



## **A FREE NATION NEEDS TO BE RESILIENT. TURKMENS HAVE TWO CHOICE: BE ENSLAVED OR RESIST**

**Ershad Salihi**



Erşat Salihi was born in Kirkuk, Musalla District in 1959, where he completed his primary and secondary education. In 1978, Mr. Salihi started his BA at the Faculty of Science in Baghdad. In 1979, he was arrested and sentenced for 10 years with the charge of "taking part in the Turkmen National Movements". Following the end of Saddam's rule, in 2003, he was appointed as the head of the Musalla bureau of the Iraqi Turkmen Front. Between 2004 and 2008, he served as the Syria Representative of the Iraqi Turkmen Front in Syria. In 2008, following the congress of the Iraqi Turkmen Front, he became the provincial head of the Iraqi Turkmen Front in Kirkuk. Mr. Salihi was elected as an MP from Kirkuk in the Iraqi general elections on March, 2, 2010 and also serves as the head of the Iraqi Turkmen Front since May 2011. He was re-elected as an MP of Kirkuk in the general election held in April 2014.

**ORSAM: The central government issue in Baghdad has come into prominence recently. It has also been seen that Turkmens have not taken place in the technocrat government with the recent change made by Prime Minister Haydar El-Abadi. Could you tell us the political developments in Baghdad and evaluate Turkmens' position?**

**Ershad Salihi:** The tension in Iraq today is not an ordinary tension. Politics on a specific plan has been implemented. Before these experiences, a constitution was made and a government was established in the environment of the tension in 2003. As a result of the establishment of this government, firstly a provisional constitution, then a permanent constitution has come into effect. However, this constitution has not included the rights regarding Turkmens in the desired way. As it can also be seen in the history of nations, Turkmens do not have to gain their rights in a short period. It is necessary to fight for it. Turkmens have achieved many things throughout their history. If the policies implemented towards Iraqi Turkmens had been implemented towards any other nation, that nation would have disappeared. Iraqi Turkmens have protected their

history, society, literature, and administration throughout a century. However, after 2003, a new process has begun and Turkmens started to live in harsher conditions. The governments in Baghdad have not been successful in this process. The goal of every political party is to form a government and do something for their people. But the Baghdad government has failed in this regard.

Recently, Baghdad administration has implemented a different policy towards Turkey. There was an agreement between Turkmens and Baghdad, and the 140<sup>th</sup> article of the constitution was about Turkmen geography. There is a backstage of these incidents. Both neighboring countries of Iraq and other powers have caused trouble in the region. Syria and Iraq are the countries that have been affected mostly by these conflicts. The emergence of ISIS, however, has changed the region totally, and ISIS has entered the region as a project. The Baghdad administration should not have allowed ISIS to enter the region, but the government has failed. Governments failed continuously after 2003, and they have failed more after 2010.

After 2014, Turkmens' rights have been restricted further, and they have

taken place in neither local administration nor Baghdad administration. At the group meeting, the prime minister was asked whether a ministry would be given to Turkmen, and the answer was positive. But, there is no Turkmen name on the list, and on the second list the designated minister has been chosen without will of public. The prime minister has a problem with Turkmen, and he has implemented a rigid policy towards Turkmen since the government was established.

**What is the reason for these policies? Why have Turkmen been given a hard time? It is clear that many people in Iraq have suffered, but since 2003, Turkmen have been the most injured party. In this region Kurds, Sunni Arabs and Shia Arabs have an effect on Turkmen geography and culture. Each of them is considered as different group in Iraqi political system, and there is a Turkmen presence between these parties. Why is there a negative campaign against Turkmen?**

