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# THE JERUSALEM POST



Kurds in Erbil, Iraq, on the day of the independence referendum on September 25, 2017..(Photo by: SETH J. FRANTZMAN)

## What the Kurds of Iran and Iraq should learn from Kurds in Syria

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I remember the day before the US-led air-strikes began. The Kurds of Syria are tasting a new round of bitterness at the hands of a major NATO member – Turkey. And this is not the first time Syrian Kurds have been under heavy attack. Perhaps it will not be the last time, either.

Article Five of the NATO treaty states that if an armed attack occurs against one of the member states, it should be considered an attack on all members.

On this basis of “one for all and all for one,” the Turkish offensive on Syrian Kurds should be interpreted as an attack coming from all NATO members.

The Kurds have played a crucial role in the Middle East for at least the past three decades. Although they have had large groups of fighters in the region, they have never used them against the interests of the West. In fact, Kurdish fighters have taken part in fighting terrorist organizations in order to reduce the instability in the region.

However, the countries Kurds are located in are of more financial interest to the West than any part of Kurdistan.

Yet, a large group of Kurds is waiting for the mercy of West to help to liberate them.

On the one hand, despite domestic corruption the hope of greater assistance from the West has pushed the Kurds in Iraq further back. Though it is worth noting that lust for wealth and power has thrown the leadership of KRG (Kurdistan Regional Government) into the peril of Iranian and Turkish control.

ON THE other hand, the Kurds in Iran have a few dysfunctional opposition parties that once used to be the greatest threat to the ayatollahs' regime. Nowadays, they are residing in KRG and fractured into quite a few parties with a lot of disputes among themselves.

While they have mostly gotten stuck in the glorious victories of the past, their empty hands are held out for the West to come and liberate them.

In 2014, Kurds in Syria were under heavy attacks from Islamic State (ISIS).

More than 300 Kurdish villages were attacked, looted and destroyed by the terrorists and Kobane was on the brink of falling to ISIS. I remember the day before the US-led air-strikes began.

There were videos of the YPG and YPJ fighters on social media resisting with their last rounds of the ammo. In one video a Kurdish fighter was bringing a handful of bullets in a plastic bag to share with his comrades. And still, they did not lose their faith in their own power.

Once again, the Kurds in Syria are under attack by Turkey. Since the beginning of the so-called Operation Olive Branch in Afrin, the Kurds in Syria have been defending themselves without the support of the West, although they deserve a pinch of solidarity after all the sacrifices they have made fighting ISIS.

The Kurds of Syria have not been waiting for the support of the West and will not expect it in the future either. They have followed a better path: believing in themselves and ignoring the empty promises called politics and diplomacy.

This is what the Kurds of Iraq and Iran should learn from their people in Syria.

The author has worked as human rights observer and journalist in Colombia, Iraq and Greece. In the past three years he has been working with refugees in Greece. Born in Iranian Kurdistan, he was exiled and now lives in Norway.

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