

McKennaMUN VIII Background Guide



Special Political and Decolonization Committee (SPECPOL)

**April 4-5 2020
Claremont McKenna
College**



DIRECTOR'S LETTER

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (SPECPOL). I am so incredibly excited to be chairing this committee at the eighth McKenna Model United Nations Conference.

I'm currently a sophomore at CMC majoring in International Relations with a geographic focus on the Middle East. I have a few jobs on campus including research with our International Relations research institute. I am also the co-president of our Middle Eastern Student Club. This is my second year doing MUN and it has been so much fun. I helped chair a committee at McKenna MUN last year but this is my first time directing a committee and I am looking forward to it. I have spent a long time studying the region in question today and the different sides involved. But, the two topics selected are especially pertinent now after they started extensively surfacing in the news lately.

Please feel free to reach out with any questions you might have. See you soon! I am looking forward to meeting you and hearing your opinions.

Best,

Yara Ismael

Chair, SPECPOL

COMMITTEE INTRODUCTION

The Special Political and Decolonization Committee (SPECPOL) is the fourth of six committees of the United Nations General Assembly. Its agenda include varying issues that are within the different decolonization-related matters, the effects of atomic radiation, information issues in relation to non-self-governing territories under Article 73 e of the UN Charter, reviews peacekeeping missions and special political missions like the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), and reports on Israeli actions. It heavily discusses the issues of Palestinian human rights and refugees¹

It submits its recommendations and draft resolutions to the General Assembly Plenary.² It also examines petitions from these territories under its mandate and performs special missions there. As a part of the General Assembly, each member has one vote.

COMMITTEE HISTORY

The committee was established as a part of the original committees of the UN on October 24, 1945 under Chapter XII of the United Nations Charter that established the International Trusteeship System for the Supervision of Trust Territories, which come under its authority through individual agreements.³

It came about to deal with mainly territories established by the League of Nations after World War I or those that were detached from states after World War II. It also deals with territories that the states voluntarily placed under the system's mandate. At the beginning, it had eleven territories placed under its mandate and they either became independent or joined neighboring countries.⁴

TOPIC A - THE TURKISH INCURSION INTO NORTHERN SYRIA

Introduction

Turkey has been at odds with Kurds since the times of the Ottoman Empire. There are over 15-20 million Kurds within its borders who demand more autonomy and rights. Therefore, Turkey also sees Kurds in neighboring countries as a threat.⁵ Changing domestic Turkish politics led to a more confrontational approach towards the Kurdish question. Turkey intensified its campaign especially against the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). Therefore, Turkey grew agitated when the Syrian Civil War and the anti-ISIS fight strengthened the Kurds in Syria who Turkey alleges have strong connections to Kurds in Turkey and the PKK.⁶

The Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) and its armed wing, the People's Protection Units (YPG), controlled the Kurdish territories and other areas in northern Syria that were

regained from ISIS since the start of the Syrian Civil War. In 2014, the US joined the anti-ISIS international coalition that supported these Kurdish groups. Turkey grew increasingly hostile of growing Kurdish power to its south. However, the US tried to deescalate the situation and prevent a Turkish incursion that could threaten the anti-ISIS operations and the relative stability created in that region of the country. However, in late 2018, US President Donald Trump announced that he would be withdrawing all US forces from that area.⁷ On Sunday, October 6, 2019, Trump announced that he is withdrawing all US forces, which was largely seen as a “green light” to the Turkish incursion of northern Syria that began the following day on October 7th.⁸

History

The Kurds are the largest stateless ethnic minority in the world, totaling between 25 and 35 million. They encompass territories across Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria. They refer to these areas as “Kurdistan” or the land of Kurds.⁹ These areas were occupied by the Ottoman Empire and the reason Kurdistan never transpired into a state is because even though the Treaty of Sevres in 1920 following World War I provided the option of an independent Kurdish state, the Sykes-Picot Agreement left them out.¹⁰

Kurds have since struggled to create an independent Kurdistan through leading strong national self-determination movements and rebellions. Nevertheless, these were usually repressed, resulting in civil wars and genocides.¹¹



Figure 1 - Map of Kurdistan¹²

There are 5 to 10 million Kurds in Syria, which has a total population of 21 million. They live in the northern region of the country, near the Turkish border. Kurds refer to this region as Rojava which means western Kurdistan in Kurdish. The main cities in this region are Qamishli, Al-Hasakah, and Afrin to the west, near the Turkish border.¹³

Under former Syrian President Hafez Al-Assad, Kurds were oppressed, denied citizenship, and stripped of their land. It was always illegal for Kurds to celebrate their culture, speak their language, or dress in their cultural clothes.¹⁴ So, as the central government was weakened by the Syrian Civil War that started in 2011, Kurds turned their focus on establishing a safe haven from both the Free Syrian Army (FSA) and other rebels as well as the government forces. On July 12, 2012, the Kurdish Supreme Committee was created as the governing body of all Kurdish-controlled areas.

Meanwhile, Turkey was also dealing with its own Kurdish population in the southern part of the country. The PKK was leading the guerrilla fight against the Turkish government and was designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) by the United States in 1997.¹⁵ However, as the organization began to change its ideology into one that renounced violence and sought a solution for Kurds within a democratic and inclusive Turkey, they were able to establish a couple of ceasefires with the Turkish government.¹⁶ These peace negotiations were intensified from 2013 to 2015. Kurdish-Syrian parties like the PYD were welcomed in Ankara, Turkey as a part of these negotiations and even as potential allies in the fight against Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad. At the same time, the Kurdish-Turkish political party, the People's Democratic Party (HDP), won 13% of the popular vote and gained access to the Turkish parliament in 2015. Soon after, the peace process with the PKK crumbled. Regional factors like ISIS and strengthening of Kurdish players in Syria as well as domestic factors like Erdogan's political considerations contributed to the resumption of conflict. The United States' support for Syrian Kurds exacerbated Turkey's worries as they began receiving arming and were supported by the international coalition in the fight against ISIS. The Kurds were the best and most reliable fighters against ISIS in the region and even in Iraq. The US tried to ease Turkey's worries by downplaying the relationship between the PKK and PYD/YPG. They also tried to rebrand these forces by creating the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) which included various groups from the areas being liberated.¹⁷ Turkey still saw them as a mere cover for the YPG but Washington continued to deny that the YPG was running the SDF.

Particularly alarming to Turkey was the unification of Rojava when the YPG gained control over Tel Abyad in the summer of 2015 from ISIS that signaled to Turkey that this Kurdish control could become permanent.¹⁸

Turkish Military Operations

Citing the UN Charter Article 51 on self-defense, Turkey launched Operation Euphrates Shield on August 24, 2016. It aimed to combat both ISIS and the Syrian-Kurdish forces. By the end of this operation in 2017, it allowed Turkey to clear thousands of square kilometers. This also prevented the Kurds from unifying their eastern canton with Afrin in the west.¹⁹

On February 27, 2016, ISIS launched an attack on Tel Abyad from both the Turkish and Syrian sides even though Turkey denies that its soil was used to launch this operation.²⁰

On January 20, 2018, Turkey launched Operation Olive Branch where the Turkish military and its backed militias intervened in Afrin, a Kurdish-controlled city in northwestern Syria, thereby separating Rojava into east and west again.²¹ The FSA was also a part of the operations that attacked this city.

