

REPORT ON KURDISH LOBBY AUSTRALIA'S DONATION TO KOBANE RECONSTRUCTION BOARD



[Map](#) showing towns on either side of the Turkey-Syria border, with Kobane named 'Ayn al-Arab'

INTRODUCTION

This report provides:

- A very brief history of Kobane;
- Information about the Education System in Kobane; and
- How Kurdish Lobby Australia's donation to the Kobane Reconstruction Board contributed to the refurbishment of Dibistan S. Azad School in the town of Kobane, November 2018.

A VERY BRIEF HISTORY OF KOBANE/KOBANI

Prior to World War 1, the Kobane district in Aleppo province in northern Syria was ruled by the Ottoman Empire and mainly populated by semi-nomadic Kurds. Kobane was the name given to the town and district during this time by a German company that built a railway from Baghdad to Konya connecting the town of Kobane to the town of Suruc in modern day Turkey. Under the French mandate Kurds were given a degree of autonomy but based on an Arabic translation of the Ottoman name for the town and district, Kobane was officially renamed Ayn al-Arab by the Assad regime, during the Arabisation of northern Syria between 1962 and the 1980s, when 20 percent of the Kurdish population were stripped of all citizenship rights. Some 300,000 to 500,000 Kurds remain non-citizens in Syria.

The Arab Spring protests in Syria transformed into an armed conflict in 2011. Since 2012, Syrian Kurdish-led People's Protection Units (YPG), formed in 2004, and Women's Protection Units (YPJ), formed in 2013, have been responsible for the security of Kobane. In 2012, their political counterparts established

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an autonomous administration for the district. But Kobane came under increasing attacks by ISIS and in June 2014, ISIS massacred 200 civilians and kidnapped women from the town. Between 16 September 2014 and 26 January 2015, ISIS laid siege to Kobane township and surrounding villages. The YPG and YPJ defended the district with little resources but great heroism.

On September 22, the US-led coalition began targeting ISIS with airstrikes, and in late October the US made its first airdrop of weapons, ammunition and medicines to those defending Kobane. At the same time, Peshmerga from the Kurdistan Region of Iraq crossed through Turkey to help the Kurds in Kobane fight ISIS. The defence of Kobane was the first military victory over ISIS, and the first time Kurds from all parts of Kurdistan militarily fought a single foe. It was also the beginning of an important alliance between the YPG/YPJ and US-led coalition to defeat ISIS in Syria.



ISIS and the war on ISIS destroyed 80 percent of the town's infrastructure. In February 2015, the administration of Kobane established the Kobane Reconstruction Board.

Despite Turkey closing the border and a lack of international NGOs in the district, the Kobane Reconstruction Board helped demine and continues to clear rubble, and provide healthcare, education, electricity, water and agricultural inputs, relying on donations from organisations and individuals mainly based in Europe.

[People](#) celebrating the defeat of ISIS in the destroyed town of Kobane, 2015

EDUCATION IN KOBANE

Before ISIS, the Assad regime had not built enough schools for the population of Kobane. To attend university people had to go to Raqqa or Aleppo, while the ISIS attack in June 2014 killed a number of teachers. To begin the 2015 – 2016 school year, Kobane Reconstruction Board had Kurdish language textbooks written and published, as the old textbooks were in Arabic and were tools of propaganda. Experienced teachers and university professors gave a three-month training course to volunteer teachers, and in the course of the education year these new teachers continued their training. Meanwhile, rubble was removed from schools, and schools with 20 to 70 percent of their buildings damaged by ISIS and airstrikes had to be rebuilt. In that first year, classes were conducted in makeshift classrooms and new teachers faced up to 70 students in a class.

In 2018, Kobane town and surrounding villages have 537 schools for 57,522 students, who are taught by 2,616 teachers. Ninety percent of these teachers are women. In the greater Euphrates Region, there are 37,000 Kurdish students and 71,000 Arab students. Class sizes are now 35 students, with the hope of

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reducing class sizes to 20 students in the near future, especially as village schools often teach students from different villages and grades in one class.

