



**REPORT ON MEETINGS WITH ADVISORS,
AT PARLIAMENT HOUSE CANBERRA
8 NOVEMBER 2016**

Those who attended meetings:

Zirian Fatah (President, Co-chair, Kurdish Lobby Australia)
Gina Lennox (Public Officer, Co-chair, Kurdish Lobby Australia)
Ismet Tastan (Kurdish Lobby Australia, Australian Kurdish Association, Rep. Kurdish National Congress)
Kenan Bircan (Australian Kurdish Association)
Beste Tungandame (*İnsan Hakları Derneği*, İHD Human Rights Association of Turkey)

Aims of meetings

Based on the KLA report 'ISIS, Failing States and the Kurds' 22 September 2016
KLA wanted to ask parliamentarians what they or the Australian Government were doing or intended to do about:

Turkey's trajectory

- Arresting 12 HDP parliamentarians and detaining 10, detaining 2 Kurdish mayors, and the purge of academics, teachers, media, judges, armed forces etc. since the coup attempt;
- Embarking on a civil war and martial law involving curfews, sieges, extrajudicial killings, destruction of suburbs in eastern Turkey;
- Roadmap to peace between the Turkish state and Kurds;
- Turkey invading northern Aleppo and attacking Kurdish and allied forces and civilians in northern Syria;
- Turkey wanting to invade and interfere with the governance of Nineveh;
- Reviewing the classification of PKK as a terrorist organization and the holding of Abdullah Ocalan in isolation.

Syria, in terms of:

- a political solution, including whether the Australian Government supports a federal system of government in Syria and the local administrations in Rojava, and whether creating safe zones run by local administrations is the way to go;
- Plans and involvement for reconstruction, and whether loans, investment and aid should build local capacity in governance, security, judiciary, other services and civil society.



Iraq, in terms of:

- Plans and involvement in post-ISIS reconstruction, and whether loans, investment and aid should build local capacity in governance, security, judiciary, other services and civil society to encourage decentralization in accordance with the 2005 constitution and avoid waste, corruption and incompetence of the central government;
- Kurdistan, the disputed territories and ethnic rights;
- Security to prevent potential conflict post-ISIS.

Suggested actions included public statements, quiet diplomacy via ambassadors in Australia and Australian embassy personnel in the relevant country, supporting UN resolutions, and carrot and stick approaches.

In addition, **AKA** wanted to know whether parliamentarians would write letters of support or otherwise support e.g. through meetings:

- A visit to Australia by HDP parliamentarians in 2016;
- A visit to Australia by Salih Muslim in early 2017;
- A PYD office in Australia.

Unfortunately, we did not have time to cover issues concerning Iran such as the death penalty and minority rights.

At each meeting we asked what was fair compensation for the sacrifices being made by Kurdish fighters and civilians in the fight against ISIS, thus limiting ISIS's impacts in Iraq and Syria and around the world. We got no response.

Meeting Schedule.

2.30 pm Nina Dynon, Advisor to Penny Wong, Shadow Min. of Foreign Affairs

3.30 pm Peter Khalil, Labor member for Wills, Victoria

Email: Peter.Khalil.MP@aph.gov.au

4.30 pm Natasha Hooper (Europe/Turkey) and Simone Rowoth (Middle East) Advisors to Julie Bishop, Min. of Foreign Affairs

Justin Bassi (National Security Advisor, Office of the Prime Minister)

Notes on meeting with Nina Dynon, Advisor to Penny Wong, Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs.

The main points of the meeting were:

- Penny Wong and her office are following events closely and are most concerned about what happens after ISIS is defeated.
- A bi-partisan approach is taken for Foreign Affairs, and it is important that the Government, not the Opposition, leads the process. Australian responses to issues raised must be part of an international response.
- Being in Opposition, Penny Wong and her office have no access to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and other government bureaucracies so reports like those written by KLA and any other information is helpful. The office gets regular updates from Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International.
- Penny Wong has made no statements and has taken no public position on what is happening in Turkey, Iraq and Syria. However there is ongoing discussion within the department and Wong has asked about the attempted coup in Turkey in Senate Estimates. Nina said she would send the transcript. On 10 November Gina emailed her asking for the transcript.
- AKA asked whether the Minister would write a letter of support for HDP parliamentarians and Salih Muslim to visit Australia. AKA also asked whether the Opposition would support a PYD office in Australia.