Beyond their aforementioned attempts, the US also began conducting patrols of the Turkish borders along with the Turkish authorities. It also secured the Kurds' withdrawal from the border with Turkey. The only thing left in the way of the Turkish soldiers were the American troops. In December, 2018, President Trump announced that he will withdraw all troops from Syria.²² But, his decision was widely opposed and it was slowed down after Defense Secretary Jim Mattis resigned. The chaos started to stabilize until Trump announced, after a phone call

with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, on October 6, 2019 that he will withdraw all forces from the area. Erdogan launched his invasion the next day even before the American troops had left.²³

The issue really reached a boiling point and grabbed the world's attention following that announcement as Turkey launched Operation Peace Spring, planning to enter 19 miles (30 km) into Syria in order to create a buffer zone between Turkey and the alleged Kurdish terrorists, otherwise also called a "safe zone." 450,000 people live within 3 miles of the border.²⁴ The airstrikes and ground assaults focused on Sere Kaniye (Ras al-Ayn) and Tel Abyad (Gire Spi) that are immediately on the borders. Countries like Norway and Finland immediately halted their arms trade with Turkey while others like France, Cyprus, Greece, and Sweden push the EU to impose sanctions on Turkey, which failed to happen at the EU summit only a few days later.²⁵ The SDF and the Kurdish administration announced on October 13, 2019, that they are entering an agreement with Assad's Syrian and Russian governments, which also included an agreement about Afrin, which allowed the Syrian Army Forces to enter Kurdish cities in the north for the first time since the Kurdish Autonomous Administration gained ground in that region. Russian aircraft and troops were also deployed. Trump announced sanctions on Turkey through doubling tariffs on Turkey's steel and suspending a \$100 billion trade deal. Only two days later, the US and Turkey announced a 5-day ceasefire, which constituted the SDF leaving even more territory than Turkey had initially asked for, expanding the Turkish "safe zone" to 32 km instead of 30. Some fighting and civilian deaths continued throughout the ceasefire. By October 22, Russia and

Turkey created another deal by which Russia gave Turkey Ras al-Ayn and Tel Abyad and established their own 10 km-long border patrol.²⁶

Why should we care?

Kurds felt betrayed since the only reason Turkey felt threatened enough by them to take such drastic measures was because the international community asked them to step up and lead the fight against ISIS, which resulted in the death of at least 11,000 Kurdish fighters.²⁷

Commander in chief of the SDF, General Mazloun Kobani, said that after his decision was announced, President Trump called and reassured him that “there would not be a massacre against the Kurds” and that he would step in to stop the Turkish invasion. However, Kobani said that Trump did not fulfill that promise.²⁸

Since the beginning of Operation Peace Spring, over 500 civilians were killed and 300,000-400,000 displaced from their homes.²⁹ The Kurds were responsible for at least 12,000 ISIS fighters in prison camps and tens of thousands of their family members in nearby camps. At least 800 ISIS affiliates and 100 ISIS fighters escaped from prisons in the first week since the operation was launched, most of their escapes were aided by Turkish shelling.³⁰ ISIS sleeper cells were revitalized and witnessed over 48% increase in activities in October of 2019 as SDF and Coalition anti-ISIS raids fell by 75%.³¹

With 3.66 million Syrian refugees in Turkey, Erdogan threatened: “hey European Union, pull yourself together. If you try to label this operation as an invasion... we will open the gates and send 3.6 million refugees your way.”³² Erdogan continues to use refugees as a card to

achieve economic and political gains. He also stated that a primary goal of his incursion was to create a safe zone in northern Syria where he can relocate the Syrian refugees in Turkey. He says that he is helping Syrian refugees return to their homes even though most of these refugees are not originally from these areas. These areas that Turkey currently occupies in northern Syria where it intends to create the safe zone are Kurdish-majority areas which means that Erdogan's plan will carry demographic changes consequences. When he spoke at the UN, Erdogan claimed that "if this safe zone can be declared, we can resettle confidently somewhere between 1 to 2 million refugees" which would allow refugees to resettle from refugee camps and tents. This plan would require an international UN-led donor conference.³³ But, Jens Laerke from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) told journalists in Geneva that the so-called safe zone was set up by the Turkish military and not by humanitarians and that "we do not control it and we have not been involved in the planning of it."³⁴

Turkish-backed forces that were fighting the Kurds in northern Syria were accused of committing war crimes. These crimes included a video that was released showing bearded men from Faylaq Al-Majd (Glory Corps) battalion committing war crimes against Amara Renas who is a fighter in the Women's Protection Units (YPJ) which is the all-women Kurdish armed wing of the PYD and part of the SDF.³⁵ Turkey also repeatedly targeted hospitals and other civilian infrastructure while preventing the Kurdish Red Crescent from helping the injured.³⁶ The UN warned that Turkey would be held accountable for these actions taken by the militias they back. The US Ambassador to the UN Kelly Craft also warned similarly, saying that Turkey bears "full

responsibility for protecting the Kurdish population and religious minorities, including Christians,” and for ensuring that ISIS, “does not reconstitute itself in any way, shape or form.”³⁷ There were also allegations that Turkey used white phosphorus against civilians in northern Syria. Although white phosphorus is allowed in certain uses and amounts in military operations, its use against civilians is internationally outlawed. The United Nations’ chemical weapons watchdog, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), announced that it will collect information to create an investigation. The Kurdish Red Crescent and other organizations documented at least six patients in the Hasakah hospital with symptoms of chemical burns.³⁸ However, shortly after, the international investigators team refused to examine the time-sensitive tissue samples of those patients with suspected white phosphorus burns. They justified their decision saying that it fell outside of their purview because they claimed that the injuries were the result of heat and not chemical. Yet, many believed that the decision was influenced by other factors. Some believe that it came following a politicization of the issue by members of the committee who saw such an investigation as an embarrassment for NATO.³⁹ Others see a correlation between that and the \$33,000 (£26,000) donation made by Turkey on October 17, 2019.⁴⁰ Seeing the lack of an investigating body, US Congresswoman Ilhan Omar led a letter in Congress to the US Syria envoy, writing: “the United States is uniquely positioned as a NATO ally of Turkey and a partner of the Syrian Kurds, who are the alleged victims of this attack, to take a lead on a full investigation into the circumstances surrounding

[it].”⁴¹ This letter came after Ambassador James Franklin Jeffrey mentioned during an earlier hearing at the US House of Representatives that the US and State Department are looking into it.

The UN Secretary-General Antonio Gueterres said on October 10, 2019 that he did not “believe in military solutions for the Syrian problem, also for any other problem in the world. I always strongly believe in political solutions.”⁴² Also, the UN Security Council European members brought this issue up at the Security Council. Its European members: Germany, France, the UK, Belgium, and Poland expressed concern over Turkey’s actions and they urged it to “cease the unilateral military action.” However, due to Russia’s position, they were unable to pass a joint statement against the incursion.⁴³

SPECPOL has dealt with occupation questions many times before, especially when it comes to Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories. It has passed resolutions that affirmed the illegality of Israeli settlements built on Palestinian territories and condemned Israel’s use of violence against Palestinian civilians.⁴⁴ It also referred to the International Court of Justice the question of the Israeli wall’s legality.

KEY ACTORS

Russia

Russia is perhaps the main actor in the region at the moment. Its alliances and the sway it holds over other main actors like Assad and Turkey allow it to control the situation, especially

after the US withdrawal— both militarily and politically. It continues to strengthen its position in that region by continuing to deploy troops and opening a military base in Tel Tamer.⁴⁵ While it did cooperate with Kurds before and opposed the Turkish invasion at first, it did not hold Turkey back right away in order to coerce the Kurds into an agreement with its allies in the Assad government. Its agreement with Turkey allowed both more power in the region. If Kurds want a more favorable solution, they are more likely to achieve that through Russia rather than the US.⁴⁶

The United States

The US created a strong alliance with the SDF or the Syrian Kurds in general, primarily motivated by their ability to fight ISIS. But, President Trump decided to withdraw from the region in accordance with his campaign promise to bring American troops home. Syrian Kurds, however, gained popularity in the US and even among American troops who defied the laws by wearing YPJ/YPG patches as they were ordered to leave Rojava.⁴⁷ After the initial withdrawal decision, Trump announced that some troops will remain to secure the oil.⁴⁸ After that, the US announced that its troops will have a presence in the area in order to conduct large-scale counterterrorism missions.⁴⁹ After Trump passed executive sanctions on Turkey, Congress also considered other sanctions, including an arms embargo.⁵⁰ However, because of their NATO and geostrategic alliance, the US has not taken a decisive position against Turkey. Turkey can also prevent the US access to its military bases in Turkey, like Incirlik base which also houses US nuclear weapons.⁵¹

Syria

While Bashar al Assad's government had always had a tumultuous relationship with the Kurds to the north of the country, when the Civil War broke out, Assad and the Kurds considered an alliance which would allow Assad to focus on fighting the rebels in the rest of the country even when the PYD declared autonomy for the region.⁵² As Assad started regaining control over the entire country, Kurds began fearing the autonomy of their region. However, when the US forces withdrew abruptly, the Kurds were forced into ceding a lot in a deal with Assad. His forces entered the region in an attempt to protect against a Turkish invasion. It is unlikely that even if and when the Turkish forces leave that Assad will allow the Kurds' Rojava autonomous experiment with democracy to continue.⁵³ But, even when he gains control over the region, Russia is the one calling the shots for Assad.

