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Syrian Kurds with new found autonomy and historic opportunity find themselves in the limelight and key actors in the Syrian struggle. The Democratic Union Party (PYD) is at the centre of the Kurdish struggle in Syria and in the Kurdish quest to capitalise on their new dawn. With rumours and scrutiny facing the party, Bashdar Pusho Ismael of the *Kurdish Globe* spoke exclusively with Saleh Muslim, Co-leader of the PYD on a number of issues to set the record straight.

"The Kurdistan regional Government is doing what it is doing in their areas and they are controlling their areas in South Kurdistan," Muhsin says. "But our conditions are very different. We are not looking for a system like in Southern Kurdistan. So we can have very good relations but we have different conditions and our solution is different from them. Their governance is based on federalism whereas what we strive for is democratic self-governing which is different. We don't have to draw the border between Syrian Kurdish areas and the Arab areas."



Saleh Muslim, Co-leader of the PYD says they are not looking for a system like in Southern Kurdistan.

GLOBE PHOTO/Safin Hamid

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# Globe Editorial

Azad Amin

## Leave Baghdad and come back to Kurdistan

The tension between Erbil and Baghdad has escalated with no real hope of a permanent solution to the dispute. In the last editorial it was stated that 'the social contract between the Kurds and Iraqi state is being terminated with the Iraqi premier's centralized and dictatorial tendencies and moves. It is indeed clear that Maliki does not respect the Iraqi constitution, deviates sharply from it and attempt to resolve the issue through military methods.

This is not something very surprising. Since the toppling of Saddam's regime the Globe tenaciously argued that establishment of a democratic, federal and plural Iraq is an impossible task as the historical background of an artificially created Iraq lacks basic fundamentals of developing such a democratic system. The question cannot be personalized on Maliki's individuality; rather it is due to the mental formation of the Iraqi political landscape.

The Iraqi constitution refers to the unity of Kurdistan with Iraq as a voluntary union and the Kurdish leaders reiterated that the Kurds will remain within Iraq as long as Iraq respects its constitution and runs as a democratic and federal regime. Well this voluntary union now dangles at the tip of the barrel and separation is inevitable.

Is not Maliki aware of the danger that his actions lead Iraq towards its disintegration? It seems very unlikely. In a press statement on Saturday Maliki coldly warned of the danger of 'ethnic conflict' in Iraq. He further stated that "If conflict erupts, it would be unfortunate and



An oil field in Iraqi Kurdistan.

painful, and it will be an ethnic conflict" that is "not in the interest of Kurds nor Arabs nor Turkmen." Maliki's warning came after the talks between federal and Kurdish security officials aimed at easing high tensions between the two sides in disputed territories broke down over Baghdad's refusal to scrap the Tigris Operations Command. This suggests that Maliki assumes a controllable and manageable ethnic conflict with the Kurds but not disintegration of Iraq.

There are some reasons that drive Maliki to escalate conflict in Kurdistan by deploying military forces into the disputed territories. General argument among the political observers both in Kurdistan and abroad is that Maliki prepares himself for the upcoming provincial election in 2013 and attempts to present itself as an Iraqi nationalist and protector of Iraq to attract the Sunni electorates. This argument has certain truth but does not explain the whole picture.

The Kurdish leaders and political forces generally argue that Maliki has a dictatorial tendency and tries to

establish a centralized rule from Baghdad and deviate from Iraqi constitution. There is no doubt about Maliki's tendency and even some Arab political leaders accuse Maliki as such. This is also not sufficient to explain the recent troop deployment and rising escalation that has been triggered by Maliki's action.

Maliki has more sinister aims by his troop deployment and his unconstitutional manner in dealing with the pending issues between Erbil and Baghdad. By creating such chaos and tension in the region Maliki may aim to threaten and frighten global oil companies that signed exploration contracts with Erbil despite the refusal and threats of Iraqi oil ministry. It is well known that the world giant Exxon-Mobil left its West Qurna oil fields in the south and moved to Kurdistan. Exxon was followed by Chevron, Total and Gazprom. Such moves emptied the Baghdad's oil policy vis-à-vis Kurdistan and brought the Kurdistan region to a recognized global energy actor. Entry of global giants into Kurdistan oil sector rebuked Iraq's monopoly over oil

and strengthened the hand of KRG in Baghdad. Maliki and his team particularly Hussein Shahrastani tried everything including blackmailing oil companies to bring the Kurdistan to heel. But they failed in their attempt. By escalating tension and bringing the region to the brink of war Maliki hope to create panic among the oil companies in Kurdistan about the stability and their long term interests.

Oil and gas industry is one of the most strategic sectors of Kurdistan and it is the key to the wellbeing of the citizen and the development of the region. Disruption of this sector is as critical as the incorporation of disputed territory into the Kurdistan region.

Maliki not only disrespects sovereign rights of the Kurdish nation but also attempts to destroy the economic life of Kurdistan. These are not acceptable and cannot be accepted. The tension cannot be left alone for the time to resolve because the longer this military tension continues the worse the oil and gas sector along booming Kurdish economy suffer.

Political forces of Kurdistan displayed united position against the aggression of Iraqi state. This was necessary but not enough. It is categorically imperative for the Kurdish political forces to draw a strategic position to resolve this issue once and for all. The first step should be the Kurdish MPs and all the Kurdish ministers in Baghdad to return back to Kurdistan as a stern warning to Baghdad what will be the next step to be followed. Dialogue and patience are prudent characters but there must be a limit as well.

## US to end 16-year ban on commercial flights to Iraq



The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration is lifting a 16-year-old ban on commercial flights by U.S. carriers to two airports in Kurdish northern Iraq, citing increased stability in the region.

Civilian flights to that nation, which had been the scene a U.S.-imposed no-fly zone and then a war to depose President Saddam Hussein, were halted in 1996 for safety reasons, the FAA said in a notice to be published in the Federal Register tomorrow.

The agency will now allow flights into Erbil and Suleimaniya airports in northern Iraq's Kurdistan region. Flights by commercial operators from other nations have used the airports without incident for years, the FAA said in the notice.

"The FAA has determined that flights by U.S. operators may now be conducted safely to these two airports under certain conditions," it said.

U.S. civilian flights have been allowed to operate over Iraq at altitudes above 20,000 feet (6,096 meters), and the FAA has granted permission for some commercial flights into that country under contract by the military or other agencies.

The Transportation Security Administration, which oversees security issues, also must approve U.S. carrier operations in Iraq, according to the FAA notice.

The FAA said it is evaluating other airports in Iraq to determine if additional lifting of the restrictions might be warranted.

While U.S. political and commercial relations with the Kurdistan regional government are stable, tensions with the central government of Shiite Muslim Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki have been strained by reports that Iraq is allowing Iran to ship weapons through Iraqi airspace to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's forces.

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# Trilateral meetings to resume

As Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri Maliki's unilateral governance is becoming more and more apparent, efforts to remove him from power have resumed. However, this time the disarray of the Iraqia Bloc might become an obstacle.

Despite Maliki's threats, both Iyad Allawi, head of the Iraqia Bloc, and Muqtada Sadr, head of the Sadr Movement, are planning to visit Erbil and meet with the Kurdish President Massoud Barzani. It is expected that this is a continuation of their meetings earlier this year between the three parties about the issue of withdrawing support from Prime Minister Maliki.

Additionally, Iraqi Parliament Speaker Usama Nujaifi is also visiting Erbil and has a roadmap.

Latif Sheikh Mustafa, Kurdish member of the Iraqi Parliament on the Gorran Bloc, argues that Maliki is trying to attract a number of the Iraqia and Sadr parliament members to himself.

"Three parliament members of the Ahrar Bloc, affiliate to the Sadr Movement, and around 30 members of the Iraqia Bloc have changed their minds and no longer demand Maliki's removal from his position," said MP Mustafa.

Out of a total of 325 parliamentary seats, Kurds have 57 seats, Iraqia occupies 80 and the Sadrists occupy 41.

There is still a chance During the first effort to withdraw support from Maliki there



Iraqi Parliament Speaker Osama al-Nujaifi, Kurdistan President Massoud Barzani, Iraqi President Jalal Talabani, Head of Sadrist Movement Muqtada Sadr and Head of the Iraqia Bloc Iyad Allawi meet in Erbil to discuss the issue of withdrawing support from Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri Maliki's government, Erbil, April 28, 2012.

were more than 163 signatures, but then this number faced some distortions.

Hassan Jihad, member of the Parliament on the Kurdistan Bloc, thinks that there still is a chance to implement the plan, but the Kurds, Iraqia Bloc and Sadrists "should talk with the Supreme Islamic Revolution Council, Fazila and Ahrar parties inside the Shiite alliance to collect votes against Maliki among them as well."

One way blocked

Prime Ministers removal could be done in two ways, either the

majority of the parliament members, i.e. 163 members, should vote for it, or the President has to ask the parliament to summon the Prime Minister for questioning, and after the questioning, the decision for his removal should be put on vote.

MP Mustafa thinks that if such a thing is done, Maliki would collect power against the parliament, as he has recently vowed to use force against anyone who would work for his removal. The President, on the other hand, has announced on December 2nd that he has stated in an interview with

the Al Arabia Channel that he is not yet willing to submit such a request to the parliament.

Transition government

Expectations are in the direction that the meetings between the Kurds, Iraqia and Sadrists will resume in the coming days and the main focus will be on the issue of withdrawing power from Maliki's cabinet.

Liqa Mahdi, member of the Parliament on the Iraqia Bloc, sees the resumption of the meetings as a way to unite the views and reach a conclusive decision about the

political situation in Iraq.

A source from the Kurdistan Regional Government suggests that a document with final decision should be signed among the parties supporting the withdrawal to avoid anyone from changing his mind again.

The Gorran MP, however, is not confident whether the Iraqia Bloc would accompany the rest till the end of the way, as there are still concerns that the same thing as last time would repeat.

