



Research Report

Forum: *Organisation of Islamic Cooperation*

Issue: *Finding a solution to the issue of the Kurdish diaspora in relation to the fall of the Islamic State*

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Personal Introduction

Dear CalsMUN delegates,

My name is Matthijs Koch, I am 18 years old and I will be serving as your chair during the conference.

Last year I graduated from Cals College and currently I live in Delft, where I study *Architecture and the Built Environment*.

I started my MUN-career as a delegate at Cals College, and I have been the Deputy Secretary General and Conference Manager at respectively the first and second edition of CalsMUN. I am very excited to be back at CalsMUN and I am looking forward to meeting all of you soon!

The best of luck with your preparations,

Matthijs



Hey, I'm Gialesi Notkamp. I'm a first year student at the Technical University Eindhoven, where I study Electrical Engineering. I like to play the piano, row and hang out with friends. I have attended 10 MUN's –of which one was a University MUN- and I like participating in MUN's very much. Unfortunately due to my busy schedule, I won't be able to participate in many MUN's. Thus I was extra thrilled when the opportunity was given to me to chair at CalsMUN, the MUN of my high school. The past two years I have helped set up the CalsMUN, so I'm very excited to come back as a chair. Hope you're all excited too!





The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation

The Organisation of Islamic cooperation is an organisation similar to the UN. Excluding the UN it is even the largest inter-governmental organisation. The OIC focusses on protecting the interests of the Muslim world. They consist of multiple bodies and 57 member states. The goal of the OIC is to preserve Islamic social and economic values. The OIC also strives for a better connection on the grounds of social, economic and political grounds for its member states. Syria has been suspended due to human rights abuses in the Syrian Civil War.¹

Even though the OIC is not actually a body of the UN but rather an organisation similar to the UN, we will still be debating at a Model United Nations, so we will apply the same rules and procedures that apply in a normal MUN committee in this MUN's OIC.

¹ <https://www.oic-oci.org/home/?lan=en>



Issue: Finding a solution to the issue of the Kurdish diaspora in relation to the fall of the Islamic State

General information

The Kurdish people are an ethnic group, culturally, historically and linguistically classified as an Iranian people (note: this should not be confused with 'ethnically from Iran', but it is based on the Kurdish language belonging to the Iranian language group). It is rather hard to measure the total number of Kurds, but estimates range between 30 and 45 million, which makes the Kurds one of the biggest stateless peoples on the planet.

The Kurds mostly live in an area that is often referred to as Greater Kurdistan, which spans across Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria, and can be seen on the map in image 1. Because this Greater Kurdistan area is mostly based on historical and current occupation by Kurds, there is not a specific border to this region.

However, there is also a rather large diaspora to be seen amongst the Kurdish people. There is a large number of people who are considered Kurdish, who have gone to places beyond Greater Kurdistan. These people include refugees who fled for wars, such as the Iran-Iraq War, the Gulf War and Syrian Civil War. Also, this large-scale migration can be traced back to discrimination and oppression by the governments of the countries where Kurdistan is located, where Kurds are often politically, socially and economically disadvantaged. Many Turkish Kurds also went to Western Europe in the twentieth century as migrant workers. This could, however, also partly be seen as a result of economic suppression in the Turkish-Kurdish region.