LOOKING AHEAD

Today as the story fades away from people's minds around the world and even after the situation has to an extent calmed in the sense that not many new advances have been achieved, Turkey continues to occupy these territories. While seen above, the vast majority of the world opposed the moves made by Turkey and yet were unable to achieve progress due to the extreme politicization of this issue considering the alliances that could be at risk.

The question for delegates looking forward will be to propose resolutions that take a nuanced approach, bearing in mind the complexity of the existing agreements in question as well as the political climate of the international community and their respective countries. The main question in mind will be creating a sustainable stability in the region, especially as the Syrian crisis comes to an end. It is also important to consider the delicacy of relative peace in that region considering all the active terrorist groups in the region. Other plans must address the humanitarian situation, including the current refugees as a result of the Turkish invasion as well as its plans to seek cooperation from the UN to create the safe zone where it hopes to relocate Syrian refugees. Another issue that must be addressed is the war crimes allegations including the chemical weapons question which the UN has dropped before resolving.

Delegates must also keep in mind the feasibility of their proposals in the context of the UN. Some proposals might seem like the ultimate solution but are unlikely to pass through the appropriate UN bodies. Peacekeeping missions are unlikely to come out of the UNSC considering Russia's position. Hence, our body must seek solutions with similar impact that are politically feasible. Its mandate also includes matters relating to reports on "comprehensive review of peacekeeping operations."⁵⁴

While we must recognize that our committee in the UN is limited in power and reach, it is also important to acknowledge that it is easier for the UN in general to deal with these issues than for example the occupied Palestinian territories that this body has extensively debated. This body can also make recommendations to other bodies in the UN. Turkey still relies on the

international community and even the UN in general and also for the execution of its plans like the safe zone where it hopes to relocate Syrian refugees.

Questions to Consider:

1. In dealing with the question of invasion, self-governance, and human rights violations, which groups can we address in our body?
2. Considering the crime of killing Hevrin Khalaf, how can SPECPOL address violations of human and political rights as well questions of colonization overlap?

TOPIC 2 - THE QUESTION OF KURDISTAN'S INDEPENDENCE

Introduction

As explained earlier, Kurdistan is home of Kurds and other minorities divided by the borders of four countries: Iraq, Iran, Turkey, and Syria and that they have always fought for independence.⁵⁵ In the last topic we focused on Turkey and Syria but in this one we will focus on the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) with a particular focus on its right to self-determination claims.

KRI is the part of Kurdistan that has achieved the most progress in terms of autonomy and stability compared to the other parts of Kurdistan. Kurdish movements in other parts have gradually toned down their demands from independence to democratization of their societies and acknowledgment of Kurdish identity within the existing borders. But, the clamors for independence can be heard the loudest in the KRI since the region already enjoys relative autonomy from the Iraqi Central Government (ICG).

The KRI has been governed by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) since 1992 after suffering from marginalization for decades and genocides under Saddam Hussein. They were able to create a haven for inclusivity and peace in comparison to the rest of Iraq that attempts to model after western-style democracies, thereby creating strong alliances with countries around the world. They also hosted millions of refugees from Iraq and Syria. Therefore, they demand that their human rights violations and self-determination right be considered in accordance with Article I of the UN Charter. And due to the pre-existent KRG, Kurds also claim they have a right to Chapter 11, Article 73 of the UN Charter regarding preserving the rights of and assisting people who have not yet achieved full self-government.⁵⁶

History

There are at least six million Kurds in Iraq which makes them 17-20% of the entire country's population.⁵⁷ Kurds were incorporated into modern day Iraq under the British colonial rule after the end of World War I in 1918 and they rebelled to achieve independence even since. As early as 1923, Sheikh Mahumd Barzinji declared a Kurdish kingdom in defiance of British rule.

Again in 1932, Kurds protested against allowing Iraq to join the League of Nations. In 1943 Mullah Mustafa Barzani who is perceived as the father of Iraqi Kurds led an uprising that wins him control over most of the KRI. Shortly after, British bombing forced him and his men to flee to Kurdistan of Iran where they established the first Kurdish republic led by Qazi Mohammed which crumbled only months later. When the Iraqi monarchy was overthrown in 1958, Kurdish leaders returned to organize publicly in northern Iraq until the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) was dissolved by the Iraqi government in 1961. In 1971, Kurds are offered autonomy by the Iraqi government which they refuse because it leaves out the governorate of oil-rich Kirkuk claimed by Kurds. Supported by Iran, the Kurds started another rebellion. So when the eight year-long Iran-Iraq war broke out in 1980, Kurds supported Iran. Iraqi troops killed over 8,000 men from Barzani's home town in 1983 in retaliation for allowing Iran to use Iraqi Kurdistan as another front in the war. In 1998, the Iraqi government launched the "Anfal" campaign seeking revenge by vowing to eradicate Kurdish identity and any Kurds supporting the Peshmerga (Kurdish forces). Over 180,000 Kurdish civilians were tortured, imprisoned, killed or disappeared. More were forced to flee their homes and tens of thousands of Kurdish villages were razed to the ground. Hussein ordered dropping chemical weapons over Kurdish towns and the most notorious incident was in March of 1998 when the town of Halabja was attacked by chemical weapons, instantly killing over 5,000 civilians. In 1991, thinking they will have the US support, Kurds started another rebellion and when they were abandoned, Hussein forces put it down immediately and 1.5 million Kurdish civilians fled. A month later, the coalition forces led by the

US announced a no-fly zone in northern Iraq, while Kurdish leaders negotiated independence with Saddam Hussein. In 1992, the first free elections were held in Kurdistan, splitting the vote between the KDP and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), who established the KRG. The 1996 UN “Oil-for-Food” program determined that 13% of the Iraqi oil exports are for the three Kurdish governorates in the north. Iraq’s 2005 Constitution recognized the autonomy of the region and KRG. But, human rights violations by the ICG continue in Kirkuk years after Hussein first started his efforts to impact demographic changes in the oil-rich city by replacing Kurdish with Arab families from the rest of Iraq.⁵⁸

Figure 3 - Kurdish civilians killed while trying to flee the chemical gas attack on Halabja⁵⁹

The second largest city located in the north of Iraq, Mosul, fell in June of 2014 to ISIS. Since then the Kurdish Peshmerga were leaders in the fight against ISIS.⁶⁰ At first, they only protected the KRG borders. But, when the Iraqi army forces deserted Kirkuk, the Peshmerga forces stepped in to fill their vacancies and prevent the city from falling into the hands of ISIS. A similar scenario unfolded in other villages and towns



that are a part of Article 140 of the Iraqi constitution which deals with the “disputed areas”

claimed by Kurds but are under the administration of the ICG. The most prominent fight was when Peshmerga forces retook the town of Sinjar where Yezidis were massacred by ISIS and stranded on Mount Sinjar. The US-led coalition to fight ISIS supported the Peshmerga forces in their efforts.⁶¹

The issue

In 2014, Iraqi President Maliki applied increasing pressure on the KRG and even implied that Kurds supported ISIS. Kurds pushed further for the implementation of Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution. The KRG also suffered an economic crisis because of their fight against ISIS while hosting 2 million refugees and IDPs from Syria and the rest of Iraq, which is almost a third of the Region's population. This made Iraqi budgetary cuts even direr. It is noteworthy that although the Iraqi Constitution guarantees the KRG a share of the central budget proportionate to its population, that number was always disputed between the two parties. Other matters also contributed to the escalation of tensions between the ICG and the KRG.

