



"Kerkuk Problem and Article 140: Defining Alternatives, The views of Kerkuk's Turkmen and Arabs"

European Parliament, 23 June 2008 (ASP 5G2)

- Press Release -

Iraq is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country, home to numerous cultures and communities. Northern Iraq in particular is highly mixed, making it difficult to draw any boundaries on the basis of ethnicity. Even Erbil, which has now been made the Capital of the Kurdish region, is a highly mixed Turkmen-Kurdish-Assyrian city, whereas it was an almost purely Turkmen city in the turn of 20th century. The one million mainly Arabic Mosul and the geopolitically important Kerkuk region are now claimed and controlled mainly by the Kurdish political authorities. Institutions of ethnically based demarcation in this region are highly hazardous and threaten the future of the Iraqi state and the regional peace.

The huge casualties and the catastrophic tragedies since the occupation of Iraq demand significant awareness when attempting to solve problems. No doubt that the Kerkuk case is considered one of the major problems. A fair solution of the Kerkuk problem is important as well in the context of the equity, human rights and the principles of democracy, which are requested to be instituted in the Middle East. Durable solutions, which carry long lasting stability in the volatile region as the Middle East, should also be considered when the Kerkuk problem is investigated.

Little consensus has however emerged by the Iraqi constitution's "normalization", "census" and "referendum" to solve the problem, which instead has further complicated the democratic processes aimed at safeguarding future stability.

The complexity of the Kerkuk case has increasingly become more evident, particularly when the referendum, which is stated in the Iraqi constitution, could not be realized at the requested date - end 2007. In early 2008, the case was given to the United Nations, which still could not map the way of a solution. The European Union can be considered an important arbitrator of a solution.

Kerkuk is a city rich with both oil and history. The Iraqi Turkmen, in particular stand opposed to the city's inclusion in a Kurdish region, drawing attention to the Turkmen nature of the city. Kerkuk Arabs, who constitutes a considerable community, are strongly against the changes which took place in Kerkuk after occupation. Both groups fear however that their input into the normalization process has been marginalized. This is reflected in what they view as primarily Kurdish immigration and voter registration in anticipation of the crucial referendum, as well as a catalogue of unresolved land claims following confiscation during the Ba'ath era. They both support the options that either Kerkuk province is annexed to Baghdad or made an independent province.

With Participation from:

Ana Maria Gomez, MEP, Parliament's Rapporteur on Iraq

Ali M. Sadeq, member of Kerkuk City Council

Marino Busdachin, UNPO General Secretary

Mohammed Kh. Nasef, Member of Kerkuk City Council, member of article 140 committee

Mohammed Mahdi Ameen, Member of the Iraqi Parliament

Muzaffer Arslan, Advisor on Turkmen Affairs to the President of Iraq H.E. Jalal Talabani

Rakan S. Ali, member of Kerkuk City Council

Sheth Jerjis, SOITM Chairman

Tahsin Mohammed Ali Wali, Member of Kerkuk City Council, member of article 140 committee

Yako Michael Jajjo, Foundation Assyria

Note to the Editor

The Conference will be held at 23 June in Room ASP 5G2 of the European Parliament, Rue Wiertz, 1047, Brussels, from 01.00pm until 04.30pm.

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