The Monthly report for January 2016 from Kurdistan Region of Iraq

Political issues
Massoud Barzani says I will meet with parties to resolve region’s issues
All Kurdish news agencies
2nd of January

Erbil: In his New Year message, Massoud Barzani expressed his hope that 2016 will herald in peace and prosperity for the people of Kurdistan and the whole world. Barzani praised the bravery and the sacrifices of the Peshmerga forces in the fight against the Islamic State (IS) militants. On the internal political disputes in Kurdistan region Barzani said “At the beginning of the New Year, I will meet with the political parties to find a resolution to the problems that have hindered the political process, and to help the government and parliament to operate on new basis.” “On the presidency issue he said “I again call on all the political parties to convene and settle this issue permanently” and in order to solve the problem he suggest either the political parties decide on early elections for a new president, or name a new president until 2017, or agree on the status quo to continue until 2017, because of war and the extraordinary situation in Kurdistan. The political crisis erupted after Massoud Barzani, whose term as Kurdistan President ended on August 20, 2015. According to the law, Barzani cannot run for presidency anymore.

Political parties welcomed Barzani’s presidency resolution
All news agencies
3rd of January

Erbil, Kurdistan Region of Iraq - Political parties in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region considered the New Year message by Massoud Barzani as a good step forward in dealing with the current political deadlock. According to different media sources the political parties react as below on Barzani’s message: Begard Talabani, a member of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) Political Bureau, said that, “We see Barzani’s message as a good step forward, hoping in the New Year, all political parties meet at the negotiation table to indicate the problems in order to find solutions for them.” Shukria Ismael, an Islamic Group MP, welcomed Barzani’s New Year message but she stressed the need for implementing the initiative. Beston Faiq, Gorran Movement MP said that Gorran does not have any pre-conditions for holding meetings but insisted his party’s position that “solving the current political problems is in the hands of Barzani.” Ahmed Warty, Kurdistan Islamic Movement spokesman told the media that, “Barzani’s statement is a political project, all political parties were waiting for such initiative to become a base for resolving the problems.” It is further to mention that Barzani in a message published on the Kurdistan Region Presidency website on December 31, 2015, Barzani proposed three scenarios, asking the political parties to agree upon one. “I call on all parties to settle this [presidency] issue, by either deciding on elections for a new president, or name a new president until 2017, or agree on the status quo until 2017”.

KDP ready to hold talks with Gorran: KDP official
Xebat news paper
3rd of January

A Member of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) Leadership Council Ali Hussein revealed that his party is ready to resume negotiations with Gorran (Change Movement) in order to resolve political disputes. Hussein stressed that the Kurdish political parties are now responsible to find an immediate solution for their differences and take the Kurdistan Region forward. Hussein added that “KDP politburo has also contacted Gorran and expressed its readiness to resume talks and reach a mutual understanding” further to mention that Kurdistan Region of Iraq is facing a big political parties due to conflicts on Barzani’s position as president.

EU Parliament: Kurdistan Region Key Factor for Stability

NRT TV

4th of January

Erbil – The Kurdistan regions president Massoud Barzani met with European Parliament Vice President Richard Charneski in Erbil to discuss the latest political and security developments in the region. During the meeting Charneski praised the role of people of Kurdistan Region in the war against Islamic state (IS), stressing out that the Kurdistan Region is a key factor for the security and stability in the wider region he also thanked the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) for hosting a large number of refugees and internally displaced people) regardless of their ethnic backgrounds and religious orientations, finally he promised to urge the EU countries to increase their economic and humanitarian support for Erbil in the near future. From his side Barzani explained that the Kurds have been oppressed throughout centuries but they never stopped fighting for their rights and they are trying always to reach and preserve their rights in a peaceful way. The Kurdistan Region president also outlined the latest developments on the Peshmerga frontlines against IS militants in northern Iraq, and asked the international community to provide further financial and military assistance to the KRG and Peshmerga forces, which face a series of prolonged crises in the region.

30,000 Kurds migrate from Iraqi Kurdistan in 2015

Basnews

3rd of January

Erbil: Iraqi Kurdistan region’s federation of refugees revealed that some 30,000 Iraqi Kurds migrated to western countries during 2015 in hopes of finding a better future abroad. Amanj Abdullah, the president of Kurdistan Region’s Federation for Refugees told the media that young people make the highest proportion of Kurdish emigrants who left home, mostly to the EU. According to the United Nations, 3,800 refugees drowned in 2015 while attempting to cross the Aegean Sea between Turkey and Greece, among which 200 victims were from the Kurdistan region of Iraq.
Massoud Barzani invites Mrs. Hero Ibrahim Ahmad for meeting

Hawlati news paper

5th of January

Sulaimani: Kurdistan Democratic Party leader Massoud Barzani invited senior leader of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan PUK and former Iraq’s First Lady Mrs. Hero Ibrahim Ahmad for a meeting in Erbil, The invitation comes at a time when Kurdistan witnesses a political crisis over Kurdistan presidency as Massoud Barzani, whose term as Kurdistan President ended on August 20, 2015 The KDP party insists to extend his mandate despite. The Change (Gorran) Movement accused the KDP of a monopoly all government’s positions in Erbil, and it does not believe in the principles of true partnership and and peaceful transfer of power. Kurdistan PM Nechirvan Barzani has removed four members of his cabinet from the Change (Gorran) Movement on October 13, 2015; the expelled ministers were replaced on October 28, 2015 with KDP politicians. Iraqi Kurdistan Parliament’s Speaker was prevented from entering Erbil city on October 11, 2015. According to some sources the meeting between Barzani and Hero Ibrahim Ahmad will be essential in solving lots of the problems in the region.

Gorran Movement remains silence in responding to Barzani’s demand

KNNCTV

5th of January

Sulaimani: The Change (Gorran) Movement has remained silent in responding to a demand by Massoud Barzani who asked political parties in the region to improve ties instead of stoking tensions. Shoresh Haji, the movement’s spokesman, told media that the movement will not respond to the demand unless KDP tried to bring back the situation a normal one and he said that Change Movement will consider political the situation in the region and will act accordingly without explaining what does he mean by" considering the situation in the region".

Iraqi Kurdistan’s commission expresses readiness to hold referendum

Sharpress

5th of January

Erbil: The high commission of elections in Kurdistan Region stated that it is ready to hold a referendum on the independence of the Kurdish region in Iraq’s north. A member of the commission, Jwtyar Adil, told media that the commission is ready to hold a referendum on the independence of the regions soon after officials from the region demand the move. He added that holding the referendum needs lost of preparation as well as budget and the election
body should prepare needed humanitarian forces and train them at for months after the demand. Adil went on to say that related laws on the intended referendum or election should be ratified in the region’s local parliament and the laws should be announced to the commission to make necessary preparations.

A party leader from (KIU) “Iraq is not against Kurdistan Region’s independence”

K24

5th of January

Sulaimani: The leader of Kurdistan Islamic Union (KIU) stated that the central government in Baghdad is not against Kurdistan Region to declare its independence from Iraq, stating that the only hurdle on the region’s independence is internal disputes among political parties in the autonomous northern region. According to Muhammad Faraj attempt to announce region’s independence has been welcomed internationally and the central government in Baghdad has allowed the decision too. Stressing that Erbil, the capital of the region, has taken good economical steps in line reaching the goal; the party leader repeated that the only hurdle on the region’s independence is tensions and rifts among political parties in the region. Faraj went on to say that his party has not received any official message from Massoud Barzani over the region’s independence but he said we do support Barzani’s announcement for preparing for referendum.

Kurdistan Islamic Union (KIU) is a party with 10 seats in the Kurdish parliament and they use to have 3 ministers in KRG one of them just resigned yesterday (minister of electricity).

Massoud Barzani in his annual meetings with foreign missions in the region” Kurdistan issues are political and not sectarian

Xebat news paper

6th of January

Erbil, Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Massoud Barzani president of Kurdistan region received a number of chiefs of missions, consul generals and other diplomats from around the world who are based in Erbil. President Barzani began his annual meeting by warmly welcoming the attendees. He then spoke of the current war against the terrorists of the Islamic State, the relations between the Kurdistan Region and Baghdad and the internal issues in the Kurdistan Region. Regarding the war against (IS) Barzani stressed that the Islamic state is till at big threat and the world should help the countries that are in war with this group. Barzani spoke also about the internal despites in the region he said that “the problems in the region can be solved since they are not sectarian issues” also he emphasized that fact that region will move a head towards the referendum, regarding the relationship with Bagdad Barzani said that we are trying to solve our problems with dialogue with Bagdad. Further to mention that Barzani usually meets the heads of the international missions at the beginning of each year, this year he met the heads of 36 missions according to the presidency of the
KDP: Not condemning Shiite cleric's execution is not related to Barzani-Saudi tie

Hawler newspaper

7th of January

Erbil: A deputy from the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) stated that the execution of prominent Shiite cleric Sheikh Namir al-Namir is an internal issue for Saudi Arabia and no one should interfere in the issue, adding that not denouncing the execution is not related to Kurdistan leader Massoud Barzani’s relation with Saudi dynasty. Farhan Jawhar, a KDP deputy, told media that Sheikh Namir was a Saudi citizen and that’s why his execution is an internal affair and we are against any interference in the issue. Reiterating that not releasing any statement by Kurdistan Region in denouncing the executions not linked with Barzani’s relation with Saudi ruling dynasty, he added that no one would benefit in interfering in the affairs of others.

