



Annual Report on Kurdish Lobby Australia (KLA) Activities, 2019

Overview

In 2019 KLA continued to write reports and statements, made one presentation about the future of Iran at Queensland Parliament House, and held a seminar in Sydney to raise money for two humanitarian projects, one for Afrin refugees living in Sulaimani and another for Kurdish refugees from Turkey at Judi Camp, Makhmour. Following Turkey's invasion of Rojava in October, KLA representatives did a number of media interviews. Otherwise, a highlight of the year was reaching out to Australian Jewish and Muslim communities.

Reports on Overseas Projects

In April 2019, KLA Member Alison Buckley went to Bashur and held a number of meetings that inspired KLA to hold a fund raising seminar and conduct two humanitarian projects, one for Afrin refugees in Sulaimani and one for Kurdish refugees from Turkey now residing in Judi Camp, Makhmour. Alison and Bakhtyar (her interpreter who subsequently joined KLA) met with Judi camp committee members Dr Medya Mustafa, Bewar Unver, Yusuf Kara and Ayse Mohamed in Dukan. They identified a depleted and contaminated water supply was a critical concern, as well as many other health, educational and infrastructure needs.

Alison and Bakhtyar also met with four representatives of Heyva Sor in Sulaimani (Masoud Heso, Kilani Rasho, Fathalla Hosani, President of the YPG representatives, and Khawla Mostafa, who told them that up to 3,200 families from Rojava were living in and around Sulaimani. They described the needs of camp Sheba in Rojava, and local camps Bareeka and Ashti. They also met with Heyva Sor leaders Kilani Rasho and Ghassan Hasan at their office in Sulaimani. Ghassan Hasan became the point of contact for KLA to help 170 Afrin families living in Sulaimani who were trying to support themselves without any aid. Life was getting more difficult as the number of NGOs had decreased after 5-6 years on the assumption that the IDPs and refugees must have integrated into the community!

KLA Donation to Afrin Refugees in Sulaimani, 18 October 2019

Report on Operation Hope, 20 November 2019

Report: Testing Water quality at Judi Refugee Camp, Makhmour, Northern Iraq 2019

Other Reports / Presentations / Statements

Post ISIS States IX- Turkey's Year of Living Dangerously, May 2018 – May 2019, 14 May 2019

Future Scenarios for Iran – Report/Presentation, 8 June 2019, with Slides.

Report on use of chemical weapons by the Turkish Armed Forces in Northern Syria, 28 October 2019

International response required to Turkey's Aggression against Kurds in Turkey, Iraq and Syria, 11 September 2019

Turkey's Aggression in Turkey, Iraq and Syria requires urgent action, 11 Sept. 2019



Media Release on US-Turkey Agreement, 18 October 2019

Letters

Open Letter to the Prime Minister of Australia, 29 April 2019

KLA letter published in the Australian Jewish News, 31 October 2019 (Click to read: [*The Second Great Betrayal & We must pay Kurds our debt of gratitude*](#))

Letter to the Australian Jewish News, 28 October 2019

Emails to the Prime Minister & Minister for Foreign Affairs, 22 Oct 2019

An email from the Office of Senator Janet Rice, 14 October 2019

Seminars

In June 2019 a fundraising seminar was held in Sydney to raise money for the two humanitarian projects. There were two presentations under the heading 'Tax Minimisation and Wealth Creation Strategies'. KLA Treasurer Nader Gariban spoke about 'Effective Ways to Gain Financial Security' and KLA President Eziz Bawermend spoke about 'How to Grow Rich in the Share Market'. The money raised at the seminar was donated to Afrin refugees living in Sulaimani city and testing the water in Judi camp near Makhmour for heavy metal contamination. More details of these projects can be found in the report of each project.

Media Coverage

Hazhar Siyani was interviewed by Rosa Garmian for *SBS Kurdish Radio* about human rights in Iran, July 2019

Hazhar Siyani was interviewed by *Wire Radio* about KLA, who we are and what we do, in September 2019

In October 2019, following Turkey's invasion of NE Syria:

Eziz Bawermend was interviewed twice by Channel 9 News, *SkyNews* (once by Andrew Bolt), and twice by ABC National Radio *RN Breakfast*, (once by Geraldine Doogue).

Eziz Bawermend had a phone interview with Ben Doherty of *The Guardian* on 9 Oct 2019. The article was published the next day, and is attached to this report.

Eziz Bawermend had a phone interview with David Crowe - Chief Political Correspondent at the *Sydney Morning Herald* in 10 Oct 2019 for an article published the next day.

Nader Gariban (Treasurer) and Zirian Fatah (Vice President) attended Q & A, ABC Television, October 2019.

