Carter in Erbil to discuss Mosul fight with Barzani
The operation of liberating Mosul has practically mounted. Peshmerga forces are achieving their specified targets in Northeast of Mosul, while the Iraqi army is liberating villages in South-west of the city. The big war of liberating Mosul which the officials call the end of ISIS has yet to be started. It seems to be a big and bloody war, a war that could repeat another Aleppo in Mosul, which will consequently result in big humanitarian catastrophe and a long-standing and heavy war.

Russia has expressed concerns over the possibility of ISIS’s escape into Syria following besieging of Mosul, because it thinks gathering is Syria would further complicate and broaden their task there. France also believes that ISIS should be ended in Mosul, thus the doubts over allowing ISIS out of the city is not quite real. The same scenario of Fallujah and Anbar could also be repeated in Mosul. U.S wants to use airstrikes against ISIS as a card, but big wars usually results in big conflicts and reason. Under the pretext of a fierce fighting is expected to happen during the Mosul operation, but he is optimistic about the Peshmerga forces and Iraqi army working together to defeat the extremist group in the major city. He also welcomed the military coordination between Erbil and Baghdad, noting that it’s the first time Peshmerga and the Iraqi soldiers are fighting on the same front line against a common enemy. He confirmed that advances are continuing as their forces have already managed to free 300 square kilometers from ISIS while the militants are using different tactics to resist. According to Barzani, ISIS is struggling to prevent the advances of Peshmerga and the Iraqi army by sending suicide bombers, VBIEDs, and setting fire to the oil fields so they could stay out of the sight of the coalition warplanes.

The Kurdish president emphasized on the participation of the Kurds in the Mosul assault, explaining that the extremists remain a “constant threat” to Kurdistan Region as long as they are in Mosul, some 80 kilometers far from Erbil.

President of Kurdistan Region pointed out that they wished there was a political plan for the post-ISIS Mosul through which the future of the diverse components of Mosul could be secured. “There must be a new formula for Mosul,” Barzani said. He revealed that they have an agreement with Baghdad to establish a joint committee which will deal with possible issues and overcome obstacles expected to be faced.

The top Kurdish official said that he is optimistic about the Mosul operation, but giving a time scope for the mission to be accomplished is not possible at the moment.

**Peshmerga Ministry prevents NRT from covering operations**

The Kurdistan Region’s Ministry of Peshmerga has decided to prevent NRT from covering Peshmerga forces’ operations on the justification that two guests on an NRT program allegedly caused offense to Peshmerga and the families of martyrs. The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) Peshmerga Ministry released a statement on October 21, 2016 saying a decision was made to block NRT from covering operations.

The Peshmerga Ministry said former lawmaker Adnan Othman and journalist Kamal Rauf had disrespect the Peshmerga and the families of martyrs were hurt and considered over the remarks of the lawmaker and reporter made during an NRT program. The ministry said it has decided to block NRT reporter and photographers from covering operations and visiting near front lines.
Carter in Erbil to discuss Mosul fight with Barzani

United States Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter arrived in Erbil on Sunday, October 23, 2016 and met with Kurdistan Region President Massoud Barzani.

Carter was accompanied by Brett McGurk, President Obama’s Special Envoy for the Global Coalition to Counter ISIS, Douglas Silliman, U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, Stephen J. Townsend, Commander of American Army in Iraq and Syria, Ken Gross, the U.S. Consul General in Erbil, as well as a number of U.S. Army advisors and officers.

From the Kurdish part, the meeting was attended by Nechirvan Barzani, KRG Prime Minister, Masour Barzani, Chancellor of the Security Council, Karim Shingali, Interior Minister, Fouad Hussein, Chief of Staff of the Presidency Office, Falah Mustafa, Head of the Department of Foreign Relations, Saifeen Dziaye, KRG Special person, as well as Sheikh Jaafar Mustafa, Lieutenant General Sherwan and Lieutenant General Jabar Yawar, members of the General Command of the Kurdistan Region’s Protection Forces.

