
SADR REJECTS RETURN OF KURDISH TROOPS TO IRAQ'S DISPUTED AREAS

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by Mohamed Mostafa

Baghdad (IraqiNews.com) Iraqi Shia cleric and political leader Muqtada al-Sadr voiced on Sunday his rejection of the rumored return of Kurdish forces to areas disputed with the Iraqi government.

Answering his disciples questions through his online portal, Sadr stressed that only the heroic Iraqi army, and no one else, should take charge there.

He added that the Iraqi armys control should include every inch of the homeland, and not only the disputed regions.

Iraq denied on Saturday reports that it was under pressures from the United States to allow the return of Kurdish forces to areas disputed by Baghdad and Kurdistan Region.

A statement by Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadis spokesperson, Saad al-Hadithi, reported by The New Arab, said that The issue of the deployment of Iraqi forces in the northern and western territories is part of the responsibility of the government in Baghdad. He added that the matter is a sovereign, independent decision that is not subject to the will of foreign powers.

He noted, however, that coordination to counter dangers at the disputed regions is ongoing. Kurdistans Peshmerga Ministry also denied on Thursday news of the return of its troops to the disputed regions, stressing refusal of shadow agreements in that regard.

News reports quoted Pentagon sources on Wednesday saying that special forces of Peshmerga had entered Kirkuk, after coordination with Baghdad.

Iraqi government forces approached the southern borders of Erbil, capital of semi-autonomous Kurdistan Region, after taking over Kirkuk province from Kurdish Peshmerga fighters in October, fulfilling instructions made by the Prime Minister Haidar al-Abadi to retake areas where sovereignty is disputed with Kurdistan.

Baghdad seized back areas disputed with Erbil following the Kurdistan Regions vote for independence September 25.

Iraqi PM Abadi had earlier called for joint administration of those regions.

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