In October 2019, Hazhar Siyani was interviewed by Rosa Garmian for *SBS Kurdish Radio* about the demonstrations being held in Australia over Turkey's invasion of Rojava and the need to write personal letters to local and federal politicians.



Zirian Fatah was interviewed by RTR FM on 22 October 2019 about the history of Kurds and Turkey being a major factor as to why Turkey invaded Rojava. https://rtrfm.com.au/story/frontline-of-turkey-invasion/?fbclid=IwAR36Q0_FJCJ6KnZW73LhugUQnMGc2HvCsybva9sfalk1c9SHZNLva4lvDog

Zirian Fatah was interviewed by ABC Radio Breakfast on 30 October 2019 'Kurdish Australians fear for Syria' Talking about Turkey's invasion being ethnic cleansing <https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/breakfast/abandoned:-kurdish-australians-fear-for-syria/11652126>

Meetings

Zirian Fatah attended the UDIA Luncheon on 20 February networking with business leaders and informing them about KLA. The Hon. Rob Stokes MP, Minister for Planning & Public Spaces was present.

Zirian Fatah attended Lefand Annual Summit on 3 March 2019 to network with different ethnic community groups and business leaders, informing them about the work KLA does.

Eziz Bawermend and Gina Lennox (Public Officer) met with Tony Burke, MP – re what is happening in Syria and Turkey, 8 April 2019.

Eziz Bawermend and Zirian Fatah met with Rabbi Dr Dovid Slavin when they attended Israel's 71st anniversary for Independence Day, networking with other community representatives and Gladys Berejiklian, on 14 May 2019.

Zirian Fatah attended a business luncheon on 28 May 2019. The guest of honour was the NSW Treasurer and Minister for Industrial Relations, the Hon. Dominic Perrottet MP.

Eziz Bawermend, Zirian Fatah and Gina Lennox met with Associate Professor Rhett Butler in Mosman about a water filter called a Skyhydrant that we were looking into for Judi camp, Makhmour, 16 June 2019.

Eziz, Zirian and Gina met with Jeremy Jones, Director of International and of Community Affairs for the Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council, re lobbying strategies and tactics, in September 2019.

Zirian Fatah attended the Canterbury Bankstown Chamber of Commerce Gala night on 9 November 2019, to network with different ethnic community groups and business leaders and tell them about issues of concern for Australian Kurds.

Eziz Bawermend met with Mr Enver Yasar, Government Relations Advisor, at Gallipoli Turkish Cultural Foundation on 11 November 2020.

Eziz, Zirian and Gina met with Ramia Abdo Sultan, Community Relations Advisor, Australian National Imams Council (ANIC), re speaking about Muslims needing to embrace diversity, tolerance and justice and organise a round table discussion between Muslims of different ethnicities. The meeting was held on 14 November 2019.

Eziz, Zirian and Gina met the Imam of Lakemba Mosque Sheikh Yahya Safi in November 2019 to discuss the aforementioned issues but were told that Islam is above politics.



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Eziz and Gina met with the General Manager of the Lebanese Muslims Association, Mr Khaled Alameddine in November 2019 to talk about the aforementioned issues and were asked to put what they need in writing.

Priorities for 2020

In 2020 the KLA plans to:

- Continue writing reports and statements on what is happening in Kurdistan;
- Seek interest to hold a united Newroz in 2021, having started the process in 2020 for Newroz 2020, holding a number of productive meetings before all public gatherings were banned because of Covid-19;
- Make contact with Christian communities and other Australian organisations to inform them about the situation in the four Kurdistan regions;
- Make podcasts, hold panel discussions and debates on topics to be decided to raise money for different projects.

Call for new Members

KLA is a small group of volunteers. As you can see we are very active but we are limited by our numbers. To become even more active we need new members with ideas and a willingness to take responsibility for specific tasks.

PLEASE CONSIDER JOINING KLA IF YOU WANT TO ACTIVELY CONTRIBUTE TO ADVOCATING ON BEHALF OF THE PEOPLE OF KURDISTAN OR HAVE IDEAS, CONNECTIONS OR A WISH TO MAKE PODCASTS, CONTRIBUTE TO THE WEBSITE, RAISE MONEY etc.

This was published 6 months ago

'Complete betrayal': Kurdish community braces for Syria 'bloodbath', urges Turkey boycott

By [David Crowe](#)

October 9, 2019 – 4.46pm



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The Australian Kurdish community is urging the Morrison government to join global action to prevent a "bloodbath" in northern Syria after accusing United States President Donald Trump of a "complete betrayal" by withdrawing US troops.

Kurdish Lobby Australia president Eziz Bawermend said Mr Trump's decision sent a message to the world that his administration would "run away" from a fight and desert its allies.