In the meeting Carter congratulated President Barzani on the commencement of the operation to retake Mosul and appreciated the role of the Peshmerga Forces in the operation and their notable victories in the very first days of the operation. U.S. Defense Secretary also passed his condolences to President Barzani, the families of the martyred Peshmargans and the people of Kurdistan for the losses.

“I would like to thank you for keeping your promises between Iraq and Kurdistan Region, which resulted in this victory, which is a victory for Kurdistan Region, the United States and the world whole,” Carter told Barzani.

Carter and Barzani also talked about the U.S. support and assistance to the Peshmerga forces and Carter reiterated the continuation of their support. Carter commended Barzani’s role in solving the issue of the displaced in the post-ISIS Iraq. Barzani, on the other side, emphasized the political and military importance of eradicating ISIS in Iraq and praised the cooperation between Erbil and Baghdad in liberating Mosul.

Barzani told Carter that there is a need for a careful plan and a political agreement about the administration of Mosul after repelling ISIS from the area, to be a guarantee against the possibility of the eruption of conflicts and protecting its communities, especially the Christians and Yezidis, as well as the bravey of the Peshmarga forces.

Another topic of discussion in the meeting was the continuation of the warfronts and the military needs, as well as the bravery of the Peshmarga forces.

Carter told President Barzani that the bravery and victories of the Peshmarga forces for the whole world and the Kurds have all the rights to be proud of them, “we also take pride of our friendship with the Kurdistan and the Peshmarga.”

Carter spent the day Saturday in Baghdad getting updates from his top military leadership and meeting with Iraqi Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi. He said the U.S. is prepared to provide additional support for the fight if requested by Iraq and U.S. advisors.

Carter fueled debate in Iraq on Friday when he met with Turkish leaders in Ankara and suggested Turkey should play a role in the Mosul battle. Abadi on Saturday balked at that call, saying his country’s own forces will oust Islamic State militants from the city.

Barzani and McGurk Discuss Mosul Offensive

Kurdistan Region President Massoud Barzani received a US delegation headed by Brett McGurk, the Special Presidential Envoy for the Global Coalition to Counter the Islamic State (IS).

The pair discussed the Mosul operation against the Islamic State (IS) as well as the advances made by the Peshmarga forces as planned by the agreement between Baghdad, Erbil and the coalition.

McGurk conveyed President Obama’s message of support for the Kurdistan Region and stated that the Peshmarga forces are indeed fighting this war on behalf of the world, noting that all of the needed support should be provided to them.

He also commended the coordination between the federal government in Baghdad and Erbil, asserting that Barzani’s leadership has brought the Kurdistan Region even closer to Washington in the past two years.

He expressed his condolences to the families and loved ones of the martyred Peshmarga forces and prayed for speedy recovery to the wounded.

Barzani stated that the first day of the operation was the largest operation against IS and the Peshmarga forces succeeded in liberating some 200 km of areas which were previously controlled by the militants.

He thanked the US-led coalition forces for their support to the Kurdistan Region and Iraq against the IS extremist organization.

He expressed his appreciation to the Coalition led by Brett McGurk, the Special Presidential Envoy for the Global Coalition to Counter the Islamic State (IS).

Grandi was in a meeting with President Barzani, thanked the Kurdish leader for hosting a large number of displaced Iraqis as well as refugees despite huge economic challenges facing the province.

Grandi, according to a statement by the President of Kurdistan, appreciated Barzani’s message of assurance to the people of Mosul when the liberation offensive started.

The UN, he added, was very worried about the political conditions that would surround Mosul following its liberation.

Barzani said the Iraqi and Peshmarga forces are fighting together against a common enemy to eject it from Mosul.

“This is a historic thing happening for the first time,” said Barzani, and this could be a chance to “review many issues and coordinate to build the future.”

He called for solving the issue of the displaced as soon as possible.

Grandi met with prime minister of Iraq’s Kurdistan and discussed the liberation of Mosul and displacement of locals from the city during the military operations.

