

Syrian Kurds in exile are preparing for a “National Unity Conference”

President of Kurdistan National Congress (KNC) and Western Kurdistan Government in Exile” (WKG), Dr. Jawad Mella, have confirmed to Rudaw they are planning to hold a “National Unity Conference” for the different Kurdish political parties and organisations in Syria, amid the violence and instability haunting the rest of the country.

Dr. Jawad Mella told Rudaw in an exclusive interview, they are inviting Kurdish political parties and profiles from across the political spectrum in Syria, “because the Kurdish nation cannot afford to be part of a civil war that has nothing to do with the Kurdish question, Kurds do not want bloodshed and this is for sure, all we want is the simple right to self-determination and this is what the Kurdish nation desire most as their very basic democratic right in Syria.”

He said:“ it is now the time all the Kurdish organisations, parties and profiles from and outside Syria come together on one table, the national oppression of our people in Syria must be enough to unite us altogether, to bring us on a national table, to debate and to discuss our different strategies regarding the Kurdish national question in current Syria, so no one is left out due to political differences and other pity differences, a collective decision of a national character is needed to be made on behalf of our long neglected Kurdish nation in Syria.”

While the war within in Syria is claiming more lives than ever before and it is dividing the Syrian society on sectarian lines, the Kurds have seized an opportunity to self-govern their communities and many have taken up arms and have become members of “community defence forces”, protecting their neighbourhoods from the violence, others, have become part of the opposition forces and are fighting along those currently in war with the Syrian government.

It has been widely reported that Kurds in Syria have now begun to establish their own town halls and city councils even, while the Syrian government’s personnel, the official army of the Syrian government headed by Bashar Al Assad of the ruling “Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party – Syria Region,” have left the Kurdish areas busy fighting their own war with the opposition forces of the “Free Syria Army”, who are mainly situated on the country’s border areas with Turkey and Lebanon.

The Syrian opposition is politically and officially represented in the international community by the “Syrian National Council” (SNC), comprised of Syrian political opposition parties and groups, mainly Sunni Islamists.

The topic of Kurds getting prepared for a “National Unity Conference,” has been about amongst several of the Syrian opposition groups here in London for a while now. KNC and WKG in Exile argue however, “it is vital Kurds are united in these bitter times which the Kurdish nation is facing as well as the rest of the people of Syria.”

“Kurds in Syria are now even self-policing their areas from the violence taking place at the heart of the Arab populated areas beside the Kurdish community, not the government nor the opposition expected this to happen because Kurds have historically took sides in similar conflicts in Iran and Iraq, even in Turkey in the past,” said Ahmad Nasim Jibwri , an independent Syrian opposition activist based in the UK, “but this time round Kurds responded very differently from what we all expected, it seems like they are doing what they can for their own fight in Syria and that is why they have ignored all sides involved in the conflict, and it is entirely peaceful which is quite unique I believe, as Kurds are known historically to have advocated guerrilliasm for their independence, however, in Syria this time round they are peaceful.”

“Mind our own business mind yours’ seems to me is the attitude Kurds are taking on board, and it is working for them, although they are not politically and entirely united, I also have to admit.” He added.

Dr. Jawad Mella told Rudaw from his London office that WKG in Exile, have recently got in touch with many related parties, “on a national and international level for the National Unity Conference,” where they would argue for a United Front between all the Kurdish parties in Syria, and for the right of the Kurdish nation to self-determination, including the right to succeed and form their own separate state from a country, “they have long been forced to be part of without their own consent, for nearly a century now.”

He said that KNC and WKG in Exile advocates United Front strategy amongst the Kurdish political parties, profiles and factions because historically, he believes, “Kurds have not been able to move forward politically because the struggle had lacked national unity,” adding that the experiences of Kurdish failed uprisings of the 20th century, inner conflicts and civil war, “as well as sectarian and ideological divisions and including the recent developments in Iraq, all show repeating the same mistakes could led this nation to face tragic consequences once again.”

“We cannot do this in Syria because the Kurdish nation cannot bare yet another national defeat, so the first thing is to unite all the different Kurdish political forces, so we do not let go of this golden opportunity, that has sprung up for us Kurds in Syria today, and may never come back if we let go like we have done in the past.”

Syria: The war within and the prospect of Kurdish independence

Q&A with Dr. Jawad Mella, President of Western Kurdistan Government in Exile (WKG)

Rudaw: There are speculations that KNC and WKG will be announcing a “Unity Conference” soon, is this true, and why, what is the purpose for such a conference while the conflict in Syria is claiming more lives than ever before, and the death toll is rising as reported by many media outlets and governmental organisations here in the West ?

