Gulf War in 1991) however no real action has been seen. The US doesn't, as of now, guarantee to help a free Kurdistan, however that may change on the off chance that it thinks about self-governing or autonomous districts for Kurds as a way to guarantee more prominent stability and oil access. Human rights for Kurds and the USA's noteworthy help for the self-assurance of countries and nationalities should likewise be thought of.

Other Western countries share the USA's unease to proceed with soundness in the Middle East, looking to stay away from another flare-up of violence and revolts in the area. A few groups and organizations have been self-assured in promoting Kurdish rights, specifically, the EU has made it a main point of contention for Turkey to resolve negotiations.

Countries with stateless peoples and/or ethnic minorities:

As a result of the precedent, an autonomous Kurdistan would set for other stateless ethnic countries, a few nations (China, Russia, and Pakistan, among others) might be reluctant to help a free or independent Kurdistan. These nations, notwithstanding, wish to

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abstain from being viewed as hindering basic freedoms and may uphold activity taken on Kurdistan as long as it doesn't straightforwardly influence them.

4. Committee Mission

Mission Statement

For the humanitarian disaster in the Middle East to come to a close, Turkey must find reconciliation with its domestic population of Kurds or risk escalation of transnational conflict. Given the volatile nature of the situation, the UN Security Council is simultaneously tasked with ensuring the protection of human rights for Kurds as well as ensuring the Turkish government's commitment to the region. While these two tasks become seemingly more mutually exclusive with each passing day, it is necessary to mend this relationship (at least temporarily) to focus on the issue of Syria.

Questions for further consideration

1. Would the lack of stability of Kurdish areas progressing to self-governance or freedom be more than the current instability?
1. In case of future fighting or military missions, what steps ought the UN take to secure civil and human rights?
2. What role should the worldwide community take in the Kurdish inquiry, to the extent that it concerns worldwide stability?
3. What activities should nations with Kurdish populaces take to guarantee human and political rights are secured? By what means can the UN impact the nations to make these moves?
4. Should the UN adopt various strategies for specific Kurdish regions in each nation? Provided that this is true, what should these methodologies be?

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5. Annotated links for further research

A. Country Links

[UN Member States](#): This link provides a great summary of each country in the United Nations.

[The World Factbook](#): Provides information of all nations of the world.

B. Topic links

[Buried Alive: Stateless Kurds in Syria](#)

[Working Papers Stateless Kurds and their multiple diaspora](#)

[The Stateless Kurds of Syria](#)

[A look at the Kurds, a stateless nation in a restive region](#)

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