International organizations, including the UN, said around a million people might flee Mosul during the military operations against IS, half of them may come to Kurdistan, which is already hosting over two million Iraqis and Syrians.

Barzani thanks the U.S. for its support and assistance to the Peshmarga forces and Carter reiterated the continuation of their support. Carter commended Barzani’s role in solving the issue of the displaced in the post-ISIS Iraq.

Barzani, on the other side, emphasized the political and military importance of eradicating ISIS in Iraq and praised the cooperation between Erbil and Baghdad in liberating Mosul.

After meeting the Peshmarga forces, Barzani thanked General Command, the families of the martyred Peshmarga forces and the people of Kurdistan for the losses.

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Carter fueled debate in Iraq on Friday when he met with Turkish leaders in Ankara and suggested Turkey should play a role in the Mosul battle. Abadi on Saturday balked at that call, saying his country’s own forces will oust Islamic State militants from the city.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed the first phase of the liberation of Mosul, the valuable victories achieved by the Peshmarga forces and the Iraqi army.

They also confirmed that the high level of cooperation and bilateral coordination was a key factor in achieving these victories, and emphasis was placed on the continuation of this coordination and cooperation in the coming stages and at all levels.

President Barzani meets the Iraqi Army General Staff Gen. Othman Ghanim.

During the meeting, they discussed the first phase of the battle to liberate Mosul, the two sides praised the accomplishments of the Peshmarga and the Iraqi armed forces.

They also stressed the need for the continuation of this strategy for the benefit of the two sides.
Kurdish Peshmerga and Iraqi forces close in on Mosul after making quick gains

Heavy guns and artillery trundled towards the front-line village of Nawaran, nine miles (14km) north of Mosul, which the Peshmerga seized within an hour. According to a Peshmerga commander, Iraqi Special Forces took part in the operation. The British turned up in white bulletproof 4x4 vehicles and a pick-up truck, while the Americans drove MRAPs (mine-resistant ambush-protected vehicles).

Within half an hour of the start of the operation, ISIS fought two divisions of the Peshmerga and coalition forces’ positions. This prompted a daunting clacking of gunfire in which one drone was shot down. The other managed to get away.

Simultaneously, the Iraqi Special Forces staged their own advance along another key road point into Mosul. Maj Gen Maan al-Saadi said elite troops had moved towards the largely abandoned town of Bartella, backed by air strikes from the US-led coalition and heavy artillery.

They entered Bartella a few hours later. The head of Iraq’s Special Forces, Gen Talib Shaghati, said two soldiers had been hurt in the operation. At least 15 militants had been killed, he said, adding: “After Bartella is Mosul, God willing.”

The US military said that one American service member died from wounds inflicted by a bomb near Mosul. ISIS seized Bartella two years ago, during a rapid military offensive in which the group occupied a series of mixed villages east of Mosul in the Nineveh plains. The fighters now appeared to be retraining. By the end of the day, Kurdish and Iraqi forces had seized a string of villages including Bartella, south of Mosul. Kurdish TV showed civilians cheering and waving white handkerchiefs.

A US general said ISIS leaders had begun to flee Mosul, leaving foreign fighters to the Iraqi army and the Kurdish forces.

Iraqi Special Forces are expected to lead the way into Mosul, where they will face fierce resistance in a densely populated landscape, with ISIS militants preparing for a climactic battle and laying boobytraps. An ISIS vehicle was blown up on Thursday near Mosul dam.

The offensive is the biggest operation by Iraqi forces since the 2003 US-led invasion. It is expected to take weeks, if not months. However, speaking in a video conference call to Paris from Baghdad, the Iraqi Prime Minister, Haider al-Abadi, said on Thursday that Iraqi forces were moving faster than expected. “The forces are currently pushing forward towards the town more quickly than we thought and more quickly, certainly, than we established in our plans of the campaign,” he said.

After retaking Nawaran, the Peshmerga faced resistance at another village, Barima. Despite an air strike on an ISIS position, at lunchtime a group of ISIS militants were holed up in the village and fighting back.