Well yes, it is true that we are preparing for such a conference, and we have contacted many people on an international scale in the diplomatic areas, I personally have contacted many on the diplomatic scene regarding what is happening in Syria today and how we as Kurds should respond to the outcomes of what is now happening in that country. So, we all agreed and they the diplomats of many different countries who I have spoke to, have said to us that they too would like to see a national conference by Kurds of Syria, because in their eyes, this could give them at least an idea about what Kurds as one nation think of the situation and what we desire and what we are demanding from the situation and also from the international community. Now that is partly why we are preparing the conference from an international relation perspective. And, yes death toll are rising there is no doubt about that we do not deny these, however, on a national level as well, we Kurds of Syria need a united agenda for this difficult time, the reality tells us this is a golden opportunity for Kurds in Syria and we cannot afford to let it slip in front of our eyes this time round. We need to come together as a nation and we need to come to a joined agreement between all the political parties, and we need to present that to the world as a nation, not as a political party, an economical entity or other sectarian lines. This is a nation’s dilemma, not a partisan one, so these are mainly the motives behind the idea of preparing such a conference for the Syrian Kurds and their political representatives, regardless of Ideological, religious and other differences that we may have , we can all put that to one side for now, and begin to think as a human beings first, then as a Kurds in Syria, and present our collective demands of our nation collectively, which then certainly can have a greater influence on how we should react and respond better to the

current crisis while considering the interest of the Kurdish nation above all else, and the international community also can hear and see our demands clearly. These are simply the reasons.

Rudaw: You are saying Kurds should not let go this opportunity this time round, what were the other “opportunities” then that Kurds had let go in the past, as you and also many in WKG today claim?

Well, when you look at our modern history in the Middle East, we had many chances all over Kurdistan to date. The 1991 uprising in Iraqi-Kurdistan and the later 2003 occupation of Iraq were like political lottery for Kurds really, especially the 2003 occupation of Iraq was a golden opportunity for Kurds, but they had let go that opportunity for independence and salvation. Now, we argue that we cannot afford for that to happen once again. In 1972, I met with Mustafa Barzani and we debated the formation of a Kurdish state, and he said to me, “If there is a nation or a country as small as Lebanon who would support our independence then I would declare a Kurdish state right now.” In contrast, in 2003, as Kurds of Iraq, we had the biggest political and military might of today’s world behind us which is the U.S. and we were in coalition with most powerful countries on earth, yet we shied away from our simple demand of Kurdish separatism and the formation of a Kurdish sovereign state, or even a mini state in southern Kurdistan. So, we cannot do the same this time in Syria we have to come together all the different Kurdish organisations, yes our politics may pole apart from each other, however, Kurdish independence and the struggle of this nation for the right to self-determination must unite us right now, we need to collectively debate and come to a united conclusion that could further the democratic initiatives in Western Kurdistan in Syria, it is really easy to understand it, let us put all the political differences aside for now, the plights of this nation is enough to unite us, so let us do it together and present it to the world from our own tongues, the world is waiting, the Kurdish nation is waiting and the people of Syria are also waiting. Division amongst us, can easily lead to misunderstanding from and outside Syria, therefore, we say unity now so the Kurdish nation can speak for itself to the world about its own dilemmas from its’ own heart and mind, but most important of all, such a unity can prevent tragic consequences which Kurds have faced in the past, such as ethnic cleansing and genocide. This is our political stance and understanding, though we may be wrong, thus we are call for such a conference where we can debate our different politics openly and publically to bring about a principles unity based on the sole interest of the Kurdish nation in Syria.

When and where wills this conference is going to take place then, because nothing has yet been publically announced as far as the media is concerned?

We are now waiting for all the parties, politicians and organisations invited to respond and see who is willing to take part to bring about a national unity, who is not and why? And, when we receive all those details and confirmations from those we have sent invitations to, then we’ll announce the date and place as soon as possible, also the agenda for everybody to share, debate and principally join us in this call for principled unity.