As a result, the KRG President Massoud Barzani announced in July 2014 that his government will hold an independence referendum, which was held in September of 2017 when the fight against ISIS was almost over for the Kurdish fighters.⁶²

In 2005, the KRG carried out a similar independence referendum where 99% of the two million voters voted in favor of independence but the results were merely symbolic since the polling was unofficial.⁶³

President Barzani continued to affirm that the results of his referendum will not be used to declare independence directly. Yet, it was opposed by almost everyone. The Iraqi government threatened to send its troops to seize control over the border crossings and oil fields, and to establish an embargo over the KRI including through shutting down international flights to and from Erbil and Sulaymaniyah airports in the KRI.⁶⁴ Turkey and Iran threatened similar action considering their sizable Kurdish populations which they feared would be emboldened by this step. International powers who were considered allies of the Kurds like the United Kingdom, Russia, and the United States, opposed the move as well.⁶⁵ The referendum had a turnover rate as high as 72% with 4.5 million registered voters. 92.73% of them voted in favor of independence.⁶⁶ President Barzani went forward with the referendum despite Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi's demands to cancel it, saying that his government will no longer be open to talks once the referendum is carried out. Soon after, Iraqi forces and militias supported by Iran launched a major operation to retake Kirkuk which was held by the Kurds since the Iraqi army fled it when ISIS attacked. The Peshmerga forces who were instructed "not to initiate any war" withdrew and turned the city over to the Iraqi forces.⁶⁷ Once the Iraqi forces took over, over 100,000 Kurds fled the city, most of them were civilians who were affiliated with Kurdish political parties and especially Barzani's KDP.⁶⁸

Past UN resolutions

Unilateral referendums happen around the world independent of the central government and they do not work to declare independence but rather are symbolic or

aspirational in nature.⁶⁹ This is exactly what President Barzani said when he announced the referendum. Past similar instances include South Ossetia, Abkhazia, Transnistria, Gagauzia, Nagorno-Karabakh, Somaliland, and Catalonia.⁷⁰ Some examples of resolutions that the committee has taken up in relation to this issue include: (A/AC.109/2018/L.22) on New Caledonia, (A/AC.109/2018/L.24) on French Polynesia, (A/AC.109/2018/L.20) on Turks and Caicos Islands, and (A/AC.109/2018/L.21) on United States Virgin Islands.⁷¹

The General Assembly's resolution 1514 (XV) of 1960 and 1541 (XV) state that any form of colonization or exploitation is a violation of the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. They establish the decolonization mandate allowing Member States to examine the level of self-government in listed territories. Other resolutions allow the committee to examine non-self-governing territories on a case-by-case basis.⁷²

The UN Security Council passed resolution 688 in 1991 which calls on Article 2, paragraph 7 of the UN Charter, which came at the time that Saddam Hussein was threatening to revenge Kurdish civilians for the rebellion they started against his government.⁷³

KEY ACTORS

Turkey

Despite Turkey's strenuous relationship with its own Kurdish population and the Kurds of Syria as seen above in the first topic, the country had developed a close relationship with the KRI,

due to mainly their trade agreement. The KRG relied on Turkey because it was a rentier state that relied solely on its oil and gas exports with underdeveloped industries. Turkey also relied on the KRI as a market for its goods but it always held the upper hand. The KRG would not be able to sell any of its oil if it did not rely on its pipelines that go through Turkey. It also used the Turkish banking system to collect the revenue from its sells. The KRG also allowed Turkey to strike against the PKK in the KRI's Qandil mountains near the border.

Yet despite this relationship, Turkey was always strongly opposed to any Kurdish independence aspirations for fears that it could empower its own Kurdish population. President Erdogan warned that it would let the KRG "starve" because of this referendum.⁷⁴

The United States

The US is allies with Kurds as mentioned before in the first topic. However, their alliance with the Kurds of Iraq is more special in the sense that it extends beyond mere military strategies. It also recognizes the region and even hosts an embassy there. Its support for Kurdistan was crucial during the Peshmergas' fight against ISIS. The Kurds have for long gone back and forth between the Soviet Union and later Russia and the US. But, they have relied on the US more especially when it comes to taking the next steps but the US has backed down from fully supporting the Kurds multiple times even after they take decisive steps like rebellions, etc.⁷⁵ At the time of the referendum, the US policy towards Iraq now is a unified and sovereign Iraq even though the Kurds are its biggest allies in the country now.⁷⁶

Arab League

The Arab League prefer to not get too involved in the issue of Kurdistan. They, however, criticize Kurdistan's amicable relationship with Israel. Israel publicly supports Kurdish self-determination rights and has some presence in the region. Other Arab countries like Saudi Arabia view Kurdistan of Iraq as a majority Sunni Muslim region that they can sometimes use to stop the influence of Shiite Iran and the Baghdad government from growing even more.

Iran

Iran has a population of about ten million Kurds who are denied political and cultural rights and representation in the country. Also, as mentioned earlier, the majority of Kurds are Sunni Muslims so they could stop in the way of Iran's Shiite expansion ambitions.⁷⁷

Looking forward/questions to consider

Our committee not only deals with colonization issues but also with matters of self-government legitimacy in terms of political rights. The question of Kurdish independence is very interlinked with regional and international politics and it is important that delegates understand those complexities in general but also their countries' positions and approach. However, this committee is trying to approach this issue constructively and to evaluate the legitimacy of the Kurdish people's claims in multiple facets, mainly self-determination right and human and political rights violations. Beyond that, delegates should also consider the United Nations' relationship with the Kurds and the extent to which they offer them recognition through membership or observation status in the UN. They should also consider the support they provide

through, for example, increasing their involvement in the concerned region in order to monitor and protect against rights violations. Empowering a sizeable persecuted minority such as the Kurds will better enable this body to address the issues of human rights abuse facing this population. While this body is limited in its ability to issue protection against human rights abuses, it can also extend special missions in the concerned regions such as the one in the Palestinian territories or it could expand the existing missions and functions of the UN in that region. Also, the legitimacy of a self-governing body is needed for vulnerable populations to successfully receive greater protection and aid in general. This body which is also considered with political rights can provide the necessary support if it decides to after evaluating the legitimacy of the people's claims.

Glossary

KRG - Kurdistan Regional Government

KRI - Kurdistan Region of Iraq

YPG - People's Protection Units

YPJ - Women's Protection Units

PYD - Democratic Union Party

PKK - Kurdistan Workers' Party

NATO - North Atlantic Treaty Organization

ICG - Iraqi Central Government

Rojava - Western Kurdistan (Kurdistan of Syria)

KDP - Kurdistan Democratic Party

Peshmerga - 'those who face death' Kurdish forces

PUK - Patriotic Union of Kurdistan

FSA - Free Syrian Army

HDP - People's Democratic Party

Bibliography

"100,000 Kurds Flee Kirkuk since Iraqi Army Takeover -Kurdish Officials." Reuters. Thomson Reuters, October 19, 2017. <https://www.reuters.com/article/mideast-crisis-iraq-kurds/100000-kurds-flee-kirkuk-since-iraqi-army-takeover-kurdish-officials-idUSL8N1MU2NJ>.

