



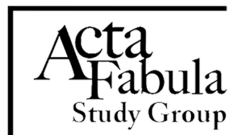
Why is it so difficult for Syrian
Kurdish parties to unite?

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estion. And I will also show that, because of the aims both parties stand for, it is in a way impossible to unite. Realism tells us only some superficial deal is the only thing achievable.

The Americans started to support YPG (Peoples' Protection Units) militarily by weapon droppings to fight ISIS in Kobani. Others, too, like the Peshmergas were sent in from Iraq via Turkey and a Free Syrian Army (FSA) brigade from Aleppo helped. "YPG has one line of control," a US diplomat told the author, "that's why it's so easy to work with them." All developed in the current SDF (Syrian Democratic Forces) led by the YPG control covering about one third of Syria, and most of the population in SDF area are Arabs. The Arabs, mainly living in Raqqa and Deir al-Zour areas, are not involved in this secretly held talks, they seem to be just guessing what will be decided for them; the same goes for other smaller components in the area, like Assyrians (Christians).

"We are proud of the joint work of the Kurdish National Council (KNC) and the Kurdish National Unity parties, as their work to reach an initial agreement is a source of joy," SDF commander Mazloun Abdi tweeted on 16 June.²

But the day after, the main KNC negotiator in the intra-Syrian-Kurdish talks denies in a WhatsApp voice message there was an agreement: "These are understandings, but there's not an agreement. One understanding is that we accomplished a political vision in a joint binding way and we got to an understanding together that the Duhok Agreement is the base from where we built upon for a dialogue in the future and the details of the dialogue to get good results from."³

WHY CAN'T THE TWO RIVAL BLOCS JUST UNITE?

From interviews with KNC leaders when asking them what the differences are between them and the Democratic Union party (PYD), the following eight arguments they share:

Firstly, we are political parties, whose struggle to defend the Kurdish people's existence and rights in Syria began in 1957 and continues to this day. Our stru-

² This translation was provided by ANHA, a PYD outlet.

³ This joint declaration can be found here: alrayiysiat 'iilam ENKS 'akhbar 'iilam ENKS bayan mushtarak 'iilaa al'iilam walraay aleamm, <https://www.r-enks.net/?p=24904>

WHY IS IT SO DIFFICULT FOR THE SYRIAN KURDISH PARTIES TO UNITE?

"The second phase of the (secret) dialogue, or negotiations between the PYD and KNC resumed about a week ago" a member of the KNC delegation told the author on Wednesday 23 July. "These negotiations will go according the Dohuk Agreement¹ along three subjects. The first subject will be authority, the second subject will be the administration and the third subject will be the military matters. We started with the first subject. Until now, there were no direct negotiations. A direct (face to face) meeting between the delegations hasn't happened yet. There is an exchange of papers and ideas with the help of an American go-between. But we arrived at a closer point to be able to have a direct meeting to discuss a first draft paper. I don't think it will take a long time to wait; maybe within only a few days it will happen," he said.

For decades, the Syrian Kurds have been deprived of their rights, on top of the repression all Syrians suffered. But, moreover, after almost ten years into the Syrian Conflict, and after the ISIS threats and after the Turkish interventions in Afrin and Northeast Syria, the Syrian Kurdish parties are still not united. Why not? In this article, I will attempt to answer that qu-

¹ Divided Syrian Kurds reach deal in face of ISIS threat, https://www.rudaw.net/english/kurdistan/221020141-amp?__twitter_impression=true

uggle focuses here. Secondly, we are against the blood shedding dictatorial regime in Syria. We stand by the Syrian National Opposition and we seek a political solution. Thirdly, we adopt the political and democratic method in dealing with the Syrian society, so we stay far away from weapons and repression. Our vision is clear and overt to everyone. Fourthly, the Kurdish movement and the Kurdish National Council have a clear position regarding the national opposition and their political struggle is clear within the cadres of the Kurdish community. Fifthly, the PYD is an emergency party which represents the PKK and has no agenda related to the rights of the Kurdish people. It was only established to provide logistical support to the PKK and to fulfill the Kurdish Workers Party's agenda. Moreover, the PYD doesn't abstain from any means to achieve this goal. Sixthly, together with the regime, the PYD arranged the oppression of the Kurdish movement and the claims of the Kurdish and Syrian people, and it supports the regime by protecting it and its economic foundations. Seventhly, the only means of the PYD are arms and repression. It neutralizes the other options and refuses to cooperate with anyone. The PYD hides its agenda from everyone, even from its comrades and executives. Lastly, they made use of murdering, kidnapping and threats to prevent the spread of the Kurdish movement. They were the regime accomplices and they all are the enemies of the Syrian people.

