

KURDS IN TURKEY

The Kurds are an Indo-European people who settled in the Middle East approximately 4,000 years ago. After Arabs and Turks, they are the single largest ethnic group in the Middle East, comprising roughly 20 million people. Kurds have their own distinctive language, culture, and history - and their land is known as "Kurdistan".

This land was divided, in order to serve the post-World War I imperial interests of England and France, between the newly created states of Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria. Since that time, Kurds have struggled for their national identity and their legitimate right for equality.

Because of our common interest in the State of Turkey, and the fact that approximately one-half of the Kurdish population is concentrated there, I will limit my discussion to the Kurds living in Turkey.

The Kurdistan of Turkey covers approximately one-third of the country's territory, extending into the southern and southeastern regions. ~~11~~ Ten million Kurds live in Turkey (though this figure is not based on government census figures since the Turkish Government has chosen to ignore Kurds living there) and, of these, seventy percent live in rural areas where the unemployment level is extremely high.

Following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, a struggle ensued to establish a Turkish republic and the Kurds were instrumental in bringing about this objective. They aided Turkish leaders such as Mustafa Kemal, Ismet Inano, and Fathi Beq, who so admired their allegiance that they promised Kurds autonomy. However, following their victory in establishing a republic in Turkey - a victory made possible by Kurdish involvement - these leaders chose to ignore their promise to the Kurds. Instead, they attacked them. Mr. Nehru, the Indian Prime Minister, remarked in his writings that the Turks, who had themselves fought against oppression and imperialism, had in turn initiated the same policies against the Kurds living in Turkey.

In March of 1925, the Kurds - led by Sheikh Saeed Piran - staged an uprising against the Turkish Government. However, due to the Turkish Government's superior military arms, as well as their support from imperialist powers, the revolution was crushed in a bloody battle on June 27, 1929. On that day, 47 Kurdish nationals were hung without trial - including the revolution's leaders, Sheikh Saeed Piran and General Ismail Fakhri Bakir. On June 28, the Turkish Government led a massacre into the city and villages of Kurdistan, killing thousands of civilians and supporters alike.

Despite the terrible history of Kurds living in Turkey, nothing can parallel their treatment at the hands of the

current Turkish military regime which is supported by the United States. Martial law has been instituted in every Kurdish city in Turkey and every conceivable, barbaric action has been taken against the Kurdish population in their struggle for autonomy.

Five thousand members of the Kurdistan Workers Party were jailed and hundreds of others were hung. On March 21, 1982, while Kurdish prisoners were celebrating the traditional New Year (Nawrooz), their guards opened fire and killed 33 of them. It is believed that five of those killed were actually burned in the fire - including a member of the Central Committee of the Kurdistan Workers Party.

The struggle of the people of Turkey for the establishment of a genuinely democratic and popular regime faces many barriers. However, the struggle of the Kurdish people for liberation faces even more formidable obstacles. Nevertheless, a number of progressive forces in Turkey do recognize the existence of the Kurdish nation and deal with the Kurdish national question within the principle of the rights of all nations to self-determination.

The Kurdish people have never had an opportunity to practise their democratic rights and to organise themselves. At this stage of the struggle, the Kurdish people are making strides forward and are able to avoid being victimized by the fascists and reactionaries in Turkey. The struggle of the Kurdish nation aims at increasing national and class consciousness among the peasants, workers and the toilers of Kurdistan. The Kurdish people will not isolate themselves from the progressive forces in Turkey. They consider these forces to be their natural allies. Moreover, the forces of liberation all over the world, the anti-imperialist and anti-fascist forces, are also the natural allies of the Kurdish people and their just struggle.

The Kurdish movement in Turkey is a progressive and revolutionary movement, a movement hostile to imperialism, oppression and feudalism. The Kurdish nation's struggle for liberation and the right of self-determination is a just struggle. There is no doubt that this struggle will be victorious.

KURDISTAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY-Iraq-
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