

Research Report

Issue: The question of the Kurds
Forum: GA4
Assembled by: Kim van Vliet and Wessel Mulder



Table of contents:

- Introduction to the question
- History
- Current conflicts
- Countries involved
- Questions to answer in resolutions
- Bibliography

Introduction to the question

Definitions

IS

IS is a terrorist group which seeks to eradicate obstacles to restoring God's rule on Earth and to defend the Muslim community, or umma, against infidels and apostates.¹

Kurdistan

The Kurds strive to rule their own country; of which they refer to as Kurdistan.

Kurds

A member of a pastoral and agricultural people who inhabit a plateau region in adjoining parts of Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Armenia, and Azerbaijan.

PKK

Partiye Karkeran Kurdistan (Kurdistan Workers Party) is a separatist group which has been set up in 1984 by students. Their goal is to gain an independent state for the Kurds, and in order to reach this goal they are willing to use violence.

Rojava

An area in the northern of Syria which is called Rojava by the Kurds. Kurds generally consider Rojava to be one of the four parts of a greater Kurdistan, which also includes parts of southeastern Turkey (Northern Kurdistan), northern Iraq (Southern Kurdistan), and western Iran (Eastern Kurdistan).²

YPG/ YPJ

The Kurdish People's Protection Units (and the YPJ; the women's sector) are fighting against IS in Iraq and Syria. Since they do not have the resources to afford a lot of weaponry, many of them are killed in these battles.

History

The Kurds have been living in the Middle East ever since Mesopotamia existed. They have

¹ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29052144>

² http://inomuun.weebly.com/uploads/3/1/6/5/31658519/rr_hrc_final.pdf

survived and lived in the highlands, which explains their common known saying: *“The Kurds do not have friends but the mountains”*. This ethnic group has always been a minor group in the Middle East and did not succeed in having their own country. In the Treaty of Sevres, after World War I, the western countries promised to set up a national state for the Kurds; Kurdistan. Three years later, when the Treaty of Lausanne was made, this dream vanished. The current borders of Turkey were set, and they did not leave any terrain for the Kurds. Since then, the Kurds have been fighting for their independence. During their rebellions they are being held by governments with a lot of violence.

Starting in 1918, the end of World War I and the fall of the Ottoman Empire, a series of conflicts and rebellions took place between the Kurds and Iraq. This long thread of clashes ended in 2003 when the United States invaded Iraq.

One of the problems that the Kurds have faced and are still facing today are humanitarian issues. Citizens of other countries have oppressed them, and even denied the Kurds access to international humanitarian organizations. Luckily, these repressive actions were condemned by the United Nations Security Council when it passed resolution 688. This document was also the first international document to mention the Kurds by name, since an arbitration signed by the League of Nations in 1926.

The Kurds in Syria have been suppressed long and denied basic rights as well. This includes citizenship, and the confiscation of land which is then redistributed to Arabs in order to decrease the size of the Kurdish regions and increase the size of the Arab regions.

The Kurds in the area they live in Iraq and in the northern of Syria (referred to as Rojava), but in the minority in Turkey and Iran. The Kurdish region of Iraq is ruled by the Kurds, but is not officially known as their area; it belongs to Iraq. Their capital in this area is called Erbil.

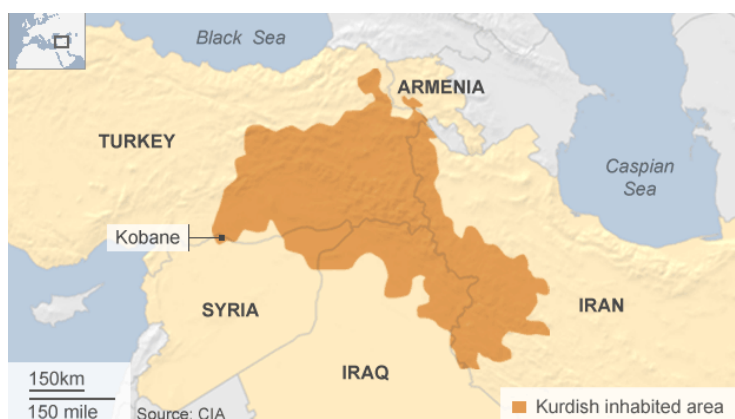


Figure 1 Kurdish inhabited area in the Middle East

Current conflicts

When talking about the question of the Kurds, we have to take a look at several conflicts they have been involved in.

A party of the Kurds, the Partiye Karkeran Kurdistan (PKK), is a separatist group which

strives for the political human rights in Turkey. Kurds are often being persecuted in Turkey and have used violence in order to reach their goals. The Turkish government has cleared a number of Kurdish villages in the mountains. As a consequence, hundred thousands of Kurds are on the run.

The Kurds are currently fighting against IS in Syria, where they have taken over some areas. Due to financial matters, they are not always equipped well enough to combat the terrorists of the Islamic State. The Kurds active in these battles fight under the banner of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), and the United States-led coalition considers them one of the few effective partners on the ground in these conflict zones.

Countries involved

Europe

Around 12.000 Kurds are living in Europe, which have fled from the threats they were facing in the Middle East. A large part of the Kurds resides in Germany and France.

Iran

Ten percent of Iran's population is Kurdish. They are being discriminated heavily, because they are Sunni Muslims and most of the Iranians are Shia.

Iraq

In the period between 1986-1989, the Kurds have suffered from one of the worst genocides in world history in Iraq. In 1991, they were able to set up their own capital (Erbil) in Iraq, in a small part of Iraq which they call Kurdistan. Erbil is said to be more developed than Baghdad.

Syria

The Kurds in Syria suffer from shortages of food, medicines and other basic needs. They are being threatened by several enemies but do not get any support from the government or any others.

Turkey

Even though one fifth of the Turkish population is Kurdish, the government strongly opposes this ethnic group. In 1984, a guerrilla war was started by the PKK against the Turkish government. In 2004, when the conflict was almost over, they started fighting again. Seven years later they stopped fighting and announced a ceasefire, however since then there have always been some sort of tension between the Kurds and the Turkish government. As Mr. Erdogan has said: *'we will never allow the establishment of a new state on our southern frontier in the north of Syria'*. Turkey is kind of controverting itself, since they are on the same point of view with the Kurds about IS, but put more effort in combatting the Kurds than in forming an alliance with the Kurds to combat IS together.

United States of America

The United States of America have given support via ammunition and arms, however they do not want to undermine the governments of countries such as Iraq, Syria, Iran and Turkey. They have assisted the Kurds in the battle against IS on a technological basis as well.

Questions to answer in resolutions

- How can we stop the persecution of the Kurds?
- Can we give the Kurds their own independent state, and if so, which areas do we provide them with?

Bibliography

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29702440>

http://inmun.weebly.com/uploads/3/1/6/5/31658519/rr_hrc_final.pdf