There are more grievances and obstacles that raise from the interviews, such as the KNC military wing (there are no exact statistics, but Syrian Kurdish sources estimate 3,000-4,000 men), the Rosh Peshmerga (the Kurdish FSA as one of the KNC politicians described), stay outside Northeast Syria; PYD/YPG don't allow them to enter the area, so they're still in Iraqi Kurdistan. Many KNC leaders have been expelled from the area and can't return. The same goes for KNC activists, and Assyrian (Christian) and Arab opponents.

Several KNC politicians have asked the PYD and YPG to denounce their ties with the PKK in public, but this has never happened. Mazloun Abdi, Aldar Xelil and Salih Muslim are known PKK militants who spent years of combat training in Qandil. The PKK is labeled as a terrorist organization⁴ in the US, EU and Turkey.

In interviews with PYD politicians, they say they fol-

low the same ideology without being connected. They also have grievances: "The KNC and the other parties that are with them went out at Friday, the people went out at Friday from the mosque, and they say 'Allah akbar, Allah akbar'. They finish. Until that time becomes one hour. And until the next week. The Revolution is not this, of course. Beyond this, the Revolution from the mosques and the use of religion, that is not a revolution. There should be an idea. PYD is an idea, we're present on the ground, with a complete vision, and YPG is our protection force, our defense. And from the society itself, we have Arabs, Assyrians/Syriacs, Kurds; a gathering from this society. It does not have a relation with PYD. And, we know that this will end in a fight between Shia and Sunni."

"We're on the ground, they're outside Syria," PYD/Tevdem's Aldar Xelil said on Syria TV. KNC leader Ibrahim Biro, when answering the question why he is outside (Erbil): "They arrested and expelled me from Northeast Syria and threatened to kill me, in case I would return to Northeast Syria."⁵

The SDF military leader Mazloun Abdi came with an initiative to unite the Syrian Kurdish ranks after the Turkish intervention in October 2019 in (YPG controlled, Arabic) Tel Abyad and Ra's al-Ayn in Northeast Syria (YPG controlled mixed Arabic Kurdish and some Circassians, Syriacs and others). From the many previous attempts to unite the two rival blocs, insiders who helped facilitating previous talks told the author that YPG/PYD are not really willing to make concessions towards the KNC. A year ago, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs organized a fruitless conference with both parties. Other talks took place in other places, according to participants also in The Netherlands.

"There is pressure on them (SDF), Turkish pressure from the moment Turkey entered Ra's al-Ayn and Tel Abyad. And international agreements, a Turkish-Russian agreement, and a Turkish-American agreement. Mazloun Kobani went thirty-two kilometers further, still near the border. And the Americans returned from Iraq to Qamishli, and a bit west from Qamishli via Pesh Khabour. In Amouda are the Russians. When Mazloun saw the situation was bad, he asked for a unification of the Kurdish position. The Americans pressurized us (KNC) even more. From a long time already until now. I told the Americans, we need to

4 US Department of State, Foreign Terrorist Organizations, Bureau Of Counterterrorism, <https://www.state.gov/foreign-terrorist-organizations/#.XwRda7k-LPJo.email>

5 For those among you who understand Arabic, here's the full TV broadcast covering this story: aljazeera alsuwriyat walmasir almuntazar - alssalun alsyasiyau, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dqRuUF-Ovs&feature=youtu.be>

build trust, to open up the offices and allow political activities, and to discover where the missing persons are. They try to cover up; that is not building trust, if they were trustworthy, they'd say: 'We killed them,'" A KNC politician told the author.

