

Kurdistan UPDATE



Follow up visit – 20 years after the Uprising

**JUNE 2011 VISIT BY THE ALL PARTY PARLIAMENTARY
GROUP ON THE KURDISTAN REGION**





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Background

The All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on the Kurdistan Region in Iraq visited Kurdistan from 31 May to 6 June 2011.

Introduction



ABOVE: Members of the All-Party Parliamentary Group at the entrance to the Kurdistan Parliament. The delegation had meetings with MPs from the ruling parties, Opposition and ethnic and religious minorities.

Major events in the wider Middle East have overshadowed the already neglected story of the Kurdistan Region which is now the safest, most pluralistic and dynamic part of Iraq although there should be no complacency about pressing and persistent social, economic and political problems.

We have conducted many extensive and cross-party fact-finding visits to Kurdistan in recent years while our Co-Chair is British-Kurdish and a regular visitor since the early 1990s. We are candid friends urging the UK and others to lend a helping hand, seeking to develop relationships of mutual benefit.

We engage with government, opposition parties, media and civil society organisations which say that Kurdistan needs to accelerate the speed of its reform, deepen its democracy and make its economy work better for the benefit of its people and Iraq as a whole. An Opposition MP told us that Kurdistan needs much reform but added, “be under no illusion - things are good here.”

Another senior opposition leader expressed a common view to us that “a thousand words in Kurdish are put in the bin but one word from the British and Americans is listened to.” We hope that all Kurdish views are heard but appreciate that our own views have an audience and ask that our report be read as a whole and in conjunction with our previous reports.



Context

Kurdistan's achievements are remarkable given its geographical location and history. The Kurds have survived against the odds for centuries at the landlocked epicentre of three larger and sometimes hostile civilisations.

The Kurds have learnt how to protect their interests and many have cultivated an entrepreneurial spirit. Significant numbers of Kurds spent time abroad during the years of dictatorship and increasing numbers are returning to bring their talents to the aid of their homeland. However, many people have also come to rely too heavily on the state.

Overall, their dignified, friendly and open attitudes are major assets in the modern globalised economy.

Kurdistan may be small but it certainly doesn't lack ambition. We also know ourselves and from others that people who visit Kurdistan are usually bowled over by what they see and wish to return.

If Kurdistan plays its hand wisely, it could have a great future with huge natural assets of oil, gas, agriculture and heritage to add to a growing go-getting mentality. Kurdistan could become self-sufficient and export energy and food as well as develop a decent income from tourism to fund the good society based on traditional Kurdish values of community. Its natural resources could be used as the means to develop a dynamic entrepreneurial economy for the long term.

Continuing reform

Change is easier said than done but we have met many policy-makers who know that continuing reform requires shaking off the shackles of antiquated command and control systems and states of mind.

Ministers and opposition figures also passionately advocate democratic politics and an open economy. They know that this requires determination and exposure to best practice elsewhere. Government and Parliament are interested in the British experience and

are already engaged in promoting their development including a significant jointly-funded programme with the Westminster Foundation for Democracy.

The basic ingredients of a democratic market economy are clear from international experience. The menu includes a smaller but smarter state, an active civil society, a free and professional media system and more private businesses all buttressed by a rules-based culture and independent institutions.



Security and justice

Reform everywhere is painful and always finds resistance from those stuck in the old ways. People at all levels need persuading that the longer-term interests of society and of themselves can be enhanced by change.

Change takes a great deal of time and political credit when there is stability. It becomes much harder when ministers and society face security threats aimed at dividing and destabilising everything.

Fortunately, Kurdistan has established an enviable security record in the past 20 years. Over 100,000 people have been killed in the rest of Iraq since 2003, mainly at the hands of terrorists, compared to fewer than 200 terrorist murders in a few attacks in Kurdistan, with no successful ones since 2007.

The loss is still tragic and included the cream of its leadership who were martyred in two suicide bombs in 2004. Terrorists are trying constantly to murder and maim but they are prevented by good police and intelligence work strongly supported by the people.

