



ORSAM

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**THE FULL TEXT OF
IRAQI KURDISH REGIONAL
GOVERNMENT'S PRESIDENT
MASSOUD BARZANI'S
SPEECH AT ORSAM
ON 4 JUNE 2010**

-ANKARA-

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Prof. Dr. Meliha Altunışık: Good morning. This is another meeting organized by ORSAM welcoming Iraqi political leaders. And today we are very happy to have with us his Excellency, Mr. Massoud Barzani. Mr. Barzani was born in 1946 in Mahabad in Iran. He was elected to the Kurdistan Democratic Party Central Committee in 1971, and later to its political bureau. As you know, he comes from a well known political family in Iraq. And he was later elected as the leader of the KDP in 1979; he was reelected as the KDP's leader in 1993 and later in 1999. Mr. Barzani played a key role in establishing cooperation among the Kurdish political parties in Iraq. Following the 1991 Gulf War, Mr. Barzani coordinated the Kurdish movement against Saddam Hussein regime. The first election in any part of Iraq was held in the Kurdish region in May 1992, establishing the first Kurdish national assembly. After the war in 2003, Mr. Barzani was appointed to the Governing Council and held the rotating presidency in May 2004. He played a very critical role to achieve official recognition of the Kurdish region and the Kurdish region's government, the KRG in the transitional administrative law. Later, in the drafting of the Iraqi constitution with the other Kurdish political institutions he was a central figure in negotiating a new federal system in Iraq. Mr. Massoud Barzani was elected as the first president of the Kurdish region by the Kurdish national assembly. He was sworn into office on 12 June 2005. In July 2009, in the first direct election of the presidency of the KRG he was reelected as president by the public ballot, receiving 69, 6% of the votes. As you know, his Excellency Mr. Massoud Barzani is here in Turkey with four ministers actually, Minister of Interior, Minister of Natural Resources, Minister of Trade and Minister of Education and we already heard that there are important agreements on security and economic cooperation with Turkey. Now I would like to leave the floor to his Excellency Mr. Massoud Barzani, please.

Mr. Massoud Barzani: First of all I would like to welcome you. I'm very pleased to have this opportunity to talk to you this morning. Our visit to Turkey comes as a continuation and extension of the visit that was paid to the Kurdistan region of Iraq by the Foreign Minister and also the Interior Minister of Turkey. I can say that the relations have entered a new era. The Turkish Consulate-general has opened officially in Arbil. The largest and the biggest number of companies active in the Kurdistan region are the Turkish companies. We foresee a bright future ahead of us in order to build strong relations on all aspects. So we hold respect to the Turkish people and the Government of Turkey, and the fact that we are neighbors, so our desire is to live in peace for eternity and also to have cordial relationship. It is on this basis that the visit comes to Turkey in order to strengthen and consolidate this relationship and achieve further advancement in this relationship. So we have conducted several meeting yesterday with his Excellency the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister and the Interior Minister. So we have conducted series of meetings and we are comfortable with the outcome of the meetings. There has been a common understanding. As you may know that the security situation in Kurdistan region is very stable and secure. And the fact that Kurdistan region is safe and secure can play a role to be the bridge and a corridor for the sake of a common interest of Turkey, Iraq and also that bridge is useful for Turkey to go further down to the Gulf. So we are committed to the unity of Iraq provided that Iraq is governed in adherence to the Constitution; because we see that in the interest of the Iraqi people and the interest of the entire region. As you may know that we as Iraqis have been working on the issue of the

elections and recently the results have been approved by the Constitutional Court so from now on a serious process of negotiations have started on the government formation. We as Kurdistan region play a helpful role, so that we remove all the obstacles in that sense. We believe at this stage and also in the future Iraq needs a kind of government that would bring about everybody, it should be an inclusive government that represents all the communities of Iraq. It doesn't work if any sect or any part of the community would be marginalized or excluded. And it would be on this basis that the talks would resume and our delegation will go to Baghdad next week in order to start negotiation with other blocs in Baghdad. In fact I do not want to go on just talking I would like to give you more opportunity to ask specific questions if you have. Once again thank you for coming it was a pleasure being with you.