"They killed them, the eight that are missing?" "Yes, this is what we believe." The Americans said that they know the file of the missing and some mistakes the PYD made, but "we need to find a way. We want a next step. Are you willing to start a dialogue or not?" And to be honest, America is an important country, we are not able to say: No. But we want to know to what extent the SDF are serious. To what extent can SDF pressure PYD and let the PYD accept the agreement? And in principal, maybe from next week, we can start a meeting." This was in February. "Where will you meet? In the area, or outside Northeast Syria?" "In the area, at the location where the American delegation stays and near the Hasaka dam, just outside, between Hasaka and the M4 road, there is junction Derbasiye – Hasaka, a location where we meet," according to a KNC politician familiar with the matter.

But the differences between the PYD and the KNC have always been huge and – in essence – unreconcilable, with perhaps the biggest problem that the KNC is anti-Assad and the PYD isn't. In Qamishli and Hasaka, the regime has significant military foot-holds, and according to activists and politicians from all ethnic groups of the Hasaka province, the regime intelligence has never left the area: "They don't operate from their headquarters, but from their homes," as an Assyrian politician pointed out. A female Kurdish activist in Qamishli told the author she gets visits from the PYD and from the regime about her posts on Facebook. The PYD has suppressed anti-Assad demonstrations such as in Amouda. According to Syrian Kurdish journalists, seven protestors were killed here in June, 2013. "Among them were KDP-S and Yekitee members and supporters, says KNC politician Abdel Hakim al-Bashar from Amouda. Recently, the PYD apologized for this – well, at least they acknowledged – but no one was arrested or put on trial. They also handed over some KNC politicians and activists to the regime, according to KNC sources.

The differences between PYD and KNC haven't diminished over the years; several KNC politicians and activists, like Mashaal Tammo, and Nasreddine Burheik have been killed or have gone missing by PYD or PKK. Nasreddine Burheik, a colleague and close friend of the current main negotiator of the KNC,

Mohamed Ismail, was shot, and he told Ismail in the Qamishli hospital the perpetrators were PKK. Burheik did not survive the assassination attempt. Many KNC politicians have been jailed or expelled from the area. Ismail himself was jailed for six months in 2016 and 2017. And now he has to make a deal with his jailers. The KNC offices have been closed, some have been ransacked and put on fire. This is a reason why the KNC is afraid to re-open them, even if they were allowed to do so. Office owners are hesitating to rent them out to KNC parties again, etc. Still a number of KNC politicians and activists are missing. The KNC wants to know what happened to them, but the PYD denies holding them. The SDC spokesperson in Qamishli said that on that list was a regime officer. A KNC leader told the author: They are dead for sure.

In short, the KNC (and also Syrian Kurdish journalists and activists) believes the PYD is carrying out orders from Qandil, from non-Syrians, and that they have their own revolution.

The PYD advocates they have a third way, that they are neither with the regime, nor with the opposition, and they say they have a democratic project for the whole of Syria (Aldar Xelil on Syria TV). The KNC responds as follows: "The Syrian opposition has a democracy project for whole Syria already, we don't need a new PYD plan. First of all, we are Syrians, being Kurds comes second."⁶

The Syrian Kurds are the second biggest minority in Syria, after the Alawites, although hard statistics are impossible to obtain because the Syrian regime does not give them. According to the CIA Factbook⁷, the Kurds are about ten percent of the population.

"In contrast to Iraq, Iran or Turkey, the Syrian Kurds don't have one single geographically connected area that is mainly populated by Kurds. Various Syrian border areas in the north, formerly inhabited to a great extent by Kurds, have since the 1960s become more heavily populated by Arabs who have settled there as part of the Ba'thist policy to Arabize the northern Syrian border areas, the so-called 'Arab belt'. During the Syrian War, the PYD has been active in 'ethnic cleansing' of the Arab population in the north."⁸

6 For those among you who understand Arabic, here's the full TV broadcast covering this story: aljazeera alsuwriat walmasir almuntazar - alssalun alsiyasiu, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dqtRuUF-Ovs&feature=youtu.be>