"Aligning with Fourth Committee, General Assembly Adopts 28 Texts across Sweeping Political, Decolonization Agenda, with Several Requiring Recorded Votes | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases." United Nations News. United Nations. Accessed January 15, 2020. <https://www.un.org/press/en/2014/ga11597.doc.htm>.

Baker, Peter, and Lara Jakes. "Trump Throws Middle East Policy Into Turmoil Over Syria." The New York Times. The New York Times, October 7, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/07/us/politics/turkey-syria-trump.html>.

Calamur, Krishnadev. "Why Doesn't the U.S. Support Kurdish Independence?" The Atlantic. Atlantic Media Company, October 20, 2017. <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/10/us-kurdish-independence/543540/>.

"Chapter XI." United Nations. United Nations. Accessed January 15, 2020. <https://www.un.org/en/sections/un-charter/chapter-xi/index.html>.

Chulov, Martin, and Fazel Hawramy. "Peshmerga Forces Enter Sinjar in Fight against Isis." The Guardian. Guardian News and Media, November 13, 2015. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/13/peshmerga-forces-sinjar-isis-oust-gunfire-kurdish>.

Collin, Katy. "The Kurdish Referendum Won't Deliver Independence-Here's Why It Matters Anyway." Brookings. Brookings, September 19, 2017. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/markaz/2017/09/19/the-kurdish-referendum-wont-deliver-independence-heres-why-it-matters-anyway/>.

Collin, Katy. "The Kurdish Referendum Won't Deliver Independence-Here's Why It Matters Anyway." Brookings. Brookings, September 19, 2017. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/markaz/2017/09/19/the-kurdish-referendum-wont-deliver-independence-heres-why-it-matters-anyway/>.

Dalay, Galip. "After the Kurdish Independence Referendum." Foreign Affairs. Foreign Affairs Magazine, August 14, 2019. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2017-10-02/after-kurdish-independence-referendum>.

"De-Escalation of Turkish Military Operation in Northern Syria 'Absolutely Essential' | UN News." United Nations News. United Nations, October 10, 2019. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/10/1049021>.

"Divided UN Fails to Agree on Turkey's Syria Offensive: DW: 10.10.2019." DW.COM. Accessed January 15, 2020. <https://www.dw.com/en/divided-un-fails-to-agree-on-turkeys-syria-offensive/a-50786639>.

Engel, Richard, Marc Smith, and Linda Givetash. "Kurdish Leader Says Trump Promised He Would Protect the Kurds." NBCNews.com. NBCUniversal News Group, October 17, 2019. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/kurdish-leader-says-trump-promised-he-would-protect-kurds-n1068071>.

"Fourth Committee | the United Nations and Decolonization." United Nations. United Nations. Accessed January 15, 2020. <https://www.un.org/dppa/decolonization/en/fourth-committee>.

Gol, Jiyar. "Syria Conflict: The 'War Crimes' Caught in Brutal Phone Footage." BBC News. BBC, November 3, 2019. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-50250330>.

"Google Maps." Google My Maps. Google. Accessed January 15, 2020. https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/embed?mid=1umTU2XPomzQ245YY40dF_NNTpVc&ie=UTF8&t=h&oe=UTF8&msa=0&ll=39.45193528013647,45.87890581250008&spn=8.45726,13.02795&output=embed&z=5.

Gurini, Ferhat. "Turkey's Persistent Kurdish Question." Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, April 19, 2018. <https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/76128>.

Hesso, Aimad. "The Syrian Kurds: Oppression, Isolation, Exodus." Kurdistan24, April 17, 2018. <https://www.kurdistan24.net/en/opinion/3e035596-7b0d-42a7-af10-c1f86bc93b48>.

Hoffman, Max. "The State of the Turkish-Kurdish Conflict." Center for American Progress. Accessed January 15, 2020. <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/security/reports/2019/08/12/473508/state-turkish-kurdish-conflict/>.

IC, Rojava. "Turkish Invasion Provokes 48% Rise in ISIS Sleeper Cell Attacks." Rojava Information Center. Rojava IC <https://rojavainformationcenter.com/storage/2019/01/rojavaic-logo-top.svg>, December 15, 2019. <https://rojavainformationcenter.com/2019/11/new-data-turkish-invasion-provokes-48-rise-in-isis-sleeper-cell-attacks/>.

Ioanes, Ellen. "11,000 Kurds Died Fighting ISIS and Now the US Is Abandoning Them - Who Will Help America next Time?" Business Insider. Business Insider, October 8, 2019. <https://www.businessinsider.com/military-leaders-warn-trump-abandoning-ally-grave-mistake-2019-10>.

"ISIS Launches Attacks after Cease-Fire Starts in Syria." CBS News. CBS Interactive, February 27, 2016. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/isis-attacks-syria-us-russia-ceasefire/>.

"Iraqi Forces Launch 'Major' Kirkuk Operation." Iraq News | Al Jazeera. Al Jazeera, October 16, 2017. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/10/iraqi-forces-launch-major-kirkuk-operation-171015220651177.html>.

"Iraqi Kurdistan Profile." BBC News. BBC, April 25, 2018. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-28147263>.

Jeffery, Simon. "The Kurds: a History of Suppression." The Guardian. Guardian News and Media, August 17, 2001. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/aug/17/kurds.iraq>.

Kareem Fahim, Karen DeYoung. "Trump Says a Limited Number of Troops Will Remain in Syria after Ordering a Complete Withdrawal." The Washington Post. WP Company, October 22, 2019. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/us-discussing-proposal-to-leave-troops-around-syrias-oil-fields-pentagon-says/2019/10/21/0b024d4c-f401-11e9-8cf0-4cc99f74d127_story.html.

Kheel, Rebecca. "House Approves Turkey Sanctions in Rare Bipartisan Rebuke of Trump." TheHill. The Hill, November 11, 2019. <https://thehill.com/policy/defense/467986-house-approves-turkey-sanctions-in-rare-bipartisan-rebuke-of-trump>.

Kingsley, Patrick. "Who Are the Kurds, and Why Is Turkey Attacking Them in Syria?" The New York Times. The New York Times, October 14, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/14/world/middleeast/the-kurds-facts-history.html>.

Landler, Mark, Helene Cooper, and Eric Schmitt. "Trump to Withdraw U.S. Forces From Syria, Declaring 'We Have Won Against ISIS'." The New York Times. The New York Times, December 19, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/19/us/politics/trump-syria-turkey-troop-withdrawal.html>.

Loyd, Anthony. "Syria: U-Turn over Investigation into 'White Phosphorus Injuries' after Turkey's Clash with Kurds." World | the Times. The Times, November 2, 2019. <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/syria-un-refuses-to-investigate-claims-of-white-phosphorus-use-in-turkish-offensive-3bv7qdmxz>.

Malik, Kenan. "Syria's Kurds Dreamt of a 'Rojava Revolution'. Assad Will Snuff This out | Kenan Malik." The Guardian. Guardian News and Media, October 27, 2019. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/oct/27/syria-kurds-dreamt-of-rojava-revolution-assad-will-snuff-this-out>.

McKernan, Benthon. "93 Per Cent Vote Yes in Kurdish Independence Referendum." The Independent. Independent Digital News and Media, October 10, 2017. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/kurdistan-referendum-results-vote-yes-iraqi-kurds-independence-iran-syria-a7970241.html>.

Phillips, David, and Kelly Berkell. "The Case for Delisting the PKK as a Foreign Terrorist Organization." Lawfare, October 31, 2019. <https://www.lawfareblog.com/case-delisting-pkk-foreign-terrorist-organization>.

Press, Associated. "Russia Warns Syrian Kurds against Relying on U.S. Support." PBS. Public Broadcasting Service, November 26, 2019. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/russia-warns-syrian-kurds-against-relying-on-u-s-support>.

"Resolution 688." UNSCR. United Nations, April 5, 1991. <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/688>.