Iraqi Kurdistan government we are not a part in dispute between Iran and Saudi Arabia

K24 TV

8th of January

Erbil: The head of department of foreign relations (DFR) in KRG Falah Mustafa commented on the execution of the prominent Shiite cleric Sheikh Namir al-Namir by Saudi Arabia, and said “Kurdistan region is not a part in this dispute “he also said there are plenty of conflicts and wars in the region and we wish that the international community will do something to defuse the situation and solve problems with peaceful talks”

KDP party refuses once again the return of Kurdistan Parliament Speaker to his office

Lvinepress

9th of January

Erbil: Kurdistan Democratic Party led by Massoud Barzani renewed his rejection to the return of the Speaker of the Parliament of Gorran Movement, Yusuf Mohammed Sadiq, to his office. KDP Party member Sherzad Qasim told the media that Sadiq could no longer return to the presidency of the Kurdistan Region Parliament”. The crisis erupted after Massoud Barzani, whose term as Kurdistan President ended on August 20, 2015 but refused to step down and remains unofficially in office. According to the law, Barzani cannot run for presidency anymore. Kurdistan PM Nechirvan Barzani
January, 2016

has removed four members of his cabinet from the Gorran Movement on October 13, 2015. Kurdistan Parliament’s Speaker was prevented from entering Erbil city on October 11, 2015. The expelled ministers were replaced on October 28, 2015 with KDP politicians. The Gorran Movement accused the KDP of a monopoly all government’s positions in Erbil, and it does not believe in the principles of true partnership and and peaceful transfer of power.

Kurds should leave Iraqi army: Kurdish MP

Basnews

9th of January

Erbil: Kurdish member of Iraqi Parliament said that the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) should urge the remaining Kurdish officers to leave the Iraqi army and join the Kurdish Peshmerga forces as Baghdad prohibits them from taking an affective role in the Iraqi army. Deputy Head of Parliamentary Committee for Defense and Security Affairs, Shakhawan Abdullah told Basnews that very few Kurdish figures have remained in the Iraqi army while a large number of officers already left their positions and joined the Peshmerga forces in the Kurdistan Region. Iraq’s central government has so far failed to provide the Kurds with their deserving share of Iraqi budget. Kurdish officials previously accused the Iraqi army of undertaking sectarian policies and neglecting Kurdish officers and officials. The Kurdish MP pointed out that the Iraqi Foreign Minister, Haider al-Abadi, promised to solve the issue and assign a Kurdish official for the position of Iraqi Army’s Chief of Staff, “but he simply failed to keep his promise”.

Leader in PUK: A political agreement between PUK party and Gorran, soon

PUK Media

10th of January

Sulaimani: A leader in the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan PUK said that there is a great convergence between the PUK and Change (Gorran) Movement and meetings between them are continuing to sign a political agreement between the two sides. The member of the political bureau of the PUK Hakim Qadir Hama Jan said in a press statement that the bilateral meetings between PUK and the Gorran are still ongoing to bring the views in preparation for the signing of a political agreement between the two sides,” explaining that there is a great convergence between Gorran and the PUK, and we arrived a political agreement will not be at the expense of other political parties. In regard to oil and natural resources file, Hakim Qadir said that the Regional government must provide clear information about the sale and the quantities of oil export abroad, noting that in spite of the differences between Baghdad and Erbil on the oil file, there are questions within the region about the lack of transparency in this file.

Nawshirwan Mustafa plans new proposal to resolve political crises in Iraqi Kurdistan: PUK

Rudaw media net work

10th of January
**SULAIMANI**, Kurdistan region of Iraq— A leader in the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), a leading political party in Iraq’s Kurdistan Region, revealed the intention of the Chairman of the Change (Gorran) Movement, Nawshirwan Mustafa, to provide a comprehensive political project to resolve differences and political crises in Kurdistan. The military leader and member of the political bureau of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) Jafar Sheikh Mustafa said in a press statement, that the leader of the Gorran party revealed plans during a London meeting with a number of officials of the PUK. Mustafa announced that he will present a comprehensive political project on his return to the Kurdish region to resolve the complex differences and political problems. Nawshirwan Mustafa left Iraqi Kurdistan over three months ago for medical tests and treatment in Britain.

**Kurdistan VP urges parties to resume negotiations**

Xendan

11th of January

Sulaimani: Iraqi Kurdistan Region’s vice president urged the political parties to return to negotiations in an effort to solve ongoing crises, according to the media Kosrat Rasoul the vice president of Kurdistan region met with an Italian diplomatic delegation to discuss issues facing the region, which included the ongoing war against the Islamic State (IS) and a financial crisis. Rasoul said during the meeting “We all must know the fact that issues have to be resolved on the negotiation table” calling on the parties to reach an agreement on the stalled political process and prevent the region’s residents from falling victim to political infighting.

**Dutch government delegation meet with Massoud, Nechirvan Barzani**

All Kurdish news agencies

11th of January

Erbil: Massoud Barzani welcomed in his office the Netherlands government delegation that included Deputy Prime Minister Lodewijk Asscher and Defense Minister Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert. In a meeting between Barzani and the Dutch delegation, the fighting against Islamic State (IS), the humanitarian situation of refugees and internally displaced people in Kurdistan were discussed. Asscher pledged his country’s continued support for the Peshmerga forces. He also expressed his empathy for the KRG in looking after large numbers of refugees and internally displaced people. Further to mention that the PM Nechirvan Barzani received Mr. Asscher and the Dutch delegation on Sunday to discuss the fight against IS and Erbil-Baghdad relations. The Dutch deputy PM reaffirmed his country’s commitment to providing military and humanitarian assistance to the Kurdistan Region, a government website reported.
Efforts continue to resolve Iraqi Kurdistan political crisis

PUK media

12th of January

Sulaimani: The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and the Change Movement (Gorran) political parties met on Monday at the PUK political headquarters in Sulaimani. The meeting agenda focused on finding a solution for the current political crisis in Iraq’s Kurdistan Region. The Gorran delegation was led by Omer Saiyd Ali, and Qader Hama Jan represented the PUK. After the meeting, a statement released read, “the PUK and Gorran discussed the details and the circumstances of security in Kurdistan and Iraq. Also they discussed the financial crisis in Kurdistan. The participants of the meeting agreed to find a resolution in order to resolve the ongoing situation and they decided to have more meetings.” The PUK plans to draft a project and propose it to the other political party involved, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), in order to move forward with a joint plan with Gorran in the hope to resolve the political quagmire.

KDP agrees on the return of Kurdistan Parliament Speaker temporarily: PUK

NRT TV

12th of January

SULAIMANI, Kurdistan region ‘Iraq’, — the senior leader of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan PUK Mala Bakhtiar announced that the Massoud Barzani-led KDP party agreed on a new proposal by the PUK to resolve the political crisis in Iraq’s Kurdistan region. The official of the Political Bureau in the PUK Bakhtiar said in a press statement that “the Kurdistan Democratic Party KDP agreed to proposal for the return of the isolated Speaker of the Kurdistan Parliament, Yusuf Mohammed Sadiq, on a temporary basis, until the solution of problems and the selection a new presidency to the parliament, and if the Change (Gorran) Movement agreed, the Speaker of Parliament will return and will not remain any problems .From their side Change movement didn’t say anything till now on this topic.

Barzani: The Iraqi army won’t be able to move on to Mosul in the next six months.

Basnews from CNN

12th of January

ERBIL — in an interview with CNN, Nechirvan Barzani the KRG’s prime minister said that the gains by the Iraqi army in Ramadi was a “big success” against IS, but he insists that the central government in Baghdad is not able to be able to move on to Mosul soon and he thinks that the liberation will not be within the next six months ,concerning the current situation on the battlefields against IS, Barzani explained that the Kurdish Peshmerga forces, with the help of US-led coalition, have been able to push the jihadists back on every frontline. Regarding the Mosul dam which is allegedly under threat of collapse, Barzani explained that the Peshmerga forces are in control of the dam but it can be a “disaster”
January, 2016

for Mosul and Baghdad if the dam breaks he revealed that the Iraqi government has informed them about a company will repair the dam soon to prevent such catastrophe. Discussing the Kurds captured by IS and used as sex slaves or child soldiers inside IS territories, Barzani revealed that they have rescued nearly 2,400 captives, half of which are children. Barzani explained that the international efforts have so far been successful to contain IS, but to completely defeat the jihadist group, they need to come up with a more comprehensive military plan. The senior Kurdish official warned that IS recruitment boosted to 35,000 people last year which is a significant increase compared to the year before. “This is dangerous not only to the Kurdistan Region, but also to the world.”

