



Kurdish National Congress of North America
P.O. Box 90823, Nashville, TN 37209
www.kncna.org

Senator Barack Obama, Democratic Party Candidate for President
713 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

September 18, 2008

Dear Senator Obama:

Since 2003 when American forces liberated Iraq, the Kurds have been helping America implement its policies in order to create a more democratic form of government in Iraq. It now appears that this cooperation will not be repaid with a just form of government – indeed, not even with a government that meets constitutionally mandated commitments.

In 2003 the Turks, who had been long considered to be the strongest ally in the region, did not allow American forces to pass through Turkey to form “the Northern Front” to facilitate the collapse of the Iraqi dictator, Saddam Hussein. When America was searching for an alternative, the Kurdish leadership joined forces with American forces and made the creation of a Northern Front possible. Their blood was mixed with American blood on the battlefield.

Ever since then, the Kurds have been the most loyal friends in Iraq and one of the most reliable in the entire Middle East. Yet American policies toward them have not been clear. Following the close cooperation of the Kurds in securing the removal of Saddam Hussein and during the formation of a new constitution, the Kurds have been integral part of making this infant democracy work. The new Iraqi constitution, under the tutelage of the U.S., guaranteed the Kurds democratic rights within a democratic Iraq.

However, after the blueprint of the constitution began to be implemented as policy on the ground, the Iraqi government has created obstacles and dragged its feet on every step of the road in order to avoid implementing articles related to Kurdish democratic and national demands.

In particular, their reluctance centers around Article 140 which relates to the end of Arabization of Kurdistan and areas provisionally sequestered from Kurdistan under the Ba’athist regime. Furthermore, this deliberate refusal to honor the terms of the constitution in enforcing Article 140 has been done on the American watch. It appears that every time there has been a dispute between the Kurds and the Iraqi government over issues which they had previously agreed upon, Americans have pressured the Kurdish leadership to abandon the issues or policies that protected their interests, security, or guaranteed their equal participation.

Nothing may symbolize this cynical *realpolitik* more than the fact that the Iraqi regime now stands poised to insist on the 36th parallel as the boundary for Kurdish regional autonomy. The selection of the 36th parallel was an arbitrary and expedient war time measure that coalition and U.S. forces selected as a temporary means to secure a haven for the Kurds against Saddam's helicopter gunships. It certainly has no organic relation to the actual human geography of where Kurds actually lived before Saddam Hussein's persecution began. For the Iraqi regime to now insist that a line that was chosen for air cover and tactical expediency become a viable boundary of areas of Kurdish interest is arrogant and Machiavellian.

Rebuilding Iraq with a government that will produce a democratically functional society requires that American leaders do better than colonial regimes before them and recognize the reality on the ground – that Iraq as a society has never been united due to the policies of former regimes. The only way to make Iraq a democracy is to acknowledge the complexity of Iraqi society in terms of ethnicity and sectarian factions and to find some means to accommodate those competing interests.

It is in the United States interest to make Iraq a stable country in the most disputed region in the world. The U. S. can do this by making the country a model for other undemocratic countries in the region by creating a genuine federalism in Iraq that allows ethnic groups to run their own affairs within their regions. Not acknowledging the reality of Iraqi society is to lead Iraq back to decades of oppression and instability that brought it to the brink of disintegration. The idea of creating federal states within Iraq where all ethnic factions have their respective identity under one national (not centralized) government could bring Iraqi society together which could lead the nation to a more prosperous future.

While espousing democratic values, one should realize that there is no one Republic that is entirely democratic. At this point, the Iraqi nation stands poised to be plunged into the 'tyranny of the majority' and in danger of possibly descending back into dictatorship.

I urge you to pursue a policy that supports Iraqi federalism, and that you not leave behind the most loyal ethnic group, the Kurds, who are secular and pro American. The Kurds were betrayed twice in the past in 1975 and again in 1991 by previous American administrations. The people of Kurdistan look up to America and they are hoping that they would be given a chance to learn from American democracy in the context of a federated Iraq.

Sincerely,
Kirmanj Gundi
Kirmanj Gundi
President