
THERESA MAY BACKS UNIFIED IRAQ IN CALL TO KURDISH PM

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UK Prime Minister Theresa May and her Kurdish counterpart Nechirvan Barzani discussed a range of issues Tuesday morning, including the September referendum and the restarting of international flights into Kurdistans two main airports.

According to a statement from 10 Downing Street, the UK prime minister and Barzani discussed the referendum, with May saying that the UK would continue to fight to protect the identity and rights of the Kurdish people under the Iraqi constitution.

The prime ministers office added that May welcomed Barzanis governments recognition of the Iraqi Federal Supreme Courts ruling that Iraq is unified and indivisible.

The non-binding referendum on the independence of Kurdistan took place on Sept. 25, resulting in 93 percent support for independence. Its legality was however rejected by the government of Iraq, and led to retaliatory measures such as the closure of Kurdistans Irbil and Sulaimaniya airports to international flights.

According to Mays office, the two leaders also discussed a resumption of international flights to the two airports. They both said that they hoped to see progress on this soon, it added.

Previous to the September referendum, airlines such as Dubais Emirates and Flydubai, along with European carriers Lufthansa and Austrian Airlines flew direct to Irbil Airport. A Flydubai spokesperson told Arab News via email that flights to Irbil have been temporarily suspended. Passengers booked on a flight between Sept. 30, 2017 and March 24, 2018 can rebook on a flight to another destination in Iraq or receive a refund to the original form of payment. For flights after this date further updates will be provided nearer the time.

In the phone call May discussed the UKs determination to see reform in Iraq. She underlined the UKs continued support for the Kurdistan region and Kurdish people within a unified Iraq, while urging continued reform in the political, economic and security sectors to strengthen Kurdistans institutions and deliver for the Kurdish people, Downing Street said.

May also said that she would be pleased to see Prime Minister Barzani in London in due course to make further progress on these matters. Her office confirmed to Arab News that no official visit to the UK by Barzani is currently planned.

Kaynak/Source: