

Report of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on the Kurdistan Region in Iraq on its fact-finding mission to Erbil, Duhok and Domiz, November 2013.

Five years: the continuing story of success and transition in the Kurdistan Region.

Introduction

When we first started sending parliamentary delegations to the Kurdistan Region in Iraq in February 2008, it was barely on the mental map for most people. That has changed markedly thanks to the efforts of many commercial, cultural and political groups. We are also pleased that successive British Governments have abandoned an unwarranted wariness towards the Region in favour of positive engagement.

At the beginning, we would have been able to count the various Kurdish-British partnerships on the fingers of two hands but it is now very difficult to list the connections. This is a sign of success. The greatest credit for this change goes to the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and its energetic and effective Representation in the UK, headed by their eloquent High Representative, Ms Bayan Sami Abdul Rahman with whom we have worked very closely on a non-partisan basis for all this time.

We have now organised nine delegations and believe that our focus on a small number of practical measures has helped lift the quality of the British-Kurdish relationship.

What we have done so far

We persuaded the then Labour Government in 2010 to send an official trade mission to the Region. This took place later that year and has encouraged previously sceptical or unaware British companies to begin exploring opportunities. We believe that there are now 120 registered British companies working in the Region and that many more could be tempted to begin operating there, possibly in partnership with Turkish companies.

We urged the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition Government to maintain the consulate in Erbil and are pleased that it was saved and upgraded. We look forward to the day when its offices are nearer the centre of Erbil. We pay tribute to successive Consuls-General in their work to represent the UK and to construct increased and improved links.

It is now easier for Kurds to secure visas in Erbil itself rather than having to trek to Amman in person for potentially long and expensive periods. British border security is being maintained but at less cost to mutually profitable business and other opportunities which had been stymied by this old procedure. We still hear of visas being refused on what appear to be inconsistent grounds and will seek a meeting with the Home Office to discuss concerns that the visa regime needlessly obstructs commercial and cultural connections.

We are also aware of the efforts being made to reintegrate returnees from many countries, including the UK, into society in Kurdistan through programmes such as those run by the

European Technology and Training Centre in Erbil, of whose board Gary Kent is a member and whose reintegration programmes are funded by the FCO.

We have urged the UK Aviation Minister and his officials to work with the KRG to make sure that its security procedures at Erbil are sufficiently robust to allow certification of a direct route from the UK which can be taken up by a commercial carrier. We are cautiously optimistic that this can be done in the relatively near future.

When we were given a tour of the yet to be completed Erbil International Airport in 2009 and drove down its runway - the fifth longest in the world - one of our number, Derek Wyatt MP, suggested we ask the popular television programme, Top Gear to visit and race on the runway. We asked them to do so and they broadcast the programme in December 2010 with Jeremy Clarkson and Richard Hammond concluding that Kurdistan was safe and beautiful. Kurdistan is becoming better known to more and more people - including tourists and has received rave reviews in major British newspapers and by tourist trade journals. The Kurdistan Region was featured by National Geographic magazine as one of the top 20 places to visit in 2011. We know that it is improving every year.

Tourism and Iraq do not figure for most people but the Kurdistan Region has a plethora of ancient sites, battlefields, natural beauty. The city of Duhok, which should have its own airport in less than three years time, is a particularly colourful city and is often seen as the coming capital of tourism in Kurdistan. All this could attract niche markets - adventure-seekers, hikers, archaeologists, history buffs - as well as a wider market but much work needs to go into developing the tourist architecture that will enable this.

We recognise the psychological and practical boost given by tourism as well as by parliamentary and other delegations and encourage others to follow suit.

Genocide

The APPG has played a major role in the last 18 months in supporting an international campaign by the KRG to win support for the formal and legal recognition of what they and we see as a genocide against the Kurds of Iraq. The long-running genocide, which culminated in chemical weapons attacks against Kurdish civilians - most notoriously at Halabja in March 1988 - affects all Iraqi Kurds, directly or indirectly.

We strongly believe that this should be treated as the Holocaust and other genocides are by the UK and by the international community. We secured an historic debate in the Commons on 28 February 2013 and won the formal and unanimous support of the Commons for a formal recognition of the genocide.

We differed with the Government, which prefers to wait for a judicial determination of this. We are very pleased, however, that the moral and political power of the arguments proposed by APPG members and supporters in this debate clearly moved the then Middle East Minister, Alistair Burt and his shadow, Ian Lucas. They agreed to work with the KRG to work out how they can go further. We maintain that this should include formal government

recognition but we are encouraged that the British Government will more formally mark the annual Anfal Day each 14 April.