Notes on meeting with Peter Khalil, Member for Wills, Victoria and Chris Jervis, senior advisor.

- Peter Khalil has worked in DFAT and the Department of Defence in Kurdistan of Iraq, where he has good contacts, and he has also worked for the Brookings Institute. For further information on his background and experience go to http://www.alp.org.au/peter_khalil
- His view is that it is not about if Kurdistan becomes independent but when and how, and that the governments of Iraq and Syria cannot return to the status quo post-ISIS and the end of the civil war in Syria, and that a federation or confederation are valid possibilities for both countries. Mr. Khalil claimed many Australian politicians are sympathetic to Kurds and named David Feeney and Kim Carr as particularly interested.
- In his first speech to parliament he talked about Kurdish issues. See: <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22chamber%2Fhansard%2Fd961ab05-d592-46b4-8a71-e41c76b2d8ae%2F0077%22>

- Mr. Khalil has had no communication with the KRG Representative, Mr. Haval Dasko Syan.
- Mr. Khalil is Chair of the International and Legal Affairs Caucus Committee that reviews proposed legislation so the party settles on a position.
- Mr. Khalil contributes to party discussions on Kurdish issues and developments in Turkey, Syria and Iraq, and is prepared to put a Question on Notice with words to the effect: Please explain what representation has been made to the Turkish Government following the arrests of 12 HDP parliamentarians, and what is happening in eastern Turkey.
- Mr. Khalil observed that the AKP Government seemed prepared for the purge after the attempted coup in Turkey and that many people from Turkey now living in Australia appear to be united in their concern about the trajectory of Turkey under President Erdogan.
- Mr. Khalil reported that after the September Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security (PJCS) hearing in view of the Attorney General relisting the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) as a terrorist organisation on 13 August 2015, under Chapter 5 Part 5.3 Division 100 - 102 of the *Criminal Code Act 1995* (revised July 2015), at which KLA and AKA made presentations, Labor dissented for PKK to be relisted as a terrorist organisation but was over ruled.
- Mr. Khalil raised the problem of aid getting to Kobani with Qubud Talabani and suggested an air route could be used. We asked if it was possible to send an Australian delegation to Rojava.
- Follow up: the possibility of an Australia delegation to the disputed territories and Rojava.

Notes on meeting with Natasha Hooper, Simone Rowoth and Justin Bassi.

- Julie Bishop has not made any public statement about the detaining of 12 HDP parliamentarians on 4 November 2016 and that 10 are being held in custody awaiting trial. However she has made past statements about Turkey.
- Embassy officials in Ankara are following events and speaking with Turkish officials.
- We fed back that public statements are as important as quiet diplomacy or otherwise the West is seen as complicit in what President Erdogan and the AKP Government is doing in Turkey and Syria, and what they want to do in Iraq.

- There is no internationally co-ordinated carrot and stick approach to encourage Turkey to change trajectory.
- There are different points of view about Turkey's actions within the international coalition against ISIS.
- Despite differences, there is a need for the US to maintain relations with Turkey just as there is a need for the US to maintain relations with Russia.
- DFAT would have to consider the opening of a PYD office in Australia.
- The Australian Government is against any Australian going to Syria to fight for ISIS, Al-Nusra or YPG/YPJ. Australians going overseas as mercenaries was outlawed in 1978. We pointed out that people who join YPG/YPJ do so on a voluntary basis, i.e. they do not get paid, unlike those who join ISIS or al-Nusra. Therefore those that join YPG/YPJ are not mercenaries.
- Australia is part of the coalition planning post-ISIS reconstruction in Iraq. The planning is well underway. Just as the Government of Iraq must approve all foreign forces in Iraq, and their roles, so will the Government of Iraq have to approve all organisations and reconstruction work. However, this response does not address our point that aid, loans and investment should be linked to building local capacity and encouraging decentralisation.
- Australia has contributed \$500 million to UN agencies and proposes to contribute another \$130 million to UN agencies for Iraq and Syria.
- When making presentations to advisors we should single out three to five issues, propose policy responses and outline challenges to these responses for each issue.



[Close & Return to Home page](#)

[Close & Return to KLA Activities page](#)