## Profile

- President Barzani, Muqtada Sadr, Iyad Allawi and Usama Nujaifi met in Erbil on April 28, 2012 and submitted an 8-point proposal to Maliki, and vowed to resort to withdrawing support from his cabinet if he does not accept the proposal.

- On May 17, 2012 a 15-day ultimatum was given to the Iraqi government and the Shiites' alliance to improve public services and solve the political issues in the country, otherwise the government would be abolished.

- The 15 days passed, the demands were not met, the threats were not converted into action and the withdrawal plan collapsed.

- Two days later and on May 19th, a second meeting was held among the anti-Maliki groups in Najaf, which resulted in a number of recommendations, but two days later, the Shiites' Alliance announced they will not respect the recommendations. Maliki's opponents, on the other side, were waiting for President Jalal Talabani's efforts to withdraw

power from Maliki. This also deemed failure.

- On May 28th, another meeting was held in Erbil, where the participants reiterated that efforts should be made to resolve the issues.

- After these three meetings, the issue of abolishing Maliki's government failed, and as a reaction Maliki started to deploy forces to areas surrounding Mosul and established the Dijla and Mosul Operations Commands.

## Turkish energy minister's Kurdistan visit canceled

Official spokesperson of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) Safin Dizayee, announced that the reason behind the cancellation of the visit of Turkish Energy and Natural Resources Minister Taner Yildiz to Kurdistan Region was the new private jet regulations by the federal government of Iraq.

Dizayee said in a press conference on Tuesday, December 4, 2012 that the

Turkish Energy Minister was supposed to attend the Second Kurdistan Oil and Gas Conference, held in Erbil, but his private jet could not enter the Iraqi air due to new aviation regulations of the Iraqi government. He also hoped that when new regulations and procedures are announced in Baghdad, relevant KRG institutions are also informed in a timely manner.

"The Oil and Gas Confer-

ence, which is the second one, has a big significance for the region," Dizayee told reporters.

Selahattin Cimen, Deputy Energy Minister of Turkey, who attended the conference, had stated that due to a visit by Russian Prime Minister to Turkey, Minister Yildiz could not attend the first day of the event, but was supposed to arrive the next day at the Erbil International Airport and attend the conference.



Selahattin Cimen, Deputy Energy Minister of Turkey addresses the Second Kurdistan Oil and Gas Conference in Erbil, December 3, 2012.

Globe interview with Saleh Muslim, Co-leader of the Kurdish Syrian PYD

# "For us it's not a case of liberation"

Syrian Kurds with new found autonomy and historic opportunity find themselves in the limelight and key actors in the Syrian struggle. The Democratic Union Party (PYD) is at the centre of the Kurdish struggle in Syria and in the Kurdish quest to capitalise on their new dawn. With rumours and scrutiny facing the party, Bashdar Pusho Ismaeel of the *Kurdish Globe* spoke exclusively with Saleh Muslim, Co-leader of the PYD on a number of issues to set the record straight.

**Globe:** At times the PYD is portrayed negatively, as a PKK-affiliated party who has not abided by power sharing agreement with other Kurdish parties, does not tolerate other Kurdish armed forces and has even allegedly collaborated with the Assad regime. What is your answer to that?

**Muslim:** The PYD is a political party established in 2003 and of course we have our way and our philosophy and our strategy for the works. I mean if our philosophy or strategy was the same as classical Kurdish parties, there would be no reason to establish a new party. We established PYD which is different from the classical parties in Syria. We have the philosophy of Mr. Ocalan and his ideas are adapted to the condition and situation of Western Kurdistan. Our work is different from a radical party or the philosophy of classic parties. So it's usual for people who promoting the interest of regional and global powers to attack our party and to blame it, because we are promoting and working for the interest of the people in Western Kurdistan and all Syrians.

In 50 years the Kurdish parties could not submit anything to Kurdish politics or to the Kurdish people of Western Kurdistan. They could not organise themselves very well and especially for the critical duration facing Western Kurdistan. So everything belonged to the PYD, all the responsibilities including defending the people and organising the people fell to the PYD. PYD is doing everything and because of that, we are being attacked not only by the classic Kurdish parties but also other sides that are against the Kurdish people and their struggle.

They are enemies of the Kurdish people. So we are under attack from all of them. There are many rumours and sayings, trying to affiliate us with the PKK where other than the general philosophy we are completely different from them. We have our own leadership, strategy, and work for Western Kurdistan, we do not have any organic relations with the PKK or affiliations with them. But we



Saleh Muslim, Co-leader of the PYD

support each other like any party, our relation with them is no different to our relations with the KDP (Kurdistan Democratic Party) of Massaud Barzani or PUK (Patriotic Union of Kurdistan) of Jalal Talabani.

**Globe:** Do you have any problem working with other Kurdish parties or power sharing?

**Muslim:** No, not at all. We would like to share the power with all Kurdish parties. We can do everything together. We have been seeking the co-operation with them since we were established in 2003, where we knocked on all their doors, we met them one by one to build relations and to work together and to make agreements with them but we could not achieve this.

**Globe:** In terms of the Kurdish forces, do you have any problem in working with other Kurdish forces specifically the "Syrian Peshmerga" trained in Kurdistan Region? Is the force in Syrian Kurdistan, a PYD force or a national force for all Kurds?

**Muslim:** We have no problem to unite all the armed forces for the sake of the Kurdish people. In Western Kurdistan you can have many political parties, many organisations but when it comes to the armed forces, there should only ever be one armed force for the region. Otherwise if you have intra-fighting it's a massive problem. Because of that, as part of the Kurdish Supreme Council we decided to unify all of the armed forces, including those Kurdish forces in Syria or those trained in Southern Kurdistan. We are trying to unify them and this is no problem as the forces belong to the people. They are protect-

ing people of Western Kurdistan. Everybody has a right to join it to defend his family and relations. This is never a problem for us. But importantly, any force should only be under one commander.

We don't refer to such forces trained in Southern Kurdistan as Peshmerga, they are simply part of the Peoples Protection Unit, the defence units. It's the same to us and we do not differentiate on the type of forces by referring to these specifically as "Peshmerga". Those forces are in Syrian right now. Most of them are Kurdish soldiers who had defected from the Syrian Army and they are simply the army of the Kurdish people in Western Kurdistan protecting them. An important point, they do not belong to any political party, nor the PYD or even Democratic Society Movement (Tev-Dem). They are established by (Tev-Dem) but they belong to the Syrian Kurdish people, because they take orders from the Kurdish Supreme Council.

**Globe:** Some have accused you of collaborating with Assad's regime in Kurdish areas, can you set the record straight on that?

**Muslim:** We have been fighting this regime since we were established in 2003. We have had our people killed under torture, when the Syrian uprising started in March 2011 we had about 1,500 people under arrest and tortured by Assad's security apparatus. Because of that we cannot say we have relations with them. But because our strategy is different from other organisations and other parties, they try to find a reason to blame us. Only because we refused to become soldiers for the others as on many other occasions

in Kurdish history. Kurds have always been soldiers for others, fighting for them, dying for them and at the end they receive nothing. So we refuse to follow that historical trap. Now they point the blame at us as we refused to be their soldiers. We have no relations with the regime at all, nor would we ever open the hand of the gladiator that is killing us.

**Globe:** Turkey has been closely observing the new found Kurdish autonomy in Syria with great unease. Do you have any contact with the Turkish authorities? Do you see any threat in a direct Turkish invasion?

**Muslim:** We are on the side of dialogue with everybody, not just Turkey. Anyone involved in the Syrian conflict or the Kurdish case, we are open to negotiations with them and we do not have any objections. Today, we don't have any contact with the Turkish authorities but we don't refuse contact or meetings with them, if the Turkish regime accepts us. As for any invasion, I don't think international conditions make sense for any invasion, they will not allow such an invasion nor is it convenient for any military intervention in Syria. But the Turkish hand is clearly in Syria from the beginning of the uprising. They are trying to be involved and are supporting armed groups to destabilise relatively peaceful Kurdish region and the Turkish intervention has succeeded in turning the peaceful uprising into an armed uprising against the regime. This was only possible with Turkish support of armed groups.

In the Kurdish case, we have already seen what happened in Aleppo, Afrin and Sere Kaniye

where armed groups have invaded the Kurdish areas from Turkey. They are supporting them and they are sending them to mix the Kurdish areas and to destroy peaceful situation of the Kurdish areas. Groups such as Al-Nusra Front and Ghuraba al-Sham are all related to the Turkish regime, affiliated, supported and sent by them.

And even in Sere Kaniye when they were going to escape to get back to Turkey, Turkey closed the border and said to these armed groups you either have to fight or die. So they didn't allow them to go back and still those forces are there. Just yesterday there was an air attack by regime forces on those armed groups, but they have nowhere to escape because Turkey closed the border and they are unable to move out, so they are hemmed in. More than 20 of them were killed yesterday by that air attack.

**Globe:** What is your message to Turkey?

**Muslim:** Turkey must step away from their Kurdish phobia. Kurds can live together with the Turkish people, we have no problem with any Turk. We are friends and neighbours with Turkmen in Syria and the same with the Turkish people. We have no problem with the Turkish people and we can co-exist peacefully. The Turkish government should understand that and build on the brotherly ties between the two nations, instead of been driven by a phobia of Kurds.

**Globe:** Recently, there has been much violence between FSA, particularly their Islamist wings and PYD forces in Sere Kaniye and within Aleppo itself. Why such hostility and general animosity? What must happen before you will work with the FSA?

**Muslim:** If they leave us alone, then we don't have any problem with the Free Syrian Army. They are mostly compromised of soldiers defecting from the Syrian Army and to protect the civilians. But it is only specific armed groups that are fighting and attacking the Kurdish areas even when there are no regime forces in such areas. They are attacking civilians and such groups do not belong to the FSA at all and even the FSA have issued declarations that they are not affiliated with them. They are different groups to the FSA and they are only using the name of FSA, but nobody recognises them as FSA. They belong to the Turkish regime. Especially, in Aleppo, Afrin and Sere Kaniye, these groups were clearly supported by Turkey with weapons, with facilities of movement and they are coming from

PRESS PHOTO

across the Turkish side.