President Barzani told us that he valued our efforts and that the issue of the genocide needs to be kept alive. This is not an arcane or academic matter. The phrase "never again" is often used in such circumstances. Keeping the memories alive is an essential prerequisite of making sure that there is never any repetition either against the Kurds or anyone else. It remains one of our most important priorities.

Security

The experience of the genocide underpins the emphasis placed on security today in Kurdistan. Its hard-fought for internal security is also an essential basis for the Kurdish success story and its potential as an active part of the international community.

On our first visit we paid our respects at the monument in Erbil to the 98 people who were murdered in two simultaneous Al Qaeda suicide bombs on 1 February 2004. This was the biggest loss of life in one day and there have been very few other terrorist incidents.

We were all deeply struck in 2008 by the powerful epitaph on the statue in Sami Abdul Rahman Park in Erbil which reads "Freedom is not free." The Kurds know this all too well from their history. But in the five years that we have sent delegations there has been just one further attack. This occurred on 29 September 2013.

The attack was carefully planned by Al Qaeda operatives for many weeks and was directed against the Erbil headquarters of the KRG's Security Service, the Asayish. The suicide-murderers took advantage of the pressures on checkpoints during the busier election period to smuggle two bomb-laden cars from Syria via Mosul to Erbil. It illustrates how the Syrian crisis is affecting neighbouring countries.

They were foiled. However, seven security personnel gave their lives in the defence of the Kurdish people. One unarmed officer grabbed a suicide bomber and hugged him to protect those around him and made the ultimate sacrifice. We visited the site to pay our respects. We salute the memory of the officers who died and those who were injured.

We were deeply honoured to be invited to take part in the formal Remembrance Day Service with British and other diplomatic figures as well as many Kurdish leaders.

Security is a constant and daily struggle against dark forces. Bombs are very rare in Kurdistan but a weekly occurrence in Beirut and much more frequent in the rest of Iraq. The Interior Minister Karim Sinjari told us that: "Al Qaeda tried and will try again as they are doing everywhere in the world." We hope that they never succeed. A senior official asked that we recommend that the British Government enters into discussions with the KRG about the supply of non-lethal equipment that can make this task more efficient and effective.

Economy

Economic confidence, growth and prosperity for all flow from security. The Region was neglected and repressed under Saddam who withdrew his forces - everything and everyone that could be moved - in 1991. He believed that the Kurds would beg him to return and applied the UN sanctions regime against Iraq as a whole in a punitive manner on the Region. The Kurds had meagre revenues and poverty was widespread. Yet they voluntarily embarked on a democratic path and used the time to prepare for liberation, which took place in 2003, although they also endured a bitter civil war of their own. The impact of this is still a factor in their politics.

When we organised the first delegation in 2008 there was much talk about vast energy resources. The huge change since then has been the construction of an energy industry. The Kurdistan Region is now known world-wide for its plentiful energy reserves and is seen as the last energy frontier. We were also told that minerals are plentiful and their exploitation is the next stage of economic development.

This new energy sector has made it essential for many countries to formulate a policy towards the KRG and for businesses of all sizes to discuss the possibilities of trade and investment there. It need not be a one way traffic and we are very pleased that the UKTI recently organised a seminar at which Kurdish business interests were invited to focus on investment in the UK itself.

But the Region's most important natural resource is the capacity of its young population and the sophistication of many of its political and civic leaders some of whom we met on our latest fact-finding trip.

The Region remains in transition with some very weighty and painful decisions to take but is able to do so on a very substantially improved base. MPs and others who have regularly visited the Region have witnessed a massive transformation in the Region.

Public services

Living standards for all have improved as have public services. The KRG is rightly proud of its achievement through judicious use of the private sector in providing nearly continuous electricity supplies to its people and, indeed, exporting electricity to neighbouring provinces in the rest of Iraq.

KRG leaders are the first to acknowledge that public services need to be improved and have a wish list of \$30 billion in infrastructure requirements over the next five years. For example, Erbil has no sewage system, just septic tanks, and the electricity distribution systems needs upgrading.

The Governor of Erbil, Nawzad Hadi, told us that the number of cars in Erbil had soared from 34,000 to 500,000 in just ten years thanks to increasing prosperity. The roads are congested, the traffic system is not fit for purpose and public transport is scant. Longer-term, a tram system in Erbil and rail links between the three main cities of the Region might be possible but his immediate focus is on train-buses in Erbil province.

