

# **THE KURDISH NATIONAL MOVEMENT**

With Special Reference to the Role of Mustafa  
Barzani

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The photo of Mustafa Barzani in the Kurdistan National Assembly,  
Hawler

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## **Abstract**

This article, which tackles the Kurdish National Movement (KNM) with special references to the role of Mustafa Barzani, aims to answer the following questions:

1. How can the KNM be defined and what are the main Kurdish national goals and objectives?
2. Do the Kurds have legitimate-rights to extend their national goals and objectives to include clear demands towards statehood?
3. Since when and in what ways have the Kurds struggled for their national goals and objectives?
4. How can the legendary Kurdish leader Mullah Mustafa Barzani and his role be seen in the KNM? And
5. Why has the KNM not yet achieved its aims towards statehood?

Accordingly, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- The KNM, which is rather secular, goes back to the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, when the Kurds formed several independent Kurdish principalities or kingdoms;
- Although the Kurds has not yet reached the statehood, there are strong legitimate domestic and international foundations for the

KNM to extend the Kurdish national goals and objectives to include clear demands for the establishment of an independent state over their land Kurdistan.

- The legendary Kurdish leader Mustafa Barzani had played a significant role in the development of the KNM; and
- Finally, the failure of the KNM to reach its full goals and objectives is related to external reasons, in the sense that the Kurds were the victims of some regional and international compromises.

## **1. Introduction**

This article that is dedicated to the 100<sup>th</sup> memory of the birth of the legendary leader Mullah Mustafa Barzani (14<sup>th</sup> March 1903 - 1<sup>st</sup> March 1979), tackles the Kurdish National Movement (KNM) with special references to the role of this legendary Kurdish leader. In fact, the KNM that occupies the main part of the modern history of the Kurds and Kurdistan<sup>1</sup> is difficult to be studied without making clear references to Mustafa Barzani's name and his significant role in the Kurdish national struggle. That is why; the Kurds are identified by the name of Barzani.

I found that the Kurdish people feel by their nature that Barzani was their national leader and for them, he remains as a national hero. There are many relevant references by which I can support this conclusion about such natural feeling of the Kurdish people. For example, in summer of 1975 in a village of the Iranian

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<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of this study, the modern history of the Kurds and Kurdistan begins with the end of the Islamic Caliphate (including the Ottomans) until the end of the First World War.

Kurdistan, I spoke to a young Kurdish boy who was only about 16 years old. When he realised who I am, he said: we have devoted a '*qurbani*'<sup>2</sup> to be slaughtered for the sake of Mulla Mustafa's success and his Kurdish revolution in Iraqi Kurdistan. We (the Iranian Kurdish boy and I) both cried and whenever I remember that conversation, I cannot stop myself from crying.

This kind of national feeling was in 1979 exercised practically, when the majority of our Kurdish people in the Iranian Kurdistan took part in Barzan's funeral sermonises. Obvious evidence to such national feeling was seen in 1994, when Mustafa Barzani's body along with the body of his son (Idris Barzani) were moved from Shino (Ashnoviya) to Barzan via Sulaymaniya (Slêmani) and Erbil or Arbil (Hewlêr). The people of Iraqi Kurdistan, including non-supporters of the KDP, showed the respected feeling to their leader and national hero Mustafa Barzani. I saw thousands of people pouring into roads and streets showing their real emotional feeling full of sorrow and even crying. Take for instance the city of Sulaymaniya; we cannot say that one single person stayed inside while the cavalcade of Barzani reached around their areas. In fact, the Kurds, as a whole, were always proud to be led by their national leader Mustafa Barzani.

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<sup>2</sup> The Kurdish word '*qurbani*' often indicates slaughtering an animal for the sake of God. The meat has to be given to poor people.



In this article, I am concerned with the political background of the Kurds and Kurdistan, notably with the Kurdish National Movement, which is also called the Kurdish National Liberation Movement or just the Kurdish Liberation Movement. However, the term “Kurdish National Movement-KNM” is used for the purpose of this study. Within this consideration, I concentrate on the period, during which the legendary Kurdish leader Mullah Mustafa Barzani had built and developed large political and military power bases through his continuous armed revolutions and peaceful political efforts towards the achievement of the main Kurdish national goals and objectives. Accordingly, the following questions are tackled:

1. How can the Kurdish National Movement (KNM) be defined and what are the main Kurdish national goals and objectives?
2. Do the Kurds have legitimate-rights to extend their national goals and objectives to include clear demands towards statehood?
3. Since when and in what ways have the Kurds struggled for their national goals and objectives?
4. How can the legendary Kurdish leader Mullah Mustafa Barzani and his role be seen in the KNM?
5. Why has the KNM not yet attained its aims towards statehood?

## **2. Definition of the Kurdish National Movement**

I define the Kurdish National Movement (KNM) as a series of organised ideological political and armed events and actions taken by the Kurdish nation and its related political organisations to achieve certain nationalist goals and objectives. Although religion, particularly Islam, has had influenced the Kurdish nationalism, the KNM is rather secular. It is true that many leaders of the KNM had an Arabic religious title, like Skaykh, Sayid, Qazî or Mella, but the major goals and objectives of the KNM were (and still are) far from religious purposes. For example, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Shaykh Ubeidallah-y Nahrî fought in the name of the Kurdish nation against Islamic Caliphates.

The KNM that can be regarded as the oldest nationalist movement in the Muslim world is widely forwarded to achieve the following aims:

- Strengthen the patriotic attitude and nationalist feeling amongst the Kurds, who share a common history, language and cultural heritage;
- Promote the aspirations for national independence of Kurdistan and emancipation of the Kurdish people from foreign domination; and

- Struggle for the achievement of certain mid and long-term Kurdish national goals and objectives, like democracy, human rights and autonomy within the countries where Kurds live now.

The major national goals and objectives of the KNM have been considerably directed towards the attainment of self-rule and liberty (Kurdish, *Rizgarî*) from the domination of the three neighbouring nations (the Arabs, Turks and Persians). It seems that since the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the most fundamental Kurdish national goals and objectives have been expressed in terms of ‘democracy and liberty’, which have been considered as the most essential political task to be achieved by almost all Kurdish nationalist groups. For instance, Kurdistan Democratic Party-Iraq (KDP) has made “autonomy for Kurdistan and democracy for Iraq” its central slogan.<sup>3</sup> This slogan was continuous since the establishment of the party on August 16, 1946 until October 4, 1992, when the Iraqi Kurdistan National Assembly declared the ‘federal political system’ to be the formal platform for all relations between the KNM and Iraqi Central Government (ICG).

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<sup>3</sup> The term “National Self-Determination” is also known within the major goals and objectives of the KNM in IKR. Moreover, the KNM is presently heading further tasks, namely to struggle not only against deportation of the Kurdish people, but also for the return of deportees to their original areas.

This change in the goals and objectives of the KNM in Iraqi Kurdistan Region (IKR) from autonomy to a federal system (within the framework of a federative central state of Iraq) reflects a stronger devotion to Kurdish nationalist goals and objectives embodied in the attainment of statehood and full political recognition. In spite of that devotion, until now the leadership of the KNM in IKR does not dare to speak directly about such goals and objectives, particularly the current international and regional circumstances do not encourage the leadership to raise any further Kurdish political demands.