It is obvious that there is a game on Turkmen. Because on the world platform, the policy regarding Iraq and the incident resulting from the policy regarding Iraq's fragmentation start from Turkmen and religious

minorities. Iraq's unity is provided by Turkmen. Especially the area where Turkmen are settled is the area between Sunni Arabs and Kurds. This area is called conflict area. As long as Turkmen have lived in this area, they have protected Iraq's territorial integrity. If Turkmen are no longer settled in this area, Iraq will start dissolving. Besides, there are also religious minorities, such as Christians and Yezidis in the region. When ISIS emerged it did not attack Shias, Kurds or Sunnis in the beginning. It attacked Turkmen first. Then it attacked Yezidis in Sinjar Mountain, and attacked Kurds. But, it let Christians leave Mosul. This is a basic policy and Western countries also know this. It began in 2004. Bombing of churches, operation in Tal Afar also happened in 2004. Both incidents are interrelated. We should not forget Turkey here because Turkey also has an effect on these incidents. Turkey's March resolution has always been a problem. We have been considered on the side of Turkey by Iraqi ministers and by other powers. We are citizens of Iraq, we have protected Iraq's integrity, we have been more royalist than the king and after this was our goal. If Iraq's territorial integrity get into danger, Turkmen will be

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the most affected party. There should be projects on this issue. If a free nation has a will it should stand on. We have options. You either become slave or resist. Running away is not a solution. If you run away you save just yourself, but generations should be saved. It is not a solution to leave Turkmen region or Kirkuk. The solution should be collective. This is Turkmen politicians' part. Turkey should also do its part.

**It does not seem like Turkmen will be given any ministerial position. How will you, as both Iraqi Turkmen Front and Turkmen, position yourself, if you are not given any ministry.**

As Iraqi Turkmen Front, we have some decisions.

Especially based on the decisions of executive committee of the Iraqi Turkmen Front, if there is no Turkmen minister in any council of ministers, they won't vote, approve, and participate in sessions. Haydar El-Abadi participated in the last session, and in that session only two or three ministries were given. We asked whether Turkmen will be given ministries, but we were not given an answer. As nine Turkmen representatives, we collected signatures and gave it to the prime minister. We expressed our demand for a ministerial post for Turkmen, and we demanded decisions will be taken that they run from different lists.

Regarding Turkmen issue, we act as the Front. We are not in the Sunni bloc. In

the election process we went to the election together only with Muttahidun list in a few regions. Even the names of three representatives in the parliament from Iraqi Turkmen Front are separated on our signature list. The names of groups are separated. Nobody has the right to associate us with other groups. We take our own decisions. We suggest other representatives in the same way. If Turkmen are not given a ministry in this council of ministers by Haydar El-Abadi, we won't participate that session. We have been notified that the assembly will be convened in the upcoming days. The problems occurred in the assembly, due to the protests. We explained that we won't participate in parliament and boycott it if they see us only as numbers who approve the ministers when the council of ministers issue will be discussed in the next sessions. If the Turkmen will not be given ministry they will boycott only the sessions in which the council of ministers are discussed. I wish all Turkmen representatives have the same attitude for bringing ministry issue in the agenda.

**The critical issue here is that there will be a Turkmen minister, but will this minister be elected by the**

**nine representatives you mentioned before?**

We wanted to elect the minister ourselves but this demand was not accepted. If it was accepted, we, nine representatives, could agree on it. The Abadi administration has brought a minister who is away from Turkmen representatives and close to themselves, and this is a technocratic approach. The Abadi administration should have done this according to expertise. Haydar El-Abadi has done this also to Sadr group, and this group expressed that they will react to it, through demonstrations. He is doing the same thing to Turkmen. Abadi does not want a Turkmen minister, but a Turkmen minister is very important for us because we do not have the chance of having more than one minister. The coming minister should take responsibility on behalf of us. If Abadi assigns someone as a Turkmen minister, who is technocrat, who is from university or who has nothing to do with politics, this will not be beneficial for us, and Turkmen representatives won't recognize this minister. People inculcate representatives, not ministers. Representatives do not own anything. Ministers have the duties like appointment, money and authority. Representatives are in a position between

