
The Kurdish-American Honeymoon Has Ended

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I woke up and was greeted with news that Turkey bombed Iraqi Kurdistan. Despite America's alleged friendship and alliance with the Kurds, Washington not only permitted Turkey to bomb Kurdish villages in Northern Iraq, but supplied Turkey with intelligence to attack under pretext of existence of PKK in the rugged mountains of Qandil in Northern Iraq.

The Kurdistan Labor Party (PKK) is a Kurdish armed group which started fighting Turkish regime in early 1980s in the hope of getting Kurdish political and cultural rights. Since then PKK was involved in conventional fighting against Turkey as well as in bombing Turkish government establishments.

In past years, even after the kidnapping of PKK founder and leader Abdulla Ocalan in February 1999, PKK declared unilateral truce with Turkey several times, but Ankara's refusal to issue a general immunity to the Guerrillas has led continuation of the conflict in southeast Turkey. There has not been a positive answer by the Turkish government for PKKs' truces, insisting that PKK put down their arms, surrender and stand trial.

Kurds have been always victims of the US foreign policy. Now Washington calls the PKK its enemy. Yet not one American soldier has been hurt by PKK or the Kurdish people in Turkey or Iraq. Calling PKK the enemy of the US only fuels anti-American feelings in all the countries where Kurds live. It's true that Kurds live in different geopolitical boundaries now. But we all have the same nationalist feeling to each other.

Almost every Kurd considers PKK a legitimate group that struggles to get Kurdish rights in Turkey. And while they disagree with some of the tactics PKK is using for getting its objectives. The way PKK is fighting Turkey is the way Iraqi Kurdish Armed groups fought the successive Iraqi regimes from the 1960s to 1991.

The US and the international community need to look for factors that caused formation of the PKK in early 1980s. Listing PKK as a terrorist organization by the US and European Union is another injustice committed against the Kurdish people because it does not make any sense to put a people of over 40 millions people into terrorist category.

Whenever I hear the US calling PKK "terrorist", I feel that I am called terrorist. That is not just my feeling as an Iraqi Kurd. But that is the feeling of my family, friends and most of the Kurdish people in Iraqi Kurdistan.

I visited those villages that Turkey is targeting many times over the last couple of years while reporting for American media. PKK did not exist inside the villages that Turkey is bombing and destroying. The loss has been just for the Kurdish villagers. I was seeing the villagers that were reconstructing those houses, schools and hospitals razed to the ground by former Iraqi regime. They were optimistic about the future after the fall of Saddam. But this time Turkey acted like Saddam Hussein in killing us and destroying our land.

It does seem that being a real friend of the Americans and to have the belief in the mission the US is trying to accomplish in the Middle East does not work as long as you are not strategic for what US wants you to be. Once again

Washington proved that it has not changed its immoral and vicious position towards those people who helped US accomplish its mission in Iraq.

Iraqi Kurds have been the best allies of the US since the liberation of Iraq in 2003 and Iraqi Kurdistan is the only safe place for the US troops as since then.

Kurdish problem has existed in the Middle East for more than a century and it still continues. Despite the fact that all the regimes have oppressed Kurds in Middle East, we have been able to preserve our identity as Kurds even when forced to take up arms to protect our Kurdishness. Throughout our history of resistance, the Mountains of Kurdistan have been our only real friends, protectors and shelters!

There has been attempts by both Turkey and Iraq to erase our identity and change our culture. There has been campaigns of Arabization and Turkishization of the Kurds in the past by preventing us from speaking our language and deprived from education by our language and even Kurdish music and Kurdish traditional festivities were forbidden in Turkey.

I am from the town of Halabja where I spent my childhood sheltering in basements and fleeing from the Iraqi military. My town was gassed in 1988 by Saddam Hussein, killing thousands of people in seconds.

Thousands of other villages were razed to the ground and more than 100,000 of men, women and children were taken and buried alive in 1980s but still international community was silent before all these crimes.

The first Gulf War weakened the Saddam regime and accidentally gave Kurds a chance to get control over northern Iraq. But in the final moments, US stopped backing the Kurdish people, and let Baghdad use its forces to crush Kurdish uprising in 1991, resulting atrocities by the Iraqi army against Kurdish civilians. Millions of people fled to neighboring countries when the former regime recaptured the Northern Kurdish part of Iraq.

Later Iraqi troops retreated and we got partial independence. This assured us that we would not be killed by Iraqi regime as the international community and especially America protected us from any aggressive action by Saddam.

But the older generation was still skeptical about American stance towards us as we have had bad experience with Western countries in the past. We have been always been used by the US for its interests and in the final moment, Washington always left us to the ironic and oppressive hands of the regimes where the Kurds live. Betrayals were followed by more betrayals.

But once again we put our trust in the United States government and received US troops in 2003 very warmly - unlike the other parts of Iraq where Americans were resisted.

By that time I was working for the foreign press and seeing how warm and friendly the Kurds from all Northern Iraq were receiving American troops when they were driving in the cities of Kurdistan. Children were throwing flowers and roses to the US troops as their appreciation for coming and liberating Iraq from the oppressive hands of Saddam Hussein.

I myself was one of the craziest and most American influenced people, hoping that the new generation of Kurds will not have to study in their basements as I did as a child. I did not think that again Kurdish schools would be razed to the ground.

Everyone thought that our future is bright and US is the light in the end of the tunnel.

In the last couple of years we have been able to secure our area and make it as the most prosperous part of Iraq in terms of economy, politics and security. Hundreds of foreign companies have invested in Kurdistan because of its good security and the tolerance of the Kurdish people towards the Western values that we have embraced since the US invasion into Iraq.

There are less than 400 US troops in whole Kurdistan as Peshmargas (fighters) have been able to secure the region. There were no US casualties in Kurdistan.

We fought alongside the US troops for liberating Iraq and then fought and still fight against terrorism. Kurdish peshmargas and American troops shed their blood against the common enemy.

US troops come to Iraqi Kurdistan for vacation and walk without the fear of IEDs.

All the people in the Middle East with the exception of Israel call us traitors because of our aid to the Americans and our belief in democracy. We sacrificed the trust of Arabs and Persians for the sake of the Americans because we deeply believed the phony slogans of Freedom and Democracy that American government proclaimed.

US has a history of rewarding its enemies and punishing its friends.

The Iraqi Sunnis, who started resisting US troops and killed thousands of American troops, are rewarded well by increasing their power, arms and money. The Sunni resistances made President George W.

Bush come all the way from Washington to the Anbar province to have a meeting with the Sunni tribal leaders. Bush shook hands with the leader of an Iraqi insurgent group that used to kill Americans.

But now as a punishment by the Bush administration to the Kurds, US has opened Northern Iraq's sky to let the Turkish war jets to bomb the Kurdish villages under the pretext of (PKK) Kurdistan workers party bases in those areas.

Despite the threats of Turkey to bomb and invade Northern Iraq, the Kurds did not think that US would ever let Turkey attack the Kurdish villages of Northern Iraq, killing innocent civilians and livestock, and destroying the newly built schools and hospitals. This is an event which has surprised all the Kurds, including our leadership because we strongly believed that we are protected by US.

It's really strange that US is preserving this duplicity policy towards the Kurds. I remember the former US Secretary of State Colin Powel visiting my hometown in September 2003 and addressing the people of Halabja, promising that Kurds will not be bombed and oppressed again. "No longer just the mountains are friends of the Kurds, but USA is the real friend of the Kurds now"

But on 16th, Dec, 2007 when the Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice visited the northern city of Kirkuk, US let Turkey send its war jets to bomb the Kurdish villages.

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