7 <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/sy.html>

8 Nikolaos van Dam, *Destroying a Nation*, (2017), p. 62 and Nikolaos van Dam, *Destroying a Nation* (2017), p.116/7

Syrian Kurds live mainly in three areas: Afrin, Kobani and in the Jezira near the Turkish and Iraqi border, and in quarters in Aleppo and Damascus. In the Jezira there are also Arabs, Assyrians, Syriacs, Circassians, Turkmens, Yazidis, some Armenians and some from others. Over the years, the regime made most Syrians flee by far, but it did not really attack the Kurdish areas. ISIS did attack Kobani and other towns in the North. More recently, the Turks took over Kurdish (Afrin, Ra's al-Ayn), causing many Kurds to flee from those areas. Where forced conscription of YPG occurred, young Kurds fled the area as well. Currently, about 70% of the population under YPG led SDF control are Arabs: Deir al-Zour, Raqqa, Tabqa, Manbij and other areas. The latter raises another question: Why aren't the Arabs involved in the talks? Mazloun Abdi is touring these Arab areas, but representatives from the biggest Arab tribe the Oqeidat, as well as from other tribes, told the author they would never accept to be ruled by YPG led SDF. Some tribes are divided on the issue, like the other big tribe, al-Baggara, or go with whom has the authority.

“At first, Turkey did not mind the PYD fighting against the regime or against IS, but when developments turned in favour of the PYD, once it succeeded in conquering bigger parts of Northern Syria, the PYD came to be seen in Ankara as an imminent security threat against Turkey”⁹

Let's turn to Kurdish political activity and the KNC parties. The first Syrian Kurdish party, Partiya Demokrata Kurdistan – Suriya (PDK-S) was established in 1957. It's still the biggest party¹⁰ within the Kurdish National Council, with the majority of offices.

The KNC was established on 27 October, 2011. The main negotiator in the intra-Syrian-Kurdish talks, Ismail, is this party's political advisor. He is part of the KNC delegation that met Mazloun Abdi and the Americans just outside Hasaka. The first KNC chairman, Abdul Hakim al-Bashar, who, in 2011, was still in Qamishli, now lives in exile. Over time, other split-offs and parties appeared, quite often keeping the same name. Some more leaning to the regime, like Hazem Darwish, and others more radical like Yekitee, which means Union in Kurdish.¹¹ “Yekitee broke up

into two fractions a long time ago: Yekitee Sheikh Ali and another Yekitee. Now this later Yekitee also split up recently, in Yekitee Fuad Aliko, Ibrahim Biro, Sulayman Oso and on the other side Hasan Saleh and his group,” according to a Syrian Kurdish lawyer.

In a recent episode on Syria TV, Fuad Aliko said: “All these leaks about us leaving the Etilaf cut with the Syrian opposition are not true.¹² We cut relations with the Assad regime, with Iran. We're part of the Syrian opposition, we're part of the Syrian Revolution. And we want the Arabs, Turkmens, Syriacs and others to be part of the talks.”¹³

Yekitee's Ibrahim Biro explains here¹⁴ how the American ambassador at the time, Robert Ford, and his French colleague asked him to invite the PYD to the Geneva talks in 2014, and how the PYD refused to be part of the opposition delegation.

PKK and PYD IN SYRIA

Abdallah Öcalan the leader of the Kurdistan Workers' Party, entered Syria via Kobani in 1980. He had his office in Douma, near Damascus. After Turkey's threats over the PKK leader in 1998, Syria expelled him. “In 1999, Turkish operatives captured PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan in Kenya, in an operation supported by the United States. He was sentenced to life in prison on the island of Imrali, where he has been the sole inmate for nearly 20 years.” Cemal Bayyik, one of the founders of the PKK wrote in the Washington Post.¹⁵

“One day during these demonstrations in 2011, we saw that there was no benefit from them. Why? We knew what would happen between Sunna and Shia.” In October, a local PYD representative shared their perspective on the anti-Assad demonstrations with the author: “Let us go back to before 2011. The PYD was forbidden in Syria and Turkey. They go out at Friday, the people leave the mosque then and shout “Allah akbar, Allah akbar” for an hour long. Then they finish, it's been enough. They leave and have a meal somewhere. Another week passes by and then they go

