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IRAQ: RESUMPTION OF KURDISTAN'S OIL EXPORTS

After more than two and a half years of suspension, oil exports from the Kurdistan Region to Turkey via the Fish Khabour–Ceyhan pipeline resumed on 27 September.

Negotiations between Erbil, Baghdad, and the oil companies—ongoing since March 2023—finally led to the signing of a tripartite agreement in Baghdad on 25 September. Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani personally announced this “historic” agreement, which allows the export of Kurdish oil under federal supervision. Kurdistan’s Prime Minister, Masrour Barzani, hailed the agreement as “historic,” opening the way for the smooth export of Kurdistan’s oil to global markets.

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio

stated that the tripartite agreement had been “facilitated” by the United States and that it “strengthens the economic partnership (...) between the United States and Iraq.” The United Kingdom and France also voiced their support for the deal, commending Baghdad and Erbil for resolving disputes through dialogue (Rudaw, 26.9).

The agreement, consisting of 20 articles, provides that the Kurdistan Ministry of Natural Resources will deliver 190,000 barrels per day to the Iraqi state oil company SOMO, which will handle export and marketing. An additional 50,000 barrels per day will be retained for domestic consumption, according to SOMO Director Ali Nizar. Kurdish oil destined for export will be transferred to the Fish Khabour station, located on the Kurdistan Region’s border with Turkey and Syria, connected to the Kirkuk–Ceyhan

pipeline, which terminates at Turkey’s Mediterranean port of Ceyhan.

The agreement de facto recognizes the revenue-sharing arrangements previously made between the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and the oil companies operating in the region. Under its terms, the international partner companies will receive \$16 per barrel for production and transportation costs—subject to revision upon the submission of a final audit report by Wood Mackenzie.

The tripartite agreement is initially valid for 30 days, with the possibility of extension until 31 December 2025. In the event of a dispute, the parties may refer the matter to the International Chamber of Commerce Arbitration Court in Paris. It was this same tribunal, seized by Iraq, that in March

2023 ruled against Turkey for violating an agreement signed under Saddam Hussein's regime governing oil exports via the Kirkuk–Ceyhan pipeline.

By allowing Kurdish oil to transit through the pipeline without Baghdad's approval, Turkey had breached that agreement, leading to the suspension of Kurdish oil exports via Turkey in March 2023.

According to the Kurdistan Oil Industry Association (APIKUR), which represents international oil companies operating in Kurdistan, the suspension of exports since March 2023 has caused losses of more than \$35 billion to all parties (AFP, 23.9).

The agreement also stipulates that these oil companies must meet with Kurdistan's authorities within 30 days of the resumption of exports "to work on establishing a mechanism to settle outstanding debts," estimated at \$1 billion.

One of the major operators, the Norwegian group DNO ASA, announced that it would not join the agreement, insisting that exports could resume only "under arrangements guaranteeing payment security."

The Kirkuk oil fields are not included in the agreement, as the province—largely Kurdish in population—has been under federal control since October 2017, with Baghdad directly marketing its production through the Basra pipeline.

A founding member of OPEC, Iraq exports an average of 3.4 million barrels per day, according to official

figures from the Iraqi News Agency (INA) citing SOMO. Oil exports provide 90% of Iraq's revenue.

In this atmosphere of compromise, Baghdad on 23 September approved the payment of July salaries for employees, civil servants, and retirees in Kurdistan, on the condition that Erbil transfer 120 billion Iraqi dinars (approximately €80 million) in non-oil revenues as part of the federal budget.

The Kurdistan Regional Government stated that the funds had been deposited with the Federal Ministry of Finance. No date has yet been set for the payment of August and September 2025 salaries.

Despite financial uncertainty and persistent difficulties, the Kurdistan government continues to advance its infrastructure projects. According to Construction Minister Dana Abdulkarim (Rudaw, 25.9), the current coalition government has built or rehabilitated 2,681 km of roads over five years, at a total cost of \$763 million.

