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## **KRG DEPUTIES MAY WITHDRAW FROM IRAQI POLITICS OVER BUDGET APPROVAL**

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Kurdistan Region Government (KRG) deputies in Federal Parliament said they may withdraw from politics after boycotting Saturday a long-delayed budget session approved by the Iraqi Parliament.

"We boycotted the vote and there are proposals for Kurdistan to withdraw from the entire political process in Iraq over the unfair treatment we have received," said Kurdish deputy Ashwaq Jaff from Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP).

The budget for more than \$88 billion is based on projected oil exports of 3.8 million barrels per day (bpd) at a price of \$46, a copy of the final bill showed. It envisions government revenues of \$77.6 billion with a deficit of \$10.58 billion.

Adil Nuri, another Kurdish lawmaker, said the withdraw may include the presidential and ministerial posts. "As Kurds, we are considering the option of completely withdrawing from politics. This also includes leaving the presidential and ministerial posts.

Nuri said the "partners have not let them any other choices" after the budget was approved, regardless of the boycott. Parliament was meant to pass the budget before the start of the 2018 financial year in January but all three main blocs, Shi'ite Arabs, Sunni Arabs, and Kurds, had serious issues with the government's proposal. The budget cuts the semi-autonomous KRG's share from the 17 percent the region has traditionally received since the fall of Saddam Hussein. It did not specify a percentage to be allocated to the KRG, instead stipulating it would receive funds proportional to its share of the population.

In a previous draft, the KRG portion was set at 12.67 percent, which is how much of Iraq's population Baghdad says the provinces in Kurdistan make up. The KRG disputes that estimation.

The KRG overwhelmingly voted to secede in an independence referendum in September, which was opposed by Baghdad and the international community. In October, Iraqi forces retook disputed territories, including the oil-rich city of Kirkuk that had come under KRG's control in 2014. Baghdad also imposed a number of sanctions on Irbil, including suspending international flights to and from KRG airports. Baghdad and the KRG had been engaged in talks for months about the sanctions and Irbil's share of the budget. The government said Tuesday it had reached an agreement with the Kurds to resume Kirkuk oil exports through Turkey's Ceyhan port but gave no precise timeline.

The projected 3.8 million bpd exports in the budget, includes a 250,000 bpd contribution from the Kurdistan region, lawmakers said Saturday. It was not immediately clear what effect the Kurdish

boycott of the vote would have on that.

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Kaynak/Source: