

A Series of Killings of Kurds in Syria

Statement from KURDISH YEKÎTÎ PARTY IN SYRIA - EUROPEAN ORGANIZATION
January 25, 2009

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We regret to inform you that a number of Kurds in the Syrian army have been killed. We are writing this report in the hope that the world will take note of the need for action to prevent the ethnic cleansing that will lead to the genocide of Kurds in Syria.

The Syrian Government has taken advantage of the world's attention being focused on other issues to increase its oppression of its indigenous Kurds. At the same time, Europe is opening the door to Syria because this is to its political and economic advantage, while Kurds live in poverty and despair. Against this background the Governments of Iran, Turkey and Syria continue to work together to ensure that Kurds accept the nationality of their respective countries as second class citizens at best, or to drive them out.

Conscripts killed by the Syrian authorities:

The Syrian authorities have reported that Kurdish conscripts have committed suicide. It is believed that these people have been killed for their political activity. The following examples demonstrate this: 19 January 2009: The soldier Barkhwadan Khalid Hammo from Qobani town was killed in al-Hassaka while he was on military service.. 13 January 2009: Mohammad Bakkar Sheikh Daada was killed whilst in the army. His family was told that he had committed suicide.. His family does not accept this because he was known to be a strong character, and before he went to the army he had been under arrest for six months due of his activity with the Kurdish movement. He is known as a Kurdish activist. 27 December 2008, the soldier Ibrahim Rouf'att Charwish from Afrin town was killed in Damascus whilst on service and his family was informed that he had committed suicide. 21 December 2008 the soldier, Siwar Tammo from Durbassia town was killed in Aleppo, another case of 'suicide', as reported by the Syrian authorities. Others have died under similar circumstances. Kurdish soldiers have become very afraid that this may happen to them.

Demonization of Kurds:

In January 2008 we wrote: These are very difficult times for the Syrian Government because it is under a lot of pressure from America and Britain, especially as the Syrian Government has been involving itself in the politics of Iraq and Lebanon, and due to the conflict between Syria and Israel. The attached letter is a translation of a directive sent from the Government to the Armed forces in Syria at the end of 2007 (dated in the Islamic year 1428 but no month). We understand that this was released at the time of the Israeli air attack on Syria. There is no confirmation from the Syrian Government that this letter is genuine, however some Kurdish conscripts have recently had their mobile phone confiscated by their commanding officers. We are certain that this is a direct result of this directive. We are concerned that the intention of this directive is to place responsibility for troubles in the Middle East directly on the shoulders of the Kurdish people, by suggesting that the Kurds were complicit in the 2007 air attack on Syria by enabling Israel to gather vital intelligence.

The benefit of this suggestion, to the Syrian Government would be that:

- Secular opposition parties in Syria will question whether or not they can trust the Kurdish people and their political parties, and so they will become divided and less effective in opposition to the Syrian Government;
- Islamic groups will be persuaded that Kurdish people are supportive of Israel, and so will seek to further disempower them and to take revenge;
- Nationalists in Syria will use this opportunity to increase their oppression of Kurds and to

charge them with betraying Syria, and will use this as an excuse to rid Syria of its Kurdish people;

· The directive has been available on the internet although the Syrian Government has not confirmed that it is genuine, nor have they spoken about it, however this does not matter because people believe what it says, and this encourages a general backlash against the Kurdish people and political parties.

We know that that the basic human rights of Kurdish people in Syria have been ignored for many years. We are deeply concerned that this recent directive is yet another powerful tool of the Syrian Government designed to set others against Kurdish people. Kurds are now extremely worried that as a result they will be murdered and persecuted by those who have been looking for an excuse, or who genuinely believe that this is evidence of Kurdish betrayal of Syria. We continue to be very concerned that the Syrian authorities target Kurds. We believe these recent deaths have occurred because the Kurds are considered to be traitors, and the Syrian authorities feel able to dispense of them with impunity. We ask that Governments in Europe and USA investigate these deaths, and that organisations such as the UN, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International continue to show an interest in the plight of Kurds in Syria.

Others have been held in detention

The Deputy Foreign Minister, Abdul Fatah Amora in Syria met with the Ambassadors from the Embassies of UK, France, Germany, Italy, Holland, Slovakia, Switzerland and with the Ambassador of the European Commission on 15 January 2008. His government will indefinitely refuse to accept any negotiations regarding discussion of human rights in Syria. He said that because of the events in Gaza and attacks by Israel, he was no longer going to listen to criticism of his Government regarding human rights abuses [see AKI Italian news agency].

