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To: Kurdish National Congress

My name is Zuhdi Sardar ([www.zuhdisardar.com](http://www.zuhdisardar.com)). I am a Kurdish artist living in Diaspora). Since I left Kurdistan in 1964 I have considered my duty to promote Kurdish culture through my art. We have challenges, but we are making progress.

Since the Arab uprising the pressure has been mounting. Uncertainty and fear has cast a dark cloud over the Middle East with the KRG in the center of it. The KRG is surrounded by powerful enemies. Each is trying to use KRG as a pawn against the other. Turkey is forcing Barzani to eliminate PKK for being similar to PLO. They forget that PLO ultimately Israel negotiated with PLO and its leaders are now celebrities. Maybe time has come for Barzani to insist that the Turkish government should negotiate with all parties and grant the 20 million Kurds in Anatolia their autonomy. The demand of the Kurds in Turkey is even simpler than that of Palastinians, they are asking for autonomy and not separation. Kurds will be a great asset for Turkish economy and everyday life. This will also stabilize relations between KRG and the Turkish government.

In Iraq Mr. Maliki is currently in dispute with Barzani over the exploration for oil and gas. This spills over to KRG's independent contracts with foreign oil companies. The perception is that Barzani believes that Maliki is seeking overall power and control. While the tension between these 2 leaders continues, Mr. Maliki is bringing thousands of Arabs to reside in the disputed oil area of Kirkuk, Khanagin and Mawsil. Arabization of Kurdistan has been the policy of Iraq for decades, which seems to be getting worse. When Bush Sr. and the Allies drew Parallel 36 to protect the Kurds, this did not include the disputed oil areas. Saddam Hussein forced out much of the population of these areas and replaced them with Arabs. Muktadasader said a few years ago, "I'll never let the Kurds control Kirkuk. I'll send tens of thousands of Arabs to Kirkuk every month until the majority of them living there are Arabs." Barzani needs help from everyone who cares about the future of Kurdistan. Today he is surrounded by vicious enemies and we cannot abandon him and let the tragic Kurdish history be repeated. Just remember, we are all in this together.

Despite the challenges progress has been made. Last November I went back to my home town of Sulimaniy. I could hardly recognize my home town since my last visit in 1998. Construction was going on everywhere with development of shopping centers, crowded streets and congestion with private cars alongside taxis. The government built a network of highways which connect cities, towns and villages. They made Kurdistan accessible for all to visit. There is concern over corruption though. Probably 5-10% of the people affiliated with the political parties and the contractors control the monitoring system. The wealthy 10% have bigger homes in the city and they bought properties from the farmers and built villas and summer homes where the farmers used to grow their fruits and

vegetables. The farmers had to buy property on the outskirts of the cities and congested them. Now, the government is buying 90% of all food products from Turkey, Iran, Syria and even Saudi Arabia. Clothing, furniture and all industrial products come to Kurdistan from the rest of the world. We are now completely dependent on others and the real tragedy is that the Kurds don't have good quality control and even if they try, they are bought out. Our enemies can contaminate our food supply and we may someday see the end of our Kurdish population.

When disagreements erupt between Turkey and the KRG they have the advantage because they control our lifeline. The hope of most Kurds is an independent Kurdistan. I don't know how close we are to getting our independence. Peter Galbreath, a former US Diplomat said, "The time is ripe for the Kurdish independence". However, Turkey, Syria and Iran periodically meet to renew their vows to never let the Kurds be free.

Regarding commerce, an article was published about the Irbil Auto Expo, which described the pride of the great Expo as selling millions of dollars worth of cars, some of which were priced over \$600,000. However, there is a lack of cultural expo. When I was in Sulimaniy in 1998, they had 1 art gallery. Last November, 2011 they still had only 1 art gallery. There are so many great Kurdish artists both in Iraq and abroad, there should be so many more galleries and museums.

I think it is beneficial to Kurdistan if we the Diaspora artist community help KRG to invite Kurdish and international artists from Kurdistan and abroad and organize an International Art Expo. We can have them travel through the cities of Kurdistan and other parts of the world. We have to educate our people and inform the rest of the world about our culture. We already have cultural attaché in Washington, DC which needs to connect artists, writers and those who work in the film industry regardless of their political affiliation.

My dream is that our society reaches a developmental level that can enjoy and appreciate art and literature the way developed world enjoys them. Art and culture are essential in our existence. The Roman Empire, Babylonians, and all nations of the past are rather remembered by their art, architecture, philosophers and science. While the political and business activists could help a society grow economically, the cultural activists could enrich the culture of our disadvantaged society. Let's work together for a better Kurdistan.

Sincerely yours,

Zuhdi Sardar