



# Executive Summary Istanbul II Principles

Istanbul, May 2017

**EZKS**  
Europäisches Zentrum für Kurdische Studien  
European Center for Kurdish Studies





Disclaimer: The principles in this paper reflect the discussions of the workshop. This does, however, not mean that all participants agree on all points of this document.

Europäisches Zentrum für Kurdische Studien  
European Center for Kurdish Studies

Project: Power Sharing for a United Syria

Emser Straße 26

Berlin 12051

Germany



[mail@kurdologie.de](mailto:mail@kurdologie.de)

+49 30 67 96 85 27

May 2017 | Berlin



# Istanbul II Principles

## An executive summary of the discussions in Istanbul, 27 – 30 May, 2017

This is the outcome of the discussions held in Istanbul from 27 – 30 May 2017 between representatives of various minority groups within Syria.

### Agreement was reached on the following points:

1. Syria shall be a democratic state.
2. Syria shall be a constitutional state which respects the principles of the separation of powers.
3. Syria shall respect and safeguard internationally recognized human rights.
4. Syria shall be a multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic and multi-religious state that recognizes the diversity of its population and all of its individual groups, and respects their right to cultural self-determination. International minority rights shall be guaranteed for all of the country's minority populations.
5. All ethnic, religious, and linguistic groups shall form part of the identity of Syria and shall contribute to the cultural richness of the country. All groups, regardless of their size, shall be recognized as part of Syrian society and shall be equally entitled to respect and protection of their cultural heritage and to the preservation and promotion of their cultural identity.
6. Syria shall guarantee equal rights and obligations for women and men and shall ensure reasonable and proportionate representation and participation of women in all institutions of the Syrian state. In all institutions of the central government, of the regions and of the municipalities, women shall comprise a minimum of thirty percent of the members.
7. Syria's territorial integrity shall be guaranteed and shall ensure that all individual groups can participate equally in the state.
8. Syria shall have a constitutional court that oversees human rights, minority rights, and the distribution of powers and resources and protects all of the values of the constitution.
9. Syria shall be a federation which shares power and resources between the national and regional levels.
10. Syria shall be a democratic state based on civic engagement and on the separation of the state and religion. The national constitution shall respect and protect freedom of belief and freedom of conscience for all. The state shall treat all religious communities with respect and, specifically, shall recognize the religious community of the Yazidis.
11. The system of government in Syria shall be a semi-presidential system; the constitution shall stipulate the powers of the president in explicit and definitive terms and shall contain provisions regulating the president's collaboration with the government.
12. The Syrian parliament shall comprise two chambers. In the first chamber, all groups shall be represented according to the size of their population, with representatives elected directly. In the second chamber, each region shall be represented with the same number of delegates. The regions shall determine how their representatives are to be appointed. The electoral process in the regions shall ensure adequate representation for all ethnic, religious and linguistic groups. The Assyrian and Jezidi groups as well as additional extremely small and widely dispersed groups shall each be additionally entitled to a representative in the second chamber. Decisions pertaining to regional powers and responsibilities shall require approval by the second chamber. Should a specific region be particularly affected by a project, the approval of this region shall be required.
13. The central and regional authorities shall be inclusive and shall represent all groups in accordance with the proportion of the total population. Overrepresentation of extremely small and widely dispersed groups shall be permitted.



14. At national level, the following languages shall be recognized as official languages with equal value: Arabic, Kurdish, Turkmen, Assyrian. Account shall be taken of the needs of other linguistic groups.
15. At least one national language must be recognized as an official language in each of the regions. The regions may establish one or more additional languages as official languages.
16. The national level shall be responsible for foreign relations, the military and defense, currency, citizenship, and the planning and coordination of functions which are in the interest of Syria as a whole. The other state functions shall fall within the powers and responsibilities of the regions.
17. Foreign relations shall lie within the exclusive powers and responsibilities of the central government.
18. The boundaries of the regions shall be redrawn. Ethnic, religious and linguistic criteria shall be taken into consideration.
19. Each region shall have its own constitution and its own public authorities.
20. Minorities shall, regardless of their location, enjoy the right to cultural self-determination, specifically the right to self-determination in matters of school education, of the exercise of religion, and of the fostering of culture. To this end, they may find institutions which ensure cross-border cooperation.
21. Syria's resources shall be shared between the national level and the regions based on the following criteria: population, economic development status, the need for reconstruction and compensation for past injustices.
22. An independent commission shall produce proposals for transitional justice for submission to parliament, and shall ensure that the crimes of the past are punished.
23. The regions recognize the rights of all groups to municipal self-administration. The boundaries of the municipalities shall be redrawn where necessary. Ethnic, religious and linguistic criteria shall be taken into consideration.

**The following provisions have been attached to the above-mentioned points:**

- Proviso to point 7 from the Turkmen group: The following formulation is preferred:  
Point 7: Syria's territorial integrity shall be guaranteed.  
Point 8: Syria shall ensure that all individual groups can participate equally in the state.
- Proviso to point 7 from the Druze group: The following formulation is preferred:  
Point 7: Syria's territorial integrity shall be guaranteed and shall ensure that all segments of the population can participate equitably in the state.