Rudaw: How many Kurdish political parties and factions exist in Syria today, and how many are willing to take part in such a conference

There are many Kurdish political parties and factions in Syria today, those that had existed in the past like our organisation and those that have lately formed during the early days of this political crisis in the country. We say, while it is great and lively how many different political organisations on the ground are springing up in the Kurdish areas and some have taken steps further to even self-govern their areas and some have formed their own community defence forces, while this is all very positive and can be looked at as a political progression and a rise

in national liberation consciousness amongst our Kurdish brothers and sisters in Syria, yet the great obstacle still remain which is lack of unity and a national voice of the Kurds in Syria, and this is very negatively impacting on the Kurd's political will, that is the lack of a united political message to the Syrian political establishment, the Syrian opposition and the rest of the world. This is because the Kurdish political tendencies in Syria, including us in the KNC and WKG in Exile, have not yet managed to sit down on a table together and debate the political will of our people we claim we represent in Syria today. We are politically divided and the task is for us and our nation, we believe, is first and foremost to end this division which we can later come in term with when we have managed to tell the world what our nation demands in Syria today. Currently, there are ten Kurdish political parties who are now part of the opposition Syrian National Council (SNC), whose leaders only accepted those Kurdish organisations on one condition only, that they do not demand self-determination and therefore had made them undermine the plights of Kurds to independence. Those Kurdish organisations with the opposition have all agreed that the Kurdish question must be solved "within the national and geographical boundaries of Syria", although this may not be what the Kurds would demand in Syria let us remember, because it is clear not just in Syria, but every Kurd all over Kurdistan and around the world in Diaspora demands full independence. On the other hand, there are another ten Kurdish political parties, who are not part of the SNC, and also, there are another many Kurdish youths organisations who are not part of anything, fully independent, and are very active on the ground, we also should expect other political factions rising soon as well, especially considering what we are witnessing on the political scene in Syria today. Therefore, the conference is aiming to unite these forces altogether; and we are inviting all sides, because as a nation we cannot afford to be part of a war that is not ours in the first place. And, the Kurdish nation has to decide its fate at its own hands not anyone else's, that is why, we as the acclaim representatives of the different political tendencies should come together, discuss and debate our different political strategies and tactics, so we come to a united front and a united political purpose that could reflect the nation's will, for this, we have to cast aside our own political differences, well at least for now, so our stateless nation will not fall victim to immoral politics like we have witnessed it throughout our history.

Rudaw: Calling what is happening in Syria today a "Golden Opportunity for Kurds", while there is bloodshed in the country and outside the door steps of the Kurdish neighbourhoods, what is the moral rationale then behind calling the situation as such, because whether it is the opposition forces or the Syrian government, in the end innocent lives have been lost on daily basis due to this conflict. I just wonder whether it is right calling other people's misery a "golden opportunity" for the Kurdish nation in Syria, while a civil war is devastating the people and the country, what is your comment about that?

You are absolutely right, as Kurds we should never and have never demanded our freedom on the back of other nation's miseries, no, in fact we in the KNC and WKG in Exile, have and are fundamentally considering that in order for us Kurds to achieve our rights, salvation and independence, we have to free ourselves first, therefore, we fully understand that if one nation oppresses another, a country oppressing another, they cannot be free. And, this is what we have told our Syrian brothers and sisters from the very first day Kurds vowed to struggle for the right to self-determination throughout the last century to date. It is our very basic democratic right to choose our fate and how to solve our problems, whether in or outside Syria's "geographical and national borders", but let us not forget, this is entirely dependent on how the Kurds feel and vote in a general referendum as a stateless nation in the Middle East and in our case in Syria we need to bring about that referendum. So, yes it is a golden opportunity in the sense that as Kurds, I mean as one of the nations in Syria, we have managed to stay out from the conflict and the bloodshed like you say has devastated the country and its' people, although some Kurds are now directly part of the opposition, but