KDP says changes in Kurdistan Parliament leadership are eminent

NRT TV

12th of January

Erbil: The Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) said on that changes in the Iraqi Kurdistan Parliament’s leadership will be implemented in an effort to tackle the region’s political crisis. KDP spokesman and Deputy Parliament Speaker Jafar Emniki said changes are already underway and are part of the solution to crises facing the region. He also said those crises will only be solved through compromise and urged the region’s major political parties to return to negotiations and take on their “historic responsibility.” Crises for the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) deepened after the five major political parties failed to reach an agreement on the Kurdistan presidency in October. Further to mention that the KDP and PUK went on a meeting yesterday which was described as positive by the both sides, the meeting was dedicated for the political dispute in Kurdistan.

The head of Kurdistan Region’s Higher Independent Commission for Elections” we are ready to organize the referendum process

Zagroaz TV

14th of January

ERBIL — the head of Kurdistan Region’s Higher Independent Commission for Elections said that they are ready to hold a referendum on Kurdistan Region's independence if they are asked to. Handren Mohammed claimed that the commission has the capacity to hold the referendum within a short period. As the security and political crises in the Middle East continue, most analysts believe that the political borders may be redrawn soon and new countries will be established. Kurdistan Region President recently told his party, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), to work on a referendum on Kurdish independence. Compared to elections, Mohammed explained, preparing the situation and providing technical facilities is easier for a referendum and they need only few months to be ready for the process. In Mid-2014, Barzani attended a parliamentary session in Erbil and urged the MPs to prepare the ground for an independence referendum. He insists that the people of Kurdistan Region should have the right to decide on their future: whether to stay within a united Iraq, or to declare independence.
Masrour Barzani: Islamic State is not Iraq’s Sole Problem

K24
14th of January

ERBIL — Chancellor of the Kurdistan Region Security Council, Masrour Barzani, has reiterated that militarily defeating the Islamic State (IS) will be the beginning of eliminating their ideology across the globe. Barzani received the British PM’s Special Envoy for Security Affairs to Kurdistan, Tom Beckett, on Wednesday, and discussed the current situation in the fight against IS. He Kurdish official explained that (IS) is not Iraq’s only problem as the country is suffering from other serious and historic issues as well. He said that those fighting the jihadists on the ground need further military and financial support from the international community in order to be able to defeat IS sooner. Commending the role of Peshmerga in the Kurdistan Region and other Kurdish forces in Syrian Kurdistan, Lt. Gen. Beckett said, “If it was not for the Kurds, albeit with coalition air power, things would be immeasurably worse.” The sides emphasized that Kurds must be invited to every international meeting on anti-IS efforts as they are a key player on the ground fighting the extremist

A senior member of change movement (Goran) resigned from the party

Bas news
16th of January

Erbil – Dr. Muhammad hajee the head of the diplomatic relations in change movement resigned from his party and he says that he thinks that change movement cannot play a contractive role any more, hajee said in a press conference that he resigned after some leaders in the movement didn’t allow him to participate in decision making in because the party is no under control of some teenagers. Further to mention that some other senior leaders were accused the head of change movement of monopoly the authorities and hajee was the last one among them.

Germany opens a center for Peshmerga to repair weapons

NRT TV
16th of January

Erbil: Germany opens a center for Peshmerga Forces in Iraqi Kurdistan capital city of Erbil to repair weapons and military equipment that have been sent to Kurdish forces. A special German team will train the Peshmerga forces to repair the German weapons and military equipment in the center. According to the source, at least $2.388 million has been dedicated for the equipment of the center. Training will last until September and the members of the Peshmerga forces will manage the center until the team returns from Germany, the same source said. Deputy Peshmerga Minister Anwar Haji Osman commented on the lack of resources for Peshmerga forces. “We have called on coalition forces and governments to accelerate the Peshmergas necessities,” he said. “We do not have enough centers to bring all those forces.” According to the Reuters news agency report, Germany has provided Kurdish forces with 1,800 tons of
weapons and material since 2014.

**Iraqi Kurdistan parliament speaker suggests three options to solve presidency issue**

**NRT TV**

17th of January

Erbil: Iraqi Kurdistan Parliament’s Speaker Yusuf Mohammad Sadiq said an early election should be held for both the Kurdistan Region Government (KRG) Presidency and Parliament if the issues are not solved. Sadiq released a statement on Saturday on his Facebook page suggesting three options to solve the presidency issue in the region, as the political crises have deepened after the political parties could not reach an agreement on the issue. In the first option, Mohammad said the presidency should be solved according to the Presidency Law and elections should be done according to the law. “According to presidency law, the time of election for the presidency should be pointed out and the powers of the Presidency be given to KRG PM.” Mohammad also suggested in the second option that the Kurdistan President should be chosen from Parliament as it was chosen in 2013, when the term of Massoud Barzani was extended for two more years.

**Head of Kurdistan Islamic Group: (KDP) and Barzani must make the first move to solve the problems in the region**

**Payam TV**

17th of January

SULAIMANI – The head of the Kurdistan Islamic Group (KIG) said that the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) should make the first move towards achieving reconciliation among major parties, as a political deadlock continues to affect the region. Speaking at the KIG’s youth congress in Sulaimani, party leader Ali Bapir blamed the KDP of escalating political tensions and blocking attempts to reach a deal on issues. “It is said that the five major parties are responsible,” Bapir said. “We are responsible for solving the issues; we are not responsible for worsening and ruining them.” Bapir further said the KDP and its senior officials should make the first step towards solving crises facing the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). Crises inside the Kurdistan Region deepened after the five major political parties failed to reach an agreement on the Kurdistan presidency issue in October, following the expiration of the president’s second term extension.

**Kurdistan Parliament Speaker: I will not go back to Erbil as a prisoner**

**Awena news**
18th of January

Sulaimani: Speaker of Iraq’s Kurdistan Parliament Yusuf Mohamed Sadiq said that he would not return to Erbil as a prisoner, stressing that he did not commit any national betrayal. He said in a statement that “the Kurdistan Democratic Party KDP tried since the beginning of the crisis to impose its hegemony and political will on all political parties,” adding that the presidency crisis of the region must be resolved through legal channels to get out of the political crisis and the legal vacuum in the Kurdistan region.” With regard to his return to Erbil temporarily, Yusuf Muhammad (Gorran), who is engaged in the legislative office in the city of Sulaimani, he will not return to Erbil as a prisoner at all, accusing the KDP of fabricating political crises in order to cover his frailer in managing the region.

Iraqi Kurdistan Government adopts plan to grant provinces autonomous authority

Xebat newspaper

19th of January

Erbil: Kurdistan Regional Government Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani, Deputy PM Qubad Talabani and other ministers met with governors of Sulaimani, Erbil and Duhok to discuss the current economic crisis and the ways of dealing with these crises, the participating parties were able to reach a resolution to adopt a plan proposed by Sulaimani Governor Aso Faraidoon to proclaim independent, economic autonomy in each province. The new plan will be implemented in the next 15 days under the supervision of a committee that would be headed by KRG Minister of Interior Abdulkarim Sinjari. According to the plan, each province will financially and administratively be autonomous from KRG. Each province’s income will be run by the province itself and KRG will solely be responsible for providing salaries for civil servants.

Kurdish political parties reject boycotts and protests in Iraqi Kurdistan

Kurd sat TV

19th of January

Sulaimani: Change (Gorran) Movement, Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), Kurdistan Islamic Union (KIU), and the Kurdistan Islamic Group (KIG), four major political parties in Iraq’s Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), gathered in Sulaimani to discuss the current regional situation. In a press conference, the group addressed the recent boycotts and protests erupting throughout the region due to lack of government pay for employees. The PUK leader, Latif Shex Omer, responded saying, “We are not with any protests and boycott of work, because we have seen it in the past that there is no solution by doing this. That is why we have to be patient and keep calm and secure the city.” Another politician from the KIG input stating, “we are not with the boycott by teachers because of the students are not cut off from their studying.” The four parties discussed the previously agreed upon collective reform package for the region and
reemphasized the demand to find an urgent solution for KRG to move forward.

PUK leader Braham Salih: Kurdistan’s current situation unacceptable

NRT TV

20th of January

Sulaimani: Deputy Secretary-General of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), Dr. Braham Salih announced that the Kurdistan Region’s current manner of governance has come to an end and “is unacceptable.” Speaking to NRT, Salih complained the region’s governance, which according to him, has led to the failure of the political and economic climate of Kurdistan. “Kurdistan cannot be governed in this way and region’s situation is currently in a phase which is not acceptable and has to be changed and tackled,” Salih said. Dr. Salih, former PM of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), continued his analysis saying that wrong policy choices have led the Kurdistan Region’s to the current status quo, asserting, “it needs to be revised fundamentally.” “In an effort to improve people’s welfare and income, parties have to reach political agreement and pass this circumstance,” Salih concluded.

