

## **Article 140 and the future of Iraq**

**Distinguish Guests  
Ladies & Gentleman**

**On behalf of the Kurdish National Congress, I am honored to welcome you for being part of this important and critical conference, not just for the people of Kurdistan, but also for the future of Iraq and the stability of the Middle East.**

**The Iraqi constitution is what makes Iraq a sovereign country. 80% of the Iraqis voted for this constitution. This voting was witnessed and endorsed by the United Nations and our government, the government of the United States of America.**

**Since the liberation of Iraq five years ago, the Kurdish leadership has committed itself to preserve the integrity of Iraq and to establish a democratic government where rights of all are respected equally by law and according to the Iraqi constitution. Since the liberation, two successful elections were held, and for the first time in the history of Iraq, the Iraqi constitution was approved by 80% of all Iraqis.**

**The deadline for the implementation of Article 140 has passed. Article 140 is designed to revise the process of forced Arabization and all other disputed areas within Iraq--to give for the first time, the right to the people in these areas to choose their destiny. Failing to implement this article of the constitution will result in complete mistrust between the people of Kurdistan and the central government once again, and it will take the country further away from stability and peace. This will endanger the future of Iraq and the region.**

**When the deadline passed on December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2007, an extension for six months was granted, and the United Nation stepped in to provide technical assistance to speed up the referendum process, where the roadmap to solve this issue was spelled out clearly in the Iraqi constitution. But the UN took another role to have a new set of conditions and a new road map to solve**

**this dilemma, which made life for thousands of people more miserable and undermined the Iraqi constitution.**

**Mr. de Mistura, the UN representative, said “The status of the northern Iraqi Kurdish city of Kirkuk must be solved through a political formula and not a hastily organized referendum that would trigger violence.” He called Kirkuk a Kurdish city, yet he denies the Kurdish majority in the city the right of conducting a referendum!**

**Mr. de Mistura added that “the issue of Kirkuk needs to be solved through a political formula in which everybody, majorities and minorities feel comfortable.” He told Reuters that he “would propose options so Iraq could decide under which authority to put four disputed locations, near Kirkuk, but excluding Kirkuk.” Why did he exclude Kirkuk? This will reaffirm the same policy of Arabization of Saddam Hussein. One may ask, “Whom he is serving?”**

**Mr. de Mistura also said Kirkuk is the mother of all problems. Is his intention in this statement to make this issue more complicated than fighting Al Qaeda or he is giving it its true magnitude?**

**What right does Mr. de Mistura have to water down the aspiration of the people of Kurdistan? Can he or any Kurdish leaders that agree with his approach answer the thousands of mothers and wives who lost their loved ones in the Arabization process?**

**At this time, we are grateful for the continuous sacrifices of our men and women in liberating Iraq. The United States of America has a moral obligation to use its authority to implement this article to help its only true ally in Iraq, and in the area to close this chapter of cruelty against the people of Kurdistan once and for all. The United States and the United Nations have made sure that other parts of the Iraqi constitution were implemented on time; therefore they have the same contractual obligation toward the people of Kurdistan in implementing Article 140.**

**We cannot put all the responsibilities on the Iraqi government or the US for failing to implement article 140. We must also blame the KRG and the Kurdish leadership because they failed to bring the Turkmen, Assyrians, and the Arabs to our side. They did not have a clear plan to demonstrate what they would do for these areas if they become part of the Kurdistan Region. The Kurdish leadership must make their position clear to the people of Kurdistan and they must have one policy when it comes to the future of article 140. Double standard policy will backfire on them, as well as the people of Kurdistan.**

**I hope this conference will come out with a clear road map and recommendations for the people of Kurdistan and its leadership to choose the path where the rights of the people of Kurdistan are respected according to the Iraqi constitution. Anything less will be a slap in the face of democracy, freedom, and human rights--the goal which was set by our government when we liberated Iraq, and it will be a disgrace to the memory of our martyrs.**

**Thank you**

**Saman Shali, Ph.D.**

**President**

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