Meanwhile, General Babekir Zebari, chief military adviser to the President of Kurdistan and former Chief of Staff of the Iraqi Army, stated that the unification and modernization of the Peshmerga forces should be completed by the end of 2026. The units originating from the Kurdish resistance forces will be merged into 11 brigades, of which 10 have already been unified. All will be placed under the command of the Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs and distributed between two geographic zones.

This process is being closely mon-

itored by the U.S.-led International Coalition against ISIS, which trains, equips, and advises the Peshmerga forces to turn them into a modern army capable of ensuring the security of Kurdistan and contributing to Iraq's overall stability. The Peshmerga regularly conduct joint operations with the Iraqi army against ISIS.

Iraq, now considering itself secure and capable of self-defense, has requested the withdrawal of coalition forces. These forces—including 2,500 American troops—have evacuated their bases in Arab Iraq and relocated to Kurdistan, which also serves as a base for operations in Syria.

In Kurdistan, despite a "summit meeting" on 27 September in Pirmam near Erbil between PDK President Massoud Barzani and PUK leader Bafel Talabani, negotiations to form a new coalition government have still not succeeded due to disagreement over the distribution of ministerial portfolios.

The PUK, despite its poor performance in the October 2024 parliamentary elections, is demanding a parity-based coalition, claiming half of the ministerial positions. The party appears to be banking on better results in the upcoming Iraqi federal parliamentary elections on 11 November, hoping to strengthen its position vis-à-vis the PDK for a broader negotiation over appointments in both Baghdad and the Kurdistan government.

For now, the two parties remain engaged in what the Kurdistan government describes as a "caretaker executive" handling current affairs.

IRAN: REINSTATEMENT OF UN SANCTIONS AFTER TEN YEARS

After the failure of negotiations led by the so-called E3 group—comprising Germany, France, and the United

Kingdom—to limit Iran's nuclear program, the United Nations Security Council, on the evening of September 27, reinstated the economic and military sanctions

that had been suspended since the signing of the 2015 nuclear agreement.

These sanctions range from an arms

embargo to economic measures severely restricting foreign investment in Iran and trade with the country. Iranian President Massoud Pezeshkian rejected on September 28 any negotiations likely to cause “new problems”:

“We have always declared our readiness for logical, fair, and just dialogue based on clear criteria, but we will never accept negotiations that bring us new problems and difficulties.”

Apparently, his logic is not that of the Western powers, for after several unsuccessful meetings, the European trio concluded that Tehran had made no “concrete gestures” to meet its three conditions: resumption of negotiations with the United States, access for the IAEA to the sensitive nuclear sites of Fordow, Natanz, and Isfahan, and a process to secure the stock of enriched uranium.

The Iranian president claimed that the United States had demanded that Iran hand over “all its enriched uranium” in exchange for a three-month extension of the suspension of sanctions.

“They want us to give them all our enriched uranium,” he declared on state television, “and in a few months they will have a new demand.”

Europeans and Americans immediately stated that the reinstatement of sanctions did not mark the end of diplomacy. U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio called on Tehran to accept direct talks “in good faith,” while urging all states to “immediately” apply the sanctions to “put pressure on Iran.”

The French, British, and German foreign ministers, in a joint communiqué, said they continued to seek “a new diplomatic solution ensuring that Iran never acquires nuclear weapons” (*Le Figaro*, September 28).

Russia and China had proposed on September 26 that the Security Council extend the suspension of sanctions for six months to give diplomacy a greater chance—without success. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov accused the West of “sabotaging diplomacy,” asserting that, for Moscow, the reinstatement of sanctions is “legally invalid” and that the UN decision cannot be implemented. As Russia and China are Iran’s main trading partners, the eventual effectiveness of the sanctions will largely depend on their policy toward Tehran.

Following the announcement of sanctions, the Iranian currency, the rial, plummeted to the lowest level in its history, trading at 1.1 million rials per U.S. dollar, compared to about 900,000 rials at the beginning of August. The desperate population also fears that the Iranian leadership’s insistence on pursuing its nuclear program may lead to another devastating war between Israel and the United States—a fear heightened by Israel’s claim (*Le Monde*, September 12) that Iran’s nuclear program has not been destroyed, clearly implying that it will “sooner or later finish the job.”

