



January 20, 2024

To: Australian Parliamentarians, Dept. Foreign Affairs and Trade, UN, and media

Since October 7 the Kurdistan regions of Iraq and Syria have been facing almost daily military attacks from Turkey, Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), and their militias because:

- Turkey¹ and Iran support Hamas/Hezbollah in the Hamas- Israeli War.
- The war has captured world attention and distracts from other equally important conflicts.
- Turkey, Iran, and linked militias are emboldened by Hamas and Hezbollah's actions and assume their attacks on the Kurdistan regions will have no repercussions.
- The IRGC has enabled its networks to become more active in seeking revenge for the war, Israel assassinating the IRGC commander, Sayyed Razi Mousavi (Dec. 26, 2023), the Hamas deputy leader, Saleh al-Aroui, and two Hezbollah commanders e.g. Wissam al-Tawil (Jan. 2).
- The IRGC wants to send a message to the US to stop supporting Israel's war.
- Iran and Turkey are determined to force the US out of Iraq and Syria.
- Turkey and Iran see Kurds as allies of the West and want to silence and assimilate Kurds, and abolish the national security threat of two Kurd-led, multi-ethnic regional administrations.
- With growing divisions among army personnel and the population, Khamenei and the IRGC need a low-level war to ensure the survival of the Islamic Republic.

The international community has been publicly unresponsive these attacks on the very people (Kurds) who sacrificed 15,000 lives to help the US-led coalition defeat ISIS and who are attempting to build multiethnic democracies in a region of autocrats. Australia may be on the other side of the world to these tensions and conflicts, but like north America, Europe, Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey, we continue to benefit from the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and Peshmerga defending people and territory from ISIS fighters, helping to defeat ISIS, keeping ISIS fighters and associates in prison, while our pilots bombed ISIS from the air and our troops continue to be deployed to the Middle East.

Just as the world, including Australia, is impacted by the Iran-backed Houthis' attacks in the Red Sea, if military actions in the Middle East continue or escalate, it will impact world trade and economies, with Australian taxpayers being left to finance another military operation. Consequently, we wish to discuss Australia's possible courses of action to protect the interest of all. For instance, as well as advocacy, we suggest Australia coordinate with a re-activated UN and other countries to:

- Provide adequate military assistance to the SDF and Peshmerga for air and ground defence.
- Implement a no-fly/no-drone/no-missile zone over the Kurdistan regions of Syria and Iraq.
- Initiate a multi-national peacemaking mission in both regions.

We have been advised that an informal parliamentary friendship group is going to be established in 2024 so the Australian-Kurdish community can inform and update Australian parliamentarians on the international issues at stake regarding the denial of Kurdistanis' basic human rights. Given the delays in establishing this group, late last year we asked for a conference room to be booked for a presentation in early 2024. We would appreciate a response to these requests and a timeline for establishing the informal friendship group. A brief list of military attacks on the Kurdistan Regions follow. We trust you will think deeply on all matters raised and look forward to your response.

Yours Sincerely,

Hazhar Siyani
KLA Co-Chair & President

Dr Gina Lennox
KLA Co-Chair & Public Officer

¹ On Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas leader, Ismail Haniyeh, was in Ankara. Afterwards, President Erdogan spoke at a huge pro-Palestinian rally, announcing, "Hamas is not a terrorist organisation. It is a liberation movement." In Turkey, Palestinian rallies are allowed. Kurds' rallies result in mass arrests.

OUTLINE OF MILITARY ATTACKS ON THE KURDISTAN REGIONS OF IRAQ AND SYRIA

This list of military attacks on the Kurdistan regions of Iraq and Syria do not include ongoing attacks, unfair trials, imprisonment, torture, execution or assassination of Kurdish political representatives, activists, and protesters, and Kurdish language teachers, artists and conservationists in Iran and Turkey, and the multiple attempts by the governments of Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey to undermine the economic and political wellbeing of the Kurdistan regions.