**Globe:** Any Kurdish peoples captured, such as the leader of YPG who was captured in Aleppo, are taken to Turkey for interrogation by Turkish authorities. Even in Sere Kaniye, the injured and captured people were taken to Turkey and investigated by Turkish authorities. We may not be fighting Turkish soldiers directly, but they are proxy forces instigated by Turkey.

**Muslim:** In Syria, you have Kurds, Arabs and other nationalities. If everyone liberated his place then all of Syria is liberated. Kurds cannot go to Damascus and liberate Damascus but we can liberate our part where we live. And that's what we have done. There are no regime soldiers or forces in Kurdish area, so why would rebel forces attack here?

**Globe:** What is the wait to liberate Qamishli and all of Syrian Kurdistan from Assad's forces? What is the next step in your struggle to liberate all of Syrian Kurdistan?

**Muslim:** For us it's not a case of liberation. If we push away the Syrian forces, then we are simply living with Syrian people and all Syrians within the Syrian state. For Qamishli, the situation is very sensitive. We are not fighting the Arabs but the Syrian regime. Our liberation is not from Syrian people but from Assad forces only.

While we are concerned of fighting between the Kurds and Arabs, in sensitive places like Qamishli and Sere Kaniye and to prevent this sectarian war, we could not afford to attack to regime, as we are worried that some Arabs may side with the regime. We don't want to end up in a conflict between Arabs and Kurds, as opposed to fighting the regime.

Qamishli is a Kurdish city and the capital of Western Kurdistan and the city is a hub for Kurdish activities. The plan is still to eradicate Qamishli of regime forces. But at the same time we never reject to live side-by-side with Arabs in Qamishli and we don't want Qamishli to be a place of fighting between Kurds and Arabs. When the conditions are right and when the Arabs in and around Qamishli leave with those that are against the regime, we will also extend our control to Qamishli.

**Globe:** The Kurdistan Region is your neighbour and brethren, with growing strategic power and regional influence. Can the Kurdistan Region leadership do more to help the Kurds and political parties in Syria?

**Muslim:** The Kurdistan regional Government is doing what it is doing in their areas and they are controlling their areas in South Kurdistan. But our conditions are very different. We are not looking for a system like in Southern Kurdistan. So we can have very good relations but we have different conditions and our solution is different from them. Their governance is based on federalism whereas what we strive for is

democratic self-governing which is different. We don't have to draw the border between Syrian Kurdish areas and the Arab areas.

**Globe:** A Kurd can always do more for a Kurd in terms of support. We are one nation, whether in the south, west, north or east. But for each part we have different conditions. We can help each other in the spirit of brotherhood and build our future strategy. What we are looking for in future is Kurdish parts to be unified in a democratic confederation in the Middle East. The Kurdish parts can be a reason to unite the Middle East, much in the same way as Europe came closer together through a union whilst slowly eroding their common borders. Today we have 27 countries all living together. Why can't we the same thing in the Middle East?

**Muslim:** At the point we have the Middle East united in a democratic confederation, at the same time all of Kurdistan will become united. This is our long-term strategy for the Kurdish people.

**Globe:** What is the absolute minimum that the PYD will settle for in a post Assad Syria?

**Muslim:** There are two points. One is constitutional recognition of the Kurdish people in Western Kurdistan. And secondly, guarantees for our democratic rights that is included in the constitution. In terms of self-governance model, the name is not important; it could be termed self-governance or democratic federalism. As part of democratic rights, there should be provision of self-protecting defence units such security units, essentially civilians protecting the areas.

The Kurdish case in Syria is different. Everybody is assessing the Syrian situation and talking about the Syrian problem, but nobody is looking at the Kurdish side of it. We are part of the Syrian people, we have our rights and any solution for the Syrian people must also contain a solution for the Kurdish conflict also. It is impossible to have democracy in Syria without solving the Kurdish problem. Everybody should be clear that once there is a solution of the Kurds, only then can democracy be attained in Syria.

**Globe:** It cannot be overlooked that the majority of Syrian oil is in Kurdish areas and Western Kurdistan is oil rich. Do you have any control over the oil fields at the moment and what's your view on natural resources that Kurds have never benefited from?

**Muslim:** Those oil wells are protected by our people over there. And we are still getting fuel from the refineries in Homs and Baniyas, so we protect. Of course in a future Syria, such natural resources need agreement with benefit for local community and a portion of revenues should be spent on the local areas. Revenue sharing will need negotiation and agreement, but it will be managed centrally for all Syrians.



President Barzani visiting Kurdish forces' frontline south of Kirkuk. December 10, 2012.

## Kurdish President visits Peshmarga in Kirkuk

### Barzani asks forces for restraint

Kurdistan Region President Massoud Barzani paid a visit to the Peshmarga forces deployed to the disputed areas near Kirkuk, and reiterated to them that they are taking a sacred responsibility now, which is protecting the future of the Kurdish nation.

President Barzani visited the frontiers at Lailan area and passed regards of the people of Kurdistan from all sects and ethnic groups.

"Kurds have always been against war, but at the same time has never accepted kneel to its enemies either," stated Barzani when talking to the Peshmargas. "During the 1991 revolutions and after the fall of the Baathist Regime and liberating a consid-

erable part of Kurdistan Region, the Peshmarga forces have not done any misconduct with the Iraqi Army. After 2003, Kurds have played a significant role in establishing and rebuilding the new Iraqi government."

Kurdish President reiterated that his nation has sacrificed a lot to reach today, including the Anfal operations, chemical attack on Halabja and destruction of 4000 Kurdish villages.

"Following the freedom operations President Talabani and I made all efforts to create a new Iraq, and especially efforts to endorse the constitution, which underlines the unity of Iraq," President Barzani added. "However, one cannot see any commitment to the constitution, and

army units are established illegally by the Iraqi government, none of which has went through the parliament and legislated. So they are considered illegal."

Regarding commitment to the constitution, Kurdish leader reiterated that their acceptance of including Article 140 in the constitution for the normalization of the situations in the disputed areas does not mean that they have doubts that these areas belong to Kurdistan, but rather it is to show their good intension to solve the issues via the constitution, but unfortunately some parties are now trying to hide away from the constitution.

## KRG to look into Iraq's budget

### Region's 2013 budget draft to be submitted to parliament this week

Kurdistan Regional Government's (KRG) Council of Ministers met on Thursday, December 6, 2012 with a delegation of the Kurdistan Alliance Bloc MPs in the Iraqi Parliament as well as a delegation from the Kurdistan Parliament to discuss the issue of the draft budget of Iraq for the year 2013.

The meeting, headed by the Region's Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani, first discussed the articles and items in the Iraqi 2013 budget draft that Kurds have concern about as well as suggestions and recommendations by Kurdistan Region to resolve the issues and lift the concerns.

The recommendations, according to the attendants, were not only for the benefit of Kurdistan Region but rather for the benefit of all the Federal Iraq.

The attendants decided that a committee from the ministerial council keep in contact with the Kurdistan Alliance MPs in

Baghdad and continue these meetings till the end of the process of endorsing the budget.

It is planned, according to this decision, that the KRG provides the MPs with all documents, data, figures and other information.

The government side explained to the MPS the shortcomings and concerns about the draft budget and shared their opinions and recommendations for addressing these issues.

The MPs were asked to do their best inside the parliament to serve the interests and rights of Kurdistan Region and the whole country during budget discussions.

The specific items of concern raised in the meeting included Kurdistan Region's share in the country's total budget, the expenses of implementing Article 140 of the Iraqi Permanent Constitution regarding the normalization of the situations in the disputed areas and the

routines at the Federal Ministry of Finance an Economy associated with giving compensation checks, the budget and expenses of the Peshmarga Forces, sovereign budget, petrodollar issue, regional and provincial development budgets, most of which are not only related to Kurdistan Region, but also the whole country.

Furthermore, it was also decided that a special advisory committee specialized in constitutional, legal, financial and statistical issues will be established to give advice, recommendations and support to the MPs of the Kurdistan Alliance Bloc.

Saad Khalid, KRG and Parliament Coordinator, on the other hands announced that the Ministerial Council shall endorse the Region's 2013 budget on Monday, December 10th, and submit it to the parliament for final approval by Wednesday, or Thursday at the latest.

# Civil activists bring corruption back to tables

## Campaign asks for investigation on the issue of corruption in the Suleimaniya's 400-bed hospital case

PRESS PHOTO



This photo depicts the incomplete building of the 400-bed hospital of Suleimaniya, December 27, 2010.

As the completion of the project of Suleimaniya's 400-bed hospital nears, civil society activists raise the issue of corruption and are investigating the involved parties once again and ask for investigations by relevant authorities and especially the parliament.

A group, called "The 400 Group" submitted a dossier about this "corruption case" to the Suleimaniya's office of the Kurdistan Region's Parliament, as well as the Public Prosecutor, at the beginning of 2011, and demand investigations with parties involved in the corruptions and delays in completing the project.

The most recent progress with the project was the announcement by the Kurdistan Regional Government's (KRG) Ministry of Health that the project will be completed by February 2013, and that already the Council of Ministers has made a decision to hire some 1075 staff for the hospital.

Falah Muradkhan, member of the Group 400, however, expressed his concerns and told the Kurdish Globe in an interview that he has doubts that the hospital will be opened by even March 2013.

The rationale behind Muradkhan's concern was that after eight years, only 75% of the

project is completed and hence there is no way that in a few months the remaining 25% could be completed.

"It has been one year since the Group 400 submitted the corruption case, but till now nobody or no party has been questioned," said Muradkhan.

MP Dr. Rebaz Fattah, member of the Health Committee of the Kurdistan Parliament, says the parliament has made several investigations about the case, but since the case and its shortcomings are multidimensional and complicated, till now these investigations have not had any results.

