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Panel discussion:

Kurdistan in the new world system for the Middle East and Iran

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I would like to thank and express my pleasure and gratitude for the 24th Kurdish National Congress's meeting for inviting me and my organization. I hope that this meeting will translate into another successful effort at increasing the understanding of the issues in Kurdistan and the solution to these issues.

First I will introduce the background and reasons for the "issue of Kurdistan", then delving into the democratic crisis in the Middle East as well as the ways in which this crisis can be overcome in this most crucial geopolitical area in the world.

As you may be aware of, there are currently many issues and crises of great importance in the Middle East and this topic needs to be analysed through a new viewpoint with a historical aspect. The reason for this historical aspect is that the majority of the new crises we encounter in this region are linked to previous events and the same political plans.

As a result of the political super powers plans at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the First and Second World War, the victorious forces established a political system and carved the region, based on their own specific political and economic agendas. Without slightest concern for the historical cultures and beliefs of the peoples' of the region, the land was carved up and various nation states were created and borders were put up between them. By disregarding the historical characteristics of the region and gathering the wealth of the area by the establishment of nation states, the peoples of the region were faced with inconceivable human tragedies. The international hegemonic powers caused the region severe ethnic, religious, and cultural conflicts which resulted in mass killings and historical genocides. Many of the native peoples and religions of the region such as the Armenians, the Kurds, the Assyrians, the Suryanis and the Christians have suffered ruthlessly and have as a result become victims of these policies. The Armenians, who have an ancient history in the region, are left without any rights and they have faced genocide, their riches were plundered and millions were driven into exile. The Kurds were divided between four nations and through these; the Kurds have

been subjected to assimilation, annihilation, mass killings and left without any rights. The Assyrians and Suryanis have been faced with attacks, left without any land whatsoever to live on and many religious figures have been annihilated from the pages of history.

This political order that the hegemonic powers established in the Middle East, has on the one hand treated the peoples of the region by the despotic practices of the nation states, and on the other hand increased and intensified past and present crises. The nation state political order has used all undemocratic and despotic mean and measures against the peoples in the region and all efforts were used to erase their cultural differences by force and thus maintain their own power in the area. The nation-states have attempted to erase nations, ethnicities, religion and religious leaders by resorting to mass killings, annihilation, denied rights, assimilation, prohibitions, poverty and continued mistreatment of peoples. Slight expressions of discontent or development of freedom seeking movements, people have been quelled with the outmost policy of oppression and they have replied to their legitimate demands by the use of mass killings and inhumane actions.

This system and particularly the regional regimes situation have reached a stage where the peoples of the region are not willing to accept them, under any circumstances. It is worth mentioning that these regimes are an obstacle and a threat, not only to new systems but also to the interests of the current international community and political democratic order.

With this background, it is fair to claim that the developments witnessed in the Middle East do not represent the peoples of the region truthfully. Change in the region is an undeniable fact and a historical necessity. The political meddling by international powers in the region which is both a historical fact as it is a current fact in the region has together with the uprisings of the peoples of the region and particularly the Arab people have initiated this process of change and rejuvenation of the region.

It is however clear that change will not come to the region in easy way, but with much effort and many revolts of the popular movements which are struggling for this change to come about. Still have not incorporated the experiences of the past into their movements and they have not planned their struggle according to the historical necessity which is vital for the region, but according to narrow political agendas.

Many states in the Middle East are supporting the despotic powers in the region to serve their own political and economic interests, so they subsequently remain silent in light of the atrocities and killings these regimes conduct against the people of the region.

The US and the EU which have been involved in many of the events in the region, have instead of bringing long term solutions to the region, brought short term propositions which have been developed with their national and regional well being first in mind and the prospect of the region second or even third, if at all.

The most striking and apparent aspect of this is that there are currently no plans presenting solutions to the crises of the region. The role of the Kurdish issue within the overall plan for the Middle East is also one which is apparent and clear.

The Kurdish people as one of the oldest people of the region, is of a major importance within the crises of the region. The Kurdish people and Kurdistan in the past division of the region have been divided between 4 non Kurdish states and were deprived of every right in the process. Their identity as a people was denied by the despotic powers of the region, and assimilation processes were initiated by the states to obliterate what was left but the Kurds have risen up. Despite these attempts, the Kurdish people have been struggling for freedom for decades and they have displayed their ability to continue these efforts to the international community and to the despotic oppressive states.