Greatly weakened, the regime has increasingly resorted to massive repression to stifle all forms of opposition and dissent in order to ensure its survival. According to a report published on September 23 by the NGO Iran Human Rights (IHR), at least 1,000 people sentenced to death have been executed since the beginning of 2025. This figure—the highest since 2008—already surpasses the record 975 executions recorded in 2024.

By mid-September, marking the third anniversary of the death of the young student Jina Mahsa Amini, at least 64 executions had been recorded in one week—an average of nine per day—intended to terrorize the population (*Libération*, September 23).

On September 2, Mohammad Babaei, a 44-year-old Kurd from the village of Dezli in Sarvabad, was hanged in Sanandaj Central Prison on charges related to a murder case. Five days later, on September 7, Azad Moradi, a Kurd from Baneh, was executed in the same prison. His death occurred on a day when six other prisoners were executed across Iran.

The most politically charged case occurred on September 17, when authorities executed Babak Shahbazi in Ghezel Hesar Prison in Karaj. A Kurdish political prisoner accused of spying for Israel, his case was marred by torture, forced confessions, and denial of a final family visit. His execution once again demonstrated that the death penalty in Iran goes far beyond criminal justice and serves as a weapon against political dissent.

That same week, three other Kurdish men were executed in Ilam and Karaj, in a grim wave during which at least twenty people were hanged nationwide in two weeks. On September 21, three Kurdish prisoners—Saeed Ghobadi, Kazem Jamashourani, and Hadi Nowruzi—were executed in Dizelabad Prison in Kermanshah. A few hours earlier, another Kurdish prisoner from Sarpol-e Zahab, Saeed Qubadi, had also been hanged there.

The third anniversary of Jina Amini’s death, on September 16, 2025, served as a catalyst for a broad and severe preventive crackdown across Iran’s Kurdish regions (*Rojhelat*). The regime’s objective was clearly to neutralize any potential mobilization of civil society associated with the “Woman, Life, Freedom” movement.

In villages, towns, and cities, security forces carried out raids, arrested civilians without due process, and targeted both children and adults. By mid-September, civil activist Hamid Chapati had been

transferred to Urmia Prison, while in Kamyaran, two Kurdish children were arrested by intelligence forces. On September 12, a Revolutionary Court in Urmia sentenced Nasser Bekrzadeh, aged 25, to death and Shahin Vasaf to ten years in prison on espionage charges, despite previous rulings overturning their initial death sentences.

In Kamyaran, four children and one adult were arrested in mid-September, continuing the alarming pattern of targeting minors. On September 16, twenty-two human rights groups and prominent public figures issued an appeal demanding urgent medical care for Zeynab Jalalian, a long-imprisoned Kurdish activist.

That same day, guards at the Saqqez gold mine opened fire on villagers protesting environmental damage, killing a young farmer and injuring four others. Despite threats and heavy security presence, shopkeepers in Saqqez and Diwandarah went on strike the following day to mark the anniversary of Jina Amini's death—a ges-

ture of defiance against the state's attempts to silence public remembrance.

In Sanandaj, security forces interrogated Nahiyeh Rahimi, the 71-year-old mother of slain protester Ramin Fatehi, threatening her for visiting her son's grave. On September 18, two 16-year-old boys from Oshnavieh (Shinno)—Diyar Gargol and Alan Tabnak—were arrested during night raids, and their fate remains unknown. The next day, security forces arrested another teenager, Zanyar Shadi-Khah, as well as a young man, Mohsen Dahar. That same day in Sanandaj and Diwandarah, two Kurdish civilians, Zana Mansouri and Mohammad Salehi, were arrested, again with no disclosure of their whereabouts.

On September 23, intelligence service forces raided the village of Selin in Sarvabad with eighteen vehicles, searching homes, destroying property, and arresting Mostafa Advaei, a retired teacher, and his 23-year-old nephew Kioumars Advaei. As with many others arrested this

month, their fate remains unknown.

