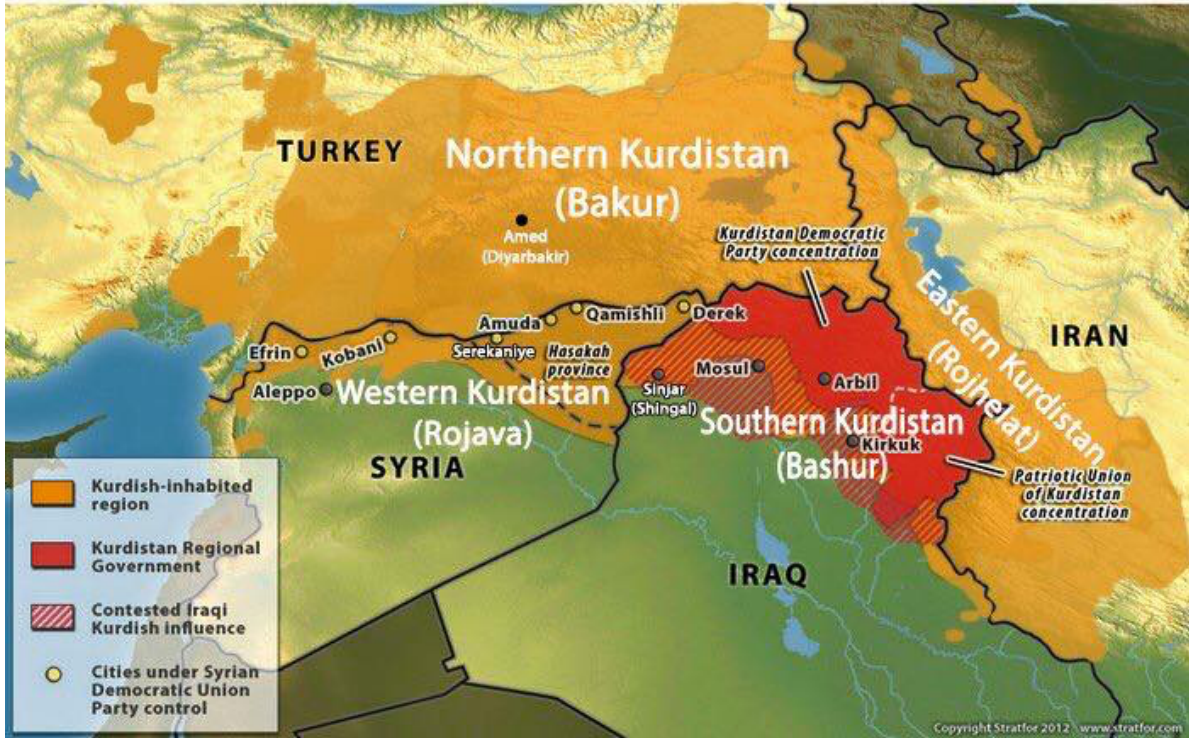


Kurdish Lobby Australia Report

Building Relations between Bashur and Rojava, based on a KLA-organised Zoom meeting held on April 28 between Kurds of Bashur and Rojava

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REGIONS

Bakur	Kurdish name for the Kurdistan Region of Turkey
Bashur	Kurdish name for the Kurdistan Region of Iraq
Rojava	Kurdish name for the Kurdistan region of Syria
Rojhelat	Kurdish name for the Kurdistan Region of Iran

ACRONYMS IN ORDER OF ESTABLISHMENT

KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government, officially formed in 2005
KRI	Kurdistan Region of Iraq, officially formed in 2005
KDP	Kurdistan Democratic Party, formed in 1946
KDP-S	Kurdistan Democratic Party of Syria, formed in 1957
PUK	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, formed in 1975
PKK	Kurdistan Workers' Party, formed in 1978
PYD	Democratic Union Party (Syria), formed in 2003
KNC or ENKS	Kurdish National Council in Syria, formed in 2011
YPG	Peoples' Protection Units (Syria) formed in 2011.
YPJ	Women's Protection Units (Syria) formed in 2013
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, formed in 2013
AANES	Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria formed in 2014, consisting of Rojava, and Arab-majority Raqqa and Deir Ezzor east of the Euphrates River.
SDC	Syrian Democratic Council formed in 2015
SDF	Syrian Democratic Forces formed in 2015
Roj Peshmerga	A formation of Syrian Kurdish ex-army officers and soldiers established by Masoud Barzani as a military arm of ENKS in 2015

INTRODUCTION

About the KLA organised meeting on 'Building Relations between Bashur and Rojava'

In this document 'meeting participant' refers to an individual attending a Kurdish Lobby Australia (KLA) organised Zoom meeting of 19 people to discuss *Building Relations between Bashur and Rojava* held on 28 April 2024. The meeting participants were academics, current and former senior political representatives and advisors from Bashur and Rojava, joined by four non-Kurds from Australia, Europe and the USA.