some Kurds have taken up arms to defend their communities, towns, cities and villages, while others believe that PKK guerrillas have come down from the mountain tops and are in control of some parts of Western Kurdistan in Syria while refusing to be part of the conflict in any way, and there are other Kurds also who have nothing to do with politics at all so they are not part of any of those Kurdish or Arabic political tendencies included, nor they have any part in the conflict or any other political congregations. I was a peshmarga myself in Qandil, and I remember it was in 1982 to 1984 when the Iran and Iraq War had intensified and the bloodshed was very intense, although there were many different Kurdish parties and Peshmargas, we did not manage to achieve anything for our parties' politics, let alone the right of our nation, because many of the Kurdish parties took sides in the conflict, some with Iran, others with the Ba'athist regime of Iraq, so while the Iranian people and the people of Iraq were busy killing each other, we too from the mountains of Kurdistan were busy killing each other because we also took sides according to the different agreements made with the then Iranian and Iraqi government by the officials of the Kurdish parties and political profiles. However, The Iranian and Iraqi governments turned over the agreements as soon as these parties' Peshmargas wakened each other and wasted all their firepower in spilling their brother's blood. Then, a civil war between the Kurdish parties began to take shape very violently in Iraq and also in Iran throughout the 1980's, until the ethnic cleansing policies of the former Saddam Hussein's regime were processed and the Kurdish nation paid the tragic price through Anfal Operation beginning early 1987, and later the gassing of Halabja occurred in 1988, all in all, as a result of the Iran/Iraq war, which the Kurdish parties too decided to take sides and became an inseparable part of it, but later realised the tragic consequences of such a lateral political position . That division and civil wars eventually led to create an ecstasy of hate amongst the people of Kurdistan in Iraq and weakened the movement and led to major setbacks for Kurdish independence and formation of a Kurdish state as a whole, which we all claimed to fight for. Therefore, in Syria it is almost the same scenario, it is very positive that we have managed as a nation to not take part in the conflict and the bloodshed in Syria. And let me be very clear here for your readers; when we demand to form our own sovereign state as stateless Kurds , this does not come from an ethnic hatred stance or whatever as those racist to Kurds would like to claim, no, this is our right and we know for sure that if we achieve our independence, tomorrow we still have to live side by side with our neighbours who are the beloved people of Syria, and in our Kurdish culture respecting your neighbour is like a religious practice even, and currently when Kurds are self-governing, they are also protecting Christians and Arabs alike in their communities let us not forget. Thus, we are saying to the people of Syria, that our rights as Kurdish people on this land have been undermined throughout history due to national oppression, ethnic cleansing policies of the Syrian consecutive governments and we have faced state-sponsored racism for an innumerable of years, while it is our very basic democratic right to decide our own future through a referendum for independence including the right to succeed, that is if the Kurdish nation wishes to do so, and if we did, we will be living side by side where our cultural integration as the people of the Middle East could be on an even greater scale, and with greater significance than now, because if we get our independence then there are no barriers left between us as Kurds , Arabs and even other minorities in Syria, while in the meantime, national oppression is the major barrier between us and the people of Syria, all due to those polices in the government and political parties had undermined our right as Kurds to salvation, which is similar to the right of the people of Syria to salvation and independence, but many Syrian politicians whether in the government or in the SNC, are ignoring this and demand to repeat the same racist policies which us Kurds have faced for so many years in our own country, this is entirely anti-democratic. I have to say yes it is true that the conflict has taken different directions from its early days when we supported it, but the Kurds of Syria, even those who are armed to self-defence, we all will extend our arms to the people of Syria if our help is needed. Like I said earlier, we respect our neighbours, not just our beloved people of Syria, but also the people of Lebanon, Palestine, all those in the Arab world, we also respect Jewish people and the people of Israel and their rights as well as our stateless

brothers and sisters in Palestine whom we share with, the same feeling and tragedy of national oppression and being stateless in our poignant Middle East which we all belong to in one way or another. We as Kurds and also as the people of the Middle East, should respect each other as brothers and sisters regardless of ethnic background, religious differences, politics or any other phenomenon that we may have and could even pole apart, but we should not be divided as a people of a continent on sectarian lines no matter what, this is our stance and the Kurdish nation stands by that too. Nonetheless, we all deserve human dignity as human beings and to be treated equally, and that is precisely what the Kurdish people today demand in Syria, but also in Turkey as well as in Iran, even in Iraq where after nearly a decade of post-Saddam governments, they have not been able to find a political solution for the very simple matter of the Kurdish “disputed areas” to come back on the map of Kurdistan and for those areas to be self-ruled either by the native people or the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). And in Iraq this comes despite the fact that article 40 of the new constitution, claims that it “guarantees” the right of the Kurdish people in Iraq to self-determination in a general referendum, yet this simple right is undermined by almost all of the political forces in the country for nearly a decade to date after the fall of Baghdad in 2003. Our plight is simple, we need to decide our own political future by ourselves so do the Syrians, Lebanese, Palestinian, Egyptians, Tunisians, Israelis, Yemenis and Libyans etc, and this is democracy if we really believe it. So, yes the situation has changed and it is rather a war within in Syria at the moment, therefore, we needn’t to be part of it, while we are ready to help and aid the people of Syria if they need us regardless of their political affiliations, but we are not prepared to kill for anybody and become part of a civil war that is dividing Syria and its people on sectarian lines with blood bath. We as Kurds are for peace with everybody in the Middle East and our plight has always been a peaceful one, and we are peacefully asking the people of Syria and the world this time round to not turn their back on the Kurds like they always have done in the past, recognise us, so we have better relations that is not based on national oppression this time, but on fraternity, people’s fellowship and respecting one another with our differences, in our case as Kurds, that will involve the Kurdish way of treating and respecting our Arab neighbours with human dignity above all else. That is what we in the KNC and WKG in Exile and many more of the Kurds in Syria today are calling “The Golden Opportunity” for our long neglected Kurdish nation and others in Syria today.

