

Iraqi Kurds Vote to Secede

According to the referendum commission, initial results indicate that 91.83 percent voted to secede. 3.4 million ballots were counted.

The separatist vote — which has only been publicly supported by Israel — has been met with hostility from Iraqi Kurdistan's neighbors, as well as Iraq. Baghdad — which rejected the vote as a "creation of a second Israel" — said that the Kurdistan Regional Government, KRG, which controls the area that held the referendum, has three days to hand over control of its airports or face an air embargo.

Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi also called on foreign states to stop cooperating with the KRG on issues in the oil sector. He also demanded that all border posts with Turkey, Syria and Iran be placed under Baghdad's supervision. Turkey also responded aggressively, threatening military action and sanctions in order to force the KRG to "give up on this adventure that can only have a dark end."

"It will be over when we close the oil taps, all (their) revenues will vanish, and they will not be able to find food when our trucks stop going to northern Iraq," Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan pressed.

Iran on Sunday had also banned direct flights to and from the Kurdistan Region.

An official within Iran's Expediency Council, Ali Akbar Velayati, stated before the vote that the existence of a secessionist Kurdish state in Iraq would only benefit the United States and the "Zionist regime of Israel," both of whom seek to "colonize and dominate" the Middle East, Press TV reported.

Why Does Israel Support an Independent Iraqi Kurdistan?

In order to undermine the idea of a united pan-Arab socialist state, one that supports the Palestinian struggle, Israel seeks to make ties with non-Arab Muslim actors.

Israeli General Yair Golan openly said that an independent Kurdish region in Iraq would stem the influence of Iran.

"Given Iran's presence in the east and instability in the region, a solid, stable, coherent Kurdish entity in the middle of this quagmire is not a bad idea," the general stated during an event at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

As Lebanese journalist and political commentator Osama al-Sharif wrote in the Jordan Times, "Netanyahu and his far right allies know very well that a unilateral Kurdish decision to cede from Iraq in the absence of an agreement



over a number of contentious issues, least of which is the future of oil-rich Kirkuk province, would trigger a civil war that is likely to spill over.

"Destabilizing the region and weakening central governments will shift attention from Israel's nefarious policies towards the Palestinians while hastening the process of colonization of what remains of the West Bank," he continued.

Oil and money

But Israel's support for Iraqi Kurdistan extends past politics: the two parties have deep-seated economic ties as well: Israel imported three-quarters of its oil from Iraqi Kurdistan in 2015.

Beyond Israel, the oil-rich region and its quest for independence, has already fomented the support of oil corporations, not least of all due to the KRG's cooperation with their demands.

In hopes of procuring financial support to create their own state, the KRG has violated both Iraqi law and OPEC treaties, subsidizing exports for oil corporations such as DNO International.

As Brad Blankenship wrote in Al-Masdar News, "What is developing in Iraq is a nation that will almost certainly be partitioned, not for the intention of conquering Iraq in the classical sense, but to use Kurdish oil to force the government in Baghdad to loosen public control over its own resources and to slow the rate of social progress.

This, of course, has always been the goal sought by the West in Iraq even though Western governments are against Kurdish independence — at least on paper,"

Turkey's Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu warned that every option is on the table for dealing with Iraqi Kurdistan's independence bid, and that they are considering a joint military operation with the Iraqi central government against the Kurds.

Iran chimed in shortly thereafter, saying they're eager to stand with both Iraq and Turkey to rule out any possible secession of the Kurds. Top Khamenei adviser Ali Akbar Velayati termed the bid "an abhorrent deviation," adding that the region would "not allow the creation of a second Israel."

Iraqi officials haven't directly addressed the possibility of military action against the Kurds, though the Iraqi parliament has approved the deployment of the military into areas contested by the Kurdistan Regional Government. It's long been feared Kurdistan's independence would mean a fight. Kurdish officials have spent the last several years building up the Peshmerga into a substantial, US-armed fighting force, though it's not at all clear they could hold their own against three nations at once.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan was a lot more direct about what is being discussed here, warning that the secession attempt could lead to an "ethnic war" of the region against the Kurds.

From telesurtv.net
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Iraqi forces took over key positions in the Kurdish city of Kirkuk and nearby oil-rich areas on October 16th, after Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi said he ordered troops sent in because Iraq is in danger of "partition," citing the Kurdish independence movement.

"This oil-rich province fell under Kurdish control in 2014, after Iraqi troops fled in the face of an offensive there by the extremist group ISIS. Now, the Iraqi government wants the territory back.

"Iraq's prime minister, Haider al-Abadi, said troops were under instructions to 'protect all citizens' as they advanced into the area, and Iraqi forces are said to have been told to avoid violence. But some residents reported hearing gunfire and explosions in the early hours of the morning.

"The hostilities mark a real challenge for the United States, which has armed and trained both Iraqi troops and Kurdish Peshmerga fighters."

The Kurdish Regional Security Council says the operation began just before midnight and involved both Iraqi forces and Iran-backed militia fighters, **"using U.S. military equipment, including Abrams tanks and Humvees." The council said that the Kurdish Peshmerga "destroyed at least five U.S. Humvees used by PMF."**

The **Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF)**, also known as the **Popular Mobilization Units (PMU)** is an Iraqi state-sponsored umbrella organization composed of some 40 militias.

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