

<b>Committee/Council:</b>	<b>Security Council</b>
<b>Issue:</b>	<b>The question of an autonomous Kurdistan</b>
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## Introduction

When it comes to the Middle East, in the past decades, news and media have been largely focusing their attention on the Israeli-Palestinian relations and the ongoing conflict concerning the aforementioned parties. However, there is a different conflict that needs to be closely examined since its solution is essential to the establishment of long-lasting stability as well as the discontinuation of brutality in the Middle Eastern region: The question of an autonomous Kurdistan.

Located in the mountainous area of Southeast Asia, Kurdistan has long been the homeland of the Kurds, a 30 to 38 million strong people occupying 300,000 square kilometers and being the largest ethnic group, worldwide, without a state of their own. Since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Kurds have fought for an autonomous nation but have had to face a brutal backlash from the concerned nations, especially Turkey and Iraq. The Kurdish people have suffered from various forms of repression, including military campaigns, genocide, discrimination, deprivation of their cultural identity and lastly being denied the right to speak their own language and practice their tradition.

As a reaction and opposition to the racial suppression that the Kurds have had to face within the aforementioned nations, many resistance movements rose to the surface, the most rebellious and brutal one being the left-wing Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) led by Abdullah Öcalan, which has been waging a violent battle against Turkish government installations and institutions as well as the military, since 1984, with the main goal of achieving regional autonomy.

Despite the fact that the situation has been getting closer to reaching equilibrium in recent years, partly due to the Kurdish attaining de facto independence in Northern Iraq, measures still have to be taken so as to ensure political stability in the entire Kurdish-populated regions of the Middle East.

## Definition of Key-Terms

### Guerilla warfare

Guerrilla warfare is a type of irregular warfare fought by mobile usually independent groups of combatants (e.g. paramilitary forces, armed civilians) leading small-scale actions against a larger, traditional military entity.

### Autonomy

In the context of the question of an autonomous Kurdistan, the term “autonomy” refers to the right of a territory to govern itself, while still being under the power influence of an overseeing authority.

### Independence

The term independence in the context of the question of an autonomous Kurdistan signifies a country’s right to political freedom as well as its right to exercise self-governance over its territory, without outside control.

### Racial Oppression

A specific race faces racial oppression when its human rights are violated, and when it is confronted with unjust or cruel behavior and restrictions.