"Till now the case of the origi-

nal implementing company is in the court and unresolved," argued MP Fattah in a Globe interview.

Zana Mawlood, an architectural engineer and expert in the field of contracting, claims that awarding this project to the Korean UI Energy Company was a mistake at the first place, "since the contracted company did not have any experience in Kurdistan Region."

"The same company was awarded the Tasluja 51 megawatt power plant project and it left the project incomplete for 5 years," added Engineer Mawlood.

Muradkhan demands transparency in the works being done

### Profile

- The Group 400: Consists of a number of civil organizations and NGO federations formed to put pressure on the relevant authorities to complete the Suleimaniya's 400-bed hospital project as well as investigating on the acts of corruption associated with the project.

- The 400-bed Hospital: The project was originally planned to be implemented on the budget of the Oil-for-Food Program under the United Nations' Resolution No. 986, but the central government hindered the project. Later the project was awarded to the Korean UI Energy Company, which started the implementation in October 24, 2012.

- The initial budget of the project was USD 57 million, USD 40 million was spent in the design phase alone. Afterwards, the KRG allocated another USD 77 million and contracted two other companies to implement the project.

in the hospital and also calls for punishing those involved in the corruption acts.

MP Fattah, on the other hand, argues that any corruption case should be dealt with and the public prosecutor shall investigate the case of the hospital and take the involved parties to court.

# Government yet to respond to Parliament

## Kurdish Parliament asked KRG to set a date for the Region's provincial council elections

Kurdistan Regional Government's (KRG) Official Spokesperson Safin Dizayee states that till the present time no timeline has been specified for the provincial council elections of Kurdistan Region.

"If something like this is to be done, the political blocs in the parliament shall be consulted," said Dizayee. "And for the technical issues the Independent Higher Electoral Commission (IHEC) shall be contacted for the purpose of specifying the date."

Last week, Kurdistan Region's Parliament sent a

request to the Kurdistan Region's Presidency and the Presidency of the Government to specify a timeframe for holding the provincial councils' elections.

MP Ahmed Warte, member of the legal committee of the Kurdish Parliament, says "there are two laws related to the provincial councils' election, one of them is the Law number 4 of 2009, which is already amended and has no problem, and hence legally the election can be without any issues."

"The second law is the Law number 3, which is related to the authorities

and powers of the provincial councils," MP Warte added. "This law needs amendment. However, even if this law is not amended, the election can legally be organized."

The parliament has been working on this issue for the past couple weeks and finally on December 5th; the Speaker of the Parliament Arsalan Bayiz sent two letters to the President and the Prime Minister to make a decision in this regard.

In the letters, the Speaker has informed the presidency and the government

that according to Article number 31 in the Provincial Council's Election Law number 4 of the year 2009, and according to the ministerial council decree number 21 of 2011, the ministerial council, in coordination with the IHEC, shall specify the timeframe for conducting the election at least 90 days prior to the date of the election.

Speaker Bayiz has also asked that the parliament should be notified about the date specified by the Presidency and the government for the election.

Furthermore, the Par-

liament Speaker has also raised another letter to the Region's Presidency, where he mentioned that the mandate of the current round of the parliament will expire on September 9, 2013.

Speaker Bayiz, has written in the letter that in accordance with the 2005 amendment of the law number 1, Kurdistan Region's President has to issue a regional decree for conducting the fourth round of parliamentary election prior to the expiry of the third round's legal period in office.

Accordingly the IHEC shall be notified to make

necessary preparations, which takes some 6 months to complete.

The Kurdistan Region's provincial councils' election has been delayed several times for various reasons, including disagreements between the ruling and the opposition parties on the powers and authorities Provincial Councils, the mechanism for conducting the elections, as well as IHEC's inability to do required preparations in time.

# Poverty line in Kurdistan

## Does Kurdistan have a line called poverty?

Don't be surprised if you see rich people who are poor. Based on this week's readings, low income is not the only meaning of poverty. There are other aspects of poverty which we may never have expected before. Which one defines poor, a rich person with no voice in society or a low income person with a voice? With no doubt the former is.

As a journalist, I tried day in and out, asking all my contacts to tell me a figure for where the poverty line lies in Kurdistan. I came up with one answer: "Sorry, we don't have any statistics" This is why I talk about the poverty line in everywhere but Kurdistan. In fact, nobody knew what I was talking about! However, I did get some something on Iraq as a whole. Iraq has recently reduced the poverty line from 23% to 16%, according to the international economic indexes. Other sources show that seven million Iraqis are below the poverty line. They earn less than \$2 per day.

According to other sources released in February 2012, the rate of poverty in Iraq is hugely different with

those mentioned above. A third of Iraqis live in poverty, according to a study released under United Nations auspices, according to an LA times report.

Statistics and measure alone do not reduce poverty, reads an article from "Poverty Matters" blog. Giving voice to poor people in society and engaging them into daily life is the key to reduce poverty, suggests the article. I agree. There is a saying in Kurdish that goes "kill me but don't break my bones." This works in the context of poverty if I translate it to "if you don't meet my demands, at least listen to me." In the developing countries, politicians can reduce poverty by just listening to the demands of people: give them freedom of expression. Poverty is worse when the poor have no voice to express what they need. That's exactly what happens in many developing countries.

Often, simple methods could reduce poverty more effectively than huge funds. Juggling, addressed in a CSM article, has changed kid beggars to money makers. A Kurdish director, for

instance, uses poor kids in his movies. Such moves could really help with poverty reduction. Microcredits, for instance, can reduce poverty if it's managed well. In Kurdistan region, the poverty line could be erased from the dictionary only by the oil income and revenue if distributed equally and managed professionally. According to international reports, the region now appears to be one of the richest in the world for oil and gas. There are many countries in the world that sit on an oil sea but are below the poverty line. Corruption, embezzlement and nepotism play a negative role here. An oil-rich country like Nigeria has many below the line. The rate of poverty in the country is rife each year. It was 32 percent in 1992, reached 60 percent in 2000 and hit 70 percent in 2007, according to online international economic indexes.

International aids, donations and assistance have not reduced poverty since after WWII, says a study on participatory development in Honduras. The study suggests valuing, sharing and participation to

bring success to a project in a developing country. International agencies should value poor people and push them to participate in the projects they have by giving them a chance to speak up, work, move and feel dignity.

Sometimes, corruption in the system of the developing countries worsens poverty and paralyzes efforts of the International donors. As discussed earlier, half of donations in Haiti do not reach out to people because of corruption. India, such an ever-fast growing economy in the world, is notorious for its corruption which has lately become a big barrier for its fast growth record. As a matter of fact, India has recently lowered the poverty line to 28 from a very high rate of over 50. However, if they get rid of corruption, the country will lower that as quickly as possible and then it will become world's number one poverty killer.

The Macarthur Foundation, addressed in an African newsletter, grants universities with funds to address national development challenges. The grant pushes students in Nige-

ria to come forward and participate in policies to develop their country. The grants encourage students to work on various fields ranging from health, energy to economic planning. The grant also aims at engaging women into new academic programs.

People of Nepal should do something and work for their future, reads an article posted by Bhumika Ghimire on the Communication Initiative Network. From the article, I learned that a quarter of people in Nepal are below the poverty line and half of the population is on the line. Nepal urgently needs development more than any other country in the world, a move almost impossible. The reason for that, says Ghimire, is a dictatorial system by the Rana clan. Three revolutions in the country came up without success.

I think poor people have a strong power if used unified. It was the power of poor people that toppled down Tunisian president. It's the power of poor people to call the Egyptian president to step down. An article posted by BBC shows a new flow of pro-

testers against the president who has 40 billion USD with his family whilst half of Egypt is poor.

Nepalese officials have no plan to develop the country, rather they fight over posts and interests, says Ghimire. "Compared to the rising level of awareness and organization in South Asia and the world, Nepal is nowhere," says Ghimire. He suggests that the Nepalese should "limit the government and take charge of their future" if they want change.

People in Nepal need education on human rights, democracy and freedom of expression. Ghimire says the Nepalese are not quite aware of the concepts of "rights" and "democracy". Bearing that in mind, change will be difficult to come by in a country where its people aren't aware of their own rights and political strife is considered more important than development.

Goran Sabah Ghafour

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PRESS PHOTO



A Kurdish child selling Kurdish flags in the street falls asleep on banana boxes. File Photo

# Mosques and Churches cause couples separation

Many love stories end in separation for religious differences

For many people religion is a reason to get together but for others it might be a cause to end a relationship in separation. All the religious groups in Kurdistan Region of Northern Iraq live in peace and converse about coexistence since hundreds and maybe thousands of years ago. But when it comes to marriage all the parties are conservative and sensitive toward the issue.

Ending in separation is the consequence of a love relation between a Muslim boy, Kosar, and a Christian girl, Sunia. Their love is scarified because of old-fashioned customs and religion. Two lovers from two different religions might have outlandish memories to recount.

Kosar, a Sunni Muslim, 25, who is these days really upset and depressed, still thinks about certain days and memories. He inhales a deep breath and says, "Why religion?"

"I have never thought to separate one day from my beloved because of religious differences."

He almost always wears a black shirt to demonstrate his sadness and sorrow for the possible failure in his love relation with Sunia, a Catholic Christian, 24.

The date they got to know each other dates back to 2 years ago, when they very furtively started in college.

No one of their fellow students knew about such a relation between the two lovers. They had promised



A church under construction next to a Mosque on the Qazi Mohammed Street, West of Erbil.

to keep it in secret until they could get married.

"I thought everything would go according to our plans. But it seems regrettably the two families and most unlikely the two religions have already banned such a marriage and coexistence," he said with drama in his tone.

Based on traditional Islamic jurisprudence Muslims have to only marry each other. The only exception is that Muslim men are permitted to marry women who are Ahl al-Kitab (Peo-

ple of Scripture), usually limited to Jews and Christians.

