

# Oppose the pro-imperialist Kurdish nationalist coalition in Iran

Sosyalist E?itlik Partisi – Dördüncü Enternasyonal  
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The “Announcement statement of the coalition of political forces of Iranian Kurdistan,” issued on February 22, 2026, and signed by the Kurdistan Freedom Party (PAK), Kurdistan Freedom Life Party (PJAK), Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (PDKI), Khabat and Komala of the Toilers of Kurdistan, is a reactionary political document.

Notwithstanding its democratic phraseology, it represents yet another episode in the protracted and disastrous alignment of Kurdish bourgeois nationalist organizations with American imperialism—this time under conditions in which the United States is actively preparing to launch a devastating military assault on Iran that could escalate into a wider regional and even global conflagration.

The oppression of the Kurdish people, divided among four countries in the Middle East, and the violation of their basic democratic rights for decades are a byproduct of imperialist domination and aggression in the region. The perspective of Kurdish nationalists, who instead of opposing imperialism—the main culprit behind the dire situation in the Middle East—turn toward it, is politically extremely short-sighted and has completely failed.

The Sosyalist E?itlik Partisi, the Turkish section of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), categorically opposes the US preparations for a military onslaught on Iran—an oppressed country—and calls on workers throughout the Middle East and the world to mobilize on a socialist program to stop this imperialist aggression.

The bourgeois-clerical regime in Iran is organically incapable of providing a progressive response to imperialist aggression, or of meeting the social and democratic aspirations of the population. But the task of settling accounts with the Islamic Republic falls to the working class in Iran, which includes Persians, Kurds, Azeris, and other nationalities. This too is only made possible by adopting an international socialist and anti-imperialist program.

Washington never accepted the 1979 Iranian revolution that overthrew the US-backed regime of the Shah. It sees establishing full control over Iran—a country with vast natural resources and a critical geopolitical position—as necessary in order to dominate the Middle East and deprive China of a key partner.

This would require either the total surrender of Tehran or a regime-change war backed by imperialist powers, as occurred in Libya and Syria with devastating consequences. As the US prepares for a comprehensive air and missile war against Iran, Kurdish nationalist forces in the country have indicated their readiness to serve as Washington’s ground troops. Workers must vigorously oppose this reactionary initiative.

## The statement’s deliberate silence on the war threat

The coalition was announced as the United States deployed two carrier

strike groups—the USS Abraham Lincoln and the USS Gerald R. Ford—in the Mediterranean and Arabian Sea, with Trump publicly declaring that Iran had “10 to 15 days at most” to submit, and the Atlantic Council openly discussing three tiers of military assault: “Enforce,” “Degrade,” and “Remove”—the last involving the decapitation of Iran’s political and military leadership.

The US had already bombed Iranian nuclear sites at Fordow, Natanz, and Isfahan during “Operation Midnight Hammer” in June 2025. Hundreds of F-22s, F-35s, and F-16s are being repositioned across the region. CNN reported that the White House had been briefed that the military could be ready for an attack by last weekend.

Under these conditions, the coalition’s total silence on the threatened imperialist attack is not an omission—it amounts to tacit endorsement. The statement does not contain a single word opposing US military aggression against Iran, the naval buildup, or the devastating sanctions regime, or defending the sovereignty of the Iranian people against imperialist attack.

On the contrary, by framing the Islamic Republic as the sole enemy and calling for its “overthrow” at precisely the moment Washington is threatening to bomb the country, the coalition objectively places itself in the camp of US imperialism. Its call for regime-change echoes the language of Secretary of State Marco Rubio, the Atlantic Council, and the Trump administration itself. The Kurdish bourgeois nationalist parties are volunteering to serve, once again, as a political instrument of American military aggression.

## The destruction of Iran and its consequences

The coalition’s program dovetails with a broader imperialist strategy whose logical outcome is not the “liberation” of Kurdistan but the destruction and dismemberment of Iran as a unified state—the Balkanization of a nation of 90 million people.