So far 1,600 Kurdish Yazidi victims found in 20 Mass Graves in Sinjar Bas

Bas news

19th of January

Sinjar: After overrunning the predominantly Kurdish Yazidi town of Sinjar (Shingal) in August 2014 and taking control of the area for almost 15 months, the Islamic State (IS) insurgents killed over 1,500 civilians and captured nearly 5,000 others. Mayor of Sinjar, Mahma Khalil, told Basnews that after the liberation of Sinjar in early November 2015, they have discovered 20 Yazidi mass graves inside and around the city where almost 1,600 bodies are buried. He revealed that the victims mostly include women, senior people and children. Spokesperson for the Ministry of Martyrs and Anfal Affairs of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), Fuad Othman said that they have started the legal and technical procedures to recover bodies from the mass graves.

According to a Kurdish news paper the wife of the minister of natural resource has been involved in a big corruption case

Wesha news paper

19th of January

Erbil – According to Wesha news paper (Chrekhan Rafiq) the wife of Asti Hawrami the minister of natural resources was
involved in a corruption case, this has been discovered by a committee that has been formed by Massoud Barzani to investigate on corruption cases, Chrekhan Rafiq was managed to collect 276 Iraqi billion dinars via several companies involved in oil business, according to the newspaper that companies of (Candid, Majestic, Mantic and Tawariq were involved in these topic), further to mention that the 276 Iraqi billion dinars of Chrekhan Rafiq and the involved companies has been blocked. According to some sources Chrekhan Rafiq managed to run away from Iraq to Turkey.

**PUK leader Braham Salih: Kurdistan’s current situation unacceptable**

**NRT TV**

20th of January

Sulaimani: Deputy Secretary-General of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), Dr. Braham Salih announced that the Kurdistan Region’s current manner of governance has come to an end and “is unacceptable.” Speaking to NRT, Salih complained the region’s governance, which according to him, has led to the failure of the political and economic climate of Kurdistan. “Kurdistan cannot be governed in this way and region’s situation is currently in a phase which is not acceptable and has to be changed and tackled,” Salih said. Dr. Salih, former PM of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), continued his analysis saying that wrong policy choices have led the Kurdistan Region’s to the current status quo, asserting, “it needs to be revised fundamentally.” “In an effort to improve people’s welfare and income, parties have to reach political agreement and pass this circumstance,” Salih concluded.

**Barzani and UK Ambassador to Iraq Met in Erbil**

**Xebat news paper**

2st of January

**ERBIL —** In a meeting with Kurdistan Region President Massoud Barzani, British envoy in Iraq was briefed on the current political, security and financial situation in Iraq and Kurdistan Region. Barzani received the British Ambassador to Iraq, Frank Baker, in Erbil the pair discussed the latest developments in the war against the Islamic State (IS) on different battlefields stretched from Northern Nineveh province to Anbar in the West of the country.

Since the Kurdish Peshmerga and international coalition forces have played a crucial role in the anti-IS efforts, the Kurdish and British officials stressed out that their cooperation and coordination should grow further to be more effective against the jihadist group. The intensified economic crisis, sectarian conflicts and an anticipated operation to liberate Mosul were also discussed in the meeting.

**KRG Responds to Amnesty International Report on Arab Villages Destruction**

**Hawler news paper**

2st of January
ERBIL — The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) Head of Monitoring International Reports Committee, Dindar Zebari, has responded to a report by the Amnesty International in which Kurdish Peshmerga forces are accused of “cooperating with Yazidi militias in bulldozing, blowing up and burning down thousands of homes in an apparent effort to uproot Arab communities in revenge for their perceived support for the Islamic State (IS).” Zebari stressed out that, firstly, there are no Yazidi militia forces, except a Yazidi Peshmerga unit which operates completely under the control of Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) Peshmerga Ministry. Zebari said, Kurds have a long history of peaceful coexistence with people from different religious and ethnic backgrounds, and the KRG has been hosting over 660,000 displaced Arabs since the start of IS crisis in 2014. Concerning the Kurdish forces prohibiting Arabs from returning to their areas, Zebari explained that, even though IS insurgents have been defeated and driven out of some areas, they are still capable of posing threat to these areas. “Civilians won’t be allowed to return to their homes unless their areas are completely safe and secured,” Zebari added. The Kurdish official continued, in some cases, international coalition forces are obliged to conduct airstrikes on IS positions near the liberated areas where civilians cannot be allowed to enter. Regarding the destructions in some Arab villages, Zebari said that some residents of these villages supported IS once the jihadist group took control of their area; they joined the militants and assisted them in undertaking mass executions of Yazidis and kidnapping their women. These people, alongside IS insurgents, fought Kurdish Peshmerga forces as well. “However, part of the residential houses were destroyed during the confrontations because jihadists used them as their hideouts, and some others were rigged with improvised explosive devices (IED) planted by IS themselves.” After liberating some areas, some villagers were allowed to stay and harvest their agricultural products, the Kurdish official said, “and then they freely decided to move to IS-held areas in Mosul, Ba’aj and Hawija. Despite the humanitarian assistances the KRG delivered to the liberated villages, in some areas, including Sahl al-Malih village, residents attacked the Kurdish forces and killed 13 Peshmerga fighters in one day. Zebari detailed that Rajm al-Abid, Ramo, Um al-Akhbar, Khazouka and several other villages have been freed by Peshmerga and their residents are now returned to their homes. But in Jidida, Asriyyah, Mjaljal, Abtaj Shoura, Jasim Joum’a, Sihah, Mome, Bzouna Sakhir, Bzouna Kabir, Haloum, Alkanah, Aza’im, Sha’lan, Manif, Dahid, Abdah, Moshirfeh, Abou Khsheb and Tel Samir villages, residents have not been allowed to return as these areas are very close to the frontlines. He insists that there are scores of other villages along the 1050-kilometres-long frontline with IS that remain under jihadists’ artillery attacks. Regarding conflicts between Kurdish Peshmerga forces and Shi’ite militia Hashd al-Shaabi in Tuz Khurmatu, Zebari revealed that the situation is now calm, but several government buildings and civilian houses have been burnt by militias.

PM Barzani: Kurdistan hit hard by falling oil prices, left alone in ISIS fight
All Kurdish news agencies
21st of January

ERBIL, Kurdistan Region - Kurdish Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani and his deputy met with three provincial governors Wednesday morning to discuss the current economic situation in the region and steps the government is taking to overcome the crisis. The PM said that all countries reliant on oil revenues have felt the impact of falling oil prices, but the decline has done the Kurdistan Region the biggest harm. Barzani said that a series of crises such as the budget freeze by Baghdad, the war with the Islamic State (ISIS) and the influx of more than 1.8 refugees have put the region in the worst crisis in a quarter century. He told the governors from Erbil, Duhok and Halabja that, worst of all, were the falling oil prices.
prices, and that government expenses exceed income. The government understands the situation and its impact on people’s lives and therefore would try to run its affairs with what income it has available. Barzani said, adding that wrong messages in the media have caused confusion and further misunderstanding of the situation. The Kurdish prime minister said the regional government cannot print money, nor can it borrow.

Barzani said that the Kurdish region has been left alone: It is fighting ISIS on behalf of the world, but the world hasn’t offered Erbil any financial assistance in this conflict. Barzani said he appreciates the dire situation of government branches and civil departments. He admitted that there have been flaws in the system. And that to overcome them hard decisions have to be made and austerity and reform must be implemented. Barzani’s Deputy Qubad Talabani also addressed the governors and said that, alongside austerity measures, serious reforms have to be introduced too. Talabani said that much confusion has been caused among people through wrong interpretations and lack of explanation from the government, which should be addressed and made clear to people through the cabinet and its ministers. Talabani warned that if the price of oil and expenses remain the same, then the situation could only get worse. He added that the reform plan will entail cutting shadow employments as well as multiple salaries and the introduction of a fair payment system. He dismissed some media reports which said this week that the government would be only able to pay half salaries from now on, saying that the half salaries paid to the employees of the education ministry was all that was available to the finance ministry. He added that everyone would be paid their full salaries. The deputy PM said that transparency would be part of the new reform program that would allow people to have access to information on government revenues and expenses. At the meeting’s conclusion, it was decided that a workshop will be held for all government ministers, where they will put on the table details of their financial situation to help the government in its plans to solve the crisis.