### **3. Kurdish Demands towards Statehood**

I think that the KNM (particularly in Iraq) has legitimate rights to extend the Kurdish national goals and objectives to include further clear demands for the establishment of an independent state over the land inhabited by the Kurdish people called Kurdistan. This argument can be explained due to the following domestic and international foundations:

i) According to President Wilson's fourteen-point programme for World Peace, the non-Turkish minorities of the Ottoman Empire should be given perfect opportunities towards political independence. The Kurds were one of the major nations that were ruled by the Ottomans;

**ii)** The international community (including the Allied Powers) had clearly recognized the Kurds as a distinct population having their own identity with a common heritage, indicating that the Kurds have legitimate aspirations to political and territorial independence (Cook, 1995: 7-8);

**iii)** Under the Treaty of Sèvres (Sevres) signed by the Allied Powers and the Constantinople Government in 1920, the Kurds were promised with an independent state (see Appendix 1). Although this treaty was never implemented because of the international compromises made in the 1923 Lausanne Treaty, the Sèvres' relating articles of (62, 63 & 64) constitute very important international legitimate basis for the continuing Kurdish demands towards statehood (Ahmad, 1994). Article 62 of the treaty provides that: "*A Commission appointed by the French, Italians and British would, within six months of the treaty entering into force, draft a scheme of local autonomy for the Kurdish areas lying East of the Euphrates, south of Armenia and north of Syria and Mesopotamia...*" (Cook, 1995:8-9). Article 63 provides that the Turkish Government hereby agrees to accept and execute the decisions of the Commissions mentioned in Article 62. Article 64 provides that: "*If after one year from the implementation of the treaty, the Kurdish population of the areas designated in Article 62 calls on the Council of the League of Nations and demonstrates that a majority of the population in these areas wishes to become independent of Turkey, and if the Council then estimates that the population in question is capable of such independence and*

*recommends that it should be granted to them... no objection shall be raised by the main Allied powers should the Kurds living in that part of Kurdistan at present included in the Vilayet of Mosul seek to become citizens of the newly independent Kurdish state” (Ibid., p. 9);*

**iv)** In 1920, when the British were appointed by the League of Nations as the mandate authority over the Ottoman provinces of Mesopotamia, including the Vilayet of Mosul, the Kurdish people (through their leader Shaykh Mahmud Barzanji of Sulaymaniya) had appealed to Britain not to exclude the Kurds and Kurdistan from the list of liberated nations of the Middle East (Ahmad, 1994:152). Compare (McDowall, 1996:144-146) as well.

**v)** On 14.09.1922, the British recognised Shaykh Mahmud Barzanji as the first King of Kurdistan under the British mandate (Barzani, 1986).

**vi)** Although the British policy towards a separate Kingdom of Kurdistan was changed,<sup>4</sup> by the end of 1924

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<sup>4</sup> It seems that it was in the British interest, particularly after discovery of oil in Kirkuk (Kerkuk), to keep Southern Kurdistan within a larger country of Iraq and then it would be easier for Britain to control the discovered oil fields.

the British high commissioner in Iraq made an official statement recognising the right of the Kurds of Iraq to establish their own local government within the frontiers of Iraq (McDowall, 1996:144-146);

**vii)** Actually, since the First World War until the establishment of modern Iraq and its admission to the League of Nations, Kurdish demands in the southern part of Kurdistan (currently Iraqi Kurdistan) were for an independent Kurdistan, or at least for an autonomous Kurdistan within the framework of Iraq. That's why, the majority of the Kurdish people boycotted the referendum that was held in Iraq to approve the establishment of the monarchy and the accession of Prince Faisal I; and

**viii)** The question of 'Mosul Vilayet' – the whole northern part of modern Iraq with an absolute majority of Kurds – remained to be considered by a special commission of the League of Nations to propose possible solutions to the question. Although the commission had (on the basis of the ethnic argument) concluded that an 'independent Kurdish state' should be created in the Kurdish territory, southern Kurdistan was annexed to Iraq, subject to the following conditions:

- The territory (i.e., Mosul Vilayet) must remain under the effective mandate of the League of Nations for a period of twenty-five years; and

- Regard must be paid to the desires expressed by the Kurds that officials of Kurdish ethnicity should be appointed for the administration of their country, the dispensation of justice, and teaching in the schools, and that Kurdish should be the official language of all these services (McDowall, 1996:144-146).

These arguments can be extended to include the following further explanations:<sup>5</sup>

1. The 1958 Iraqi provisional constitution recognised the Kurds together with Arabs as two major nations associating the state of Iraq and accordingly not only their respected national rights were constitutionally guaranteed, but also certain Kurdish and Arabic symbols were incorporated in the flag and arms of the new republic of Iraq; and
2. Under the peace agreement of March 11, 1970 concluded between the KNM in Iraq led by the KDP under the leadership of Mustafa Barzani and the ICG of Baghdad led by the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party, the ICG recognised autonomy for the Iraqi Kurdistan that within the period of four years the Kurdish areas will be granted an autonomous government within the framework of the republic of Iraq (see Appendix 2); and accordingly, the ICG

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<sup>5</sup> This explanation is closely linked to the argument that Iraqi Kurdistan Region had justifiable legitimate grounds for the conduct of the elections of May 1992 and the establishment of subsequent democratic institutions.



constitutionally reaffirmed the aforementioned recognition in the current Iraqi constitution adopted in 1970, stipulating that:

- a. The Iraqi people is made up of two nationalities, the Arab nationality and the Kurdish nationality;
- b. The Kurdish language shall be, alongside the Arabic language, the official language in areas with a Kurdish majority; and will be the language of instruction in those areas and taught throughout Iraq as a second language; and
- c. The area in which the majority of the population are Kurds shall enjoy autonomy in accordance with the provisions of the law (compare, Cook, 1995: 24).

#### **4. Beginnings of the KNM**

The Kurdish nation had since the 16<sup>th</sup> century commenced to feel that the Kurds (due to their own special social, cultural, linguistic and even economic features) are different from the neighbouring Muslim nations, the Arabs, Turks and Persians (Minorsky, 1959: 25-30). In fact, the period of the 15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries was a flourishing era during which around twenty independent Kurdish principalities or kingdoms were formed

(Hassanpour, 1992:50).<sup>6</sup> However, after the Treaty of Zuhab of 1639, both Ottomans and Persians launched heavy military campaigns against the Kurds and Kurdistan in order to extend their direct over Kurdistan and destroy the Kurdish own system of self-rule under the independent Kurdish principalities or kingdoms that were formed during the period of the 15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries. Although the principalities strongly resisted such military campaigns, the Ottomans ended the last independent principality in 1849 (Ibid.,).

The most powerful principalities or kingdoms were HAKARI and SORAN Kingdoms in central Kurdistan, BOKHTI Kingdom in southwest, BABAN in southeast, BAYAZID and DOZHIK respectively in northeast and northwest of Kurdistan. Map 1 shows the names and locations of such independent Kurdish principalities or kingdoms.