1. *Kurdish-inhabited area, known as 'Greater Kurdistan'*



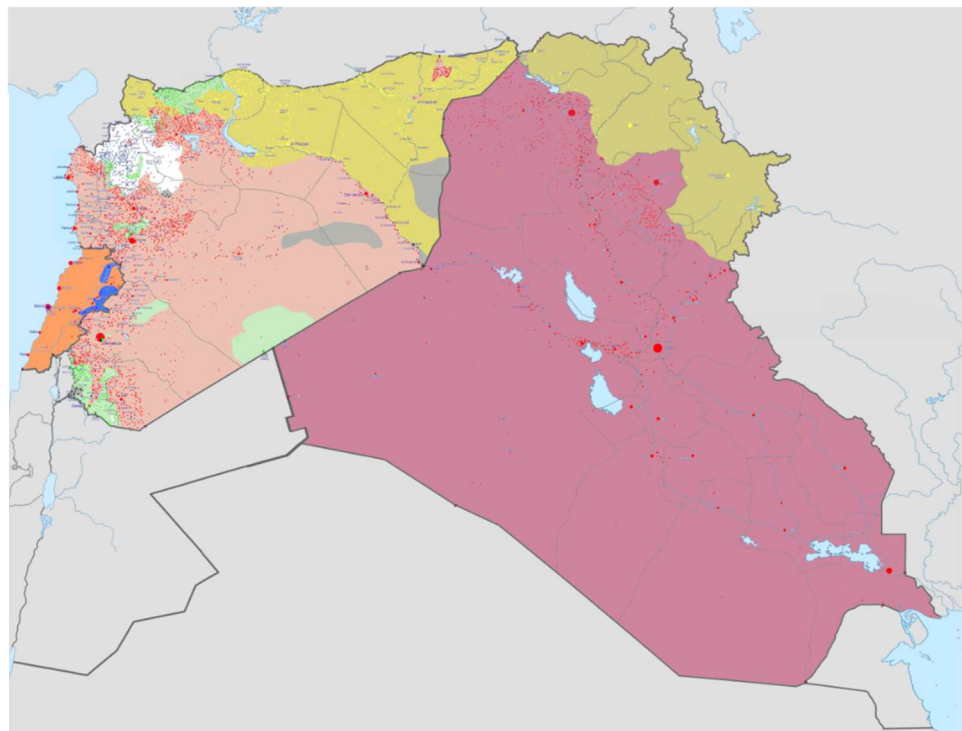
The role of Kurdish forces in the fight against ISIL

The presence of Islamic State in the Middle East has been – and still is, for that matter – a major point of concern in the region and worldwide. However, in the present moment, ISIL is gradually losing territory, having lost control over all its major urban strongholds, and its control mostly restricted to a desert region on the Iraqi-Syrian border.

Although it will take some more time until ISIL will have lost all its territory, it seems that the end of the caliphate is near. There are, however, several problems that could arise if this happens. Islamic State has been a more or less stabilising factor in the region, with the many different parties setting aside their differences to fight against this common enemy. Amongst these parties are several Kurdish forces (backed by the USA), who have had an important role in the fight against ISIL and have taken control over big parts of land in Syria and Iraq in the process. Up till now this has been globally accepted, because of their necessity in the fight against ISIL, but the question remains whether the Kurds are willing to hand over their power in these regions after a complete defeat of ISIL. Therefore, it is very well possible that the Kurdish armed struggle in the region will not end when ISIL is eradicated, unless a diplomatic solution is found.

Despite the long period of armed struggle for Kurdish rights, there was hardly ever real hope for a Kurdish state. Now, however, it is likely that the state of Syria has to be rebuilt from scratch when there will be an end to its civil war. The role of the Kurds in the fight against ISIL certainly gives them a strong position at the negotiation table, and at least has renewed the attention to the Kurdish issue.

2. *The political situation in Syria and Iraq on December 9 2017. The green part in the north of Iraq and the yellow part in the north of Syria are under Kurdish control. The grey parts are still in hands of ISIL*





Previous attempts to solve the issue

Treaty of Sèvres

After World War I, the fallen Ottoman Empire was to be dissolved into several regions/states. Originally, the Kurds were granted a referendum on its fate, with a possible sovereign state. The Treaty of Sèvres was replaced a few years later with the Treaty of Lausanne, in which the Kurdish region was divided amongst different nations and the claims to an independent Kurdistan were dropped by the Allies. Only the latter treaty has been ratified.