Kurdistan is a tightly-bound society with strong borders within which unusual activity stands out

and this is one factor that enables the security forces, to prevent attacks most of the time. This great success in preventing extremist attacks is a daily struggle that cannot be taken for granted.

Crime is very low in Kurdistan, although we reiterate our support for faster progress in building prisons to tackle overcrowding. We are pleased that the UK has been assisting with the development of forensic rather than traditional confession-based policing and with the training of the judiciary which also needs to develop its independence from the executive.

The performance of the authorities in policing demonstrations needs to be examined dispassionately. Demonstrations hostile to the government are a new development and we know that there is an understanding that lessons need to be learned and new procedures devised to uphold the right to free assembly as well as that of citizens who wish to go about their own business unhindered. We also note that EU JUSTLEX is carrying out extensive training for members of the penitentiary, judicial, and law enforcement communities and encourage other such initiatives.

Women's rights

We have examined women's rights in detail in a previous report and maintained our practice of visiting a women's organisation, this time Asuda which is funded by Christian Aid and the Foreign Office amongst others. Kurdistan remains, to some extent, a "man's world" with lesser status for women in theory and practice, a high level of "honour" murders and attacks as well as female genital mutilation.

We warmly acknowledge the efforts of political leaders to overcome such traditions and practices and we

note the greater number of women in Parliament and public life. Tapping the potential of women for the development of society as a whole remains a key principle for us as it is for Kurdish leaders.

We are very pleased that the Kurdistan Parliament subsequently passed a Domestic Violence Law, which makes female genital mutilation a criminal offence and prohibits forced marriages and child labour.



External relations and Baghdad

Some years back, the big issue for Kurdistan was its fraught relations with its neighbour Turkey. We previously noted their many common interests, which could be built upon especially with improved treatment of Kurds in Turkey. The hard work of Kurdish and Turkish politicians in achieving a warmer detente also brings great benefits in trade and with other neighbours.

Developments in neighbouring countries have profound internal consequences and possibilities. We were made aware of concerns that some foreign countries seek to destabilise Kurdistan for their own interests.

However, the key issues within Iraq relate to the development of the government and parliament in Baghdad and the impending withdrawal of American troops. On this visit we heard a greater frustration with Baghdad as it struggles to find a way of governing with the involvement of all the political blocs. The delay last year in forming a government and the inability of the government and parliament to take effective action is viewed with dismay. Some politicians we met expressed severe doubt about the ability of some parties in Government in Baghdad to ever work effectively together.

For the first time we heard greater discussion about the possibilities of increased federalism with more decisions being taken in regions rather than at the centre. Continuing dissatisfaction was clear at the failure to address the hydrocarbons law, revenue sharing, census, the status of the peshmerga and disputed territories.

The continued presence of American troops, in some capacity, is publicly favoured by the Kurds and privately by various other Iraqi parties. There are clear arguments in favour of a continued American

presence to support the further development of the country and its security apparatus but this is a matter for Iraq to determine with the USA.

The process of building a federal, pluralist and democratic process in the wider Iraq should be better supported by the international community because its success could play a central role in bolstering democratisation of the Middle East in the wake of the Arab Spring. A federal system would allow for swifter government decision-making and real change on the ground for people.

Kurdish leaders have earned their spurs through playing what can be seen, given recent history, as a generous and positive role in rebuilding Iraq and deserve credit for having worked very hard to construct a coalition government in Baghdad, including hosting key negotiating meetings in Erbil.

The role of the Iraqi Kurds in the rest of the Iraq outside the autonomous region and who number 1-2 million people is often overlooked, but Iraq would be in a worse state without their contribution.

We are also impressed by the analysis of Meghan L. O'Sullivan, a professor at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, whom we met in Kurdistan, that the Kurds could adopt what she calls a "globalisation" strategy.