Kurdish forces were moving towards the foot of the Bashisha mountain, their target the strategic town of Bashisha, once the multi-ethnic home of Christians, Yazidis and Muslims. With coalition jets in the sky above, US and UK Special Forces mingled with the Peshmerga and filmed the operation as it unfolded.

Gen Bahram Arif Yasmin, whose brigade played a key role in the offensive at Nawaran, visited the village shortly afterwards. He said: “After 20,000 Peshmerga took part in today’s operation on three frontlines.

The general was flanked by his men. In the distance, smoke billowed in the direction of Mosul. “America is an old partner of the Kurds and the American expertise in targeting ISIS has been very important,” the general added, when asked about the role the coalition forces had played.

The Peshmerga quickly made a hinder in the middle of the road to prevent ISIS suicide bombers from driving vehicles into them. An air strike less than a mile away created a huge plume of smoke. It was unclear if the plane’s target was a suicide bomber.

On a hill not far from the Kurdish general, a middle-aged Peshmerga soldier was listening to ISIS radio chatter. “Abu Omar, please give the location,” radioed one ISIS militant. The other ISIS fighter responded affirmatively. Despite not putting up much of a fight in these villages, the militants sounded composed and composed on the radio.

Peshmerga Delkhwaz Salim, 23, who has fought ISIS since mid-2014, said: “We will go to Shalalat and Bashisha and we will not move further. Daesh [ISIS] is nothing. If we have operations like this every day we can take control of Mosul within 15-20 days.”

The operation has not progressed without cost. At least five Peshmerga were killed on Thursday by bombs laid by ISIS across the three frontlines, with several others wounded.

Meanwhile, foreign ministers and senior diplomats from several western and Middle Eastern countries were meeting in Paris to discuss how to restore peace and stability to Mosul after ISIS has been routed from its Iraqi stronghold.

An Iraqi court issues warrant against ex-governor, as troops fight ISIS for Mosul

An Iraqi court issued an arrest warrant against former provincial governor Atheel al-Nujaifi for allegedly allowing Turkish forces into Iraq last year, a controversy that has resurfaced as Iraqi and Kurdish forces are locked in a battle to oust offensive to evict ISIS from its stronghold of Mosul. Nujaifi, a Sunni, was in command of the Nineveh Province – where Mosul is the capital – when it fell to ISIS in June 2014. The Iraqi parliament removed him from his position the year after. According to Turkish authorities, Nujaifi had agreed to allow Turkish troops into Iraq during his governorship.

Abdulbari Atfida, the spokesman of the Iraqi judiciary, said Thursday that three Iraqi MPs had filed a complaint against Nujaifi in December last year, claiming he had “sought the help of a foreign state which helped facilitate the Turkish troops and empowered them to open a military base in the Zilan military camp north of the province.”

The court warrant accuses Nujaifi of spying for a foreign country. According to Turkish authorities, it was Nujaifi who gave the green light for the troops to set up base in Iraq. Turkey says its role at the Bashisha camp was to train the Sunni Nineveh Guard militia, formerly known as the Hashd al-Watani. Nujaifi is in command of the militia, which enjoys good relations with Turkey.

Nujaifi said in a Facebook posting after news of the warrant that the Mosul offensive was the priority at this time, and that his Turkish-trained forces would be fighting alongside the Iraqi army for Mosul. He downplayed the accusation, saying he would leave the issue to those interested in “trivia” until “the dust of war” is settled and the matter can be dealt with legally.

For months, in the run-up to the Mosul offensive that kicked off Monday, Ankara had publicly urged Ankara to withdraw its troops from its base in Bashisha and warned against Turkish involvement in the liberation of Mosul.
Peshmerga Bravely Repulsed ISIS Attack in Kirkuk

Kirkuk citizens joined security forces voluntarily to fight ISIS

An Islamic State force of more than 60 fighters staged a terrorist assault on Kirkuk early Friday morning that claimed the lives of 12 electricity workers, six policemen, and a Turkmen family of seven. Dozens of the terrorists were dead, including two suicide bombers who detonated themselves at a power station under construction in Dubiz, north of Kirkuk, and six or more militants were killed and their attacks were repulsed efficiently. At least 35 other individuals have been arrested, according to Kurdish security sources.