From the features of the Kurdish independent principalities, it seems that the Kurds and Kurdistan enjoyed a great deal of freedom, during the 15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries; many of the principalities possessed the main criteria of independent states. For example:

1. The borders of each principality's territory were traditionally specified and maintained through the force of the army made up of members of the tribes;

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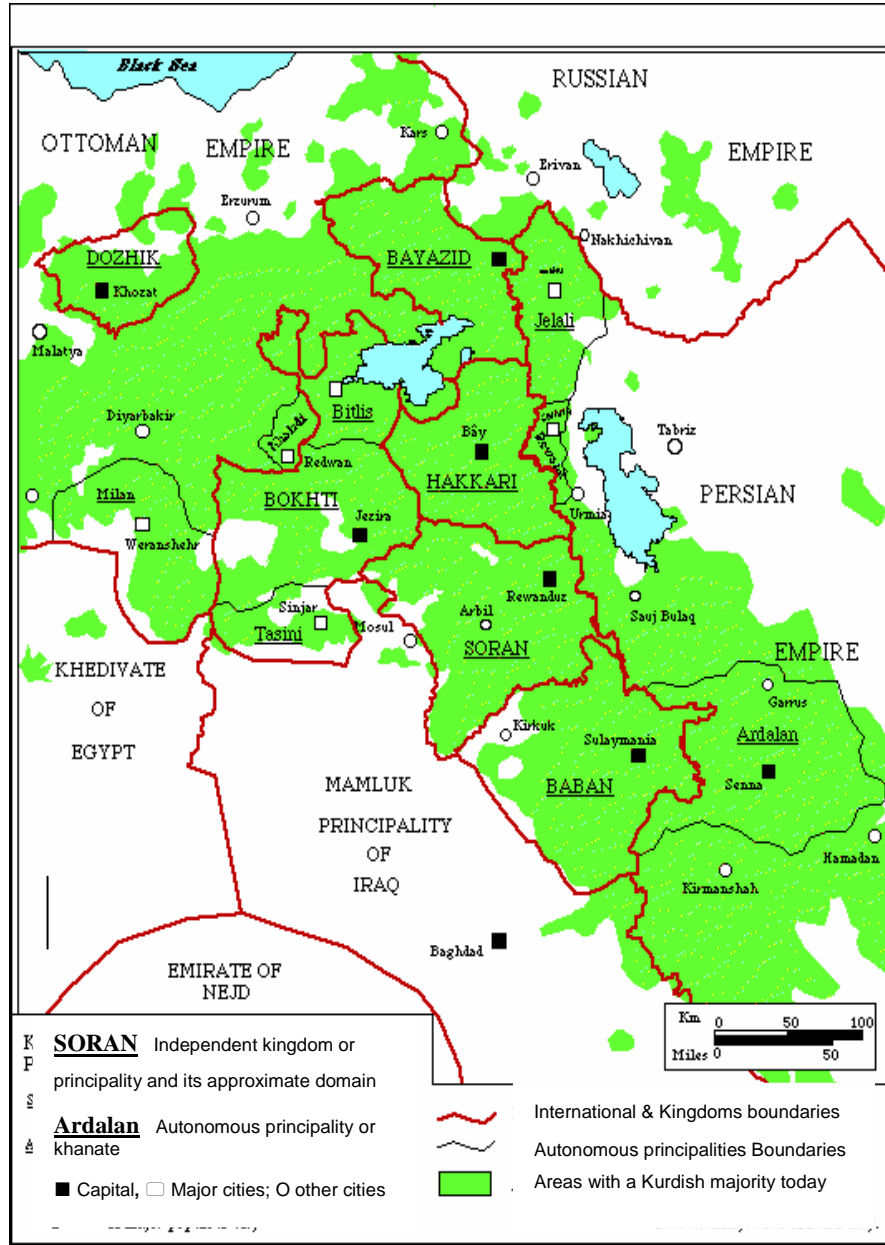
<sup>6</sup> See also Bruinessen, 1992; and McDowall, 1996.

2. The tribes and feudal lords settled within the principality had to take part in the army and also contribute to the treasury;
3. The most powerful principalities were independent and struck coins, and the religious essay '*khutba*' of Friday at noon prayer (which is usually concluded with an acknowledgement of the sovereignty of the country and its ruler) was read in the name of the prince, otherwise in the name of the Ottoman Sultan or the Persian Shah; and
4. The population were mainly peasants (settled in the villages working on the land of feudal lords in exchange for certain shares of the product) in addition to the artisans and traders (settled in the urban centres and the capital towns like Bitlis, Amadiya and Rawanduz where also the government bureaucracy operated) (Hassanpour, 1992:50-52) and (van Bruinessen, 1992:181-194).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> For further information about social, economic and political life in such principalities, see also Bidlisi, 1964; and Chelebi, 1979.

**MAP 1: KURDISH INDEPENDENT PRINCIPALITIES, 15<sup>TH</sup>-17<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES**



Source: Izady (1999).

Probably the Kurdish poems written in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and later by famous poets like Ahmedî Khanê and Hajî Qadirî Koyî not only represent real nationalist feeling, but also indicate the emergence of Kurdish national and political awareness. The poet Ahmedî Khanê (1650-1706), who raised his voice against the occupation of Kurdistan by the Ottomans and Persians, attempted to build a nationalist ideology for the Kurdish nation towards statehood (McDowall, 1996:5). The following piece of Khanê's poem that is translated by Hassanpour (1992:53-55) shows the level of Kurdish national and political awareness:

“Look, from the Arabs to the Georgians,  
They have become like towers.  
The Turks and Persians are surrounded by them,  
The Kurds are on all Four Corners.  
Both sides have made the Kurdish people  
Targets for arrows of fate.  
They are said to be keys to the borders,  
Each tribe forming a formidable bulwark.  
Whenever the Ottoman sea (Ottomans) and the Tajik sea (Persians)  
Flow out and agitate.  
The Kurds get soaked in blood,  
Separating them (the Turks and Persians) like an isthmus”

The Kurdish text of a larger part of this piece of Khanê's poem take from 'Mem u Zîn', which is changed by 'Hezar Mukiryani' into Soranî dialect, is red as follows:

جاریك بگویتە کار و باریك	بختی مه له خو هلتستی جاریك
پیدا ببی بو مه پادشایك	لین هلبگوی جیهان په نایه ك
شیری هونری مه بیته كایه	بو نووكی بنوس بیامی مایه
كوردیش له جیهان برۆ پیاكا (راكا: لاپریت)	ئم بخته رشه ی له سر مه راکا
زور زان و به بیر و مرد و رندیک	بو مش كه بیایه سر بلندیک
بی نرخ و چروك و باو نه مابوو	نخشی له دراوی مش درا بوو
نرخه نیه چشند هی نیشاندان	بی سوپه گزیر و خیوی ساكار
خوا تانجیکی پی ببه خشیایی	بو مش كه هبایه پادشایی
رنگ و کری مه ش دهاته بر چاو	پیدا دبوو ریز و گوری و ناو
بیستانی هیوای و به ر ده هینا	نیمه ی له کسایه در دهینا
بو کوند نذبووینه لانه و مال	ترکان نذبووون به سر مه دا زال
ژیر دستی شتی وها نوی و پست	چون بو عجمان دبووینه ژیر دست
روم و عجمی له سر مه دانا	هر روژی بری خودای توانا
ئم شرمی به له پیاوه گوركانه	بی شرمی به ژیر دستی ئمانه
سوچیان چیه هونر و هژاران	شوورییه له میر و نامداران
هر چی بیوی دخاته گیری	کی دستی دریز بکاته شیری
کی راسته له خوشی دووره بش بن	كورد چون دبی دیل و چاره رش بن
شیرن له هرا پلنگی جنگن	بو بخشش و دل بناوو دنگن
هر گوردی لوانه روسمیکه	دست رژی ئمانه حاتمیکه
ئم هویه گوا کز و هژاران	بو روم و عجم وکو دیوارن
بو تیری بلا نیشانه نیمین	گوپالی دستی ئوانه نیمین
كورد بند و کلیلی سر سنوورن	خویان له گر و هرایه دوورن
هر كورده دین شلالی خوینی	یک هیرشی بو سر نیدی بیینی
مردایتی و دل و نترسی	نازایی و بخششی بیرسی
ندراوه له بر ئوان بشی گس	هر بو کوری کوردان هیه و بس
کمتر له به يك گین دیرسن	هیندی كه به جرگ و دووره ترسن
هر گس دیه وی زل و له سر بی	گس بو گسی نابی چاو دیه ر بی
بیگانه ده بن سواری سه ریان	له م سر رقی په و دمای زلیان
هر بویه په بوونه هیزی خو خور	هر خویتی زلکوه و رش و بور

دستیان ده گوت ژانی سر بست	کوردیش که بیایه پک دل و دست
ناومان در نکرد به بیر و زانین	پیدا ده بوو باو و گوری و ژین
پر نرخ و بریز ده بوو شتی چاک	جیاواز دبوو گفتی پاک و نا پاک

Source: Mem u Zinî Khane, Translated from Kirmanjî into Soranî dialect by Hezar Mukiryani, Jawahiry Publisher, Tehran.

The poet Hajî Qadirî Koyî (1817-1897), who made similar attempts, criticised the traditional Kurdish leadership and called for the formation of a Kurdish state (Ibid., pp. 57-58). Furthermore, both poets believed that the Kurdish nation should use ‘pen’ (i.e., science and education) and ‘sword’ (i.e., political, moral and material power) to support their nationalist efforts (Ibid., pp. 89-94).

Accordingly, it could be said that the KNM began with the emergence of the national and political feeling expressed by both Khanê and Hajî. Actually, Khanê and Hajî’s expression shows that the Kurdish nation had, since that period, a strong devotion to the attainment of full political independence from the Persians and Ottomans. Since then and until now, the desire of the Kurdish people to attain freedom and democratic rights (including their demand for political recognition and self-determination towards the establishment of their own independent state) has continued. In other words, the Kurdish nation resisted subjugation by other nations, like the Turks, Persians and Arabs, but have not yet succeeded to reach any independent national political entity.

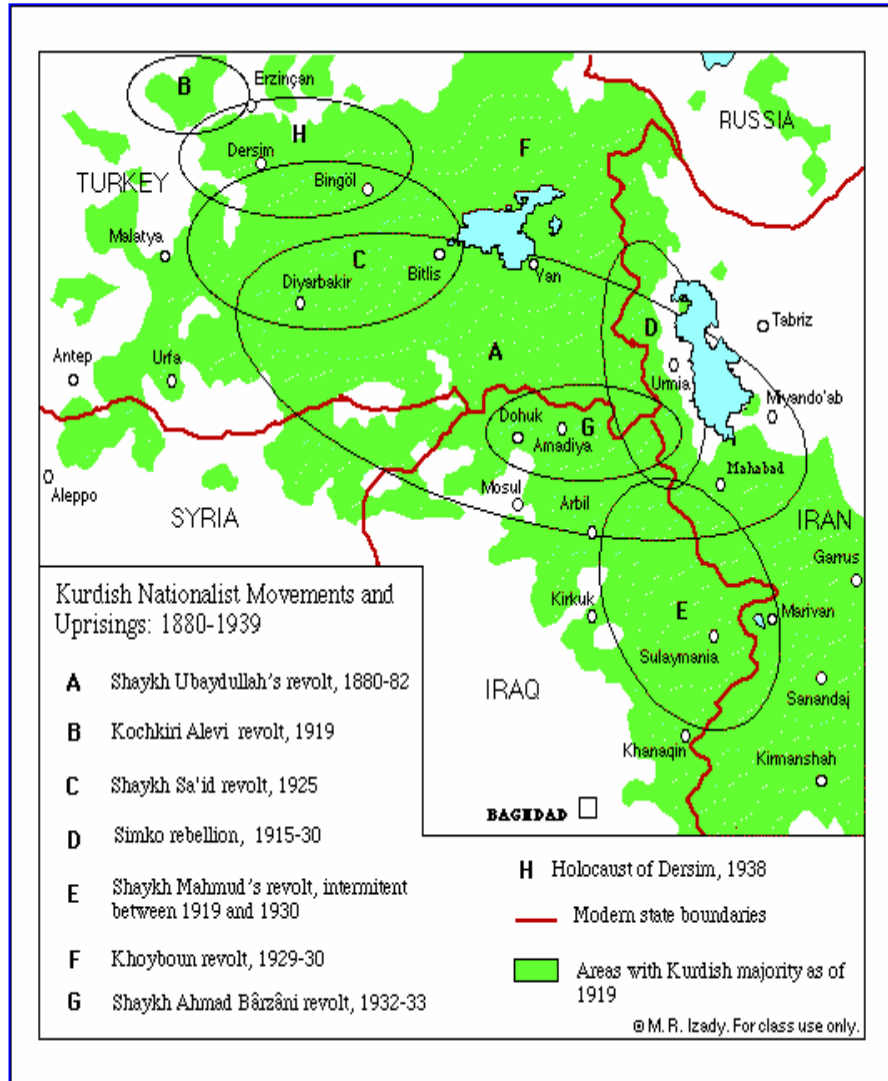
Bellow are listed the most important political events and Kurdish revolts related to the beginnings of the KNM, including the major Kurdish armed popular uprisings and political movements in the Kurdish national struggle (see Map 2):

1. After the treaty of Zuhab of 1639, both Ottomans and Persians launched heavy military campaigns against the Kurds and Kurdistan in order to destroy the independent Kurdish principalities. The principalities strongly resisted such military campaigns. Finally, the Ottomans ended the Bitlisi independent principality in 1849. For further information, see Bitlisi, 1964; Chelebi (in Nakam, 1979); and van Bruinessen, 1992.