## Background Information

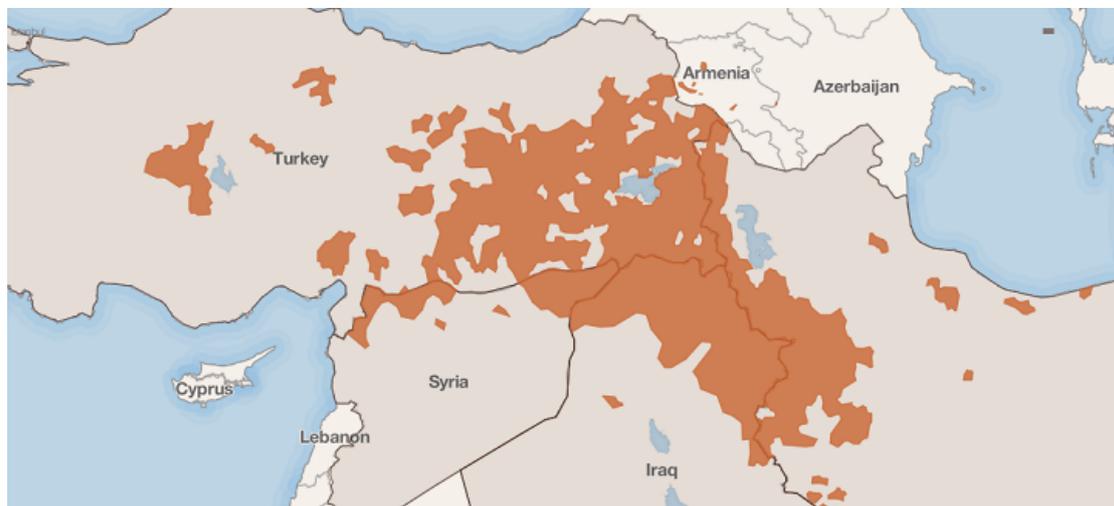
### The History of the Kurdish People

The Kurdish people are an ethnic group, historically inhabiting a mountainous area of southwest Asia (known as Kurdistan), which spreads across southeastern Turkey, northern Iraq, northeastern Syria, western Iran and southwestern Armenia, for millennia. The Kurdish community shares its own languages (Kusmanj or Sorani), race and culture, and the majority of the Kurds adhere to the religious grouping of Sunni Islam.

The Kurds’ roots trace back to the Middle Iranian era, where their origins can be found in the Iranian Section of the broad family of Indo-European peoples. More specific details on their exact origins have so far not been confirmed, however, there are records of mountain tribes with names resembling “Kurd”, in the sixth and seventh century BCE, which could possibly be linked to modern Kurds. In early history they led a nomadic life, wandering across the Mesopotamian plains and highlands of Turkey and Iran, living as sheep- and goat-herders. Despite not having a permanent state, the strength of the Kurdish cultural identity is undeniable, and the

ethnic group has played a major role in historical events of the Middle East, since the Crusades, where it established its reputation as a group of fierce and brave fighters, up until today, in the battle against the self-proclaimed Islamic State.

The Kurds' aspiration for autonomy was initialized in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, by various factors, which include the introduction of the theory of private property by the British and mainly the increasingly rigid establishment of borders by the states neighboring the areas of Kurdish settlement. After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in WWI, the Treaty of Sèvres (1920) presented great prospects for an autonomous Kurdistan. However, the treaty was ultimately rejected and replaced by the Treaty of Lausanne, which divided the region inhabited by Kurds amongst Turkey, Iraq, and Syria. Consequently, the Kurdish people were left with minority status in the Middle-Eastern areas in question and have ever since been facing various forms of government oppression. In Turkey in the early-mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, for instance, the Kurds did not have the right to wear traditional, Kurdish clothes in the major cities, they were not allowed to speak the Kurdish language, and they were labeled as "Mountain Turks". After Kurdish support of Iran in the 1980-1988 Persian Gulf War, the Kurds were confronted by similar behavior on behalf of Iraq, in forms of chemical weapon attacks, which lead approximately 2 million Kurds ,living in Iraq, to flee to Iran. As a reaction to the aforementioned events, the United Nations have created a safe haven for the Kurds, by establishing no-fly zones over the majority of the regions of Kurdish settlement in northern Iraq.



*(Kurdish inhabited areas)*

### The Kurdish People in Iran

Iranian Kurdistan is the unofficial name given to the area in northwestern Iran, which is one of the four parts of the "Greater Kurdistan" (which also includes parts of Turkey, Syria, and Iraq). The number of Kurds inhabiting the area is estimated at about 5 to 10 million (therefore comprising over 10% of the country's population) majority of which are Sunni Muslims.

In the early 20th century the Iranian Kurds strived for independence but were unable to achieve their goal after WWI. After the Second World War, however, they had managed to establish a nation of their own, in the city of Mahabad, with aid from the Soviet Union. Despite their initial successes, the newly independent state soon collapsed, with the withdrawal of the Soviets.

At the time of the Pahlavi dynasty in Iran, the Iranian Kurds faced brutal oppression and therefore actively fought for a change of regime in the 1979 Iranian Revolution. However, the revolution did not turn out in their favor, since the new Supreme Leader "Ayatollah Khomeini" saw ethnic diversity as a threat to the new republic and therefore denied the Kurds the political autonomy they had called for. The new regime crushed Kurdish rebellions and uprisings in a brutal manner, and by 1983 about 10,000 people had been killed over the course of the rebellion.

