

Kurdish Independence Conference in Kurdistan

Kurdish Independence Conference in Kurdistan

November, 2005 • Salahaddin University & University of Sulaimani • Kurdistan

The Kurdish National Congress of North America held a Special Conference in Southern Kurdistan dedicated as a forum on “Kurdish Independence” in November of 2005. The Conference was hosted by Salahaddin University (in Hawlair) on November 10, and by the University of Sulaimania (in Slemani) on November 13.

The conference was well attended at both locations by Kurds from all walks of life:- from intellectuals and academia to politicians and business leaders; from students to the man on the street. Many local and foreign dignitaries also were present and participated as speakers or panelists and contributed to the discussions throughout the day.

There was active and interactive participation among the audiences and the speakers during the question-and-answer intervals allocated for interactive discussions.

Early this year, the people of southern Kurdistan took the first baby step towards the creation of an independent Kurdish State in the form of a grass-root referendum that was conducted informally alongside the Iraqi National Elections held in January. It is our hope that the Conference gave further impetus to that drive and has helped in starting a diligent examination of the issues involved with specific focus on the opportunities and obstacles that lie ahead.

The conference concluded with the following firm expressions and assertions:

- 1. In the event of a default by the Central Government on the present understanding of a Federal Kurdish State in southern Kurdistan, the Kurdish Parliament must earnestly consider the declaration of a fully Independent Kurdish Nation- State.**
- 2. Kurdish Regional Governments and political parties alike must establish formal “Planning Boards” that will oversee the wise use of the nation’s wealth through coordinated planning and implementation of long term economic, educational, agricultural, and industrial programs with special emphasis on developing Kurdish natural resources, particularly water and oil.**
- 3. All government sponsored educational services (particularly the university system), and publicly funded socioeconomic programs and employment opportunities must be based on a system of meritocracy rather than being based on nepotism and cronyism.**
- 4. To call upon the Regional Governments to design and implement special educational and sociopolitical programs that will encourage the emergence of popular Independent Democratic Institutions that safeguard basic human rights and propagate democratic values.**

Summary of Discussions:

The one day Conference started with a brief morning session of formalities, welcoming remarks and speeches by dignitaries and guest speakers. The remaining part of the day was organized into three main sessions.

Following is a summary of each session:

**Session I: :
Roadmap to Independence:**

Kurds have an inherent right to enunciate a unified strategy that proclaims the establishment of a Kurdish State as its ultimate goal. Towards that end, the following issues should be considered and examined:

1. Putting the Kurdish house in order by bringing together diverse Kurdish political parties and sociopolitical forces and coordinating a Common Kurdish National Strategy and agenda for independence.
2. The responsibility for developing a unified national strategy for independence falls upon the Kurdish people themselves
3. Kurdish political parties from all parts of Kurdistan need to coordinate their efforts towards independence through a common strategy and agenda.
4. Establish relations with the international community, in particular the EU, and the US must be based on mutual respect and shared benefits.
5. The southern-Kurdistan Regional Governments need to groom and broaden their relationship with the neighboring countries on the basis of mutual respect and non-interference.
6. Intimate relations with the various ethnic and religious groups in the region, based on common values, history and culture, must be a priority to enhance the possibility of peaceful co-existence.
7. Turkey's membership in the EU brings democracy to Turkey and gives Northern Kurds the possibility of establishing a Kurdish parliament in Turkey and a Kurdish bloc in the EU parliament. Such a bloc would be able to draw support for Kurdish independence. Therefore, Kurds must support Turkey's membership
8. Kurdish independence will create a vibrant economy that brings prosperity to the region and strengthens the global economy.
9. Kurds must lobby the UN for a referendum on Independence in Southern Kurdistan that reflects the true wishes of the Kurdish people.
10. Kurds must seek to influence the international community for a guarantee that gives international protection to the emerging Federal Kurdish state in Southern Kurdistan.
11. The establishment of an independent Kurdistan that is protected by the international community will in and of itself ensure that the Kurdish people are not subject to genocide and/or grave human rights violation in the future.
12. An independent Kurdistan will join the international community in its fight against terror.