Oytun Orhan (ORSAM): Mr. Barzani, I want to learn what will change after this visit regarding the relations between Turkey and the KRG.

Mr. Barzani: Of course it is for some time that the relationship between Turkey and the Kurdistan region has been on the right track and what this visit would provide is more impetus that it would expand and broaden the areas of cooperation in different field to be more efficient and effective.

Özgür Ünlühisarcıkhoğlu (The German Marshall Fund): It was expected that one of the issues you would be taking in Ankara would be the cooperation between Turkey and Iraqi Kurdistan government against the PKK terrorist organization. I know some of these talks are confidential but what information can you give us regarding this issue?

Mr. Barzani: First of all I would like to say that we would be very much affected and it is very unfortunate and saddening for us when we see the blood of any Turkish citizen is shed whether it is Turk or Kurd. We are against violence and bloodshed. And we very strongly support the policy that has been adopted by his Excellency the Turkish Prime Minister and the Turkish Government this opening policy in order to solve the Kurdish question in Turkey. And also experience has proven such kind of question will not be solved through violence and through military means. We believe that more the opening policy continues the more the steps that have been taken which were courageous and brave steps that have been taken by the Turkish government and especially his Excellency the Prime minister, this brings us close to reasonable and effective solution. And we will spare no effort and we will do our best in order for all the concerned to respond positively to this opening policy. We as the KRG strongly support that. This is our policy because we believe that war will not solve this problem and experience has proven that we have to see other means and we are ready to provide any kind of support or cooperation that's needed with the government of turkey in order to find a fundamental solution to this question. This is our policy.

Osman Göksel (Nabucco's Turkey Representative): I just would like to ask a question about the pipelines. There are certain plans about getting the Qatar gas through Iraq through the Kurdish region to Turkey. Do you support such a pipeline project which at the very same time includes certain elements of political stability and the security of the pipelines?

Mr. Barzani: We strongly support such kind of initiative not only the gas from Qatar but also the gas that's available in the rest of Iraq and also Kurdistan region so that it will be added to this pipeline. That would be a very good thing to do. It would improve the relations between the Kurdistan region of Iraq, Turkey and Europe. And we can also pledge and guarantee the safety and security of the pipeline that goes through the Kurdistan region.

Cihan Candemir (President of Yüksel Construction): I would like to welcome Mr Barzani. I expected that there would be some more political question and I waited. Since there is no more political question I want to bring the issue to economic field. I'm a member of DEIK Turkish Iraqi Business Council. My company is already working in Northern Iraq. I would like to get your opinions and your messages to Turkish businessman about the economic development of Iraq and the northern part of Iraq

Mr. Barzani: Of course we welcome the role that's being played by the Turkish companies in Iraq as a whole and in Kurdistan region. Because of the fact that we face security problems in other parts of Iraq, companies are not able to have activities there. But Kurdistan region is open for business and I'm sure you have seen and read our Investment Law, which is an open law, an appropriate law, an investor friendly law that provides incentives for the companies and investors. We would like to welcome this opportunity for business to come to the region. Of course the fact that the Turkish consulate has been opened in the region that provides more opportunity for coordination for us to know and understand those companies that they are known by the Turkish government thus also to be known better by the KRG. That gives us and assurance and a guarantee that these companies can play an effective role but as far as we observe we welcome and we support such companies.

Marie-Theresa Helal (The Embassy of Canada in Ankara): I have more of a political question. Now that the election results are officially recognized, important negotiation process between the coalitions begins. We'll be sending a delegation to Baghdad next week to begin this process. I'm very much interested in hearing the views in terms of giving us a bit more insight on how the negotiation process could evolve from now on and what will be the key strategies of your own fragment in the process Thank you very much.

