

# By the Grace of Israel - The Barzani Clan and Kurdish “Independence”

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*The Kurdish region in Iraq held a “referendum” about splitting off from Iraq to form [an independent state](#). The referendum was highly irregular and the outcome [was assured](#). That such a referendum was held now had more to do with the beleaguered situation of the illegitimate regional president Barzani than with a genuine opportunity to achieve independence. The referendum was non-binding. It is now onto Barzani to declare independence or to set the issue aside in exchange for, essentially, more money.*

We first wrote about the [Kurdish problem](#) and Kurdish ambitions in Iraqi back in December 2005(!). The problems of an independent Kurdish region we then pointed out are still the same:

A landlocked Kurdish state of some kind could produce a lot of oil, but how would this oil reach the markets, especially Israel? The neighbors Turkey, Iran and Syria all have Kurdish minorities and have no reason to help a Kurdish state to enrich itself and see that money funneled to their unruly minorities. After [Kurdish] grabbing [of] Kirkuk, the Arab rest of Iraq will also not support pipelines for then Kurdish oil.

Arabs, Turks, and Persians see the Kurds as a recalcitrant nomadic mountain tribe and stooge of Israeli interests.

In the mid 1960s and 70s Israel cooperated with Iran, then a U.S. ally under the Shah, to fight against its Arab enemies – Iraq, Syria and Egypt. As part of the cooperation the Mossad sent Lt. Colonel Tzuri Sagi to develop plans for and [build up](#) a Kurdish army to fight Iraqi troops in northern Iraq. Tzuri Sagi was also [responsible](#) for the Israeli assassination attempts against Saddam Hussein. His Kurdish cooperation partner was the leader of the Barzani clan, Mullah Mustafa Barzani. The Kurdish army the Israelis created is now known as Peshmerga. The son of Mullah Mustafa Barzani, Masoud Barzani, is now the illegitimate president of the Kurdish region of Iraq.



Lt. Colonel Sagi with Mustafa Barazani. Photo reproduction: Yossi Zeliger ([Source](#))



Sagi with Kurdish commanders



Barazani with then-head of the Mossad, Meir Amit

The [Barzani's](#) are part of a major Kurdish tribe and a leading clan in the Kurdish region of Iraq. (The other major clan are the Talabani, currently with much less power.) In 2005 Masoud Barzani, the son of Mullah Mustafa Barzani, was elected President of the Kurdish region in Iraq. His eight year term ended in 2013. The regional parliament extended his presidency by two years. But since 2015 he has ruled without any legal basis. He prevented the parliament from convening and formally ousting him. Masoud Barzani's son Mazrour Barzani is chancellor of the region's security council. He controls all military and civilian intelligence. Nechirvan Barzani, a nephew of Masoud Barzani, is prime minister of the Kurdish region.

U.S. oil interests helped to build the Barzani's power. The Kurds pumped and sold oil without the consent of Baghdad. Oil is exported through Turkish pipelines and sold [mostly to Israel](#). The family of the Turkish president Erdogan is intimately [involved](#) in the business. But despite billions of income from (illegal) oil sales the Kurdish region is heavily [indebted](#). Corruption rules in Kurdistan and the regional government had to [rob local banks](#) to find fresh money. That still wasn't enough to pay salaries. The Barzani family mafia has robbed the region blind. To keep going, the local government needs to annex more riches and widen its business base.

The Barzani family has deep [religious-historic ties](#) with a Sunni spiritual order of Sufis, the Naqshbandi. The [Army of the Men of the Naqshbandi Order](#) was one of the Sunni-Baathist resistance group of the U.S. occupation of Iraq. In 2014 it [helped](#) ([or didn't help?](#)) the Islamic State in the takeover of Mosul before being shunned and defeated by it.

The Iraqi Kurds, under Masoud Barzani, were complicit in the mid 2014 Islamic State takeover of Mosul and the Sinjar region inhabited by Kurdish speaking Yezidis. They saw it as an opportunity to take more oil and declare their own independence from Baghdad. Only after the Islamic State marched towards the Kurdish "capital" Erbil, where U.S. and Israeli intelligence as well as western oil companies have their regional headquarters, did the Barzani Kurds start to oppose the Islamic State.