Riegl, Martin, and Bohumil Dobos. *Unrecognized States and Secession in the 21st Century*. SPRINGER INTERNATIONAL PU, 2017.

Sabbagh, Dan. "Investigation into Alleged Use of White Phosphorus in Syria." The Guardian. Guardian News and Media, October 18, 2019. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/oct/18/un-investigates-turkey-alleged-use-of-white-phosphorus-in-syria>.

Schmitt, Eric. "U.S. Resumes Large-Scale Operations Against ISIS in Northern Syria." The New York Times. The New York Times, November 25, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/25/us/politics/us-syria-isis.html>.

"Situation Syria Regional Refugees." Operation Portal Refugee Situations. United Nations, December 31, 2019. <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria/location/113>.

Snow, Shawn. "Silent Protest? Withdrawing US Soldier Seen Wearing Previously Banned Kurdish Militia Patch." Military Times. Military Times, October 21, 2019. <https://www.militarytimes.com/flashpoints/2019/10/21/silent-protest-withdrawing-us-soldier-seen-wearing-previously-banned-kurdish-militia-patch/>.

"Special Committee on Decolonization Approves 22 Draft Resolutions, Decisions as It Concludes Two-Week Session | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases." United Nations. United Nations. Accessed January 15, 2020. <https://www.un.org/press/en/2018/gacol3327.doc.htm>.

"State Department Maintains Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) Designation of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)." U.S. Embassy & Consulates in Turkey, March 2, 2019. <https://tr.usembassy.gov/state-department-maintains-foreign-terrorist-organization-fto-designation-of-the-kurdistan-workers-party-pkk/>.

Stein, Aaron. "Operation Olive Branch: Status Update." Atlantic Council, March 13, 2018. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/syriacouncil/operation-olive-branch-status-update/>.

Steve Sweeney Sunday, November 3. "OPCW Abandons Turkey Chemical Attack Investigation." Morning Star, November 4, 2019. <https://morningstaronline.co.uk/article/f/opcw-abandons-turkey-chemical-attack-investigation>.

Sulaymaniyah University. "Why Is Iran Against the Independence Referendum?" The Washington Institute, September 22, 2017. <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/fikraforum/view/why-is-iran-against-the-independence-referendum>.

"The Kurdish Struggle for Autonomy from the 1970s to the Present." Foreign Policy Research Institute. Accessed January 15, 2020. <https://www.fpri.org/article/2019/07/the-kurdish-struggle-for-autonomy-from-the-1970s-to-the-present/>.

"The Time of the Kurds: A CFR InfoGuide Presentation." Council on Foreign Relations. Council on Foreign Relations. Accessed January 15, 2020. https://www.cfr.org/interactives/time-kurds?gclid=CjwKCAiAx_DwBRAfEiwA3vwZYrh60s5gso-yH7qGGPiAVqCsPcEd-2Ya1ZloYR4ljZTgX_6fDTwIMRoCsW8QAvD_BwE#!/time-kurds?gclid=CjwKCAiAx_DwBRAfEiwA3vwZYrh60s5gso-yH7qGGPiAVqCsPcEd-2Ya1ZloYR4ljZTgX_6fDTwIMRoCsW8QAvD_BwE.

"Timeline: the Rise, Spread, and fall of the Islamic State." Wilson Center, October 28, 2019. <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/timeline-the-rise-spread-and-fall-the-islamic-state>.

Trew Middle East Correspondent @beltrew, Bel. "Why Turkey's Invasion into Syria Could Spark a Humanitarian Catastrophe." The Independent. Independent Digital News and Media, October 9, 2019. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/turkey-syria-invasion-civillians-civil-war-refugees-a9149476.html>.

"Turkey's Syria Offensive Could Spark Another Catastrophe, Warn Humanitarians | UN News." United Nations News. United Nations, October 11, 2019. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/10/1049051>.

“UN Documentation: Peacekeeping.” United Nations. United Nations. Accessed January 15, 2020. <https://research.un.org/en/docs/peacekeeping/ga>.

“United Nations, Main Body, Main Organs, General Assembly.” United Nations. United Nations. Accessed January 15, 2020. <https://www.un.org/en/ga/fourth/>.

Vandiver, John. “Turkey's President Says He Could Close Incirlik Air Base over US Sanctions.” Stars and Stripes. Accessed January 15, 2020. <https://www.stripes.com/news/europe/turkey-s-president-says-he-could-close-incirlik-air-base-over-us-sanctions-1.611343>.

“War: Daily Summary.” Rojava Information Center. Accessed January 15, 2020. <https://rojavainformationcenter.com/daily-summary/>.

“Who Are the Kurds?” BBC News. BBC, October 15, 2019. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29702440>.

Wintour, Patrick. “Recep Tayyip Erdoğan Proposes 'Safe Zone' for Refugees in Syria.” The Guardian. Guardian News and Media, September 24, 2019. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/sep/24/erdogan-proposes-plan-for-refugee-safe-zone-in-syria>.

Zucchini, David, and Margaret Coker. “Iraq Escalates Dispute With Kurds, Threatening Military Action.” The New York Times. The New York Times, September 27, 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/27/world/middleeast/kurdistan-referendum-iraq.html>.

Ülgen, Sinan, and Can Kasapoğlu. “Operation Euphrates Shield: Aims and Gains.” Carnegie Europe, January 19, 2017. <https://carnegieeurope.eu/2017/01/19/operation-euphrates-shield-aims-and-gains-pub-67754>.

¹“United Nations, Main Body, Main Organs, General Assembly.” United Nations. United Nations. Accessed January 15, 2020. <https://www.un.org/en/ga/fourth/>.

²“Fourth Committee | The United Nations and Decolonization.” United Nations. United Nations. Accessed January 15, 2020. <https://www.un.org/dppa/decolonization/en/fourth-committee>.

³ *ibid*

⁴ *ibid*

⁵Gurini, Ferhat. “Turkey’s Persistent Kurdish Question.” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, April 19, 2018. <https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/76128>.

⁶Hoffman, Max. “The State of the Turkish-Kurdish Conflict.” Center for American Progress, August 12, 2019. <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/security/reports/2019/08/12/473508/state-turkish-kurdish-conflict/>.

⁷Landler, Mark, Helene Cooper, and Eric Schmitt. “Trump to Withdraw U.S. Forces From Syria, Declaring ‘We Have Won Against ISIS’.” The New York Times. The New York Times, December 19, 2018.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/19/us/politics/trump-syria-turkey-troop-withdrawal.html>.

⁸Baker, Peter, and Lara Jakes. “Trump Throws Middle East Policy Into Turmoil Over Syria.” The New York Times. The New York Times, October 7, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/07/us/politics/turkey-syria-trump.html>.

⁹“The Time of the Kurds: A CFR InfoGuide Presentation.” Council on Foreign Relations. Council on Foreign Relations. Accessed January 15, 2020. https://www.cfr.org/interactives/time-kurds?gclid=CjwKCAiAx_DwBRAfEiwA3vwZYrh60s5gso-yH7qGGPiAVqCsPcEd-2Ya1ZloYR4ljZTgX_6fDTwIMRoCsW8QAvD_BwE#!/time-kurds?gclid=CjwKCAiAx_DwBRAfEiwA3vwZYrh60s5gso-yH7qGGPiAVqCsPcEd-2Ya1ZloYR4ljZTgX_6fDTwIMRoCsW8QAvD_BwE.

¹⁰“Who Are the Kurds?” BBC News. BBC, October 15, 2019. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29702440>.

¹¹Jeffery, Simon. “The Kurds: a History of Suppression.” The Guardian. Guardian News and Media, August 17, 2001. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/aug/17/kurds.iraq>.