**Kurdish Independence State Closer Than Ever: Barzani**

K 24 TV

23rd of January

**ERBIL** - The Kurdistan Region President Massoud Barzani said that the Sykes-Picot pact that led to the boundaries of the modern Middle East has been a failure and is calling for world leaders to acknowledge this effectively urging them to broker a new deal paving the way for a Kurdish state. Speaking to the Guardian president Barzani said “I think that within themselves, [world leaders] have come to this conclusion that the era of Sykes-Picot is over”. “Whether they say it or not, accept it or not, the reality on the ground is that. But as you know, diplomats are conservatives and they give their assessment in the late stages of things. And sometimes they can’t even keep up with developments”, added Kurdish President. He said independence, which has been the centerpiece of Kurdish ambitions for decades but has been fiercely opposed by suspicious regional neighbors, was “no closer than at any other time”. Barzani also said regional and global powers also needed to come with a new pact that would protect communities in Iraq and Syria. “There must be a [new] agreement, it is important to see what type of agreement it is, what mechanism it can bring and rely on to formalize
things, and what will be its status. When the formalization of that agreement will be is not known yet. It’s illogical to continue

Unidentified gunman shoots Barzani’s KDP party headquarters in Sulaimani

NRT TV

23rd of January

Sulaimani: Massoud Barzani-led Kurdistan Democratic Party’s (KDP) headquarters was fired at by unknown gunmen. No casualties or injuries were reported in the attack on the office. Deputy Head of the KDP Leadership of Foreign Relations Office in Sulaimani Haji Jamal Faqe told the media that no one has been arrested after gunmen fired at the headquarters on Sulaimani-Kirkuk main street. Faqe said. “It’s hard to find the gunmen, because it’s a large area, a main road, and we hope the security forces do their best, and find the gunmen.”. Faqe added it’s been several times that the Headquarters have been attacked in the city of Sulaimani, and the security forces should discover why the KDP headquarters is being shot upon. Amidst high tensions between the political parties, anxiety among the local population is likely the background for such violent outbursts by individuals. In October, demonstrators attacked and torched several KDP offices in the eastern cities of Kurdistan Region as the protests called on government to do reform turned into violent, following ninth round talks of major political parties on the presidency issue.

Kirkuk governor rejects report of Peshmerga selling German weapons in local market

Xendan.org

23rd of January

Kirkuk: The German media outlet DW reported on Friday that rifles and pistols provided to Iraqi Kurdish forces by the German government have been sold by the Peshmerga in the open market. The article claims that G-3 rifles have been openly sold in gun markets in Erbil and Sulaimani. It also quotes Kirkuk Governor Najmaldin Karim, as confirming the claim of Peshmerga selling their weapons due to economic hardship and unpaid salaries. But the governor “categorically rejected” the DW report as false, saying that he never said anything to any reporter to the effect of Peshmerga selling their weapons. He added that anytime asked about arms shipments he has invariably insisted that the Peshmerga needed more weapons in order to cope with the threat posed by the Islamic State (IS).

Demonstrations continue for 3rd day in Iraqi Kurdistan

Speda TV

23rd of January
Sulaimani: Demonstrations in the eastern part of Iraq’s Kurdistan Region continued days after the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) had said it would pay only half of the due salaries to the region’s teachers. Residents of the Derbandikhan district in southern of Sulaimani governorate gathered in front of the districts’ mayoral building urging government reform and to solve the political crisis. The demonstrators refused the recent efforts to appease protesters by distributing half salaries to the region’s teachers and employees. Similarly, a number of people blocked Penjween and Bashmakh Main Street near the Iranian border, where security forces dispersed the demonstrators. Further to mention that at the end of the last week a group close to 150 protests erupted in Said Sadiq, an eastern Sulaimani city. Demonstrators began throwing stones at local offices of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), Kurdistan Islamic Party (KIU) and Kurdistan Islamic Group (KIG) in the town.

New Yazidi Mass grave discovered near Sinjar town

Ezidipress

23rd of January

Sinjar: Kurdish security forces discovered again a mass grave on Friday the 22nd of January in the Kurdish Yazidi Sinjar (Shingal) district in northwest Iraq Ezidipress reported. In the southwest of Sinjar town, near the former military base Domiz, resistance fighters came across the remains of around 20 people. Based on their traditional clothes, the victims were identified as Yazidi Kurds, most of who, based on early indications, seem to be male. Further information is supposed to be obtained through investigations and identity checks.

More than 300 Kurdish migrants from Iraqi Kurdistan have died since 2014; official says

Hawler news paper

24th of January

Baghdad: The head of the Iraqi Refugees Federation said on Saturday that since 2014, more than 300 people from Iraq’s Kurdistan region have died trying to migrate to Europe. Amanj Abdulla said most of the migrants had died while trying to cross the sea that separates Turkey from Greece, often sailing on rubber boats. Abdulla said “We will assist both Iraqi and Kurdish authorities to locate and bring back bodies of drowned migrants,” Further to mention due to the war against (IS) and the difficult financial situation thousands of Kurds and Iraqis left the country and went to Europe to find better life.

28 Kurdish citizens passed away while trying to cross to Europe and the bodies of four Iraqi Kurds drowned in Aegean Sea repatriated to the region
NRT TV

24th of January

Sulaimani: The bodies of four residents of Iraq's Kurdistan Region who drowned attempting to cross the Aegean Sea on Dec. 23 were repatriated through Sulaimani International Airport early Sunday. The deceased were all from one family from the city of Kirkuk, according to some media reports. At least 28 residents of the Kurdistan Region died as a boat carrying refugees from Turkey capsized in the Aegean Sea. From his side KRG said that the war against terror create a gloomy and hopeless situation which is leading people to leave the country, while the speaker of the Kurdish parliament said that the KRG is totally responsible for that.

Barzani and Kirkuk Governor Discuss Security and Political Crisis

krp.org

24th of January

ERBIL — Kurdistan Region President Massoud Barzani met with Kirkuk Governor Najmaldin Karim to discuss the current political, economic and security situation in the Kurdistan Region and Iraq. Karim outlined the latest developments on the Kirkuk frontlines against Islamic State (IS), and briefed Barzani about the political and economic situation in the province. The oil-rich province of Kirkuk is being considered as one of the most strategic areas in Iraq where Kurdish Peshmerga forces stationed after the Iraqi army fled the battlefield in the face of IS in mid-2014. The provincial capital city of Kirkuk is also known as an ethnically diverse city where Kurds, Arabs and Turkmen live together. Since the start of IS rampage in Iraq, the jihadist group has many times conducted military offensives to breach Peshmerga lines into the city; the Kurdish forces, backed by international coalition airstrikes have so far managed to secure the area from the extremist group.

Gorran holds the Kurdistan govt responsibility for the sinking of Kurdish citizens in the Aegean Sea

KNNC TV

24th of January

Sulaimani: The Change (Gorran) Movement blamed Iraq's Kurdistan Regional Government KRG responsible for the sinking of Kurdish citizens in the Aegean Sea and the emigration from the country. A statement by Gorran said that "because the government has failed in its economic policies and monopoly of power, tens of citizens in the Kurdistan region migrate to the Diaspora in search of guaranteed life and living conditions." The Movement called for urgent action to prevent the repetition of the tragedy that the citizens suffered from on their way to Europe, through political, economic and anti-corruption reforms in government institutions as well as transparency.
January, 2016

The liberation of Mosul means the end of Islamic State in Iraq: Jabber Yawar

Hawler newspaper

24th of January

Erbil: The Secretary-General of the Ministry of Peshmerga Lt. Gen. Jabber Yawar stressed “the importance of the participation of the Peshmerga forces in the liberation operation of the city of Mosul from Islamic State (IS) group. Yawar said in a press statement that “the participation of the Peshmerga forces in Mosul liberation operation will have a major impact, noting that the Ministry of Peshmerga made the decision on participation in the liberation operation, pointing out that the Liberation of Mosul has a great importance for the security of the Kurdistan region. Yawar added that as long as the IS be in Mosul, it means that several areas within the limits of the Kurdistan region are in danger, pointing out that” the liberation of Mosul and the expulsion of terrorists from them means the end of IS in Iraq, stressing that the Region, for these reasons will participate in the liberation operation of Mosul.

A meeting between Barzani and major political parties in Erbil

Rudaw TV

26th of January

Erbil – Massoud Barzani the president of Kurdistan region of Iraq met today delegations from different political parties, the only missing parties in the meeting were Change Movement (Gorran), Islamic group and the Ainda party, Gorran spokesperson Shorish Haji told the media that the party will not participate in any meetings until the Kurdistan Regional Government institutions are reactivated. According to different media source the meeting was dedicated to discuses three different topics (the referendum, financial crises in the region and the political crises), according to different media source there will be an announcement about the meeting today late afternoon.

Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) calls on the European Union to help the region

Krg.org

26th of January

SULAIMANI – The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) has called on the European Union to help the region to improve its institutions and enhance governance, according to a statement released Monday. The KRG’s Department of Foreign Relations said Minister Falah Mustafa received an EU delegation headed by Chargé D’affaires Konstantin’s Vardakas along with Consuls General from France, the Netherlands, Italy, Hungary, Poland, Romania and the UK in Erbil. Both sides discussed a range of issues including the political process in the region, steps taken by the KRG to tackle the current economic crisis, advances of Peshmerga forces in the fight against the Islamic State (IS), the situation of refugees and displaced people in Kurdistan and ties between Erbil and Baghdad. Mustafa said the KRG is committed
to carrying out reforms but needs support from international governments to succeed. “We are confident; we just need the support of our partners,” Mustafa said. “Help us put in place the necessary systems in order to tackle the issues.” The EU delegation said the European Central Bank is ready to assist the KRG to weather the ongoing financial crisis as well as support various sectors, including the agriculture industry. KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani on Sunday met with a U.S. delegation headed by Ambassador to Iraq Stuart Jones, who said his government would send advisers and experts to help Erbil solve economic issues affecting the region. According to the KRG’s website, the U.S. delegation expressed its eagerness to help the region’s government weather the crisis with the least damage.

Results of Barzani’s meeting with political parties in the Kurdistan region
All Kurdish news agencies
27th of January

Erbil — Kurdistan Region President, Massoud Barzani, met with Kurdish political parties in the Erbil to discuss the crises faced by the Kurdistan Region as well as a future referendum on Kurdish independence. Barzani demanded the Kurdish parties to play their role and fight the current political, economic and security crises in the region. He insisted that the faith between people and Kurdish political parties must be maintained later he briefed the attendees on the war against IS and a future referendum on the Kurdish independence. The entire parties agreed that they must remain united and restore their public trust if they want the independence referendum to succeed. They reiterated that the people of Kurdistan region must have the right to decide on their future. The parties also expressed concern over the migration of Kurds to the EU and stressed out that the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) must take necessary measures to increase its revenues, overcome the financial crisis and improve people’s life in the region. In addition, a committee will be formed to find a solution to the political disputes between Kurdish parties as well as the issues pertaining to the Kurdistan Region Presidency position. The conclusion will be presented in the next meeting between Barzani and the political parties. Finally, they reiterated that Erbil should continue negotiations with Baghdad in order to resolve their disputes. Also, the Kurdistan Region must remain neutral in the sectarian conflicts taking place in Iraq.

Massoud Barzani: Referendum for Kurdish independence should take place before US polls

Rudaw TV

27th of January

Erbil: Kurdistan Democratic Party KDP leader Massoud Barzani told political parties on Tuesday that a referendum on Kurdish independence should take place before the US presidential election in November. Barzani said the Kurdistan region “should hold a referendum before the US presidential election kicks off,” which would be next November, Barzani met with top officials from the major Kurdish parties, including his KDP, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and the Kurdistan Islamic Union to find formula to solve a political impasse and economic crisis in the region. The meeting agreed to begin working on question of the referendum and resolve problems between the deadlocked Kurdish political
Nechirvan Barzani says strikes won’t solve Kurdistan’s issues

NRT TV

27th of January

Erbil: Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani said on Tuesday that strikes will not solve issues in the region, following days of peaceful demonstrations by government teachers in Sulaimani and Halabja provinces and in Raparin administrative district. Barzani thanked teachers for their perseverance in a statement following meetings with the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) Politburo. Barzani assured government employees that salaries would eventually be paid, as wages have been delayed months amid a financial crisis that has plagued the Kurdistan Region for nearly two years. “One thing is important to know,” Barzani told reporters following the meeting with the PUK. “Nothing will be solved by boycotts and strikes.” “The issue is very deep, and it has not only affected Kurdistan, but the whole region,” he added. The Sulaimani branch of the Kurdistan Teachers Union held a press conference on Jan. 21 saying teachers would go on strike starting on Jan. 26 as a protest against the government’s decision to pay half salaries, combined with multiple months of delays in payment.

Strikes among teachers in some cities in Kurdistan region

NRT TV

27th of January

Sulemaina - Teachers of approximately in 25 schools in the Kurdistan Region's districts of Choman and Rowanduz did not report to work on Tuesday (Jan. 28) in a unified action denouncing the month’s delay of salary payments. Public sector employees didn’t receive their salaries since the last 4 months, further to mention that Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani said on Tuesday (Jan. 26) that strikes will not solve the region’s issues, following days of peaceful demonstrations by government teachers in Sulaimani and Halabja provinces and Raparin administrative district. Barzani thanked teachers for their perseverance in a statement following meetings with the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) Politburo. The Prime Minister assured government employees that salaries would eventually be paid, as wages have been delayed months amid a financial crisis that has plagued the Kurdistan Region for nearly two years.

Kurdish government delegation in Baghdad

All Kurdish news agencies
31st of January

A delegation led by Iraq’s Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani arrived in the Iraqi capital, Baghdad; upon their arrival the delegation met with Haider Al Ebadi the Iraq PM. According to Barzani’s media relations officer Sami Argushi the delegation discussed greater cooperation on the fight against the Islamic State (IS). KRG’s delegation composed of the KRGs PM and Deputy Prime Minister Qubad Talabani and Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) member Roj Nuri Shaways. It is also scheduled that the Kurdish delegation will meet President of Iraq “Fuad Masom “further to mention that tensions between the KRG and central government hit a peak in 2015 after officials from both sides accused each other of failing to abide by the terms of an oil revenue sharing deal struck in December 2014. Officials from Baghdad and Erbil signed a revenue sharing deal, under which the KRG would receive 17 percent of the federal budget in exchange for transferring 550,000 barrels of oil per day to the Iraqi State Organization for Marketing Oil (SOMO) at Ceyhan Port in Turkey. Relations further deteriorated after Baghdad cut budget payments to the KRG over Erbil’s attempts at selling oil independent of SOMO. Leaders from Iraq’s presidency, Council of Ministers and Parliament gathered on Thursday to discuss restarting talks with Kurdish leaders and released a statement supporting a restart to talks.

Teachers confirm strike in Halabja province

NRT TV

31st of January

Halabja: Public school teachers in Halabja province in Iraqi Kurdistan decided to strike on Saturday (Jan. 30), days after portions of the province’s schools halted classes. The Halabja branch of the Teachers Union decided to boycott classes in all of the schools in the province, as the government hasn’t provided teacher’s salaries for at least five months, NRT reports. The teaching strikes in Sulaimani city, Garmiyan and Raparin administration also continue, following the Sulaimani branch of the Teachers Union decision to strike on January 21, 2016. Protests against the government’s decision to pay half salaries for September 2015, combined with multiple months of delay in payment, have stoked frustrations as government employees demonstrate to put pressure on officials to find solutions.

Iraqi Kurdistan forms committee to investigate German weapons sold illegally by Peshmerga

Hawler news paper

31st of January

Erbil, Kurdistan region ‘Iraq’,— A committee was established in Iraqi Kurdistan to investigate the German weapons and military equipment sold on the black market, days after reports claimed Peshmerga forces had sold the German-donated weapons, senior official said Friday. Iraqi Kurdistan’s Deputy Minister of Peshmerga Anwar Haji Osman said the committee has been established by an order from Massoud Barzani, leader of the Kurdistan Democratic
Party (KDP), whose presidency term expired in August 2015 but remained in the post. “No German is on the committee,” Osman added. “We also met with German officials on the issue.” Jabir Yawar, Chief of Staff of the Peshmerga Ministry said last week “We are going to carefully look into the issue, and violators—if any—will faces serious punishment”.

Security issues

Peshmerga killed Islamic State militants that intended to infiltrate into Kurdish positions

Sharpress

2nd of January

North east of Mousle: The Kurdish Peshmerga forces killed all members of an Islamic State (IS) group that intended to infiltrate into Peshmerga positions in Nawaran village in the north east of Mousle a Peshmerga official told Sharpress that the IS militants were encircled in a Peshmerga ambush and all 7 member of the group were killed in clashes with the Peshmerga forces. According to the official who has been cited anonymously there was no casualties among the Kurdish forces and added that the (IS) was trying to launch attacks against Peshmerga positions due to the foggy and the bad conditions of the weather.

Kurdish Peshmerga dig ‘security trenches’ against IS in Iraq’s disputed territories

The Kurdish version of VOA

7th of January

KIRKUK - Kurdish Peshmerga forces are digging what officials are calling it “security trenches” in areas bordering territory controlled by the Islamic State (IS), but the Iraqi government is concerned that the Kurds may be attempting to set up a de-facto Kurdish border as part of a process towards independence from Iraq. The trenches will stretch 652 miles from northern areas of Mosul to Khanaqin in Diyala province, General Murad Muhammad, a Peshmerga commander in Kirkuk, told the media that the trenches will be used as a defensive line to protect newly liberated areas from retaliatory IS attacks, what concerns the Iraqi government that these trenches are mostly in the disputed territories.

