

A new approach to resolve the Kurdish issue by Turkey's President needs to go further

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Recently, Mr. Abdullah Gul, the president of Turkey, courageously and publicly stated that the major problem that his country faces is "the Kurdish issue." This is an issue that must be resolved through peaceful means.

After decades of denial of the Kurdish existence, Gul's government has come to a realization that unless Turkey accepts the reality in which it lives, Turkey will not see internal tranquility. The unresolved Kurdish issue has international attention as well and therefore it will continue to be a hurdle to Turkey's membership in the European Union.

Turkey cannot continue to live in denial of the fact that it is multi ethnic heterogeneous society. It cannot continue with an unbalanced economic system that rewards the Western part of the country and keeps the Eastern part of the country in destitution. Further it cannot have two different laws for the country. At present, the Turkish legal system is structured to unfairly deny the existence of Kurdish citizens by denying them not only their political rights but also their national identity.

The overwhelming victory of DTP candidates in the mayoral election in the Kurdistan region of Turkey in late March proved that Turkey cannot continue to hide this serious internal reality from the outside world. Rather than allowing the democratic process to function, the response of the Turkish government has been to crack down on members of the DTP, apparently in retaliation. More than 400 members including high ranking officials of the DTP have been jailed.

The recent statement of Mr. Abdullah Gul implies that the Turkish-Kurdish tension must come to an end. This means that Turkey must normalize the situation in Kurdistan and free all political prisoners as a step toward creating equality between Turks and Kurds. This is essential if Turkey wants to continue to be respected as a democratic nation and not leave this legacy of hate and fear for future generations.

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