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lawyers, public and ministers, and they are responsible to people. When a Turkmen has a demand he wouldn't go to the minister; he would go to the representative who has 40-60 thousand votes. People see you on the field; therefore, we should appoint the minister. We can present ten different names, and Abadi can choose one among these ten people. This is what is reasonable. We, Turkmen representatives, agreed on this issue. Who will go to Council of Ministers should know politics well. If the coming minister is a technocrat and an ordinary person, he cannot represent us. How can he demand our right, if he does not know Article 140, if he does not know the situation of Turkmen lands in Saddam

period, if he does not know law of Turkmen rights or the issue 20 years ago? This is a risky situation for us. Thus, there is a tension between us and Abadi. We expect that the other Turkmen representatives boycott a meeting if there is no Turkmen minister in that meeting.

**I have two questions. Firstly, if Abadi does not assign a Turkmen minister for Council of Ministers, what is your alternative? You are saying that you won't attend the meetings, but then representation of Turkmen in Baghdad will end completely. Secondly, Abadi, in any case, does not want a name from you but if he assign a Turkmen minister to Council of**



**Ministers, isn't it better than nothing? Would you support this minister?**

Yes we would. If Abadi assigns a Turkmen minister without asking us, we would support that minister, but on one condition. That minister should act in accordance with Turkmen representatives. If the coming minister do not defend Turkmen rights, I will call him to account in the parliament. If Haidar El Abadi himself assign a Turkmen as a minister, we recognize him for this time and support him, but he should be in contact with us. When people tell us their problems we should be able to report him those problems so he would present these problems to parliament. It is unfair that Turkmens are only wanted to participate in the parliament in order to provide the number that is required for the approval of Council of Ministers. I will complete the number for Abadi. Abadi wants everyone to go on until gathering of Council of Ministers and oath-taking ceremony. However, this is not our concern, and I do not want to attend in the ceremony and become a witness. I do not attend the session for testimony. I can attend everything in the next processes. If there is a Turkmen minister from political bodies in Haydar El Abadi government, it will

be good. But, if there is not, we won't raise hand in those sessions.

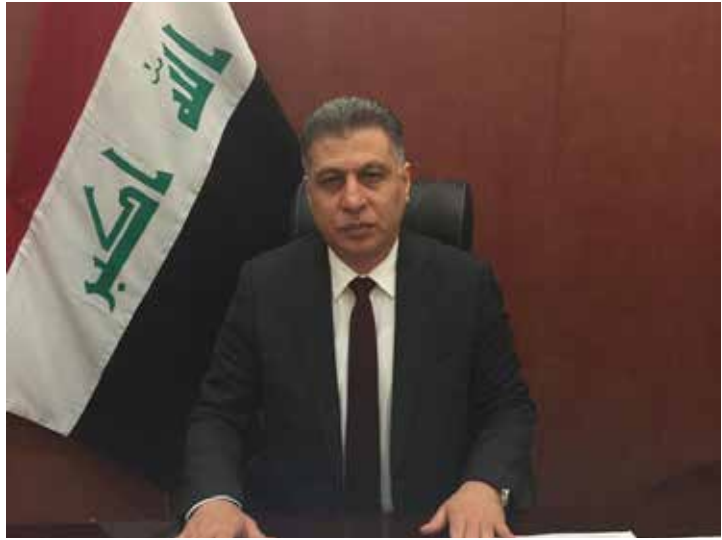
**Is there any specific ministry you want?**

Turkmens have capability to take part in every ministry. Let our people know that we do not want a ministry for ourselves. Our duty is in the assembly, in the parliament. There are individuals, who are knowledgeable about agriculture, education, health, among our people. On whatever field they want a name from us we are ready to give a name on this field. If they do not want to do that, then we can conclude that they are ill-intentioned.