We believe that the Syrian Government considers that it has opened the door to discussions with the rest of the world, and that it can continue its programme of ethnic cleansing of Kurds from its borders without any penalties. We see that Syria is ready to sign economic agreements with European countries, and that these countries see Syria as being essential to the solution for the Middle East. We need the help of the outside world. We implore those with authority and responsibility to put human rights of Kurds at the forefront of any discussions. Our fear is

that our well-being will be sacrificed on behalf of economic advantage and politically comfortable solutions, and that this will allow the Syrian Government to continue its oppression and eradication of any Kurdish movement in Syria. This will lead to mass migration of Kurds from their ancient homelands into the cities, or into other countries where they flee for asylum. People managed to escape illegally because they had no legal route out of Syria, but they then face being returned by countries in Europe, for example 7,000 Kurds are being considered for return by the German Government in agreement between the Syrian Government's Interior Minister, Bassam Abdul-Majid and Federal Minister of the Interior Wolfgang Schäuble. On return these people will suffer the same fate as others who have already been arrested. They are seen as betrayers of the country. Many Kurds already live in the slums around Damascus because they have been driven out of their homes by Decree 49 and the subsequent lack of work, and by the Arabisation of their ancient homelands.. Others have left Syria already to work in domestic service in Lebanon and Jordan, and many have tried to seek asylum in Europe. Abuse of non-violent Kurdish activists is widespread.

The following examples give just a part of the picture:

18 January 2009: Imran al-Saed was arrested for his involvement with the Kurdish Future Movement in Syria and was released. He was arrested again on 21 August 2008, and was released on 24 December 2008. The court sentenced him on 18 January 2009 to one and a half years in prison for his political activity, for working with a secret organisation.

17 January 2009: Fawaz Kano, born 1966, worked for an international non-governmental organisation called Faw was arrested, together with Zaki Ismael Khalil born 1977, who was working in the laboratory at al-Hassaka hospital. They were arrested by the political security intelligence service. They worked together with others who taught the Kurdish people their

mother-tongue in secret, because in Syria the Kurdish language is banned.

16 January 2009: Kadar Mahmoud Saadoh was arrested in Qamishli city by intelligence security services.

13 January 2009: Darwish Qalib Darwish, born 1945, a linguist, and one of the teachers developing the Kurdish language was arrested in Qamishli city by the intelligence security services.

11 January 2009: Nasser Daqori, born 1962 was arrested by the political security services in Amuda town.

10 January 2009: Mustafa Jum'a, aged 62, the deputy secretary of the Kurdish Azadi Party in Syria was arrested by the Syrian military security services from the office of Farah Palestine in Damascus

3 January 2009: Seedo Rashid Ali, born 1973, from Afrin town was arrested on in Qamishli city and has not yet been to Court. He was arrested by the intelligence security service.

31 October 2008, Salah Saed Unis, a Kurdish activist was arrested by military security services in Amuda town.

26 October 2008: Two Kurdish activists were arrested - Mohammed Saed Hossein al-Omar and Sadoon Mahmoud Shekho are members of the leading committee of the Kurdish Azadi Party in Syria. They were arrested by the Syrian military security services in the towns of Romelan and Raas al-Ein.

12 October 2008: Salah Khalil Ahmad, born 1970, from Afrin town and Mohammed Seif al-Din Khudo and Nadir Nawaf from Durbasier town were arrested and remain in custody without trial or questioning.

17 May 2008: The political activist Latifa Mohammed Morad was arrested in Turba Spier town and is held without trial.

22 April 2008: Mohammad Rasho, Bakara Haaj Muslim, Noori Ismael Khodder and Saima Ismael Kodda were arrested on Arfin town and have been detained without trial since.

3 April 2008: Zena Horro was arrested and remains in detention without trial.

16 March 2007: Rashad Behnav, an activist was arrested by political security services in Afrin town. He is still imprisoned without trial.

Kurds in Syria need the support of the outside world, and our worry is that the outside world will ignore them because it is concerned with money and politics. We believe that genocide is coming.

Kurdish Yekiti Party in Syria

European organisation Committee of UK Branch 25.01.2009

Yekiti.party_uk@yahoo.co.uk

<http://home.c2i.net/yekiti/>

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