Since the 1979 Kurdish Rebellion the relationship between Kurds and Iranians has not improved, since they are still faced with racial discrimination by the Iranian government, in forms of a lack of education, language and religious rights (majority of Iranians are Sunni Muslims) as well as by unjustly held trials (According to the UN Rapporteur for Iran, in 2016 alone, nearly 1,000 people were executed in Iran, the Kurdish community being largely affected). As of 2004 the Kurdish political and militant organization "Party of Free Life of Kurdistan" (PJAK), which is considered a terrorist organization by Iran, Turkey, and the United States, initiated armed actions to achieve the creation of an autonomous Kurdistan, within the federal state of Iran.

### The Kurdish People in Iraq

Iraqi Kurdistan is located in northern Iraq and constitutes the only autonomous region of the Kurds. The Kurdish people are the largest minority group in Iraq, with a population of 10 to 15 million (making up 15% of the Iraqi population).

After WWI Western Asia was divided amongst the French and the British (in the Sykes-Picot Agreement) in which the newly established Iraq fell under British rule. In the Treaty of Sevres (1920) the Kurdish people was promised independence, which it did not eventually achieve due to the fact that the Treaty of Sevres was superseded by the Treaty of Lausanne (1923). Several Kurdish uprisings took place in the early 1920s asking for Kurdish independence, however, they were all suppressed by the British air and ground forces, which feared that by granting Iraqi Kurds the right to self-governance other Arab areas would soon follow, and thus endanger the British power over all Mesopotamia. Even during WWII the Kurdish people exploited the current power vacuum and continued to fight for an autonomous state, against the Iraqis. With the help of the British, however, the Iraqi government succeeded in suppressing Kurdish rebellions and in gaining back power over the whole of Iraq, while forcing the group's most influential leader Mustafa Barzani into exile.

Following the military coup of Abdul Karim Qasim (1958), Mustafa Barzani who had meanwhile become leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP which sought autonomous rule of Kurdistan) had been invited to return from exile, with an arranged deal of receiving regional autonomy for the Kurds in return for his support of Qasim's policies. The fact that Qasim did not follow through with his part of the deal (regional autonomy for the Kurds) sparked a harsh battle between the Iraqi government and the KDP, which went on for decades, even after several regime changes. In March 1970, both sides finally established a peace agreement, promising broader autonomy and more rights for the Kurdish people. Since the agreement was, however, violated by the Iraqis, another rebellion was unleashed in 1974, which was initially supported by Iran and the U.S. but which finally ended in the setback of Kurdish forces (after Iran cut supplies to the Kurds), 100,000 deaths and 200,000 deportations of Kurds to other areas of the nation.

From the mid-1970s onward the Iraqi government under Saddam Hussein started implementing forced displacement as well as "cultural Arabization" with the goal of achieving internal colonization (= in this case Arab domination in the areas of northern Iraq). By the late 1970s around 600 Kurdish inhabited villages had been burnt down and around 200,000 Kurds had been displaced. During the Iran-Iraq War, the Iraqi government took even more brutal and cruel measures against the Kurdish people, including chemical weapons attacks and systematic genocide which all resulted in the destruction of estimated 2,000 villages, and slaughter of approximately 5,000 rural Kurds. One of the most infamous human rights violations is the Halabja attack, also referred to as the Halabja Massacre, which took place on March 16, 1988, as part of the Al-Anfal Campaign where 7,000 people, mainly civilians, lost their lives in one single attack.

After the unsuccessful uprising against Saddam Hussein at the end of the Persian Gulf War, United Nations Security Council resolution 688 was passed, which safeguarded Kurdish refugees from the Hussein regime through no-fly zones over the now independently functioning Iraqi Kurdistan. Certain Kurdish populated areas were, however, left out, as for instance, Sulaymaniyah and Kirkur, which are still disputed. Civil war broke out in Iraqi Kurdistan in 1994 between the KDP and the PUK, which lasted until 1998 (thanks to a peace agreement sponsored by the U.S.), however even after the restoration of peace the area remained split between two separate administrations.

In 2003, during the Iraq War, the role of the Kurds more specifically their military forces "Peshmerga" was also essential to the overthrowing of the Hussein Regime. In 2005 the establishment of a new constitution took place, which recognized the federal structure of Iraq, which consists of various regions and governorates, one of them being the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG).