The kolbars, Kurdish cross-border porters, continued to face deadly violence in September. On September 25, Iranian border guards in Baneh shot dead Qasem Azizi, a 47-year-old father of two, after reportedly telling them they were free to go before opening fire. His body was transferred to Salah al-Din Ayoubi Hospital in the city. On September 16, Mohammad Abdi, 37, was seriously wounded by gunfire in the Maleh Khor border area of Sarvabad, suffering leg and back injuries and requiring transfer to Sanandaj (Senna) for treatment (*Hengaw*, September 16, 2025). On September 23, three kolbars were injured in Nowsud; among them, Karwan Almasi from Salas Babajani sustained a serious hand injury, while the names of the other two were not disclosed (*Hengaw*, September 23, 2025).

Human rights groups report that since January, dozens of Kurdish kolbars have been killed or wounded, often shot without warning.

TURKEY:

THE MAIN OPPOSITION PARTY (CHP) STRUGGLES FOR ITS POLITICAL SURVIVAL

Since the municipal elections of March 2024, in which—with the support of the pro-Kurdish DEM Party—it won decisive victories in the country's major metropolitan areas such as Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, and Adana, the Republican People's Party (CHP) has been squarely in the government's crosshairs. The authorities are using every judicial, political, and media tool at their disposal to weaken, divide, and discredit the country's oldest party, founded a century ago by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk himself.

The CHP, which remained the sole legal party until 1946 and which, when it held a monopoly on power, harshly suppressed Kurdish, com-

munist, and Islamist opposition movements, now finds itself—by a cruel twist of history—the target of the Islamic regime's own maneuvers and intrigues aimed at preventing any political alternation.

After jailing, last March, the popular mayor of Istanbul Ekrem İmamoğlu on often dubious charges and before any formal trial, the government has systematically gone after CHP-run municipalities, one after another, arresting their elected officials on allegations of corruption, embezzlement of public funds, and manipulation of public tenders, among other charges.

The latest victim of these summary judicial practices is the municipality

of Bayrampaşa, a district of Istanbul whose mayor and dozens of local officials were arrested on September 14 (*Le Monde*, Sept. 15).

The government-controlled judiciary has now moved to the next stage: the decapitation of the CHP's leadership. On September 13, a court revoked the CHP's Istanbul leadership for alleged irregularities during its 2023 congress. According to the ruling, cited by AFP, the court annulled the results of the provincial congress, disqualifying Istanbul CHP leader Özgür Çelik along with the party's 195 executive and delegate members.

The court stated that its decision entailed "the provisional removal of the provincial chair, the provin-

cial executive committee, and the disciplinary committee elected during this congress,” and the appointment of an interim committee deemed appropriate by the court.

“The court’s decision is politically and legally null and void,” responded CHP President Özgür Özel. “We do not recognize it. Let everyone know—we will not surrender,” he declared, pledging to appeal the ruling.

However, as the judicial noose tightened around his party and its leadership—now itself threatened with dismissal—despite massive public demonstrations of support, the CHP president convened an extraordinary party congress for September 21.

On September 5, roughly one thousand party delegates submitted an official request to the electoral authorities to hold the new congress in accordance with the rules. Time was pressing, as the party leadership was already facing judicial proceedings over “irregularities” allegedly committed during the November 2023 regular congress that had elected Özel as party leader.

Following the announcement of this extraordinary congress, the Ankara court, which had been expected during its September 15 session to rule on the possible dismissal of the CHP leadership, ultimately postponed its decision to October 24.

Meeting in Ankara on September 21, the extraordinary congress re-elected, by near unanimity, the outgoing president Özgür Özel and renewed his executive team.

For now, the main opposition party, which came first at the polls in March 2023, is managing to survive.

But for how long, in a country where the judiciary has become an instrument of persecution serving

those in power, where Özgür Özel faces a dozen court cases, and where, despite being backed by more than 15 million citizens as a candidate in the next presidential election, the mayor of Istanbul remains imprisoned without trial? Where former MP and presidential candidate Selahattin Demirtaş has spent ten years behind bars despite two European Court of Human Rights rulings demanding his release?