Session II:

**Current Geopolitical Borders and their role as obstacles to a United Kurdistan;
considerations of cultural, political and economic values that form the basis for
Independent Kurdish States.**

Identification of the obstacles created by the regional powers who occupy Kurdistan and block its reunification is a necessary first step towards finding means of overcoming them. While these chauvinistic regional powers may be the prime impellers of an independent unified Kurdistan, consideration must also be given to the hindrance created by the geopolitical interests of international superpowers that coincide with the interests of the regional powers in many instances.

Achieving self-determination in different parts of Kurdistan may need different strategies. Various options and scenarios exist that can be entertained in this regard depending on the particulars of the Kurdish population and the maturity of the political movement in each part of divided Kurdistan. Most of the panelists did not opt for focusing their political activities at the present time on the achievement of a United Independent Kurdistan as a top priority; rather they favored tailoring their immediate goals according to the realistic potentials of their localities. Thus, whereas it might be considered feasible to attain a fully independent Kurdish Nation--State in one part, it might be more advantageous in another part to establish a Federal Kurdish State federated with the central government of that region. Still it might not be possible in some other part but to settle for a more limited form of self rule and autonomy. Therefore, self—determination and reunification will depend on the degree of autonomy each part achieves. It may be in the form of four Federated States or four Independent Nation--States united in a regional pact, or one United Independent Kurdistan.

1. **Dividing Kurdistan into four parts against the wishes of its people has created a hostile geopolitical environment for the Kurds – a fact that has enabled the occupiers to rule with immunity.**
2. **Lack of a Kurdish national strategy has created some discord between the various Kurdish political parties – another sad reality that has made them vulnerable to manipulation by the regional powers.**
3. **Lack of a democratic culture in the Middle East has created a hostile environment for all political parties and freedom lovers. This in turn has made the establishment of a democratic Kurdish state more difficult.**
4. **The economic and political interests of the US and the EU in the status quo with regards to the Arab states and Turkey prevent their support for an independent Kurdistan.**
5. **Control of the natural resources of Kurdistan by the occupying regional powers has created the perception that the Kurdistan economy is not viable.**
6. **Dominance of the Arab states, Turkey, Iran, and other Islamic states in the UN is another obstacle that prevents international support for the formation of independent Kurdish state(s).**
7. **Disparate views between the Kurdish parties and the Kurdish public over the realism of an independent Kurdish state in the present international environment**

- is another factor that hinders the emergence of a united Kurdish strategy for independence.
8. A positive re-evaluation of national, regional and international politics by of the Kurdish people and their leadership may assist in increasing confidence in the establishment of an independent state.
 9. Iraq's constitution in its recently ratified form does not allow for legal steps to be taken for the creation of an independent Kurdish state – a fact that effectively denies the Kurds the full exercise of their right to self-determination .

Session III:
Kurdish Nation-State(s); Future Outlines and Scenarios for the Region; Democracy and Stability in the 'New Middle East'

The full realization of self-determination by the Kurdish people and the establishment of either a single unified Kurdish state or four Kurdish nation-states will promote democracy and stability in the area.

1. Establishing a democratic Kurdish state with an elected parliament and multi-party system in Southern Kurdistan will create a culture of democracy in the region that will stretch well beyond the Iraqi borders.
2. Establishment of a Kurdish judicial system that truly upholds the rule of law will create a first-time environment of equality for all the people – an achievement that will be the envy of all the neighboring nations where equality and justice exist in law books only.
3. Emergence of a free economy in Kurdistan will strengthen peaceful coexistence among the nations of the region.
4. In general, only independent and democratic systems of governance spawn free market economies and create an environment that support social and economic developments, the Kurdish people in all of Kurdistan are ready for this task as they have demonstrated that clearly in Southern Kurdistan for more than a decade.
5. The establishment of popular democratic intuitions that promote human rights, freedom of expression, and the right of association and religious practices will promote tolerance and equality in the region.
6. The protection of women's rights and promotion of gender equality in an independent Kurdistan will elevate the status of women in all aspects of life in the entire region.

Date published: Friday, January 06, 2006