

Kurdistan Solidarity Network: a networking proposal

Proposal

A decentralised umbrella network of Kurdistan solidarity groups in the UK to be formed of “Kurdistan solidarity” and “friends of Rojava” groups that agree broadly with the ideas and principles below. This can take the name of the Kurdistan Solidarity Network.

How was the Kurdistan Solidarity Network formed, and what has it been until now?

The KSN was originally conceived of by activists at the 2015 Earth First Gathering to publicise a demonstration outside offices of Andritz, the Austrian company involved with building the Ilisu Dam. Later it was carried forward, largely by activists based in Brighton, who created the website, email list and social media accounts. Brighton Kurdistan Solidarity (BKS) was formed not long after, and BKS has always seen itself as a part of the KSN.

We have been waiting for the emergence of a number of other solidarity groups around the UK that seem to work in a similar way, with similar aims and objectives. We believe that moment has arrived and are now proposing creating a more organised and active network so we can work in a more coordinated way, build solidarity and share resources and ideas.

Resources we already have include: contacts, website, email list, twitter, FB page, films, reports and other materials that have been collected together over the last two years.

How is it different from other networks?

Stop War on Kurds (SWOK) was a very broad structure set up mainly to coordinate huge demonstrations. The differences and connections between SWOK and the KSN were discussed at the last SWOK meeting in November 2016. It was decided that the aims and structures of these networks were different enough for them both to exist. In particular, the aims of the KSN are seen as political, not just humanitarian, whereas SWOK had a humanitarian focus. It was also incredibly broad, aiming to include the Labour Movement and humanitarian organisations.

SWOK dissolved as a network after the formation of the Kurdistan Solidarity Campaign (KSC). The KSC is a broad structure that exists in the UK and is made up of Kurds and non-Kurds. It was set up by the Kurdish movement and members of the UK Labour Movement, along with family members of British martyrs. BKS is loosely linked with the KSC, but proposes the KSN have a different organisational structure. For example, the KSC has a steering committee, whereas the KSN is envisioned as a decentralised, non-hierarchical network that would work by consensus.

We recognise that while the KSN was originally formed by people coming from a largely anarchist background, other members of groups in the KSN are from a more communist, socialist, feminist or left libertarian tradition. We see this as a strength and an opportunity to build solidarity and understanding.

Principles

Principles would be decided collectively, but for example...

- Decentralised network of non-hierarchical groups, each formed of both Kurdish and non-Kurdish comrades
- Connected with the Kurdish Freedom Movement, but autonomous
- Anticapitalist, Anti-patriarchy, Anti-imperialist
- Pro women's liberation, ecology, working to create a better world
- Agree with the ideology of democratic confederalism

We could choose to adopt (a modified version of?) the PGA Hallmarks

(<https://www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/agp/free/pga/hallm.htm>). BKS, the group putting forward this proposal, has its principles online here: <https://brightonkurdistan solidarity.wordpress.com/about/>

How could it work?

Decisions that affect the whole network could be made by consensus at semi-regular congresses / convergences / gatherings / spokes-councils, where groups could send delegates / spokes / reps, or as many people as they like.

Individual groups within the network would be autonomous, making decisions that affect that group themselves, but would bear in mind the principles agreed to collectively as a network.

What could the KSN do?

- Share online platforms – all groups can have a log in for the website, Twitter, FB, to promote events and news
- Share resources – films, flyers, presentation slides, contacts, fundraising materials...
- Co-ordinate actions – eg. Hasankeyf Day of action, DSEI, Kobane Day...
- Create a shared vision of how to move forward

How could it develop in the future?

The network would decide collectively how it wants to develop and what it can become. There is potential to use this network to develop a broader movement and to connect struggles.

Next steps

An initial gathering to discuss this proposal and work out collective aims and principles.