

# SECURITY COUNCIL Topic 1: **Tackling the Conflict between Turkey and Armed Kurdish Groups.**

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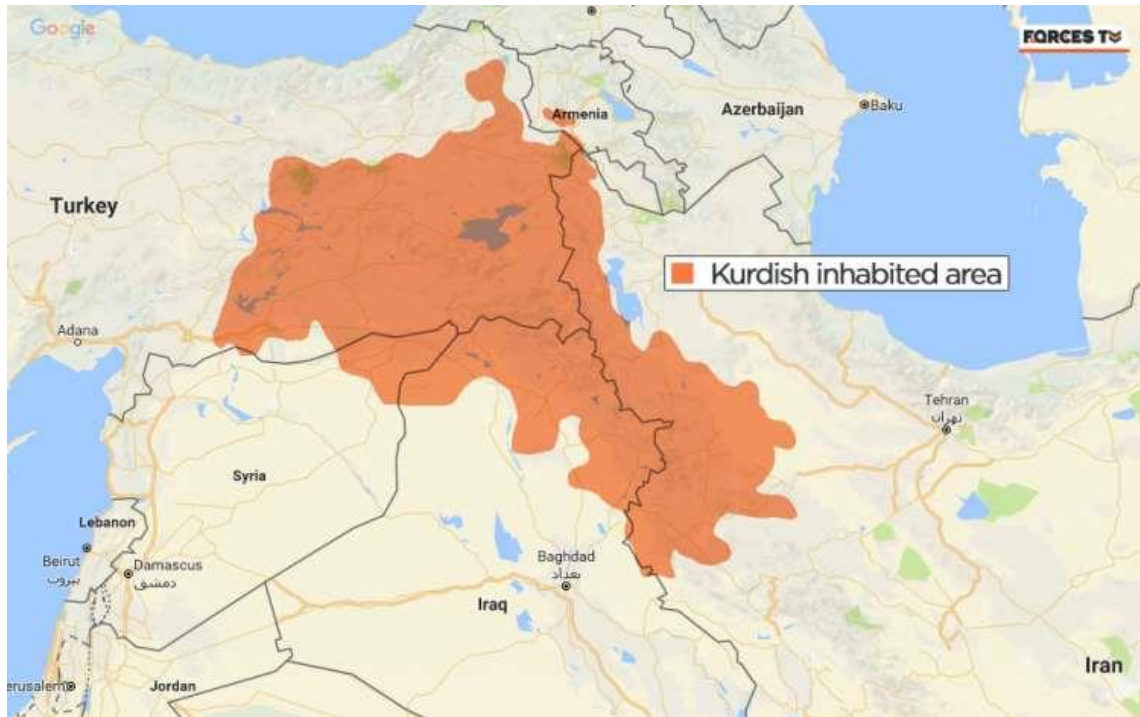
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## **1. Introduction:**

The Kurdish–Turkish conflict is an armed conflict between the Republic of Turkey and various Kurdish insurgent groups which have demanded separation from Turkey to create an independent Kurdistan, or to have autonomy and greater political and cultural rights for Kurds inside the Republic of Turkey.

## **2. Definition of key-terms:**

**The Kurds or the Kurdish people** are an Iranian ethnic group, who live across a large contiguous block of the Middle East, which spreads across Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey, (area commonly known as Kurdistan). There are 15 to 20 million Kurds, with their own language and culture, living in this territory, slightly more than half of which are in Turkey and form approximately 18% of the population in Turkey. Religiously, Kurds are Sunni Muslims, like the majority of Turkey's citizens.



### **3. Historical background, (with emphasis on the situation in Turkey):**

#### **3.1. The formation of the Republic of Turkey**

After the World War I, The Ottoman Empire is liquidated and therefore Turkish sovereignty is abolished by The 1920 Treaty of Sevres. This formed the nations of Iraq, Syria and Kuwait, with the possibility of additionally forming an individual Kurdish Nation. However, Turkey, Iraq and Syria did not recognize the Kurds as an individual group, forcing the Kurds to live as a minority ethnic group within the borders of the newly formed nations.

Parts of Turkey were occupied by Allies in the aftermath of the World War I. This situation led to the establishment of the Turkish national movement, under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. The war ended and the Turkish state was established in 1924. Although the Kurds were expecting a self-ruled region of the country after the war, Turkey became a nationalist state, which aimed at promoting only the Turks' value, without taking into consideration other ethnical or cultural backgrounds of the citizens.

#### **3.2. Arising of the Kurdish resistance**

Since then, a Kurdish resistance was born the most influential being that in Turkey, led by the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK), founded in 1978 by Abdullah Ocalan. The party's initial objective, which evolved over time, was to establish a Kurdish state in the southeast of Turkey and eventually join it with the rest of Kurdistan, as similar groups were fighting in neighboring countries.

