

Russian Delegation to Syria Proposes Kurdish Autonomy

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Kurdish fighters gesture while carrying their parties' flags in Raqqa, Syria. **Rodi Said / Reuters**

Russia's delegation to the Syrian peace talks in Astana has recommended giving Kurds in northern Syria autonomy, the RBC newspaper has reported.

Russia's Special Presidential Representative on Syria Alexander Lavrentiev announced Jan. 24 that his delegation had submitted a draft constitution to representatives of Syria's armed opposition movement.

RBC managed to obtain a copy of the text, which the newspaper reports contains 27 constitutional amendments. One of the provisions would give Kurds in northern Syria autonomy, as well as language equality.

Early in the Syrian Civil War, Kurds in northern Syria established autonomous "cantons" under the direction of the leftist Democratic Union Party and its armed People's Protection Units. Together, the cantons were referred to as Rojava (West).

Rojava has gained worldwide attention, not only for its struggle against the Islamic State, but also for its radical mode of government which is based on direct democracy as well as ethnic and gender equality.

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Other proposed constitutional amendments include removing the word "Arab" from the country's official title, leaving only "Syrian Republic."

Another proposal provides for a presidential term of seven years, but does not allow consecutive terms. Also dropped from the proposed constitution is a sentence which says that legislation derives from Islamic law.

Update: The Syrian opposition representatives have refused to read the Russian draft constitution proposal, the Kommersant newspaper reported. The opposition did not make any specific criticisms of the proposed document, but rather rejected it as "written in another country."

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