

## FAQ on the Kurdistan Referendum on Independence

### **1. When will the independence referendum be held?**

On June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2017, following a meeting by President Masoud Barzani and representatives of 15 out of 17 Kurdistan political parties that are in the government and parliament, it was unanimously decided that a referendum on independence will be held on Monday September 25, 2017.

### **2. What will the referendum question be?**

“Do you want the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) and Kurdistan territories that are outside KRI to become an independent state?” There will only be one question and it will be in Kurdish, Arabic, Turkmen, and Assyrian languages.

### **3. Is the referendum binding?**

Yes, the outcome of the referendum is binding on the Kurdistan leadership. It will mandate the leadership to negotiate the results with Baghdad to find a peaceful way of implementing the will of the people of Kurdistan.

### **4. Which areas will this referendum be carried out in?**

The referendum will be carried out in KRI and Kurdistan areas outside the KRI, sometimes referred to as the disputed territories. The referendum will not determine the fate of the disputed territories; this issue will be negotiated with Baghdad or a second referendum may be held in those areas.

### **5. Will the Kurdistan Parliament be reactivated prior to the independent referendum?**

The referendum does not require a law from the Kurdistan parliament. However, Kurdistan’s main political parties remain heavily engaged in discussions on reactivating the Parliament. The Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Change Movement are engaged in direct talks committed to reconvene the Parliament ahead of the referendum.

### **6. Is there an independent entity to manage the referendum?**

Kurdistan Independent High Electoral and Referendum Commission (KHEC), also referred to as Independent High Elections and Referendum Commission (IHERC), is authorized to carry out the referendum independently. In accordance with the provisions of part 1 of Article 56 of Law No. 1 – 1992 (amended) and pursuant to the legislation enacted by Kurdistan Parliament under its ordinary session No. 18 dated 23 July 2014, the Kurdistan Parliament enacted Law No. 4 – Year of 2014 establishing KHEC.

**7. Is KHEC inviting the international observers to monitor the referendum?**

On 17<sup>th</sup> of August 2017, the KHEC issued regulations inviting local and international observers to monitor the referendum. For more information please see [goo.gl/uny8eA](http://goo.gl/uny8eA).

**8. Why does KRI want to hold the referendum now?**

From Iraq's establishment until 2003, the people of Iraqi Kurdistan suffered from systematic violence, oppression and denial within the Iraqi state. During that period, successive Iraqi regimes demolished 4,500 villages in Kurdistan, murdered hundreds of thousands of Kurdistanis, and used chemical weapons against civilians extensively. Genocide has been repeatedly committed against the people of Iraqi Kurdistan.

Following the liberation of Iraq in 2003, the Kurdistan leadership invested in building a federal, democratic and pluralistic Iraq. Kurds have supported and participated in every Iraqi government since 2003, investing time, treasure, and precious lives in support of a federal Iraq, and at times accepting far less than was promised in terms of rights and freedoms. Baghdad does not treat Erbil as an equal partner and refuses to solve outstanding issues between both sides, in particular Article 140 of the Constitution on the so-called disputed territories, oil and gas development, support for the Peshmerga, and KRG's share of the federal budget.

Since the adoption of the new Iraqi constitution in 2005, successive governments in Baghdad have violated the constitution, and it is clear to the people of Kurdistan that Baghdad will never implement key provisions of the constitution. Faithful implementation of the constitution was the sole guarantee for Iraq's unity and with its violation the chance to preserve it is gone.

As a result, the people of Kurdistan will be given the chance to decide in a binding referendum and in a democratic process if they want independence or to remain as part of Iraq.

**9. What would an independent Kurdistan look like?**

An independent Kurdistan will be a federal, democratic, secular and pluralistic state where the rights of ethnic and religious minorities will be protected and upheld. An independent Kurdistan will be a state for all the people who inhabit the country, including Kurds, Turkmen, Arabs, Assyrians, Syriacs, Chaldeans, Armenians, Yezidis, Kakayees, Faylees and other components. In a meeting with representatives of ethnic and religious components in Kurdistan, President Barzani stated he was open to reviewing the national anthem and flag of Kurdistan in order to ensure the symbols of the nation reflect the reality of all components living in Kurdistan.

Cultural, political, linguistic and economic rights of all components will be guaranteed by the constitution of Kurdistan.

An independent Kurdistan will seek good relations with its neighboring countries and will be a factor for stability in the Middle East. It will pursue an open-door policy towards members of the international community to build bridges based on mutual interest and respect.

**10. Will Kurdistan Region hold parliamentary and presidential elections soon?**

Yes. Kurdistan's parliamentary and presidential elections will be held on November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017.

**11. Will Kurdistan voters who live abroad vote in this referendum? If yes, how?**

Kurdistanis residing overseas will be able to register to vote from September 1, 2017 until September 7, 2017. Voting for Kurdistanis residing overseas will take place on September 23, 2017. Please be advised, all dates and times are local Kurdistan time.

Voters will be asked to vote on the ballot question, "Do you want to form an independent state for the Kurdistan region and Kurdistan territories that are not under the KRG administration?" The voter will register his/her vote "Yes" or "No" by clicking the appropriate tab.

Eligibility to vote:

Kurdistani voters who live abroad must meet the following terms in order to be eligible to vote:

- Be a citizen of the KRI or Kurdistan territories that are not under the KRG administration.
- Be at least 18 years old.
- Have registered with the Voters' Registration Database.
- Have registered in the E-Voting Database.

How to register to vote:

- Register with the E-Voting Database using the electronic form, which will be available on September 1, 2017 on <http://khec17.net/>.
- Submit two forms of identification:
  - Iraqi Passport
  - Civil Status Identification Card (Nfus)
  - Iraqi Citizenship Card (Jinsyah)

- National Card
- Voters must type in their names in Arabic alphabet as written on their food coupons.
- Voters will need to provide their food coupon number. Every Iraqi family is required to have food coupons, which is under the name of the head of the family and all family members are listed.
- The names of voters will be verified and each voter will be supplied with a username and a password in order to use the application and get access to it.
- Upon first use, the user will be prompted to change his/her password in order to prevent anyone else from using his/her app and vote on his/her behalf. Each device can be used only once for voting.
- Upon voting, his/her name will be automatically added to those who already voted and his/her name will become deactivated (to avoid voting again). Each voter can only vote once.

## **12. What will happen after the referendum is carried out?**

The result of the referendum, which is widely expected to be in favour of independence, will mandate the leadership to negotiate an amicable split with Baghdad. Negotiations between Erbil and Baghdad on the upcoming referendum and other outstanding issues have already started.