She explains that "this approach would acknowledge the waning importance of state borders around the globe and focus on building strong cultural and economic links -- and maybe ultimately institutions -- that span political boundaries. Working toward a "virtual" Kurdistan, the Kurds of a transformed Middle East might realize many of their aspirations without incurring the ire of the region's larger powers."



Deepening democracy



ABOVE: The delegation visited the site of the main demonstrations in Suleimani and spoke to key people on both sides, including Suleimani's chief of police Major General Salar Abdullah Aziz.

The rest of Iraq could learn much from Kurdistan. Its economy has soared and it has willingly sought to embrace democratic values since 1991 with free and fair elections that have been validated and recognised by the international community.

This may come as a surprise to some but Kurdistan is lucky to have a new and larger opposition in parliament. This brings fresh challenges but the democratic principle is that an opposition can clarify the choices for the people and keep government on its toes.

Kurdistan has already succeeded, against the grain of the Middle East, in building an embryonic form of a democracy but visionary leaders know they need to deepen its content and to address legitimate concerns.

Discontent came to the fore earlier this year with a 62 day demonstration against corruption and services in Suleimani, the second major city in Kurdistan. Eight

demonstrators and two police officers were tragically killed and hundreds of both injured in hotly disputed circumstances in Suleimani and nearby towns.

We visited Suleimani and the site of the main demonstration. We spoke to key people and heard radically conflicting accounts of what took place. We are concerned that genuine grievances ended up in demonstrations that led to death and injury on a large scale. We are not in a position to come to a definitive view on what took place. We understand that this is a new situation for all involved and we will continue to urge that all engage in non-violent discussion and political processes.

We would also advocate due process against perpetrators, be they members of the public or security forces, and further measures to uphold free assembly and constitutional rule including training for police and security forces in managing violent demonstrations while respecting the human rights of demonstrators.



Following these events in Suleimani, we were told that ministers halted funding of opposition parties as punishment for involvement in physical violence, extremism and an attempted putsch - as it was described to us.

We were told that there is a draft law on party funding waiting to be discussed in parliament, along with many other measures. Early debate and enactment would remove one of the current sources of tension between parties putting it beyond ministerial control and achieving a measure of transparency. Grievances on this and other issues will just fester without such even-handed treatment, especially since the wounds of the often brutal and bitter civil war of the mid-1990s are skin-deep.

We were encouraged to hear that a five-party dialogue had commenced and we hope that it succeeds in drawing a line under these recent troubles and leads to better co-operation and respect between government and opposition parties.

We also welcome the responsiveness, sometimes too slow, of the political system to internal criticisms. There has, for example, been a major controversy over the government's policy of leasing land to development projects which can receive the freehold once they are 30% on target. It has been known for developers to sell the land at this point, pocket the profit and not proceed any further amid accusations of corruption and favouritism.

The reaction to complaints has been to declare a two-month moratorium on such projects but an unintended consequence was to alarm the international investor community, a key ally and asset, but which favours stability in order to make long-term decisions.

The moratorium has come to an end. 118 agreements were terminated resulting in 633 acres of land being returned to the government. Investigations into a further 300 projects continue.

While the investigations seem to have worked, we believe that a more strategic rather than tactical approach could have tackled those who exploit such schemes and also maintained investor confidence.

Since we returned from Kurdistan, the President has ordered a re-organisation to make the process of land allocation more transparent. Sunlight is the best disinfectant.

Kurdistan's Parliament is less than 20 years old and more hard work is needed to make it a more efficient and credible crucible of public debate. We have had detailed discussions with most of the MPs and this time met all the party blocs one by one.

The MPs are keen to study how other parliaments work. As already mentioned, the Westminster Foundation for Democracy is sharing UK practices with them and there is keen interest in the concept of a Loyal Opposition, which is very novel in the wider region.

We discussed with American diplomats how the Congress Library is helping the Kurdistan Parliament. We have previously put visiting Kurds in touch with the House of Commons Library. Such a resource, offering expert and neutral advice, would do much to increase the capacity of the Kurdistan Parliament.

