

17. December 2016

To: **The Danish Parliament - The Foreign Affairs Committee**

We are writing to you in regard to the recent political and legal crisis in Iraqi Kurdistan (Northern Iraq). On October 12, 2015, the security forces of KDP known as the Kurdistan Democratic Party prevented the Speaker of Parliament, Yusef Muhammad, from returning to the capital city of Erbil (Hawler) in order to carry out his legislative duties. This was implemented by the order of the top political officials of KDP as a retaliation and escalation of the deadlock in the negotiation process by the Kurdish political parties; regarding the extension of Masoud Barzani's term as president of the Kurdistan region. Barzani's legal term ended on August 19, 2015, after 10 years as president of KRG (Kurdistan Regional Government), during which he was elected for two four-year terms in addition to a two-year extension granted to him by the Kurdistan parliament. His first term started on June 12, 2005, and continued until July 25, 2009, when he was reelected to a second term. After 8 years of being in office, Mr. Barzani was not willing to leave the post and asked for a two-year extension, which was granted to him by the parliament on June 30, 2013. The 10-year presidency ended on August 18, 2015, and he is still in power and not willing to leave office as his party officials demand another two-year extension. There are five major political parties in Iraqi Kurdistan. Four of which presented a legislative resolution in Parliament to deal with the presidency issue. The KDP was the only party which refused to participate or propose resolution in any parliamentary session to deal with this issue. It insisted on negotiation to resolve the issue outside the parliament and the four political parties were forced to meet the demand.

The negotiation process started at the end of July 2015 and continued until two weeks ago. The negotiation ended in a deadlock due to the fact that the KDP has refused to compromise on its demands. Due to the deadlock, the four political parties (PUK, Gorran, Yakgrtu and Komal) decided to return the issue to the Parliament for discussion but the KDP prevented this by refusing the Speaker of Parliament entry into the city of Erbil, where the parliament is located. This move was coupled by the firing of the five Gorran ministers from the coalition government cabinet.

One of the ministers is Mustafa Said Qadirhe, the minister of the Peshmarga (Kurdish Military Fighters), who directly oversees the military operations against ISIS. This will have a significant impact on the morale of the Peshmarga in their fight against ISIS. The KDP has also closed down two major TV stations, which are NRT (Nalia Radio & TV) and KNN (Kurdish News Network) in both cities of Erbil and Duhok. By doing this, the KDP is violating the freedom of speech principle along with censoring independent broadcasting into its controlled territories.

What has happened in the KRG (Kurdistan Regional Government) is unacceptable and illegal, it can clearly be considered as a political coup d'état by the KDP. Therefore, we are asking you to address the crisis because it is in the interest of the European countries to not allow such a plot to succeed. As it will violate our core principle of defending a new-born democracy along with the peaceful and nonviolent transition of power. Denmark has a moral obligation to the Kurdish people to support their enduring struggle to achieve a democratic form of government and a civil political system rather than the monopoly and control of power by a single group and party.

A stable and prosperous government can only be achieved when the rule of law is respected and protected. What we are seeing now in Iraqi Kurdistan is an attempt by one of the political parties and its leader to disobey and prevent such a process to go forward. We strongly believe that the Denmark can play an important role in this regard by sending a clear message to both the KDP and its leader that such an attempt and action will not be accepted nor tolerated.

The Kurdish people deserve good governance and political stability, as the past and current history teaches us a lot regarding this matter. Denmark and the rest of the European countries are well viewed and respected by the Kurdish people for your support and protection on several occasions such as, 1992, 2003, and now. We will continue to count on your support and cooperation in building democratic institutions and a transparent government in Kurdistan. Your voice and stands on this issue is important and urgent.

Best regards

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