The Turkish public—accustomed for over a decade to the dismissal of elected Kurdish mayors on alleged links to “a terrorist organization” and their replacement by government-appointed administrators—now sees the same practice extending to Turkish municipalities governed by the main opposition party, threatening to decapitate it as well.

Human rights defenders are warning of a process of “deconstitution-alization”—a situation in which the constitution formally remains in force but no longer applies to certain segments of society, primarily Kurds and now opposition parties.

If this trend continues, Turkey would move from an elected autocracy toward a form of dictatorship.

Another major event of the month was the Trump–Erdoğan meeting, held briefly on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York and later, more formally, at the White House on September 25.

President Donald Trump displayed deference and courtesy toward “his friend Erdoğan.” The meeting, followed by a working lunch, focused on U.S.–Turkish relations, the situation in Syria, and the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

Contentious issues such as Turkey’s exclusion from the F-35 program and the trial against the state-owned Halkbank, prosecuted in a

New York court for massive violations of U.S. sanctions against Iran, were discussed but produced no concrete results.

Although the sale of F-16 fighter jets had been approved in principle under the Biden administration, existing U.S. sanctions still prevent Turkey from acquiring aircraft engines essential for its future fighter jet “Kaan” or for its planned giant aircraft carrier—larger than France’s *Charles de Gaulle*—whose construction was announced with great fanfare on September 2 (*Le Figaro*, Sept. 2).

Aside from promises of a forthcoming ceasefire in Gaza and a few diplomatic courtesies, the Turkish president appeared to return empty-handed from this White House visit—the first since Biden’s tenure. Trump even publicly teased his guest about “rigged elections,” quipping that Erdoğan “*knows more about them than anyone else!*”

For the first time, the U.S. president also publicly called on Turkey to stop buying Russian oil (*Le Monde*, Sept. 26).

Throughout September, the “Parliamentary Commission for Democracy and Brotherhood” continued its hearings. On September 24, its chair, Numan Kurtulmuş, who also serves as Speaker of Parliament, publicly confirmed that the question of hearing Abdullah Öcalan had been excluded from the commission’s agenda.

However, on September 15, for the first time in six years, the PKK founder was allowed to meet his lawyers in Imrali Prison.

According to him, “the process of peace and democratic society has reached the stage of a legal solution” (AFP, Sept. 17).

On September 30, in a message relayed by the DEM Party, he ap-

peared to accuse the government of attempting to create “the illusion” of a military defeat, speaking only of disarmament while ignoring the need for a political solution.

On September 1, presidential legal adviser Mehmet Uçum stated that Turkey would have to amend its constitution to advance peace with the PKK, while ruling out any special status for the Kurds.

In his words, “*The state of the Kurdish people is the Republic of Turkey. Turkey is the homeland of the Kurdish people,*” a demagogic claim in a country that does not even allow the Kurdish language to be taught in public schools.

It should also be noted that in September, Turkey experienced a wave of new scandals, including the nationwide #MeToo move-

ment, the arrest of executives of the Can Holding conglomerate, and the state takeover of their companies and television channels, which reportedly fell out of favor for reasons not yet made public.

These scandals dominate the media, diverting attention from the deep economic and social crisis gripping the country.

SYRIA: DIPLOMATIC SUCCESSES BUT PERSISTENT INTERNAL TENSIONS

The process of legitimizing the new Syrian regime achieved another diplomatic success with the speech delivered at the UN General Assembly by its interim president, Ahmed al-Charaa, on September 24.

“Syria is reclaiming its rightful place among the nations of the world,”

he declared in his address — the first by a Syrian head of state at the United Nations since 1961. The repentant jihadist thus became the first leader of a sanctioned country to speak at the UN rostrum.

During his stay, he met with numerous heads of state, including President Macron, President Erdoğan, and several leaders of Arab and Muslim countries. He even attended the Concordia Summit, a global affairs forum, where he met General David Petraeus, the former U.S. commander in Iraq who, in 2005, had ordered the arrest and imprisonment of the then-zealous jihadist.

“Once we fought with weapons; now we fight with words,”

quipped al-Charaa.

For his part, the American general praised “his journey from insurgent leader to head of state — one of

the most spectacular political transformations in recent Middle Eastern history” (*Le Monde*, September 25).

According to the interim Syrian president, “Syria, once an exporter of crises, now has a historic opportunity to bring stability, peace, and prosperity to Syria and to the entire region.” He pledged a policy of “zero problems with neighbors.”

Thus, Syria and Israel, technically still at war, are set to conclude “several security agreements by the end of the year,” a source from the Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs told AFP on September 18.

“There has been progress in the negotiations with Israel. There will be several agreements before the end of the year, primarily military and security accords,”

the source specified (*Le Figaro*, September 18). Internal Tensions

Domestically, serious tensions persist with the Alawites, Druze, and Kurds.

On September 16, Damascus adopted, with U.S. and Jordanian backing (but without Israeli support), a plan to “pacify” southern Syria, a Druze-populated region that saw intercommunal violence over the summer claiming more than 2,000 lives. For the regime,

this plan serves as a means of regaining control over the restive area.

Negotiations with the Kurds regarding the integration of their forces into the Syrian army have made little progress. Damascus, aiming to establish a centralized Islamist regime, demands that Kurdish fighters join individually, while the Kurds — whose forces are disciplined, experienced, and relatively well-equipped — insist on being recognized as a distinct component of the Syrian army rather than absorbed into a patchwork of militias with shifting loyalties.

The Kurds continue to advocate a decentralized system, allowing non-Arab or non-Muslim communities such as Alawites, Druze, Christians, and Kurds to manage their own affairs locally within Syria’s territorial unity.

To appeal to potential personal ambitions, Damascus has reportedly offered General Mazloum Abdi, commander-in-chief of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), or another SDF general, the post of Minister of Defense or Chief of Staff of the Syrian army, according to Kurdish chief negotiator Ilham Ahmed (*Kurdistan24*, September 28).

While not rejecting the idea outright,

Kurdish leaders want their forces to be recognized as an autonomous army corps, similar to the Kurdish Peshmerga forces in Iraq.

However, the Syrian regime still fails to exert effective control over the disparate militias nominally integrated into its army — groups that continue their practices of extortion, kidnappings, and looting, and that at times carry out deadly attacks on Kurds.

According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), on September 20, militias claiming affiliation with the Syrian army bombarded the village of Umm Tina in Aleppo province, killing seven civilians, including five women and two children.

The district of Deir Hafer, where the village is located, lies along the line separating Syrian government forces and the SDF, and has seen periodic clashes between the two sides. The SOHR described this as the deadliest incident in months in the region (AFP, September 20).

The SOHR and local media also reported a deadly ISIS ambush on September 24 in the rural area of Deir ez-Zor. An improvised explosive device (IED) followed by an RPG attack killed five SDF fighters and wounded another member of the convoy (*welattv.net*). This brings the total number of ISIS attacks against the SDF to around 185 since the beginning of 2025. The SDF stressed that “the war against ISIS is not over” and called for continued U.S.-led support to secure thousands of detained militants and prevent escapes.

Sporadic skirmishes have continued between the SDF and pro-Turkish Syrian militias along frontlines. On September 10, the

Suleiman Shah Brigade—a Turkmen formation backed by Turkey and now nominally integrated into the Syrian army’s 62nd Division—exchanged artillery fire with the SDF in Maskanah (rural Aleppo), though no casualties were reported.

Around the same period, SDF units and pro-regime rebel factions clashed near bridges east of the Euphrates River. On September 20, heavy shelling around Deir Hafer (Aleppo province) by regime-affiliated forces injured at least three civilians, according to the SOHR. A few days later, SDF units reported foiling an attempt by “dissident elements” of the Syrian army to seize control of the Sheikh Maqsoud district in Aleppo.

Meanwhile, Turkish military movements further heightened tensions. According to the SOHR, on September 27, highways between Aleppo and Raqqa were closed by Turkish-backed militias, coinciding with the arrival of Turkish military convoys at northern airbases.