As there are no projects for this changing region, the Kurdish issue hangs in the air and in the process of everyday politics, it is handled tactically. These policies are also vivid in the way Kurds are handled by the four states. In every part of Kurdistan, there is a different way in which Kurds are handled politically. A correct approach would be to maintain a joint, equal and strategic treatment of the Kurds in all four parts despite all the differences. The acceptance of certain Kurdish groups while isolating others will not only hinder a fundamental solution to the crises of the region but will also divide and weaken the Kurds further. The traces of history in the treatment and strategy used against the Kurds is evident and we are strongly condemning these plans and policies.

The US can have a major and historical role in the Middle East if these crucial aspects of the region are taken into consideration, and thus gather the support of

all groups and movements. In the case of the opposite approach, the result will be hardships and political struggle against the approach which is not in the interest of that country.

The most important aspect in the changes of the Middle East is a strategic proximity and a primary solution. It is important that the current regimes face a fundamental change and a democratic system is needed which and thus allow people to live freely within the democratic system.

A Middle East of those qualities will not only solve the present crises but also bring about stability. Naturally stability here refers to stability for the Middle East on an international level and is thus a strategic point.

Our view concerning the primary change of the regimes is that it will lead to a democratic and peaceful solution to the crises in the region. The regimes that are open to a fundamental change must be supported and further motivated. However, the regimes that wish to maintain their despotic oppressive systems and are opposing democratic change will face the continuous struggle to bring democracy and change.

The Iranian regime historically and at the present has been the state at the fore front of the despotic and tyrannical regimes. The current regimes have through its attempts at stifling slightest freedom seeking ambitions and by attempting to erase all the nuances of the society, caused the people of the country much agony and severe suffering.

The groups that have been subjected to annihilation policies of the Iranian regime are the nationalities such as the Kurds, Arabs, Baluchs and Azeris as well as the many religions and faiths that exist within Iran.

This regime is not only conducting these policies within its own borders, but Iran is continuously seeking to enlarge its political and ideological hegemony to the region. By promoting a state altered and distorted version of Shi'ism, the Iranian regime is aiming at causing clashes between different ethnic and religious groups and thus disturb the stability in the region in order to strengthen its power.

Despite the fact that an extensive part of the Iranian economy goes to strengthening its military, the nuclear project is also an alarming aspect for the peoples of the region. Naturally in contrast to the developments in Iran, the freedom seeking and democratic movements have a great role and major

importance for peoples and the current regime is in no way accepted or supported. The only way in which democracy and freedom can ever be discussed in relation to Iran is if the current regime undergoes a fundamental change from what it is today.

I would like to finish by mentioning that in the previous world political orders, systems stability was a much wanted condition no matter the democratic or humane factors were sacrificed for its achievement. This paradigmatic approach paved the way for many fascist and nationalist states which filled the pages of history with tragedies and genocides in the Middle East and internationally and the tragedy of 9/11 is a part of these.

To move forth from these acts, a new approach is needed for a world system of stability and secure change. The only way in which security can be achieved is through ensuring stability. Stability is naturally a vital ingredient in ensuring equality, freedom and democracy for peoples within a political agreement. In summary, this new approach to stability must be based on democratic and international values. It is through this channel that we can achieve security in the region and subsequently on an international level.

Within this context and the effect of religious ideologies, the role of the Kurdish people one as a democratic and the other as non fundamental religious people is an important one. The struggle of the Kurdish people for achieving democracy for all the people of the region to have stability is an opportunity. This truth about the Kurdish people have so far in history often been used by the states opposing the Kurdish people as a pretext to wage war against them. However, since there is now a wish to achieve democracy and stability, this opportunity must be used and the states in the western and international community should strategically approach the issue of the people of Kurdistan.

When taken into account the historical and social aspects of the region, it is clear that the division of the people of Kurdistan is a matter of importance and one which needs to be resolved for calm and stability to ever reach the region. If there is a wish for freedom and peaceful coexistence for peoples, then it is vital that the Kurds are taken into account and this issue is resolved and not forgotten.

It is important that we do not forget that in these crucial times both in Eastern Kurdistan and Iran but also in the greater region, the unity of the Kurdish people

and the Kurdish groups is an essential and historic necessity. History has taught us that beside the role played by external forces against the Kurdish people, the lack of unity and organization also aided these powers. This is where the US as an important power internationally can play a major role, and use its power to aid in resolving these crises in a just and democratic manner.

Naturally, the nuances and differences should be viewed as something positive and not the opposite and these should be treated within an organized and united Kurdish effort. Also, within the spectrum of Iran, it is utterly important to unite all the different ethnic and religious groups in a joint struggle against the despotic rule of Iran.

As a result of the historical experiences and the rich mosaic of ethnic, cultural and religious groups in Iran on the one hand and the iron fist rule of the Iranian regime, the establishment of a non central and democratic system which incorporates all the nuances of the Iranian society is crucial, and the most fitting approach to achieve this is a confederal system.

Thank you

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