
UN CAUTIONS AGAINST FLYING KURDISH FLAG IN KIRKUK

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Rudaw (21 March 2017)

The United Nations mission in Iraq (UNAMI) said it is concerned by the raising of the Kurdistan flag in Kirkuk.

The Mission cautions against any unilateral steps that might jeopardize harmony and peaceful coexistence among many ethnic and religious groups that rightly call Kirkuk their home and want to live and work together in the post-Daesh [ISIS] period, building on the spirit of unity and cooperation of all components in fighting the terrorism Daesh, read a statement published by UNAMI on Tuesday evening.

On Monday, the Kurdish flag was officially raised by the provincial government alongside the Iraqi one at Kirkuk's castle during a Newroz event.

Kurdistan's flag is not only the flag of the Kurds. It is the flag of all the social makeup of Kirkuk, Kirkuk governor Najmaldin Karim said during the event. We tell those who want to instigate chaos: this flag is that of the Arabs and Turkmen, as well as the Kurds. It is the flag of Kurdistan which is a place for everyone.

Karim announced last week that Kurdish language would be used together with Arabic in all official provincial communication and the Kurdish flag would be flown at provincial government institutions, as permitted in the Iraqi constitution.

According to Article 4 of the Iraqi constitution, Each region or governorate may adopt any other local language as an additional official language if the majority of its population so decides in a general referendum.

The Iraqi prime ministers office is of the opinion that Kirkuk does not have the authority to raise the Kurdish flag.

The constitution has clearly stipulated the powers of provincial governments and those of the federal government in Baghdad. The powers of governorates which belong to no region are also specified. Kirkuk is one of these governorates, Saad Adisi, spokesperson for the prime ministers office, told Rudaw on Monday.

Thus far, these regions are under the authority of the federal government. Hence, in places outside the Kurdistan Region, no other flag should be raised on institutions other than the Iraqi flag. This is vested with the federal government alone. Kirkuk is within the framework of these governorates, and it should commit to raising the Iraqi flag only, he said.

UNAMI, in its statement, noted that Baghdad had clarified that Kirkuk comes under the central governments control and that no flag should be raised in the Governorate other than the Iraqi flag.

The multi-ethnic city of Kirkuk is home to Kurds, Arabs, and Turkmen among others. It has been secured by Kurdish Peshmerga forces since mid-2014 after Iraqi government troops left the city ahead of a possible attack by radical Islamic insurgents when they took over large swathes of the country. The province has one of Iraqs largest oil fields within its borders.

Kaynak/Source: