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## Kurdistan Alliance

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 2006 Princeton International Crisis Simulation (PICSIM) and the Kurdistan Alliance Committee. My name is Theo Ellis and I am a sophomore economics major. My interests include political theory, economics and constitutional law. I will be chairing the Kurdistan Alliance committee with the help of director Eleni Azarias. Eleni is also a sophomore. According to her facebook profile, her interests include mangoes, Vegemite and Egyptian ratscrew.

In a college IR-conference galaxy filled with a billion dim lights, PICSIM is a shooting star. At PICSIM there are no static topics. The delegates write the script of the conference. A highly-trained and energetic crisis staff reacts continuously to the decisions of each committee. Perhaps most exciting, PICSIM allows all of its committees to interact with one another.

The Kurdistan Alliance is a fiction of the PICSIM conference. An assembly of this many potentates (even if some are represented by proxy) would be difficult to call together in the real world. Consider PICSIM an opportunity to attempt what Kurdish leaders would love to do if only they had the chance. Beware, however, that the same pressures that prevent, for example, Kurdish sovereignty from taking off in real life will exist in the conference. Don't expect PICSIM's Turkish, Iranian, or Iraqi committees to stand by idly should this committee initiate anything radical. Good luck preparing and I look forward to meeting all of you in March.

Theo Ellis (trellis@princeton.edu)  
*Chair, Kurdistan Alliance*



Eleni Azarias (eazarias@princeton.edu)  
*Director, Kurdistan Alliance*

**Princeton Interactive Crisis Simulation 2006**



## *Structure of the Committee*

A meeting of the groups comprising PICSIM's "Kurdistan Alliance" would be a major feat if it happened in the real world. An organization widely considered to be a terrorist group like the PKK could hardly send a representative to any public forum. Nor would a respected politician like Jalal Talabani risk his career by meeting openly with Kurdish revolutionaries.

Therefore, although the delegates will determine the exact role of the "Kurdistan Alliance" at the conference itself, it will begin as a secret engagement. Be careful what is shared with those outside the committee; it could mean the life of another delegate or even the Kurdistan Alliance as a whole.

Again, the Kurdistan Alliance is a secret non-governmental body. Many members of the committee are risking their lives to attend the meeting. Refrain from sharing any information – especially the identities of the committee's members - with anyone, even other students from your school's delegation.

The Kurdistan Alliance's membership will embody 5 distinct groups: Turkish Kurds, Iraqi Kurds, Iranian Kurds, a Kurdish religious leader, and Kurdish cultural leaders.

## *Committee Members*

### **Turkish Delegation to the Kurdistan Alliance**

Those attending the Kurdistan Alliance meeting from what should rightly be "northern Kurdistan" are putting themselves in more peril than any of the other delegates to the committee. In 1994 a member of the Turkish Parliament, Leyla Zana, was sentenced to 15 years in prison merely for saying, after her inauguration oath, "I shall struggle so that the Kurdish and Turkish peoples may live together in a Democratic framework." The Kurdish language itself was banned from all public and private spaces until as recently as 1991 (it is still banned in schools, broadcasts, and almost all public circumstances). Fear not, you can speak freely in Kurdish at this meeting. However, be careful not to let your appearance at this committee be known by anyone in the Turkish government!

**Zübeyir Aydar** – Chairman of Kongra Gelê Kurdistan (People's Congress of Kurdistan/KONGRA-GEL). Former member of Turkish Parliament. Your organization has close ties to the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK). Many governments consider your group a terrorist organization but your charter claims to have the goals of solving the 'Kurdish Question' by advocating protection of the Kurdish minority within the Turkish system.

<http://www.kongra-gel.com/>

**Ibrahim Bilmez (proxy for Abdullah Öcalan)** – Attorney for the legendary founder of the PKK, Abdullah Öcalan. Öcalan led the guerrilla revolution of the 1980s and 90s



against the Turkish government. He struggled to found a Marxist Kurdish state in southwest Turkey. His terrorist attacks killed tens of thousands of people between 1984 and today. The PKK and its many sister paramilitary groups still wage attacks to this day. Many also declare unilateral ceasefires from time to time. Probably the most prominent Kurd in the world, Öcalan was captured in 1999 by a joint CIA-Turkish raid in Kenya. Since then he has been prosecuted and sentenced to death. However, the European Court of Human Rights declared his trial unfair. He will be retried in the future. Öcalan is at this time being held in solitary confinement and, as recently as January 20 of this year, declared he is being tortured and pressured into suicide. Currently one of the few men in contact with Öcalan is his attorney, Ibrahim Bilmez. You will act as the voice of Öcalan on the Kurdistan Alliance. Öcalan has trusted you to represent his views accurately and completely. You will also be responsible for communicating the proceedings of the Alliance back to Mr. Öcalan.