Background

Bashur and Rojava have achieved a degree of self-government and security by being politically and militarily ready to take advantage of opportunities, beginning with the UN no-fly zone over Iraqi Kurdistan from 1991 until 2003. During this time people in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq established an de facto government, which was constitutionally recognised in 2005, as was its Peshmerga forces.

Syrian Kurds participated in the Kurds' struggle for self-determination since the 1920s, joining the Iraqi Kurds' struggle for autonomy in the 1960s and 1970s, and the Kurdistan Workers' Party's (PKK's) struggle in the 1980s and 1990s. In 2012, a year after civil war broke out in Syria, Assad's forces withdrew from Rojava to fight the opposition in other parts of Syria. This enabled Syrian Kurds to embark on de-facto self-governance, which by 2014 had evolved into the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES).

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When ISIS took territory in Syria and Iraq from 2013, Kurds and their allies immediately self-mobilised to defend Kurdistan territory on both sides of the border. Syrian Kurds, supported by Kurds from all over Kurdistan and US-led coalition airstrikes achieved the first victory over ISIS at Kobani in early 2014. After Kobani the US-led coalition adopted Syrian Kurdish militias as their ground forces, in 2015 forming a Kurd-led multi-ethnic force called the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) to fight ISIS. US support for Peshmerga and Shia militia in Iraq and the SDF in Syria enabled the defeat of ISIS in Iraq in 2017 and in Syria in 2019.

Multiple stakeholders want these achievements wiped out. Since 2014, the ‘federal’ Iraqi government has been undermining Iraqi Kurdistan’s autonomy, efforts multiplying since March 2023. The governments of Syria, Iran and Turkey refuse any form of decentralisation. Turkey blocks the ANNES and SDF from being represented at international for a, while ISIS ideological threats and military attacks stubbornly persist.

In this zone of conflict internal divisions plague Kurdistan politics. In Bashur, the division is between the two dominant parties, KDP and PUK, which caused a civil war in the mid 1990s and more recently, contributed to Kurds losing influence in Baghdad. In Rojava the division is between the KDP-aligned Kurdish National Council of Syria (KNC or ENKS), incorporating some 13 to 15 Syrian Kurdish parties, including the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Syria (KDPS), Yekiti, Azadi and the Yezidi Council, and PKK-influenced parties headed by the Democratic Union Party (PYD). Hence, divisions in Syria are extensions of the KDP – PKK rivalry to lead the ‘Kurdish cause’.

Since ENKS’ formation in 2011, it has advocated a federation in Syria, as does PYD. However, ENKS disagrees with PYD’s unilateral declaration and implementation of self-governing cantons in accordance with the writings on ‘democratic confederalism’ by PKK’s imprisoned co-founder, Abdullah Ocalan. ENKS argued, and continues to argue, that all change needs to be in collaboration with other Syrian opposition parties.

In hindsight, this collaborative approach would have severely slowed the rapid progress in establishing the current AANES, its Syrian Democratic Council (SDC) and defence forces – the People’s Protection Units (YPG and YPJ) and the SDF. On the other hand, this unilateral declaration has isolated the AANES from other Syrian opposition groups. Yet this isolation may have been inevitable, given Turkey’s support for ISIS since 2013, its abandonment of a peace process with Turkey’s Kurds in July 2015, its training and arming of Syrian militias to fight Kurds in Syria, and its subsequent invasions and occupations of northern Syria in 2016, 2018 and 2019. The dilemma of whether to act independently or in coordination with other Kurds and non-Kurds is a familiar challenge for Kurdish decision makers.

Despite divisions, Kurds share many principles and goals. All Kurds consider Kurds are indigenous to northern Mesopotamia; all aspire to constitutional recognition of people’s right to self-determination, either within each nation state or as a step towards an independent Kurdistan; all aspire to a democracy that is multi-ethnic and multi-religious; all support communities having the right to be educated in their mother tongue, and all know that Kurdistan is embedded in a hostile environment known for dictators, theocracies, and terrorism intent on destroying whatever Kurds achieve.

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In contrast, ideological differences are few but significant. The PYD-led AANES is experimenting with democratic confederalism – a participatory democracy that demands commitment from the grass roots up, male and female co-chairs for all leadership positions, and women to be 40 percent of every committee or council. This social experiment requires a revolution of the mind, a forsaking of nationalist and religious paradigms. The AANES is named accordingly – it does not refer to a Kurdish identity. It is more socialist than capitalist, relying on a patchwork of self-run communes and cooperatives. In practice major decisions are made at the top, often with little consultation, except when accommodating religiously conservative Arabs.