¹²“Google Maps.” Google My Maps. Google. Accessed January 15, 2020.

https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/embed?mid=1umTU2XPomzQ245YY40dF_NNTPvc&ie=UTF8&t=h&oe=UTF8&msa=0&ll=39.45193528013647,45.87890581250008&spn=8.45726,13.02795&output=embed&z=5.

¹³“Syria’s Kurds: A Struggle within a Struggle.” Crisis Group, January 22, 2013. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/eastern-mediterranean/syria/syria-s-kurds-struggle-within-struggle>.

¹⁴Hesso, Aimad. “The Syrian Kurds: Oppression, Isolation, Exodus.” Kurdistan24, April 17, 2018.

<https://www.kurdistan24.net/en/opinion/3e035596-7b0d-42a7-af10-c1f86bc93b48>.

¹⁵“State Department Maintains Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) Designation of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK).” U.S. Embassy & Consulates in Turkey, March 2, 2019. <https://tr.usembassy.gov/state-department-maintains-foreign-terrorist-organization-fto-designation-of-the-kurdistan-workers-party-pkk/>.

¹⁶Phillips, David, and Kelly Berkell. “The Case for Delisting the PKK as a Foreign Terrorist Organization.” Lawfare, October 31, 2019. <https://www.lawfareblog.com/case-delisting-pkk-foreign-terrorist-organization>.

¹⁷Kingsley, Patrick. “Who Are the Kurds, and Why Is Turkey Attacking Them in Syria?” The New York Times. The New York Times, October 14, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/14/world/middleeast/the-kurds-facts-history.html>.

¹⁸Hoffman, Max. “The State of the Turkish-Kurdish Conflict.” Center for American Progress. Accessed January 15, 2020. <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/security/reports/2019/08/12/473508/state-turkish-kurdish-conflict/>.

¹⁹Ülgen, Sinan, and Can Kasapoğlu. “Operation Euphrates Shield: Aims and Gains.” Carnegie Europe, January 19, 2017. <https://carnegieeurope.eu/2017/01/19/operation-euphrates-shield-aims-and-gains-pub-67754>.

-
- ²⁰"ISIS Launches Attacks after Cease-Fire Starts in Syria." CBS News. CBS Interactive, February 27, 2016. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/isis-attacks-syria-us-russia-ceasefire/>.
- ²¹Stein, Aaron. "Operation Olive Branch: Status Update." Atlantic Council, March 13, 2018. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/syriasource/operation-olive-branch-status-update/>.
- ²²Landler, Mark, Helene Cooper, and Eric Schmitt. "Trump to Withdraw U.S. Forces From Syria, Declaring 'We Have Won Against ISIS'." The New York Times. The New York Times, December 19, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/19/us/politics/trump-syria-turkey-troop-withdrawal.html>.
- ²³Kingsley, Patrick. "Who Are the Kurds, and Why Is Turkey Attacking Them in Syria?" The New York Times. The New York Times, October 14, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/14/world/middleeast/the-kurds-facts-history.html>.
- ²⁴"Divided UN Fails to Agree on Turkey's Syria Offensive: DW: 10.10.2019." DW.COM. Accessed January 15, 2020. <https://www.dw.com/en/divided-un-fails-to-agree-on-turkeys-syria-offensive/a-50786639>.
- ²⁵"War: Daily Summary." Rojava Information Center. Accessed January 15, 2020. <https://rojavainformationcenter.com/daily-summary/>.
- ²⁶ibid
- ²⁷Ioanes, Ellen. "11,000 Kurds Died Fighting ISIS and Now the US Is Abandoning Them - Who Will Help America next Time?" Business Insider. Business Insider, October 8, 2019. <https://www.businessinsider.com/military-leaders-warn-trump-abandoning-ally-grave-mistake-2019-10>.
- ²⁸Engel, Richard, Marc Smith, and Linda Givetash. "Kurdish Leader Says Trump Promised He Would Protect the Kurds." NBCNews.com. NBCUniversal News Group, October 17, 2019. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/kurdish-leader-says-trump-promised-he-would-protect-kurds-n1068071>.
- ²⁹Trew Middle East Correspondent @beltrew, Bel. "Why Turkey's Invasion into Syria Could Spark a Humanitarian Catastrophe." The Independent. Independent Digital News and Media, October 9, 2019. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/turkey-syria-invasion-civillians-civil-war-refugees-a9149476.html>.
- ³⁰Trew Middle East Correspondent @beltrew, Bel. "Kurdish Forces in North Syria Warn They Cannot Secure Isis Prisons for Much Longer." The Independent. Independent Digital News and Media, October 25, 2019. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/isis-prisons-kurds-syria-turkey-latest-a9171706.html>.
- ³¹IC, Rojava. "**NEW DATA: Turkish Invasion Provokes 48% Rise in ISIS Sleeper Cell Attacks*." Rojava Information Center. Rojava IC <https://rojavainformationcenter.com/storage/2019/01/rojavaic-logo-top.svg>, November 5, 2019. <https://rojavainformationcenter.com/2019/11/new-data-turkish-invasion-provokes-48-rise-in-isis-sleeper-cell-attacks/>.
- ³²"Situation Syria Regional Refugees." Operation Portal Refugee Situations. United Nations, December 31, 2019. <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria/location/113>. <https://www.dw.com/en/divided-un-fails-to-agree-on-turkeys-syria-offensive/a-50786639>
- ³³Wintour, Patrick. "Recep Tayyip Erdoğan Proposes 'Safe Zone' for Refugees in Syria." The Guardian. Guardian News and Media, September 24, 2019. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/sep/24/erdogan-proposes-plan-for-refugee-safe-zone-in-syria>.
- ³⁴"Turkey's Syria Offensive Could Spark Another Catastrophe, Warn Humanitarians | UN News." United Nations News. United Nations, October 11, 2019. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/10/1049051>.
- ³⁵Gol, Jiyar. "Syria Conflict: The 'War Crimes' Caught in Brutal Phone Footage." BBC News. BBC, November 3, 2019. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-50250330>.
- ³⁶"War: Daily Summary." Rojava Information Center. Accessed January 15, 2020. <https://rojavainformationcenter.com/daily-summary/>.
- ³⁷"De-Escalation of Turkish Military Operation in Northern Syria 'Absolutely Essential' | UN News." United Nations News. United Nations, October 10, 2019. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/10/1049021>.

³⁸Sabbagh, Dan. "Investigation into Alleged Use of White Phosphorus in Syria." The Guardian. Guardian News and Media, October 18, 2019. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/oct/18/un-investigates-turkey-alleged-use-of-white-phosphorus-in-syria>.

³⁹Loyd, Anthony. "Syria: U-Turn over Investigation into 'White Phosphorus Injuries' after Turkey's Clash with Kurds." World | The Times. The Times, November 2, 2019. <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/syria-un-refuses-to-investigate-claims-of-white-phosphorus-use-in-turkish-offensive-3bv7qdmxz>.

⁴⁰Steve Sweeney Sunday, November 3. "OPCW Abandons Turkey Chemical Attack Investigation." Morning Star, November 4, 2019. <https://morningstaronline.co.uk/article/f/opcw-abandons-turkey-chemical-attack-investigation>.

⁴¹Sabbagh, Dan. "Ilhan Omar Writes to US Syria Envoy over Turkish White Phosphorus Allegations." The Guardian. Guardian News and Media, December 18, 2019. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/dec/18/ilhan-omar-asks-for-facts-of-white-phosphorus-use-on-syrian-kurds-by-turkey>.

⁴²"De-Escalation of Turkish Military Operation in Northern Syria 'Absolutely Essential' | UN News." United Nations News. United Nations, October 10, 2019. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/10/1049021>.

⁴³"Divided UN Fails to Agree on Turkey's Syria Offensive: DW: 10.10.2019." DW.COM. Accessed January 15, 2020. <https://www.dw.com/en/divided-un-fails-to-agree-on-turkeys-syria-offensive/a-50786639>.