Clashes continued in several parts of the city. U.S.-led coalition jets struck ISIS targets in Kirkuk in the late afternoon and struck the ISIS stronghold of Hawija earlier in the day.

Coalition jets carried out seven other air strikes on ISIS targets in Iraq on Friday, targeting the militant group’s stronghold in the city of Kirkuk. The attacks came as large numbers of ISIS fighters have been redeployed to Kirkuk in recent weeks in an attempt to fortify the area as part of a major campaign to take the city back from the Peshmerga forces based in the city.

One Kirkuk citizen who was in a hotel occupied by ISIS said in a TV interview that approximately 50 gunmen entered the hotel in police outfits, followed by a larger number. “The terrorists were armed with modern weapons and explosive belts. The citizen who later returned by the security forces after fighting fierce, which inflicted casualties on the security forces during the rescue mission,” said Al-Khalis, an Iraqi local reporter.

A Turkman Shuria family of seven were murdered and beheaded in their home in southern Kirkuk by the attackers, according to unconfirmed reports from Turkmen sources in the city. ISIS supporters resided in the predominantly Sunni neighbourhood of Hay Al-Akseri, where the family lived, said Dr. Ali Akram Bayati, head of the Turkmen Rescue Foundation. The terrorists appeared in Hay Al-Akseri disguised as policemen driving police vehicles, Bayati said by telephone.

The attackers may have been so-called sleeper cells living in Kirkuk, according to Maj. Gen. Khilaf, the Kirkuk Governor, who said that the situation was under control. He said the sleepers could have been manned by some of the internally displaced people, or IDPs, in camps in the city. As many as 500,000 IDPs are in the camps.

“We know that there are hundreds of ISIS supporters hiding among the IDPs,” Bayati said.

Counterterrorism units moved to Kirkuk from Sulaimani, and some Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) units too moved into the city to assist the police, according to Kurdish news channels.

A security source said separate groups of armed men and suicide bombers began attacking at 3:00 a.m. targeting four police and security buildings in Kirkuk. Security forces stopped the attacks, killing several terrorists, but at least three suicide bombers detonated themselves.

The terrorists knocked on several doors announcing that they were ISIS fighters. Several local citizens armed themselves and joined with police to hunt down the jihadists.

Gov. Karim refused ISIS claims about capturing any government buildings. The terrorists briefly occupied the old Kirkuk Governance building before being driven out by counterterrorism troops. Fighting continued in some districts of the city until nighttime.

The attackers used suicide bombers and three car bombs as the first wave, followed by groups armed with medium weapons.

The complex attack included a group of three suicide bombers who targeted the Dubiz power station under construction, where they killed 12 employees. Two of the bombers detonated themselves, and the third was killed before he could do so, the mayor of Dubiz said. Power supply to the city was not affected. Mosque was occupied by attackers, where they delivered a speech through loudspeakers calling for the population to join them to fight authorities and the Kurdish Peshmerga.

“Their hope was to catch Kirkuk security by surprise, as most of the Kirkuk-based Peshmerga forces have been redeployed to the Nineveh campaign. The Peshmerga forces protecting Kirkuk when the attack came were largely retired soldiers, aided by local volunteers. Most of the terrorists were killed or captured, but some were still at large in the city,” said a TV reporter.

By midmorning, security forces had surrounded a group of attackers in the Tariq Company Headquarters, South of East Kirkuk.

“The purpose of the attack is to distract Peshmerga forces away from the liberation of Mosul [90 miles Northwest of Kirkuk],” said an official in Kirkuk.

A state of emergency and curfew was announced amid intensive fighting early Friday. The terrorists spread snipers over buildings tops but they were surrounded by Kirkuk military intelligence (Asayesh) forces.

