

# Why A Kurdish Enclave in Syria Is a Very Bad Idea

By Maram Susli

**Source:** [Global Research](#)

[The following points present] a few simple reasons why PYD/YPG claims to federal autonomy and attempts to annex Syrian land are illegitimate, undemocratic, and could lead to genocide:

1. Kurds are not a majority in the Area PYD/YPG are attempting to annex

The region of Al Hasakah, which the Kurdish Nationalist Party (PYD) and its military wing YPG have declared a federal Kurdish state, does not have a Kurdish majority. Al Hasakah Governorate is a mosaic of Assyrian Christians, Armenians, Turkmen, Kurds and Bedouin Arabs. Of the 1.5 million population of Al Hasakah, only 40% are ethnically Kurdish. Moreover, parts of Al Hasakah Governorate, such as Al Hasakah district, is less than 15% Kurdish (!). In the other large minorities in the area the Arabs and Assyrian Christians form a majority. Declaring a small area with a wide array of ethnic groups as belonging to a specific ethnic minority is a recipe for oppression.

The Kurdish population of Al Hasakah has also been heavily infiltrated by illegal Kurdish immigration from Turkey. Kurdish immigration to Syria began in the 1920's and occurred in several waves after multiple failed Kurdish uprisings against Turkey. It continued throughout the century. In 2011 the Kurdish population in Syria reached between 1.6 to 2.3 million, but 420,000 of these left Syria for Iraq and Turkey as a result of the current conflict. Some Syrian Kurds have lived in Homs and Damascus for hundreds of years and are

heavily assimilated into the Syrian society. However, Kurdish illegal immigrants who mostly reside in north Syria, and who could not prove their residence in Syria before 1945, complain of oppression when they were not granted the rights of Syrian citizens. Syrian law dictates that only a blood born Syrian whose paternal lineage is Syrian has a right to Syrian citizenship. No refugee whether Somali, Iraqi or Palestinian has been granted Syrian citizenship no matter how long their stay. In spite of this, in 2011 the Syrian President granted Syrian citizenship to 150,000 Kurds. This has not stopped the YPG from using illegal Kurdish immigrants who were not granted citizenship as a rationale for annexing Syrian land. Those who promote Federalism are imposing the will of a small minority – that is not of Syrian origin – on the whole of Al Hasakah's population and the whole of Syria.

## 2. It is Undemocratic to Impose Federalism on the Majority of Syrians

PYD did not bother to consult with other factions of Syrian society before its unilateral declaration of Federalism. The other ethnicities that reside in Al Hasake governate, which PYD claims is now an autonomous Kurdish state, have clearly rejected federalism. An assembly of Syrian clans and Arab tribes in Al Hasaka and the Assyrian Democratic Organization (ADO) rejected PYD's federalism declaration. In Geneva, both the Syrian government and the opposition rejected PYD's federalism declaration. Furthermore, PYD does not represent all of Syria's Kurdish population. The Kurdish faction of Syrian national coalition condemned PYD's federalism declaration. Most of Syria's Kurds do not live in Al Hasakah and many that do work outside it. Thousands of Kurds have joined ISIS and are fighting for an Islamic State not a Kurdish one.

Unilateral declaration of federalism carries no legitimacy since federalism can only exist with a constitutional change and a Referendum. Federalism is unlikely to garner much

support from the bulk of Syria's population, 90-93% of whom is not Kurdish. Knowing this, PYD have banned residents of Al Hasakah from voting in the upcoming Parliamentary elections to be held across the nation. This shows the will of the people in Al Hasakah is already being crushed by PYD. It is undemocratic to continue to discuss federalism as a possibility when it has been rejected by so many segments of Syrian society. Ironically we are told the purpose of the US' Regime change adventure in Syria is to bring democracy to the middle east.

### 3. Federalism May Risk Ethnic cleansing of Assyrian Christian and other minorities

Since the Kurdish population are not a majority in the areas PYD are trying to annex, the past few years have revealed that PYD/YPG are not beyond carrying out ethnic cleansing of non-Kurdish minorities in an attempt to achieve a demographic shift. The main threat to Kurdish ethnocentric territorial claims over the area are the other large minorities, the Arabs and the Assyrian Christians.

Salih Muslim, the leader of PYD, openly declared his intention to conduct an ethnic cleansing campaign against Syrian Arabs who live in what he now calls Rojava. "One day those Arabs who have been brought to the Kurdish areas will have to be expelled," said Muslim in an interview with Serek TV. Over two years since that interview he has fulfilled his word, as YPG begun burning Arab villages around Al Hasakah Province hoping to create a demographic shift. It is estimated that ten thousands Arab villagers have been ethnically cleansed from Al Hasake province so far. The villages around Tal Abayad have suffered the most as Kurdish expansionists seek to connect the discontinuous population centres of Al Hasakah and Al Raqqa. "The YPG burnt our village and looted our houses," said Mohammed Salih al-Katee, who left Tel Thiab Sharki, near the city of Ras al-Ayn, in December.

