

Kurdish National Congress Holds 17th Annual Conference in Nashville, Tennessee

The Kurdish National Congress of North America (KNC) held its 17th Annual Conference March 25-26, 2005 in Nashville, Tennessee, home to the largest Kurdish population in North America. Speakers and participants gathered from all parts of North America, Europe and Kurdistan to focus on the Conference theme: ***Kurdish Independence, Democracy and Regional Stability.***

The conference program included presentations by scholars, speeches by active politicians, and representatives from various parties and local and international organizations. The conference was kicked off by raising the Kurdish flag in front of the Millennium Maxwell House Hotel, the conference site. The conference included several panel discussions that provided a forum to exchange dialog among panels and conference participants. Speakers addressed the situation in Southern (Iraqi) Kurdistan where the Kurdish government is firmly involved in the formation of a new Iraqi government. Panelists and attendees offered a wide range of opinion on which future the Southern Kurdish leadership should be promoting, with many supporting a pragmatic position calling for full participation within a federal framework, while others offered the 1.7 million signatures on the Kurdish Referendum as evidence of the true aspiration of those in Southern Kurdistan for independence. The Halabja massacre was brought up, many ideas revolving around retribution and compensations were discussed. Some suggested KNC should take the Halabja file to an international tribunal, so that it is kept at a global level. Furthermore, the conference called for the following actions:

1. Strengthen the unity among the Kurds in all parts of Kurdistan
2. The Referendum represents the aspiration and the goal of the Kurdish people in Southern Kurdistan.
3. Unification of the two Kurdish Regional Governments in Southern Kurdistan.
4. Kirkuk and all the Arabized areas of Kurdistan of Iraq must remain part of Kurdistan.
5. Kurdish Peshmerga must remain as a core army to protect the Kurds rights.
6. Condemning all kinds of terrorism every where and the Kurds are joining the international efforts to fight the terrorism.
7. Calling on the International community and the UN to support the right of self-determinations for the all Kurdish people.

Events in all Kurdish regions were analyzed and discussed. Speakers noted the heightened attention paid by the West to the Syrian government's brutal policies towards its population, including a large Kurdish minority, as well as its role in the violence in Iraq. Similarly, the role of the Iranian regime in suppressing the rights of the 8 million Eastern (Iranian) Kurds and in fomenting Shiite violence in Iraq was analyzed. Events in Northern (Turkish) Kurdistan were discussed, including the steps and mis-steps made by the Turkish government in its move to satisfy EU requirements for improvement of the human rights accorded the largest Kurdish population in the region.

The conference concluded with a Newroz banquet and award presentation. The KNC recognized several individuals for their contribution to the Kurdish cause. Dr. Saman Shali, current KNC president made a presentation honoring the contribution of Dr. Asad Khailany, KNC founder and former president. Live Kurdish music followed, many of the attendees danced the evening traditional Kurdish dances.

The conference was covered by the local media in Tennessee. [Click on this link](#) for an article that appeared in the *Nashville Tennessean*.

More detailed conference proceedings will be published soon.

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