Military attacks on the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI)

(also known as Iraqi Kurdistan, Southern Kurdistan and Bashur; often called 'Northern Iraq' in media)

Military attacks by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) on the KRI

On 15 January, 2024 at least ten ballistic missiles and Shahed-136 suicide drones struck eight locations in and around Erbil, including three missiles that targeted the residence of a prominent Kurdish businessman, [Peshraw Dizayee](#), head of the Falcon Group, overseeing Kurdistan's oil exports to Israel. The strikes killed Dizayee, his baby daughter, [Zhina](#), a young charismatic UK/Christian Iraqi citizen entrepreneur, Karam Mikhail, and one other civilian, also severely injuring his two sons and wife. His residence is in the Barzani strong hold of Masif/Pirmam 28 kilometres northeast of Erbil. Other targets were unidentified [Iranian opposition groups](#), a senior Kurdish intelligence official, Azhi Ameen, and an alleged intelligence centre, one explosion being close to the enormous newly built US Consulate on the Erbil-Pirman Road. Up to 17 people were injured. Drones targeting the [US-led coalition Harir Base](#) 70 kilometres from Erbil were intercepted, while the targeting of the US-led coalition airbase next to Erbil International Airport temporarily closed the airport. For the first time since October 7, IRGC claimed direct responsibility, proclaiming their military targets were Mossad, and Mossad and 'Iranian opposition' centres of operation, "for planning and running espionage operations and terrorist activities" against Iran.

In the last 12 months, a pattern has emerged with IRGC military attacks in the Kurdistan of Iraq and Syria and IRGC-supported militia attacks on US interests in both regions, as well as IRGC-supported Houthi attacks in the Red Sea, and in the IRGC supported Hamas and Lebanese Hezbollah attacks on Israel, and Iraqi militia attacks on US bases in Iraq and the KRI. One wonders if Ayatollah Khomeini wants a war to save his revolution. Before this, the IRGC rarely admitted responsibility.

On March 13, 2022, the IRGC launched 12 Fateh-110 ballistic missiles targeting another Titan of industry in Kurdistan, Baz Karim Barzanji, head of the KAR group that supplies gas to Turkey and Europe. The location of the attack was Barzinji's house in Pirmam. Again, the IRGC claimed his home was an Israeli "strategic centre". Fortunately, the attack failed but the house and Kurdistan 24 News Agency was damaged. These attacks indicate Iran supports the Shia Government of Iraq to undermine the Kurdistan Region's local, regional and international economy and politics.

On September 2018, IRGC shot seven surface-to surface missiles targeting two Iranian Kurdish opposition groups in Koya, killing up to 15 people and injuring around 50 people. Some years later, the IRGC demanded that the Iranian Kurdish opposition disarm and move away from the Iran-Iraq border by September 2023 or there would be more attacks. They moved, but the Kurdistan Regional Government claimed it had no jurisdiction to disarm them.

To attack Bashur would have been a group decision that included Hossein Salami (IRGC Commander in Chief), Esmail Qa'aani (Quds Commander in Chief) and Amir Ali HajiZadeh (Commander in Chief of IRGC's Aerospace forces), their decision signed off by Ayatollah Khomeini.

Military attacks in the KRI by Iran-backed Iraqi Government militias (Hashd al-Shaabi/PMUs)

