



Kurdish National Congress of North America
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President Barack Obama,
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500

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Honorable President Obama:

In your inauguration speech, you stated that America will have a better approach with the rest of the world in terms of cooperation, mutual understanding and respect. You also appeared to promise that you would review and correct America's unsuccessful policies especially in regard to the Middle East.

A received wisdom of various US administrations is that Turkey plays a vital role in the Middle Eastern stability and promoting America's agenda in the region. Indeed Turkey is poised to become a prominent nation not only for the region but also to play a larger role in Asia and Europe. But this can only happen if Turkey bases its stability on the premise of democracy and a guarantee of human rights for its citizens. It appears that this can only happen if, with the encouragement of the US, the Turks amend their constitution where every citizen of Turkey is guaranteed respect and equality before the law. Turkey cannot remain prosperous and use slogans of democracy as a lapel pin rather than adhering to democracy's deepest principles -- principles that should be reflected in the conduct of the Turkish state.

It's inconceivable for a nation to proclaim its democratic image while it callously engages in the oppression of more than 20 million Kurds. It appears that Turkish authorities think they can continue this policy since they have been supported by America's "Good Kurds - Bad Kurds" policies for the last few decades. This policy of demonizing the Kurds is possible because the US has accepted a Faustian bargain in which they allow the suppression of a people in exchange for geopolitical gains -- and this by a nation that calls itself the 'beacon of democracy.'

Because Turkey finds inconvenient the desire of the ethnic Kurds to speak their language and sustain their culture, they have used the PKK as a pretext to suppress this ancient people. Even the 'new' Kurdish TV station that has been allowed in response to pressure from the EU only broadcast state-approved propaganda -- it just happens to be in Kurdish -- and do not reflect the true political claims of Kurds who are living under the Turkish flag. As long as Turkey can sense the compliance of the Western world, particularly of America, they will continue to press chauvinistic claims that Turkish society is monoethnic and deny basic human rights to all other non-Turks who live in Turkey. We call upon you Mr. President to end this exclusionary, divisive and cruel policy.

The Kurdish people, as one of the world's largest ethnic groups, have always been a scapegoat of the Western colonial policies in the region. The division of Kurdistan could not have happened without callous Western policies. As a result, the Kurds found themselves in four merciless nation states in which each of the governments tried to force assimilation in their own national melting pots. When assimilation was not possible, suppression and genocide followed.

It is hard to conceive that the Kurds are treated in such a harsh way as a result of America's compliance in their suppression where history can testify to their loyalty to the west and particularly to America. This is especially true in countries such as Turkey where America can influence democratic changes.

However, every time after superficial promises to the Kurds (beginning with Woodrow Wilson's promise for the Kurds and Armenians to have their own homelands in the Treaty of Sevres) the West has turned its back on them. The Treaty of Lausanne in 1923, which bowed to Turkish nationalist policies supplanted the guarantees of the Treaty of Sevres in 1920, and consigned Kurds to the yoke of a proto nationalist Turkish state. America and the West were indifferent when the Turks called the Kurds "mountain Turks" and even the words "Kurd" and "Kurdistan" were abolished and the act of speaking Kurdish in public became an offense to Turkish honor, punishable by a prison sentence.

It's ironic that America would support regimes or governments that oppress their citizens in the name of protecting its interests, not thinking of consequences that jeopardize America's interest, image and ability to claim itself as an advocate of democracy in the long run. Therefore, we encourage you to end this morally bankrupt policy of "Good Kurds - Bad Kurds" and pressure the Turks to end their suppression against the Kurds, acknowledge and respect their cultural and democratic rights.

Sincerely yours,

Kirmanj Gundi

Kirmanj Gundi
President