Germany to Send More Military Advisers to Kurdistan Region

Sharpress

7th of January

Erbil - According to some officials from Ministry of Peshmerga in Iraqi Kurdistan Region, Germany will increase the number of the German trainers from 100 to 150 soon, according to the same source the German trainers will provide weapons training to Peshmerga troops.
Peshmerga repels Islamic State attack on Sinjar

Kurdistan TV

9th of January

Mosul: Kurdish Peshmerga forces were able to repel an Islamic State attack on the Kurdish Yazidi Sinjar (Shingal in Kurdish) district, northwest of Mosul. A source from the Peshmerga told the media “The Islamic State militants attacked Dumez area in Sinjar, and the Peshmerga forces confronted them, killing dozens of them and destroyed a number of their military vehicles”. The source added: “The IS withdrawn towards Tel Afar and Mosul, and the Peshmerga forces imposed its full control on the outskirts of Sinjar”.

Over 20 tons of IEDs defused by Kurdish Peshmerga in southern Kirkuk

NRT

10th of January

Kirkuk: Bomb disposal teams in the Peshmerga forces defused over 22 tons of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) which Islamic State (IS) militants planted to slow Peshmerga advances in southern fronts of Kirkuk. According to Peshmerga commander Fariq Mohammad, six Peshmerga forces were killed and 23 others wounded by IEDs in the villages of Bashir, Said Khalaf and Tel Rabi in southern Kirkuk. Mohammad told media that, “In 2015, we defused over 7,000 IEDs which were planted in barrels, containers and pots.” The IS militants have been known to leave IEDs and bombs behind in town and villages as they are pushed out by the security forces. According to the source up to 182 Peshmerga forces have been killed by IEDs in the southern fronts of Kirkuk in 2015.

1,345 Peshmerga fighters killed in fight against Islamic State: ministry

Hawler newspaper

13th of January

Erbil: Despite recording significant victories on various frontlines against the Islamic State (IS), a large number of Kurdish Peshmerga forces have been killed or injured since the start of IS rampage in mid-2014. Halgurd Hikmat, Spokesperson for the Peshmerga Ministry of Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) told the media on that 1,345 Peshmerga have been killed since the start of the war, with 62 others missing. He also revealed that nearly 8,000 Peshmerga were wounded, “most of which were light injuries.” Hikmat state that the ministry did not expect that many casualties, but “it is a war, and victory is not possible without making sacrifices” the Peshmerga official added. After crossing the border into Iraq in June 2014 and taking control of Iraq’s second largest city of Mosul, the IS insurgents
attacked Peshmerga frontlines and attempted to move deep into Kurdistan Region’s territories.

**Peshmerga shelled Islamic State sites south of Kirkuk**

*Basnews*

19th of January

Kirkuk: A security source in Kirkuk said that the Kurdish Peshmerga forces on shelled with artillery sites and gatherings for Islamic State (IS) militants south of Kirkuk. The source said that the artillery of Peshmerga bombed sites and gatherings of IS in Shahis village of Rashad district, south of Kirkuk and other areas south of the province. He explained that the international coalition aircraft bombed sites of IS in the Technical Institute in Hawija, west of Kirkuk, and other sites and vehicles for IS in Zab district, west of Kirkuk.

**Kurdish security arrested a group in Sulemaina linked to (IS)**

*PUK media*

19th of January

Sulemaina – The Kurdish security service (Asayish) in Sulemaina announced today that they have been able to arrest a group of extremist whom they have links with (IS), according to the security services the group was planning to attack a Shiite mosque and city center of Sulemaina, according to the same sources the group composed of Kurds and Arabs.

**Crime on the rise in Iraqi Kurdistan due to financial crisis: police**

*Hawlati news paper*

19th of January

**SULAIMANI**, Kurdistan region ‘Iraq’, — In Sulaimani city in Iraq’s Kurdistan Region, crime and kidnappings are on the rise according to a recent statement by the city’s police spokesperson. In the current environment, including an economic and political crisis, tensions are high and the overall situation in Sulaimani is bleak for many citizens. Some residents are stoking ethnic divides by blaming the current crisis on those entering the Kurdistan Region due to displacement from the ongoing conflict, regardless of the connection in these factors. Sulaimani Police Spokesperson Sarkawt Ahmed told media that people are exhausted by the economic situation and desperate, causing an increase in crime. The decline of societal relations and increase in crime includes suicides, thefts, murders, kidnappings, and mass migration.

**Economic issues**
Turkey border crossing with Iraq's Kurdistan Region still closed
Rudaw news agency
2nd of January

Duhok: It’s been 17 days since Turkish authorities closed Ibrahim Khalil crossing point in the border with Iraqi Kurdistan Region. The closing started from 14th of December, 2015 after growing unrest in Turkey’s Kurdish region near the Iraqi Kurdish border and over a sharp increase in violence between Turkish security forces and Kurdish protesters in Cizre and Silopi. According to the different media sources hundreds of trucks stocked at Ibrahim al-Khalil border crossing point. The crossing is one the most important border points between Kurdistan Region and Turkey, as it is a key commercial corridor from the north to the south. According to Turkish daily newspapers, trade volume between the Kurdistan Region and Turkey stands at $12 billion per year

Kurdistan is losing millions of dollars because of the closer of border points with Turkey
Bas news
4th of January

Erbil – Due to closure of the biggest border crossing point between Iraq and Turkey, Kurdistan region of Iraq is losing millions of dollars as revenues, according to MP Dilshad Shaaban from Kurdistan regions parliament the region lost since the last 22 days more than $20 million dollars. It is further to mention that Ibrahim Khalil border crossing point between Turkey it is very active commercial crossing border point which witnesses in a day the cross of more than 1,500 truck, MP Dilshad Shaaban said also that the KRG is trying to find a solution for the situation as a possible, Ibrahim Khalil border crossing was closed before 22 days due to disturbances that still occur in the Turkish side of the border between the Turkish government and PKK fighters.

Turkey, Iraqi Kurdistan region border has been opened today
Hawler news paper
5th of January

Zakho: today (Jan. 5), the Ibrahim Khalil border, a major thoroughfare for business between Iraq’s Kurdistan Region and Turkey, has been reopen after being closed due to recent fighting in southeastern Turkey. The Turkish Minister of Customs and Trade announced in a statement that the Ibrahim Khalil Border, between Iraqi Kurdistan and Turkey, is open now. Kurdish region is depending a lot on the trade exchange with turkey especial through Ibrahim Khalil.

Erbil to rectify budget shortfalls with independent oil exports 2016
NRT TV
5th of January

ERBIL, Kurdistan Region—according to an official the Kurdish government will stop delivering oil to the central government in Iraq and will instead export oil independently to make up for its budget shortfalls. The chairman of the KRG’s finance and economic affairs in the Kurdish parliament Izzat Sabir told the media “If the KRG delivers to Baghdad the agreed quantity of 550,000 barrels a day, Baghdad will not be able to pay KRG’s share of the budget -- which is about $1 billion a month. For that KRG studied the situation and decided to export oil on its own”. KRG says this is a response to the freezing of its 17 percent share of Iraq’s national budget by Baghdad for more almost two years. Independent oil exports would be to supply Erbil with steady revenue. Sabir said also."Oil prices are low, and government revenues in 2015 were about $50 billion at best, which means half of what has been forecast," The payment of civil servants salary (many in the Kurdistan Region depend on income paid by the public sector) has been delayed for four months now as the KRG struggles to cope with the threat posed by Islamic State (ISIS) and make up for the slump in the price of oil. Erbil therefore hopes by further exploiting oil in their own territory in 2016 and exporting it independently that they can at least partially rectify this situation.

Iraqi Kurdistan begins work to extend a pipeline to transport Kirkuk gas to Turkey

PUK media and Xendan.org

9th of January

Kurdistan region: An oil source in Iraq’s Kurdistan Region, announced that the region began to extend a pipeline to transport natural gas from gas fields in Kirkuk to Turkey. The source who didn’t give his name said that technical and engineering teams began to extend the pipeline carrier gas running from the field, Bai Hassan, actually near al-Dibs area northwest of Kirkuk, which produces more than 180 thousand barrels per day, it has been linked to the extended pipe network from Khurmal passing through the Kurdistan Region to Turkey. He added that the technical teams began extending the pipeline parallel to the oil one to transport the gas to the world markets via Turkey, and to meet the Turkish need of the produced gas, adding that the process may take several months to be completed. Member of the Energy Committee in the provincial council in Kirkuk Najat Hussein noted that Kirkuk demanded two dollars a share for each cubic meter of gas produced, and there are negotiations between Kirkuk and the Kurdistan Region to ensure their share of the petrodollar. According to Tony Hayward, the chairman of Genel Energy, one of the leading energy companies in Iraqi Kurdistan the first batch of natural gas from Iraq’s Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) is expected to flow into Turkey within the next two or three years, and 20 billion cubic meters of it are expected to pour into the Turkish market – where it will then reach the European market – in early 2020.An expert in the natural gas field said last December that the Iraqi Kurdistan could provide Turkey’s needs with natural gas for 100 years, pointing out that in addition to the availability of large reserves of gas, it is of high quality. The Kurdistan regional government economic advisor Bewar Hansi said that the authorities of Iraq’s Kurdish region plan is to begin natural gas supplies to Turkey by the end of 2016.