**Turkmens, in the current situation, have had to struggle with deeper problems especially after the ISIS's emergence. After post-ISIS process what is the latest situation in terms of Turkmen geography.**

The tension in the Middle East and new Sykes-Picot are mostly happening in the Turkmen regions. Regions of Azaz, Cobanbey, Bayirbucak and Turkmen Mountain are a barrier that prevents implementing Kurdish corridor in Syria. There is a demand by someone to eliminate these barriers. For example, Tel Abyad is similar to Tal Afar. Tal Afar is a distant town on Iraqi territory, and

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Tel Abyad is a distant town on Syria Turkmen territory. There are Turkmen at the center of it and there are Arabs around it. ISIS has come to this region. When ISIS came, Turkmen have gone to Turkey, and Arabs have gone to Raqqa. Now America is hitting this region. PYD, on the other hand, is advancing on ground. Because PYD is advancing and saving this region, it lays claims to the region. Similar to Bashir. They have rescued wherever they wanted. Today, armament is as important as economy. Who has the arms has the power. This is a new practice. In this regard, Tel Abyad blatantly came under the rule of PYD. There is a Kobani incident and a corridor there. The incidents in Syria also has been happening on Turkmen geography. Syria Turkmen

has been in a worse situation than Iraqi Turkmen. Iraqi Turkmen's positions, parties, institutions, organizations, literature, ceremonies and music are documented to large extent. Syria Turkmen are more assimilated, and they are mostly under the effect of Baas Party. If Baas Party wants they can kill a Syria Turkmen. The same Baas Part killed us, killed Tuz Khurmatu, killed Taza Khurmatu. At the same time, young people coming from Turkmen region are on the side of Baas Party and fighting against Turkmen. This is a very dangerous situation, and it can turn Turkmen against each other. Turkmen should be conscious, Turkmen politicians should be careful and they should not take part in this game. For this reason, these incidents happened in

Turkmen regions in Syria and Iraq. We shouldn't surrender immediately in the regions we've lost. Today, in Diyala, some of the regions, such as Celevle, where Turkmen live, have been seized by peshmerga, while some of them have been seized by Hashd al-Shaabi or Baghdad administration. How will there an agreement between them and who will take Karatepe? A kind of agreement has emerged here. Then we can understand that ISIS is a project and it has come and changed many factors. Tuz Khurmatu will follow Diala. Tuz Khurmatu is even more important than Kirkuk for Turkmen. Each of our regions has different importance, but Tuz Khurmatu is actually a key point. Recently some of Turkmen has come to power and got stronger over there after rescue of Amirli, but Kurds did not accept them. They have created problems in that region. Today, there are problems between Kurds and Turks.

**This is a very significant point. There are parties that want to spread this issue and the conflict to other towns. Today, Turkmen are resisting in Tuz Khurmatu , but they are being ignored and other identities are tried to be presented. This is one of**

**the most dangerous points in terms of Turkmen. As you said before, Turkmen should be open-eyed, and where Turkmen should be on the alert most is Tuz Khurmatu. Tuz Khurmatu is a Turkmen settlement, and there is an attack against Turkmen here. There is no attack against any other identity or a group. As you mentioned, it is possible to say that Tuz Khurmatu is a key point. If Turkmen identity in Tuz Khurmat is not protected, all Turkmen are responsible for it. You cannot protect either Kirkuk or Turkmen identity to Tal Afar. Therefore, it is important to emphasize it. There is an attack against Turkmen in Tuz Khurmatu, and the issue in Tuz Khurmatu is about nothing but eliminating Turkmen. Since 2004, Tuz Khurmatu has suffered due to Turkmen identity. Turkmen have tried to resist there. Al-Qaeda came before ISIS, and there were many attacks to Ali Hasim Muhtaroglu. I think that this issue is about eliminating Turkmen. What is your opinion on this issue?**