Iran is an ethnically diverse country. Persians constitute roughly 61 percent of the population; the remainder includes Azeris (the largest minority, concentrated in the northwest), Kurds (predominantly in the west), Arabs (mainly in Khuzestan), Baloch (in the southeast), Lurs, Turkmen, and others.

Some strategists in Washington and Tel Aviv have long identified this ethnic composition as a “vulnerability” to be exploited. The Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD) has openly advocated exploiting Iran’s multi-ethnic makeup to fragment the state. Amid Israel’s military attack on Iran last June, The Jerusalem Post called for a “Middle East coalition for Iran’s partition” and proposed granting “security guarantees to Sunni, Kurdish, and Balochi minority regions willing to break away.”

What would the destruction of Iran produce? The answer is written in the experience of every country subjected to imperialist dismemberment

over the past three decades—Yugoslavia, Iraq, Libya, Syria. The breakup of Iran would potentially give rise to a patchwork of weak, ethnically defined statelets: a rump Persian state, an Azerbaijani entity in the northwest (pulled between Baku and Ankara), a Kurdish statelet in the west, an Arab entity in Khuzestan (sitting atop Iran’s principal oil reserves, and thus of immediate strategic interest to Washington and the Gulf monarchies), a Baloch entity in the southeast (straddling the Pakistani border and the approaches to the Indian Ocean), and various other fragments.

Not one of these successor states would be genuinely independent. Each would be, in all but name, a semi-colony of one or another imperialist power or regional ally. A Kurdish statelet, landlocked and surrounded by hostile neighbors (Turkey, a rump Iran, and Arab-dominated territories), would be entirely dependent on the patronage of the United States or Israel for its survival—just as the Kurdistan Regional Government in Iraq has been, serving as an instrument of US policy while its population remains mired in poverty and its politics dominated by corrupt bourgeois-tribal cliques.

An Azerbaijani entity would become a satellite of Turkey or a prize in the competition between Ankara, Moscow, and Western oil interests. An Arab entity in Khuzestan—controlling a significant portion of the world’s proven oil reserves—would immediately become a zone of imperialist plunder, contested by the Gulf monarchies, the US, and global energy corporations. A Baloch entity would become a new front in the great-power struggle over the Indian Ocean, the Strait of Hormuz, and the land routes connecting Central Asia to the sea.

The human consequences would be catastrophic. Iran’s ethnic groups are not neatly separated into distinct territorial zones. Millions of Azerbaijanis live in Tehran; Kurds, Lurs, and Persians are interspersed across western Iran; Arabs and Persians coexist in Khuzestan. Any attempt to draw ethnic borders would produce mass displacement, ethnic cleansing, and civil war on a scale dwarfing even the Yugoslav catastrophe. The experience of Iraq after 2003—where the imperialist destruction of the centralized state unleashed sectarian warfare that killed hundreds of thousands—would be repeated on a vastly larger and more explosive scale.

This is the objective content of the coalition’s program. By calling for the overthrow of the Islamic Republic in alignment with US war aims, and by demanding a “national and democratic entity based on the political will of the Kurdish nation in Iranian Kurdistan,” the coalition is providing a democratic fig leaf for the carve-up of Iran by imperialism and its regional proxies.

### **The bankruptcy of bourgeois nationalism in the epoch of imperialism**

The coalition statement is the latest confirmation of the ICFI’s longstanding analysis of the historical bankruptcy of bourgeois nationalism. As we have explained, the character of national movements has undergone a fundamental transformation since the period in which Vladimir Lenin advocated the right to self-determination.

In the early twentieth century, national movements in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East were directed, however imperfectly, against imperialist domination and the legacy of feudal backwardness. “India” and “China” were political concepts that implied the progressive unification of diverse peoples across vast territories, opening up prospects for economic and cultural progress. The primary concern of the Marxist movement in the national question has been the interests of the international unity of the working class and the struggle for socialism.

