

'The West must clean its own house first': Turkey, Iran, and double standards

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The United States has adopted a more demanding stance on Iran, though it may be too little and too late. In addition, their policy has nothing to do with the freedom of the peoples of Iran—and the U.S. does not have a reputation for keeping its word on such issues. It could happen that, all of a sudden, the Ayatollah Khamenei decides sit and negotiate with the "Great Satan," and U.S. economic interests could answer positively. Friendly smiles could emerge on pursed lips between old foes.

Before the "444 days of hell" that begun on 4 November, 1979, the Grand Ayatollah Khomeini had already waged a full scale war on Kurds, Balochis, and Ahwazi Arabs. Khomeini demanded that all "non-believers"— by which he meant minorities and dissidents— must be wiped out. Bani Sadder, an "Islamic moderate," called on the army to "not untie their shoe aces" until the Kurdish uprising was exterminated.

After 444 humiliating days, the United States surrendered to Khomeini. The hostages flew out of Iran as Khomeini's supporters shouted "Death to America!". Everything

about that January day in Iran nearly 38 years ago was reminiscent of Mr. Andrew Brunson's release from Turkish prison this fall. The only difference is that Turkey released just one hostage.

In the last 39 years Iran's Islamic Republic have killed, persecuted, imprisoned, harassed and suppressed Kurds, Balochis, and Arabs. The Kurds have as usual have been attacked the most, as they are more organized and have engaged in armed struggle. No Western state, including the U.S., has uttered a word against this aspect of the fascistic behaviour of the Islamic Republic. The nuclear issue is not the only issue. In fact, for the peoples of Iran, all other issues are indeed much more important. Therefore, they don't see the nuclear issue or other American demands as their own. Furthermore, the ethnic Persian Iranian opposition of today, like the Mujahedeen-e-Khalq (MEK) and the Royalists, have proven that they are at least as bad as the Khomeinists.

It is clear now that the West not only does not care about the situation of the oppressed peoples of Iran, but also can ignore its own priority, the nuclear issue, for the right price. Unclear policy on Iran does nothing but cost Saudi Arabia and some of the Gulf states a significant share of their oil money. Western states continue to enjoy weapons sales without any changes to the regional status quo.

So what does the issue of Iran tell us? It tells us that Western interests outweigh real concern for the freedom of the peoples of the Middle East. Turkey is at least as bad as Iran— but at the same time, it enjoys many political, economic, diplomatic, and military intelligence privileges from Western states. Turkey has committed genocides and atrocities throughout its history, and practices state terrorism. Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan organizes Islamic fascism on a global level. He reminds the oppressed peoples of our region of the early days of Nazi Germany. ISIS and other Islamic terrorist proxies that devastate communities across Iraq and Syria are nothing but paramilitary units under personal leadership of Erdogan.

It is insane to allow Erdogan to threaten the political administration of Northern Syria and its promising democratic experience with open war and invasion. Those who advocate for democratic values must prove themselves in this situation. Turkey is not "isolated" like Iran, though its government commits similar human rights abuses. The current regime in Turkey is the spoiled child of the West. Turkey is a NATO member, a candidate for EU membership, and is a member of many different organizations in the West— though it flouts their rules, as it did with the most recent European Court of Human Rights ruling calling for the release of former HDP co-chair Selahattin Demirtas. When the US and the EU do nothing to stop Erdogan's fascist war machine and give him a tacit green light to enact his imperial ambitions, why should

anyone trust the current US stance against Iran?

When the US takes concrete measures to throw Iran and Turkey out of Iraq and Syria; helps federalism emerge in Iraq and Syria; and asks for a peaceful political solution to the Kurdish question in Turkey— as both Demirtas and Abdullah Ocalan and have cried out for many times— they will lay the groundwork for political trust. Years of tolerance of Iranian and Turkish expansionism and extremism tells us that the U.S. calculates only its own national interests. There is not much room left for democracy and human rights for others.

In the end, the ball is in the U.S. and the West's court. To be trustworthy on Iran and other issues in the Middle East, they need to clean their own house— and that starts with Turkey.