

The Sochi Conference and Afrin: Interview with Mihrac Ural

by Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi • Feb 8, 2018



Ural at Sochi

Readers will probably remember that I previously spoke with Mihrac Ural (Ali Kayali) when I profiled his group the Syrian Resistance (aka The Popular Front for the Liberation of the Sanjak of Alexandretta) [back in 2013](#). Repeated claims by the rebels to have killed him have turned out to be unsubstantiated. Ural has most recently come to public attention through his attendance of the conference in Sochi sponsored by the Russian government, aiming to cement a Russian-led political process in Syria and the Damascus government's ascendant position. Ural's attendance attracted considerable anger from the Turkish government, which considers him to be a terrorist.

Following Ural's return to Syria, I was able to interview him on the Sochi conference and the current situation in Syria, including the Turkish assault on Afrin. Note that there was no discussion of a question I put to him regarding the Syrian Resistance's stance on the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) more generally in the country and the possibility, if any, of a future agreement between the Syrian state and areas under SDF control. The transcript of the interview is below. The interview has been slightly edited for clarity, with any explanatory notes in square brackets.

Q: What is the aim of the Sochi conference? And why did the Russians invite you to the conference?

A: The Sochi conference is a message to the history of mankind and to our descendants. There is nothing like this conference in history, whether in whole or part, and it is a call to those who fought each other from the sons of the one homeland, and it was crowned with success by 12 concluding clauses for the Sochi conference, as well as foundations for the future by democratic, civilized means and comprehensive mutual understanding and overcoming all the foreign interferences as a collective free mind looking into the future of this homeland. Being a Syrian by ancestry, and bearing Syrian identity in rights, culture and mindset, I obtained this honour in my attending of the Sochi conference. I was invited by my state, my Russian friends and the group that I was participating in and on the insistence of all parties. I offered my message in the name of the sons of the Sanjak of Alexandretta with a raised head and loud voice, and I finished my mission without responding to the drums of fitn [strife/discord] and makers and patrons of terrorism. And there is no illegitimate matter for my participation, as is also true of some 1500 people [who attended Sochi] with a cultural standing whose roots extend to 7000 years of Syrian civilization.

Q: Do you think that the Sochi conference was a success?

A: Yes, it was a success. And in the academic challenge and lines of evidence, I say: the Sochi conference will be a point of reference through history and a high civilizational example of mutual understanding for all who fall into the same situation.

Q: What is the Syrian Resistance's stance on the Turkish invasion of Afrin? Are you ready to intervene to help the so-called Kurdish YPG?

A: I wish for the reader of this report to know that the problem of the Middle East for 1000 years has been the problem of the peoples of the region with the capricious, wandering, barbarian Turkish invaders. As one of the sociologists- the famous Turk Taha Akyol- said: 'From the societies of the wanderers, civilization is not made.' This is apparent from their people as they entered into Anatolia in 1071 CE with the Battle of Manzikert and they destroyed all the civilizations that are located on the land of Anatolia from the different peoples. They could not make a

new civilization or noble life through their burden and wretchedness on the land, but rather they resorted to oppression, repression, theft and plunder. And their state of affairs has always been as they call it- 'The Great Terror'- because they seized control over the owners of the lands and riches in this region by force and did not offer them anything from civilization. Therefore, the psychology of their rulers has been the complex of the thief who fears that the owner of the riches and lands will return to demand them back and nothing has remained for them. I deem above that the Turkish people, and all I say regarding theft, plunder and barbarianism concerns the Donmeh [crypto-Jews who publicly declared conversion to Islam] rulers of the Ottomans, for the sake of whose rule they desire to kill and destroy even the Turkmen tribes.

Therefore, just as they were spreading yesterday by means of their Janissary armies, so today in the neo-Ottoman era, they are trying to regain their claimed sultanate that is an expression of barbarianism and today is an expression of oppressive fascism against its people and the people of region. The sick man, as he was called in the days of the First World War: whenever he recovers relatively speaking, he returns to his ways of theft, plunder and usurping the lands of others: thus the usurpation of the stolen sanjak- the Syrian Sanjak of Alexandretta- in 1939 CE, taking advantage of the global balances and the mandate situation in Syria, in addition to killing and destroying 19 times the demands of the Kurdish people for their independence (and it continues to do so). And he [the sick man] has undertaken fascist military coups against the demand of the Kurdish people and the other peoples in Anatolia for freedom and democracy. He captured little Cyprus [referring to Northern Cyprus].

And today, after the bloody dictator Erdogan attained rule, he is trying to open up political space to pour out his filth and barbarity on the peoples and lands of the region, and he is searching for waves of conflicts in order to ride them, sometimes with the Americans who colonize Turkey with their military bases, technology and capitalism, and sometimes he is trying to ride the wave of conflicts between Russia and America. And from these vacuums, he acquired Jarabulus, Dabiq, al-Bab and then Idlib, and after that on the basis of foolish arguments with no truth to them, and despite the fact that he is the maker of terrorism and its supporter, he claims against the the YPG that they are 'terrorist movements' that are hostile Turkey and must be deterred. In truth, these popular Syrian Kurdish organizations have been among the fiercest fighters against terrorism and the one who supports them [the terrorists], and in the areas in which they defeated terrorism, there is no branch that can take root or cause ruin.

And the attack began on Afrin as one of tyrannical oppression, and the neo-Ottomans think that the war will be a picnic, but the Syrian people of Afrin in all its components have resisted this neo-Ottoman imperialist wave, have brought down its wing, broken its feet and stopped it despite all the permits that the neo-Ottomans obtained from here and there, as they fell on the mountains of Afrin. And here on the 20th day of this despicable campaign, the dictator Erdogan has not realized any

overwhelming victory. The Turkish army is a NATO alliance army, and as the NATO generals have said: 'The cheapest commodity in Turkey is its army.' And this cheap army has been fighting for 40 years with the heroic PKK, facing abominable defeats.* And today in Afrin it has been stopped at the point beyond which it cannot pass and cannot obtain any political or military gain before the Syrian people of Afrin in all its components.

As for the Syrian Resistance, it supports the people of Afrin in all its components, and as the need arises, we will fight in the positions shoulder to shoulder with our brothers in the struggle.

Q: Is there any contact between you and the so-called Autonomous Administration for the Afrin Canton with regards to stopping the Turkish invasion of Afrin?

A: Yes, the contact is continual and the information is always being exchanged, and we will not abandon this unity, the state of affairs for this shared homeland. And we will remain as the sons of one homeland in every meaning of the word from the meaning of solidarity.

Q: There is talk of an attempt by some of the youth from Nubl and Zahara' to help the Kurds in resistance. Is this true?

A: Until now we do not have conclusive information. But Nubl and Zahara' are the nearest towns to Afrin. It is from their right and obligation that they should defend this part of the Syrian homeland in all their capabilities.

Q: On what fronts does the Syrian Resistance fight and how many martyrs does it have?

A: We fight on all fronts under the leadership of the Syrian army wherever required. We have 100 martyrs and 325 wounded and this is a badge of honour for all cadres of the resistance from leaders and members.