

The Syrian Kurds: A Key Element in the Syrian Conflict
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The silence and the inaction of the international community, especially the United States and the European Union, about the massacre and kidnapping of hundreds of Kurdish civilians by the al Qaeda-affiliated terrorist organizations, al-Nusra Front (ANF) and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), in northern Syria (Syrian Kurdistan) is a contradiction to the global war on terror and is a deterrence to the spread of democracy and the stability of the Middle East.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights has reported that the ANF and the ISIL terror groups have been laying siege on the Kurdish towns and villages; killing, kidnapping, and torturing hundreds of innocent Kurdish civilians, including women and children. Moreover, it has been reported that the al-Qaeda affiliated clerics have issued fatwas (religious edict), to permit the murder, rape, looting, and torture of the Kurdish civilians.

Undeniably, murder, rape, and torture of civilians are heinous crimes against humanity. On the moral grounds, the international community is obliged to condemn terrorist acts and take actions to protect the victims regardless of their political or economical interests. Yet, the US and the EU, and the major international news media, such as CNN and BBC, have been relatively passive and silent about the atrocities committed against the Kurdish civilians.

According to the U.S. and European intelligence sources, Syria has become the hotbed for the al Qaeda and its affiliates, the ANF and the ISIL. Nonetheless, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar have been arming and providing logistical support to the Free Syrian Army (FSA), which has been hijacked by the aforementioned terrorist groups.

Several U.S. news organizations have reported that Washington intends to supply arms and ammunitions to the FSA. However, the U.S. should reexamine its plans, as the weapons will likely end-up in the hands of the terrorist groups and may potentially be used to carry out attacks in the U.S. and Europe in the future.

Further, as the FSA is primarily composed of and controlled by the Islamist terror groups, the U.S. support would be a contradiction to the global war on terror that has cost the American people thousands of martyrs and billions of their tax dollars.

On another note, the wars that followed 911 and the protests that quickly spread across the Arab countries in North Africa and the Middle East that has become know as the Arab Spring have profoundly changed the geopolitical landscape of the Middle East. On the one hand, it led to the rise of the Salafist terror groups, which has significantly reduced the U.S. influence in the region.

On the other hand, the seismic political change has helped the Kurds, the largest ethnicity in the world without a state, approximately 40 million, become a significant power in the region; this new reality has enabled them to play an influential role in shaping the future of the Middle East.

Ever since the Syrian uprising against the Assad regime in April of 2011, the Syrian Kurds, which are Syria's largest ethnic minority and have long been discriminated against by the regime, have been disregarded by the Syrian opposition and its supporters. Their demands for the recognition of cultural, political, and linguistic rights in the post Assad Syria has been denied. As a result, it has forced the Kurds to boycott the Syrian opposition and protect their own areas independently.

There are numerous reasons for the international community to support the legitimate demands of the Syrian Kurds. Amongst them, the latter's demands are in the framework of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Moreover, they have proven to be one of the most secular, democratic, and peaceful components of the Middle East; the success of the democratic experiment in Iraqi Kurdistan highlights this point.

Without a doubt, the efforts for removing Assad from power ought to continue. However, the U.S. and its allies must reassess their approach of handling the Syrian conflict. Al Qaeda and its affiliates are a major threat to the prospect of a democratic Syria and to the stability of the Middle East. Hence, they must pressure Turkey, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia to end their support for the religious extremists. Instead, the secular and democratic-leaning elements of the Syrian opposition, including the Kurds, should be supported and the rights of the ethnic and religious minorities must be guaranteed in the post Assad era, as it is the key for the stability of the entire region.

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