They then used the fight against the Islamic State to widen the area they controlled by 40%. Minorities like the Yazidi and Assyrians, which were driven away from their homes by the Islamic State, are now denied to return to their areas by Kurdish occupiers. As NYT correspondent Rukmini Callimachi [reports](#) from the ground:

A common refrain I hear is that the Iraqi army ran when ISIS overran Mosul, whereas the Kurds stood their ground. Sadly that's not true. One of the areas that was under the control of Kurdish troops was Mt Sinjar, home to a large share of the 500,000 Yazidis living in Iraq. According to the dozens of interviews I've done with Yazidi survivors of ISIS' ensuing genocide, Kurdish troops cut and ran when ISIS came. Adding insult to injury, say community leaders, Kurdish troops disarmed Yazidis. And did not warn them of ISIS' advance. The result: Thousands of Yazidi women were kidnapped by ISIS and systematically raped. Many I spoke to partially blamed Kurdish troops for their fate.

Callimachi further reports that Kurdish troops now prevent Yazidis from returning to their homes. Barzani has unilaterally annexed their land and unilaterally declared it to be part of the Kurdish region. The Kurds also [occupy land and villages](#), already mentioned in the bible, that belong to Assyrian Christians.

Another hotspot is Kirkuk. The oil rich city is an original Turkman and Arab areas. The Kurds [snatched it](#) in 2014 while the Islamic State marched onto Baghdad. The move on Kirkuk was, allegedly, coordinated with the Islamic State. They now want to annex it. The Iraqi state is naturally vehemently against this and is now sending its army. The Turkish government, which sees itself as defender of all Turkmen, also threatens to intervene.

After the Kurdish independence referendum the Iraqi government declared a partial blockade of their region. Iraq is a sovereign state, the Kurdish region has no independent legal status. This gives Baghdad many ways to strangle Kurdish ambitions. Starting Friday all international (civil) flights to Erbil [are](#) by order of Baghdad prohibited. A land blockade and stoppage of all trade and monetary transfers are likely to follow.

Syria, Iran and Turkey have all spoken out against Kurdish independence and threatened retribution. Officially the U.S. is also against an independent Kurdish state. Israel was the only state that supported the referendum. That sympathy (or politically convenience) runs both ways: [In Kurdistan's Erbil, the Polling Station Head Shouted Out: 'We Are the Second Israel!'](#)

Chuck Schumer, Democratic Senate leader and a reliable Zionist tool, [called on the Trump administration to recognizing](#) an independent Kurdistan. Trump can not do so because it would put the U.S. in opposition to its "allies" in the Turkish and the Iraqi government. But the official position is different from what the U.S. does on the ground. U.S. arms still flow to Kurdish forces in Iraq and Syria.

Likewise Turkey is officially very concerned about the independence move of Kurdish Iraq but it also has commercial interests in it. Long term it fears the independence movements in its own large Kurdish population and sees the referendum in Iraq as a [U.S. move](#) against Turkish security interests:

[Turks] believe the referendum is actually part of Washington's supposed long-

standing desire to establish “a second Israel” in the region. Israel’s support for the KRG referendum has fed into this perception.

According to the Iraqi prime minister Turkey [agreed](#) to isolate the Kurdish region. But Turkish companies, and Erdogan’s immediate family, have commercial interest in oil from the Kurdish region. Turkey exports some \$8 billion per year in food and consumer goods to the Kurdish region. While Ankara is anxious that its own Kurdish population will follow the Iraqi Kurdish example, near term greed [may well prevail](#) over long term national interests.

Without Turkish agreement an “independent” Kurdish region in Iraq can not survive. Such independence would totally depend on Ankara’s whims.

Should Masoud Barzani gain enough external support and prevail with his independence gimmick, the situation in Syria [would also change](#). The Kurds in Syria are currently led by the PKK/YPG, a political cult and militia which follows [Abdullah Öcalan’s](#) crude philosophies. Politically they are opposed to Barzani but they have similar interests and attitudes. Though only 8% of the population, they have now occupied some 20% of Syria’s land and control 40% of its oil reserves. Continued U.S. support for Syrian Kurds and the example in Iraq could incited them to split from Syria. Damascus would never agree to that.

Kurdish independence, as Barzanistan in Iraq and/or as anarcho-marxists Öcalan cult in Syria, would be the start of another decade of war – either between the Kurdish entities and the nations around them, or within the ever disunited Kurdish tribes themselves.

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