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The Kurdish people should get involved in and support campaigns on local and national issues

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The emigration of Kurdish people to Europe, Scandinavia, the United States (USA) and other countries started during World War II. However, they remained a tiny minority, compared to immigrants from many other countries, until the mid-1970s and early 1980s, when major waves of Kurdish migration from the different parts of Kurdistan started. In Iraqi Kurdistan emigration started after the collapse of the Kurdish movement led by Mustafa Barzani in March 1975. In Iranian Kurdistan it started after the “revolution” when the Islamists came to power. In Turkish Kurdistan it started as soon as the PKK movement emerged in the 1980s. In Syrian Kurdistan it started in 80s, but was very slow until the start of the “Arab Spring”.

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At present, there are no data on the number of Kurds in these countries. However, one thing is clear, Kurds from Iraq and Turkey make up the majority of Kurdish migrants.

The Kurdish diaspora has many problems in common with migrants from other nations. These include language, housing, social connections, employment, and looking after family left behind in the homeland. What brought all migrants to their destinations were political reasons including economic issues. Many of them have suffered from imprisonment, repression and persecution. Attacks on some of their nations by the US, Russia and Western countries, or subjugation of their governments to the demands and wishes of these countries were also another major factor.

All the above problems were and still are common among almost all ethnic minorities. If we look at migrants from Africa as a whole, the Middle East, Asia, Central Asia, South East Asia, the Far East, some Eastern European countries and South America, we can see this is the reality. Their people have left their countries not least because of such reasons.

Given the main reasons for emigration to Europe and elsewhere are war and political issues we should ask an important question. Why are these people not involved in politics here, in their new countries? There could be various reasons for this. Seeking to avoid politicising their present suffering compared to the past, not connecting the cause of past suffering to the government in their new homeland, fear of attack and suppression from the countries they came from, family problems, lack of confidence, and social problems. There are probably other reasons too, related to what people face in their everyday lives: discrimination and prejudice, inequality and injustice. However, whatever their reasons, not participating in what goes on in their new countries cannot be justified.

In addition to the common causes that resulted in their emigration, migrants, wherever they came from, have enemies in common

too. Migrants who have escaped their homelands now often live in States that are creating wars around the world; and that support the terrorist groups and make the arms deals with dictatorial and fascist governments that result in the displacement of people. Not only are these States causing mass migration, at the same time they are closing their borders in their face of those they have displaced. Given this, why are these people silent and failing to translate their anger and hope into some productive action?

In the rest of this article I will try to concentrate on the Kurdish diaspora in respect of their activities and involvement in politics. Many of them are very active for their own causes. However, generally, they do not connect their struggle to the machinations of the State in their country of destination and so do not expand their activities to actions against their new state, or to support for campaigns about local and national issues in their new homeland.

We all know our communities in Britain are under threat from whoever is in power, Labour, Tory or Lib Dem. We have been under this threat to the point at which we are at risk of losing our identity, our individual freedom, and whatever the present or previous generations have achieved. Indeed, we face losing almost everything. Look at the history of the past three or four decades: the restriction of freedoms, the installation of over 15 million surveillance cameras to invade our freedom by spying on us, being terrorised by the police through implementation of laws promulgating the so-called the war on terror, the attacks on trade union and workers' rights, constant changes in the rules and regulations relating to qualifying for benefits and housing, homelessness, selling social housing, expanding academy schools, closing down maternity and A&E wards in many hospitals, trying to privatise other health services, long hospital waiting lists, the introduction of tuition fees, increase in utilities bills, increases in the pension age, the introduction of zero-hours contracts, over 6.5 million workers receiving less than the minimum wage, so many children living in poverty, over half a million people relying on food banks, and in-

creases in pollution levels. The list can go on and on — in short we have modern slavery.

Most or all of the above problems affect Kurdish people, and other ethnic minority people, more so than native British people. The reasons for them being affected so badly are because they have large families, family problems here and back home, language difficulties, lack of understanding of the system, and psychological and health problems due to their social and political experiences.

There are many groups in different boroughs in London and in other cities campaigning against the government and corporations on each of the issues raised above. These groups have fought back against the government and the corporations in their own way and some of them have been successful. There is no doubt that the victories of any of these campaigns are much more beneficial to the Kurdish community and other ethnic minorities than to native people due to their special circumstances.

Kurdish people should be involved and campaign hard shoulder to shoulder with other people. It is time to escape the self-marginalisation, it is time to fully participate in local campaigns, it is time to publicise the issues affecting the Kurdish community here by going to meetings, taking part in demos, protests and offering solidarity to local campaigns and in return getting back support and solidarity with issues that are more specifically Kurdish.

With regard to the latter, Kurdish people should use this solidarity to make their own issues into local and national issues. Simply doing demos attended only by the Kurdish community, organising rallies and protests alone — making a bit of noise, raising some placards and pictures of one leader or another are not enough. If they expect this activity is sufficient for their voice to be heard by the media and the authorities here, they are mistaken.

If Kurdish people want their voices to be heard by the rest of the population, the State and local authorities they should integrate into wider society in order to get their sympathy, support and solidarity. It is not right to expect others to help you but not help

them in exchange. The truth is everybody shares the fruit of winning campaigns.

Having said the above it does not mean Kurdish people should leave their own question behind and concentrate only on what is going here. More it is that if you want to gain more support and solidarity you should be involved in politics in the country you live in as well as your own questions. The Kurdish people should know that those who support their enemies back home are the State and corporations here. The weaker the State and the corporations here, the weaker the government in their own home countries, and the stronger the struggle and the faster the victory.

This is not simply a problem in Britain. I know through other comrades and friends in European and Scandinavian countries and the USA that there are hardly any Kurdish people taking part in activities unless those activities directly relate purely to the Kurdish struggle.

Here in UK, especially in London, where I have lived for a long time, I know there are many boroughs where the Kurdish Community constitutes a fair proportion of the ethnic minorities in the borough. In these boroughs there are major issues that people, including the Kurds, are facing. These issues directly affect the Kurdish people, but still they have been silent, concentrating on their own affairs as if these problems are nothing to do with them.

In Haringey where I live, we have major problems with the local authority and central government. While a great many of Kurdish people live in the borough, and indeed have a few community centres here, as far as I am aware, only a tiny minority of them are involved in any of the many ongoing campaigns in Haringey.