Between 2011 and 2016, the PYD bloc in Syria was a member of the National Coordination Body for Democratic Change (NCB/NCC), a coalition of unarmed left wing political organisations that wanted to travel a ‘third path’ and keep open the option of negotiating with President Bashar Al-Assad. This proved useful. When Turkey invaded Afrin west of the Euphrates in 2018, and Tell Abyad (Girê Spi) and Ras al-Ayn (Serê Kaniyê) east of the Euphrates in 2019, Assad sent a token force to curb Turkey’s ambitions, with the USA and Russia also putting limits on these. The Turkey-backed Syrian opposition and some in the NCB saw the PYD and the AANES as ‘pro Assad’. This is despite the failure of all political negotiations between the Kurd-led administration and the Syrian government. The PYD split from the NCB in 2016, but in 2021, the NCB/NCC and SDC negotiated a memorandum of [understanding](#).

Unlike parties represented in the AANES, both ENKS and the KRG advocate a traditional secular multiparty representative democracy, and accept all political parties with diverse ideological, religious and ethnic bases. In Bashur, the KRG has developed a capitalist economy with socialist components. But the most controversial difference between the PYD bloc and ENKS is that ENKS belongs to the Syrian National Coalition and Council (SNC) representing Syrian opposition groups aligned with and based in Turkey. This comes at a cost for ENKS, whose members are divided on how much to compromise with the PYD/AANES, the Syrian opposition and Turkey. For instance, after Turkey invaded Afrin in 2018, ENKS briefly abandoned the SNC protesting the war crimes and ethnic cleansing committed by Turkey and its Syrian proxies. Later ENKS rejoined to effect change from within and remain a voice for Syrian Kurds at international fora.

Historical Attempts at Building Relations between Bashur and Rojava, PYD and ENKS

Often underemphasised in media and rhetoric is the sincere goodwill between Kurds in and from Bashur, Rojava, Bakur and Rojhelat, whether between family and friends for which borders are twentieth century fabrications, or between political leaders, as demonstrated in the efforts to reconcile political difference in the Erbil and Dohuk Dialogues (2012 – 2014) involving the Syrian Kurdish Democratic Society Movement or TEV-DEM, led by Salih Muslim (Co-Chair PYD 2012 – 2017), and ENKS/KRG led by Masoud Barzani. Even so, ongoing crises, Kurdish history and psychology as well as political and ideological divisions have prevented agreements from being successfully actioned.

A meeting participant in the SDC played a senior role in these dialogues and voluntarily acknowledged President Masoud Barzani’s hard work. It was Masoud Barzani who invited

PYD and ENKS to the first and second conferences held in Erbil on July 24, 2012, and December 17, 2013, and contributed to the negotiations. The meetings are often referred to as Hawler 1 and 2, a Kurdish name for Erbil.

In 2012 it was agreed to:

- Form a joint higher body - the Supreme Kurdish Committee (SKC), or Kurdish Supreme Committee (KSC) as the sole governing body of Rojava tasked with drawing up policy, ensuring the principle of parity in the structure of all committees, and consensus in all decision making;
- Form three committees (political, military, and service) to action decisions;
- Consolidate working mechanisms;
- Stop negative media campaigns that target the 'other'; and
- Not launch attacks on Turkey or supply weapons to PKK.

The last point has been upheld since 2012. Otherwise, relations frayed. Concurrent with Hawler 1, the Assad Regime withdrew from Rojava to fight the opposition in other parts of Syria. The YPG and YPJ immediately took charge of security, except for a token regime presence in the towns of Hasaka and Qamishli. This led Masoud Barzani to form a military offshoot of ENKS, called the Rojava Peshmerga or Roj Pesh, largely made up of Syrian army-trained Kurdish officers and soldiers, many having sought asylum in Bashur after defecting at the start of the civil war. For a short while, the Roj Peshmerga and YPJ and YPG jointly managed checkpoints, but arrests and disappearances of ENKS political members culminated in a protest in Amude on 27 June, 2013, in which YPG killed six protesters and abused 50 others. ENKS immediately withdrew from the SKC claiming PYD was monopolising power, making all decisions and taking on all responsibilities.