2. During 1878-1881, the first Kurdish nationalist uprising led by the leader Shaykh Ubeidallah-y Nahrî broke out through the whole of Kurdistan against both Turkish and Persian occupation. Shaykh Ubeidallah claimed that he was acting in the name of the Kurdish nation. He aimed to establish a united independent Kurdish state over the whole of Kurdistan. In one of his letters to the British consul in Tabriz, Iran, Shaykh Ubeidallah stated that the Kurdish nation is a separate people, and they are different (due to their language and culture, for example) from Turks and Persians. In the same letter, he added that the inhabitants of Kurdistan want their affairs to be in their own hands and the Kurds disagree with the policy carried out by both Ottoman and Persian governments (McDowall, 1996:53-69).

**MAP 2: KURDISH NATIONAL MOVEMENTS AND UPRISINGS, 1880-1939**





Source: Izady (1999)

3. The first and second decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw the first revolution of Barzan, which was led by Shaykh Abdul-Salam Barzani against the Ottoman rule (Barzani, 1986). Shaykh Abdul-Salam demanded a Kurdish self-rule for the Kurdish people within

the framework of the Ottoman Empire. Like Shaykh Ubeidallah-y Nahrî, Shaykh Abdul-Salam sought the British and Russian support and corresponded them through their diplomats in the cities of Mosul, Orumiya and Tbilisi (Botani, 1998).

4. Although the First World War opened new doors for many nations and groups of people (particularly for those peoples who had been ruled by the Ottomans) to establish national states and subsequently to set up their own governments, the Kurds and Kurdistan neither reunited nor gained any real positive advantages towards any kind of self-rule after the collapse of the Ottoman empire. While eastern Kurdistan remained under Persian control, 'Ottoman Kurdistan' was divided into more than three parts according to the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916. The situation of the Kurds and Kurdistan after the First World War was rather complicated. On one hand, underdevelopment, lack of communications and dissension among the Kurdish tribes disrupted the unity of the Kurdish voice and their demands. On the other hand, it seems that it was in the British interest to link southern Kurdistan to Mesopotamia (McDowall, 1996:117-121). In fact, Iraq without southern Kurdistan was nothing for Britain, particularly with the increasing importance of oil, which is plentiful in Kurdistan.

5. In spite of such disadvantageous circumstances of the Kurds and Kurdistan, certain Kurdish leaders managed to submit the Kurdish national demands, including their demand for the establishment of a

united independent Kurdistan, to the Allies' Paris Peace Conference of 1919. Then, in the treaty of Sèvres, signed by the allies on 10 August 1920, the Kurds were promised a homeland of an autonomous Kurdistan within certain areas of northern Kurdistan. In the meantime, under the same treaty, southern Kurdistan would also be allowed to join this Kurdish entity in future.<sup>8</sup>

5. However, because the establishment of an independent Kurdistan was unacceptable to the Turkish nationalists led by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the relevant articles of the Sèvres treaty were never ratified and the promised autonomous Kurdistan was forgotten. The whole case of Kurdistan disappeared from international attention. Later, when the treaty of Lausanne was signed on 24 July 1923, no provision was made for the Kurds and Kurdistan (Ahmad, 1994). Consequently, the Kurds not only lost their great opportunity for statehood, but also suffered from another division of their land, Kurdistan, over more than four independent countries of the Middle East.

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<sup>8</sup> Related articles of the treaty of Sèvres to the Kurds and Kurdistan are shown in Appendix 2.

## 5. Further Developments of the KNM in Iraq

Not only during the British direct (1914-1921) and indirect (1921-1931) domination, but also since the establishment of modern independent Iraq,<sup>9</sup> the Kurdish relationship with ICG has been mainly characterised by a series of political and armed conflicts; in the sense that Kurdish disagreement with the ICG continues until now. For the purpose of this study, I suppose that the KNM in Iraq has (since 1921 until 1991) developed over two stages: 1921-1958 and 1958-1991.

**Firstly**, the following chronological Kurdish popular uprisings and political events took place during the time of the monarchy that ruled Iraq until 1958:

- As Britain was not ready to separate southern Kurdistan from Iraq, in 1927 and 1931, Shaykh Mahmud Barzanji refused the British occupation and called himself the King of Kurdistan.

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<sup>9</sup> Iraq, which became independent in 1931, was ruled by the Monarchy until 1958 when the Republic was established after a so-called July revolution led by Abdul-Karim Qasim. In 1963, the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party co-operated with a group of Arab nationalists led by Abdul-Salam Arif to overthrow Abdul-Karim Qasim through a military coup. In 1968 the same Party came to power through another military coup. The Arab Ba'th Socialist Party that is presently led by the president Saddam Hussein is still in power.

However, after a long armed conflict that took place between the British occupation and the Kurdish forces led by Shaykh Mahmud for several years, the British policy (in combining southern Kurdistan with Iraq) did not change;<sup>10</sup>

- During 1943-1945, after their earlier popular uprising of 1931-1935, Shaykh Ahmad and his brother Mustafa Barzani led their second revolution against ICG, demanding Kurdish self-rule in Iraqi Kurdistan. On 15 January 1945, the Freedom Committee (*Lêzney Azadî*) was established. This Committee, which was headed by Mustafa Barzani, comprised a group of Kurdish army officers, including Mustafa Khoshnaw, Mîrhaj Ahmed, Muhammad Mahmud Qudsî and Ezet Abdul-Aziz (Barzani, 1986a). At the

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<sup>10</sup> At the same time, particularly after the treaty of Lausanne, the Kurdish people in other parts of Kurdistan raised their voice for the establishment of an independent Kurdistan. For example, in 1924-1925 the Kurds under the leadership of Shaykh Saeed Pîran revolted against Turkey. There were similar rebellions in 1930 and 1937 in eastern parts of Turkey around Ararat and Dersim respectively. In 1927, the Kurdish national league '*Khoybun*' was established, marking the beginning of the contemporary Kurdish national struggle (see Map 2). On March 1945, the *Khoybun* League presented Kurdish national claims to the San Francisco conference. A comprehensive map of the whole of Kurdistan was attached to the claims to be considered by the conference (see Map 3, Enclave No. 3). See also Meiselas, 1997.

same time, the Kurdish Political Party of *Hîwa* (the Hope), which was founded in the 1930s by a group of the Kurdish intellectuals in Iraqi Kurdistan, had significantly cooperated with the Barzan's second revolution in general, and Mustafa Barzani and his Freedom Committee in particular;

- After Barzan's second revolution of 1943-1945, Mustafa Barzani with his *pêshmerga* and a number of the Iraqi Kurdish officers actively participated in the 'Kurdish Republic of Mehabad' that was set up from December 1945 until December 1946 by the Kurds of Iran under the leadership of Qazî Muhammad and his Kurdistan Democratic Party-Iran. On 11.10.1945, the Barzani Tribe and their leaders (Shaykh Ahmad and his brother Mustafa Barzani along with a large number of the Iraqi Kurdish participants in the Barzan's 1943-1945 revolution) left Iraqi Kurdistan to participate in the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad. In addition to the mentioned names (as members of the Freedom Committee), the following Kurdish army officers were within the participants and they were: Said Aziz Said Abdulla, Khayrulla AbdulKarim, Abdul-Rahman Al-Muftî, Bakir Abdulkarim, Muhammad Salih, Jalal Amîn and Nuurî Ahmed Taha, in addition to two acting-officers (Barzani, 1986a).