¹² Etilaf is the main Syrian opposition group

¹³ Report about the intra Syrian Kurdish talks in Northeast Syria, <https://twitter.com/RenaNetjes/status/1274289271223058432?s=09>

¹⁴ We talked with the US ambassador @fordrs58 and the French ambassador... <https://twitter.com/RenaNetjes/status/1224311793268535297?s=09>

¹⁵ Now is the moment for peace between Kurds and the Turkish state. Let's not waste it, Cemil Bayik, 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2019/07/03/now-is-moment-peace-between-kurds-turkish-state-lets-not-waste-it/>

⁹ An interview with Mohamed Ismail

¹⁰ The National Relations Office of the PDK-S issues an important circular on the situation of stranded people in Syrian Kurdistan, <https://www.arknews.net/en/node/20392>

¹¹ This is the second biggest party in the KNC. Ibrahim Biro, one of its leaders, was arrest-ed and dropped at the border by PYD.

again. This is, of course, not the Revolution. On top of this, the Revolution had its birthplace in the mosques, but being religious is not a revolution in itself. There should be an idea. PYD is an idea, present on the ground. We have a complete vision, and YPG is the protection force, the defense force. And from the society itself, we have Arabs, Syrians, Kurds; a gathering from this society. It has no link to PYD.”

HOW DID THE PYD BECOME SO POWERFUL?

“In 2011, the PYD started to control the Kurdish majority areas in north Syria, three enclaves close to the Turkish border. They did so for several reasons. Firstly, it leans on the preaching and philosophy of Abdallah Öcalan concerning the brotherhood of the peoples. In the ears of the fighters from different countries in Qandil, who had been fighting for ten, twenty years in the mountains of Northern Iraq against Turkey, this preaching sounded gentle. It was a dream to have a kind of self-administration in the Kurdish region. And some countries in the region encouraged this. The governments of Iraqi Kurdistan and Iran and Turkey thought it was good to get rid of those fighters who’d been in the mountains for over thirty, perhaps forty years,” A Syrian journalist from the area told the author.

“The Iraqi Kurdistan government doesn’t control them. Fighters were always seen going from Syria and Turkey towards Qandil, but now they went from Turkey and Qandil to Syria. These countries considered them a problem. And these governments saw that, if all these fighters were going to Syria, this reversed north-south fighters’ migration would ease their problem a bit. These fighters, with dozens of years’ experience in combat training in difficult mountains circumstances, had a big influence on the organization to get control. The KNC was organizationally and militarily weak. The people in the area took over this dream of Kurdish rule, of Kurdish federalism. Raising the Kurdish flag in the area enabled the party to control it. We can’t deny those people brought huge sacrifices in the fight against ISIS. But this fight against ISIS would never have been possible without the support of the international coalition,” according to the journalist.

“We know that the PKK is established in the bosom of Hafez al-Assad and Iran. Their trainings camps were in the Shi’ite areas of Lebanon under the auspices of Hezbollah and Iran. The Hezbollah and Amal camps have been there for decades. Their connections with Hafez al-Assad and Iran go back to their same cradle

the 1980s. Still, they persist they are PYD, but their ideology is from Öcalan. Everything points at their good connections with Iran and with the Bashar al-Assad and regime allies. This is an important point... the moment ISIS entered Kobani, the popularity of the PYD on the Kurdish streets was at its lowest ever for a number of reasons. The main one is that the PYD killed seven people who had organized an anti-regime demonstration in Amouda on June 27, 2013. Because of their massacring of Kurds and their suppression of Kurdish youngsters who supported the revolution, they forbade to raise the revolution flag in the Kurdish areas. It was clear the PYD wasn’t pro-revolution. The PYD pushed all the Kurdish youths in favor of the Syrian revolution, squeezing them, whether in detention or by forcing them to leave Syria,” says the Syrian local journalist.