While both religions allow the two lovers to get married, their families are still insisting that there are some customs in the society that do not allow the marriage.

Some of Mullahs and Sunni scholars believe that there is no consensus regarding this matter in Islam because there is no apparent equivalent text in Islam to prove invalidity of a martial relation between couples with different religions.

Mullah Abu Bakir said that Muslim women are not allowed to marry non-Muslim men and the vice versa is right.

Another Sunni Mullah, Abdulwahab Sangawi, Haji Bakir Mosque's Imam in Sulaimaniyah said that there are tens of Christian-Muslim couples that live luckily.

He rejected that Muslim men are not allowed to marry non-Muslim women, adding that their marriage continues in its validity if the marriage does not dam-

age the religious practice of both sides.

Kosar said that I always was awaiting her in front of the college entrance in order to go in together.

Like Muslims, Christians are also very conservative to give their children to a Muslim.

Sunia similar to Kosar is living in the same sad situation and trying to get her families approval to let her suitor's family to come to an agreement for a suitable ceremony.

"I have just recounted my

feelings to my mother. I do believe if my father knows about this relation he will kill me," she said while her voice was shivering because of the fear she had in her heart.

She also believes that religion is the only option that human beings can choose it freely in life. She says that role of religion in the Western societies has dropped in contrast to Eastern developing countries in which religion is still impressive and strong.

Some of the new sciences have not consensus with religion. During the industrial revolution in Europe, a wave of new beliefs and non-religious movements appeared in which religion was put aside and identified as a personal matter or option.

Christian organizations in Kurdistan Region of Iraq have very decisively ordered that no Christian has the right to marry a Muslim or vice versa.

St. Aiman Aziz Hurmuz a priest in St. Josef Church in Sulaimaniyah told a Kurdish media outlet that getting married between a Christian and a Muslim is determinedly forbidden for now.

"If any one disobeys this rule we will consider him/her as non Christian," he said.

In the past Christians were allowed to marry with Muslims but now they are not allowed, according to Hurmuz.

By Salih Waladbagi

# Money-transferring-system to change

**Over \$55 million has been spent over six months for Kurdish scholars abroad**

According to a statement from Kurdistan's Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, the ministry has very transparently tried to spend the budget allocated for the

scholars currently study Masters and PHD degrees abroad.

The scholars have been sent to study in foreign universities through a Human Capacities Development Program, HCDP. According to the ministry, over \$55 million has been spent over the past six months only.

In a statement, the min-

istry announced that \$55 million has been assigned for approximately 1926 scholars in different European countries.

Most of the scholars criticize Kurdistan Regional Government, KRG, because they almost always receive the tuition fees behind schedule, and adds to their pressures.

The process of receiving

the tuition fees and other expenses is very complicated. Someone from the family of the scholars should go to Erbil's Central Bank and get all the money in cash. Then it will be sent to the scholar through Western Union service or any other bank services for transferring money.

According to the statement the ministry will

try to improve the money transferring system. "Ministry of Higher Education is at the present preparing to put a plan to transfer the money through bank account to the scholars abroad."

Weeks ago in a statement around 400 scholars in the United Kingdom claimed that they had not received the expenses for over six

months.

"We, as young Kurdish scholars currently studying abroad, in the UK, have been waiting for more than six months to receive tuition fees from the KRG, but The Ministry of Higher Education would not even answer our request," the statement read.

By Salih Waladbagi

# Number of Christians more than ever in Kurdistan

The number of the internally displaced Christians who have so far fled from middle and southern parts of Iraq to Kurdistan has reached around 40 thousand, Christian officials say.

Jamal Albeer, General Director of Christians Affairs in Kurdistan Region of Northern Iraq believes that the number is now higher than ever. He also rejected the rumors that Christian organizations are working on converting Muslims to Christianity.

"I totally reject the news that Christian organizations convert Muslim people in Kurdistan. This is a horrific endeavor to freeze up Muslim-Christian relations."

In regard to the number of Christian internally displaced families, the directorate announced that there are 2 thousands and 880 families in Erbil, while there are 122 families in Sulaimaniyah.

"There are around 7,190 Christian internally displaced families in Duhok province. The total number of the members of the Christian families has so far reached around 40 thousands and 768 people."

ple."

The directorate of Christian affairs in Kurdistan's Ministry of Religious and Endowment Affairs to take care of Christian people's affairs and follow-up their requests. The directorate also organizes and supervises all the churches with cooperation of the Kurdistan Regional Government.

The number of Christian families in the capital city of Erbil is estimated around 3,045 families, while the number is about 100 families in the second biggest city of Kurdistan, Sulaimaniyah.

According to statistics from the directorate the number of Christian families in Duhok is expected around 5,757 families. If each family consists of four members the total number of the Christian population in all the three Kurdish provinces of Iraqi Kurdistan is estimated something like 35 thousands and 806 people.

There is a church in Erbil which is called Kurdish-Language-Church which has taken direct official permission from Kurdistan's Ministry of Interior. The directorate announced that the church has now a



Two christian girls are walking past a Church in this file photo. Ainkawa.

good relation with them, but do not act upon their rules.

According to the directorate, the number of the churches is just about 96 across Kurdistan Region.

The directorate has to follow 21 articles which have been issued by the

KRG once they want to construct a church across the region. This has to be in cooperation with Iraq's federal government too.

One of the articles is to respect other religions and the budget which is allocated to the project for constructing a church has

to be spent transparently.

All the churches in Kurdistan Region are free to organize their religious practices. There are also some foreign churches which have come from abroad, the directorate told Kurdish media outlets.

"All the churches have to

bring their internal rules to the directorate and all of them have to be managed by a staff not one person. Protecting national security is also one of the major items of the articles."

By Salih Waladbagi

# Around 1,600 scholars study in the UK



A view of the University of Sheffield, United Kingdom

Student union of Iraqi and Kurdish scholars in the United Kingdom's Sheffield University has said that there are several problems ahead of the scholars currently studying Masters or PHD degrees.

He says English language skills and not receiving tuition fees from the KRG are the major problems causing high levels of psychological pressure on them.

According to Shwan Kakayi, PHD scholar and representative of Iraqi and Kurdish students, most students cannot speak English language well which is why they might face problems during their academic courses.

Telling Kurdish media outlets, he also urged those scholars who want to come in the future to

improve their language before coming to the UK.

In regards to the number of the students currently studying Masters and PHD degrees in the UK's universities, he said that there are about 1,600 students studying in the different fields.

In addition, Kakayi said that their duties are to make students administrative works easier, adding that they provide the students with essential guidance's.

"Most of the scholars now studying here have come through a Human Capacities Development Program. But there are several more students that are not financially sponsored by any part."

He furthermore stated that another problem that scholars might face along

with language deficiency is regarding the dissimilarity of eastern countries' culture with that of western.

But Kurdish scholars are much better than students of other countries at learning the English language, according to him.

He also said that they have so far taken some steps in Sheffield University to allow about 20 Kurdish lecturers to take part in an English language course, asking the ministry to help those who are not being sponsored.

"We are ready to answer questions or queries through Iraq@sheffield.ac.uk email address," he said.

By Salih Waladbagi

# 'Anything that keeps you warm' – from Berlin to Duhok

Piran Dilshad Barzani, a high school student in Berlin, has spearheaded a remarkable project collecting essential sleeping gear and clothing items for the Syrian refugees seeking shelter in Duhok's Domiz.

The latest report from UNHCR reveals a growing influx of refugees to the Kurdistan Region; Domiz camp now houses over 55,000 refugees, making it the size of a small city. As winter closes in, the families will face the increasing dangers of hyperthermia. In an attempt to provide essential items for these families, the young student, Piran Dilshad Barzani, singlehandedly began a noble mission to provide humanitarian assistance to the Syrian refugees.

According to Piran, the international school he attends runs an annual 'Coat Drive' project to collect essential clothing items from students, friends and family members for the homeless and vulnerable in Berlin. Choosing to pursue a 'different' initiative this year, Piran began his own 'Anything That Keeps You Warm' campaign to explain the plight of Syrian refugees fleeing their homeland to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq – an area little known to his classmates and teachers.

Following his initial discussions with other class-

mates, the 17 year-old began distributing posters and leaflets, calling upon others for donations in any way possible. Piran said that this had little impact until he delivered a speech to the entire school to attract further awareness.

Four weeks later, Piran has collected hundreds of items, including sleeping gear, clothing items, jackets, shoes and other essentials. Asked about the motivation behind it, he said: 'I was involved in charities in the past – we built schools for the vulnerable in Thailand and Ecuador, and simply put, I enjoy helping people.'

'Nobody talks about the Syrian refugees and their situation, the media only covers the Arab uprising,' he says with contempt. 'The situation really touched me.'

His presentation to the school led to dozens of donations from the students before logistical arrangements were put in place. As part of the project, MG International provided transportation from Berlin to the Domiz camp in Duhok for free of charge.

The collections were delivered to the camp on Saturday and were coordinated with the local authorities. Piran says he was 'surprised' at witnessing the refugees' living conditions and by their sudden rush to their arrival.

Piran was seen helping the families unload the de-

liveries and carried boxes to individual families. The local authorities had prepared a list of families that were most vulnerable, including a family of five with a handicapped father. He recalls the moment he entered the tent to find the young children afraid of their sudden intrusion witnessing their conditions.

'There was a clash of feelings. On one hand I saw how important this was and the contributions I was making. On the other I was disappointed with their situations and not being able to help more families. It was a mixed-feeling.'

'I want to do this again but on a larger scale, and I intend to seek the involvement of local and international schools to help these families,' he adds.

He's quick to cite the similar experience that the Kurdish Region of Iraq was facing in the early 90s. 'Our people have gone through a similar experience – we were refugees and had unbearable living conditions, and our communities should be more engaged to provide food and shelter.'

The local businesses, Piran says, should provide small donations to change the lives of these families. He called upon the local media to provide more coverage of these refugees to ensure there is a 'constant reminder'.