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There were explosions in the *maqam* (a shrine revered by the Turkmen) generally in 2004 in Tuz Khurmatu. That *maqam* was a Turkmen *maqam*; it cannot be treated as a sectarian *maqam*. For Turkmen people the *maqam* in Tuz Khurmatu is sacred, and they visit there. Turkmen have repaired that *maqam*. After two days there was another explosion in that *maqam*. There were no other explosions somewhere else. As a result, Iraqi Turkmen Front marched there. Ali Hasim Muhtaroglu got injured there and seven people fell martyr. After this, another march was conducted and 6 people fell martyr. Kirkuk helped in the events in Tuz Khurmatu, and we managed to unify. The

game is here and Turkmen should have known that. In Tuz Khurmatu Turkmen power or Hashd al-Shaabi, regardless of who, can defend themselves. Turkmen should have questioned why PKK is in Tuz Khurmatu. PKK is fighting against ISIS, but why is it hitting Turkmen? Who told PKK to hit Turkmen? Why did PKK cooperate with peshmerga and want people of Tuz Khurmatu to fall to the detriment of Turkmen? There is a game on your geography, not on your sect. Nobody can take your sect away. It is quite difficult to take a nation's religion or sect away. It is difficult to change the sect of a person who is Shia, but it is easier to take their territory. The war

in Tuz Khurmatu was on territory, geography. There was 2004 explosion in Tuz Khurmatu and since then almost 2000 houses have been bombed. These are not new for Tuz Khurmatu. Turkmens should find out who benefits from these. One of our most important figures died over there. There were demonstrations in Tuz Khurmatu. Late Ali Hasim and Ahmet Koca went there and then there was an explosion. This was thought-provoking. What is there? Why did these incidents happen? Why are people from Turkmen Front killed? Why did they kill Munir Kafili in Kirkuk? Why did they kill Yavuz Efendi in Mosul? Why did they kill student union representative Sadik Selvi there? Why did they explode house of Iraqi Turkmen Front president just after one week he became president? Why did they hit the houses of Front presidents before me, and lay mines on their way. Why specifically Turkmen Front? It means that someone has specific goals. The incidents in Tuz Khurmatu are not ordinary incidents. We have three representatives in Tuz Khurmatu, but district governorate is under control of Kurds. They did not have even one representative but they have the control of administration. We

disapprove of the agreements made in Tuz Khurmatu. After the agreements some attacks have been conducted against Iraqi Turkmen Front, but our guards defended well. As Iraqi Turkmen Front, our office in Tuz Khurmatu is working with reason. We do not want to become a tool for someone and we suggest others to act in the same way. There are Yengijah and Bastamli near Tuz Khurmatu. ISIS entered Yengijah, and some groups from Yengijah moved in concert with ISIS. Is all Yengijah ISIS? Is all Bastamli ISIS? Bastamli has been there since Ottoman period. We should all be together and send people to Yengijah and Bastamli. But we do not want blood shedders here. The blood shedders do not have place in either Yengijah, Bastamli, Tuz Khurmatu or Kirkuk. If they join us they will kill us. In Yengijah there are rational tribes other than ISIS; there are good people. It is necessary to make people come back. Otherwise, those people collaborate with other nations and move against you. This is not in favor of us. They want to do that. They should take lessons from Tuz Khurmatu, Tal Afar and Yengijah. Tal Afar is the most important place for us. There are nearly four hundred thousand Turkmens in Tal Afar. If

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there are many people with Turkmen identity card and if you have a large population, you can demand rights from government. If I decrease the population from 3 million to half million, and make people migrate to Ankara streets or Kerbela, people will become miserable. We should look at Tuz Khurmatu, Kirkuk, Bashir, DIALA and Tal Afar. There are tribes with different sects in Tal Afar, and they live in a better way. Setting tribes against each other, they pit brother against brother. Now some of them are under control of ISIS, some of them in Yahyava camp in Kirkuk, some of them are in Istanbul or Ankara, and some of them are in the south, in Kerbela or Najaf. Those in the south are feeling very rejected. Those who are from Tal Afar

were lords or landowners. They are not accustomed to this situation, and they were not people who are begging. The landlords of Tal Afar were always wealthy, but now they become poor. The reason for this is brother fight, sect fight. I see that some Turkmen politicians are also doing the same thing, they are playing with fire. If the sectarian dispute occurs among Turkmens we will be destroyed. In order to become representative Turkmen politicians should not bargain on this issue; they cannot be representative or minister in this way. We should have taken lesson from Sunnis. After the Ottoman period Sunnis dominated Iraq for a century. Sunnis fell out with each other, and now there is no Sunni in Iraq. Sunnis are