“Independent reports and Turkish intelligence suggested Assad was again supporting PKK activities in Turkey and allowing the PYD to act freely in Syria. These allegations came both from the Arab opposition as well as from the Kurdish communities in Turkey themselves,” writes Harriet Allsopp in her book.¹⁶

“The evidence that supports these accusations includes the five following details: *Firstly*, the PYD party leader, Salih Muslim, exiled from Syria in 2010 and then encamped with the PKK in the Kurdistan region of Iraq before returning to Syria in 2011, reportedly with as many as 2,000 PKK guerilla fighters, without regime intervention. *Secondly*, the PYD initially didn’t explicitly call for the fall of the regime and remained open to dialogue with it. *Thirdly*, it openly established a number of Kurdish language schools without interference from Syrian authorities. *Fourthly*, it was accused of preventing and disrupting protests against the regime in Afrin. *Lastly*, it erected checkpoints and began policing Kurdish areas in the presence of regime security services as its takeover of Kurdish towns and regions was peaceful and swift, raising suspicion that they had an agreement with the Syrian authorities to secure the areas from the FSA and to incite sectarian divisions within Syria.

Each point was refuted by the PYD. The party categorically denied any connections to the Assad regime or to the PKK, aside from an ideological affinity with Öcalan’s theory of democratic confederalism.”¹⁷

In the upcoming The Clingendael report on the PYD

16 Harriet Allsopp, *The Kurds of Syria : Political Parties and Identity in the Middle East*, p. 208.

17 Allsopp, pp. 208/9.

by Erwin van Veen and the author you will find a closer look into this matter.

In this regard, this is the eyewitness account by Abdul Hakim al-Bashar of the first meeting between the PDK-S (now in the KNC).¹⁸ “Really the first meeting with the PYD from the start of the revolution, was in April 2011. I was at the time still living in Syria, and I had a clinic. I am a doctor, in Qamishli. Salih Muslim was the Secretary of the PYD, visited me. He asked me if we could cooperate as two parties. I was the chairman of the party (PDK-S) at the time. And he asked if we could coordinate in a strategic way. I asked him one question: You are wanted by the Syrian regime in Damascus, how can you ask me this? He came to visit me in Syria. He had been abroad and was being followed by the security apparatus outside Syria. He stayed in the Qandil mountains. In the beginning, only a few weeks into the revolution, he visited me. ‘You are wanted by the regime and how did you enter Syria again?’ He told me: ‘I’m hiding.’ Then I opened the window and told him that there is a security officer. ‘And that one is standing there 24 hours per day. How did you even enter?’ At that time, April 2011, the Syrian regime was in totally full control of the whole area. A week after Salih Muslim’s visit, it was still in April, another person came to visit me. He told me he was Aldar Xelil, member of the PKK central committee, so one of the leaders. He also suggested to work with Salih Muslim in a strategic way. He said ‘Let’s open a TV channel. It can be a good idea we could both benefit from.’ I put him the same question: ‘You are wanted by the regime for two cases. How did you enter here? While the security apparatus is present in every street.’ His answer was weak and he left the clinic. I refused to work with him.”

KNC politicians, like Abdul Hakim al-Bashar also told the author how the regime approached them to meet. “We’ve had enough experience with the regime to know it won’t give us our rights at all,” a KNC politician told us.

“And if you think one day you can find a solution for the Kurdish Syrian problem in Syria. Well, you can’t possibly solve this issue before the problem between Turkey and PKK has been dealt with; Syria is not like Iraq or Turkey” an Assyrian politician told the author.

“In Iraq, you know you have the Barzani and the Talebani party. On the other side, you have PKK and APO,

Apoci, Abdallah Öcalan. The real problem for the Kurds in Syria is the competition between Apo and Barzani. Who will control the Syrian Kurds? The Qandil trend wins this competition. So, in fact, there are three Kurdish forces in these Syrian regions, namely PYD (and all the institutions next to PYD, the Kurdish National Council (KNC)), and the new Kurdish alliance, just now like let’s say, Hamid Darweesh.”¹⁹

“So, for a real solution for the Kurdish issue in Syria, first of all, I think we have to start to re-open the peace dialogues between AKP and Abdallah Öcalan. If there are no moves forward into this direction, I don’t think there will never be some solution,” according to the Assyrian politician.