Kurdish Official: Kurds Won’t Leave the Liberated Areas

Kurdistan Regional Government’s (KRG) Peshmerga Deputy Minister, Anwar Haji Osman, shed light on the current situation in Kirkuk and the future of the areas that were retaken by the Peshmerga forces from ISIS.

Osman said all the preparations and coordination have been completed for retaking Mosul from ISIS but what remained so far is just the political and administrative issues related to the province after retaking it.

“We have agreed on military preparations for the offensives with Baghdad. We are committed to do whatever is needed to support this. We do things of course that end in Peshmerga’s favor for sure,” Osman said.

Osman also said many great leaders from outside visited President Barzani in the past few weeks and promised to cooperate with Kurdish forces as much as needed; this shows they pay great attention to Kurds especially in the matter of retaking Mosul.

Osman had a chance to meet with German Defense Minister in the past days. When he was asked what Germany wants to do for Kurds, Osman replied “Germany has been helping us since the beginning of ISIS war and has been a good ally to Kurds. They have provided our forces with guns and ammo and have promised to continue supporting us.”

Concerning the Kurdish areas retaken from ISIS, Osman said that Kurdish forces will not abandon the areas they have liberated and will never let others enter those territories.

According to him, there is good understanding and agreement between the Kurdish forces and the Iraqi forces about how to deal with the liberation process.

The liberation started last week and the Kurdish forces so far have been able to liberate many villages and they continue moving forward.

KDP bloc to present candidates for post of Iraqi Finance Minister, MP says

A member of the Iraqi Parliament, Tariq Sidiq, said on Thursday, October 20, 2016 his bloc will present three candidates next week to replace dismissed Iraqi Minister of Finance Hoshyar Zebari.

Sidiq said in a press release he considers the position of the minister of finance to be part of the quota for the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) bloc, adding, “The existence of mistakes during the operation of Hoshyar Zebari does not mean the ministry should go to another political bloc.”

Lawmakers in the Iraqi Parliament began a session on September 21 after a quorum of Al-Iraqiya, dismissing Zebari over corruption and mismanagement allegations.

“The Kurdistan Democratic Party has three candidates to replace Zebari next week for the purpose of the House of Representatives to vote for one of them, as it is an important ministry which is related to the country’s economy and the life and livelihood of the public,” Sidiq said.

However, the Iraqi Parliament must take responsibility if there is any delay in putting KDP submitted candidates for a vote to fill the vacant position, Sidiq added.

A previous session of the Iraqi Parliament was suspend-
There are more than 21 different units of Shiite militiamen in the town of Shargat who are deployed across the town. Some of these units, particularly the special operations unit, are led by 39-year-old woman, Wahida Muhammad.

She’s known as the adventurous woman. Her husband was executed by ISIS in Shargat two years ago and she is now determined to cleanse her area from ISIS militants and avenge his blood.

KRG Foreign Minister discusses latest developments with Dutch Foreign Minister

KRG Foreign Minister Falah Mustafa on Wednesday, October 19, 2016 met with Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands Bert Koenders in the Hague to discuss bilateral ties as well as recent military and humanitarian developments.

Minister Koenders highly spoke of the role of Kurdistan Region in the fight against ISIS terrorists and in caring for Syrian refugees and Iraqi displaced people. The Dutch Minister reiterated the commitment of his government to continue supporting Kurdistan at both humanitarian and military levels. Both Ministers discussed bilateral ties and areas of potential cooperation in order to increase economic and investment cooperation.

The KRG Minister thanked the Dutch government for providing humanitarian and military support to Kurdistan Region and stressed the need to receive further and continued support from the international community. He briefed Minister Koenders on the developments in regard to the ongoing fight to liberate Mosul as well as the humanitarian fallout from the operation. Both Ministers also discussed the Post ISIS era and the need for a new political arrangement that could guarantee inclusiveness.