now recovering, but there are no people. Many people from established families died, their 15-16 years old daughters came into others' hands. Turkmen politicians should not cause Shia-Sunni conflict. We should prevent fragmentation of this nation. We should unite under the word Turkmen. You can talk with people from Tal Afar in Najaf and Kerbela about what happened there. The police department in Tal Afar was in control of a Turkmen tribe. Baghdad dismissed the man who was the head of police department, and assigned another man who has a different sect. The man who is in charge began to cause sectarian fights in the region, and then the Americans started to hit Tal Afar, and the people reacted. Baghdad wanted to be in police department. We employ a Turkmen, even if he is Christian, if he serves well. We are two representatives in Kirkuk, but we do not look at each other's sects. We have offices in Kirkuk but we do not look at employers' sects. We only look at whether they are Turkmen. I hope Turkmen politicians do not make sectarian discrimination. Turkey came to help for us in these incidents. Turkey accepted us for the treatment of the injured.

**Therefore it is very significant to hear these first hand. We also want to hear the situation of Tuz Khurmatu and operation in Bashir from you. Two operations have been conducted; unfortunately they conducted these operations by deceiving Turkmen. They pushed Turkmen towards ISIS, and finally having an attitude towards implementing of specific program and projects, there have been airstrikes and America's air operations with the condition of entrance of peshmerga. Bashir could be saved in this way. What is next? What is the future of Turkmen geography? Almost everything has been destroyed in Bashir. There are still serious issues in Tuz Khurmatu. Where is Turkmen geography going?**

I congratulate Turkmen forces in Hashd al-Shaabi in the operation of Bashir. What they have done is very significant. Many people died here, and many people got injured. Representing Iraqi Turkmen Front in the best way, our brother Yilmaz who is the leader and the commander of Ebu Sayr, and the others resisted, and fought several times. Iraqi Turkmen Front in Bashir

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went to war. We allowed them to fight and they did. I congratulate them. They said “If peshmerga do not attack, we do not give air support”. Peshmerga attacked from one side, there were forces brought from south. Firkat El-Abbas Kitaliye came. Beside Kurds and Arabs there were also Turkmen brigades. This town was liberated in the best way. This was conducted according to a specific goal. Bashir is important for us as a territory, because we consider it as our rib. We can always be under threat there. After Saddam period, as Iraqi Turkmen Force, we have built 100 houses there in order to bring back people of Bashir. If we look at these incidents we can see that someone wants to weaken Turkmen geography. We

will overcome this, too. We have Tal Afar operation later, and the people in Tal Afar will always be supporting us. We have demanded force and weapons from government. If government gives us weapons we will take them, otherwise we will find weapons anyway. Having weapons is no more difficult. We can pay for weapons and save our territory. We have military volunteers from Tal Afar and Iraqi Turkmen Front. We have projects and strategies for the future of these regions.

**You mentioned that PKK is hitting Tuz Khurmatu. We see that the actors you mentioned are attacking Turkmens in Syria in the same way. This is used as a pretext on the ISIS issue as it**

was in Syria to eliminate Turkmens in the region by forcing them to migrate. Thus, it is very important that what is happening in these two countries should be realized, and Turkmens should protect their forces because Turkmen territory is being lost. The threat is common. We mentioned Kirkuk and Tuz Khurmatu. An operation has been conducted in another Turkmen territory which is in the north of last Bashir operation. Mosul operation is significant not only for Turkmens but also for fight against ISIS. Mosul is one of the places where the ISIS is most powerful, and it is considered as capital of the ISIS along with Raqqa. What is the situation regarding saving Mosul from ISIS? Furthermore, most of Turkmens had to leave Mosul and migrate. What is your opinion regarding returning of Turkmens, and saving Mosul from ISIS?

