

Barzani: Sign U.S.-Iraqi Security Agreement or face civil war

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The President of Iraq's Kurdistan local government has warned of a 'civil war' if Baghdad refuses to sign a security agreement with the US.

"If the pact is not signed, the situation in the country may deteriorate to the point of a civil war," Voices of Iraq news agency quoted Masoud Barzani as saying at a press conference on Wednesday.

Barzani had earlier said his region will provide the US with military bases if the Iraqi government refuses to sign the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA).

Baghdad and Washington are negotiating the deal to provide a legal basis for the presence of US troops in Iraq after their UN mandate expires in December 2008.

Based on the agreement's provisions, the US would be granted the permission to build military bases, camps and prisons inside Iraq.

The deal, however, has met fierce opposition from the country's political and religious leaders who are concerned about those SOFA provisions which would "violate Iraq's sovereignty".

Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki has also declared that any agreement with the United States should consider the country's sovereignty and national interests.

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