

No Friends But the Mountains

For anyone with no understanding of what's happening to Kurds right now, here's a simplified history lesson.

Kurds have been living on the land they call home now for thousands of years. After WWI and the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the British and French promised Kurds they could continue to reside in those areas peacefully because they intended to create a country called **Kurdistan**. They went back on that promise and carved up the Kurdish homeland with the creation of some new countries, meaning that the **Kurdistan was split between Iraq, Iran, Turkey, and Syria**.

All four of those countries have persecuted their Kurdish populations ever since. Turkey has committed the worst atrocities during that time, and up until recently, the Kurdish language, Kurdish names, and more were all banned. Turkey even refuses to call the people Kurds, and refers to them as "**Mountain Turks**" - a slur designed to brand Kurdish people as barbaric and uneducated.

Thousands of Kurds lost their lives during the 80s and 90s fighting against their Turkish oppressions, and yet the situation barely improved.

During the first Gulf War, the US encouraged Kurds to rise up against Saddam Hussein, but then failed to protect them when they did, resulting in thousands being murdered with chemical weapons.

Cue the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

When the US, UK and other Western countries invaded Iraq, Kurds fought alongside the allies, and against Saddam's army. They managed to create an autonomous region in Iraq because of it. When ISIS began grabbing mass amounts of land in Iraq, the Kurds fought back with allied assistance and stamped them out.

When ISIS started taking land and murdering thousands in Syria, the Syrian President Assad ordered his army to leave the region and he left millions of Kurds there to die. They would have done too if it weren't for the assistance of coalition air strikes and weapons that allowed them to push ISIS back and carve out another autonomous region in their homeland.

That region is Rojava. The people there live under a system called Democratic Confederalism which is based on workers' rights, equality, feminism, and ecology. In principal, this version of democracy is far more democratic than any system used in a Western country today.

The Kurds didn't want to team up with the US in Syria, they just didn't want to die, and they were left with no option after being abandoned by Assad.

Now the US has abandoned the Kurds and left them to die too. They're no longer "useful" and heaven forbid America is seen to be assisting a people who don't bow to the international banking cartel, and are determined to live in a real democracy.

The US said it wanted to bring "democracy" to the Middle East, but not *THAT* sort of democracy.

Now, the Syrian Kurds facing an existential threat and the destruction of the fragile autonomy they have built, have been forced to cut a deal with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and his Russian backers to protect them from the Turkish attack.

Erdogan and Putin carved up the region in a pact that effectively cedes a chunk of formerly Kurdish-held territory, 75 miles wide and 20 miles deep, to Ankara and puts Russian and Turkish troops on the Kurds' borders. Their political and territorial losses put them in a drastically weaker position to negotiate any sort of autonomy in a future Syrian state.

At the same time, Assad and his Russian and Iranian backers have cemented control over much of Syria—a scenario U.S. officials fear will set the stage for an Iranian land bridge that stretches across Iraq and Syria to Israel's border.

And Turkey (the biggest oppressor of the Kurdish people, and the country that literally funded ISIS) has invaded their land with one of the largest armies in NATO with the intention of ethnic cleansing, genocide and freeing ISIS prisoners.

The Kurdish people just can't win. Every major global power uses them when it suits their agenda, and then they feed them to the wolves.

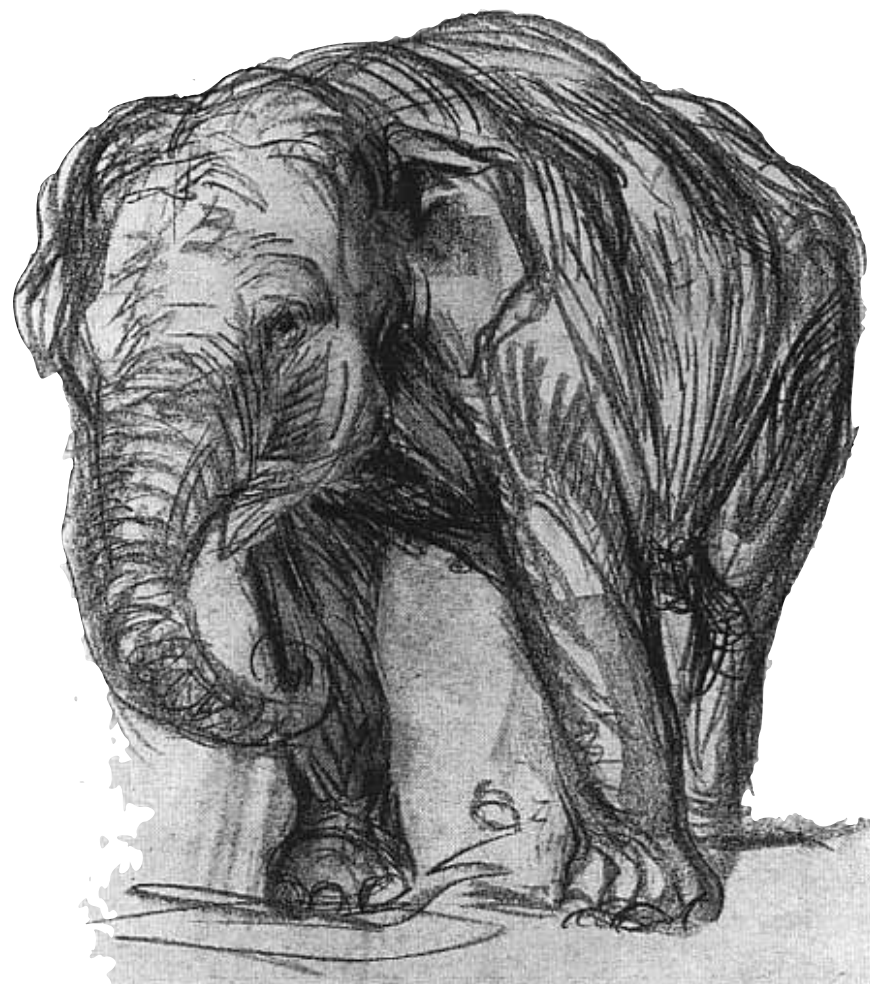
The US won't stand up for the Kurds. The Syrian Government won't stand up for them, and neither will Iran or Russia. That is why every single person with a heart reading this must raise their voice now!