The Parliament emerged in different and difficult conditions and needs to adapt to the changing reality of Kurdistan. One possibility we discussed with MPs is some form of a permanent Procedures Committee that can review parliamentary practices to streamline its work. We did not discuss parliamentary processes in detail but were told several times that laws to address particular issues existed in draft. It was not clear why delay existed in passing them but this was clearly the case.

We were also surprised to learn that many decisions by ministers have to have parliamentary approval. Again we did not look at this issue in detail but it raised concerns that vital public sector developments will be delayed by bureaucratic processes. While involving parliament and reporting on key issues is good practice there may be a need to look more carefully at allowing government to make progress more quickly.

While government and opposition parties will from time to time have strained relationships we would suggest that the ruling parties could be more tolerant and respectful of the opposition and the opposition needs to learn how to be more thoughtful, responsible and engaged.



Smarter state and open economy

Not surprisingly, Kurdistan shares some typical aspects of governance elsewhere in the Middle East. Decades of war, genocide and isolation have resulted in centralised party machines.

When Saddam was forced out of Kurdistan in 1991 he took all administration with him in a scorched earth policy. The two main parties filled the vacuum, rebuilt services and allocated what revenues they could raise despite the impact of UN sanctions on Iraq and Saddam's own sanctions on Kurdistan. It was tough and they were dirt-poor before liberation in 2003.

Today the public sector employs two-thirds of the workforce, compared to 90% in the rest of Iraq, many on make-work schemes in the absence of a comprehensive social security safety net. One minister told us that just a quarter of his ministry's staff does any substantive work. The subsidised comfort zone of administrative city jobs is at the expense of the rural economy which was deliberately destroyed by Saddam.

We have talked to many people about corruption. It's not enough to say that this is widespread in the Middle East where there is the culture of "wasta" - people using their connections to bypass normal procedures.

Kurdistan's own efforts to embrace democratic values and a market economy have raised the bar - one can see anger over corruption as a problem of its success in raising expectations of better standards than elsewhere. The current political leadership, including many who have stayed the course for a long time, have begun a democratic dynamic. They have voluntarily opened themselves up to scrutiny and have wisely bought in external expertise, for example, from PriceWaterhouse Coopers and the National School of Government to undermine corruption and to professionalise their civil service.

We heard in detail about how they are seeking to institutionalise independent appointments and eliminate conflicts of interest. This could be pushed harder and faster to tackle the corruption and inefficiency which undermines Kurdistan's image and holds back growth and corrodes trust in the ability of the system to change peacefully and democratically. Moving from the political party being the same as the state is a key step that must be taken. Without independent appointments and institutions, government will ultimately not be able to command the support of the whole population.

This is increasingly recognised with, for instance, plans for a Judicial Institute to improve the recruitment of judges so they are no longer political appointees.

In the bad old days of Saddam, Kurdistan derived most of its income from taxing trucks from Turkey and Iran. Its own resources were mainly untapped or had been deliberately neglected or destroyed for years.

Kurdistan now relies on its 17% (sometimes less in practice) share of the federal budget from Baghdad, which mainly comes from oil and gas earnings. We do not underestimate the problems of bringing in a tax system - few people like paying taxes - but the absence of taxes or service charges denies a firm social contract between rulers and the ruled.

The advantage of a fair tax base is that it helps transform people from supplicants into equal citizens. It gives them a powerful incentive to ensure that every dinar of their hard-earned money goes further and fairly. It discourages waste, encourages individual responsibility and keeps the government on its toes. We suggest that a tax base is an essential condition of a sustainable and fair economy.



Encouraging capacity, talent and participation

Kurdistan's transition from a command economy to a dynamic market economy will be painful for some and requires convincing and democratic leadership. The capacity of local and national political leaders and non-governmental institutions could be nurtured through international exchanges. Independent unions could develop sharp elbows to ensure social justice is wired into this new start. The idealism of its youth, the majority of its people, needs to be tapped or they will be alienated.