About 5 years later, a new conflict arose between Iraqi Kurdistan and Iraq, over oil revenues, foreign relations, and mostly territorial questions. The territorial disputes concerned the areas which were historically considered Kurdish, due to a population consisting of non-Arab minorities (mostly Kurds), but were “raised” by the Assad Regime, according to article 140 of Iraq’s Constitution. On November 19, 2012, a military clash found a place between the Iraqi government and the KRG after central Iraqi security forces attempted to enter a disputed area in northern Iraq.

In 2014 the territorial conflict went on when Iraq seized the disputed city of Kirkur in the beginning of the year. In July the military forces of the KRG seized power over the region’s oilfields and were subsequently faced with threats and condemnation on the side of the Iraqi government. In June 2014, Massoud Barzani (president of Kurdistan since 2005) announced his plan of holding an independence referendum, which was however postponed to the end of 2016, due to the rapid threat that ISIL posed from the southwest.



### The Kurdish people in Turkey

Approximately half of the Kurds reside in Turkey, where they compose between 15% and 30% of the population and are therefore the largest ethnic minority group in the country. The main regions they inhabit can be found in eastern and southeastern Turkey, and are the areas, which are bordering northeastern Syria, northern Iraq, northwestern Iran as well as western Armenia.

After WWI, similar to the situation in Iraq, the Kurdish populated areas in the newly created state of Turkey were not given the right to self-rule. Even after the Turkish

war for independence, in which the Kurds were of immense help to the Turks, they did not receive the right to independence, which they had been previously promised by the Turkish nationalist leader Mustafa Kemal who spoke of “a state of Turks AND Kurds”. Shortly after the Turkish republic was declared, Ankara took a more offensive stance against non-Turkish minorities, attempting to eliminate (physically and culturally) any Kurdish and Armenian elements within the Republic. Initially Kurdish schools, organizations and publications were forbidden as well as any sort of acknowledgment of Kurdish existence. In the late 1930s however, the first major brutality took place against the Kurds, the Dersim Massacre, in which estimated 10,000 to 15,000 people lost their lives and thousands were forced into exile, in an attempt by the Turkish government to “turkify” the population through the massive resettlement of ethnic minorities.

Until the late 1990s, the Kurdish people living in Turkey continued to be persecuted, discriminated against and marginalized by the local government. For most of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, they were referred to as “mountain Turks”, they were not allowed to speak their own language in public and until 2009 Kurdish broadcasting stations and Kurdish TV channels were banned. Thousands of Kurdish authors, peaceful protesters and owners of shops with Kurdish names were imprisoned, tortured to death or were faced with the death penalty. Since the 1970s, with the formation of the PKK, the Turkish government has been confronted with major backlash from Kurdish communities in forms of guerilla attacks on the Turkish military and police stations. A ceasefire was reached in 2013, after years of violent attacks on both sides, which was however broken due to the Siege of Kobane. Especially during the July 2015 crisis, tensions between the PKK and the Turkish government increased, and various attacks and killings were carried out by both parties (alleged killing of two policemen by the PKK, alleged bombing of Iraqi PKK bases by Turkey).

### The Kurdish People in Syria

Syrian Kurdistan refers to the region in Syria, which is largely inhabited by Kurdish populations. Approximately 10% of the entire Syrian population is Kurdish, constituting the largest minority group in the country. Rojava (Western Kurdistan) is a de facto autonomous Kurdish region (since 2013) in northern Syria. The Rojava region is divided into 3 cantons, the Canton of Cizre in the East, the Canton of Kobani in the center, and lastly the Canton of Afrin in the West. The aforementioned cantons are cooperating with various regional and international parties to fight the self-proclaimed Islamic State.

