

Missing Historical Opportunity

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Press Release

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Article 140

December 31st, 2007

The creation of modern Iraq by the Allies in the aftermath of World War I brought Kurdish people nothing but suffering and injustice. They denied the Kurds the sovereignty of their soil not because they were not capable and they did not have all the right elements to be a sovereign nation but because the British found oil in Kirkuk.

Since then the Kurds have been fighting to regain what is rightfully theirs. Negotiations on the rights of Kirkuk with the successive Iraqi governments have been postponed endlessly. The 1970 delay cost the Kurds over 182,000 lives, over 4500 villages, and over 5,000 civilians in the city of Halabja alone in the infamous chemical attacks. After the liberation of Iraq in 2003, the new Iraqi constitution, which was approved by 80% of all Iraqis, clearly stipulated a step-by-step timetable to solve this complex issue by December 31st, 2007.

Recently the Kurdish parliament approved [Vote 94 (Yes) - 17 (No)] the delay for six months, without any pre condition or road map clearly show how Article 140 will be implement in the next six months. What if at the end of the six months there is another request for delay and so on? This delay did not take its constitutional path; the request should have been submitted to the Iraqi government from the High Committee for the Implementation of Article 140. Then the Iraqi government would approve the request and ask the Iraqi parliament to approve this delay for **one time** only. The constitutional process was not followed.

History is repeating itself. Thirty-three years after the non-implementation of the 1970 agreement between the Kurds and the Baghdad government, we are witnessing another delay on Kirkuk. The responsibility for this delay rests with the Kurdish leadership in the first place, the United States government for failing to help implement article 140 of the Iraqi constitution, and the neighboring-occupying states of Kurdistan for doing their

utmost to derail the implementation of the article. The Iraqi government takes a secondary role because the Kurdish ministers in the Iraqi government and the Kurdistan Alliance in the Iraqi parliament did not take a strong stand to push the Iraqi government to speed up the process.

We at the Kurdish National Congress strongly oppose this delay and regard it as a slap in the face of the Kurdish people and a belittling of their sacrifices as a partner in the new Iraq. We demand that the Kurdish Parliament and the Kurdish Regional Government take a brave step by incorporating immediately all the Kurdish areas cut off from Kurdistan if article 140 is not implemented after six months under any pretext. They must reject any future request for further delay **under any circumstances**. The plan to incorporate all the Kurdish areas must be put in place parallel to the implementation of article 140.

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