'Hawler 2' in 2013 was attended by the respected former Kurdish parliamentarian in Turkey, Leyla Zana, who spent ten years in prison after saying the last sentence of her 1991 parliamentary oath in Kurdish. Also attending from Turkey was the former mayor of Diyarbakir, Abdullah Demirbas, who had been removed from office and arrested for using the Kurdish language in an official meeting. Hawler 2 endorsed Hawler 1 with an additional requirement for the blocs to form a joint delegation to participate in the UN supported 'Geneva II' talks in early 2014. Geneva II was intended to bring together the Assad government and all opposition groups to discuss a political transition and a period of transitional justice. At the last minute, some Arab Islamist parties withdrew and there were no positive outcomes.

Other reasons contributing to the deterioration of relations were ENKS' internal divisions as to who should represent ENKS in the new governing body, and PYD's unilateral announcements of conscription, an autonomous administration of cantons, and to hold elections for public office. This lack of consultation went against the Hawler dialogues. Inside ENKS there was argument about how much to co-operate with the PYD, and in 2014, ENKS expelled three parties for advocating compromise. A year later, these three parties were accepted back, but differences are ongoing.

In response to soured relations and spurred on by the need to fight ISIS in Kobani in September 2014, Masoud Barzani invited Syrian Kurdish parties to a meeting in Duhok resulting in the 'Dohuk Agreement', signed on October 14, 2014. The agreement aimed to set

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aside differences and establish political and military co-operation, particularly in the fight against ISIS. While largely an iteration of the Erbil agreement, a new specification was the establishment of a 30-member power-sharing council to run the cantons in Syria, with the PYD and ENKS having 12 seats each, and the remainder going to non-aligned parties. It was also agreed that Roj Peshmerga would return to Syria and form a joint military force with the Syrian Protection Units to fight ISIS in Kobani. After negotiating with Turkey, Roj and Iraqi Kurdish Peshmergas brought tanks to Kobani to help fight ISIS.

When the SDF was formed in 2015, ENKS/KDP stipulated that Roj Peshmerga would only join the SDF if Roj Peshmerga were made 'military partners'. The SDF welcomed the Roj Peshmerga units, but only if they came under SDF command. In addition, the SDF refused the Roj Peshmerga's demand to abolish conscription for all men between 18 and 30, given it was causing many young Syrian Kurds to seek refuge elsewhere.

In 2016 ENKS released its vision for Rojava. Common ground with the PYD's social contract included federalism, minority rights, and political pluralism, but again, nothing was actualised and renewed efforts by France and the US to mend relations were short lived.

France organised meetings in Paris in 2019. Efforts failed. According to ENKS this was because PYD refused to release ENKS representatives that had been 'politically and judicially' pursued, 'abducted' and imprisoned, ENKS claiming that 12 ENKS representatives were in PYD prisons. Observers were pessimistic that the two blocs could form a joint administration, despite a strong argument for this being that Turkey would likely find the Syrian-Kurdish led administration less [threatening](#) if ENKS was included. Yet this was not guaranteed. If there was a guarantee, the outcome may have been different.

US-mediated efforts in Hasaka in 2020 were initiated by the respected SDF Commander in Chief, General Mazloum Abdi Kobani, and were mediated by the SDF. In preparation for the Kurdish unity [talks](#) PYD [formed](#) the Kurdish National Unity Parties (PYNK) consisting of 25 parties on May 20, 2020. It was agreed that in Phase 1 the two blocs would arrive at a joint political vision of a federal administration. In Phase 2 the blocs would form a joint Kurdish Political Authority. Phase 3 was meant to deal with conscription, the return of the Roj Peshmerga forces, the disengagement of the PYD from PKK, and a review of the AANES' [education](#) curricula that includes lessons on democratic confederalism. Negotiations ended, in good part because the US envoy James Jeffrey retired, but also because PYD rejected a return of Roj Peshmerga without a prior agreement of integration, and refused to cut links with [PKK](#).

US and France had worked hard but were tired of getting nowhere. Negotiations came to a halt. Since then, the Kurdish blocs have kept channels open, and General Mazloum Abdi Kobani has directly liaised with US diplomats about integrating the forces but there has been no political, administrative or military agreement. One meeting participant from Bashur, who was involved in informal negotiations recommended a concurrent Tier 1 (political and military leaders) and Tier 2 (community leaders, professionals etc) negotiation process, each tier informing the other and relevant external actors to achieve outcomes.



The pontoon bridge at Semalka Border Crossing built in 2013

One negotiation that has been successful is keeping the Semalka/Faysh Khabour border crossing over the Tigris River open for people, trade and US convoys. In 2013, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) replaced the use of small boats, then a barge, by building a pontoon bridge, and since 2016, the border crossing is open more often than it is closed. If shut, it is only for a few hours or a day rather than extended periods, each side known to shut the crossing to make a political point.