The Kurds in Syria had to face similar discrimination to the Kurdish communities in the other Arab nations, by their state authorities. They were denied basic rights such as the right to speak their own language, the right to give their children Kurdish names and prohibitions against Kurdish private schools as well as other limitations were also in place. In 1958 for instance, all Kurdish-language publications were banned by the government. Especially in the Rojava region, strict nationalist policies

were in place, attempting an Arabization of the society. Through the imposition of laws, Kurds were unable to own property and were even deprived of their citizenship. A census in 1962 leads to 120,000 ethnic Kurdish citizens losing their citizenship and therefore becoming “stateless”. Due to the fact that the stateless status is hereditary, the amount of stateless Kurds has only grown ever since. A decade later hundreds of square kilometers of agricultural land, which was originally owned by Kurdish citizens, was taken away from the owners and given to Arab families that had to come in from other provinces. In 2007 similar actions were carried out, in the areas of Jazeera, with the same intention of ratifying the resource-rich regions (by depopulating them of their ethnic Kurdish inhabitants).

In the course of the Syrian Civil War, the Kurdish YPG was formed to protect the Kurdish-inhabited regions Kobani, Amuda and Afrin, seen as the military forces of the Syrian government withdrew from the region in 2012. In late July the YPG also seized power over the other Kurdish cities in Syria, apart from al-Hasakah and al-Qamishli which remained under the control of the Syrian government. From mid-2013 until late-2014 the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) started aggressively displacing Kurdish civilians from their inhabited areas in northern Syria. In the beginning of January 2015, ISIL had managed to capture over 300 Kurdish villages in Kobani as well as displaced 400,000 civilians. By January 27, 2015, however, the YPG with aid from the FSA, the Peshmerga forces as well as US-led airstrikes had succeeded in one of the biggest counterattacks to ISIL and had fully recaptured the city of Kobani.

## **Major Countries and Organizations Involved**

### The Peshmerga

The Peshmerga (meaning of the name = “those who face death”) are the military forces of the autonomous Kurdish region in Northern Iraq. The number of the fighters is estimated to be at approximately 190,000 to 300,000, with its formal leader being Masoud Barzani, President of the Iraqi Kurdistan Region. The Peshmerga’s tasks include protecting the Kurdish people and institutions of Iraqi Kurdistan as well as defending the entire region since Iraqi forces are not allowed to enter Iraqi Kurdistan. Apart from safeguarding its own people, the military forces were also vital to the capturing of terrorist leaders as for instance Saddam Hussein and Osama Bin Laden and have played a major role in combatting the ruthless terrorist organization ISIS.



*(The Peshmerga forces with the Kurdish flag as their emblem)*

### The PKK

The Kurdistan Workers' Party (Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan, PKK) is a militant separatist group and was formed in the 1970s in Turkey by a group of radical Kurdish students under the leadership of Abdullah Öcalan in Ankara, Turkey. The group's ideology was initially founded on revolutionary socialism and Kurdish nationalism with the main goal of achieving a Marxist-Leninist, independent state called Kurdistan. It is listed as a terrorist organization by a number of Western states as well as organizations, such as the EU, NATO as well as the US. The PKK's battle started in the late 1970s (as a reaction to the oppression that the Kurds had been facing by the Turkish government) with attacks on the government's machinery and the spreading of propaganda in forms of revolts, protest, and uprisings. With the Turkish coup d'état in 1980, the PKK's offensive reached a whole new dimension since it slowly transformed into a paramilitary group, using training camps as well as launching bomb strikes and deadly attacks against Turkish state institutions and the government itself. In the 1990s the group withdrew its former demand for an independent state and merely requested more autonomy for the Kurdish people. In the same year, PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan was arrested in Syria and extradited to Turkey, where he was faced with lifelong imprisonment. In March 2013 Öcalan called a ceasefire, stating that the group's armed battle for independence has reached an end, which was however ended 2 years later when Turkey launched airstrikes against the PKK.



*(The official PKK flag)*



*(PKK fighters)*

### The YPG

The YPG (The People's Protection Units / the People's Defense Units) are the main armed forces of the Kurdish region of Syria – Rojava. The YPG emerged after the outbreak of the Syrian Civil War started affecting the Kurdish areas of the country, mainly Western Kurdistan. The armed service has also been playing a key role in the fight against ISIS and was the one who managed to recapture the Syrian City Kobane from the self-proclaimed Islamic State, which is seen as the first major defeat of the terrorist organization. In its fight against IS militants, the YPG has cooperated with other forces such as the Peshmerga in northern Iraq in its battle for the liberation of the Yazidi town of Sinjar from ISIS forces, as well as with the Free Syrian Army in its attempt to safeguard refugees fleeing from ISIS forces.