**Leyla Zana** - Formerly imprisoned Kurdish member of parliament; now founder of the Democratic Society Movement (DTH), which has incorporated the Democratic People's Party.

**Orhan Dogan** - Former deputy of Democracy Party (DEP), arrested with Leyla Zana in 1994 and now a founding member of Democratic Society movement (DTH), which strives for Kurdish reconciliation and EU membership.

### **Iraqi Delegation to the Kurdistan Alliance**

**Jalal Talabani** – President of the Iraqi Republic, founder of Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). Talabani was a leader in the Kurdish independence movement earlier in his life but has become less vocal about his views since becoming head of the Iraqi government.

**Massoud Barzani** – Head of independent Autonomous Kurdish Government of Iraq. Led Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) after his father's (Mustafa Barzani) death. KDP and PUK battled for control of the semi-autonomous region during Hussein's reign.

**Nawshirwan Mustafa** - deputy secretary general of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan. As a general, led Kurdish liberation war after Iraq's loss in first gulf war.

**Hoshyar Zebari** - Iraqi minister of foreign affairs. Formerly foreign spokesperson for the KDP, convinced UK and US governments to support Kurdish forces in both gulf wars.

### **Iranian Delegation to the Kurdistan Alliance**

**Amir Hassanpour**- Famous Iranian-Kurdish scholar living in Canada. Expert on Kurdish nationalism.

**Mustafa Hejri** - Secretary-general of Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (PDKI).



**Ebrahim Alizadeh** - spokesman and First Secretary of Komalah, a Marxist, Iranian Kurdistan political party which advocates self-determination for the Iranian Kurdish population.

### **Kurdish Religious Leader**

**Sheik Majid Al-Hafeed** – Highly respected Sunni Muslim Sheik based in the autonomous Kurdistan region of northern Iraq. Prior to the American invasion of Iraq, you were outspoken in your opposition to Saddam Hussein. You have managed to gain the attention of the international media and are often contacted to act as the voice of the Kurdish religious community. You have also used this media attention in the past to publicize aid-seeking tours to Asian nations like South Korea and Japan.

### **Kurdish Cultural Leaders**

**Sivan Perwer** – The most famous Kurdish musician of all time. You are a Turkish lute virtuoso whose highly nationalistic music enflamed the Kurdish spirit in the 1970s and 80s. Your songs are so pro-Kurdistan that almost all of it is still banned in Iran and Turkey. People trade cassettes of your music though the punishment for owning it is often death. For the last fifteen years you have lived quietly in Sweden, coming out mainly to do benefit concerts for Kurdish IDPs. Any statement made by you would have major resonance in the Kurdish community.

**Bahman Ghobadi** - You are a 37-year-old Kurdish Iranian film director who garnered international acclaim with “A Time for Drunken Horses” (2000) and “Turtles Can Fly” (2004, the first feature film made in Iraq since the American occupation). You have attained superstar status in the Middle East film community. There are altogether very few Kurds in the movie industry and your position in it has made you an influential figure among the Kurdish youth.

## *Brief History of the Region*

Before engaging in any study of Kurdistan it is worth calling to mind the nation’s most salient feature: it does not, nor has ever, existed as a sovereign state. After World War I, the Entente nations carved new colonies out of the defunct Ottoman and Persian Empires through a series of complex and diplomatically messy compromises. The modern Middle East is a product of negotiations that often put placating local dictators and repaying wartime allies above securing peace or distributing oil wealth equitably. A sovereign nation named Kurdistan was born out of the 1920 Treaty of Sèvres between the Entente nations and Ottoman Sultan Mehmed VI. This country was to stretch from southeast modern-day Turkey across northern modern-day Iraq and into parts of modern-day Iran and Armenia, blanketing the area of the Middle East with the densest Kurdish population (see figure 1). However, as the Ottoman Empire was virtually defunct by the time of the Treaty of Sèvres, and the Turkish Republic that would follow it favored incorporating all ethnic groups into a broad Anatolian nation, Kurdistan never materialized. Mustafa



Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic, insisted that he was not bound by the Treaty of Sèvres because his nation was not a party to the agreement.

Atatürk instead recognized the 1923 treaty of Lusanne, which split the Kurdish region into modern-day Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Syria and Azerbaijan. In 1927, a series of Kurdish revolts resulted in the formation of the Kurdish Republic of Ararat. The Republic of Ararat, however, lacked foreign support. By 1931 Turkish forces had crushed the Kurdish rebellion and regained control of the southeast region where Kurds are most prevalent. Under Turkish law all Turkish citizens, regardless of their ethnicity, are referred to as ‘Turks.’ Partly as a result of their many rebellions, the Kurds were an exception to this rule; until the 1980s the government called them “Mountain Turks.” The preferred term today is “Eastern Turks.”

The purpose of the ethnicity-less moniker “Mountain Turk” was to disassociate the Kurdish population from the Kurdish population living in neighboring nations. The Turkish government also outlawed the speaking or writing of Kurdish language in either the public or private spheres. To this day, Kurdish is banned in most public situations. These attempts at de-Kurdification have largely failed; many young Kurds in Eastern Turkey are unable to speak even basic Turkish and identify themselves as ‘Kurds’ before ‘Turks.’

The next unified Kurdish rebellion took place during World War II. Iranian Kurds, with the support of the USSR, established the Republic of Kurdistan, a country with its capital in Mahabad, Iran. This revolution was led by Qazi Muhammad and Mustafa Barzani. Barzani would later go on to found the KDP in Iraq. The Republic of Kurdistan was destroyed in 1946 by the Iranian military.

The Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iraq is the oldest and possibly strongest pro-Kurdish party in the region. It has ties to parties in Turkey, Iran, Syria and Lebanon. During the 1950s, its leader, Mustafa Barzani, attempted to negotiate a solution to the “Kurdish Problem” with then-Prime-Minister Abdul Karim Qassim. After talks failed, a decades-long revolt began in 1961. Syrian forces helped the Iraqi government repress the Kurdish rebellion. By 1975, the KDP’s will was largely broken and a period of relative peace began. In this year, Jalal Talabani, now the President of Iraq, broke ranks with the KDP and established the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). The PUK chose to cut ties with the more tribal elements of the Kurdish population. Until a 1998 peace treaty was signed, there were tensions between the two major parties of Iraq’s Kurdish region.

The 1980s was the bloodiest decade in the history of the struggle for a Kurdish state. In 1979, Ayatollah Khomeini, although Iranian Kurds initially supported his rise to power, declared a jihad against all Kurds. The Kurdish region of Iran was attacked by the Iranian military in 1980. Since this time, countless human rights atrocities have occurred in the Iranian province of Kurdistan. Most recently, in July of 2005, Shivan Qaderi, a Kurdish rights activist, was shot to death in Mahabad by Iranian troops. Pro-Kurd riots roiled western Iran, leading to the closure of most Kurdish newspapers. Over 500,000 people were said to have participated in protests of Qaderi’s death.



The 1980s also marked the beginning of the Turkish Kurdistan Workers Party's (PKK) military operations. Led by Abdullah Öcalan, the PKK waged a massive guerrilla war. Abdullah Öcalan conquered entire cities and his organization has taken responsibility for tens of thousands of terrorist incidents. The PKK hoped to establish a free, communist Kurdistan. To this end, they bombed sites across Turkey, kidnapped westerners, assassinated political figures and even engaged in conventional warfare with the Turkish army. In 1999 Abdullah Öcalan was captured in Kenya, resulting in a ceasefire. Since then the PKK has created the spin-off group KADEK, which has espoused more peaceful objectives than the PKK. However, in recent months Kurdish discontent has grown and PKK activity seems to be heating up again. Öcalan has publicly rebuked the actions of the PKK since his capture but the validity of these statements has been put into question because Öcalan has been in solitary confinement. On January 20<sup>th</sup> of 2006, Öcalan released a statement through his lawyer saying he is being tortured and is near the point of suicide. The websites of many Turkish guerrilla groups have released statements of support for Öcalan and are still protesting his detainment.

Between 1986 and 1989 the Iraqi government waged the al-Anfal genocidal campaign against the Kurds of northern Iraq. One of the greatest atrocities of the twentieth century, the al-Anfal genocide cost the lives of 182,000 Kurdish civilians. Entire Kurdish towns were gassed. Iraqi engineers were employed to plan the wholesale destruction of Kurdish cities while people were still inside. About 2000 villages were wiped off the map during this period.

After the invasion of international forces in the first Gulf War, Kurdish armies were encouraged to topple the Saddam regime. The KDP-led assault failed but the Kurds were able to retreat safely to the semi-autonomous Kurdish region because of the UN-imposed no-fly-zone. However, Turkish troops attacked sites in northern Iraq, claiming that PKK bases had flourished in the border region after the gulf war.

