



Kurdistan **A people in revolt**

An interview with Adnan Mohammedi

First of all, could you explain the background to Kurdish politics and the Kurdish fight for independence?

The Kurdish people have been in revolt for the last eighty years. Right now we have a little independence in northern Iraq, only a small region. We are trying to win independence for all the other parts of Kurdistan: in Iran, Turkey and Syria. Hopefully we will be able to make one country in the future. At the moment, Kurds in northern Iraq have won some independence, but the message is for all of Kurdistan to be independent. It's a bit tough to do it in those other parts, especially in Iran: as you know, it's a big regime with huge power and money.

Adnan, where you're from is under the Iranian government. Could you tell us how Kurdish people are treated by the government in Iran?

First of all, Kurds are being treated very badly in all those countries: Iran, Turkey, Syria, everywhere. But the Iranian regime is a real dictatorship. They are very bad not just against Kurds, but against other nationalities inside Iran. However, against the Kurds they are really very bad. Kurds in Iran are not allowed to study in their own language, or to have their own media. They have to follow the dominant language in Iran. Recently two Kurdish journalists were sentenced by an Iranian court to be hanged publicly in a market just because they wrote in Kurdish about the Kurdish people. I'm not just talking about Kurds, but all the nationalities in Iran. The Iranian government recently decided to cut the hands and legs off five people from different nationalities, publicly in the market, in the name of religion. I heard that recently an Iranian court decided to kill two people by throwing them down a mountain, in the name of religion. The latest report on human rights in Iran says that in 2007 they hanged 270 people, most of them publicly, and 17 of them were under 18.

Do the Turkish and Syrian governments treat Kurds the same?

Every country decides to do such things by their own rules. In Iran they do it in the name of religion, but in Turkey it is different. At the moment there is an agreement between Turkey and Iran about how to attack the Kurdish parties, the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) and PJAK (Party for a Free Life in Kurdistan). They have decided that Iran will attack PJAK, and Turkey will attack the PKK. If both sides go ahead with those operations, thousands of people who live in the villages will come under attack: normal people, children, women, who live in those areas. Big governments have no fear of going against those two small parties. It would be better if they chose to talk to them rather than fight, because the Kurdish people have been at war for the last eighty years. We are a big nation, but very small from a military point of view. We can't fight against all those big countries, so it's better if we can talk and make peace rather than fighting. Both sides, Turkey and Iran, are trying now to do the same thing that was done to Kurdish people in Iraq. Normally the relationship between Turkey and Iran is not good, but against the Kurds they agree 100 per cent, they are very friendly when it comes to attacking the Kurdish people. There are no business relations

between those countries, or even travel connections, but against the Kurds – unluckily for us – they are both fighting together. They agree about everything if it's against the Kurds.

In the Kurdish region in Iraq, some Kurds have worked with the Americans. What do you think of that?

I personally really don't want to see American troops or American domination in Kurdistan or in Iraq. I hope they go back as soon as possible. We really needed to have a friend, because we have no friends in that area, but, as you know, America are always looking after their own interests. One day they are going to make big trouble for us. George Bush calls the PKK a terrorist group, but in my opinion the PKK are not a terrorist organisation. If they are terrorists, that means that all the Kurdish people are terrorists as well, because they come from the Kurdish people, and Kurds are not terrorists. We are all fighting for independence, for democracy in our country. We don't fight for religion or to dominate any other group or country, like al-Qaeda or other organisations do. We only fight to defend ourselves because we are being persecuted by those countries. But the situation in Iraqi Kurdistan is very good for other Kurds in Turkey and Syria and Iran. The situation is very bad for Kurds, so it's good to have a peaceful place like that where people can go and live and save themselves from attack.

Is there any support for socialism in Kurdistan?

In the Kurdish part of Iran, if you ever talk about socialism, you will disappear or get killed if the Iranian government hear of it, because you have to follow their religion and their rule. I was personally involved in an opposition political party, and we wanted a revolution to bring socialism and democracy to Iran. We wanted the people who live there to be able to speak freely about religion and socialism and any other thing they want, instead of what the Iranian government is doing at the moment, exercising a dictatorship against the people. Freedom of speech is not really very popular with them.

Could you tell us why you were forced to leave Iran and come to Ireland?

As I say, I was involved in a small political party. In 2003, when I was active in that party, I had to flee. I wasn't able to flee from Iran to Iraq because the war was going on there, so I decided to go to Turkey. But the Turkish government is very bad with Kurds: as soon as they see you coming into Turkey from Iran, they deport you back to Iran, and the Iranian government will put you in prison or you are going to lose your life. So from Turkey I decided to go somewhere safe, and then I found Ireland.

What happened when you came to Ireland? How did the Irish government treat your application for asylum?

First of all when I arrived and applied for asylum, I went for interview and they turned my case down. I appealed, and was waiting for eight months, and then I went back for interview again. After the second refusal I was very exhausted. I was a very bewildered man, because I have a wife and child, and I felt it was not fair for me to live like that. I couldn't go back to my country, and I couldn't stay here with the government having turned my case down. So I decided to go on hunger strike. While I was on hunger strike I really got good support from friends here in Ireland like Residents Against Racism, and Joe Costello, and Aengus Ó Snodaigh. I will really never forget all this support. I got huge support from those people, which made the government let me stay in Ireland.

How did you feel about the fact that the government said they didn't believe your story, even though an independent journalist checked it out and immediately found out that you were telling the truth?

I was really uncomfortable about that situation, and that's why I decided to go on hunger

strike. It's really hard when you are telling a very strong story and people don't believe you. I was very glad when Colin Murphy showed that my story was true. Kurdish people are not a nation who forget things. We never forget the good things especially, because we have been treated very badly, and whoever helps us will never be forgotten. During the election I found a poster of Joe Costello, and I took it home and put it on the wall in my flat because he helped me! I really appreciate the support. We as a nation always remember those people who help us or try to help us. The Kurdish people have a special personality. Even though we have been treated very badly by the Iraqi regime, Arab people who killed thousands of Kurdish people at al-Anfal and Halabja in attacks with chemical gas, right now if you go to Kurdish Iraq you will see thousands of Arab people coming and living in that region. They are very happy and enjoy their life in Kurdistan without anybody speaking of what has been done in the past.

Before you came to Ireland, did you know anything about Irish history or politics?

I only knew a little about how the Irish people were invaded by the British government in the past. As far as I knew, the Irish people have had a similar situation to what we have right now in Kurdistan.

People in Ireland who want to support the Kurdish people, what can they do?

First of all, I hope that the Irish media follow the Kurdish story, tell the Irish people what has happened and what is going on with the Kurdish people. That would be a good way for Irish people to help the Kurds. I hope the Irish government and Irish people will be able to help the people in a positive way and give them the right to stay in Ireland, because they are really without government, denied their culture and everything, being destroyed by dictatorship. Hopefully we will have a just political situation for the Kurds in the future. I don't understand why the Department of Justice or the Irish government refuse asylum to Iranian people who they know are really in danger if they are deported back to Iran, that the Iranian government will hang them in the market publicly. It's really bad for the Irish government to do such a thing against Kurds—particularly Iranian Kurds, because the Iranian government is really dictatorial. I hope the Irish government will in the end look after the Kurdish people properly, give them status so they can stay in this country, allow them to be involved with the Irish community, living their own life. In the past we have been treated very badly, and we hope that it's going to stop and that we will be able to enjoy our life normally, with no war and no other country acting against us just because we are Kurds. We hope the Irish people do the right thing for Kurdish people in Ireland.

*Red Banner 31
March 2008*