# Rain and snow wave hits Kurdistan



People walk in a snow storm in a Suleimaniya Downtown street in this file photo of January 26, 2010.

Since the beginning of the rain season in Kurdistan, a considerable amount of rain has fallen on all areas of Kurdistan Region, and early this week a heavy rain wave increased the rain level significantly.

According to Fazil Ibrahim, Region's acting weather and earthquake director general argued that the rain level of this year is 100% higher than that of last year.

"During the past 24 hours [December 8th till De-

cember 9th], the rain level reached 7.5 mm in Erbil, in Pirmam 10.5 mm, in Suleimaniya 4.1mm, in Chamchamal, 2.8 mm, in Duhok 38.1 mm, and in Zakho 55.6 mm," stated Ibrahim in an interview with a local Kurdish news agency. "In total this year the amount of raining has reached 91.3 mm in Erbil, 145.1 mm in Pirmam, 223.2 mm in Suleimaniya, 101.4 mm in Chamchamal, 138.7 mm in Duhok and 133.3 mm in Zakho."

Furthermore, Ibrahim also

added that a wave of heavy snow is also expected in the coming week, and especially in the mountainous areas of the Region.

This means that the rain and snow amounts are expected to be significantly higher than last year.

This gives more hope to people, and especially those who have suffered from last year's drought and made significant losses in their agricultural activities.

# Erbil to have a modern international terminal



A young boy walks past a bus transporting tourists between Erbil and other Iraqi cities.

Erbil's new terminal is expected to open in April next year.

The terminal is built on a plot of land with a total area of 5 hectares and it is situated in the east of the city on the 100 meter street, near Family Mall.

Erbil Governor, Nawzad Hadi visited the project on Saturday, December 1, 2012.

The terminal has two

floors, dozens of offices for transportation companies, restaurants, cafeterias, money exchanges, banks, libraries, markets, rest areas as well as other service areas.

There will be buses for city transfers as well as domestic, regional and international transfers and will be managed with a modern system.

This project is expected

to significantly improve the public transportation system in the capital of the Kurdistan Region, as it currently is very weak in services and low in quality.

Lack of a modern public transportation system forces people to resort to private transportation means and this has led to a significant increase in traffic issues and accidents.



A view of the Syrian refugee camp in Domez, Kurdistan Region.

GLOBE PHOTO/Safim Hamid

PHOTO By Sebastian Meyer

PRESS PHOTO

# Duhok hosts 110 companies in its 4th International Fair



A view of Duhok's 4th International Fair.

The fourth International Fair in Duhok launched on December 5th hosting 110 local and international companies in fairs Halls in Alukah. The international fair consisted of Agricultural and Food, Construction and Household fairs, In addition to many other electrical devices that showcased in the fair. The Fair lasted for four days. "Launching such international and wide scale fairs in Duhok will pave the way to investors so as to get in touch with the other local and foreign companies" said Ismail Saeed, the Director of the Duhok International Fair. He explained that 110 local, Arabic and international companies show-

cased their products in the fair, many of them for the first time. "The fair was more successful than the former ones" claimed Saeed, explaining that this year, many new countries participated in the fair and many new companies showcased their best products as well. The fair consisted of homes equipment, construction, clothes and electrical devices. Many new companies showcased their products in the fair this year, and according to Duhok Chamber of Commerce, 16 countries participated in the fair, "the difference between this fair and the former ones is the large number

of companies that participated and showcased their products." said Ayad Hussein, the head of the Chamber. He is optimistic that the Fair is developing year after year. He also said that a large number of people attended the fair and the companies have showcased all the equipment which meets the demands of peoples' daily lives. "Many companies have participated for the first time in Duhok, from which many other local companies and investors benefited" Hussein concluded.

Shvan Goran  
Duhok

# Domiz Refugees need more qualitative aids

As the conflict in Syria continues, refugees are still flowing into the Kurdistan Region leaving behind their homes to live peacefully in a region they consider their second home. The refugees in Domiz camp thank both the people and the government of the Region for supporting them, but at the same time they are not fully satisfied with the services they're provided with and say that they need some more attention to be paid to them. Haval Faydi, a Kurdish Syrian refugee in Domiz camp says that when the government and the organization want to help them and distribute goods, they should observe the distribution themselves so that every one gets his part fairly. "We get into trouble a lot because everyone is trying to take more than

his limited share" Fydi said. He demands a better life for the refugees by providing them with more suitable houses to live. He explained that they have been there for more than 19 months, and thanked the government and the people of Kurdistan Region for showing their support to them. The director of migrants and immigration in Domiz Camp stated that more than 48 thousand Kurdish Syrian refugees have crossed The Region's borders so far. Niyaz Nori says that when a refugee is registered, he will be provided with a tent and all the bed equipments and some food materials. Nori explained that many other organizations helped the refugees for winter preparations like providing blankets and heaters



Children await as an NGO distributes children's equipments in Domiz Camp of Syrian refugees.

for them. Mahmud Muhammad, a father of 5 children and another refugee from the camp says that many people still don't have any place to live in the camp

and they live in other's tents as guests, which is why their places have become very uncomfortable. Regarding the medical care inside the camp, Muhammad says that the

medicine is inadequate, in spite of the fact that there are some foreign medical teams, furthermore he says "For every illness, they give us headache pills and cannot diagnose

our illnesses." Among this large number of refugees, there are many university graduates, who helped others' children to continue their study inside the camp. The camp administration and Duhok Governorate have provided them with the necessary equipment, and children are now studying from class 1 – 9. One of the teachers who teaches in the camp says that refugees' lives are very tough, but still their children have rights to continue their study wherever they are. "Although our children live in a bad situation, as many families don't have electricity yet, they're still clever and love to study" says Nizar Bahram, a teacher in the camp.

Shvan Goran  
Duhok

# Land prices reach its peak in Duhok

In the last two months, land in Duhok has witnessed a continuous rise in prices, making the business of selling and buying land increasingly difficult. Some people say that Duhok city is small in size and the chance of its enlargement is difficult, that's why the prices are always rising. Others claim that the government halted distributing land to the employees, increasing the demand for land.

Saad Abid, an estate agent in Duhok says that he's been working as an estate agent in Duhok for 14 years, but he hasn't anything as strange as what's happening at the present moment. He says he has sold a plot of land in Duhok for more than US 1\$ million. "Duhok is small in size, and land hasn't been distributed or given to government employees, which is why people try to buy land

themselves" says Abid, claiming that these are reasons behind this rise in prices. After 2003, Duhok opened up to other provinces of Iraq and outside, and people started to trade with other countries, which made the state of economy in the province much better than before and made the prices higher especially in terms of land. "More demands are on the land of the neighbor-

hoods like KRO, Masike, Zirka and Kevla in Duhok city, because these neighborhoods are new" Abid says adding that some plots of land have risen by more than US 40,000\$ in less than a month. Izzat Muhammad, a man who wants to buy a piece of land in Duhok, says that the prices of pieces of land are very high; "nowadays, only rich people can buy land." he added that the prices depend on the place

and direction of the land. "When you want to buy a piece of land, you have to sell every thing until you afford it" Muhammad claims. "If I were not in need of money, I would never sell my land" says a land seller. He claims that the prices are rising day after day, that's why he wasn't going to sell his land if he wasn't obliged to. "People do not want to live in apartments, except gov-

ernment employees who have limited income and most of the time can't afford to buy land" says Yasin Mustafa. He says that 30% of people buy houses while 70% of them buy land, because they want to build their new houses themselves with modern designs.

Shvan Goran  
Duhok

# Number of beggars on the rise

**Begging has been increasing dramatically in Erbil, especially after the political issues and wars in Syria have lead to many Syrian people leaving their country and heading towards Kurdistan Region.**

Scores of homeless people from Syria arrive in Kurdish cities to beg for alms. Many of them are seen usually at the mosques, where upon finishing their prayers, they start begging. Most of them say they have been attacked by the Bashar Assad's armed men and forced to leave their homes.

Mustafa Ahmad is a Kurd from Syria who came to Erbil city in October and because of the difficulties he faced in finding a job he started begging in mosques.

"My wife asked me to get some food for my 5-year old son, but I had no money to buy anything. I went to mosque and performed noon prayer at Zheyen Mosque in Erbil and decided to beg for the first time in my life," said Ahmad

Once Ahmad collected 50, 000 Iraqi dinars (ID) within only 10 minutes, he decided to continue begging. Ahmad said he never thought of begging before and he would like to quit it if he finds a job in Erbil or goes back to his country.

According to unofficial statistical reports the Syr-



GLOBE PHOTO/Safin Hamid

Syrian Kurdish children seen in this file photo receive meal.

ians constitute over 60% of beggars in Kurdistan Region.

"I don't collect much nowadays, probably because of the increasing number of beggars. I feel very embarrassed when I say I am poor because some people think that I just pretend to be poor," said Omer Kadhim, another Syrian Kurd who refused to call himself a beggar.

Kadhim said he used to live in a good condition and had a house, his own car and a good job in Syria before coming to Erbil.

Kurdistan Region is regarded as one of the developing places; con-

structions are seen everywhere and streets are full of the high modern cars. But, on the other side, one can barely pass through a crowded area without encountering a few beggars, especially women who have put veils on their faces.

In the city of Erbil, beggars usually gather in front of the mosques, malls and some walk by shops in the city market. Each beggar tries in his own way to attract the sympathy and compassion of those passing by. Some leave their children on the sidewalk begging for money to feed them, some show a medical report – often a fake

one – indicating a critical health condition preventing them from working. Others use disabled children, who sit next to them near crowded medical clinics.

"I have encountered many people who pretended they were poor and begged, but later I found out they were even wealthier than I am. It is hard to tell which one is really poor and deserves to be helped," said Bestoon Shukir, an Erbil citizen while passing by a beggar in Erbil's down town market

Although begging is illegal according to laws and the Erbil Police have

already placed measures to curtail begging and have increased patrols in the markets and other places frequented by beggars, the phenomenon of begging is increasing.