Other countries make much better use of their Diasporas to encourage inward investment and cultural links. The Kurdish Diaspora in Sweden, Germany and the UK should be encouraged assiduously. One idea is that the government could appoint an independent

figure, with a secretariat, charged with encouraging this perhaps through convening an annual civic forum attached to Parliament to make the Diaspora leaders an important part of the renewal of their homeland.

The state will continue to play a major role in providing strategic necessities such as an educated workforce, infrastructure and welfare provision but it should be less dominant in the market place.

A larger and independent private sector could also create jobs and provide checks and balances against state power. Already it takes weeks to establish a business compared to ten months in Baghdad but Kurdistan can become an entrepreneurial hub with a thriving public sector allied to a government that provides the strategic framework.

Media rights and responsibilities

The other traditional check on an executive is a free media and transparency but both are underdeveloped and this exacerbates the usual tensions between them.

The media comprises a growing number of party and private/independent outlets. There is a meagre advertising market. Few journalists are trained and fair reporting is not culturally or legally ingrained. Many journalists and press officers cling to the habits of the old days when there was what someone described as "struggle or mountain journalism" - which refers to the propagandist efforts of freedom fighters who took refuge in the mountains from which they would launch attacks on Saddam's forces.

The best can shame the worst but needs a helping hand such as that offered by the independent Kurdistan Media Centre, run by a Dutch NGO, which provides professional training as does the IWPR.

Opposition leaders raised a recent publication on media rights from Human Rights Watch in which its Middle East Director claims that "The Kurdistan Regional Government promised a new era of freedom for Iraqi Kurds, but it seems no more respectful of Kurdish rights to free speech than the government that preceded it." This



ABOVE: The APPG members met the Editor of Hawlati Kamal Rauf (second from left).

is ludicrous and offensive hyperbole, given that previous governments carried out genocide against the Kurds.

However, it is clear that there is intimidation and confiscation of cameras. The editor of the privately-owned Hawlati newspaper told us of such regular summonses to far-away courts that he considers to be harassment. There



have also been physical attacks and murders, although we are not in a position to allocate responsibility.

We must also note that newspapers are accused of publishing defamatory articles with little or no regard for the facts.

We visited the privately owned Nalia TV station in Suleimani which was razed, after several threats, in an apparently organised military operation by about 40 armed men which nearly killed two cleaners and wounded a guard, according to the owner. The Nalia station, which was rebuilt and broadcasting again, aims to provide an independent source of information. We trust that perpetrators will be prosecuted.

It is argued that such attacks and murders are unauthorised rogue operations but the authorities need to crack down, prosecute and set an example.

There is insufficient government transparency for three major reasons resulting from the legacy that Kurdistan has inherited: a) a tradition of secrecy which was sustained through living under and resistance to dictatorship and which was deepened in Kurdistan's civil war in the

mid-90s, b) the absence of reliable information and c) mistrust of journalists by government officials who have been misquoted or feel they have been defamed and have become reluctant to deal with the media. The net result is that there is too little reliable information to sustain a national "conversation" without which conspiracy, vendetta and innuendo sometimes rises to the top.

In general, a culture of freedom of information needs to be developed alongside a professional and responsible media. Furthermore, we encourage the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) to invest in building a professional statistics service and information base of key social indices to bring it up to international standards and by using external expertise. We also believe that this illustrates the importance of a long overdue pan-Iraq census.

We had several discussions about the possibilities of adapting the UK's evolving regulatory regime for the media. Without some form of self-regulation, those who are able now resort immediately to the courts to achieve redress. Given some of the allegations that are published this is entirely understandable but again makes for a cumbersome and expensive process.

UK and international business and political support

Kurdistan is fast developing its infrastructure and services. The shape of the cities changes every six months or so. Iraqi Kurdistan is blossoming though not evenly. We visited Halabja in January to see the site of the atrocity in which 5,000 people were killed in chemical weapon attacks in 1988. It was clear that the area has been neglected compared to other cities and towns.

