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Guest Editorial

Kurdish Regional Government Needs Lessons in Democracy

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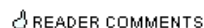
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(AINA) -- In an effort to consolidate their power over northern Iraq the Kurdish leaders of K.D.P and P.U.K are working to unify their governments into a single entity. In an interview, by the (Kurdish) Hewler Globe, Bayan Sami Abdul Rahman, Kurdish Regional Government High Representative to the UK said:

"I'm not sure that we in Kurdistan realize that there is a shift in the perception of the Western journalists. In the past we were the oppressed people, the underdog. Now we are a government, we build institutions, and we have our own media. The instinct of every Western journalist is to question what government officials of any nationality tell them. That is how they view the Kurds in Iraq today. We need to understand that and develop a strategy to deal with this new situation."

It is not clear what strategy Abdul Rahman has in mind, but if he dares he should tell Barzani and Talabani that for as long Kurds continue to treat the non-Kurds such as Assyrians and others as second class citizens in their own homeland and use Kurdish militia to terrorize them into submission Kurds will be judged as oppressors. Such a perception will be especially costly to the Kurds because of how they have treated the Assyrians in the past. A historical reality which has not yet been extensively written about.

Another advice Abdul Rahman can give to the Kurdish Regional Government is that Kurdish authorities should stop treating the Western nations as fools who can be easily deceived by their Machiavellian tricks. In interviews with 'Asharq Al-Awsat' Nechirvan Barzani praised the civil liberties in the Kurdistan Region by claiming that "Assyrians, Chaldeans, and Sabian Yazidis enjoy full religious rights, the same way Sunnis and Shiites do, and explained that the various religious sects have a long history in the region." He went on to say that his finance minister, Sarkis Agajan, is Christian, and that the region's former deputy prime minister was Christian as well."

Nechirvan Barzani fails to mention the fact that Kurdish authorities have refused to work with (ADM) the Assyrian Democratic Movement which was voted as the legitimate Assyrian-Chaldean representative in the last election, instead un-elected individuals such as Sarkis Agajan and few others who have joined the (K.D.P) 'Kurdish Democratic Party' have been anointed by the Kurds to be used as propaganda tools to further Kurdish interest, and give an illusion of Kurdish democracy.

Assyrians (also known as Chaldeans and Syriacs) are more than just religious denominations, they are the indigenous people of northern Iraq now renamed Kurdistan, Their history in the land of their forefathers goes back to few thousand years. One does not live by religion alone, being able to practice their religion is just one of their many rights which should be honored. In an attempt to divide the community so that it can be easily exploited the Kurdish authorities have bribed one faction against the other. They have also opposed allowing a self administrative region for the Assyrians including the Chaldeans and Syriacs in the palin of Nineveh where they are a majority of the population.

While Kurds have spent millions of dollars donated by the Western governments to settle Kurds from all over the world in northern Iraq to increase their people's population not a penny has been spent to help resettle the 250,000 Christian refugees now stranded in Syria, Jordan and Turkey. A recent report tells of the Assyrian refugees who fled to the north from southern Iraq were sleeping on bare dirt in the Christian cemeteries.

Among many Kurdish oppressive tactics is the roaming of the Kurdish militias of Barzani and Talabani in the Assyrian villages acting as if they own them. According to a recent report on July 1st, 2006 "the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) Peshmerga (party militia) seized the main petrol station in the Assyrian town of Hamdaniya to expropriate gas reserved for the general public. When the local police interfered an entanglement ensued. Two police were injured. The people were frightened and the gas station was closed depriving them from their share of gas.

Attacks, assaults, and confiscation of gasoline by the KDP are normal recurrences. The militias killed two residents of Bartella earlier this year when they were waiting to receive their share of gas at a gas station. The people protested the trespassing of KDP's Peshmerga against what belongs to the general public."

It is no wonder that recently, a Time Magazine blogger described Iraqi Kurdistan as a "police state", arguing there is a long way to go before Kurdistan can become a society based on tolerance and democracy. However it will not happen for as long as Kurds treat non-Kurds as adversaries who have to be vanquished; militarily, politically and, economically.

William Warda is an Assyrian from Iran. He attended Roosevelt University in Chicago and has written various articles about Assyrian history and their present situation for the Assyrian Star, Journal of the Assyrian Academic Society, and other publications. He is the webmaster of [Christians of Iraq](#) website.

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