Kurdistan Region in Iraq

Since 2005 the Iraqi Kurds officially have an autonomous region as a federal entity of Iraq. This allowed the Kurds to build up their own economy, with its own military. The Kurdistan Region is a place where the Kurds can openly practice their culture.

Possible solutions

An own sovereign state

Solving the issue of the diaspora seems to be synonymous with creating a safe haven for Kurds in their own region. A place where their culture is protected and where their economy can flourish by itself.

This would only be possible when nations give up territory, which is an unlikely scenario. Diplomacy and economic ties with neighbouring countries will be hard, considering the pre-existing discrimination and oppression. It could be an option in Syria, where the complete country has to be rebuilt after the civil war.

Autonomy within states

Autonomy within states grants many of the same possibilities as having a sovereign state, without countries having to give up territory. However, the central governments still lose the majority of power over a large part of the country. It might also not satisfy groups such as the PKK, and thus not completely end the violence in the region.

Turkey's EU candidacy

For a long time, Turkey has wanted to become part of the European Union. In order for this to happen, Turkey must conform to certain criteria, including the rule of law, human rights and protection of minority rights. In order to become a EU-member, Turkey must find a solution to the Turkish-Kurdish conflict. Turkey's EU candidacy puts pressure on this issue.



Major countries involved

Countries

Turkey

Of all countries, Turkey hosts the highest number of Kurds, with estimates ranging between 13 and 20 million Kurds living there, which accounts to roughly 16 to 25 percent of the population. Most of them live in the east and southeast of Turkey, in the Northern Kurdistan area, but especially recently, many Kurds have moved away from this region to big cities in the west. Istanbul has seen such a great influx of Kurds since the Kurdish-Turkish conflict with the PKK started in the 1984, that with approximately two to three million Kurds living there, it is the city with the biggest Kurdish population worldwide.

The Turkish government has often been accused of being racist towards the Kurds. The use of the Kurdish language has been prohibited from 1983 to 1991, and even now people can be fined or arrested for using the Kurdish language. Also, during the conflict between the Turkish government and the PKK, the government has destroyed many villages and forcibly expelled Kurds from their villages.

Iran

The estimates for the Kurdish population living in Iran range between 7 and 12 million. Most of these people live in the West of Iran, in the region that is often referred to as Eastern Kurdistan. Relations between the Kurds and the Iranian government are relatively well, but there are several Kurdish organisations (mainly Sunni Kurds) that are physically and politically fighting for the rights of the Kurdish people. Different parties seem to be divided on whether or not they want a separate state or more autonomy within Iran.

Iraq

The Kurds in Northern Iraq have gathered a relatively great amount of independence. Within the state of Iraq, the Kurds have an autonomous region, Iraqi Kurdistan, officially called the Kurdistan Region. The region is a federal entity of Iraq and is governed by the Kurdistan Regional Government. In the war against ISIL, the Kurdish army, the peshmerga, seized control over some of Iraq's disputed territory, which resulted in a military reaction by the Iraqi government to reclaim the land.

Syria

Northern Syria is home to the region that is often called West Kurdistan. During the civil war in Syria, two Kurdish parties signed a cooperation agreement to bring all Kurdish controlled areas under one *Kurdish Supreme Committee*. This resulted in the declaration of the Democratic Federation of Northern Syria (DFNS), commonly known as Rojava. Rojava functions as a de facto autonomous federation, which consists of three self-governing regions in the north. These regions are not officially recognised as autonomous by the Syrian government, nor by any other state.



Timeline of related events

August 10, 1920 - (TURKEY) - The Treaty of Sèvres outlines the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, with Turkey renouncing rights over certain areas in Asia and North Africa. It calls for the recognition of new independent states, including an autonomous Kurdistan. It is never ratified.

July 24, 1923 - (TURKEY) - The Allies and the former Ottoman Empire sign and ratify the Treaty of Lausanne, which recognizes Turkey as an independent nation. In the final treaty marking the conclusion of World War I, the Allies drop demands for an autonomous Turkish Kurdistan. The Kurdish region is eventually divided among several countries.

