

Iraqi Kurdistan Independence Referendum

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The referendum held on September 25 received overwhelming 93% support, Kurdish officials in northern Iraq calling the results binding. Turnout was around 80%.

Demonstrators celebrated in Irbil, the semi-autonomous Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) capital, chanting "Bye bye Iraq!"

Not so fast! Baghdad threatened to send armed forces to the region to take control of the area and its highly valued oil fields, producing hundreds of thousands of barrels daily.

Tens of thousands of well-armed Peshmerga fighters could challenge any intervention. Possible civil war could erupt.

Turkish President Erdogan threatened to close the oil pipeline, carrying crude from the region to the Mediterranean, demanding Kurdish leadership "abandon this adventure with a dark ending."

Iraqi and Turkish forces announced joint military exercises - a dress rehearsal for joint intervention?

Baghdad, US and EU parliamentarians rejected the referendum, saying the results won't be recognized, expressing support for Iraqi unity and territorial integrity.

The State Department said the following:

"The United States strongly opposes the Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government's referendum on independence, planned for September 25. All of Iraq's neighbors, and virtually the entire international community, also oppose this referendum."

The statement cynically ignored US support for partitioning regional and other countries, Britain endorsing the same policy, Russia and China against it.

Netanyahu cynically endorsed “the legitimate efforts of the Kurdish people to achieve their own state” – polar opposite his opposition to Palestinian self-determination.

He hopes Kurdish independence aims can help Israel divide and dominate the region, easier with smaller weaker states.

Iran opposes Kurdish separatism, calling for Iraq’s territorial integrity to be preserved, days earlier suspending flights to and from the region to its territory.

The Security Council unanimously issued a statement voicing alarm over “the potentially destabilizing impact” of the plebiscite, urging “dialogue and compromise” with Baghdad.

Calls for Kurdish independence are longstanding. An unofficial 2005 plebiscite in northern Iraq got 98% support.

In early June, Kurdish President Masoud Barzani announced the referendum would be held on September 25, Kurdish officials saying a “yes” vote automatically means independence.

Ahead of Monday’s vote, Barzani said

“(w)e are at a junction in the road, either to choose independence or subordination and oppression,” adding it’s “too late to postpone the referendum.”

A truly independent Kurdistan remains a distant unfulfilled dream. Iraqi Kurds have semi-autonomous status, what’s next after its referendum still uncertain.

Syrian Foreign Minister Walid Moallem offered to negotiate Kurdish autonomy in his country – once the scourge of US-supported terrorism is defeated.

In the meantime, a region in turmoil remains the top priority to address, unlikely to be resolved any time soon because peace and stability defeat Washington’s imperial objectives.

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