Brigadier Abdulkhaliq Talaat, chief of Erbil Police Directorate, said "Most of those who are begging in the city markets, near malls, and the mosques are not from Erbil. Most of them are not really poor. Erbil citizens usually don't beg even if they are poor because they feel shy,"

According to Talaat, begging is increasing because many people especially foreigners regard

begging as a type of job and within a short amount of time they collect a lot of money without being tired.

Talaat said police is in the process of finding proper mechanisms to tackle the issue of begging and for that purpose their main task is to separate the beggars who are poor and those who are not.

Social activists think if the government starts paying attention to this phenomenon and develops appropriate solutions, people in Kurdistan will get rid of the most serious issue in society.

"The separation of those who beg because they are poor with those who are not poor but beg because they got used to is a critical need," said Mahabad Qaradaghi, a social activist, adding "Once the government creates the separation, it needs to implement social insurance for the helpless people and house them if they are homeless."

Qaradaghi stressed the need to design social and economic projects to pull people out from the miserable reality in which they live. Support and rehabilitation, according to her, could save society from a negative phenomenon before it escalates to a humanitarian catastrophe.

"There are many who beg just because they are disabled. The government should find suitable jobs for them." Concluded Qaradaghi

*By Zakariya Muhammed*

## Police officers return 500 million dinars to government

After the Payment Committee received money from a government bank for distributing payments among police officers in Gariyan police Directorate, they found out they had 544 million extra Iraqi Dinars (ID) in hand.

Although the Payment Committee is authorized to deal with extra money, based on laws, the committee returned the extra

money to the bank. In return of that, Kurdistan Region Government's ministry of interior has only thanked Aram Sadeeq, Hameed Hamrasheed, and Ameer Shamsullah, the committee members.

Lt. Colonel Hassan Muhammad, Gramiyan Police Directorate spokesman said "The committee, who decided to return the extra money to the bank did so

because they thought it was their national duty,"

Lt. Colonel Muhammad is disappointed because the Interior Ministry didn't reward the three police officers. "The ministry only thanked them. I think this is not fair. The committee deserves more than a verbal appreciation." Muhammad criticized

## Another day off for students underway

A source from Kurdistan Teachers Union (KTU) has revealed that they are working hard in order to persuade the Kurdish Government to allow another day off for students in the Kurdistan Region.

Duhok, Suleimaniyah, and Erbil are the only three provinces in Iraq where students go to school on Saturdays. Schools are closed dur-

ing Saturdays in the rest of Iraq.

"Because the Iraqi government and its Kurdish counterpart usually practice the same strategic plans concerning work days and holidays, teachers and students in Kurdistan region have rights to take Saturdays off just like students and teachers in the other cities of Iraq," said Ahmad

Kirkuki, Head of Teachers' Advocacy

According to Kirkuki, KTU has discussed this issue several times before but it has not officially worked on it so far. "We are ready to raise this issue up, and if the teachers like to have Saturdays off we are ready to support them."



# Maliki, a would-be tyrant

With malignant narcissism disorder

By *Behrooz Shojai*

Prime Minister Maliki of Baghdad has sent Dijla Operation forces to Kirkuk and its vicinity to, as he proclaimed, safeguard the Arab composition of the area. He has argued that "we have already agreed with the Kurds that the boundaries of Kurdistan are those before the American invasion 2003 and the Kurds should keep there and not mention the areas they consider to be theirs". These areas, says Maliki, are Arab territories and not Kurdish. A while ago this paper published an article written by this writer, in which hundreds of sources during the last centuries testified the Kurdishness of Kirkuk.

I don't think Maliki is so much concerned about history, justice and amendments. He stated that the economy of Kurdistan region has collapsed and the rate of growth is beneath zero. The Turks and Jews are operating in the region, thus foreign companies will flee the area. The Dijla Operation force is a part of the Iraqi Army, hence it has the right to operate in Kirkuk and all provinces in Kurdistan region. We are committed to the constitution and we expect that they [Kurds] also are committed to the Iraqi constitution. Ironic! Kurds have pleaded for implementation of article 140 and Maliki urges the Kurds to be committed to the constitution. I am not sure if he has any good contact with reality either.

The behavior of this man indicates typical signs of a would-be tyrant. Typical for a tyrant, he is challenging the morality of the people he is supposed to govern. Similarly, he is about to undertake reckless adventures by sending troops to suppress a disadvantaged group in the history of Iraq. What is he trying to do? Restore the old Iraq, the Saddami Iraq? Is he trying, like Saddam, to declare himself as the heir of Hammurabi, or Nebuchadnezzar? Why not Sargon? Why on earth not Saddam Hussein? The resemblance

is really striking. Maliki definitely shows signs of grandiosity. But he is in the beginning of his career; he is frenetically busy with consolidation of his power position. Restoring the former glory of Iraq is just an excuse for this man to idealize his own ego; eventually, like many other malignant narcissist tyrants he will lose his capacity for change and growth. Claiming that Kirkuk and other disputed areas of article 140 is just an indication of a serious disorder in the prime minister's personality. The man is trying to manipulate without any scruples or sense of guilt. Again; a borderline personality syndrome with pathologic narcissist features that enables him to act so irrationally. His severe superego pathology enables him to show the irrational characteristics of a tyrant. He once was a good friend of Kurdish leaders in Iraq. He was, as a matter of fact, an exiled guest in Kurdistan region several years.

He probably idealized Kurdish leaders and politicians from whom narcissistic supplies were expected; both president Barzani and Talabani supported his nomination as the Prime Minister. He probably had positive feelings toward them. But these feelings evaporated when Barzani disappointed him. He simply forgot the attachment he once had. In psychodynamic terms, such a person suffers from continuous feelings of emptiness and fear of abandonment, along with a chronically unstable sense of self, as well as paranoia. But initially Maliki showed quite a balanced face. Just like many other tyrants, who have personalities, in the beginnings of his career he had a somewhat greater impulse for control than later on.

Maliki's malignant narcissism reminds us quite extensively of Stalin's personality: During his early years as a revolutionary in Tiflis and Batum, Georgia, Stalin continually maneuvered to



Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri Maliki.

increase his power. Maliki started his political career in Kurdistan. In his final ascent to power, Stalin eliminated all rivals in the Party Politburo. Maliki has suppressed all other political Shiite leaders in Iraq, including Hakim, Jaafari and others.

By aligning himself in the mid-1920s with the Leningrad faction led by Lev Kamenev and Grigori Zinoviev and the Moscow group led by Nikolai Bukharin, Stalin first defeated Leon Trotsky and his supporters. By aligning himself with Kurds and other Shiite leaders, Maliki defeated the Sunni and secular Shiite leaders. Then, with Bukharin's help, Stalin turned against Kamenev and Zinoviev. Maliki then with the support of president Talabani and Sunnis isolated Barzani. Finally, Stalin moved against the remaining Bukharin faction, and by late 1929 had destroyed it. In the late 1920s and 1930s Stalin moved to annihilate anyone who could find a power base from which to challenge him. Some were executed after show trials (Kamenev, Zinoviev, and Bukharin), while others were assassinated (Ser-

gei Kirov, probably, and Leon Trotsky). By the late 1930s the old Bolsheviks and later leaders were almost completely eliminated. Seventy percent of the Communist Party's Central Committee was dead, half of the party's membership was arrested, and more than a million members had been killed. Maliki then turned against Talabani, who protected him against Barzani's initiative to initiate vote of no confidence in the parliament. A characteristic of the malignant narcissistic tyrant is to create split and divisions among competitors; Maliki definitely managed to create this division among Kurds.

This malignant narcissist, by way of contrast manifests not only the self-inflation of all narcissistic types, but also greater aggression and deficiency in his superego development. His antisocial behavior is manifest in aggression or sadism directed against others; our fellow narcissist Maliki manifest aggression against Kurds. As a would-be tyrant he works to create an environment, a social and ideological structure, in which the

manifestations of his disorder-cruelty, paranoia, and what would normally be criminal behavior - become legitimized and justified behavior.

This is facilitated in the early stages of the tyrant's career, during his climb to power promotion of an Iraqi notion of Pan-Arabism - each of these became a ground for making law-breaking and anti-social behavior into principled resistance. Once power is attained, however, a complete system is created (in political and military terms) that transforms the intrinsically antisocial and criminal behavior of the tyrant and his associates into measures necessary for the preservation of the polity against internal and external enemies. When the tyrant nears his zenith, the criminality takes on massive proportions, as in Stalin's purges or Hitler's "Final Solution." Jews for Hitler are equivalent to Kurds for Maliki. Ironically he has asserted that Kurds are support from Israel! His paranoia will probably infect the whole Arab nation, if he manages to stay in power.

Maliki's paranoia is delusions of conspiracy and

victimization that are apt to be well concealed from those around him. The central defense of Maliki is splitting. He maintains some sort of stability via a paranoid defense. He is projecting his own dark side and vulnerabilities onto an external source, transforming an internal conflict into an external one. Thus, he is able to distance himself from an internal conflict (his fragile position in Baghdad) by transforming that conflict into an external battle (Dijla Operation forces) between himself as the representative of good (the Arab Iraqis, Sunnis as well as Shiites) and the scapegoat as the representative of evil (the Kurds and Barzani). Maliki is projecting onto the Kurds his own proclivities for lying, slander and other devious behavior. Will Maliki succeed in transforming into full-blood Arab Saddam Hussein? Actually it depends on the Kurds. If the Kurds wait till Maliki's next move, he will eventually transform to a new Saddam. I hope that the Kurds, for once, are proactive and preemptive.



# From fashion To diplomacy

By **Diane Rah**

Rumors of Obama's consideration of making Anna Wintour, editor and chief of American *Vogue* the next U.S. ambassador to the UK seems to be meeting critical wave among people in the world of politics and diplomacy.