Electricity, water, education, health and housing surpass the rest of Iraq. Illiteracy has been more than halved in a decade and malaria eliminated. Major waste water treatment and recycling projects are still being planned. The banking sector is underdeveloped, insurance is almost non-existent and the postal system is in its infancy. People are impatient and a mostly young population cannot live on past glories alone.

Kurdistan is exploiting its oil and gas riches commendably and ahead of schedule through making good use of the private sector. European energy security will

gain from their ability to supply gas through the projected southern energy corridor for a century. This deserves UK recognition and support.

But Kurdish leaders don't wish to emulate autocratic rentier regimes in the wider region which use vast wealth to sideline and alienate subjects with little stake in their societies. Kurdistan's leaders wish to diversify the economy mainly through boosting agriculture and tourism for when they run out of hydrocarbons.

The remodelling of Kurdistan must be home-grown but requires external expertise, investment and trade. British companies should rush to Kurdistan to compete for contracts and we share the frustration of government and business leaders that there has been too little interest so far. Other European countries are further ahead than us which is shameful given the widespread respect for the UK's traditions, practices, services and goods.



Education

Kurdistan consciously seeks external expertise to help liberate its geological and human potential. They look to the UK whose degrees are deemed prestigious and where most government funded scholarships are so far based. This benefits our universities with good personal relations and trade cascading down the generations.

There is much innovative thinking about educational reform. For example, the old centralised higher education system allowed the ministers to micromanage universities to an incredible degree. The minister, himself a former critic of the government, was amazed to find that his job included agreeing individual students' transfers from one degree to another. He is pioneering a decentralisation of his powers to lift the dead hand of bureaucracy and liberate staff to do their jobs better.

In order to ensure that students benefit from wider perspectives there is now a programme of supported scholarships to foreign universities. The Higher Education Minister told us that to date over 80% of scholarship students are going to UK universities. Much has been done to support this process with partnerships developing between many UK institutions and Kurdish universities. There are huge opportunities here which will not only lead to short term benefits for all but ensure that strong relationships and friendships continue between Kurdistan and the UK.

The Rawabit programme brings together further education and vocational colleges across Iraq, including



ABOVE: Higher Education Minister Dlawer Ala'aldeen (centre) wants to give Kurdistan's universities more autonomy. Many KRG postgraduate scholarship students are going to UK universities.

Kurdistan, to share knowledge about best practice and has trained hundreds of Iraqi lecturers and deans. This is a very good model of co-operation for mutual benefit. Those trained within the UK system have gone on to order millions of pounds worth of equipment from the UK. We seek to maintain support for this project and to extend the principle to higher education.

In schools, the government rightly places great stress on literacy classes which have reduced illiteracy by more than half in ten years - from 34% to 15%. We commend this progress and hope that further reductions will occur.

Tourism

Our previous reports emphasised the potential for tourism in Kurdistan. It has fantastic advantages. Take the long and winding roads between their major cities and you will see snow-capped mountains, a large lake or two, waterfalls and arable plains that are begging to be harvested.

As well as these stunning vistas there are ancient cities, caves, archaeology, religious centres and historic battlefields. Upmarket hotels with decent food are

already available, as are many others and more are being constructed. The flight from London via Vienna is pricey for now but once tourism is better established direct and cheaper UK flights should follow.

Intrepid travellers are already making their way there and love it. National Geographic already puts it in the top 20 trips of 2011. We will encourage travel writers to explore Kurdistan in order to encourage tourism.



Kurdistan and Britain

It cannot be said enough or too loudly. Kurdistan is pro-British. English is their second language. Yet we sometimes don't even know where it is. Many just hear "Iraq" and turn away without realising that Kurdistan is open to business and cultural connections.

They appreciate us protecting them from Saddam from 1991 and in liberating Iraq in 2003. This could sustain a deep relationship with a largely secular Muslim democracy which seeks to improve women's rights and gives exemplary assistance to Christians from the rest of Iraq.