Education has been a major priority and three-shift schools have become two-shift schools - divided between morning and afternoons - with the building of hundreds of new schools. But their aim is that all schools are one shift and have smaller class sizes.

There is a mix of public and private health provision which is superior to the rest of Iraq, if somewhat hit-and-miss, and attracts significant numbers of Arab Iraqis to the Region. We visited the Rizgari hospital in 2012 and found that, while relatively new, it was less than it should be. We aim to revisit on our next trip but on the most recent mission visited the West Erbil Emergency Hospital. The head of the Hospital, Hazhen Talat - himself a graduate of Nottingham University - kindly broke his holiday to escort us round the hospital which was a joint project of the US Army and the Governorate of Erbil. It was most impressive and represents the future of health provision in the Region.

There is awareness of the hidden needs of disabled people - few people in wheelchairs are seen and access to buildings for disabled people is poor - and that there is a wide incidence of mental illness caused by the traumas of the past decades. We were told that the Region is entitled to 17% of Iraq's health budget but doesn't receive this and is often sent medicines near expiry.

Relations with Baghdad and Ankara

The attitude of the federal government in Baghdad on health illustrates the wider problem of Baghdad's relations with the Region. The cat and mouse game between Erbil and Baghdad is as old as Iraq itself and deeply engrained.

We agree with Kurdish leaders that Baghdad should nurture and celebrate the social and economic achievements of the Region and see it as the future for the whole country. We heard from many who are dismayed that some in Baghdad seem to take every opportunity to deride and obstruct the Region.

This is most obvious issue between autonomous region and the federal government is the oil and gas sector, which accounts for the vast majority of the revenues of Iraq as a whole. As well as creating a sector that is fit for purpose the KRG has worked very hard to build new relations with their neighbour, Turkey, which has been cultivated for a decade behind the scenes and is now centre-stage. The fruit of this statesmanship was seen, after we returned, in the historic visit of the Kurdistan Region President Barzani to the Kurdish city of Diyarbakir in eastern Turkey.

After our visit, a major oil and gas conference took place in Erbil and was attended by Nadhim Zahawi MP and Gary Kent. It seems possible that the autonomous region and the federal government can negotiate a revenue sharing law that accompanies the new pipelines between the Kurdistan Region and Turkey.

The benefits of the rapprochement with Turkey will, we believe, include making it easier to successfully conclude what may be a long peace process between the PKK and the Turkish Government. We believe that economic co-operation between the KRG and Turkey will help considerably as it generates economic activity in the relatively poor Kurdish areas of Turkey.

We note that in Iraq only the Kurdistan Region has a border with Turkey and that the country provides greater access to Europe and the world than its eastern neighbour, Iran which is nonetheless its second biggest trading partner and with which it seeks good neighbourly relations.

Turkey was originally dismissive in the period after the liberation of Iraq in 2003 of the Kurdistan Region believing that Baghdad would soon reassert its central authority over the officially recognised autonomous region. Military confrontation between Turkey and the KRG came close in February 2008. Turkey had 100,000 soldiers prepared to confront the Region. It now has 200,000 citizens from hundreds of Turkish companies working in the Region and is the Region's single largest trading partner. The Turkish consul officially opened the Turkish-built and British designed state of the art airport in Erbil. Such co-operation has developed considerably with recent agreements on energy exports.

We welcome the tact of the Kurdish leadership towards Turkey and trust that it will be reciprocated. One senior leader told us that the leadership is "realistic and pragmatic and does not wish to jeopardise the achievements of the Kurdistan Region by adopting slogans and sentiments. A dream can often be turned into a nightmare." Another described the delicacies of "supporting our Kurdish brothers and sisters in Turkey but seeking good relations with Turkey and not endangering its interests."

Energy exports

Before the latest trip, Robert Halfon MP, a member of the delegation, tabled a Commons motion which summarises our attitude on the energy issue. It reads:

"That this House warmly welcomes the historic news that the Kurdistan region of Iraq and its neighbour, Turkey have concluded a comprehensive agreement to build oil and gas pipelines to ship the autonomous region's rich hydrocarbon reserves to world markets; believes that this could allow the Kurdistan region to export two million barrels per day of oil to world markets and at least 10 billion cubic metres per year of gas to Turkey in a move that will increase the security and diversity of energy supplies; recognises that this represents a triumph of diplomacy based on hard-headed self-interest between two places which were once at loggerheads; hopes that it can underpin a successful peace process between Turkey and its Kurds; and rejects the unreasonable fear that economic independence for the

Kurdistan region of Iraq will lead to the disintegration of Iraq, because the country as a whole will gain from the success of the Kurdistan region, oil will remain the property of the people of Iraq and the proceeds of energy sales will be shared by all according to a much needed and robust revenue sharing formula and a fully-functioning federal system, as outlined in the Iraqi constitution which was approved by the people of Iraq in 2005."