⁴⁴"Aligning with Fourth Committee, General Assembly Adopts 28 Texts across Sweeping Political, Decolonization Agenda, with Several Requiring Recorded Votes | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases." United Nations News. United Nations. Accessed January 15, 2020. <https://www.un.org/press/en/2014/ga11597.doc.htm>.

⁴⁵"War: Daily Summary." Rojava Information Center. Accessed January 15, 2020. <https://rojivainformationcenter.com/daily-summary/>.

⁴⁶Press, Associated. "Russia Warns Syrian Kurds against Relying on U.S. Support." PBS. Public Broadcasting Service, November 26, 2019. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/russia-warns-syrian-kurds-against-relying-on-u-s-support>.

⁴⁷Snow, Shawn. "Silent Protest? Withdrawing US Soldier Seen Wearing Previously Banned Kurdish Militia Patch." Military Times. Military Times, October 21, 2019. <https://www.militarytimes.com/flashpoints/2019/10/21/silent-protest-withdrawing-us-soldier-seen-wearing-previously-banned-kurdish-militia-patch/>.

⁴⁸Kareem Fahim, Karen DeYoung. "Trump Says a Limited Number of Troops Will Remain in Syria after Ordering a Complete Withdrawal." The Washington Post. WP Company, October 22, 2019. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/us-discussing-proposal-to-leave-troops-around-syrias-oil-fields-pentagon-says/2019/10/21/0b024d4c-f401-11e9-8cf0-4cc99f74d127_story.html.

⁴⁹Schmitt, Eric. "U.S. Resumes Large-Scale Operations Against ISIS in Northern Syria." The New York Times. The New York Times, November 25, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/25/us/politics/us-syria-isis.html>.

⁵⁰Kheel, Rebecca. "House Approves Turkey Sanctions in Rare Bipartisan Rebuke of Trump." The Hill. The Hill, November 11, 2019. <https://thehill.com/policy/defense/467986-house-approves-turkey-sanctions-in-rare-bipartisan-rebuke-of-trump>.

⁵¹Vandiver, John. "Turkey's President Says He Could Close Incirlik Air Base over US Sanctions." Stars and Stripes. Accessed January 15, 2020. <https://www.stripes.com/news/europe/turkey-s-president-says-he-could-close-incirlik-air-base-over-us-sanctions-1.611343>.

⁵²"The Kurdish Struggle for Autonomy from the 1970s to the Present." Foreign Policy Research Institute. Accessed January 15, 2020. <https://www.fpri.org/article/2019/07/the-kurdish-struggle-for-autonomy-from-the-1970s-to-the-present/>.

⁵³Malik, Kenan. "Syria's Kurds Dreamt of a 'Rojava Revolution'. Assad Will Snuff This out | Kenan Malik." The Guardian. Guardian News and Media, October 27, 2019. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/oct/27/syria-kurds-dreamt-of-rojava-revolution-assad-will-snuff-this-out>.

⁵⁴“UN Documentation: Peacekeeping.” United Nations. United Nations. Accessed January 15, 2020. <https://research.un.org/en/docs/peacekeeping/ga>.

⁵⁵ Riegl, Martin, and Bohumil Dobos. *Unrecognized States and Secession in the 21st Century*. SPRINGER INTERNATIONAL PU, 2017. https://books.google.com/books?id=xAlmDwAAQBAJ&pg=PA160&lpg=PA160&dq=krg+never+receive+the+17%25+from+iraqi+central+government&source=bl&ots=7dtxMNYXkq&sig=ACfU3U3kv5zehvd9fcWhWCUR_fMi1OyWZA&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKewjs_dKw9YHnAhX4IDQIHSPKBlgQ6AEWA3oECAgQAQ#v=onepage&q=krg%20never%20receive%20the%2017%25%20from%20iraqi%20central%20government&f=false

⁵⁶“Chapter XI.” United Nations. United Nations. Accessed January 15, 2020. <https://www.un.org/en/sections/un-charter/chapter-xi/index.html>.

⁵⁷“Iraqi Kurdistan Profile.” BBC News. BBC, April 25, 2018. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-28147263>.

⁵⁸*ibid*

⁵⁹*ibid*

⁶⁰“Timeline: the Rise, Spread, and fall of the Islamic State.” Wilson Center, October 28, 2019. <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/timeline-the-rise-spread-and-fall-the-islamic-state>.

⁶¹Chulov, Martin, and Fazel Hawramy. “Peshmerga Forces Enter Sinjar in Fight against Isis.” The Guardian. Guardian News and Media, November 13, 2015. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/13/peshmerga-forces-sinjar-isis-oust-gunfire-kurdish>.

⁶²“Iraqi Kurdistan Profile.” BBC News. BBC, April 25, 2018. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-28147263>.

⁶³Collin, Katy. “The Kurdish Referendum Won't Deliver Independence-Here's Why It Matters Anyway.” Brookings. Brookings, September 19, 2017. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/markaz/2017/09/19/the-kurdish-referendum-wont-deliver-independence-heres-why-it-matters-anyway/>.

⁶⁴Zucchini, David, and Margaret Coker. “Iraq Escalates Dispute With Kurds, Threatening Military Action.” The New York Times. The New York Times, September 27, 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/27/world/middleeast/kurdistan-referendum-iraq.html>.

⁶⁵Dalay, Galip. “After the Kurdish Independence Referendum.” Foreign Affairs. Foreign Affairs Magazine, August 14, 2019. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2017-10-02/after-kurdish-independence-referendum>.

⁶⁶McKernan, Benthon. “93 Per Cent Vote Yes in Kurdish Independence Referendum.” The Independent. Independent Digital News and Media, October 10, 2017. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/kurdistan-referendum-results-vote-yes-iraqi-kurds-independence-iran-syria-a7970241.html>.

⁶⁷“Iraqi Forces Launch 'Major' Kirkuk Operation.” Iraq News | Al Jazeera. Al Jazeera, October 16, 2017. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/10/iraqi-forces-launch-major-kirkuk-operation-171015220651177.html>.

⁶⁸“100,000 Kurds Flee Kirkuk since Iraqi Army Takeover -Kurdish Officials.” Reuters. Thomson Reuters, October 19, 2017. <https://www.reuters.com/article/mideast-crisis-iraq-kurds/100000-kurds-flee-kirkuk-since-iraqi-army-takeover-kurdish-officials-idUSL8N1MU2NJ>.

⁶⁹Collin, Katy. “The Kurdish Referendum Won't Deliver Independence-Here's Why It Matters Anyway.” Brookings. Brookings, September 19, 2017. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/markaz/2017/09/19/the-kurdish-referendum-wont-deliver-independence-heres-why-it-matters-anyway/>.

⁷⁰*ibid*

⁷¹“Special Committee on Decolonization Approves 22 Draft Resolutions, Decisions as It Concludes Two-Week Session | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases.” United Nations. United Nations. Accessed January 15, 2020. <https://www.un.org/press/en/2018/gacol3327.doc.htm>.

⁷²*ibid*

⁷³“Resolution 688.” UNSCR. United Nations, April 5, 1991. <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/688>.

⁷⁴McKernan, Benthon. "93 Per Cent Vote Yes in Kurdish Independence Referendum." The Independent. Independent Digital News and Media, October 10, 2017. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/kurdistan-referendum-results-vote-yes-iraqi-kurds-independence-iran-syria-a7970241.html>.

⁷⁵ <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/10/us-kurdish-independence/543540/>

⁷⁶Calamur, Krishnadev. "Why Doesn't the U.S. Support Kurdish Independence?" The Atlantic. Atlantic Media Company, October 20, 2017. <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/10/us-kurdish-independence/543540/>.

⁷⁷Sulaymaniyah University. "Why Is Iran Against the Independence Referendum?" The Washington Institute, September 22, 2017. <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/fikraforum/view/why-is-iran-against-the-independence-referendum>.