Otherwise, after 12 years of negotiation efforts:

- ENKS is unable to operate safely in Rojava;
- Has not been included in any governing body; and
- Roj Peshmerga have yet to join the SDF

despite the **popularity** of ENKS.

Iraq has asked US military forces to leave Iraq by the end of 2025. There is no telling whether the Baghdad government will allow US forces to stay in Bashur, where they are welcome and needed. Syria, Iran and Turkey are also applying pressure for US-led coalition forces to leave Syria. In this context, and with Kurds facing so many antagonists, all meeting participants expressed hope that the US will restart negotiations between the SDC/ANNES/SDF and ENKS/KDP/KRG/Roj Peshmerga.

ANALYSIS

Why Dialogues keep Reaching a Stalemate

Factors behind the stalemates include internal obstacles that Kurds can fix, and external obstacles requiring international leverage and mediation.

What Kurds can Fix

The major obstacles that Kurds can fix themselves are:

- I **ENKS accuses PYD of monopolizing power:** A KRG participant noted that Bashur's democracy is a work-in-progress, but at least 36 parties of different persuasions can advocate their own position and fly their own flag. In the ANNES territory only parties that support democratic confederalism are allowed to operate without threat. ENKS members and offices continue to be targeted. The KRG representative claimed the flag used by Bashur and Rojhelat (Kurdistan of Iran) is banned.
- II **PYD et al claim ENKS is too close to Turkey and the SNC.** Some SDC/AANES meeting participants expressed that Syrian Kurdistanis are unsure of where ENKS and KDP loyalties lie. They suspect ENKS passes on information to Turkey and SNC.
- III **Both blocs politicize everything.** PYD and the AANES defer to PKK and PUK, and ENKS defers to KDP and Turkey, causing some people to see the other bloc as an existential threat.



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- IV **There is a lack of cohesion within ENKS.** For example, a Rojava meeting participant involved in the Erbil and Dohuk dialogues claimed all 13 parties in ENKS wanted representation in each committee when there was only space for five from each bloc. Note: this may become a problem for the ANNES too.
- V **The KDP does not want Roj Peshmerga to be under SDF command** but the SDF wants to avoid Bashur's on-going problems of having separate Peshmerga forces answering to PUK, KDP and the Ministry of Peshmerga. There is also a problem of salaries. The KRG pays Roj Peshmerga rank and file US\$500 per month, which some Bashur officials claim is illegal as Roj Peshmerga do not serve Bashur. The SDF rank and file are paid US \$390 per month. Special forces are paid [more](#).
- VI **Failure to renew political leadership in Bashur and PKK means current leaders can be stuck in old ways of thinking.** All meeting participants agreed that new blood in the PKK and KRG could help relations.
- VII **KDP oversees the Semalka border crossing.** Would joint management work?
- VIII **The AANES and KRG rely on tariffs for revenue.** The double tariff is high.
- IX **Intentional disinformation and unintentional misinformation deepen distrust.**
- X **Parties have incompatible ideologies.** This is so, yet both blocs support a federal system which could enable a different political economy in each region.

External obstacles requiring international assistance to overcome

1. **Turkey and hardline PKK supporters do not want the AANES/SDC and KRG, as well as PYD and ENKS to build strong mutually beneficial relations.** Turkey considers this would be a national security threat. PKK sees this as a threat to its power and influence in Greater Kurdistan.
2. **Turkey's preference for war over political solutions since July 2015 deepens divisions, suffering and uncertainty.** Turkey's military operations in Rojava and Bashur on the pretext of going after PKK undermines the credibility and effectiveness of the AANES and KRG, distracts the SDF and Peshmerga from going after ISIS, distracts *Asayish* (police) from maintaining law and order, kills thousands, displaces hundreds of thousands, destroys livelihoods and essential infrastructure that supply water, electricity and medical services, and hence, further divides parties. All meeting participants agreed that Turkey appears intent on expanding its occupation in northern Syria and Iraq but Kurds do not have the political or military means to curb this expansion. A major obstacle for joint advocacy or action against Turkey's military attacks, is that just as Bashur is the lifeline for Rojava, Turkey is a lifeline for Bashur. Meanwhile, the international community is too busy appeasing Turkey to coordinate action against Turkey's breaches of international law. Hence, there has been no outside support to defend Rojava and Bashur from Turkey's military attacks, unless these attacks threaten US-led coalition troops.
3. **Turkey's political interference.** Turkey has isolated the SDC, AANES, TEV-DEM and SDF from other Syrian opposition groups and has successfully opposed their representation at international fora to discuss a transitional government, humanitarian assistance and reconstruction. It took many years for Turkey to adjust to a constitutionally recognised KRI (Bashur) and Turkey was antagonistic to Masoud Barzani's referendum on independence in 2017. To this day, Turkey sends spies and agents into both regions.