January 1946 - (IRAN) - The Kurdish Republic of Mahābād is established as a Kurdish state, with backing from the Soviet Union. The short-lived country encompasses the city of Mahābād in Iran, which is largely Kurdish and near the Iraq border. However, Soviets withdraw the same year and the Republic of Mahābād collapses.

1958 - (SYRIA) - The government formally bans all Kurdish-language publications.

1958 - (IRAQ) - After Iraq's 1958 revolution, a new constitution is established, which declares Arabs and Kurds as "partners in this homeland."

March 1970 - (IRAQ) - A peace agreement between Iraqi government and Kurds grants the Kurds autonomy. Kurdish is recognized as an official language, and an amendment to the constitution states: "the Iraqi people is made up of two nationalities: the Arab nationality and the Kurdish nationality."

June 1975 - (IRAQ) - Former KDP Leader Jalal Talabani, establishes the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). The following year, PUK takes up an armed campaign against the Iraqi government.

1978 - (TURKEY) - Abdullah Öcalan forms the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), a Kurdish separatist group.

Late 1970s - (IRAQ) - The Baath Party, under Saddam Hussein's leadership, uproots Kurds from areas with Kurdish majorities, and settles southern-Iraqi Arabs into those regions. Into the 1980s, Kurds are forcibly removed from the Iranian border as Kurds are suspected of aiding Iranian forces during the Iran-Iraq War.

1980 - (IRAQ) - The Iran-Iraq War begins. Although the KDP forces work closely with Iran, the PUK does not.

1983 - (IRAQ) - PUK agrees to a cease-fire with Iraq and begins negotiations on Kurdish autonomy.

August 1984 - (TURKEY) - PKK launches violent separatist campaign in Turkey, starting with killing two soldiers. The conflict eventually spreads to Iran, Iraq and Syria.



February-August 1988 - (IRAQ) - During Operation Anfal ("spoils" in Arabic), created to quell Kurdish resistance, the Iraqi military uses large quantities of chemical weapons on Kurdish civilians. Iraqi forces destroy more than 4,000 villages in Kurdistan. It is believed that some 100,000 Kurds were killed.

1990-1991 - (IRAQ) - The Gulf War begins when Saddam Hussein invades Kuwait seeking its oil reserves. There is a mass exodus of Kurds out of Iraq as more than a million flee into Turkey and Iran.

March 1991 - (IRAQ) - Kurdish uprising begins, and in two weeks, the Kurdish militia gains control of Iraqi Kurdistan, including the oil-rich town of Kirkuk. After allied support to the Kurds is denied, Iraq crushes the uprising. Two million Kurds flee, but are forced to hide out in the mountains as Turkey closes its border.

April 1991 - (IRAQ) - A safe haven is established in Iraqi Kurdistan by the United States, the United Kingdom and France. Iraqi forces are barred from operating within the region, and Kurds begin autonomous rule, with KDP leading the north and PUK leading the south.

1996 - (IRAQ) - Iraq launches attacks against Kurdish cities, including Erbil and Kirkuk..

April 6-7, 2005 - (IRAQ) - Kurdish leader Jalal Talabani is selected the country's president by the transitional national assembly, and is sworn in the next day.

2005 - (IRAQ) - The 2005 Iraqi constitution upholds Kurdish autonomy, and designates Kurdistan as an autonomous federal region.

December 2007 - (TURKEY) - Turkey launches attacks in Iraqi Kurdistan, targeting PKK outposts.

2009 - (TURKEY) - A policy called the Kurdish Initiative increases Kurdish language rights and reduces military presence in the mostly Kurdish southeast.

April 2011 - (SYRIA) - Syria grants citizenship to thousands in the Kurdish region. According to Human Rights Watch, an exceptional census stripped 20% of Kurdish Syrians of their citizenship in 1962.

