

14th Annual Conference Summary

8/3/2001

The Kurdish National Congress of North America (KNC) held its 14th Annual Conference on August 3-5, 2001 at the Crown Plaza Hotel in the beautiful hillside city of Pleasanton, California, under the banner of the Conference's theme "Kurdish Visions for the Twenty First Century"

The Organizing Committee had invited distinguished Kurdish guests from the Homeland and Kurds in Diaspora to participate in the conference, and to discuss issues related to its theme. Many of the distinguished guests traveled long distances to attend the proceedings, while others who were unable to attend sent well-wishing letters of support and congratulations.

Present at the Conference were Dr. Rojh Noori Shaways, Speaker of the Parliament (Kurdistan National Assembly - Iraq), Dr. Hamma Sabir, Patriotic Union of Kurdistan's (PUK) Representative in Washington DC, Kak Mehdi Zana, Past Mayor of Diyarbakir, Turkey, Dr. Musa Kaval, European Representative of the Kurdistan National Congress in Brussels, Belgium and Kak Rafa`at Qara Ali, from the Kurdish Socialist Party in Syria.

One of the important goals of the Conference was to stimulate an open-forum discussion among Kurds around the globe focusing on their visions, their dreams, and their realistic expectations for the future of the Kurds in the 21st century and as mankind enters the new millennium. This goal was amply addressed throughout the duration of the conference, in formal panel addresses as well in private small group discussions.

Discussions at the Conference were lively and varied. They ranged from Arts, to Business, to Politics. Some spoke to the issues of how to preserve the Kurdish cultural heritage and how to further enrich it, while others tackled the question of how best to bring the Kurdish nation technologically and economically into the 21st century.

Of special interest to all participants were the discussions on the political front and the political future of the Kurdish nation. Contributors presented their views and their visions for a political system that will best serve the Kurdish people and guarantee their political and basic human rights. Working within the frame of an all-important premise that must govern all such discussions: the basic human right that asserts that the Kurdish nation must have its absolute and unequivocal right of self-determination, participants discussed various political systems and scenarios of self-rule in all their modalities, ranging from simple local self-rule, to federation, to confederation, to full independence. The issue of particular note this year to an outside observer would, perhaps, have been the universal agreement among the Conference guests from abroad on the regionalization of the struggle of the Kurdish people: that is to say that the representatives of the various Kurdish political parties present were all calling for the development of the Kurdish nation on a regional basis (Southern, Northern, Western, or Eastern Kurdistan) rather than on a pan-Kurdish basis and without undue pressure from the other parts of

Kurdistan. The universality of this opinion among the conferees is a phenomenon worth follow-up discussions in future conferences.

The Conference discussions resulted in four resolutions:

1. Cognizant of the importance of a unified representation in the international arena, the 14th Annual Conference calls on the KNC to take the necessary steps, in consultation with various Kurdish political parties and organizations in Kurdistan and in the Diaspora, for the creation of a unified Kurdish body, which provides for equal representation, prevents dominance by a single political party, and is financed by the participating entities in proportion to their annual budgets.

2. The Conference recognizes and salutes the Kurdish struggle for freedom in all parts of Kurdistan; further, the Kurdish National Congress calls for a peaceful and democratic solution to the Kurdish question in all the region, as well as for respect for the human rights of the Kurdish people. It strongly condemns the repressive measures taken by the regional governments against the Kurdish people. It further calls upon the governments of Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria to unequivocally recognize the identity of the Kurdish people as a nation and to respect their political aspirations.

3. Recognizing the impact of gaining self-rule in one part of Kurdistan on the rest of the region, the Conference calls on all Kurdish political parties and organizations to support and enable the Kurds of southern Kurdistan - Iraq - to consolidate their administrative and political position in the region with a view to gaining greater recognition in the international arena, and to also avoid all actions that might jeopardize the gains made in the self-rule area during the past 10 years.

4. The Conference recommends that:

- All Kurdish residents of North America should consider representing themselves to others and to local authorities as Kurds, with Kurdistan as their birthplace.
- Kurdish organizations and political parties should make maximum efforts to have a Kurdish desk established at the United States Department of State.