“There were three agreements between PYD and the KNC (Erbil and Duhok agreements). Of course, under the patronage of Masoud Barzani, but they failed. They failed with three axes, one of them military, one was financial... And PYD/YPG didn’t accept that: first of all, it was 50/50 and then 70/30 between them. The only thing they accepted between them was the initiative... let’s say the governance aspects of the treatment. But the most important were the two first ones, the military and the financially. And in that time, there was a checkpoint in Samalka and even one more in al-Yaroubiye which was also in PYD hands,” according to an Assyrian politician.

In the political programme, ‘The Political Salon’ on Syria TV, on 20 June, some other important points and questions were being raised here by an Arab representative: “France and the US are pressuring Arabs, Kurdish KNC, and the others in the area to support PYD. Until now, we have no idea what happens with the oil revenues (Rumeilan and Deir al-Zour). And we know how PYD dealt with the Revolution. And why there are Kurdish – Kurdish talks about how Deir al-Zour (which is completely Arabic) should be run, and Raqqa (which is almost completely Arabic)? If they agree that Duhok²⁰ (2014) will be the starting point for further talks, why Duhok isn’t being implemented now immediately?”

“There is still nothing new. Or if there is, there are no leaks about them. The agreement about the first phase ended, given the joint politically binding declaration. The second phase is about administrative things, and the matter of defense, the matter creates worries

¹⁹ Hamid Darweesh passed away in the Autumn of 2019 (Oct. 24).

¹⁸ The PDK-S is the biggest party in the KNC that was to be established half a year later.

²⁰ Report about the intra Syrian Kurdish talks in Northeast Syria, <https://twitter.com/RenaNetjes/status/1274289271223058432?s=09>

among other components of the Syrian people: what about the PKK, as until now the PYD/SDF hasn't published any statement that clarifies their connection with the PKK, nor their departure of its cadres from Syrian soil, still the faith of Raqqa and Deir al-Zour is not clear, will the agreement be only about the Kurdish areas or about all the areas under SDF and PYD control? What is the connection between the Kurds and Deir al-Zour? This matter causes a lot of worry. They say there is no final agreement, only drafts. And even these drafts remain secret because together with the Americans, the PYD and the KNC, they agree it will remain secret. But, according to my opinion, this is linked to all the people, to all Jezira, to all components, directly linked to the Syrian people; Northeast Syria has the wealth of oil. So there should be enough information about these agreements and about all that's going on. But until now, this hasn't happened, as everything is still happening secretly. The Etilaf facilitated the KNC in a direct way, but until now the KNC is not answering any questions in public" according to an exiled Kurdish lawyer from Kobani.

Ibrahim Biro (KNC): Barzani tried three times but failed. Unfortunately, the PYD did not stick to the most essential common points to become partners. They (PYD) really have to offer something for talks to succeed.²¹

When will the next round of talks begin? I asked KNC veteran Ne'mut Daoud, chairman of the Kurdish Democratic Equality party, in Qamishli. He answered on 9 July:

"After 16 June, after they issued the statement²² about the understandings which happened between the KNC and the National Unity Parties. Twenty Kurdish parties – next to the PYD – the second phase of the negotiations did not yet start, there is contact between the KNC and the supervising side of the negotiations whether it is the American side or the leadership of SDF, general Mazloum, there is contact between us, there is preparation for the second phase."

"The second phase of the (secret) dialogue, or negotiations between the PYD and KNC resumed about a week ago" a member of the KNC delegation told the author on Wednesday 23 July.

"These negotiations will go according the Dohuk Ag-

reement²³ along three subjects. The first subject will be authority, the second subject will be the administration and the third subject will be the military matters. We started with the first subject. Until now, there were no direct negotiations. A direct (face to face) meeting between the delegations hasn't happened yet. There is an exchange of papers and ideas with the help of an American go-between. But we arrived to a closer point to be able to have a direct meeting to discuss a first draft paper. I don't think it will take a long time to wait; maybe within only a few days it will happen," he said.

* For safety reasons, names of many sources had to be omitted.

"The editing of this article was done by Limwierde Taaldiensten. <http://limwierde.nl>"

21 Aljazirat alsuwriat walmasir almuntazar - alssalun alsiyasiu, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dqtRuUF-Ovs&feature=youtu.be>

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