The new form of nationalism that has proliferated since the dissolution

of the Soviet Union and the collapse of the post-colonial national-developmental projects is of an entirely different character. As the ICFI explained in its 1994 statement *Marxism, Opportunism and the Balkan Crisis*: “[T]hese new ethnocentric movements seek the Balkanization of existing states. Rather than proposing to create a home market, they desire more direct economic ties with imperialism and globally mobile capital. The ‘right to self-determination’ is invoked as a means of advancing the interests of small sections of the local bourgeoisie.”

In its 1998 statement *Globalization and the International Working Class*, the ICFI further clarified:

In India and China, the national movement posed the progressive task of unifying disparate peoples in a common struggle against imperialism—a task which proved unrealizable under the leadership of the national bourgeoisie. This new form of nationalism promotes separatism along ethnic, linguistic, and religious lines, with the aim of dividing up existing states for the benefit of local exploiters. Such movements have nothing to do with a struggle against imperialism, nor do they in any sense embody the democratic aspirations of the masses of the oppressed. They serve to divide the working class and divert the class struggle into ethno-communal warfare.

The Kurdish bourgeois nationalist movements in Iran and across the Middle East fall squarely within this latter category. Their history in the 20th and 21st centuries proves this. Kurdish nationalist leaderships have, at various points, sought alliances with the CIA, Israel, the Shah of Iran, the Moscow Stalinist bureaucracy, and successive US administrations.

In Iraq, the parties of Talabani and Barzani served opposing sides in the Iran-Iraq war, functioned as instruments of the 2003 US invasion, and subsequently presided over the Kurdistan Regional Government—a corrupt statelet dependent on US and Turkish patronage.

In Syria, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), sister organization of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK), served as a US proxy force, participated in the destruction of Raqqa, and were then abandoned by Washington when strategic calculations shifted—only to face assault by the US-backed Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) regime in 2026.

PJAK, a member of this new Iranian Kurdish coalition and an affiliate of the PKK, belongs to a movement whose imprisoned leader, Abdullah Öcalan, is now negotiating with the Turkish state in a deal the ICFI has identified as a “peace” between the Turkish and Kurdish bourgeoisies, under the auspices of the US and other imperialist powers, against the working people of the Middle East.

The PDKI’s ongoing diplomatic courtship of Western parliamentary forces—meetings with Belgian parties, participation in Western-sponsored seminars—underscores the coalition’s class orientation. These are not activities aimed at mobilizing the Kurdish or Iranian working class. They are appeals to the very imperialist powers whose wars have devastated the Middle East for over three decades.

### **The global implications: Balkanization as imperialist strategy**

The principle advanced by the Kurdish coalition—that ethnically defined populations have the right to carve out their own states, with the assistance of imperialist powers, from existing multi-ethnic countries—is one with world-historical implications. It is not an abstract democratic principle but a weapon in the arsenal of imperialism, and its application extends far

beyond Iran, including to China and Russia, which are particularly targeted by US-led world imperialism.

China is home to 56 recognized ethnic groups. The Han majority constitutes approximately 91 percent of the population, but the remaining minorities—Uyghurs, Tibetans, Mongols, Hui, Zhuang, and dozens of others—inhabit vast, strategically critical territories. Xinjiang alone, home to approximately 12 million Uyghurs, borders Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India.

As the geo-strategist Robert D. Kaplan has openly discussed, the fomenting of ethnic separatism in Xinjiang, Tibet, and Inner Mongolia is a linchpin of US strategy for destabilizing and breaking up China. Uyghur separatists have received training in Syria and Iraq. The logic of the Kurdish coalition's program—ethnic self-determination backed by imperialist powers—applied to China would mean the dismemberment of a nation of 1.4 billion people, the transformation of Central Asia into a zone of permanent warfare, and a catastrophic escalation toward nuclear conflict between the US and China.

As for Russia, it comprises over 185 ethnic groups across a territory spanning eleven time zones. The North Caucasus (Chechens, Dagestanis, Ingush), the Volga region (Tatars, Bashkirs), and Siberia all contain distinct ethnic populations. US strategists have long contemplated the fragmentation of Russia along ethnic and regional lines. American geo-strategist Zbigniew Brzezinski's Grand Chessboard treated the "Eurasian Balkans" as the decisive arena for US global hegemony. The wars in Chechnya, the "color revolutions" in Georgia and Ukraine, and the ongoing NATO proxy war in Ukraine are all elements of a strategy aimed, ultimately, at reducing Russia to a series of semi-colonies open to imperialist plunder.