- January 18, 2024 – a [suicide drone](#) targeting Erbil International Airport was prevented.
- January 17, 2024 (two days after the IRGC attacks) – IRGC-supported [Axis of Resistance](#) (Iraqi PMUs) targeted the American Consulate General in Ankawa, Erbil, with seven drones.
- Between October 7, 2023, and January 15, 2024, PMUs carried out 30+ attacks on US-led coalition bases in Erbil and Harir. Examples include a drone attack on the US-led coalition base next to Erbil International Airport on December 25 that injured three US soldiers.
- Another significant example occurred on December 30, 2023, when Iran-backed Iraqi militia conducted an unprecedented drone attack targeting a Peshmerga base in Pirmam/Masif. There was material damage but no casualties. KRI Prime Minister Masrour Barzani was furious. He posted on X/Twitter: “They use state money and weapons to attack the Kurdistan Region, destabilise the whole country and risk renewed conflict in a nation that has seen enough bloodshed.” Attacking Peshmerga forces and the symbolically important Pirmam increases pressure on the Barzani leadership and the Kurdistan Regional Government to submit to the will of Baghdad, given the multiplying unresolved disagreements related to the constitution, including the decisions being made by the unconstitutionally formed Federal Supreme court, the parliament and court’s refusing the right for the KRI to independently export oil and other commodities, the distribution of allocated revenue, the re-Arabisisation of disputed territories and Article 140 regarding the status of the disputed territories, as well as the carte blanche attacks by PMUs, election delays, the US presence in Kurdistan, and so on.
- Two years earlier, on February 15, 2021, an attack killed a Kurdish civilian and a US contractor from the Philippines. Iranian backed Saraya Awliya al-Dam (Guardians of Blood) fired 14 short range Iranian Fajr-1 107mm rockets into Erbil hitting multiple locations. It was a huge security breach as these missiles were shot only seven kilometres from Erbil City Center. Many rockets landed in civilian neighbourhoods and some hit the Erbil International Airport.

Military attacks by Turkey on the KRI

Since May 1983, Turkey has been establishing bases and launching air and ground offensives on the KRI and the disputed territories of Sinjar (Shingal) and Kirkuk, allegedly targeting PKK but killing over 100 civilians, destroying livelihoods, and causing the evacuation of hundreds of villages. More recent back-to-back land and air operations are as follows:

- Operation Tigris Shield – March 19, 2018 – May 27, 2019
- Operation Claw – May 28, 2019 – June 14, 2020
- Operation Claw Tiger and Operation Claw Eagle – June 15, 2020 – ongoing Operation Claw Lock & Operation Claw Sword – Since April 2023

Attacks are too many to list and have escalated since October 1, but two examples are:

- August 4, 2023 – Turkish drones targeted a convoy at Sulaimani International Airport that included SDF Commander in Chief Mazloun Abdi Kobani, and US Defence Force personnel.
- January 6, 2024 – Turkey’s air operations targeted suspected PKK positions in the Metina, Gara, Khakurk, Qandil, and Asos mountains, destroying 15 targets consisting of “caves, bunkers, shelters, and warehouses.”

If you believe Turkish media, there would be no more PKK guerillas left in the mountains to kill. If the PKK fights back, Turkey’s responds with more attacks, including attacks in Syria.

**Military attacks on the Kurdistan region of Syria
(also known as Western Kurdistan, Rojava, and sometimes 'North and East Syria' when including parts of the Arab-majority provinces of Deir Ezzor and Raqqa, with capitals of the same name)**

Turkey, Turkey-backed Syrian militias (including former ISIS fighters), the IRGC, IRGC-backed multi-ethnic militias, including Afghanis and Chechnens, ISIS, the Syrian Army, bribed Arabs and those in disagreement with the secular multiethnic society of the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES) frequently attack the SDF, infrastructure and civilians in territory served by the AANES. This territory spans third of Syria that has a multi-ethnic population of around 4+ million, as well as hundreds of thousands of people displaced from other areas.

Military Operations and attacks by Turkey on Aleppo and the AANES region in Syria since 2016
(allegedly targeting Kurdish terrorists despite victims being allied to the US-led coalition against ISIS)

- Operation Euphrates Shield – August 24, 2016 – March 29, 2017, co-opting extremist forces and resulting in Turkey's ongoing occupation of the Jarablus – Azaz – Al Bab triangle.
- Operation Olive Branch – January 20 – March 24, 2018, resulting in Turkey's ongoing occupation and ethnic cleansing of the Kurdish majority district of Afrin in Aleppo province.
- Operation Peace Spring – October 9 – November 25, 2019, resulting in Turkey's on-going occupation and ethnic cleansing of Tell Abyad (which Kurds call Gire Spi) and Ras al-Ayn (which Kurds call Serê Kaniyê).

