



Kurds Tell Shiites Enough is Enough With Arabisation Policy

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Paris (AsiaNews) --- The repatriation of Kurds to the Kirkuk area and the hiring practices of the Iraq's Northern Oil Company have opened cracks in Shiite-Kurdish coalition that governs Iraq.

Some Kurds complain that Shiite Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari is running the government in a discriminatory manner with the goal of "Arabising" the country, this according to Saywan Barzani, the Paris-based Kurdish envoy to Europe, who spoke to AsiaNews,.

A few days ago Iraq's Kurdish President Jalal Talabani and Massoud Barzani, leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party, complained in a letter to al-Jaafari that he was putting the Prime Minister's Office before the government. They received no reply.

But on Saturday, a Shiite lawmaker criticised Talabani for going public with the differences just before the October 15 referendum.

Saywan Barzani, who is Massoud Barzani's nephew, said that "Ibrahim Jaafari is running the government without consulting his Kurdish allies even though the two groups that won the January 30 elections had agreed that every decision had to be done in accord with the Kurds."

Worse still, other Kurdish leaders are complaining that al-Jaafari is promoting a policy of "Arabisation".

As evidence Saywan Barzani points to the fact that this government has not allowed a single Kurdish family back into the oil-rich, northern city of Kirkuk.

Saddam Hussein's regime had ethnically cleansed the city of its Kurdish population in the eighties and Kurds today hope to reassert the majority status they had before Saddam's "Arabisation" drive.

"The government has done nothing to bring some kind of normalcy to the city despite what the provisional constitution and the Shiite-Kurdish agreement say," Barzani noted.

Barzani goes further and accuses the government of pursuing an "unacceptable racial policy". For example, most oil from northern Iraq comes from Kurdish areas and yet Kurds constitute only 1 per cent of the workforce in Iraq's Northern Oil Company.

"This is unacceptable discrimination in a country that wants to become democratic and make a clean break with the old racist and criminal Baathist regime that perpetrated genocide against the people of Kurdistan," he said.

The Kurdish envoy is still hopeful though. "The divide between Shiites and Kurds can be overcome if Arabs accept to recognise Kurdish rights and understand what they did to them: genocide, Arabisation, destruction of 90 per cent of Kurdistan and hundreds of thousands of civilians killed and buried in the Arab desert."

In the meantime, at a press conference in Prague (Czech Republic) President Talabani denied rumours that he wanted Prime Minister al-Jaafari to resign. "All we need to ask him is to change his methods," he said.

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