

Kurdish Referendum inspires hope among Eelam Tamils: TGTE

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The Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam (TGTE) congratulates the people of Kurdistan on their recent success in conducting a referendum in their homeland and among the Kurdish diaspora.

The Kurdistan people were subjected to genocide under the regime of Saddam Hussein. Notably, during Saddam's genocidal Anfal campaign between 1986 and 1989, tens of thousands of Kurds were killed. The Kurds' claim for an independent state intensified as a result of the above and as a form of seeking remedial justice.

The Kurds did not give up their claim for an independent state as a form of remedial justice after the overthrow of Saddam Hussein. They neither relied on the goodwill and/or the "good governance" of the new regime after Saddam Hussein, nor they modified their political aspirations. They attributed the international crimes rightly on the state itself, and chose to secede from it. As Peter W. Galbraith, a former American diplomat aptly put it: "Would you want to be part of a country that committed genocide against you?"

Holding Referendums as a means to determine the political future of a people is a clear act of democracy. As the Kurdish leadership repeatedly stated, independence is not followed immediately upon referendums. Referendums entail dialogue between and among the relevant stakeholders. As demonstrated by the Iraqi Government and the regional and international powers, through their willingness to make concessions short of an independent state, the bargaining power of the referendum or even the efforts of having a referendum become quite evident.

What is remarkable in the Kurdistan Referendum is the unwavering determination and steadfastness of the Kurdistan President Barzani. Not only the Iraqi Government but also the regional and international powers and the international institutions threatened them with economic sanctions and military action if they proceeded with the referendum. The Iraqi Supreme Court declared that the referendum was illegal and unconstitutional. The Bagdad Government threatened to use military force if holding the referendum provoked violence. The referendum was also held in oil rich and contested area of Kirkuk where Arabs and Tuckerman also live. Turkey moved their tanks towards the border of Kurdistan which unlike the putative Tamil Eelam is a landlocked country. Iran closed its air space. The



Kurdish Ambassador to U.S. Ms. Bayan Sami Abdul Rahman and V. Rudrakumaran, Prime Minister, Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam (TGTE)

U.S. warned that diplomatic support and assistance for Kurdistan might be curtailed if they proceeded with the referendum. The UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres said it would also undermine reconstruction efforts and he asked the Kurdistan leadership to scrap the referendum plan. However, Kurdish leadership, taking into account the history of their struggle since World War I and the betrayal of the international powers, stated "Kurds know no one will protect us, but ourselves."

The Kurdistan referendum illustrates the emerging reality that non-state actors could independently create facts on the ground. It is to be noted here also that, in 1991, the then U.S. President George W. Bush warned Ukraine against the breakup of the Soviet Union and the U.S. State Department made a statement following the referendum held in Croatia that the U.S. was committed to protect the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia. Today, both Ukraine and Croatia are independent states, have friendly relationship with the U.S. It also should be noted that today the U.S. provides defensive weapons to Ukraine to protect itself against Russian expansion.

During the celebration following the referendum, the present Kurdish Ambassador to the U.S, Ms. Bayan Sami Abdul Rahman, made the remark that President Barzani was like a rock.

If we, as Eelam Tamils, also retained a rock solid faith in our freedom, the day when the flag of Tamil Eelam flutters in front of the UN cannot be far away.

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