

United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 2, 2017

His Excellency Haider Al-Abadi  
Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq  
Baghdad  
Republic of Iraq

Dear Mr. Prime Minister:

In light of reports of violent clashes between Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and the Kurdish Peshmerga in northern Iraq over the last few weeks, we write to emphasize our support for a united, federal, and democratic Iraq and urge you to work with the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) to deescalate this dangerous situation that is in no one's interest.

We recognize that the KRG's unilateral referendum on independence in September put your government in a difficult position and risked distracting from the fight against ISIS at a critical phase. However, we are also mindful of the immense support the KRG has provided over the years, including in counter-ISIS efforts, and we continue to support a strong and autonomous KRG within a unified and federal Iraq. The referendum even divided opinion within Iraqi Kurdistan, contributing to Masoud Barzani's recent decision to step down as the KRG's president. Recognizing the unintended consequences, the KRG has offered to freeze the results of the referendum and engage in negotiations for a path forward, and we hope you will work with them to resolve this quickly.

The protection of Iraq's Kurdish citizens and minority communities is of the utmost importance to us. As tensions remain high, we would like to ensure that these communities are protected and to avoid any further violence that could spiral out of control. The presence of Iranian-backed Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) in disputed areas – especially the Nineveh Plains – has caused serious concerns, especially in minority communities. We strongly encourage you to remove non-local PMF units and to ensure that only the most disciplined elements of the ISF are tasked with security responsibilities in these sensitive areas. Having invested considerable resources to equip and train the ISF, we are deeply troubled at the prospect of American-supplied arms being used against Iraqi Kurds or other minority communities. We urge you to have the ISF refrain from any unilateral or uncoordinated movements in the disputed and Kurdish areas, to accept a freeze of the referendum, to begin a dialogue with the KRG leadership to craft a constitutional solution to the current impasse, to establish joint mechanisms for security in disputed areas, and to address the broader political issues vital to Iraq's long-term stability.

Further, we would like to take this opportunity to stress our belief that the fight against ISIS is far from over. A rift between Iraqi Kurds and the rest of the country will only exacerbate an already difficult situation. Stable, peaceful, and productive relations between the KRG and the Iraqi Government should be a critical priority for both our countries.

We are grateful for your leadership and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Ron Johnson  
U.S. Senator



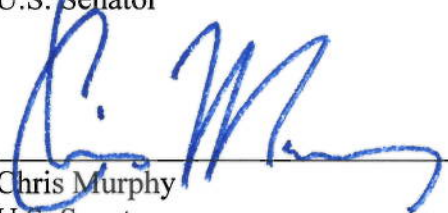
Tim Kaine  
U.S. Senator



Marco Rubio  
U.S. Senator



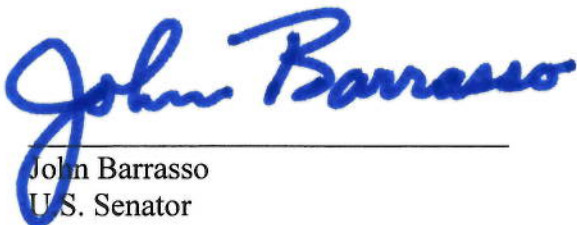
James Risch  
U.S. Senator



Chris Murphy  
U.S. Senator



Cory Gardner  
U.S. Senator



John Barrasso  
U.S. Senator



Johnny Isakson  
U.S. Senator