The motion was well received in the Kurdistan Region and featured prominently in the Turkish media. We note that Turkey has been seeking to overcome difficulties in its diplomatic relations with the federal government in Baghdad, which have been strained by differing positions on the Syrian crisis and what one senior Kurdish leader called the Iraqi Prime Minister's marginalisation of Iraqi Sunnis.

The pipeline, we learnt on a site visit to the Genel Energy oil field at Taq Taq, is already built. The KRG's Minister for Natural Resources, Dr Ashti Hawrami, confirmed to us that oil may start flowing as early as December. The Genel field has the deepest oil well in the Kurdistan Region and can provide one sixth rising, as production increases, to one third of Turkey's daily consumption of oil.

Independence or federalism

The rapprochement with Turkey has concerned some in Baghdad and in America who fear that economic independence will become political independence and that Iraq will disintegrate. We accept that a unified Iraq should work for all its component parts through what President Barzani described to us as "partnership and power-sharing."

We were told that, sadly, Baghdad cannot control its streets and that billions of revenues from oil have not created sufficient economic progress and services. The Kurds told us that they are also anxious that the federal government seeks to purchase advanced F16 fighters which cannot be used to fight extremism. We understand the fears of the Kurds that such weapons could be used against them as jets were used in the not so distant tragic past.

Kurdish leaders have long made it plain that, despite popular pressure for independence, they are not seeking to break from Iraq. They make the point that the failure to implement the provisions of the federal constitution, which allows them to exploit their energy resources as they see fit, provided that the revenues from all oil and energy are shared by all Iraqis, will increase the pressure for breaking from Iraq.

We heard from many that Iraq as a whole would be strengthened by Kurdish success, which should be celebrated and emulated in the rest of the country. Doing otherwise will make fears of schism a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The Kurds are emphatic that their freedom and prosperity will not be controlled by "bureaucrats in Baghdad." They told us that the current revenue-sharing agreement should give them 17% of the national budget but that they usually receive about 10% and not

consistently. The crucial need is for a robust and reliable revenue-sharing law. They are dissatisfied with what the Foreign Minister Falah Mustafa Bakir calls "dysfunctional federalism."

We understand that some in Baghdad allege that Kurdish exports are illegal but we were told by Kurdish leaders that nearly 60 oil companies have invested billions in Kurdistan and would not have done so if they considered it illegal.

We heard assessments that nothing will change before the scheduled parliamentary elections across Iraq in late April. We hope that entrenched attitudes could start shifting after that. We were also informed that it is not just the Kurdistan Region that seeks to overcome old habits of centralised thinking in Baghdad and that Basra is seeking more decentralisation and even becoming an autonomous region.

Syria

However, the crisis in Syria seems to be intractable and is having a tremendous impact on Iraqi Kurdistan. Few people, even at an official level, seem to realise that the refugees are not just in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey but are also sheltering in the Kurdistan Region.

APPG delegations have visited the main refugee camp of Domiz near Duhok and about 40 miles from the Syrian border on three occasions this year. The number of people in the camp has soared from 50,000 to 75,000 since June with 150,000 in the Duhok province as a whole. The number of refugees in the Region has itself increased to about 250,000 and 50,000 of them entered in August alone.

Given that many Kurds have themselves been refugees, it is not surprising that they have been welcomed with open arms. The Iraqi the Kurds have been kind and hospitable with support, work and residence permits but increased problems of crime, which are inevitable given such a huge influx, will change attitudes given currently low crime rates in the Region. We congratulate the KRG on its treatment of the refugees. The refugees will remain for some time. As Tamar Fattah, the Governor of the Duhok province, told us: "whatever happens in Syria, they won't be going back soon."

The slaughter in Syria will change all neighbouring countries, including Iraqi Kurdistan. We were told that jihadists of 83 nationalities are fighting in Syria which could go the way of Afghanistan and threaten Europe as a whole. There is a deeply realistic assessment of the regime's chances of survival. One leader said he believed that a quarter of the Syrian population favours Assad compared to maybe a fifth for the opposition. He added that Christians prefer a secular dictatorship to Al Qaeda.