Strikes in Halabja

All Kurdish news agencies
Different Kurdish media agencies reported that the civil servants in some public sector organizations start to stop in providing any services and they went on a strike, according to these sources the civil servants from the Municipality of Halabja and electricity department went on strike and they said that they will never return back till they get their payments from the government. Further to mention that the public sector employees in some KRG foundation didn’t get their salaries since the last 4 months.

The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) on Monday published the monthly KRG oil export report for December 2015.

Erbil - According to Kurdistan Region’s Ministry of Natural Resources exported 18,105,734 barrels of crude oil (an average of 584,056 barrels per day (bpd)) in the month of December through the Kurdistan pipeline network to the port of Ceyhan in Turkey. Of this amount, fields operated by the KRG contributed 13,504,536 barrels (435,630 bpd on average).While fields operated by the North Oil Company (NOC) contributed 4,601,198 barrels (an average of 148,426 bpd), according to KRG statement. Due to circumstances beyond the KRG’s control, during December there were three days of downtime for the export pipeline, caused mainly by attempts at sabotage and theft.

Iraqi Kurdistan may sell parts of electricity sector to plug budget gap: deputy PM

Erbil - The region’s Deputy Prime Minister Qubad Talabani told media that the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) may sell parts of its electricity sector to raise funds to help plug a budget gap left by sinking oil prices. Talabani said also that KRG is also “considering monetizing assets including oil infrastructure. In further details Talabani said that the Iraqi Kurdish government “is working with the private sector to hand over some elements of the electricity sector” such as bill collection, he said. Further to mention that the region is running a monthly deficit of about 380-400 billion Iraqi dinars ($350-$370 million) with oil prices having fallen to about $30 a barrel from more than $100 two years ago. The region produces about 600,000 barrels of crude a day in production-sharing agreements with international oil companies.

KRG Cabinet Decide to pay only half Salary to his employees

Erbil – Due to financial crises and lack of income KRG decided to pay only half salary of public sector employee’s the decision will be implemented with teachers’ salaries Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) decide to pay only. Further to mention that civil servants in Kurdistan region has not received their salaries since September of 2015.
Teachers in Iraqi Kurdistan to receive half their September salary

All Kurdish news agencies

17th of January

Erbil, Kurdistan region of Iraq— Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) announced on that it would release funds to pay government teachers half of the amount owed to them for September 2015, in an effort to catch up on delayed payments. The KRG’s Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs issued a statement saying half of the total funds for September would be transferred to the Ministry of Education, which is responsible for distributing salaries. The ministry said the other half would be transferred in the future, though it did not give an exact timeline. From their side The Kurdistan Teachers’ Union said it would hold a meeting in Erbil on Monday to discuss the decision to pay only half of the salaries. Head of the union’s Garmiyan branch press office, Salih Mirways, said that the half-salary payment is “unacceptable.” Further to mention that the teachers hold demonstrations in October 2015 over the government’s failure to pay salaries on time – often delaying payments three months at a time.

Turkey fully reopens border with Iraq’s Kurdistan Region

Hawler news paper

17th of January

Zakho: Iraqi Kurdistan Region’s Ibrahim Khalil border crossing with Turkey was fully reopened on Sunday, following weeks of intermittent closures. Mohammad Khalil, Deputy Director of the Iraqi side of the border, confirmed that the crossing was fully open and allowing vehicles passage. Turkish authorities closed their side of the border crossing on Dec. 14, citing tensions and security concerns in cities and towns in its southeast. The crossing is located some 18 kilometers south of Silopi in Sirnak Province, where clashes between Turkey’s military and the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) have been ongoing. Turkey’s yearly export volume however fell 21.9 percent in 2015 from $10.7 billion to $8.3 billion dollars.

PM Barzani: Kurdistan hit hard by falling oil prices, left alone in ISIS fight

All Kurdish news agencies

21st of January

ERBIL, Kurdistan Region - Kurdish Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani and his deputy met with three provincial governors Wednesday morning to discuss the current economic situation in the region and steps the government is taking to overcome the crisis. The PM said that all countries reliant on oil revenues have felt the impact of falling oil prices, but the decline has done the Kurdistan Region the biggest harm. Barzani said that a series of crises such as the budget freeze by Baghdad, the war with the Islamic State (ISIS) and the influx of more than 1.8 refugees have put the region in the
worst crisis in a quarter century. He told the governors from Erbil, Duhok and Halabja that, worst of all, were the falling oil prices, and that government expenses exceed income. The government understands the situation and its impact on people's lives and therefore would try to run its affairs with what income it has available. Barzani said, adding that wrong messages in the media have caused confusion and further misunderstanding of the situation. The Kurdish prime minister said the regional government cannot print money, nor can it borrow. Barzani said that the Kurdish region has been left alone: It is fighting ISIS on behalf of the world, but the world hasn't offered Erbil any financial assistance in this conflict. Barzani said he appreciates the dire situation of government branches and civil departments. He admitted that there have been flaws in the system. And that to overcome them hard decisions have to be made and austerity and reform must be implemented. Barzani's Deputy Qubad Talabani also addressed the governors and said that, alongside austerity measures, serious reforms have to be introduced too. Talabani said that much confusion has been caused among people through wrong interpretations and lack of explanation from the government, which should be addressed and made clear to people through the cabinet and its ministers. Talabani warned that if the price of oil and expenses remain the same, then the situation could only get worse. He added that the reform plan will entail cutting shadow employments as well as multiple salaries and the introduction of a fair payment system. He dismissed some media reports which said this week that the government would be only able to pay half salaries from now on, saying that the half salaries paid to the employees of the education ministry was all that was available to the finance ministry. He added that everyone would be paid their full salaries. The deputy PM said that transparency would be part of the new reform program that would allow people to have access to information on government revenues and expenses. At the meeting's conclusion, it was decided that a workshop will be held for all government ministers, where they will put on the table details of their financial situation to help the government in its plans to solve the crisis.

**Nechirvan Barzani says financial crisis may push Kurdistan to think ‘beyond oil’**

**Rudaw TV**

**24th of January**

Erbil: Top business and government leaders in Iraqi Kurdistan discussed strategies to work a way out of the region’s financial crunch, at a workshop Saturday led by PM Nechirvan Barzani. Barzani said he hoped the crisis would push both the government and the public to seek new ways “beyond oil” to rebuild and develop Kurdistan. “Hopefully, it will be a chance for all of us to start to reassess our conditions, as we find a way out of this crisis,” Barzani said. He explained the problem, and why his government has been unable overdue public salaries since September 2014: “When we started producing our own crude oil, the price was over $110 (per barrel), but we sell it at a price of $20.” “We need about 850 billion dinars (around $700 million) to cope with the monthly salaries, but currently we have only half of that in oil revenues,” Barzani said at the meeting, where his deputy and several ministers were present. The KRG’s other domestic revenues have also dropped from around 300 billion dinars (about $240 million) to about 140 billion dinars (about $110 million) in 2015, as many businesses have lost revenues.
Iraqi Kurdistan gov't provided Kirkuk with $10 million from oil sale
Hawlati newspaper
27th of January

Erbil: A Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) official Mohammed Kamal in Kirkuk said on Wednesday that the Iraq's Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) has provided $10 million dollars to Kirkuk from the city's oil sale revenue, saying the Governorate has not confirmed the allocation. “Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and Kurdistan Democratic Party have been aware of the Kirkuk oil sales,” Kamal said in an interview with local newspaper Hawlati. The Kirkuk Governor Najmaldin Kareem, Kurdistan PM Nechirvan Barzani and KRG’s Minister of Natural Resources Ashti Hawrami made a recent agreement over selling Kirkuk’s oil, Kamal added. Kamal further explained the agreement between the KRG and the Kirkuk Governor, saying that Kirkuk will receive two dollars for each exported barrel of oil by the KRG under terms of a compensation system called the “petrodollar.

KRG will cut parts from salaries of public employees in 2016
Kurd sat TV
27th of January
SULAIMANI — The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani announced on Wednesday (Jan. 27) that all government employees would receive decreased monthly payments in 2016 and that the remaining amount would be used by the government to tackle the region’s financial crisis. During a recent meeting with local governors and economic experts, Prime Minister Barzani said the remaining amount from the decreased payment would stay in the government's budget to address the crisis but that government employees “would be paid back” in the future.