Iraqi Oil Minister seeks reactivation of 2014 deal with Erbil

Newly-appointed Iraqi Oil Minister Jabar al-Luaibi said in an interview, October 19, 2016, there is no disagreement between Erbil and Baghdad over oil, stressing his quest to reactivate an earlier deal over revenue.

Luaibi said in an interview with al-Ghad Press, “We are working on activating the 2014 agreement between Erbil and Baghdad over the oil, stressing his quest to reactivate an earlier deal over revenue.”

Luaibi said in an interview with al-Ghad Press, “We are working on activating the 2014 agreement between Erbil and Baghdad over revenue.”

The Kurdish Regional Government denounces Iraqi Foreign Minister

A statement from the Council of Ministers of the Kurdistan Region:

Under French and Iraqi supervision, a conference was held in Paris on Thursday, where diplomats from 20 countries discussed Mosul’s political future. The Kurdistan Regional Government welcomes any international initiative to counter the so-called Islamic State terror organization and stabilize Iraq and the region. However, it is unfortunate that once again the Kurdistan Region, the leading actor on the political, military and humanitarian fronts, has not been invited. Iraq was represented by its Foreign Minister in the conference.

The Kurdish Regional Government strongly denounces the Iraqi Foreign Minister for his improper and unilateral actions, with no regards to the sacrifices made by the Kurdistan Region. Over the past two years, the Kurdistan Region has served as the strongest force to confront the expansion of the most dangerous terrorist organization, the Islamic Caliphate. The President of the Kurdistan Region and the Peshmerga forces are delivering major blows to the ISIS terrorists and liberating swaths of land, in an effort to protect our country, the dignity of our people, and the values of humanity.

After the recent visit of the Kurdistan Region President to Baghdad, the political and security relations between Erbil and Baghdad have witnessed a major improvement. Additionally, at a time when the Kurdistan Region has been sheltering more than 1.8 million refugees and internally displaced persons, placing major burden on the Kurdistan Regional Government, we find it surprising that the Iraqi Federal Government and the Foreign Ministry insist on blocking the participation of the Kurdish Region delegation in international events and conferences on ISIS and refugees, disregarding the unmatched sacrifices made by the Kurdistan Region.

This is not the first time that certain Iraqi officials intentionally block the participation of the Kurdistan Region in such events. Therefore, we ask our partners in the international community to directly invite the Kurdistan Region, which is a major actor in fighting ISIS and hosting refugees, to international events on counter-terrorism, the plight of refugees and Mosul’s future. Moreover, we ask the Iraqi Federal Government to refrain from repeating similar damaging actions that will only harm the interests of Iraq.
AC Milan ended a four-year wait for a win over Juventus at the San Siro on Saturday night, with Manuel Locatelli scoring a sensa- tional winner to seal all three points. There was controversy over a disallowed goal in the first half from Miralem Pjanic, but the Rossoneri were able to battle their way to victory, which lifts them to within two points of Juve at the top of the Serie A table.

Iniesta Could Be Out for Eight Weeks
Barcelona captain Andres Iniesta will be out for six to eight weeks after injuring knee ligaments in the dramatic win over Valencia. The midfielder was injured by an Enzo Perez tackle after 14 minutes of the 3-2 win and left on a stretcher. He could miss the rest of the Champions League group games and is definitely out of the match at Manchester City on 1 November. Barca won thanks to a late Lionel Messi penalty, his second goal of the game.

Lionel Messi scores an injury-time penalty as Barcelona came from behind to beat Valencia and go top of La Liga.

Real Madrid Opens Door to Chicharito Return
The Bayer Leverkusen forward spent a spell on loan with Madrid back in 2014-15, scoring nine goals in 33 matches.

“Impressed with Pjanic’s performance”
Real Madrid head coach Zinedine Zidane has praised Miralem Pjanic’s display against Juventus on Saturday night.

Sports News
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Layla Who Escaped IS Slavery Tells Her Story

Layla Mahmud, who is a 27 years old lady from Kocho Village in Shingal, a few months ago was rescued from IS. She narrates her heroic life story under the IS control.