- 4. All meeting participants agreed that hardline PKK followers cause problems, and these problems need to be addressed.** In Rojava, youth in Ciwanên Şoreşger, and an unknown number of others are very loyal to Abdullah Ocalan and PKK's central committee in Qandil. Rojava meeting participants claimed that the ANNES is split between PKK hardliners and pragmatists, and the pragmatists are winning. This assessment contrasts the lack of identification, arrest, and imprisonment of those responsible for setting fire to ENKS offices, and ongoing harassment of ENKS representatives in Rojava. As for Bashur, one Rojava participant noted that in the last 30 years the KRG and PKK have had several bilateral agreements. Currently, there is no agreement. This can be explained by a KRG advisor's observations that:
- PKK is active everywhere except Turkey (presumably excluding PKK's ideological influence on Kurds in Turkey);
 - PKK does not recognise the KRG's authority in Bashur; and
 - The presence of PKK is drawing Turkey further and further into Bashur, the disputed territories of Sinjar and Kirkuk, and other parts of northern Iraq like Nineveh.

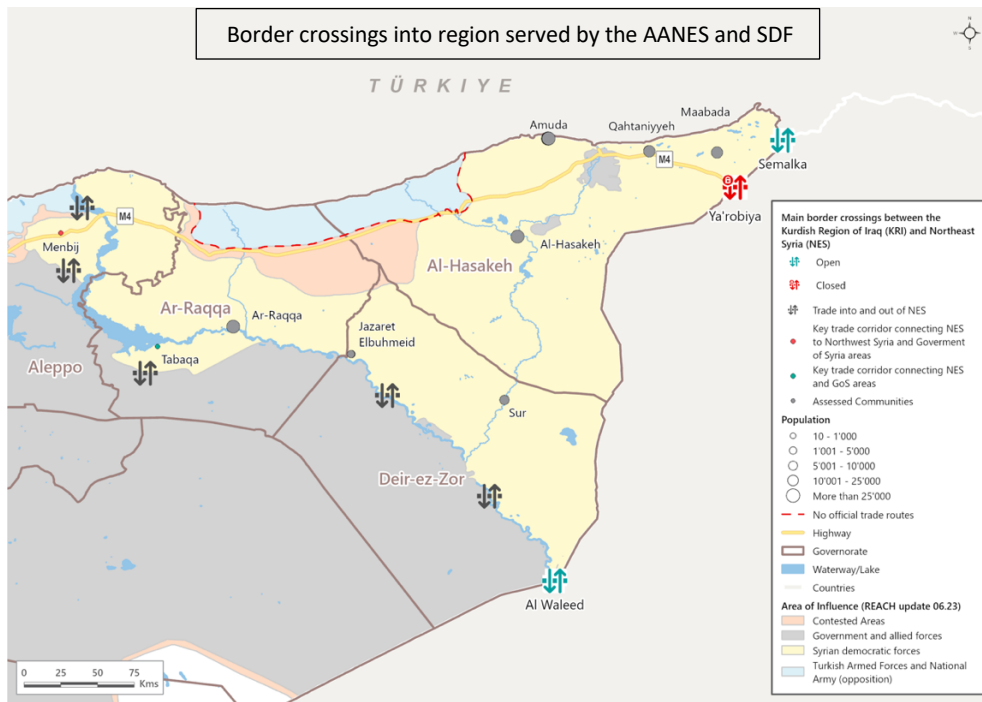
What could Block Building Relations

1. Planning is difficult when Kurds lurch from multiple crises to multiple crises.
2. Both regions rely on the US-led coalition presence to survive politically and militarily due to Turkey's ongoing attempts to shut down all efforts for Kurds to have democratic representation in Turkey, and Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria having increased their military and political interference in the AANES and Bashur, all four states demanding the US sever ties with the SDF and leave Syria and Iraq. Hence, all meeting participants expressed hope that the US and/or others will restart negotiations between PYD and ENKS, and the Turkish state and PKK, but to date, there are no public signs of this.
3. If all these threats further reduce the autonomy of Bashur and Rojava/eastern Deir Ezzor and Raqqa, negotiations will become more difficult.
4. Continued non-recognition of the SDC, AANES and SDF will also reduce these entities' capacities to make agreements. Although Syrian Kurds helped the US-led coalition to fight ISIS the international community appears unwilling to officially recognise these structures. The US has an ambiguous transactional interest in Rojava, and arguably in Bashur, influenced by a Cold-War view of Turkey as an ally.
5. US may want to restart dialogues but remains committed to including ENKS rather than supporting direct negotiations between the SDC/AANES and KDP/ ENKS.
6. Disinformation and misinformation serve to solidify divisions.

