



## Kurdish PM Meets With Top US Officials in Washington

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In an official visit to Washington, the Kurdish PM Nechirvan Barzani arrived in Washington late last week to explain his administration's stance on several important issues regarding Southern Kurdistan and Iraq, a KDP official told the Kurdistan Observer today.

The US KDP representative Farhad Barzani said that the Kurdish PM had met last Monday with US National Security Chief Condi Rice. On Tuesday, he met with the Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and his assistant Paul Wolfowitz. On the same day, the Kurdish PM also met with the Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage.

According to Mr. Farhad Barzani, the Kurdish PM reaffirmed his position on the Kurdistan city of Kirkuk. Nechirvan Barzani told his hosts that "the Arabization of the oil-rich region of Kirkuk and the eviction of thousands of Kurds by Saddam Hussein must be reversed or the future will be at risk."

Mr. Barzani said "the Arabs who were brought to Kirkuk must be resettled to where they came from -- with compensation from the Iraqi government, and the same should also happen to the Kurdish refugees". The prime minister also made it clear to US officials that eventual control of Kirkuk -- historically a Kurdish area -- must be returned to Kurdistan.

For the Kurds to forsake their goal of independence, Barzani said that the new Iraqi permanent constitution must guarantee and recognize the Kurdistan Regional Government and the geographic boundaries of Southern Kurdistan.

For their part, the American officials expressed appreciation for the Kurdish leadership in their effort to rebuild Kurdistan and Iraq and reaffirmed their support for Kurdish rights and also discussed Iraq's political transition, the current security situation, regional issues, and their shared objectives of a federal, democratic, unified and prosperous Iraq.

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