

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 18, 2023

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.

Dear President Biden,

We urge you to make every effort to end the unacceptable treatment of Iraqi Kurds and the Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) by Iran-aligned elements in Iraq.

You are well aware of the role the US played in supporting the Iraqi people as they developed a constitution in 2005 that established the semi-autonomous region of Kurdistan. The Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) has served as one of the United States' most reliable partners in the Middle East, yet is being economically strangled, politically and legally pressured, including reportedly by Faiq Zaydan, President of the Supreme Judicial Council in Iraq, and militarily threatened by Iran and Iran-backed elements in Baghdad.

It is encouraging that Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' al-Sudani's Council of Ministers reportedly agreed to loan the KRG 2.1 trillion Iraqi dinars to help pay civil servants' salaries and other expenses through November. However, and far more significantly, the closure of the Iraq-Türkiye pipeline (ITP) has cut off the KRG from the majority of its revenue. This comes at a time when oil prices are rising and Iran is able to export oil with seeming impunity, despite U.S. sanctions.

In an August 15 letter, Secretary of State Anthony Blinken noted the importance of the ITP and that the State Department has "engaged on this issue in Baghdad, Ankara, and Erbil." He also stated that, "our partnership with the KRG remains a cornerstone of our broader relationship with Iraq."

Nonetheless, on September 3, KRG Prime Minister Masrour Barzani reportedly sent a letter to you, stating that the overall problem has only gotten worse. In his words: "I write to you now at another critical juncture in our history, one that I fear we may have difficulty overcoming...[W]e are bleeding economically and hemorrhaging politically. For the first time in my tenure as prime minister, I hold grave concerns that this dishonorable campaign against us may cause the collapse of ... the very model of a Federal Iraq that the United States sponsored in 2003 and purported to stand by since."

It is clear that the engagements Secretary Blinken cited have not contributed to a successful resolution to the crisis in Iraq and reopening of the ITP. A new Iraq strategy is necessary. We urge you to raise this issue with Prime Minister Sudani at your meeting at the UN General Assembly. We further ask to be informed of the specific, new steps you and Secretary Blinken intend to take to address this crisis.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Michael Waltz
Member
House Foreign Affairs Committee



Michael T. McCaul
Chairman
House Foreign Affairs Committee



Joe Wilson
Chairman, Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa
House Foreign Affairs Committee