In 1994 armed conflict between the PUK and KDP for control of the semi-autonomous region began. The Iraqi Kurdish regional parliament would not meet again peacefully until 2002. In 2003, united Kurdish troops aided Coalition forces in toppling the Hussein regime.

During the course of the 1990s, the Turkish government gained the upper-hand in fights against the PKK. Syria ended its support for the PKK forces in its northern regions after the Turkish government threatened war. A massive military strike in 1995 also wiped out much of the PKK presence remaining in Iraq. With the capture of Abdullah Öcalan in 1999, the PKK was left seriously weakened.

Kurds have taken a powerful place in the new government of Iraq. They earned approximately 25% of the vote in the January 2005 election in Iraq. Furthermore, a Kurd (Jalal Talabani) was chosen for the Presidency of the Iraqi Republic. In a truce, the PUK had taken the helm of the Kurdish cause at the national level while the KDP has maintained control of the Kurdish semi-autonomous region.





## *Brief Overview of the Kurdish People*

Kurds are members of an Indo-Iranian ethnic group originating in present-day Iran but now living in Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria, and, to a lesser extent, every other nation in the Middle East. Archeological evidence has determined that the earliest ancestors of the Kurds probably lived about six thousand years ago. Kurdish groups were often united into emirates that at times functioned as independent states and at other times as tributaries to larger empires, like the Persian Empire of Cyrus the Great or the Arabic Caliphates. Kurdish tributaries always considered themselves ethnically ‘Kurd’ but a sense of Kurdish ‘nationhood’ did not exist until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the Ottoman Empire recognized a Kurdish province. Estimates of the modern-day Kurdish population are particularly unreliable because Kurds tend to live in small, remote villages and because many Kurds are reluctant to cooperate with the census agencies of governments that have frequently waged genocidal wars against them. However, the CIA World Factbook speculates that Kurds number 25 to 27 million, making them the largest stateless ethnic group in the world.

Of course, such a large and geographically diverse group possesses countless political agendas. Historically, the vast majority of the Kurdish population has sought an independent Kurdish state. Recent events though, like the election of a Kurd to the Presidency of Iraq and the arrest of Abdullah Ocalan, have moved many towards solving the “Kurdish Problem” through existing democratic frameworks.

There is no one Kurdish religion. While most Kurds are Sunni Muslims, there is a minority group of Shi’a. Half a million Kurds in northern Iraq also subscribe to the ancient religion of Yazidism. Kurdish Christian and Jewish villages also abound. In fact, Kurdish Jews were the first Jews in the world to name a woman a rabbi. Kurds are not defined by a single religion but by their shared cultural heritage, their geography and their shared ancestry.

## *Where to Look to Continue Research*

Surprisingly, most Kurdish political groups – even the paramilitary ones - have English-language websites. Be careful what you take as fact. While these websites can be useful for finding out more about your delegate’s positions, they are riddled with errors. The websites are designed to rally popular support for Kurdish causes and not to necessarily provide accurate information.

Additionally, I recommend David McDowall’s [A Modern History of the Kurds](#). The book is an exhaustive treatment dripping with the juicy facts indicative of a thorough study of the topic. Delegates will probably find the last section of the book most useful because it deals with the Kurdish history of the last 30 years.



## *Awards Policy*

Because PICSIM is a special kind of conference, delegate preparation for it will be much different than for an ordinary Model United Nations simulation. The best delegates will come to committee with a strong understanding of current events in the Middle East and how they affect the Kurdish people in particular. Delegates should, of course, know the modern history of the Kurds. Ideas for how the Kurdistan committee can achieve its goals will galvanize discussion.

As a result, there is no “right” way to react to the situations the committee will face. Instead, the committee staff will be evaluating the decision-making processes, creativity, and persuasiveness of members of the committee. Important evaluation questions include:

Did the delegate do basic research on Kurdistan, the Middle East, and his/her specific area of focus?

Did the delegate make the best choices given the information s/he was given?

Did the delegate provide innovative solutions to problems faced by the committee?

Did the delegate persuade others in the committee (including the chair) to adopt these solutions?

In short, think critically and be creative!

**“Hey enemy, the Kurdish nation is alive with its language**

**Can not be defeated by the weapons of any time**

**Let no one say Kurds are dead**

**Kurds are living**

**Kurds are living, their flag will never fall”**

**-from Ey Reqib, the Kurdish national anthem**