YPG have also begun a campaign of intimidation, murder and property confiscation against the Assyrian Christian minority. The YPG and PYD made it a formal policy to loot and confiscate the property of those who had escaped their villages after an ISIS attack, in the hope of repopulating Assyrian villages with Kurds. The Assyrians residents of the Khabur area in Al Hasaka province formed a militia called the Khabour Guard in the hope of defending their villages against ISIS attacks. The Khabur Guard council leaders protested the practice of looting by Kurdish YPG militia members who looted Assyrian villages that were evacuated after ISIS attacked them. Subsequently, the YPG assassinated the leader of the Khabur Guard David Jindo and attempted to assassinate Elyas Nasser. At first the YPG blamed the assassination on ISIS but Elyas Nasser, who survived, was able to expose the YPG's involvement from his hospital bed. Since the assassination YPG has forced the Khabour Guard to disarm and to accept YPG 'protection.' Subsequently most Assyrian residents of the Khabour who had fled to Syrian Army controlled areas of Qamishli City could not return to their villages.

The Assyrian Christian community in Qamishli has also been harassed by YPG Kurdish militia. YPG attacked an Assyrian checkpoint killing one fighter of the Assyrian militia Sootoro and wounding three others. The checkpoint was set up after three Assyrian restaurants were bombed on December 20, 2016 in an attack that killed 14 Assyrian civilians. Assyrians suspected that YPG was behind these bombings in an attempt to assassinate Assyrian leaders and prevent any future claims of control over Qamishli.

It would be foolish to ignore the signs that more widely spread ethnic cleansing campaigns may occur if Kurdish expansionists are supported, especially since other ethnic groups are not on board with their federalism plans. It has only been 90 years since the Assyrian genocide which was conducted by Turks and Kurds. This history should not be

allowed to be repeated. Assyrians have enjoyed safety and stability in the Syrian state since this time. Forcing the Assyrians to accept federalism is not going to ensure their safety. Establishment of a federal Kurdish state in Iraq has not protected Assyrian villages from attacks by Kurdish armed groups either. The campaign of ethnic cleansing against both Assyrians and Arabs in Al Hasakah has already begun and may now only escalate.

#### 4. The Resources in Al Hasake are shared between all Syrians

While Kurds make up only 7-10% of Syria's total population, PYD demands 20% of Syria's land. What's more, the region of Al hasakah that YPG want to annex has a population of only 1.5 million people. Much of Syria's agriculture and oil wealth is located in Al Hasakah and is shared by Syria's 23 million people. Al Hasakah province produces 34% of Syria's wheat and much of Syria's oil. The oil pumping stations are now being used by ISIS and YPG's Kurds to fund their war efforts while depriving the Syrian people.

While headlines abound about Syria's starving population, there is little talk of how federalising Syria could entrench this starvation into law for generations to come. Instead, promoters of Federalism talk about how giving the resources shared by 23 million people to 1.5 million people will lead to peace.

#### 5. A Kurdish Region in Syria will be a Threat to Global Security

Since the majority of Syria's population and Syria's government oppose Kurdish annexation claims, PYD will not be able to achieve federalism through legal means. The only way the PYD and YPG can achieve federalism is through brute force. This brute force may be backed by the US air force and an invasion by special forces which contradicts international law. Head of PYD Saleh Islam has already threatened to attack

Syrian troops if they attempt to retake Raqqa from ISIS. A Kurdish state in Syria as the Iraqi Kurdistan ensures US hegemony in the region. Like the KRG [1] the YPG are already attempting to build a US base on Syrian soil. Russia, which has been an ally of Syria for a long time, will be further isolated as a result. This will once again tip the balance of power in the world.

All of Syria's neighbouring countries are also opposed to an ethnocentric Kurdish state in Syria. The YPG is linked to the PKK, which is active in Turkey and which the United Nations has designated a terrorist organisation. Turkey will see YPG's federalism claims as strengthening the PKK. Turkey may invade Syria as a result, guaranteeing at least a regional war. This regional war could involve Iran, Syria, Hezbollah and Israel.

Israel wants to establish a Kurdistan, as a Sunni-Iranian rival to Shi'ite Iran. They hope such a Sunni state will block Iran's access to Syria and will also prevent Lebanese resistance against Israeli invasion. This was all outlined in Israel's Yinon Plan published in 1982. Israel is an extension of US influence and hegemony in the region, the Israeli lobby holds much sway over US politics. Strengthening Israel in the region will strengthen US influence over the region, once again shrinking Russian influence and pushing the nuclear power into a corner. Journalists who show a sense of confusion about the reason the West is supportive of Kurdish expansionism should consider this point.

Finally, a designated 'Kurdish area' in Syria is deeply rooted in ethnocentric chauvinism. A US state strictly designated for Hispanic, White or Black ethnicity would be outrageous to suggest and would be considered racist. But the use of ethnicity as a means to divide and conquer is the oldest and most cynical form of imperialism. Syria must remain for all Syrians, not just for one minority. Voices who oppose this should be discouraged. The Syrian Constitution should continue to resist all ethnocentric religious-based parties. If there

is a change to the Syrian constitution, it should be the removal of the word Arab from Syrian Arab Republic. In spite of the fact that the vast majority Syrians speak the Arabic language, the majority of Syrian are historically not ethnically Arab. All sections of Syrian society should be treated equally under the Syrian flag.

Notes:

[1] The Kurdish Regional Government in Iraq

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