It was 9:00 o’clock in the morning when Layla was first held captive with another 70 women and 25 men by IS near the village of Kocho. ISIS fighters confiscated money, jewels, and cell phones from the captives and separated the males from the females.

“All the men were killed in front of our eyes. The IS men were only four but the loopholes were we did not have guns with us. My husband was killed with all the men. I wanted to get close to my husband and say goodbye, but the IS fighters shot several rounds around me and made me retreat,” Layla said.

After the killing massacre, Layla and the other ladies were transferred to Siba Shekhdr Village. On the way going there, Layla saw 25 dead bodies and when they reached the village she saw another 450 more dead bodies.

“They were all in different ages including children. The village was almost empty from people but sometimes the IS cars were moving around,” she said.

In the same day at 3 o’clock in the afternoon, they were moved to Gzark Village where ISIS fighters were breaking into stores and looting people’s properties. Leyal’s brother’s store was one of them.

“They brought us some water, but I refused to drink though I was very thirsty. After another 6 hours, we were moved to Ba’aj town where people celebrated on the occasion of holding us captive,” she narrated.

In the same night Layla and other ladies were transferred to Shingal and made a tour inside the city to make the ladies see dead bodies. Then they were all transferred to Mosul and stayed there for 15 days before moving to Talafar and staying for another 20 days. They were then moved to Kasr Mihrab and stayed 45 days. Layla was able to get a phone and call her family.

After spending a year under IS control, Layla was moved to Raqa in Syria. Layla said women were using different tricks in order to make the fighters do not get close to them. Some of the ladies pretended they were crazy and others pretended they were pregnant just to make the fighter keep away from them. But when the fighters realized the ladies were tricking them, they beat the ladies hard.

According to Layla, the ladies were humiliated and beaten by the fighters. The kids were confiscated from them. Layla and other ladies were moved from Qastala toward Mainbaj city in Syria. “I was hurt hard by a man who I was forced to be his slave. I did not want to submit to his demands, so he hurt me a lot. The man had another two wives but he was very greedy. I suffered a lot in the house with the man. I was beaten a lot until I lost my power to move,” she said.

Layla started thinking about running away from the city. “I hid myself in a garden and a car followed me but no one knew where I was exactly. I heard voices saying "Layla Layal where are you at? It is better for you to surrender.” But I was able leave the garden safely.”

Layla went to a house where only an old woman and old man were living. She stayed there for seven days and she was able to talk to her family. Layla was able to find a smuggler to move her out from the city. After she called her brother who agreed with the smuggler to move Layla out of the town for some money, Layla was moved by the smuggler through riding a motorcycle.

“I fell down from the motorcycle several times, but luckily nothing serious happened. I was finally moved out from IS territories on April 12, 2016.” She concluded.

A Kurdish Film Selected as Best in U.S

The Kurdish film ‘Lovers Die Standing’ wins the prize of the best film in Motion Picture Film Festival 2016 in the U.S.

Shahram Maslakhi, the director of the film who’s originally from Halabja but raised up in Iran and has studied cinema, presented the prize to the directors and actors of Sulaimani and stated that he hoped a circumstance would come up that actors and directors were honored and their art would be recognized in the world. “I hope that our actors and directors and their art are honored in Kurdistan the same way as they are in the world” Maslakhi said.

He added that he was happy that in spite of Iran’s sensitivity over films produced in Kurdish language and by Kurdish actors, but the film was showed in most of the Iran’s cinemas and the role that actors of Sulaimani had played grabbed the attention of people and cinema critics.

“What raised my concern was lack of cinema halls in Sulaimani. The actors couldn’t watch their own films next to their audience and see people’s attention and reaction, but now the opportunity has come up and Salm Cinema has been able to fill the gap” argued Maslakhi. The Kurdish director praised the role of Peshmerga who are providing security and stability for people, and said that it was an honor to make a film describing their courage.

The film has previously been selected as the best Iraqi film by juries of Baghdad Film Festival.