

From Mahabad to Paris: How Kurdish Fate Is Still Decided Elsewhere

When International Diplomacy Chooses States Over Nations

For more than a century, Kurdish political aspirations have repeatedly collided with an international system designed to privilege recognized states over stateless nations. From the destruction of the Republic of Kurdistan in Mahabad [in 1946](#) to the diplomatic process centered in [Paris in 2026](#) concerning Syria, the pattern has remained strikingly consistent: Kurdish self-rule is tolerated only temporarily and discarded once it conflicts with regional and international agreements reached elsewhere.

Mahabad (1946): The First UN-Tested Kurdish Betrayal

When the United Nations adopted its [second-ever Security Council resolution on 30 January 1946](#), it established a precedent that would shape the Kurdish question for decades. UN Security Council Resolution 2 (1946) framed the Iranian crisis exclusively as a dispute between sovereign states, Iran and the Soviet Union, calling for negotiations while affirming Iran's territorial integrity. Kurdish self-governance in Mahabad was not mentioned.

At the time, the Republic of Kurdistan in Mahabad was a functioning political entity with its own administration, armed forces, education system, and leadership under Qazi Muhammad. The Kurdish cooperation with Soviet forces was tactical and defensive, driven by the need to shield Kurdish civilians from repression by Tehran. Nonetheless, the emerging postwar order prioritized state sovereignty over indigenous self-determination.

Once the Soviet Union withdrew under international pressure, Iranian forces reoccupied Mahabad. The republic was dismantled, and its leadership publicly executed. The international response was silence. Mahabad's fall demonstrated a core reality of the new world order: stateless nations had no standing, even when they governed themselves.

The Syrian Kurds and a Familiar Outcome

Nearly eight decades later, Kurdish forces once again found themselves indispensable to international security. Beginning in 2014, Kurdish-led forces became the most effective local partner in the U.S.-led campaign against ISIS. More than 15,000 Kurdish fighters were killed defending not only Kurdish regions, but global security interests.

Despite this, Kurdish political recognition never followed military cooperation. The Autonomous Administration of North and East of Syria (AANES) built governing institutions, local councils, and internal security mechanisms, yet Western governments continued to insist on Syria's territorial integrity as a red line.

Fast forward to today. A [Reuters report](#) revealed how this pattern continues in real time. According to Reuters, three coordinated meetings held earlier this month—one in Iraq, one in Syria, and one in Paris—formed the diplomatic sequence shaping Syria's next phase. Citing nine sources, Reuters reported that officials from the United States, France, and Israel, alongside regional actors, were briefed on a Syrian government operation aimed at reasserting central control over Kurdish-administered areas and did not raise objections through these channels. As in 1946, approval was conveyed not through public declarations but through closed-door coordination and silence. Kurdish representatives were not present as political equals in discussions determining the future of their territories.

The parallel between Mahabad and Rojava, Syrian Kurdistan, is structural rather than rhetorical. In both cases, Kurdish systems of governance emerged organically under conditions of extreme pressure, war, repression, and existential threat, only to be delegitimized once international diplomacy reverted to its default, state-centered framework. Kurdish self-rule was treated as provisional and expendable, negotiations concerning Kurdish territories were conducted without meaningful Kurdish political representation, and the territorial integrity of existing states was elevated above the rights of an indigenous nation. In each instance, international silence functioned not as neutrality but as an active policy choice, enabling the dismantling of Kurdish autonomy without the need for formal condemnation or explicit agreement.

Betrayal, Business as Usual

After more than a century marked by repeated betrayals, documented by historians and international [observers alike](#), the Kurdish experience no longer reflects isolated failures or broken promises, but a durable pattern.

From [Lausanne](#) in 1923 to Mahabad in 1946 to Paris in 2026, the Kurdish experience exposes a system that does not malfunction; it operates exactly as designed. Kurds are mobilized in times of crisis, praised in moments of need, and abandoned when stability is negotiated without them. The United Nations erased Mahabad by omission. Today's international community risks repeating the same act in Syria.

Kurdistan is not a security problem. It is a political reality denied by an international order unwilling to confront its own foundations. Until Kurdish self-determination is treated as a legitimate political right rather than a threat to stability, history will not move forward—it will repeat.

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