- In March 1946, Mustafa Barzani was appointed as the General Commander of the Republic's Army. In fact, General Barzani and his *pêshmerga* were able to defend the Republic, but it seems that the Leader Qazî Muhammad preferred to avoid war with the Iranian Army, particularly after Soviet Union's withdrawal and

stopping their support to both Republics of Kurdistan and Azerbaijan;<sup>11</sup>

- The successful establishment of Kurdistan Democratic Party-Iran encouraged the Kurds of Iraq, particularly those who were in Mehabad-Iran, to think of having a united and stronger political party that take over the Kurdish national struggle in Iraqi Kurdistan. For this purpose, Mustafa Barzani sent his representative from Mehabad to the Iraqi Kurdistan in order to make preparations for the establishment of such political party. So, on 16 Augustus 1946 a conference was held in Baghdad. Following this conference, the Kurdistan Democratic Party-Iraq (KDP) to be led by Mustafa Barzani was founded.<sup>12</sup> It seems that in the KDP's establishing conference, which was held on 16 Augustus 1946 in Baghdad, both Kurdish political organizations of "*Rixgarî*" and "*Shorish*" joined the newly established Democratic Party of Iraqi Kurdistan. While

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<sup>11</sup> Consequently, Mustafa Barzani with 500 of his *pêshmerge* went to USSR. The rest of the participants with all their families returned to Iraq.

<sup>12</sup> The name of the KDP-Iraq was soon changed from "Kurdish Democratic Party" to "Kurdistan Democratic Party" (Kurdish; Partî Dimokratî Kurdistan, or just Partî).

*Rixgarî* was the extension of the Kurdish political party of *Hîwa*,<sup>13</sup> *Shorish* was established by a number of Kurdish communist leaders who had spilt from the Iraqi Communist Party. During the period from its establishment until 1958, the KDP continued its underground political activities, holding several conferences to develop its overall program and elect its new leadership. Mustafa Barzani had been always re-elected as the president of the party. In fact, since its establishment the KDP has significantly headed the KNM in Iraq and until now it can be considered as the largest political party in the Iraqi Kurdistan.

**Secondly**, in relation to the second stage and the corresponding period of 1958-1991, the following Kurdish popular revolutions and political events are crucial:

- On 14 July 1958, the republican revolution led by General Abdul-Karim Qasim ended the Monarchy in Iraq and announced a provisional constitution, stating that the Kurds and Arabs are partners in the land of Iraq (see earlier, 5.2). On 7 October 1958, Mustafa Barzani and his followers returned to Iraq from exile in the former Soviet Union and meanwhile many Iraqi political parties, including the KDP, were given official legal permission to act

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<sup>13</sup> *Hîwa* (i.e., the Hope) was established in 1939 in Iraqi Kurdistan by a group of Kurdish intellectuals. Until 1943, *Hîwa* was the strongest Kurdish political party.



freely. Meanwhile, the KNM in Iraq to reached several national goals and objectives, notably the Kurdish people and their language were officially recognised in the Iraqi institution.

- Although the republican revolution of 1958 (namely Abdul-Karim Qasim who ruled Iraq until 1963) had helped the KNM to reach aforementioned goals and objectives, lack of a relevant mechanism for the practical implementation reduced the importance of such achievements (Barzani, 2002). Meanwhile, the political conflict between certain groups and political parties led to the occurrence of some painful events in different places of Iraq; take for example the events of July 1959 in Kerkuk. Moreover, as Abdul-Karim Qasim was not able to answer the Kurdish demands towards autonomy (particularly he was fearful from the Arab nationalists), the relationship between ICG headed by Qasim on one side and Barzani and his KDP on the other side became complicated, creating extra disagreements between both sides. Consequently, on 11 September 1961, Mustafa Barzani and his KDP declared their revolution. This revolution, which was called the September Revolution (Kurdish; *Shorishî Aylul*), continued over the period from 1961-1975, leading to the longest and most serious Kurdish armed struggle in the modern history of the Kurds and Kurdistan.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> For details of the September Revolution of 1961-1975, see the Third Part of Barzani and the Kurdish Liberation Movement, written by Masoud Barzani. This

- In 1964-1966, the KDP leadership split into two wings or divisions. The majority of the party members along with a larger division of the *pêshmarga* remained to be led by Mustafa Barzani. Ibrahim Ahmed, Jalal Talabani and about 15 other members of the KDP's central committee along with a smaller division of the *pêshmarga* and party members left the party to be called the political bureau wing. Both divisions reunited under the leadership of Mustafa Barzani in 1970, after the announcement of the peace agreement of the 11<sup>th</sup> of March 1970.
- During the period from 11.09.1961 until 11.03.1970, the KNM in Iraq leading the September Revolution saw several stages of war and political negotiations with the ICG. For example, in June 1966, the ICG agreed with the KNM and the KDP led by Barzani to stop the fighting and then Iraqi Prime Minister (Abdul-Rahman al-Bazaz) declared his announcement of 12 points that was called the announcement of June. This announcement did not include the right of autonomy for Kurdistan, but a wide range of cultural and local administrative rights, including the right of appropriate participation of the Kurdish people in the government of Iraq. However, many aspects of the announcement were not implemented and subsequently the war restarted between the KNM and ICG.

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important book is available in Arabic Language (Barzani, 2002).

- On 11 March 1970, ICG submitted to the Kurdish demands and recognised autonomy for Kurdistan that had been for a long time considered as a major political goal to be achieved by the KNM in Iraq. That is to say, under the peace agreement of 11 March 1970 (see Appendix 2), concluded by ICG and KNM led by Mustafa Barzani, the Iraqi Kurdistan was granted autonomy within the framework of Iraq to be implemented after two years from the announcement of the agreement. This important victory of the KNM in Iraq united almost all the Kurds of Iraq, including the KDP's political bureau wing that was led by Ibrahim Ahmed and Jalal Talabani. Even the Kurds of the other parts of Kurdistan were proud to be led by and work under the nationalist umbrella of Mustafa Barzani's leadership.
- However, on 11 March 1974, the ICG unilaterally announced its law for the Autonomous Area of Iraqi-Kurdistan. In connection with this law, the area of Iraqi Kurdistan, which was determined by the ICG – to be composed of the provinces of Duhok, Arbil and Sulaymaniya, including the sub-provinces of Chamchamal and Kalar – was granted a limited kind of autonomy over certain aspects of local affairs. Kirkuk, Khanaqin, Shekhan and Sinjar were kept out of the Autonomous Area of Kurdistan (see Enclave No. 5; Map 3).
- When the leadership of the KNM rejected Iraq's law of autonomy, in April 1974, a savage war broke out between ICG and the Kurdish people led by the KDP-Iraq. At the meantime, in the face of Iraq's arrangements for such weak and incomplete

autonomy, the leadership of KDP-Iraq separately formed an autonomous regional government in late March 1974 to rule the liberated areas of Iraqi-Kurdistan. The Kurdish self-rule experience along with war continued until 6 March 1975, when Iraq and Iran agreed at Algiers to co-operate with each other against the KNM in Iraq. Indeed, according to this 'perfidious' agreement, Iraq agreed to concede the territory (about half of its 40 mile long waterway of Shut al-Arab estuary formed by the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers about 100 miles from the Gulf) in return for Iran's promise to co-operate in order to stop the advances of the ongoing Kurdish revolution of 11 September 1961 (compare, Randal, 1995). However, in 1980, Iraq vowed to regain its control over the Shut al-Arab and consequently the bloody Iraq-Iran War, which started in September 1980, continued over more than eight years.

