



Member of the European Parliament

H.E. Dr Haider Al-Abadi  
Prime Minister of Iraq

Wednesday 20th December 2017

Dear Prime Minister,

As Members of the European Parliament, we are writing to highlight some of our concerns following the referendum conducted on the 25th September 2017 by the Kurdistan Regional Government.

It was always our understanding that the result of referendum was not to be interpreted as a fait-accompli of independence but rather as an expression of feeling that could form the basis for the start of a conversation between Erbil and Baghdad as to its future relationship. In light of the events of recent years and the imminent destruction of ISIS on Iraqi soil, this appears to us a very natural moment for such a dialogue.

Events following the September referendum, however, have given us some cause for alarm. The decision of Baghdad to impose a number of sanctions upon the Autonomous Region of Kurdistan, namely the closure of airspace and travel restrictions, in addition to the military campaigns to take territory previously in the control of the KRG, are chief among those.

We note the decision of the Iraqi Federal Supreme Court on 6th November, which clarifies the interpretation of Article 1 of the Iraqi Constitution, making it clear that any unilateral secession of a province or region of Iraq is unconstitutional. Given the KRG's decision to respect this ruling, in addition to its previous decision to freeze the result of the referendum, it seems clear to us the KRG is keen to engage with the central government in Baghdad, and to find peaceful solutions to the country's shared challenges.

The Peshmerga units under the control of the KRG have played an instrumental role in the ground military offences in the fight against ISIS during the past three years and the KRG continues to host upwards of 1.5 million refugees and IDPs. We welcome this support and appreciate the financial difficulties that this has caused the region. The proposals of the 2018 Draft Budget Bill, which seeks to heavily restrict funding to the KRG, is therefore of immediate concern.

We call on your Government to engage in positive and constructive talks with the authorities in Erbil, in order to deescalate the current tensions. In our view, the priorities should be to ensure that the 2018 Draft Budget apportions sufficient funds to the KRG in line with the Constitutional framework; to remove the air and travel restrictions placed on the Autonomous Region and its inhabitants; and to ensure that all members of the Iraqi Council of Representatives can fully carry out their duties.

Finally, we believe that a Government statement underlining its commitment to the integrity of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq would be a welcomed confidence building measure.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Demesmaeker MEP

José Ignacio Faria MEP

Ana Gomes MEP

Tunne Kelam MEP

Costas Mavrides MEP

John Procter MEP

Alyn Smith MEP

Charles Tannock MEP

Julie Ward MEP