July 2012 - (SYRIA) - In the midst of the country's civil war, Syrian security forces retreat from several Kurdish towns in the north-eastern part of the country.

December 2012 - (TURKEY) - Erdogan announces the government has begun peace talks with the PKK.

March 25, 2013 - (TURKEY) - Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan and Iraqi Kurdistan Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani negotiate a framework deal that includes an outline for a direct pipeline export of oil and gas. The pipeline would have the Kurdish crude oil transported from the Kurdish Regional Government directly into Turkey, allowing the KRG to be a competitive supplier of oil to Turkey.



June 2014 - (IRAQ) - Refugees flee fighting and flood into Iraqi Kurdistan to the north as ISIS militants take over Mosul. Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) closes then reopens, with restrictions, border crossings used by those fleeing ISIS.

August 11, 2014 - (IRAQ) Kurdish fighters in Kurdistan, who are called Peshmerga, work with Iraqi armed forces to deliver aid to Yazidis stranded on Mount Sinjar after fleeing ISIS fighters.

December 2, 2014 - (IRAQ) The government of Iraq and the government of Iraqi Kurdistan sign an agreement to share oil revenues and military resources. Iraq will now pay the salaries of Peshmerga fighters battling ISIS and act as an intermediary to deliver U.S. weapons to Kurdish forces. The Kurdistan government will deliver more than half a million barrels of oil daily to the Iraqi government. Profits from the sale of the oil will be split between the two governments.

March 21, 2015 - (TURKEY) In a letter read to thousands during a celebration in the city of Diyarbakir, imprisoned PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan urges fighters under his command to lay down their arms, stop waging war against the Turkish state and join a "congress."

June 7, 2015 - (TURKEY) Three-year-old fledgling party Kurdish People's Democratic Party (HDP) receives more than 13% of the vote, winning 80 seats in the 550-seat parliament.

March 17, 2016 - (SYRIA) Kurds declare that a swath of north-eastern Syria is now a separate autonomous region under Kurdish control. The claim stirs up controversy, as Syrian and Turkish officials say it goes against the goal of creating a unified country after years of civil war.

July 20, 2016 - (TURKEY) Following a failed coup attempt, President Erdogan declares a state of emergency. In the first three months, pro-Kurdish media outlets are shut down, and tens of thousands of civil servants with alleged PKK connections are dismissed or suspended. The purge includes ministers of parliament, military leaders, police, teachers, and mayors, including in the Kurdish-majority city of Diyarbakir.

September 25, 2017 - (IRAQ) Iraqi Kurds vote in favour of declaring independence from Iraq. More than 92% of the roughly 3 million people voted "yes" to independence.

October 15, 2017 - (IRAQ) Iraqi military seizes disputed, oil-rich city of Kirkuk from Kurdish control

This timeline is extracted from CNN. The most important information for this issue is taken into this research report. For a more elaborate timeline, please visit their [website](#).



Key terms

Diaspora

The spreading of people from a national group or culture to other areas: *the African diaspora*.
(*Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*)

Autonomy

1 Freedom that a place or an organization has to govern or control itself: *campaigners who want greater autonomy for Corsica*. Synonym: independence
(*Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*)

Sovereignty

1 complete freedom and power to govern: *the sovereignty of Parliament* | [+over] *Spain's claim of sovereignty over the territory*

2 the power that an independent country has to govern itself: *the defence of our national sovereignty*

(*Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*)



Sources

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https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kurds_in_Syria#Kurdish_rebellion

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic_State_of_Iraq_and_the_Levant

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kurds_in_Turkey

Images:

https://legacy.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east.html

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kurdistan#/media/File:Syrian,_Iraqi,_and_Lebanese_insurgencies.png

Useful videos:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9FXE6kkUQTW>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IZB9HqoHaaU>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rSDkAR3Li_k