An Education Board oversees education in the Democratic Federation of Northern Syria and an Education Assembly runs education in the town and district of Kobane. Education is compulsory for children up to 14 years of age. About 95 percent of children attend school until this age. There are six years of elementary school, three years of secondary school and three years of high school. All students are guaranteed the right to learn in their own language using the script of that language. From fourth grade they must learn a second local language, and a foreign language, which is generally English and in rare cases, French. Civic education is taught at all stages of education. In elementary school it is called 'life and society', in secondary school 'culture and ethics' and in high school 'social sciences'. Within this subject children are taught about democracy and self-government structures or 'democratic autonomy'.

In September 2017, the University of Kobane was opened with two faculties, Sciences and Kurdish Language and Literature, 16 teachers and 45 students. In 2019, faculties will expand to Agriculture, Sociology and Arabic Language and Literature.

To continue the development of a quality education system there is a need for:

- New schools, particularly in the villages;
- Basic equipment and supplies such as chairs, benches, books, pens, laboratory tools for scientific subjects like chemistry and biology, sports equipment and equipment for music and art; and
- Teachers to cover all subjects in the high school curriculum.

KURDISH LOBBY AUSTRALIA'S CONTRIBUTION

In mid-2018, Kurdish Lobby Australia (KLA) approached the Kobane Reconstruction Board in view of making a donation. Ozlem Tanrikulu, who manages the Board's operations in Europe, suggested that a school in Kobane required refurbishing and arranged the transfer of KLA's donation of AUD\$2,000 to Kobane Reconstruction Board via Un Ponte Per (UPP) Head of Mission in North East Syria, based in Erbil. Within one month Ms. Tanrikulu forwarded documentation, including receipts, letters, and photos of how KLA's small donation contributed to the installation of PVC windows, desks and whiteboards at the Dibistan S. Azad School. For its efficiency and good work, KLA highly recommends working with the Kobane Reconstruction Board. Initial contact can be made via email: reconstructKobane@gmail.com.



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ABOUT DIBISTAN S. AZAD SCHOOL

Dibistan S. Azad School has 968 students aged between six and twelve years, of whom 532 are girls and 436 are boys. There are 37 female teachers and 36 male teachers. These teachers donate their time for nine hours a day, five days a week.

Students study in the Kurdish language, specifically the Kurmanji dialect that uses the Cyrillic script.

The subjects taught are mathematics, science, geography, life and society, music, drawing, sport, Kurdish, Arabic and English. This means students learn three languages and three scripts! The weekend falls on a Friday and Saturday.

S.Azad School is an old building, consisting of 31 rooms that include classrooms, administration offices, a warehouse and a staffroom. Local materials have been used to refurbish the school.



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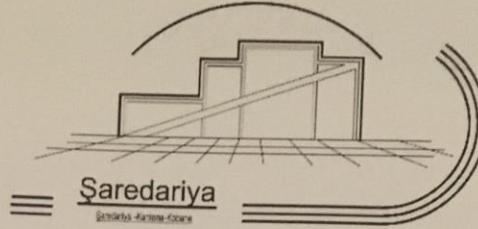
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Sûriya –Rêveberiya Xweser a Demokratîk

Kantona Kobanê

Encûmana Şaradariya Kobanê

Numere :



سوریا- الإدارة الذاتية الديمقراطية

مقاطعة كوباني

مجلس بلدية كوباني

الرقم:

التاريخ:

To

Ms.Gina Lennox

Kurdish Lobby Australia-KLA

Kobane, 27th November, 2018

Dear Ms. Gina Lennox and KLA Staff

On behalf of Kobane Municipality, Administration of Schools in Kobane and Reconstruct Board we would like to inform you that we received on the date 15 November 2018, \$2740, that include 1190€ as ongoing donation of the **Kurdish Lobby Australia** and 1220€ as donation of **UIKI Onlus** for supporting education needs in Kobane.

The amount received through bank transfer by Ozlem Tanrikulu (UIKI Onlus Chair and our delegate in Europa).

That contribution helped to renew the windows of S. Azad School and to buy the desk for the pupils as we send documentation, including receipts, letters, and some photos.

Thank you again for your support!

Sincerely

Roshan Abdi, Co Mayors

Faris Atti, Co Mayors