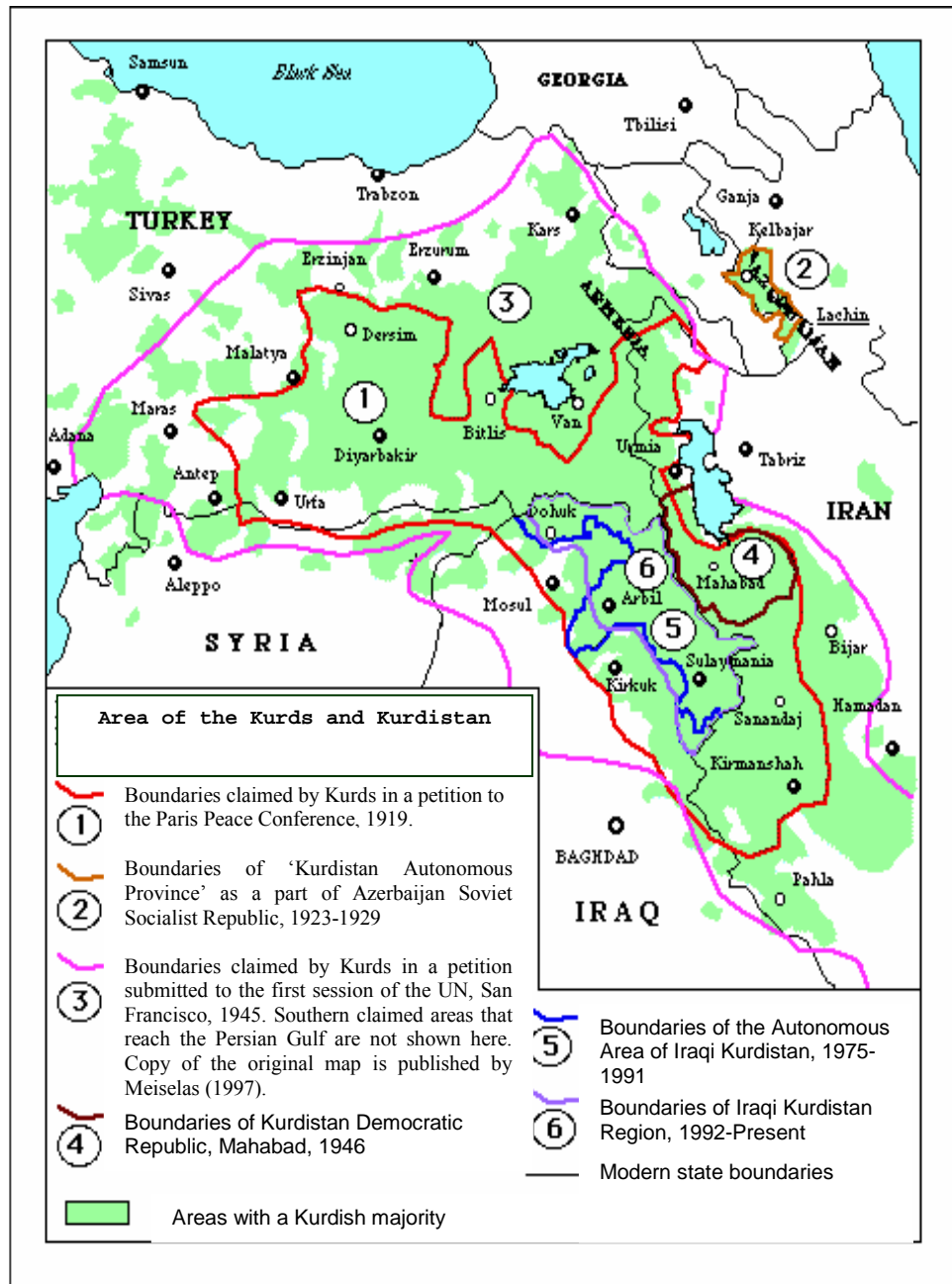
- While the political disagreement and the military conflict between the KNM and ICG after 1975 continued until 1991, during the 1970s and 1980s the Kurds (in Iraq) were left alone to suffer from all different kinds of suppression policies employed against them by ICG in a more comprehensive and even aggressive way, not only to minimise the size of the Kurdish population and their land Kurdistan, but also to make serious attempts towards the genocide of the Kurds. The Kurdish countryside was day-by-day depopulated and almost all the Kurdish villages were destroyed and thousands of Kurdish families and individuals were deported and forced either to move into the southern desert areas of Iraq or to live in large newly established settlements within the so-called

Autonomous Area of Kurdistan. Map 2.5 shows further details of the major policies of deportation campaigns, which are employed against the Kurds and Kurdistan in the 20<sup>th</sup> century by the related countries. Following the same policy of denial, in 1986, around eight thousand Barzani adult men were taken from their homes as prisoners. They never came back to their families. Afterwards, in the late 1980s, ICG carried out the '*anfal*' campaign, whereby tens of thousands of Iraqi Kurds, including women and children, were taken as prisoners and disappeared forever. Almost all Kurdish sources claim that during the 1980s alone about 200,000 Iraqi Kurds were killed and 183,000 disappeared (Vanly, 1999). Even chemical weapons were used against the Kurdish population, not only in the city of Halabja, but also in some other places of the Iraqi Kurdistan (McDowaal, 1996).<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> For more information about Deportation Policies, Genocide and Anfal Campaign, Violation of Human Rights and using Chemical Weapons against the Kurds of Iraq, see different years' reports and publications of Amnesty International-Iraq, Human Rights Watch, Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan, Middle East Watch, US Department of State, Human Rights Reports of different years, United Nations, High Commissioner for Human Rights, 1997 and other years' reports of Mr. Max van der Stoel.

**MAP 3: AREA OF THE KURDS & KURDISTAN, SHOWING MAJOR POLITICAL ENCLAVES**



Source: Izadi (1999)

## 6. Conclusions

**Firstly**, the KNM, which is rather secular, can be regarded as the oldest national movement in the Muslim world. In fact, the early steps of the KNM go back to the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, when the Kurds formed several independent Kurdish principalities or kingdoms. Regarding the main Kurdish national goals and objectives after the First World War, it seems that “autonomy for Kurdistan and democracy for Iraq” were the main goals and objectives of the KNM (particularly in Iraqi Kurdistan). However, in October 1992, the federal system was declared to be the base for the relationship between the KNM and ICG of Baghdad.

**Secondly**, although the Kurds has not yet reached the statehood, it can be explained that there are strong legitimate domestic and international foundations for the KNM (particularly in Iraq) to extend the Kurdish national goals and objectives to include clear demands for the establishment of an independent state over their land Kurdistan.

