

Minute of meeting 24 October 2017

1. Welcome and apologies - Ross Greer in chair.
2. Minutes of previous meeting
Actions – It was noted that MSPs had been asked to support the Deputies for deputies campaign that letters would be sent to Council Provosts and council leaders would be contacted and asked to support the Mayors for mayors campaign.
Approved
3. AGM – election of office bearers
Clare Haughey took chair for this part of the meeting.
Ruth Maguire MSP and Ross Greer MSP were proposed and agreed as Co-convenors.
Ross Greer took the chair.
It was agreed that the Secretary would be provided by Scottish Solidarity with Kurdistan and that Stephen Smellie would fulfil that role.
4. Iraqi Kurdistan referendum – David Pratt, International Editor for Sunday Herald was welcomed to the meeting.
David explained that he had visited Kurdish Iraq for decades and covered the recent events in Mosul. Kurdistan anticipated many of the problems that have now occurred. Said things would be difficult once Daesh was defeated. Senior officials in the Kurdish Regional Government, KDP, Goran and PUK were all worried.
REFERENDUM many felt this was an auspicious moment.
USA tried to persuade President Barzani to pull back but momentum had built up.
Now after the events of the past few weeks there is a massive sense of betrayal.
Had questioned the Kirkuk Governor at time of the referendum. He was PUK but close to the KDP . Indicated there were splits in PUK and it is now known that deals being done with Iran.
Things are very bad and leaves KRG in vulnerable situation. EU media planning delegation but have to go through Baghdad.
Everyone now pausing for thought. Complete escalation of violence on back burner. Could Turn at any time.
During the referendum there was a sense of tension in Kirkuk with the Arab and Turkmen areas being quiet whilst the polling stations were busy in the Kurdish areas.
As the Iraqi forces advanced towards Kirkuk the Peshmerga retreated as the PUK deal had left them weak. Level heads realised that retreat was sensible.
There was a lively discussion.
In conclusion David pointed out that there was now a military situation and believed that a period of stability was needed to allow for time to reflect. It was hoped that further conflict could be avoided.
Ross thanked David for his contribution and proposed that a letter be sent to the Foreign Secretary urging him to call on the Iraqi authorities to pull back from further military actions.
5. Health of Abdullah Ocalan
Murat Gulen spoke about the situation in regard to Abdullah Öcalan. Öcalan has been in prison for 18 years. More than a year since heard from him. There had been rumours that he is dead and no official response. Kurds in Turkey have been protesting and demanding news and access to Ocalan.
If something happens to him there will be a worsening of the situation.
Agreed to write to the Turkish consul and FCO and to table a motion in Scottish parliament.
6. Upcoming trial of Diyarbakir Mayor Gultan Kiskan
Agree message of support and motion in parliament.
Ross recalled support for Leyla Birlek.
Suggest link with Westminster group
7. AGM – future meetings and purpose of the CPG

Ross stated that he had proposed a geographic focus from beginning. We had discussed the situation in north Kurdistan (south east Turkey) at the last meeting and south Kurdistan at tonight's meeting. He proposed that at the next meeting we look at the situation in Rojava. This was agreed.

Possible other themes were discussed including -

Women, Solidarity, economy, links, progressive politics, transparency, media.

Consider activities around country.

Need for education on the Kurds and their history.

Kurdish community in Scotland, culture, etc

The group could support a delegation to Kurdistan in 2018.

8. AGM- Membership of Cross Party Group

Membership was formally open to MSPs. Groups who had agreed to be supporting organisations were Scottish Solidarity with Kurdistan and Scottish Global Forum (a think tank on foreign affairs). It was agreed to keep to that formula and to establish a supporters list who would be invited to attend.

9. Any other business

a) Committee of Turkish Parliament coming to visit Committee of European and External Relations. Agreed that Ross should raise questions regarding the situation regarding the Kurds.

b) Kobane Day – it was noted that an event was being organised in Glasgow on 1 November to commemorate Kobane day.

10. Date of next meeting

Mid December- date to be confirmed.