Factors upon which Relations can be Built

1. **Abundant person-to-person goodwill**, which needs more acknowledgment. **For instance, 250,000 Syrians, the majority being Kurds, live in Bashur** for reasons of safety from attack by ISIS, Turkey, Arab tribal factions and Iran's Axis of Resistance, or to avoid unemployment, a lack of law and order, or simply to have access to water, electricity, medical care etc. Syrian Kurdish political parties can operate safely in Bashur. The exception to this goodwill is the presence of the PKK's military arm (the HPG).

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2. **Semalka-Faysh Khabour border crossing is the only way into Rojava for humanitarian assistance, US convoys, military supplies, and cash (US dollars for paying remittances, etc) and the only way out for AANES' oil. It is the safest way in and out of Rojava for people and trade.** Note: other supply routes via Manbij and government-held areas suffer from military attacks, long inspection processes impacting perishable goods, damages from off-loading and re-packaging trucks at crossings, and multiple crossing checkpoints.
3. **Trade between Bashur and Rojava:** The AANES exports oil which largely finances public services, as well as wheat, cotton, vegetables, olives, livestock and poultry products. From Bashur it imports food (sugar, cooking oils, tomato paste, fruits, vegetables, olives and rice), construction materials (cement and steel), livestock, fertilizers, pesticides, electrical goods, machinery and medical supplies. Trade provides employment on both sides of the border and reduces prices in Rojava. For example, 13 percent of north and east Syria's labour force work in the construction [industry](#). Erbil is the main financial hub through which cash remittances from relatives living in the diaspora can be distributed.
4. **Bashur and Rojava need each other.** One SDC meeting participant described Bashur as Rojava's oxygen. Other Rojava participants said that 'People in Rojava respect Bashur's achievement and wish to learn from Bashur' and 'We look to Bashur as a role model; we need Bashur.' Trade highlights this interdependence as do people in need of asylum, but also how US bases in Bashur are essential for Bashur as well as supporting SDF in curbing ISIS, Syrian, Iranian and Iraqi militias, and left unsaid: Turkey's military and its Syrian proxies' actions.
5. **The US presence. This is a stabilising influence** given that the US helps keep Semalka border crossing open and works with the KRG, Peshmerga and the SDF.
6. **Relations between Bashur and Rojava are healthier than their relations with other parts of Iraq and Syria.** Relations between PUK and Rojava and KDP and Turkey could provide mediation pathways.

7. **Both the AANES and KRG are secular administrations**, which should make negotiations less difficult. One meeting participant claimed that people in Bashur are becoming more religious due to urbanisation and an Arab influx, but another meeting participant argued that Bashuri elections do not reflect this.
8. **Both regions have multiple natural resources.**
9. **Both regions are arguably the most stable regions in Syria and Iraq.**

Recommendations

To continue building relations priority should be given to:

- **Shared interests;**
- **Practical, actionable, non-threatening outcomes, leaving the most contentious issues until later;**
- **Balancing rewards and risks;**
- **Each bloc's minimum requirements of themselves and the other; and**
- **What would have international support and lead to international recognition.**

Underlying all matters is the need for:

1. **International leverage on Turkey to enter an internationally mediated ceasefire, peace process and political negotiations with PKK, and other stakeholders in and outside Turkey.** The process could start with an end to Abdullah Ocalan's isolation and continue with multi-pronged paths emphasising practical milestones to build trust before embarking on the next phase. KDP could play a role as it did in Turkey's 2013 - 2015 peace process. The enormity of the effort cannot be overstated but the benefits are immense. Political solutions would help Kurds, Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Iran, Europe, the USA and its allies like Australia by reducing military conflict, political instability and the numbers of asylum seekers.
2. **For Turkey to guarantee**, at a minimum, that it will end all military attacks on AANES territory, and ideally withdraw from Syrian territory, if ENKS and Roj Pesh are integrated into the SDC/AANES/TEV-DEM and SDF.

Meanwhile, and not listed in order of priority:

3. **All Kurds need to continue building diplomatic relations** with other ethnicities in the regions they occupy and the US, UK, Israel, Russia, China, Asia, Europe, Middle Eastern states, and new states like East Timor.
4. **Expand trade between Bashur and Rojava by way of trade agreements** that could include tax concessions for local farmers and small business people;
5. Implement **confidence and trust building measures such as:**
 - a. **Ensuring all political parties can safely operate in each other's territory.**
This occurs in Bashur, but not in Rojava;
 - b. **Hold separate and joint workshops on negotiation and transactional skills, including the art and value of compromise**, especially for Tier 1, 2 and 3 negotiators;
 - c. **Address damaging disinformation** by teaching community representatives, school children etc. to question and verify or disprove specified source/s and evidence, and clearly identify what is unknown before making any public statement, penalising those responsible for spreading misinformation, especially for political purposes.

