

## Remarks With Kurdistan Democratic Party Leader Massoud Barzani

### Secretary Condoleezza Rice

Irbil, Iraq

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**MR. BARZANI:** (Translated from Kurdish) First of all, I would like to welcome Madame Secretary Condoleezza Rice, on behalf of the people of Iraqi Kurdistan, and me personally, and the accompanying delegation for this visit. We value this visit, and we have appreciation for it, we feel honored to have you here, and we see this visit as a kind of reconfirmation of the United States' support for the people of Iraq, and also for the Kurdistan region, support for the democracy process, and for building a democracy and a federal Iraq. Once again, I would like to welcome you.

**SECRETARY RICE:** Thank you very much, sir, for the wonderful welcome and the wonderful hospitality. I want to thank the Kurdish people for the great welcome, with flowers, with lovely children, when I first arrived. We have a wonderful friendship and a history of friendship between the Kurdish people and the American people and now we have an opportunity to use that friendship to help to bring about a democratic and unified and federal Iraq. I know that the Kurdish people sacrificed greatly in the last regime and now it is wonderful to see that there is an opportunity for a democratic and peaceful Iraq. Thank you.

**QUESTION:** (Translated from Kurdish.) A question from Kurdistan Satellite television. As you kindly talked about the sacrifice of the Kurdish people, and also the future, could we see any role and any position for the Kurdish people, the Kurdish leadership, in the policies of the United States for the future? And the other question was addressed to President Barzani, through the meetings that you have with high-level officials, Sir, to what extent do you see the role of the Kurdish people in the policies and the cooperation.

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, one reason that I am here is to have consultations with our friends, we've just had those consultations, and I think Mr. Barzani is a very wise man and I have listened thoroughly. We agree that the future now is to have a constitutional process that is inclusive so that Iraq can take the next step toward a democratic and federal Iraq.

**MR. BARZANI:** (Translated from Kurdish) There is no doubt that the Kurds play a major role in the building of a federal democratic Iraq and, the current visit of Madame Secretary is another indicator of the role that the Kurds will play in the new Iraq, in building a federal democratic, and her mere visit is a response to your question.

**MODERATOR:** Anne Gearan, Associated Press.

**QUESTION:** Madame Secretary, U.S. military officials have recently talked to the new Iraqi leadership about getting tougher and doing so more quickly with the insurgency. Do you feel that the new government is saying and doing the right things, and doing them fast enough?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, let's remember that it is indeed a new government, just a few weeks old now, not even a few weeks old, and so I'm here to consult with members of the new Iraqi Government. Obviously, terrorism has to be fought, and it has to be fought actively and aggressively because these terrorists are killing innocent Iraqi people. And I know that all responsible Iraqis, especially the leadership, wants to put an end to that. And so we are – I will be here to talk with them about the role that the coalition is playing in helping to train Iraqi security forces, but I think there can be no doubt that there is only one way to deal with terrorists who are killing innocent people, and that is to fight them.

**QUESTION:** (Translated from Kurdish) A threefold question. First of all, what role do you see, Madame Secretary, for President Barzani in the writing of the constitution for the new Iraq; and secondly, as you concede that Kurdistan is in the forefront of fighting terrorism, is there any specific support or assistance for upgrading the level of security forces in the KRP (inaudible) to the government; and third, economic development and growth, do you have anything specific to help the (inaudible) (being partners and allies with you in this process.

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, we talked about the fact that the political process, the security situation and economic development are all intertwined and we have already developed a number of projects, economic development projects, infrastructure projects, that we will continue to work with all parts of Iraq. I hope that some of those will benefit this area, including the place in which we stand, Irbil.

Secondly, we did discuss the need to increase the security capacity of all of Iraq and all Iraqis and I'm certain that the leaders from this region will participate in that process.

And finally, we talked about how Iraq's democratic founding fathers now will need – and mothers – will need now to have a constitution that is inclusive of all people of Iraq and the very important role that Mr. Barzani can play in that because he has good relationships and respect of many of the people of Iraq.

**MODERATOR:** Last question, Boston Globe.

**QUESTION:** Why is the administration so eager and insistent on having the constitution writing process meet the August deadline? Particularly given that the major parties are still far apart on fundamental issues, and there's security challenges that make it hard to have the meetings you need to have quickly if you're trying to be very inclusive?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, the August deadline, of course, was set in Iraqi processes, and there needs to continue to be a certain momentum to the political process. But I would just say that we have to remember that the Iraqi people have managed to meet every deadline that they – that was put before them. People said that it would not be possible to transfer sovereignty on June 30<sup>th</sup> of last year, and it's amazing, it's only one year –since the transfer

of sovereignty, not even one year since the transfer of sovereignty. People said that the Iraqis would never be able to have elections on January 30<sup>th</sup>. They had elections on January 30<sup>th</sup>. I am quite confident that the Iraqis, because they are committed, and they are dedicated and they are determined to make this process work, will find a way to move the constitutional process along so that there can be elections for a permanent government at the end of April.

**QUESTION:** A quick follow up – what's the significance, what's the message of you coming straight from America to meet with Mr. Barzani, especially with regard to the future of Kurdish autonomy and territory?

**SECRETARY RICE:** My understanding with Mr. Barzani, and we've just had a discussion about it, is that he is one of the many leaders of Iraq, several leaders of Iraq, who are dedicated to a unified and federal and democratic Iraq. He talked about what the Transitional Administrative Law has meant to him personally. Of course the Kurdish people have a very special culture and a very special place. But it is a place within a democratic and federal Iraq, and so I am now in a very important and special part of Iraq.

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