We concur with the Kurds that opportunities to nip this in the bud when the fighting began were squandered. The example of the no-fly zone applied to the Kurdistan Region in 1991 could have been applied. Even now, we agree, there should be liberated areas.

We accept Mr Bakir's plea to remember that each of the 250,000 refugees has a story to tell. We pledge to do our utmost to increase humanitarian aid to the Kurdistan Region which is less about cash than capacity building. We agree that humanitarian intervention in Syria, backed by military force, should remain an option.

Internal differences and reform

Syria and the current conflict with Baghdad represents something approaching a national emergency for the Kurds in Iraq who have been united on the key themes of protecting their hard fought for autonomy within Iraq.

There are differences between the parties on a range of domestic issues, as is normal, but deeper tensions are stretching their young democracy. It is reasonable to point out that transitions to parliamentary democracy, with its full array of checks and balances against centralisation and in favour of a healthy civil society, take time. We always acknowledge that the UK took 713 years to go from the Magna Carta to full universal suffrage in 1928.

We recognise that other aspects of Westminster can be emulated elsewhere. The role of the Loyal Opposition, for instance, only emerged in the 1930s and is little understood in Iraqi Kurdistan which has been part of a wider middle eastern mindset where power is taken and kept.

We are also aware that the civil war in the 1990s between the Region's two historic parties - the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) of President Barzani and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) of the ailing Iraqi President, Mam Jalal Talabani- still casts a long shadow, in similar ways, for example to the history of the unionist and nationalist parties in Northern Ireland.

The KDP and the PUK have shared, and disputed, power since 1992. Until the last election in September 2013 they had a strategic coalition agreement and shared the seats on a fifty-fifty basis. In September, the two parties stood on separate platforms, although their strategic agreement remains in place.

The KDP gained seats while the PUK lost nearly 100,000 votes and now has fewer seats while the principal Opposition party, Gorran (the Change) won more seats than the PUK and is now in second place. The PUK is now undergoing a major rethink of its role.

Complex negotiations are now underway to establish if it is possible to form a coalition government between these three parties and perhaps one of the two smaller Islamic parties. It is not for us to choose any particular option but, in discussions with KDP and Gorran MPs as well as a very frank and detailed appraisal by a senior PUK figure, Qubad Talabani, we are aware of some of the issues that make this process so complicated.

Some parties have long experience of being in government but those which enter government for the first time should commit themselves to an agreed common programme. The formation of the Coalition Government in the UK in 2010 may have some lessons for the KRG. One of us pointed out that the smaller partner focused on securing its key priorities but accepted that it needed to formally support those of the larger partner and that this is best done through a formal agreement which is transparent to the public.

More generally, according to Qubad Talabani, the main parties are reforming their ideologies in this national emergency and are stuck between four poles: state, market, authoritarianism and democracy.

Another is the legacy of security forces that are controlled by the two main parties. One MP told us that this was necessary because there was an insufficient base of trust in more pan-Kurdish forces. Comparisons with Northern Ireland are inevitably flawed and should not be exaggerated but one of the major achievements of the peace process there was the reform of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and its reincarnation as the Police Service of Northern Ireland. It is now more Catholic and female and is generally accepted in all areas of Northern Ireland without the need for military support. That could be a model but we acknowledge that this process is only just beginning.

Choosing a future

The Kurdistan Region has come far in a few years. Its oil, gas, minerals, agriculture and tourism plus its links with Turkey, Iran and other countries could lift its profile and most importantly, the position of its people. We commend the decision of the KRG to establish a Kurdish National Oil Company and give shares to its own people which they can trade on the open market.

We applaud their insistence that companies in the energy sector give something back to the community via corporate social responsibility programmes. We heard how Genel Energy has funded infrastructural improvements for villages in and near its field in the Koya area as well as training and apprenticeships for local people who can use their transferable skills as the workforce in oil and gas is reduced. We are pleased that oil companies are donating in cash and kind to the appeal for Syrian refugees.

An important debate in all energy-rich countries and which we discussed with several senior leaders is how to avoid the curse of natural resources, which were once used against the Kurds by the genocidal campaign waged by Saddam Hussein. They are gripped by the need to avoid their economy and society being dependent on this one resource, which will run out or for which world demand may drain as other energy sources are established. That is why they are seeking to diversify the economy, although this has been hampered by the unreliability of funding from the federal government.