Since the PKK's foundation, it has been involved in armed clashes with Turkish security forces. The full-scale insurgency, however, did not begin until 15 August 1984, when the PKK announced a Kurdish uprising. As civil rule was restored in Turkey in 1984, Ocalan and thousands of his fighters settled in Syria and began their armed struggle within Turkish territory. In its campaign, the organization has been accused of carrying out atrocities against both Turkish and Kurdish civilians and its actions have been criticized by human rights groups such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. Similar actions of the Turkish state have also been criticized by these same groups.

### **3.4. The arrest of Ocalan**

The struggle intensified during the 1990s and the Turkish government sought to kill or capture the powerful Ocalan. In late 1990s, Turkey threatened that it would invade Syria if Damascus did not arrest and hand over Ocalan to Ankara. Fearing arrest, the Kurdish strongman fled Syria and tried to seek asylum in Europe and Russia before he was captured in Kenya. Turkish intelligence, with the help of the United States' Central Intelligence Agency and, allegedly, Israel's Mossad, managed to capture Ocalan, return him to Turkey and eventually sentence him to death in 1999. His sentence was changed to life in prison when Turkey abandoned the death penalty as part of reforms toward European Union membership.

### **3.5. Situation after 1999**

After Ocalan was imprisoned, in support for NATO ally, the United States, the EU and other Western powers had labeled the PKK a terrorist group and continue to do so to this day.

In response, PKK declared it was seeking to stay within Turkey, but with an area of self-rule. They let go of the state objective and sought autonomy instead. Following the landslide win of the Justice and Development party (AK), things started to change. The AK party sought closer relations with the European Union, as part of Turkey's ambition to get into the bloc.

The European Court for Human Rights had repeatedly denounced Turkish human rights abuses against the Kurds. Language was allowed in politics and Kurds were allowed to participate in politics. However, the conflict and the fighting continued, as the conflict

between Kurdish groups and the Turkish government has been inflamed by the ongoing conflicts in Iraq and Syria.

In July 2015, a two-year cease-fire between Turkey's government and the PKK collapsed following a suicide bombing by suspected Islamic State militants killed nearly thirty Kurds near the Syrian border. The PKK has accused Turkish forces of not doing enough to prevent the attack against Kurdish civilians.

Turkey's deadliest attack occurred at a peace rally in Ankara in October 2015. It was claimed by TAK (Kurdistan Freedom Hawks)—an offshoot of the PKK—and killed more than one hundred people. Since then, over two thousand people have been killed in clashes between security forces and the PKK.

The growing role of Kurdish representatives in Turkey's parliament has alarmed the Erdogan government, especially as it continues to tamp down internal dissent. Nearly a year before the July coup in June 2015, the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) won more than 12 percent of the vote, forcing President Erdogan's more conservative Justice and Development Party (AKP) to form a coalition government. In November 2015, however, the AKP regained control of parliament, winning nearly 50 percent of the vote in a parliamentary election. Political divisions in Turkey were further exacerbated by the July 2016 coup attempt.

## **4. Kurds' situation in other countries**

### **4.1.Syria**

Beyond Turkey, Syrian Kurds have been combating the Islamic State (IS) and have formed a semi-autonomous region in Northern Syria. In September 2014, the Kurdish-controlled town of Kobani was besieged and eventually captured by the Islamic State. The violence resulted in more than 1,200 deaths. The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)—an alliance of Arab and Kurdish fighters backed by the United States—liberated the strategic Syrian city of Manbij from the Islamic State in late August 2016.

### **4.2 Iraq**

The alliance of Kurdish fighters has also converged in Iraq, where the Islamic State has advanced toward the autonomous Kurdish region of northern Iraq. The Peshmerga—armed fighters who protect Iraqi Kurdistan—have joined with Iraqi security forces and received arms and financial assistance from the United States.

## **5. Parties involved:**

### **5.1 Kurdistan Communities Union**

The **Kurdistan Communities Union** or **KCK** is a Kurdish political organization committed to implementing Abdullah Öcalan's ideology of Democratic Confederalism. The KCK also serves as an umbrella group for all the Apoist political parties of Greater Kurdistan, including the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party), PYD (Democratic Union Party), PJAK (Kurdistan Free Life Party), and PÇDK (Kurdistan Democratic Solution Party). The term Apoist refers to followers of the ideology of Abdullah Öcalan ("Apo").

### **5.2 Combatants:**

- **Turkey**
- **Syria**
- **Iraq**
- **Iran**

## **6. Possible solutions:**

### **6.1. Political measures:**

One political measure to be taken into account is the construction of a new civilian and democratic constitution in Turkey. Therefore, the rights of all differences, such as like religion, sect, ethnicity and language, to exist and be sustained should be taken under constitutional protection.

### **6.2 Social measures:**

The most significant social issue that shall be addresses is that 3,000 villages have been evacuated in the Southeast and some 3 million people have been displaced. The region also suffers from serious problems, including migration, rapid urbanization, drug use, prostitution, female suicide, an undereducated young population (47 percent of Diyarbakır's population is under the age of 15), homelessness, gangs and unemployment.

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