In the Saddam period, Baas Party executed a Turkmen from Tuz Khurmatu. Baas Party is the same Baas Party with Syria. Baas Party executed the Turkmen from Tuz Khurmatu by stating that "you are a member of idealist

party, you are a Turkish nationalist. At the same time, that Baas Party was imprisoning Turkmens in Syria, too. Turkmens should know this. The Baas Party here is Saddam Hussein, and in Syria it is Bashar Assad. The party is the same party. It means that the same person and same idea is targeting you. Although persons were different, the ideas were the same. In Syria, in Bayirbucak, Bashar Assad take Turkmens' territory. The Baas Party takes our territory in both Tuz Khurmatu and Bayirbucak, Turkmen Mountain. The Turkmens in Bayirbucak should stand with those in Tuz Khurmatu.

**You are arguing that the reason why Turkmens become target is not because of their sects but because they are Turkmen. The reason for that is Turkmen territory. In both territories Turkmens are only fighting for protecting their territory, homes, honors, and lives. There is no other secret agenda or political goal. The only goal is protecting Turkmen territory. Turkmens in towns are also trying to protect themselves.**

Both of them are same. I wish Turkmens from Tuz Khurmatu go to Turkmen

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Mountain and fight against Assad for Turkmen there; and in the same way, Turkmen from Turkmen Mountain fight against ISIS for their Turkmen brothers in Tuz Khurmatu. This geography is the same geography. However, there are some people among the youth who are deceived by money and driven to other ways. It should not be forgotten that we are living in the same geography and for this reason we should have the same consciousness. Now, the Mosul operations are on the agenda. As you know Americans have an agreement with Iraq government. Mosul is in a very important position. There are some projects for surrounding Mosul. There is an idea to establish a Christian town in Mosul. This, however, is not accepted by Kurds. Turkmen want Tal Afar to become a province. We want to protect Tuz Khurmatu for a long time. Yezidis, on the other hand, want Sinjar to become a province. Mosul is in a bad situation now. There should be a force there and these forces should work together to save that region. America, Turkey, Iraq forces, peshmerga forces, tribal forces and military volunteers should be organized to fight against ISIS. If Mosul is liberated

after fight against ISIS, Raqqa can also be liberated. If Raqqa cannot be saved, the threat for Iraqis will continue. The other forces should be in communication. What is important is saving Mosul. After that, meetings regarding the future of political situation after ISIS period should be conducted. We should get rid of ISIS first, and Iraq's economic and political power should be controlled by Iraqis again. Iraq oil should be in control of Iraqis. Other powers should not use, process, and sell our oil, and the pressure they create on Iraqis should be prevented. Turkmen people should also be realized this.

**Regarding the issue of liberation from ISIS, as you mentioned before, liberators are laying claim on the regions they saved. Liberation of Mosul from ISIS is very important. What is your expectation regarding what will happen after ISIS?**

We should underline that it will be a wrong attitude if any power save a region under occupation, and then declare that the region is now under their control. These claims are expressed by Kurds for Kirkuk. Kurds are arguing that they have fought for Kirkuk and now Kirkuk is theirs. It is forgotten that

Turkmens have been killed for a century. In 1924 massacre Turkmen were killed. In 1959 massacre were Turkmen or Arabs killed? In Saddam period Turkmen were killed in Altin Kopru massacre and Taza Khurmatu massacre. They have ignored that we have been killed for a century. It is not a reasonable approach that it becomes a problem when they are killed. You have weapons and you save your territory. You are able to do that thanks to weapons you take from central government or Western countries. If we have those weapons, we can fight, too. We have been given some weapons, and we liberated our territory, Bashir, with those weapons. If we had been given tanks and missiles, we would have controlled Iraq now. Moreover, our people died here, thus, if someone claims that they own here then I will reply that Anbar and Ramadi are ours. 50 people from Tal Afar were killed due to explosion there. This means that Tartar is ours. We can take all Tartar region and say that this region is Turkmen region. A large number of Turkmen were killed in Baiji. When I expressed this idea to Turkmen, everyone criticized me. What I told is happening now. I have to tell the truth. I do not deceive my people. Unfortunately,

our people keep away from politics. We need to follow politics. We need to question why America wanted Bashir to be saved by peshmerga forces. We need to know the reason for it. If we allow them to save Bashir, we cannot go there. We should save Bashir together.