Eziz Bawermend said the US withdrawal from northern Syria "is a total and complete betrayal of the Kurdish people". LOUISE KENNERLEY

Mr Bawermend said Prime Minister Scott Morrison should join efforts at the United Nations to warn Turkey against invading Kurdish territory, while Australians themselves could "boycott" Turkey and Anzac Day commemorations in Gallipoli to make the same point.

After years of fighting against Islamic State, the Kurds are now exposed to attacks from Turkish forces expected to move into northern Syria in the wake of the US withdrawal.

"It is a total and complete betrayal of the Kurdish people," said Mr Bawermend, who was born and raised in Kurdistan but emigrated to Australia as a teenager and lives in Sydney.

"They have made huge sacrifices in fighting ISIS, which we see as a scourge of humanity, and those sacrifices include 11,000 dead and over 20,000 seriously wounded people who will no longer be their families' breadwinners.

"The Kurdish people of that region engaged in this war against ISIS not just to protect themselves but also, we believe, to protect the whole civilised world from ISIS's evil."

Defence Minister [Linda Reynolds and Labor defence spokesman Richard Marles made no criticism of Mr Trump's decision on Tuesday](#), although Greens leader Richard Di Natale criticised the "erratic and dangerous" decision.

Weeks after Mr Morrison signalled his closeness to Mr Trump at [a rare state dinner at the White House](#), Mr Bawermend said Australia should heed the signal from the President's sudden decision on Syria.



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Trump's threat to Turkey

In a tweet, the US President has threatened to obliterate Turkey's economy if it invades northern Syria. US troops are being withdrawn from the region in anticipation of the invasion.

"Donald Trump has I think sent a signal to friends and foes that US administrations, as distinct from the American people, cannot be trusted, that when things get tough they will simply pack up and go away – if not run away," he said.

"I think that is an awful signal to give to the enemies of freedom, the enemies of peace, and it will encourage an awful lot of people around the world knowing that US administrations cannot be trusted and are not worth counting on."

"But I must emphasise the distinction between the President and the American people."

While the Kurdish community has been gratified by the support from ordinary Americans and Australians, it fears an invasion by Turkish forces under orders from Turkish President Recep Erdogan.

"We expect a bloodbath. The reason for Erdogan going in to Syria is not to fight terrorism – the main objective for wanting to invade Syria is a demographic change, to change the population along the border," Mr Bawermend said.

Senator Reynolds argued on Tuesday it was too early for the Australian government to respond to the US decision, but the Kurdish community wants Mr Morrison and his government to speak up against an invasion.

The Abbott government sent forces to drop munitions and humanitarian aid to Kurdish fighters in 2014, given the partnership between Kurdish and US forces against Islamic State.

Mr Bawermend said Australia could respond in two ways.

"Firstly they should tell Turkish leaders that the policy that the Turkish government is pursuing is barbaric, is inhuman and is not acceptable in this day and age," he said.

"The second avenue is to raise the matter at the United Nations General Assembly or Security Council.

"They should raise concern that the second largest army in NATO is planning, openly, to invade a sovereign member state of the UN to attack very lightly armed militia who have come into being to protect people's lives from the scourge of humanity that is ISIS."

Mr Bawermend described the Kurdish Lobby Australia as non-partisan and non-sectarian but the Kurdish community is known for the divisions between different militias active in Iraq and Syria, including the rival Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

"As far as public actions are concerned I have not seen any evidence that the Australian government is doing anything at all," he said.

"The Australian government can do a lot more but I think the Australian people can do a lot more than the Australian government, not just by speaking up but also by boycotting tourism to Turkey and not going to Turkey.

"To be effective, the Australian people can boycott Turkish goods and services, but particularly tourism, and all visits relating to Anzacs, I think people should be determined to increase their knowledge of the Turkish government's brutality against their own citizens."



David Crowe



David Crowe is chief political correspondent for The Sydney Morning Herald and The Age.



This article is more than **5 months old**

Kurdish Australians say families in Syria have been abandoned in face of Turkish invasion

Kurds feel 'despondent' and 'totally hopeless' after Trump's announcement of US withdrawal leaves friends and relatives at risk

Ben Doherty

Thu 10 Oct 2019 14.53 AEDT

Kurdish Australians say they fear for family members in northern Syria, and for the future of their people, following Turkish airstrikes, artillery bombardment and military invasion of Kurdish-dominated cities and villages.

Following the sudden withdrawal of US troops from the Kurdish-controlled areas of north-eastern Syria - known as Rojava - Turkey has begun a long-threatened assault on Kurdish centres.

The Turkish military “launched the land operation into the east of the Euphrates River” on Wednesday, later claiming to have hit 181 “militant targets”.

Video footage showed civilians fleeing towns with columns of smoke rising in the background and jet trails visible in the sky.