*Vogue* is the world's largest and most prestigious fashion and lifestyle magazine with its roots in America. Decades of popularity and growth have led the magazine to a global empire where many countries have established their own version of it, including Italy, UK, France and Mexico. Wintour is well known for her formidable

reputation in the world of fashion, and according to Bloomberg she raised over \$500,000 to help reelect Obama for presidency making her among his top 10 fundraisers during the elections.

Rumors have gone viral on multiple media outlets claiming that Obama is considering offering Anna Wintour the post as U.S. ambassador to the UK.

Sarah Churchwell, professor of American studies at the University of East Anglia said to the BBC that it is perhaps the cult of celebrity and image politics that has helped Obama's popularity in the past few

years and based on such perspective it would be a beneficial move on the President's part to make Wintour, a high profiled and well known personality the bridging link between the United States and United Kingdom. Prof Churchwell explained: 'she would bring not just business savvy but also an understanding of the cult of personality - that is what drives Obama's popularity globally.'

But the critics are worried that Anna Wintour's expertise and lifelong experiences in the fashion world are just not suitable nor adequate for an ambassador, in particular

the prestige position of U.S. ambassador to London. Charles Laurence of *The Week* states in his article that 'it boggles the mind... Charm, tact and wily persuasion - the skills of diplomacy- are not her trademark'.

Considering her prominent role in the fashion industry many are not surprised to see Wintour's name floating as a possibility to become U.S. ambassador to London, but it remains to see if Wintour's contribution to the Obama campaign is going to be awarded a diplomatic position despite her undiplomatic like persona and experiences.



PRESS PHOTO

Anna Wintour, editor and chief of American *Vogue*

# The path to a reconciled Halabja, A possibility or a dream?

Decades of pain and mourning over our dearest Halabja are not easily erased horror memories; they recapture our saddest thoughts and greatest reunion among us Kurds year after year.

We always say that time flies by too fast but clearly some of our memories stay hammered in our heads and hearts till the day of our final breath. The terrorization of Halabja in 1988 is a part of our devastating and horrifying history that we learn and hear about from an early age. I always believed that the attack on Halabja was an attack on all Kurds, it killed the innocence of our children and grandparents, and whether from South, West, North or East we all tie into this piece of history and reunite as one wherever we may be.

Interestingly, when I think of Halabja it draws me to thoughts of reconciliation, whether one day our victims will be able to live with inner peace and forgive the inhuman event. I remember writing



Visitors walk around the Halabja Monument in Halabja, south east of Suleimaniya.

case studies on the Rwandan genocide during my Bachelor degree where the central argument was that reconciliation through the Gachacha court system

was a possibility and it helped motivate the victims to move on in life while the perpetrators paid for what they did. Now, that was one perspective of

it vaguely mentioned here, but in reality the agony and pain the genocide caused is a continuous battle for families and relatives of the lost ones.

I don't deny the importance of reconciliation, in many cases it also helps to deemphasize retribution and future conflicts to be provoked, but I don't

believe that it is a process so easily achieved through a court system or through a defined time set by some judges of some sort. Unlike Rwanda, the Kurds and the victims never had a highlighted time for reconciliation, perhaps the execution of Chemical Ali in 2010 was the only moment some may have felt they could think ahead and close such a devastating chapter.

When I read or hear people speak about Halabja in such light that they should forgive and forget, I can't help but think that it is a superficial and lack of analytical way of putting this important piece of history into perspective. Yes decades have passed and mourning of the past will bring nothing but renewing the pains caused in 1988, but I think that the people of Halabja and the Kurds as a whole should be let alone to decide when it is time to forgive such atrocities, and only time can teach us how to reconcile.

By **Diane Rah**

*Sports news*

# Erbil cyclists ranked 10th at Arab championship

GLOBE PHOTO/Rebin Ramzi



A view of cyclists at the Arab Championship held in UAE.

The Erbil cycling team traveled to United Arab Emirates to take part at the seventh Arab Cycling Championships in the last days of November. Event organizers welcomed the Erbil delegation on its arrival in Ra'as Al-Khaima, where the championships were held. Upon their arrival, the team held a training session.

The Erbil team consisted of 12 athletes and personnel: Abdulqader Nuraddin, trainer; Muzaffar Hameed, referee; Rebin Ramzi, pressman; Musa Muhsin, coach assistant; Orfius Jalal, mechanic; Massimo Fareeq, cyclist; Jovan Tomi, cyclist; Amanj Sherzad, cyclist; Rebaz Muzaffar, cyclist; Abdullah Abdulkhazayar, cyclist; Dlovan Kosrat, cyclist and Ali Abdulkhazayar, cyclist.

Over 70 cyclists from 14 Arab country clubs participated in the championship and the Algerian cyclists were able to control the front places. Upon finishing the competition, the Algerian clubs, Mujammaa and Sofak, were placed first and second, while Muhafadha club from Syria ranked third.

The last round, running on December 2nd, was a 140-kilometer ride with seven turns and Erbil entered the race with six cyclists against 70 cyclists from 14 Arab clubs. The participating clubs included Erbil and

Sina'a from Iraq; Salam from Saudi Arabia; Ahli, Emirate and Nasir from UAE; Jamea Riyadhi from Tunisia; Muhafaza from Syria; Bani Yousuf from Egypt; Mujammaa and Sofak from Algeria; Doha from Qatar; Rafaa Sharqi and Bin Hamza from Bahrain.

In the last round, Abdullah Abdulkhazayar placed 35th, which was Erbil's best result, Ali Abdulkhazayar placed 36th, and Sherzad placed 37th. Dlovan Kosrat placed 41st while Masimo Fareeq and Jovan Tomi didn't complete the competition due to injury.

Due to the modest results in the championship Erbil was placed 10th, and Coach Abdulqader Nuraddin, as always had excuses for his cyclists' simple performances.

"My cyclists weren't very well prepared for the tournament. They didn't have enough time to open long lasting training camps due to a shortage of time," said Nuraddin, adding "The competition was very strong compared to the previous ones held in the previous years due to the participation of many skilful cyclists from Algeria who excelled and were able to win the first places for themselves. Most other athletes were cyclists of their national team."

Despite not gaining satisfying results, Nuraddin thinks his cyclists' participation in the championships

was very useful as they identified their mistakes and weak points.

"We can work on our weak points so that we can show a better performance level in the future tournaments. I tested some new cyclists who benefited a lot from the event. Hopefully we will have better results in the future competitions." Noted Nuraddin

Mahmud Aziz, Erbil sports club secretary, said that Erbil cyclists need more time in order to compete with the international cyclists. Commenting on the Erbil team's performance and results Aziz said, "The result is to some extent good, though we expected a better result. I am optimistic about Erbil because most of the cyclists are young and have time to improve."

Aziz considers the competition at this championship as tough, because most of the teams sent their national team cyclists, who are preparing for the upcoming Arab Countries Championships in Qatar.

When asked why Erbil cyclists excel in domestic tournaments but perform less well in international competition, Aziz answered: "Our cyclists are young and have no experience. The international competitions will help them to trust themselves and learn from others. I believe they can get better if they try hard and do their daily

training under the supervision of their coaches."

Some criticize Erbil club athletes for poor results in international competitions, despite funding from the government and other sources. The cycling team, for example, gets high-quality equipment and is better funded than other clubs in the Kurdistan Region. Sports observers ask, "Can other clubs do better if their athletes are funded like Erbil's are?"

The representatives of the participating teams met with Sheikh Faisal Hamid, Ra'as Al-Khaima's governor last year. The hour-long meeting was an exchange of ideas. During the meeting, Erbil was selected to host the 20th Arab Cycling Championships for men and the 10th Arab Championships for women.

Iraqi Cycling Association members and Erbil city sports officials have shown their readiness for hosting this important event. Since most of the Arab clubs participate in the championships every time, Erbil sports officials and people like to start preparing for it as soon as possible.

**Zakaria Muhammed**  
Erbil

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## Three nominees for 2012 AFC Player award announced

Korean Lee Keun Ho, who played a key role in Ulsan Hyundai's victorious AFC Champions League 2012 campaign, Iran's Ali Karimi (Persepolis, Iran), and ACL quarter-finalists Guangzhou Evergrande (China) defender Zheng Zhi of China have maintained their places in the list.

However, Australian defender Lucas Neill (Al Wasl, UAE) and Iranian defender Mohsen Bengar (Persepolis) have failed to make the final shortlist. The AFC Player of the Year award will be presented at a grand ceremony on November 29, 2012, at the Mandarin Oriental in Kuala Lumpur.

## Grant rules out Chelsea return

Avram Grant has ruled out the possibility of returning to Chelsea to work with newly-appointed interim boss Rafael Benitez.

Grant has been linked with a return to the Stamford Bridge dugout in recent weeks after Benitez's less-than-auspicious start at the club.

He said "Nobody from Chelsea has offered me this job. I think Benitez is a very experienced coach and manager and I don't think a few weeks after they give him the job he will leave and I don't think it will be right."

## 2013 FIFA Confederations Cup draws released

The countdown to the ninth FIFA Confederations Cup, one of the most keenly awaited in recent times, began in earnest on December 1st, when the Draw for the competition was held at the Anhembi Convention Centre in Sao Paulo, Brazil.

Presented by FIFA Secretary General Jerome Valcke, the Draw ceremony revealed who will face who in the group phase of the Festival of Champions, which takes place in Brazil on 15-30 June 2013.

Group A: Brazil, Japan, Mexico, Italy.  
Group B: Spain, Uruguay, Tahiti, the next African champions

## Mancini not feeling pressure



Manchester City boss Roberto Mancini insists he does not feel under any pressure despite crashing out of the Champions League.

City crashed out of Europe altogether on Tuesday night after finishing bottom of Group D with just three points.

City's poor campaign in Europe has increased the scrutiny on Mancini, but he insists their main target was to retain the Premier League title this term.

"I don't feel any pressure. I'm disappointed because we went out of the Champions League and I'm disappointed for the club because they deserve to go through and for our players, who deserve to play on that stage."



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