*(YPG units)*

### The United States of America

Even though the US's stance towards the Kurdish people has not been stable throughout history, it has been of immense assistance to the Kurds in various situations and conflicts. During the Qasim regime, for instance, the US initially

supported Kurdish guerilla forces in their rebellions against the government. Also in 1972/1973 the Americans funded Kurdish guerilla factions against the Hussein regime. Furthermore, the US played a crucial role in establishing peace between the KDP and the PUK after the Kurdish Civil War in 1998. Lastly the US has been cooperating with the PKK in fighting the self-proclaimed Islamic State, which is why it is surprising for many that the PKK has been listed as a foreign terrorist organization by many.

## Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
10 <sup>th</sup> of August 1920	In the Treaty of Sèvres, it is defined that the Kurdish people are to receive their own, independent nation, Kurdistan.
24 <sup>th</sup> of July 1923	The Treaty of Lausanne replaces the Treaty of Sèvres and divides the region inhabited by the Kurdish people amongst Turkey, Iraq, and Syria. The Kurdish striving for autonomy was completely ignored in the treaty.
1937/1938 (TURKEY)	The Dersim Massacre is the first massive «arabization» attempt by the Turkish government and leads to thousands of deaths and forced resettlements of Kurdish populations.
1958 (SYRIA)	The Kurdish continue to face various forms of discrimination and oppression, an example is the prohibition of all Kurdish-language publications .
September 1961 (IRAQ)	Begin of the Iraqi Barzani Revolt, the KDP led by Mustafa Barzani continues its fight for independence throughout various regime changes in Iraq, one of its most known victories is the Battle of Mount Handrin.
1962 (SYRIA)	A special census leads to thousands of Kurds losing their citizenship and becoming «stateless».
1970 (TURKEY)	After the creation of the PKK, the Turkish government has to face numerous guerilla attacks against its military and police forces.
March 1970 (IRAQ)	A peace plan is announced under Soviet pressure to end disparities between Iraqis and Kurds
1974 - May 1975	Another Kurdish rebellion is unleashed after the Iraqis fail to

(IRAQ)	implement the measures included in the peace plan.
1979 (IRAN)	The Iranians fight for a change of regime in the Iranian Revolution, revolts continue until 1983 when the Iranian government regains power over the largest part of the nation.
1980 (IRAQ – IRAN)	The outbreak of the Iraqi-Iranian war.
16 <sup>th</sup> of March 1988 (IRAQ)	Approximately 7.000 people lose their lives in the Halbaja attack (use of poison gas).
5 <sup>th</sup> of April 1989 (IRAQ)	The UN Security Council adopts resolution 688, safeguarding the Kurds in Iraq through no-fly zones.
1992 (IRAQ)	Official establishment of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG).
1994 (IRAQ)	Civil war between the KDP and PUK.
2003 (IRAQ)	During the Iraq war the KDP, PUK, and the United States cooperate in order to overthrow Saddam Hussein.
2007 (SYRIA)	Hundreds of square kilometers of agricultural Kurdish land is given to Arab families with the intention of arabifying the resource-rich areas.
2012 (SYRIA)	During the Syrian Civil War, the Syrian government withdraws from most of the Kurdish areas, and the YPG seizes control.
November 2012 – 2014 (IRAQ)	Continuous territorial disputes between the KRG and the Iraqi government lead to military clashes.
2013 – late 2014 (SYRIA)	ISIL invades the Kurdish inhabited and controlled areas of Syria and causes the displacement of thousands of Kurdish civilians.
March 2013 (TURKEY)	After decades of war, PKK leader Ocalan calls for a ceasefire.
June 2014 (IRAQ)	The President of the KRG, Massoud Barzani, announces his plans of holding an independence referendum until the end of 2016.

