



Iran's Negotiations with Domestic Kurdish Opposition Groups

OE Watch Commentary: It has recently been reported that the government of Iran has started another round of negotiations with its Kurdish opposition groups to find a peaceful resolution to its Kurdish issue, following several failed attempts. The accompanying articles provide insight into the possible motivations behind these latest round of negotiations.

As the first passage discusses, Iran invited four Kurdish groups (the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran, the Kurdistan Democratic Party, and two factions of the Komala Party of Iranian Kurdistan) to Oslo for a third round of negotiations in August. These parties comprise the “Cooperation Center of Iranian Kurdistan’s Political Parties” formed in 2018, in an effort to unify Kurdish opposition against the Iranian regime. The article argues that the latest negotiations are an attempt by Iran to prevent Iranian Kurdish groups from collaborating with the United States against the Iranian regime “should the [US] take military action against Iran.”



Fighters of the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (PDKI or KDPI) in 2013.
Source: Kurdishstruggle via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:PDKI_fighters.jpg#/media/File:PDKI_fighters.jpg, CC BY 2.0

The article suggests that the Iranian delegation took a threatening approach, noting “[T]he Iranian delegation, led by Seyed Mohammad Kazem Sajjadpour, a veteran Iranian diplomat ... ‘threatened’ the Kurdish side with ‘unpleasant consequences’ if they failed to heed Tehran’s advice.” Furthermore, while negotiations were on-going, Iran launched attacks on armed Iranian Kurdish opposition groups, casting doubt on the sincerity of the government’s intentions regarding the negotiations.

The second article from the Kurdish website *nupel.net* argues that these negotiations might be a mere delaying tactic on the part of the Iranian regime. The article points out that Iran engages in diplomacy as a tactic of war since it has used negotiations in the past to kill influential Kurdish leaders such as Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou in Vienna in 1989. According to the article, the two main factors that led Iran to seek negotiations are the potential for Kurdish opposition parties uniting internally and waging war against the Iranian regime, and external pressure. Iran is concerned about external pressure from the United States and the threat from Kurdish parties in Iraq and Syria to its forces in those countries. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gündüz)**

“Their aim is to thwart any cooperation between us and the United States.”
-Kurdish opposition member

Source: Amberin Zaman, “Tehran courts Kurds as Washington amps up rhetoric against Iran,” *al-monitor.com*, 16 July 2019. <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2019/07/iran-court-kurdish-opposition-groups-talks-washington.html>

Iranian Kurdish opposition groups will meet with Iranian government officials in Oslo for a third round of talks in August, Al-Monitor has learned. The meetings, to be mediated by a Norwegian organization devoted to conflict resolution, mark the first time the Iranian regime has sat at the same table with multiple Kurdish groups since 1979...

“I don’t believe for a second that the Iranian regime is sincere.” The official echoed sentiments aired by other Iranian Kurdish opposition sources...

The prevailing consensus among the Iranian Kurdish groups is that Tehran’s cooperation with NOREF is aimed at dissuading the armed Iranian Kurdish opposition from collaborating with the United States, should the latter take military action against Iran....

A Kurdish opposition member confirmed that the Iranian delegation, led by Seyed Mohammad Kazem Sajjadpour, a veteran Iranian diplomat who currently advises Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, had “threatened” the Kurdish side with “unpleasant consequences” if they failed to heed Tehran’s advice....

“Their aim is to thwart any cooperation between us and the United States,” the Kurdish opposition member said. “We agreed to take part because we want to show good will, to prove that we want a political solution to the Kurdish problem, so we don’t end up getting labeled the bad guys.”

Source: “İran’ın Kürt açılımı derde deva olmayabilir (Iran’s Kurdish opening may not be a panacea),” *nupel.net*, 22 July 2019. <https://nupel.net/iranin-kurt-acilimi-derde-deva-olmayabilir-35970h.html>

Iran has started negotiations with some Kurdish parties in Oslo. The available data suggest that Tehran follows distraction tactics rather than solutions...

When looking at the Iranian-Kurdish conflict, it can be seen that these dialogs and negotiations are [used] as weapons of assassination and methods of liquidation against the Kurds. ...

Diplomacy for Iran is not the continuation or less intense form of war, but one of the basic tactics of war.

Iran’s main policy is not to recognize the Kurds, so what factors [pushed] Iran to initiate such a process... The first is the struggle of Kurdish parties and movements, the second is the international factors and the combined pressure of these two...