

In focus: on kurds and their struggles for independence

[Politics](#)



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Kurds are a non-Arabic ethnic group adhering to the teachings of Sunni Muslim faith. This group is said to be compassionate, romantic and fatalistic as it is evidently shown with their literature. Kurds are politically and ideologically diverse (Yildiz and Blass, 2004). They fought several struggles to claim their independence, but still, their struggles seem unending. At present, they are still establishing their own independent states in Syria, Iran, and Iraq.

Brief History About the Kurds

McKiernan (2006) stated that Kurds are Indo-European people residing in the mountains and highlands of Kurdistan (area where Turkey, Iran and Iraq meet). They do have their own native language that is much like of the Persian language. Also, Kurds adhere to the belief of Sunni Muslim faith, but there are some who embrace other religions such as Jews, Yazidis, Christianity and other sects.

Their way of living is nomadic. Herding sheep and goat is their main source of living. Until the middle of 19th century, Kurds were never at peace due to the disagreement of the Ottoman and Persian Empire about border areas. The result: Kurds are mistrusted by both empires. The group was pressured to give up their old ways, to conform to the majority. They are forced to learn the language of the nation. Upon learning such language, they were to give up Kurdish identity and to accept the nationalism of the borders where they are residing. The group was divided; but most of them tried to resist the changes particularly those concerning their identity (Saleem, 2006).

Kurds and Their Struggles

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As early as 19th century, Kurdistan, a territory for the Kurds had been promised but it was never kept until this day. Throughout the years, as new state systems have been imposed targeting centralization, homogenization, and control, the Kurds have been made homeless. In addition, new state systems have their own political ideologies where the demands of the minorities are last among its priorities (McDowall, 2004).

After the conflicts and struggles, there was peace among the Kurds that lasted for twenty years. But during the peaceful period, Kurds were maltreated; specifically they did not have rights that ensured their safety and protection. Due to such treatment, Kurds opted to continue their struggle for independence and nationhood (Mckiernan, 2006).

Yildiz and Blass (2004) reported that Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria are the concerns since Kurds are presently residing in those countries. The government of the mentioned countries have implemented several strategies on whether to accept or deny the political, social, and security demands of the Kurds. And often, the strategies deny the legitimacy of the Kurds in the country concerned. The demands and rights are taken away from the group, peaceful talks regarding the concepts of Kurdistan were never given.

In Turkey, there are about 10 million Kurds forbidden to speak their native language, instead they are forced to learn and speak the Turkish language; if caught speaking the Kurdish language, they will be imprisoned. Also, they must not call themselves as “Kurds”, instead they must label themselves as “Mountain Turks”. The Kurds in Turkey cannot withstand the discrimination,

they rebelled against the Turkish government but instead of winning their plea; the government suppressed the rebellion by deporting thousands of Turks from the country (Gunter, 1997).

It was in 1920 when the Iranians ruled over the Kurds. The Iranian domination over the Kurds stopped in 1946, when the Kurds of Mahabad were successful in claiming their independent republic. The Kurds were able to win their rights, registering their tribal lands as their own possession. They were also given a seat in the ruling elite, ensuring that their demands and rights are protected as well. After the Shia revolution, their demands and rights were once more deprived of them (McDowall, 2004).

It was in Iraq, where there are several revolts held by the Kurds to uphold their rights and privileges as a nation, as an inhabitant of Iraq. The revolt started in 1964 which was led by Mullah Mustafa Barzani, the famous leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iraq (KDP).

In 1975, the rights and privileges fought for had been heard later on to find out that their leader had abandoned the Kurds in exchange for self-interest. Brutal attacks had been done to Kurdish civilians (Yildiz and Blass, 2004).

The demands of the Kurds are seen as challenges for the country's ruling body. The group is regarded as a hindrance for government systems to be implemented smoothly. Often, Kurdish political demands such as shared power and resources among different political groups, multi-ethnic and multi-religious, are viewed as threats for the country's security and sovereignty.

Despite the long years of struggles that are continuing up to the present, Kurds remain to be political inhabitants of the country (Mckiernan, 2006).

The Kurdish people up to present are still continuing their battle against oppression and colonization among Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey. They are continuously fighting to uphold their identity, rights and to rule over their own individuality. Despite the efforts given, the conflicts among Kurds must first be resolved.

The tribal social structure of each group residing in Kurdistan areas, their beliefs and particularly the political ideologies they are adhering to. The differences among them must first be resolved in order to achieve good outputs. And for the past years of struggle, many Kurds have given up their lives to achieve the political ideologies that they have been fighting for. Kurds experienced devastating tragedies killing fellow Kurds believing in their rights a group, as an individual, and as an ethnic Kurd member (Saleem, 2006).

Conclusion

Despite the years that have passed, the struggles seem endless for the Kurds. There are several reasons contributing to the failure of their long struggle. Internal disputes among them seem trivial but have effectively impeded their way to success. The countries still hold to their tactics in eventually eliminating their rights and privileges, while Kurds adhere to their political beliefs and upholding their rights. Unless a quorum is reached, this issue is unlikely to be resolved .

Compromise among the countries and the Kurds must be made possible. Peaceful dialogue among the groups should be initiated as early as now. Once more, we should not allow devastating killings to occur and peace initiatives at the national and international levels must be strengthened in order to have a conducive atmosphere for peaceful dialogue.

As for the Kurds, who suffered pain throughout their years of battle, they must conform to these peace initiatives being set. The peaceful coexistence of both peoples is achievable.

For this proposal to occur, there must be bilateral ceasefire and negotiations among the involved parties.

The future of the group is within their hands. The internal conflicts among them must first be resolved in order to achieve unity. The differences and the question of supremacy must be set aside in order to negotiate the rights and privileges that they are all fighting for. The governments will see that the rights and privileges are not demands that would impede the country's system.

Respect is the key for the successful deployment of peace negotiations. One must learn to respect one's individuality. The political beliefs that both parties have, are working well for their respective inhabitants, and the process should be allowed to maintain this status quo.

Kurds may preserve their individuality and be able to utilize the culture handed on to them in such a set-up. Language and education would be their most powerful tools that will allow them to churn

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out meaningful literary output (written in their native tongue), showcasing to the world their cultural heritage and its uniqueness.

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