The ICFI has always defended the democratic rights of oppressed peoples, including the Kurds, and has opposed military repression—whether by the Islamic Republic, the Turkish state, or any other government. But the ICFI insists, based on the entire historical experience of the 20th and 21st centuries, that the invocation of "self-determination" by bourgeois nationalist movements operating in alliance with imperialist powers is not a democratic demand but a reactionary tool for the fragmentation of existing states, the subjugation of their populations, and the advancement of imperialist geopolitical interests.

### **Oppose bourgeois nationalism and fight for socialist internationalism**

The coalition statement speaks of "the people," "the nation," and "political forces" as undifferentiated categories. There is no mention whatsoever of the working class, of class exploitation, of capitalism, of imperialism, of land reform, of nationalization, of workers' power, or of socialism. The program is one of bourgeois democracy within the framework of the existing capitalist order: "free elections," "democratic governance," a "secular political system." These formulations correspond to the interests of a Kurdish bourgeois and petty-bourgeois layer that seeks to negotiate its own share of political power—or, failing that, to establish its own capitalist statelet under imperialist patronage.

The coalition includes parties spanning a wide ideological range—from the PDKI (a Socialist International member, social democratic) to PJAK (affiliated with the PKK, which declared itself "democratic socialist") to more conservative nationalist formations—united on a lowest-common-denominator program that is devoid of any class content. This is a bloc that seeks to subordinate working-class interests to bourgeois nationalism and, through it, to imperialism.

The genuine defense of the Kurdish people—against the Islamic Republic's repression, against Turkish military aggression, against the

new Syrian regime, against imperialist war—requires a political perspective that the bourgeois nationalist coalition is organically incapable of providing. It demands the independent mobilization of the working class of all nationalities—Kurdish, Persian, Turkish, Azerbaijani, Arab, Baloch, and Jewish—on an international socialist program.

Such a program must be based on the theory of permanent revolution elaborated by Leon Trotsky, co-leader of the October Revolution in 1917, irreconcilable opponent of Stalinism and the founder of the Fourth International in 1938. The theory explains that accomplishing democratic and anti-imperialist tasks requires the working class, as the leader of the oppressed masses, to seize power and expand the socialist revolution on an international scale.

The Kurdish question, which spans Iran, Iraq, Turkey, and Syria, cannot be resolved within the framework of existing capitalist nation-states, much less through alliances with the imperialist powers that drew those borders in the first place. The solution lies not in the creation of new, weak, dependent capitalist statelets—which would inevitably become pawns in the great-power struggle for control of the Middle East—but in the revolutionary unification of the working class across all national and ethnic divisions, fighting for a Socialist Federation of the Middle East.

This requires, above all, the building of sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International in Iran, Turkey, and across the region. Only through the overthrow of capitalism—the Islamic Republic, the Kurdish bourgeois leaderships, the Turkish state, the Gulf monarchies, the Zionist State of Israel, and the imperialist powers that stand behind them all—can the democratic and social aspirations of the Kurdish people, and of all the oppressed peoples of the Middle East, be realized. The success of this struggle depends on workers in the Middle East forging a revolutionary class unity with workers in the US, Europe, and the rest of the world.

The newly formed Kurdish nationalist coalition in Iran and its statement, far from advancing this struggle, stand against it. Issued at the very moment that American imperialism is preparing to rain destruction on Iran, it aligns the Kurdish movement with the war drive and offers the democratic rights of the Kurdish people as a justification for imperialist aggression. It is one more expression of the political bankruptcy that the ICFI has identified and opposed for decades: the transformation of bourgeois nationalism from a historically limited but once partially progressive force into an open instrument of imperialist reaction. The working class must draw the necessary conclusions and turn to the program of world socialist revolution.



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