There's an old Kurdish saying that goes: "**NO FRIENDS BUT THE MOUNTAINS**"

Please show our Kurdish brothers and sisters that isn't true. Do everything you can. I beg you.

- Lee Brickley @lee_brickley

*The musician and activist behind the album **Songs For Rojava**, dedicated to "freedom fighters around the world" with a special focus is directed towards the Rojava revolution. a self taught singer-songwriter, writer, activist and, anarcho-communist.*



A NEW WRINKLE IN SYRIA



President Trump has approved an expanded military mission to secure an expanse of oil fields across eastern Syria, locking hundreds of U.S. troops into a more complicated presence in Syria, despite the president's vow to get America out of the war. Under the new plan, troops would protect a large swath of land controlled by Syrian Kurdish fighters that stretches nearly 90 miles (150 kilometers) from Deir el-Zour to al-Hassakeh, but its exact size is still being determined.

Officials speaking on condition of anonymity said many details still have to be worked out. But, Trump's decision hands commanders a victory in their push to remain in the country to prevent any resurgence of the Islamic State group, counter Iran and partner with the Kurds, who battled IS alongside the U.S. for several years. **But it also forces lawyers in the Pentagon to craft orders for the troops that could see them firing on Syrian government or Russian fighters trying to take back oil facilities that sit within the sovereign nation of Syria.**

Sen. Tim Kaine, a Virginia Democrat, called the mission misguided.

"Risking the lives of our troops to guard oil rigs in eastern Syria is not only reckless, it's not legally authorized, President Trump betrayed our Kurdish allies that have fought alongside American soldiers in the fight to secure a future without ISIS - and instead moved our troops to protect oil rigs."

The Pentagon will not say how many forces will remain in Syria for the new mission. Other officials suggest the total number could be at least 800 troops, including

the roughly 200 who are at the al-Tanf garrison in southern Syria.

According to officials, lawyers are trying to hammer out details of the military order, which would make clear how far troops will be able to go to keep the oil in the Kurds' control.

The legal authority for U.S. troops going into Syria to fight Islamic State militants was based on the 2001 and 2002 **Authorizations for Use of Military Force** that said U.S. troops can use all necessary force against those involved in the Sept. 11 attacks on America and to prevent any future acts of international terrorism. So, legal experts say the U.S. may have grounds to use the **AUMF** to prevent the oil from falling into IS hands.

But protecting the oil from Syria government forces or other entities may be harder to defend.

"The U.S. is not at war with either Syria or Turkey, making the use of the AUMF a stretch," said Stephen Vladeck, a national security law professor at the University of Texas at Austin.

He added that while the U.S. Constitution bestows significant war powers on the president, those are generally meant to be about self-defense and for the collective defense of the country. Arguing that securing the oil is necessary for national security *"just strikes me as a bridge too far,"* he said.

Members of Congress, including Kaine, have also raised objections to the Trump administration using the **AUMF** as a basis for war against a sovereign government. That type of action, he and others have argued, required approval by Congress.

U.S. officials said the order approved by Trump does not include any mandate for the U.S. to take Syria's oil. Trump has said multiple times that the U.S. is **"keeping the oil."** But the White House and the Pentagon have so far been unable to explain what he means by that. Defense Secretary Mark Esper said Friday he **"interprets"** Trump's remarks to mean the military should deny IS access to the oil fields.

There were already a couple hundred U.S. troops around Deir el-Zour, and additional forces with armored vehicles, including Bradley infantry carriers, have begun moving in. Officials have said the total force there could grow to about 500.

Currently, the U.S.-backed Syrian Kurdish forces have controlled the oil, supported by a small contingent of U.S. troops. A quiet arrangement has existed between the Kurds and the Syrian government, whereby Damascus buys the surplus through middlemen in a smuggling operation that has continued despite political differences. The Kurdish-led administration sells crude oil to private refiners, who use primitive homemade refineries to process fuel and diesel and sell it back to the administration.

It's unclear how long that agreement may continue. And if some dispute arises, U.S. troops must have clear guidance on how to respond.

U.S. forces can use military force to protect themselves. If Syrian government troops try to retake a portion of an oil facility and U.S. troops are not nearby, it's unclear now how much force they could use if they aren't acting in self-defense.

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