
CALM PREVAILS THOUGH NO REAL PROGRESS IN ONGOING IRAQ-KURD SECURITY TALKS: MINISTER

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21.11.2017

Rudaw, 21 Nov 2017

Ongoing security talks between Erbil and Baghdad have not yielded any results yet, but the situation remains calm, the acting Peshmerga minister said.

"Dialogue is continuing between the Peshmerga forces and the Iraqi army, but has had no results so far. The fighting, however, has stopped and the military movements have decreased," said Karim Sinjari after a meeting between his ministry and the US-led Global Coalition in Erbil.

The Coalition is overseeing the bilateral talks that began in late October.

Iraqi and Kurdish forces have respected a ceasefire that came into effect on October 28 after two weeks of deadly sporadic clashes triggered by Iraq's incursion into the disputed areas in the wake of Kurdistan's independence vote.

The Iraqi army and Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi have accused the Peshmerga of holding little interest in the security dialogue, saying that the Kurdish army wants negotiations moved into the political sphere as part of wider talks on all outstanding issues between the two governments.

The Peshmerga say that are not ready to hand over control of Kurdistan Region's international borders to the Iraqi forces and have called for a joint mechanism to administer the disputed or Kurdistan areas claimed by both Erbil and Baghdad.

Both sides say their position is backed by the constitution. Baghdad argues that it has the constitutional right to impose federal authority throughout the whole country. Erbil says disputed areas must be dealt with by a joint mechanism and the Kurdistan Region itself is recognized by the constitution with its own government and armed forces.

Iraqi forces and their allied Iranian-backed Shiite Hashd al-Shaabi forces took control of the oil-rich and diverse city of Kirkuk and other disputed areas since mid-October.

Kurdistan's oil exports have subsequently dropped by about half, resulting in a serious loss of revenue for the oil-dependent Region.

Monday's meeting between the Peshmerga and the Coalition was a routine one as part of the war against ISIS.

That war is not over and militants continue to carry out "movements" in some places, Sinjari said, without providing details. Because of the ongoing risk, it is necessary for the Coalition to continue its cooperation and support of the Peshmerga, he added.

Iraqi forces and a mixture of Shiite militia and tribal fighters pushed ISIS out of the last urban areas in Iraq on Friday when they liberated Rawa and the Syrian border area, ending the extremist group's territorial hold in the country.

Kaynak/Source: