

The Assyrians Under Kurdish Rule in Northern Iraq: Short Term Solutions

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Despite numerous accounts of the Kurdish leaders' oppression and persecution policies against the indigenous Assyrians in northern Iraq, an organized campaign by certain Assyrian sources has been suggesting that the Assyrians must cooperate and work with the leaders of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). These voices have described the Kurdish region as democratic and friendly to the Assyrian people.^{1 2}

The undisputed fact is that the region under the rule of the KRG is an apartheid system. The apartheid system is created when one group dominates all the other populations whether in privileged rights, military, education, land, or economy. If we closely examine the policies of the KRG, we will discover that the the Kurds dominate life and all the fields mentioned above in the region under the KRG.

How do we transform this apartheid system into a real democratic rule for all groups? The US and European Union and the rest of the world must apply pressure on the KRG just as they did to South Africa and force the Kurdish leaders to abolish their apartheid policies. The Kurdish leaders have succeeded to present themselves as democratic, when it is anything but that. Washington helps the KRG to be seen as such, but in fact it is an illusion of freedom. Frank Zappa said, "The illusion of freedom will continue as long as it's profitable to continue the illusion. At the point where the illusion becomes too expensive to maintain, they will just take down the scenery, they will pull back the curtains, they will move the tables and chairs out of the way and you will see the brick wall at the back of the theater."

It is argued that the American politics is fueled by vast wealth. Money is power, and power generates more money. Since the US policy is driven by the economy, it is not strange then that Washington supports wars and areas of both conflict and unrest around the world. This is natural when the US Defense constitute almost half of its national budget. But, to help and help in protecting Assyrians and the rest of the defenseless indigenous people around the world who have nothing to do with those conflicts could be used to change the US image around the world.

Is it in the best interest of the Kurdish people to see their leaders treating the non-Kurds unfairly and unjustly? I suggest that the Kurdish leaders change their old policies when dealing with the indigenous Assyrians and Yezidis and the other minorities in the region they rule.

Some short term measures and steps must be taken immediately to gain the sympathy and support of the non-Kurds in northern Iraq Kurdish region. In connection with the Assyrians, the followings must be considered and instituted:

1. The Assyrians are the indigenous people of Iraq. Both Kurdish Region and Iraqi constitutions must reflect that historic fact. Apply all articles that are contained in the 2007 UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People to the Assyrian people. According to the declaration, indigenous peoples have, among other things, the right to live in peace and security (end the unrest on the borders), to continue to

1 <https://www.fredaprim.com/pdfs/2021/The%20Patriarch,%20the%20Archbishop,%20and%20the%20message.pdf>

2 <https://www.fredaprim.com/pdfs/2021/Hariri%202.pdf>

speak and teach their languages (pay all Assyrian schools expenses and not limited funding), protect and secure the Assyrian sacred places, artifacts and archaeological sites from theft and damage and repair all the damaged site and lastly but not least, provide the real opportunities for Assyrians to be consulted on government decisions that apply to them.

2. Do whatever it takes and ASAP to establish the Nineveh Plain governorate out of the three Districts of Hamdaniya, Tel Kaif and Shaikhan and add this new governorate to the current 18 governorates of Iraq. The concept of the 19th Governorate of Nineveh Plain was tentatively accepted by the Iraqi Council of Ministers in January 2014 prior to ISIS invasion and it is instituted in Article 125 of the 2005 Iraqi Constitution. Was the invasion of Mosul and Nineveh Plain coincidental as the Iraqi Council of Ministers approved the creation of the Nineveh Plain Governorate? Many believe not.

Therefore, need to announce the establishment of the Nineveh Plain Governorate to prevent further exodus of the Assyrians. This should be accompanied by:

- a) assign the funds needed to clean the region,
- b) grant the displaced families the necessary funds to help them return and survive for the short term until all necessary infrastructure is put in place,
- c) and support the Nineveh Plain Protective Unit (NPU) to control peace in the new governorate and force the other militias to evacuate the region.

The Kurdish authorities are delaying this as they have placed the region as part of the so-called disputed territories that the Kurdish leaders have invented to block any efforts to resolve issues in regions that they plan to annex to the Kurdish region.

3. Resolve all Assyrian land disputes in northern Iraq and return Assyrian lands that have been confiscated since 1988 Anfal operations by the Kurds and Arabs to their original Assyrian owners or reach agreeable compensations with the original owners for those interested to do so.

4. Coordinate and negotiate between Baghdad, Arbil and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) of Turkey to end the latter's presence in the Assyrian villages in northern Iraq. The presence of the PKK in the Kurdish region is giving the Turkish army the excuses to continuously attack and bomb the Assyrian villages and farms in the region. Assyrians are leaving their homes and villages and losing their crops because of the unrest and Turkish attacks that is occurring due to the PKK presence.

5. Abolish the Islamization of Minors Law in both the central and the northern Kurdish region legal systems. Currently, when any of the Christian parents converts to Islam, the minor Children are forced to become Muslims automatically. This must be abolished and allow the minors to stay with the Christian parent until turning 18.

6. Businesses could be owned 100% by Assyrians in northern Iraq. Why should officials force Assyrian businesses to have a Kurdish partner who owns 51% of the business?

7. End interference in the internal national and political affairs of the Assyrians. Modify the election law to where the Christian seats are strictly voted for by Christians. Shi'aa and Kurds have used votes by non-Christians to control these seats and have placed their own candidates in both parliaments.

8. Change history curriculum in the Kurdish region. Allow real and unbiased historians to write that curriculum and include Assyrian scholars and historians to be in a special committee to write that history.