Western Kurdistan now is not any more under the Syrian regime control because the Kurds in Qamishlo city on 8-5-2012 opened Osman Sabri* Club.

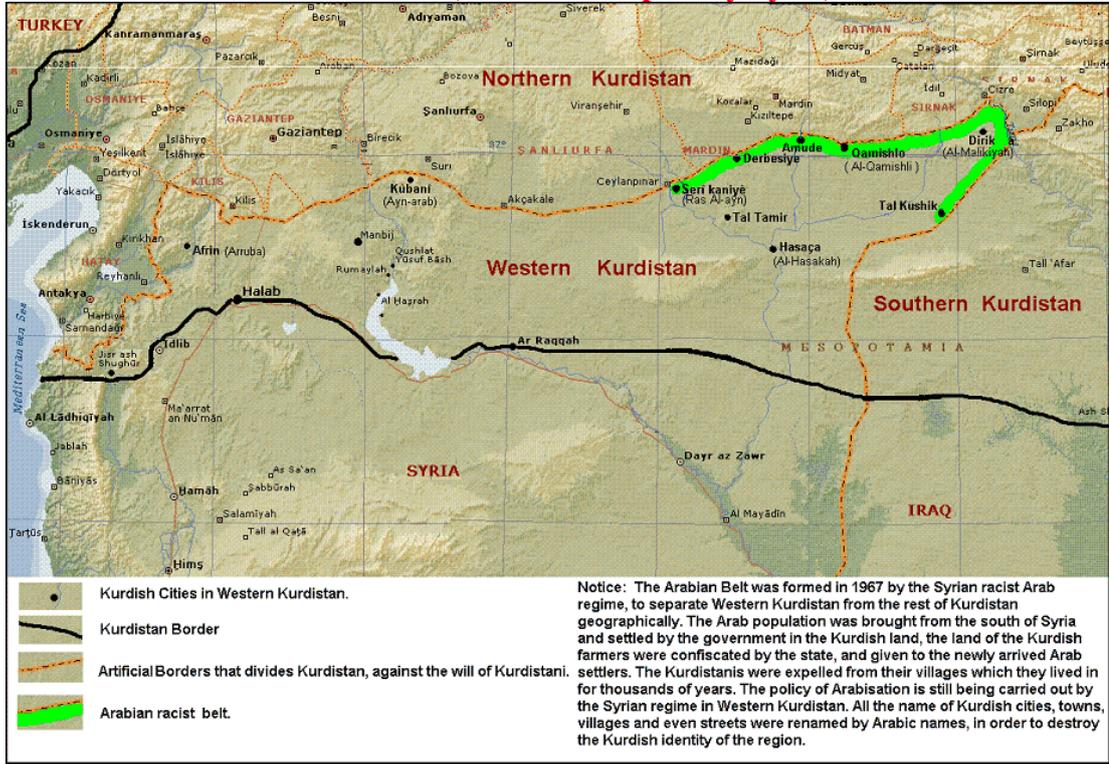
*Osman Sabri is a symbol of the Kurdish nation’s freedom:

Osman Sabri, imprisoned 18 times in Syria and spent around 12 years from his life behind bars... Osman Sabri was the hero that the Syrian regime scared when anybody mentioned his name, even the Turkish regime in 1920s sentenced Osman Sabri to death penalty two times. as well the French mandate in Syria exiled Osman Sabri to island of Madagascar in Africa exactly as the British authorities in Iraq which exiled another hero Sheikh Mahmoud Al-Hafid the King of Southern Kurdistan to India.

Dr. Jawad Mella
President
Kurdistan National Congress
Tel: 0208 748 7874
Mobile: 07768 266 005
e-mail: wka@knc.org.uk

www.knc.org.uk
www.westernkurdistan.org.uk
www.rojavatv.org.uk
www.jemalnebez.com
www.jawadmella.com
www.jawadmella.net

Western Kurdistan (which is occupied by Syria)



Dr Jawad Mella claimed Kurdish State for the Syrian Kurds inside the American Congress in 12 March 2006