**I want to ask you about Kirkuk Governor Najmaldin Karim's recent commentary. He was in America recently, and he made a statement there. I think that the statement made in America is very important. He said that Kirkuk has to be part of Kurdish region in the North after this process; it is about time. Previously, he argued that the independence referendum similar to that will be conducted in Kurdish region should also be conducted in Kirkuk, and he said that in the elections Kirkuk should be included in Kurdish region. It can be seen that after ISIS period Kurds are increasing their dominance in Kirkuk. A project to make Kirkuk a part of Kurdish region has begun to come onto the agenda. Najmaldin Karim's last commentary is the most significant indicator of this. What would you**

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**say on this issue as you are one of the most important parts on this issue?**

I would like Turkmen politicians to answer these kind of statements at first hand. Presidents of Turkmen parties and Turkmen representatives should also have taken responsibility. Sometimes giving an answer is very important. Unfortunately, we have seen that answers by officials from some parties were not enough. Some presidents of political parties did not mention these issues; they only published a notice through the behalf of press office. These notices were not enough. They should have spoken out. The reason why the governor made this statement is there is a competition between the KDP and PUK. At the same time the PUK has lost in Kurdish Parliament in Northern Iraq. In order to gain strength in the Parliament, the PUK wants Kirkuk to become part of Kurdish region. There is a competition between the two parties. As Turkmens, our strategy and project are evident. We have tactical, short-termed and long-termed projects. They claim that we do not have any strategy, but if we didn't have a strategy, we wouldn't continue. If we didn't have

a strategy, Iraq would be already fragmented. Our strategy has been for the integration of Iraq. We have protected Iraq much more than anyone else has done. Especially in these regions, if Iraq is divided in three parts, Turkmen administration will control their own region. People see this as a dream. However, they shouldn't see this as a dream. Kurds did not know that they would come where they are now 15 years ago, and nobody can know what will happen in the future. Balances are changing. Our people need to have resistance spirit. What governor said is a risky step. If he gives a message in this way, we perceive it in a different way. If he takes my territory by force this will be controversy. There are articles in the constitution. Based on these articles, we can reverse Kirkuk's demographic transformation. We accept only what Kirkuk's true face is. If any solution is brought after changing Kirkuk's demography, this will be in favor of Turkmens. Here, both Arabs and Christians should have clarified their response. For this reason, we are rejecting this kind of statements. There is an important issue here, and we see that ISIS is a project and it is acting in favor of someone. We understand that ISIS is beneficial for Kurds, and

harmful for Turkmens. Kurdish politicians should be aware of that, and they need to look at their regions. Is this the view of Erbil, view of Sulaimani or view of Germiyan region?

**What is Turkmens' expectation from Turkey?**

Our expectation from Turkey is more than they did for us. They supported us enough in humanitarian and health issues; hundreds of our people have treated here. But, this was not enough. We should have been more prepared for these situations. Iraq is an important place.

The security of Iraq also affects the security of Turkey. As an Iraqi citizen, I still want Iraq and Ankara to have good relations. The more Turkey is effective in Baghdad, the better our role becomes. The Turkmens have suffered due to the deterioration of relations. Thus, we can contribute to improving relations between Turkey and Iraq by being a bridge. Turkey should be very effective in this process, though.

**We wish you success on your efforts.**

*If Iraq is divided in three parts, Turkmen administration will control their own region. People see this as a dream. However, they shouldn't see this as a dream. Kurds did not know that they would come where they are now 15 years ago, and nobody can know what will happen in the future.*

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