



Kurdish National Congress of North America

P.O. Box 90823, Nashville, TN 37209

www.kncna.org

Mrs. Hillary Clinton, Secretary
U. S. State Department
2201 C Street Northwest
Washington, DC 20520-0099

March 5, 2010

Honorable Secretary Clinton:

The U. S. and other democratic nations' attempt to find a peaceful political solution to the Kurdish plight in Turkey should have a multi-dimension approach including political, cultural, and humanitarian aspects on the part of politicians, professionals, and human rights activists. Westerners, including unofficial American organizations and citizens, have been involved in helping the Kurds for decades to reach a peaceable conclusion with the central governments in Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey.

Mr. Ralph Fertig, a U. S. citizen and human rights activist, is one of the many who had been active with the Kurds in Turkey to find a peaceful political solution to the Kurdish question. Mr. Fertig had been working with the Kurdish factions including the PKK to engage in dialogue and diplomacy. His involvement to draw a political solution to the Kurdish plight in Turkey has been used against him as if he was aiding a terrorist group.

On February 23, 2010, Mr. Fertig was tried in a federal court for allegedly aiding the PKK. The U. S. Patriot Act which was passed under George W. Bush, makes it a crime for a U. S. citizen to provide aid including "training, personnel, service, and expert advice or assistance." to an organization that is blacklisted by the U. S. State Department.

While punishing an American citizen for encouraging the PKK to work toward and find a peaceful solution to the Kurdish issue, it would be constructive to encourage the Turks to amend their Constitution—a Constitution in which all who hold Turkish citizenship are regarded as "Turks" and not "citizens of Turkey." According to this very myopic Constitution more than 20 million Kurds in Kurdistan-Turkey do not exist. The PKK is a product of this racist Constitution.

Nonetheless, the PKK has, occasionally, unilaterally ceased all sorts of hostile activities against the Turkish state and called for a political solution—and every time the PKK's call was rejected. Contrary to the Kurdish approach, the Turkish authorities have yet to take a significant step forward and create an environment in which a legal and moral solution to the Kurdish issue could be found. While Turkish public relations may say they have created a "Kurdish opening", this is more political sloganeering than a real legal solution.

Further, the peace between the government of the UK and the IRA was brokered by private citizens and groups using just such kinds of advice now declared 'illegal' under the Patriot Act. It seems counterproductive to punish groups or individuals who work for peace and democracy. It contradicts the very basis of American values.

Madam Secretary, Mr. Fertig's "expert advice" was to lay a ground on which the Turks and Kurds could find a way out of the cycle of fear and distrust, and seek out a more practical and feasible means to establish mutual trust which might lead to a peaceful coexistence. Mr. Fertig, as a true son of this great nation, has projected American values far and beyond the oceans and tried to help an oppressed people to realize their dream through democracy and diplomatic means. Therefore, we ask that his case be reviewed and the kinds of advice be more narrowly defined to exclude people of good will from prosecution. We are certain that his good-will approach will transcend and prevail over the allegations brought against him.

Sincerely yours,
Kirmanj Gundi
President