27 <sup>th</sup> of January 2015 (SYRIA)	The YPG manages to recapture the city of Kobani, in one of the biggest counterattacks to ISIL.
July 2015 (TURKEY)	Following the crisis in Kobane (which already started 2014) the ceasefire between the PKK and Turkey is broken.

## Relevant UN Treaties, Resolutions and Events

### HR/CN/754

#### SUBCOMMISSION ON PREVENTION OF DISCRIMINATION AND PROTECTION OF MINORITIES

The sub-commission was established in 1947 and its work is largely focused on preventing the discrimination of national, ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, as well as ensuring the protection of the aforementioned groups. It aims to eliminate human right breaches against women, indigenous people and lastly also deals with ways to end modern forms of slavery.

### E/CN.4/1989/3

#### SUBCOMMISSION ON THE PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

The work of the aforementioned sub-commission is similar to that of the sub-commission on prevention of discrimination and protection of minorities. It carries out studies in the fields of human rights and fundamental freedoms and aims to achieve the protection of racial, national, religious and lastly linguistic minorities.

### S/RES/688

#### UN SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 688 ON NORTHERN IRAQ

This Security Council resolution was adopted on the 5<sup>th</sup> of April 1991 at the end of the Persian Gulf War. It strongly calls for the discontinuation of the repression of the Iraqi population, especially in the areas inhabited by the Kurds. Furthermore, it requests the access of international humanitarian organizations into the concerned areas of the nation as well as cooperation with the Secretary General so as to advance humanitarian aid efforts. Lastly it is important to note that the UK, France and the US used this resolution as a basis for the imposition of no-fly zones over most of the affected areas of Iraqi-Kurdistan,

## Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

The only direct attempt by the UN to solve the question of the Kurdish minorities in the Middle Eastern region was UN Security Council resolution 688, which was adopted on the 5<sup>th</sup> of April 1991. The resolution condemned the repression of the Kurds by the Iraqi government, allowed international humanitarian help to enter the Kurdish regions of Iraq and it also led to the creation of no-fly zones in Iraqi Kurdistan, thus creating a safe haven for the endangered minority group.

## Possible Solutions

Finding a solution to the question of an autonomous Kurdistan can be rather complicated since numerous nations are deeply involved in the issue. What also needs to be considered is that the relations between the Kurdish communities and the local governments, varies from country to country and that in each nation, different historical backgrounds, different conflicts and therefore different political complexities and problems exist. Furthermore, throughout the years, the Kurdish movement has crystallized itself into various groups and organizations, as apparent by the ongoing conflict between KDP and PUK in Iraq. Considering all of the aforementioned factors, the creation of one, autonomous Kurdistan with one, universal government, can be of immense complexity.

Having the above in mind, the first step towards solving the issue should be to ensure that human rights violations and any forms of oppression against the Kurdish communities are eliminated. They should be treated as equals in the countries that they inhabit, and should have the same rights as the Arab communities. This could for instance be achieved through raising awareness on the entire history of the Kurdish call for independence. While this might not directly solve the problem at hand, it will definitely put pressure on the governments involved in the conflict, to find a solution as soon as possible.

Moreover, it is essential to stop the brutal fights between Kurdish parties and governmental forces, such as the ongoing conflict between the PKK and the Turkish government, so as to ensure stability in the Middle Eastern region. One possibility would be to follow the rather successful model of the federal structure of Iraq in which the KRG exists as an autonomous region of the greater nation of Iraq. In that way, the Kurdish community would be granted the right to self-determination on one level, but would not have an entirely independent status, since it will still be part of a larger unit. However, for the aforementioned model to work, the debate on a national level would be necessary.

Lastly, the international community could grant the Kurdish people extended rights of autonomy by urging them to apply for UN membership or at least by granting

them the observer status within the UN system. Still, attention must be paid to the fact that this proposal would require extended debate with the nations hosting Kurdish minorities, as well as other countries that are faced with separatist movements within their borders.

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