On October 1, 2023, two suicide bombers injured two policemen outside Turkey's National Security Directorate in Ankara, for which PKK claimed responsibility. Since then, Turkey has escalated attacks in the Kurdistan of Syria:

- Between October 1 – 4, 2023, **175 airstrikes** killed 11 civilians and systematically destroyed much of Rojava's power-grid, at least 50 schools and two hospitals, leaving 80 percent of all residents without electricity and water, and soon to be without food and fuel.
- In the following ten days Turkish planes, drones, and artillery [continued their attacks](#) in the AANES administered region, hitting 29 infrastructure facilities (resulting in half of the region's oil and electricity facilities being inoperable), 185 residential areas, 13 SDF military sites, 25 Syrian Army sites, seven agricultural sites, three factories, and a third hospital. The strikes caused 24 civilian deaths and 33 military deaths. Another 39 AANES personnel were wounded, (Note: statistics on fatalities vary between sources). These attacks occurred at a time when SDF were quelling an Assad- and Iran-inspired Arab uprising in the south.
- January 12, the SDF [seized](#) 'platforms for rockets and mortars' that belonged to "terrorist groups" plotting to attack the SDF, US forces, and civilians.
- January 13, 2024, Turkey bombed 29 SDF targets.
- January 14, 2024, Turkey destroyed the Kobani and Ain Issa power stations.
- January 15-16, 2024, Turkey conducted **70+ airstrikes** damaging seven power stations, an oil refinery, a wedding hall in Derbasiya, a house in Qamishli, a store in Rilman, and gas facilities in Terbesbia and Suwaydiya. These attacks killed 48 civilians.
- January 17, 2024, Erdogan vowed to escalate attacks on Kurdish 'terrorists' in Syria and Iraq.



Infrastructure repeatedly damaged and repaired and damaged again, repeatedly, by Turkey in the AANES' region.

- Multiple electrical power stations (e.g. in Qamishli, Amuda, Suwaydiyah); electrical relay stations (e.g., in Darbasiyah) & power lines (e.g. in Tel Habash, Tel Mozan & Heseke).
- Water pumping stations
- At least seven oil refineries including those in Suwaydiya, Qarah Shuk, Rumayla, and Tayyim
- Hospitals and ambulances
- Schools
- Printing press for schoolbooks and general publications in the Kurdish language
- Wheat mills, silos, and other agricultural sites
- Cemeteries, churches, and Yezidi temples
- Archaeological sites, and
- Villages.

Turkey and Turkey-backed Syrian militia target, kidnap, rape, mutilate, kill and severely injure civilians, including women and children, fire fighters, other emergency responders, journalists, farmers, politicians, and protesters.

Military attacks by IRGC-backed militia on the Kurdistan region of Syria

Attacks by IRGC-backed militia on US coalition forces in the AANES region have become an almost daily occurrence since October 7, 2023. As reported by the [Middle East Institute](#) attacks repeatedly target US-SDF bases protecting the "Omar Field and Conoco plant in the Deir Ezzor countryside; the Kharab al-Jir base, Tal Beydar, and al-Shaddadi in the al-Hasakah countryside; as well as the al-Tanf base near the tri-border area of Syria, Iraq, and Jordan. The methods of attack (vary) encompassing drone strikes, improvised missiles, and mortar shells."

Conclusion

If one includes all four regions of Kurdistan, an estimated 50 million already traumatised Kurds and others (Assyrians, Armenians, Chaldeans, Turkmen and Arabs) are living in a state of constant threat and fear. The more man-made fires are lit and allowed to burn, the more costly it is to put them out. The UN should forget consensus and go for a majority rule to put out the fires, or be disbanded. International institutions and democratic states need to act, or they will reap the consequences. Please refer to the possible actions mentioned in the letter on page 1. There are many more possible actions to discuss. The escalating instability in the Middle East is as challenging as Climate Change, world poverty and Russia's invasion of Ukraine. To make sensible decisions, Australian Parliamentarians must stay informed, given Australians have been involved in every war fought in the Middle East in modern times, and will likely be involved in the next one.

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