

Iraq denies attempts to restore PKK-Syria relations



Barham Salih (R), then a senior PUK politician who has held multiple top positions including prime minister of the Kurdish region shows his ink-stained finger after voting in the Kurdistan's legislative election at a polling station on September 21, 2013 in the northern Kurdish city of Sulaimaniyah [SHWAN MOHAMMED/AFP/Getty Images]

Iraqi President Barham Salih did not propose mediation between the Kurdish PKK group and the Syrian regime, the country's presidency spokesperson, Luqman Al-Fili, announced yesterday.

The London-based *Asharq Al-Awsat* recently reported that Salih "adopted a scenario to fill the gap left by the United States' decision to withdraw its forces from Syria."

The agency claimed that Salih's proposal suggested that the PKK leaders would meet with the Syrian government officials in the capital Damascus to discuss restoring relations between the two parties. It explained that the PKK leaders would arrive there through the Iraqi-Iranian border and then through the

northern Iraqi city of Sulaymaniyah.

According to the agency's report, the agreement would include "the return of the [Syrian] army and border guards to all Syrian border points with Turkey and Iraq, in addition to waving the official Syrian flag and returning the sovereignty elements in the eastern Euphrates."

The Saudi-funded newspaper pointed to a "possible resumption of coordination between the PKK and Syria for joint action against Turkey." It noted that there has been communication between the Kurdish PYD and the Syrian army in the country's Al-Hasakah and Aleppo governorates.

"This information is inaccurate, and we reiterate that the President of the Republic [Iraq] has previously stressed the need to support the efforts of a peaceful solution to end the vicious cycle of violence in neighbouring Syria," Al-Fili said.

He added that the Iraqi approach in Syria was based on "respect for its independent decision and an end to interference in its internal affairs," adding that the "president [Salih] believes that achieving peace in Syria requires coordination and support from the neighbouring countries and the international community."

Salih, Al-Fili reiterated, has always sought to strengthen relations with all Iraq's neighbours, including Turkey. "We always follow the policy of not interfering in other countries' internal affairs."

Source: <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20181224-iraq-denies-attempts-to-re-store-pkk-syria-relations/>

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