**Thirdly**, The Kurdish people have led a hard struggle through a long series of continued revolutions and rebellions against foreign imposed rule on the Kurdish nation, but unfortunately, the Kurdish struggle has been of little avail. Consequently, the Kurds remain without a state of their own, and therefore, they have been called “a Nation without a State”.

**Fourthly**, the legendary Kurdish leader Mustafa Barzani had definitely played a significant role in the development of the KNM, particularly during the period from the beginning of the 1930s until end of the 1970s. In fact, his powerful political and military role is seen as a major factor in the Kurdish national struggle; to the effect that the current semi-independent entity of IKR is one results of this role.

**Finally**, The failure of the KNM to reach its full national goals and objectives (particularly, towards statehood) could be mainly related to external reasons, in the sense that the Kurds were the victims of some regional and international compromises; as happened in 1923, when the Treaty of Lausanne was signed and accordingly the Kurds were ignored. Again, when southern Kurdistan was annexed to the newly created state of Iraq in 1926 against the will of the Kurdish people, the demands and desire of the Kurdish population of southern Kurdistan to have their own state were ignored in order to satisfy British political and economic considerations. The conclusion that the Kurds were the victims of some regional and international compromises could be applied even to the later stages of the KNM. The Iraq-Iran agreement of 6 March 1975 at Algiers is another example of such regional and international compromises. In the mean time, internal reasons for such a failure should not be disregarded. It seems that the Kurds have largely divided among themselves resulting from a lack of agreement between leaders of the Kurdish tribes, local rules and political parties.



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## **Appendix 1: Treaty of Sèvres**

**10 AUGUST 1920**

### **Articles Related to Kurdistan**

#### ***Article 62***

A Commission sitting at Constantinople, composed of three members appointed by the British, French and Italian Governments respectively shall draft within six months from the coming into force of the present Treaty a scheme of local autonomy for the predominantly Kurdish areas lying east of the Euphrates, south of the southern boundary of Armenia as it may be hereafter determined, and north of the frontier of Turkey with Syria and Mesopotamia, as defined in Article 27, II. (2) and (3). If unanimity cannot be secured on any question, it will be referred by the members of the Commission to their respective Governments. The scheme shall contain full safeguards for the protection of the Assyro-Chaldeans and other racial or religious minorities within these areas, and with this object a Commission composed of British, French, Italian, Persian and Kurdish representatives shall visit the spot to examine and decide what rectification, if any, should be made to the Turkish frontier where, under the provisions of the present Treaty, that frontier coincides with that of Persia.

***Article 63***

The Turkish Government hereby agrees to accept and execute the decisions of both the Commissions mentioned in Article 62 within three months from their communication to the said Government.

***Article 64***

If within one year from the coming into force of the present Treaty the Kurdish peoples within the areas defined in Article 62 shall address themselves to the Council of the League of Nations in such a manner as to show that a majority of the population of these areas desires independence from Turkey, and if the Council then considers that these peoples are capable of such independence and recommends that it should be granted to them, Turkey hereby agrees to execute such a recommendation, and to renounce all rights and title over these areas. The detailed provisions for such renunciation will form the subject of a separate agreement between the Principal Allied Powers and Turkey. If and when such renunciation takes place, no objection will be raised by the Principal Allied Powers to the voluntary adhesion to such an independent Kurdish state of the Kurds inhabiting that part of Kurdistan which has been hitherto been included in the Mosul vilayet.

## **Appendix 2: Peace Agreement of 11 March 1970**

### **Introduction:**

Under this agreement, which was concluded between Iraqi Central Government (ICG) and the Kurdish National Movement (KNM) in Iraq led by Mustafa Barzani, ICG recognised that the Kurdish areas shall enjoy autonomy within the framework of the Republic of Iraq. Although ICG has not fulfilled its part and promises, the agreement remains one of the most prominent achievements of the KNM in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Essential Articles of the Agreement:**

1. The Kurdish language shall be, alongside the Arabic language, the official language in areas with a Kurdish majority; and will be the language of instruction in those areas and taught throughout Iraq as a second language.
2. Kurds will participate fully in government, including senior and sensitive posts in the cabinet and the army.
3. Kurdish education and culture will be reinforced.
4. All officials in Kurdish majority areas shall be Kurds or at least Kurdish-speaking.
5. Kurds shall be free to establish student, youth, women's and teachers' organisations of their own.

- 6.** Funds will be set aside for the development of Kurdistan.
- 7.** Pensions and assistance will be provided for the families of martyrs and others stricken by poverty, unemployment or homelessness.
- 8.** Kurds and Arabs will be restored to their former place of habitation.
- 9.** The Agrarian Reform will be implemented.
- 10.** The Constitution will be amended to read “the Iraqi people are made up of two nationalities, the Arab nationality and the Kurdish nationality.”
- 11.** The broadcasting station and heavy weapons will be returned to the government.
- 12.** A Kurd shall be one of the vice- presidents.
- 13.** The Provincial Law shall be amended in a manner conforming to the substance of this declaration.
- 14.** Unification of areas with a Kurdish majority as a self-governing unit.
- 15.** The Kurdish people shall share in the legislative power in a manner proportionate to its population in Iraq.



## CURRICULUM VITAE



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- Date & place of birth: 1950, Erbil
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### **University and Higher Education:**

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- MSc. (Econ) University of Wales, Swansea, UK, 1985
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### **Other Studies, Courses and Skills:**

- Higher Professional Studies ( Baghdad, 1969-1973
- Advanced English Language Studies for Academic Purposes; Norwich, England, 1982-1983
- Short Courses in Public Relations, Communications, Didactic & Teaching Methods, and Automation, Erbil and Baghdad, 1979-1995
- Thorough Methodological Knowledge and Experience in Social Science Related Research
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- 2003-Present: Senior Lecturer and Academic Supervisor of the Legal & Political Science Research Unit at Salahadin University, Erbil
- 1991-1996: University Lecturer at the College (Faculty) of Law & Politics, Salahadin University, Erbil

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**Further Activities and Memberships:**

- Member of Kurdish Academic Network, KAN, London, 1999-Present
- Member of the Inquiry Commission (associated with School of Oriental & African Studies, University of London) to prevent Political Violence Occurring in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region, 1994-1995
- Elected Member of the Council of the College of Law & Politics, Salahadin University, 1993-1996
- President of Kurdistan Political Science Association, Erbil, 1992-1996
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**Publications:**

- The Kurds & Kurdistan and Recent Political Developments of the Iraqi Kurdistan Region (a book to be published)
- Measuring Degrees of Democratic Attainment: A New Methodological Approach (to be published). The approach, which binds relevant qualitative data to certain adjusted quantitative methods, is utilised to be appropriate for

the purpose of measuring degrees of democratic attainment by countries that lack reliable data

- Preparedness to Carry out Scientific Research: Study Aid for Students and New Researchers, 1995
- Evaluation of Social Development Projects and its Difficulties, Journal of Law and Politics, Volume 1, June 1994 (College of Law & Politics, Salahadin University, Erbil, Iraq), 1994
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