Turkish officials continued issuing warnings: in mid-September, the Turkish Ministry of Defense accused the SDF of failing to implement the March integration agreement and of undermining “Syria’s unity,” while Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan openly threatened Kurdish forces.

In Afrin, occupied by Turkish forces and allied militias, Kurdish civilians reported systematic abuses. A Syrian documentation center stated that at least 14 Kurds were kidnapped in early September in Afrin and other rebel areas—part of a wider wave of about 190 arbitrary arrests and kidnappings of Kurds since January by armed groups. Witnesses described house

raids, looting, and detentions.

Furthermore, new decrees targeted Kurdish property rights. On September 18, the Turkish-appointed Afrin administration issued Circular No. 6, imposing onerous conditions on displaced Kurds seeking to reclaim their land or homes. The Kurdish National Council of Syria (ENKS) condemned the decree as “unjust,” saying it effectively prevents rightful owners from returning. The regulation forces applicants to navigate complex bureaucracy, pay high fees, and prove ownership, without penalizing current occupants. ENKS activists noted that such legal obstacles are unique to Afrin and violate citizens’ rights.

Worsening the situation, on September 4, the Syrian Ministry of Justice transferred all remaining Kurdish judges from Afrin courts, thereby eliminating any local legal recourse. Human rights groups warn that these policies aim to cement demographic changes and prevent the return of Kurds.

In September, France repatriated 13 of its nationals from the Kurdish-run Al-Hol refugee camp — three women and ten children. Another 47 French detainees were transferred on September 19 to Iraq, where they will be tried for crimes committed on Iraqi soil (*Le Monde*, September 19).

It was also announced that Syria will hold an indirect election on October 5 to form a “transitional parliament” of 210 members, one-third of whom will be appointed directly by interim president al-Charaa. The two Kurdish-controlled provinces and the Druze-majority province of As-Suwayda are excluded from this sham electoral process.

PARIS: AN ALLEY OF THE PESHMERGAS

On September 5, Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo inaugurated the Allée des Peshmergas in the Parc André-Citroën of the city's 15th arrondissement, in the presence of Massoud Barzani, former president of Kurdistan and a historic figure of the Kurdish resistance.

Numerous French personalities attended the inauguration, including several deputy mayors of Paris, former Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner, philosopher Bernard-Henri Lévy, and the mayors of the 15th and 10th arrondissements.

More than 300 former Peshmergas from various European countries, representatives of the Kurdish civil society, and members of the Kurdish Institute took part in this highly emotional ceremony — described as *historic* by President Barzani. In a brief address, he expressed his gratitude to the City of Paris for this gesture of solidarity and recognition. He also thanked the Kurdish Institute for its role in

developing Franco-Kurdish relations and defending the Kurdish cause, and France for its steadfast support of the Kurdish people despite political changes over the years.

He recalled that during the joint struggle against ISIS, 12,000 Peshmergas were killed or wounded, and that ISIS was defeated thanks to the sacrifices of the Peshmergas and Syrian Kurdish fighters, supported by the international coalition in which France, alongside the United States, played a leading role.

“To give this walkway, located on the banks of the Seine near the Eiffel Tower, the name of the Peshmergas is to pay tribute to all that the Kurdish people and their Peshmergas have done for us — for our freedom, for peace,”

declared Anne Hidalgo in her inauguration speech (*see our website*).

A unit of Peshmergas, composed of both men and women in uniform, was honored by the Mayor of Paris.

For his part, Philippe Goujon, mayor of the 15th arrondissement, praised the Peshmergas as “a force of resistance of the Kurdish people and a symbol of their enduring struggle for dignity, freedom, and the right to live in peace.”

The Kurdish presence has now become a visible part of Parisian geography. After the Yilmaz Güney Garden and the Jina Mahsa Amini Park in the 10th arrondissement, this new dedication in the 15th arrondissement further cements that presence.

Recently, a Hevrin Khalaf Square—named after the Kurdish politician and Future Party leader assassinated by Turkish-backed Islamist militias—was also inaugurated in Lyon.