Britain used to worry that dealing with Kurdistan would offend Baghdad but has listened to our case for engaging with Kurdistan as a gateway to the rest of the country. We won a very successful official trade mission while the Consulate has been upgraded and is diligently encouraging connections. More visas are being processed locally rather than in third countries, which is very inconvenient and off-putting for those who still have to leave Kurdistan for this purpose. Ideally, all visas should be issued locally and direct flights would drive a two-way exchange of goods, services and ideas.

Conclusion

Kurdistan is not perfect - as many on all sides told us - and has to more urgently overcome some deep-seated defects but overall it is an inspiring success story in the making which deserves stronger support from the UK and the wider international community. We again salute the exemplary treatment of Christians fleeing from the rest of Iraq.

The 20th anniversary in 2012 of the establishment of the Kurdistan Parliament and the 25th anniversary of Anfal and Halabja as well as the 10th anniversary of the liberation both in 2013 could be milestones during which we will encourage a range of events to focus on the Kurdish experience and how the UK can play a much more positive role in respectfully nurturing the many positive changes that are taking place within Kurdistan.

June 2011

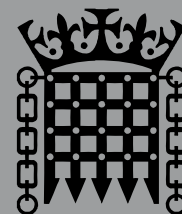
The report has been drafted and agreed between all members of the delegation: Meg Munn MP, Nadhim Zahawi MP, Robert Halfon MP, Gary Kent – APPG Administrator, and John McTernan – political adviser and journalist. They were accompanied at some meetings by Bayan Sami Abdul Rahman, the KRG's UK Representative.



Meetings between 31 May to 6 June

- US diplomats based in Erbil.
- A dinner with the British Consul, Chris Bowers, KRG Adviser Michael Howard, Saad Sadullah, Hiwa Osman, the heads of the University of Salahaddin and of the University of Kurdistan, and representatives of Erbil Chamber of Commerce.
- The Speaker of Parliament, Dr Kamal Kirkuki.
- Gorran List MPs.
- Kurdistan List MPs.
- Other opposition parties' MPs.
- Christian MPs.
- Turkmen MPs.
- Left and Islamist MPs.
- KRG Head of Foreign Relations, Minister Falah Mustafa Bakir.
- Masrour Barzani, Head of Intelligence and member of KDP Politburo.
- Acting Deputy Prime Minister/ Interior Minister Karim Sinjari.
- Natural Resources Minister, Ashti Hawrami.
- Culture Minister Kawa Mahmoud who is also acting minister for Anfal and for Justice.
- Higher Education Minister Dlawer Ala'Aldeen.
- Minister for Health Taher Hawrami.
- Trade union representatives.
- Nisar Talabany, adviser at the Council of Ministers, and Jhilwan Qazzaz to discuss good governance programme by PWC.
- Dr Rawaz Khoshnaw and Nasreen Rasheed, MPs in Baghdad.
- Prime Minister Barham Salih.
- Gorran Headquarters – Mohamad Tofiq, Gorran spokesman and head of media, Sarko Osman, media department and two Gorran MPs in the Baghdad Parliament, Salim T Kako and Shayan M. Tahir.
- Major General Salar Abdullah Aziz, chief of police in Suleimani.
- Governor of Suleimani Bahroz Qashany.
- Mala Bakhtiar, member of PUK Politburo.
- Shaswar A Qadir, Chairman of Nalia Group.
- Kamal Rauf, Editor of Hawlati newspaper.
- Bob Haddow, a British businessman.
- Nazand Begikhani at Suleimani University to see Bristol University gender studies centre.
- Independent Kurdistan Media Centre.
- Khasim Rahim Latif, Asuda women's organisation.
- American University in Iraq in Suleimani.
- Dinner with British Vice-Consul Bernadette Greene.
- Governor of Erbil Nawzad Hadi.
- Education Minister Safeen Dizayee.
- Minister for Municipalities and Tourism Samir Akrawi.
- Press briefing to which all main party and other outlets were invited.

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