Mr. Barzani: In the elections there were four main major winning lists, that included the al-Iraqiya headed by Allawi, the State of Law headed by Maliki, the Iraqi National Accord, and the Kurdistan Alliance. None of these lists got the majority of the vote that would enable it to form the cabinet without being in need of the other blocs. The Iraqi constitution stipulates that the biggest bloc that has the majority of the votes would be tasked to form the government. Some of the interpretations of this article that was given by the Constitutional Court says that the biggest bloc not necessarily means the winning bloc of the election but before entering the parliament or before the first session has convened, if two blocs can unite together and have one bloc and that could be the major bloc or the biggest bloc that could be tasked to form the cabinet. Just few days ago, the constitutional court has approved the election results. Thus far, to this moment, al-Iraqiya is the biggest winning bloc. But before going to the parliament, before the parliament convenes, if the state of Law bloc and the Iraqi National Alliance bloc united and they would be the biggest bloc. If it remains that as it is, then Allawi should be tasked to form the government. If two other blocs united, then their candidate should be tasked to form the government. We have only two weeks before the parliament convenes so that's the maximum time that we have. We as Kurds will continue to play our role. Our role is very clear that we will not enter an alliance with the Shias in order to exclude or marginalize the Sunnis, nor do we go with the Sunnis so that we weaken the Shias, but we would prefer to work all of us together and in that case we will be able to play an effective role. But if one group wants to marginalize and exclude the others then we will not be a part of that.

Ogun Duru (ORSAM): Mr. President welcome to Turkey. Mr President what do you think about the visa regime between Turkey and Iraq and how do you think the removal of this visa

regime will affect Turkey-Iraq bilateral relations, as well as Turkey's relations with the region.

Mr. Barzani: Of course we support the idea of removing the visa so that visa will not be needed. But this is of course a decision that the foreign ministries in both capitals, Ankara and Baghdad would determine, but as far as we are concerned we would like to remove so that it provides a better opportunity to broaden that horizon for cooperation.

Prof. Dr. Meliha Altunışık: we talked about Iraq's relations with Turkey, but I would like to hear your views about Iraq's relations with other neighbors.

Mr. Barzani: Our policy is clear that we would like to have good neighborly relations and friendly relations with the neighboring countries and also a relationship that's based on cooperation, based on mutual respect and also mutual benefit. We also would like the neighbors of Iraq help us so that we overcome the difficulties and get out of the crises that we face. But that does not mean the neighboring countries to interfere in our affairs in Iraq nor to decide on behalf of the Iraqis. But I can inform you all that as far as we are concerned and we have been following, and we have been following the situation closely since the fall of the Baath regime in Iraq, we have not seen one single terrorist who has crossed the border from Turkey into Iraq, which means and shows Turkish concern for the security and stability in Iraq. This is something highly appreciated by the people of Iraq and the people in Kurdistan region because no Iraqi blood was shed as a result of terrorists who have either been supported or a blind eye has been turned people who use Turkey as a passage therefore that position has been appreciated. Turkey has provided neither assistance nor turning a blind eye on people who cross Turkish border to Northern Iraq.

Finland Embassy: We recognize that it is a very positive development between Turkish government and your regional government, which is a background for this. I just wondered if you could say a little bit of the basis of discussions you've had here, in fact now this may normalize further and that which also could mean that both Turkish government and us here have the pleasure to see your Excellency here on a regular basis.

Mr. Barzani: Certainly this visit has made the relationship between both sides enter a new phase and a new stage. This is very normal for us to come here and our brothers in Turkey come and visit us this is the objective and this is normal. While in fact yesterday the foreign minister has stated that in the press conference when he said that what's not normal is that to have no visits. To have visits, this is something that has to be very normal and I share his vision and share his position with that.

Oytun Orhan (ORSAM): Mr Barzani could you give us some information about the planned free trade zone between Turkey and the KRG?

Mr. Barzani: In fact this is an issue that we've been working on both sides. The relative ministries are working on that.

Prof. Dr. Meliha Altunışık: I think this is the end of this session. Thank you very much again for coming.