Observers reported at least seven civilians had been killed.

The president of the Kurdish Lobby Australia, Eziz Bawermend, said Kurds in Australia felt their people had been abandoned not only by long-standing ally the US, but also by the broader global community.

“It’s a feeling of horror, if you like, we feel abandoned, we feel despondent and totally hopeless. I spoke with several people on both sides of the [Turkish-Syrian] border, and it’s the same feeling: does the world care? Will anything happen? What have we done to deserve this?”

Bawermend said the Kurdish people had been “complete and totally betrayed by one man” - US president Donald Trump - who unilaterally withdrew American troops after a phone call with the Turkish president, but were also suffering because of global indifference, even complicity.

“It’s American jet fighters, German tanks, French artillery, against lightly armed militia. People are just scared, running, but they don’t know where they can go to be safe. It is villages and populated areas that are being bombed.”

The Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces, backed by the US, have borne the brunt of fighting against the Isis terrorist network, suffering significant casualties, including up to 11,000 fighters killed.

Bawermend said the US’s dramatic withdrawal had shown that the Trump White House was an unreliable ally.

“It’s a total and complete betrayal. It sends a very strong message to people all over the world. Northern Syria is very far away, but the message will go around the world. This US administration cannot be trusted, when the going gets tough, they will pack up and run away.”

Bawermend said he hoped other forces in the US political system, its Congress and Trump’s Republican party, might help restore American support for Kurdish forces, and protection for Kurdish people. Otherwise, he said, he feared genocide.

“We expect a bloodbath.”

Bawermend urged a boycott of “Turkish goods and services”, in particular tourism, as a way the public could put pressure on Ankara to end its aggression, and support the Kurdish cause.

“Enough drops of water, fill a glass, a river, an ocean, that’s how I see people power. I’m not asking anybody to sacrifice anything, but to consider alternatives to Turkish goods and services, as a non-destructive way to make their views known.”

Heval Herki, from the Federation of Kurdish Democratic Society in Australia, said the war would “bring many casualties, many deaths, chaos for Rojava, for the region, for the whole world”.

Herki said there was barely a Kurdish family in Australia that had not lost someone to the violence of the region over the past five years, and said many now feared further deaths from the Turkish incursion and from a resurgent Isis in the chaos expected to follow.

“People say they are stranded in fear, the land is very flat, and people fear when the bombs will come.

“Many houses, many buildings have been destroyed. It is indiscriminate, massive air bombardment to cause chaos and fear among the people. But where can they go? There is no exit for them in any direction.”

The Australian prime minister, Scott Morrison, said on Thursday the government was “concerned about what we’re seeing, of the actions of the Turkish government moving into Syria, and what that could mean for the safety of the people in that area”.

“We are also very concerned about what this could mean for the potential resurgence of Daesh [Isis] and we will be working through all diplomatic channels, working with our colleagues, whether in Europe or the United States or elsewhere, where we have been in partnership in the Middle East for some time, to closely monitor these developments.”

The UN security council was due to meet on Thursday to discuss the Turkish offensive. But the council was not expected to strongly condemn Ankara’s actions, given tacit Russian support and US ambivalence.

Launching the offensive, dubbed Operation Peace Spring, Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said it was being undertaken by Turkish military and Turkish-backed Syrian militias, against Kurdish forces and Isis.

“Our mission is to prevent the creation of a terror corridor across our southern border, and to bring peace to the area,” he wrote on social media.

Turkey says it wants to establish a 32-kilometre wide “safety zone” along the border, as protection against the threat of what it regards as Kurdish terrorist groups as well as Isis. Turkey also says it wants to resettle Syrian refugees in the zone.

Huseyin Atayman, executive secretary of the Australian Turkish Advocacy Alliance, said Turkey had waited long enough “to take this last but necessary step to protect its people and create the conditions to resettle some part of the 3.7 million refugees it is hosting”.

He said Turkey’s Operation Peace Spring aimed “to disarm elements hostile to Turkey, create a safe zone, [and] resettle thousands of refugees in their homeland. The idea of a safe zone idea has been floated by the Turks since 2011”.

Atayman said the Syrian Defence Force was being led by hostile “terror groups” - as the Kurdish PKK and YPG are regarded by Turkey - and that Turkey’s right to defend itself should be respected.

“Trump did not betray Kurds, its allies betrayed Turkey by arming a terrorist organisation, and not solving the ensuing Syria problem. This matter unites Turks from every political background. And, I believe, every reasonable country in the same circumstances would take exactly the same action.”

The eight-year Syrian civil war is estimated to have killed up to 570,000 people, including more than 100,000 civilians, and has led to more than seven million internally displaced people and five million refugees.

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