6. **As matter of urgency but immense in scope, the ANNES needs to improve law and order in north and east Syria to protect its civilian population as well as ENKS offices and members.** This will require more attention to **providing security**, and by demanding security personnel work according to due process and be held accountable for any breaches of the process or the law. **Forming impartial highly trained and accountable forces or committees** to investigate the actions of police and other security forces, and those responsible for vandalism, arson and bombing of ENKS offices; those involved in blackmailing, bribing, scamming or the harassment, abuse, kidnapping or killing of civilians and ENKS representatives. **Due process** requires the mandatory requirement of a warrant for any arrest, for the arrested individual to be informed why they are being arrested, the individual be given prompt access to a defence lawyer, and a fair trial involving impartial, qualified judges. Due process also needs a **complaint mechanism** in which an impartial legal body assesses each complaint to see if it merits further action. **Inside prisons**, the authorities need to separate violent prisoners from others and **ensure regular inspections of facilities**. There also needs to be a **public dissemination of laws and regulations** and **for all the aforementioned to be compliant with international human rights standards and be open to being monitored**.
7. **The KRG needs to match (6).**
8. **Both regions need support in building an independent judiciary and other institutions by periods of placement of professionals in well regarded institutions in other countries and/or having professionals come to work in-country.**
9. **ENKS needs to clarify and guarantee its loyalties, one way being to work collaboratively on joint projects that have realistic time frames**, including:
- **Joint infrastructure projects**, the first being a **permanent Semalka bridge with service facilities** on both sides of the Tigris to replace the pontoon bridge. Down the track, joint infrastructure projects could include water pumping stations, renewable electricity generation etc.;
 - **Easing red tape at the Semalka border crossing** to allow checked civilians, NGOs, and traders easy travel between Bashur and Rojava;
 - **Joint working bees to plant trees, clean up plastic waste, etc** either side of the border;
 - **Sports diplomacy**: Expand sporting events and competitions between individuals, schools, and districts in Bashur and Rojava, and beyond.
 - **Cultural diplomacy**: Encourage tours and joint concerts and courses in music, poetry, dance, theatre, film, painting, sculpture, weaving, debates and literary and agricultural festivals and celebrations like Newroz;
 - **Expanding medical assistance** for Syrians in need of Bashur hospitals.
 - **Encouraging vertically integrated and value-added industries**;
 - **Expanding educational, training and exchange programs** in each region, across both regions, or beyond e.g. in countries with a good track record, through on-line classes, workshops, exchanges for students and academics, and professional exchanges for police, lawyers, judges, doctors, dentists, nurses, small and medium business people, people working in sports, creative arts, public policy and administration, with workshops and courses examining the prerequisites for democracy, tools of diplomacy, essentials for an independent judiciary, civil society, and in conservation, renewable energy,

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alternative ways to using water to extract oil and gas, IT, agriculture, value adding, and standards for construction, worker safety, chemical use, and industrial waste disposal.

- The KRG could provide **university scholarships** based on merit to people from the AANES region, like the KRG offers the offspring of KDPI from Rojhelat who now live in Bashur.
- Establishing **apprenticeships** in the trades and professions; and
- **Holding joint workshops** on women's health, men's health, PTSD, family violence, living with disability, grief counselling, business and NGO management; building a strong civil society, how to distinguish disinformation, and debating skills.

Note: The problem of different dialects and alphabets can be overcome by school and external education in both scripts and dialogue, employing appropriate teacher/s that are familiar with Sorani and Kurmanji, and via the use of subtitles and translation software.

Once trust improves, the blocs may be ready to negotiate:

- Joint training of **SDF and Roj Peshmerga** identifying refining **and implementing the most effective form of integration**; and
- **ENKS participating in different levels of governance** for a trial period before:
- **Free and fair elections.**

One meeting participant suggested that sensitive negotiations could be held in Erbil, for example, at the US Consulate, for reasons of safety, convenience, and to ease Turkey's concerns. If the region served by the ANNES remains insecure, inaccessible, and unrecognised, Erbil could become its financial and commercial hub. To be sure, for any of these ideas to materialise there needs to be an acknowledgement of shared interests, and a core of tenacious, flexible, visionary individuals that can build trust, respect and a willingness to collaborate.