

Press release: Foreign Secretary statement on Kurdish/Iraq tensions

The Foreign Secretary spoke with both Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government Nechirvan Barzani and the Iraqi Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi on Sunday afternoon. He urged both parties to seek a quick, peaceful resolution within the constitution to the current Kurdish/Iraqi tensions and reiterated the UK's continued support to the Kurds within a unified Iraq.

Last night, I spoke to Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi and the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Nechirvan Barzani. I encouraged both to continue to de-escalate the situation on the ground in Iraq and to avoid misunderstandings that could lead to conflict. The UK welcomes the willingness of the Government of Iraq and Kurdistan Regional Government to engage in dialogue on the basis of the Iraqi Constitution. The UK encourages both sides to agree a timetable for talks.

The UK remains committed to the sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity of Iraq and will continue to support all Iraq's people, including Iraq's Kurds, within a unified Iraq.

It is also critical that all parties continue to focus on the fight against Daesh, prevent its re-emergence and work together to rebuild liberated towns, villages and lives.

Yesterday, Masoud Barzani also retired from the office of the President of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. We welcome the opportunity this presents for leadership of the Kurdistan Region to pass to a new generation of Kurds. They must build strong democratic institutions and resolve the historic differences between the Kurdistan Regional Government and the Government of Iraq consistent with the Iraqi Constitution. They will have the UK's full support.

The Government of Iraq and Kurdistan Regional Government have been staunch allies of the UK in recent years as we have jointly fought the scourge of Daesh in the region. I want to pay tribute to former President Barzani's leadership in that fight, to his years of service to the Iraqi Kurdish people and to the role he played in the formation of modern Iraq.