Kurdish leaders are candid about the shortcomings of the current system. One of them said

that it makes people lazy" and that "if you give too much free to people they don't appreciate it." The APPG has previously urged consideration of building a tax base and utility charges so that people have a stake in the system and don't waste valuable resources such as water - an increasingly precious commodity in the middle east. Their leaders are looking at how comparable entities are making the most of their natural wealth. Norway is one example. Dubai is another although one leader cautions against the Kurdistan Region becoming just a "consumption society."

Such change requires the reduction in the size and scope of the state which employs most of the workforce whose temptation is for the quiet and less productive life. This in turn disincentivises initiative, enterprise and economic pluralism.

This legacy of the one party command economy of the common Iraqi past cannot be overcome overnight although there is a clear will in the leadership for this to happen. Yet the interests of some is to maintain the status quo and its top-down mentalities. The trouble is that such a model is inherently inefficient and excludes many young people, a majority in the Kurdistan Region, who are increasingly well-educated and well-connected via the internet.

The other big change, essential to a modern society open to the world and keen on foreign engagement and investment, is connectivity. On our first delegation, we had basic phone connections but this time our smart phones were in constant use. Ashti Hawrami, the respected Natural Resources Minister and architect of the successful energy sector, proudly told us that "smart young people are asking about each dollar the KRG spends."

Yet it is clear that politics and policy formulation are the preserve of a minority, who are over-worked and under considerable pressure from the vortex of geopolitical instability that geography has gifted this generally dynamic gem in the Middle East.

Political and policy support programmes such as that of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy and the National School of Government have been operating in the Region for many years at the instigation of the KRG. Such efforts need to be widened to include young people and civil society organisations. We know of proposals for a range of think tanks that can complement official programmes and we urge private sponsorship of such initiatives.

Mr Bakir, himself a Chevening scholar, appealed for a wider range of exchanges between parties as well as government to government with the stress on expanding the rule of law and freedom of speech as "components of a civilised society" as well as help to empower women in society.

The Kurdistan Region is ahead of much of the middle east in women's rights but it remains, from our observations, a man's world. We congratulate the KRG on its efforts to reduce the incidence of FGM, which has fallen but needs to be entirely eliminated through a mixture of legislative, political and cultural action.

We have also examined the role of the media in previous reports. A healthy, challenging but professional media is the bedrock of a democratic society, accountability and transparency. We spent some time with the leaders of the Rudaw media company - the biggest private outlet in Kurdistan - which has expanded from a weekly newspaper and online English edition into radio and television in the last year. Its aim is to broadcast to Kurds wherever they are. Since we left, we were saddened to hear of the murder of a journalist, Kawa Garmiyani in Kalar near Slemani. We condemn this murder without reservation and ask for the authorities to pursue and prosecute those who carried out this attack.

Conclusions

We have in the past five years seen a major success story in the Kurdistan Region. Progress sometimes seems slower than necessary and is often accompanied by a last-minute-dot-com approach mixed with mañana and inshallah - but they have accomplished big changes: the most notable being a new energy sector and radically reshaping relations with Turkey as well as a massive expansion of education. We commend the KRG on its recent successful election campaign as a beacon: vigorously fought but with no major incidents.

Their leaders look to Britain to play a bigger part and we aim to increase awareness of the many opportunities in the Region. The people and the parties of the Kurdistan Region have all to play for. Their success will be that of the middle east and the wider world. Every government should engage with them as a part of a federal Iraq.

What we will do next

- We will seek to win a General Adjournment Debate in the Commons on UK relations with the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.
- We will suggest that the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Select Committee considers an inquiry into UK relations with the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and prospects for Kurds in Syria, Turkey and Iran.
- We suggest that the UK Government invite the President and Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Region on an official visit to London to meet the PM and the Foreign Secretary.
- We will suggest that the British Government considers the possibility of a visit by the Foreign Secretary to the Kurdistan Region.
- We urge the UK Government to enter into discussions with the KRG about the supply of non-lethal security equipment.
- We urge the UK Government to appoint a UK Trade Envoy to the Kurdistan Region
- We urge the Prime Minister to convene a seminar at Downing Street on the potential for British interests in the Kurdistan Region.
- We will seek a meeting with the Home Office to discuss the visa regime and any needless obstacles to increased cultural and commercial connections with Kurdistan.
- We continue to urge the British Government to formally recognise the genocide conducted against the Kurds and to take a full part in marking the annual Anfal Day on 14 April.

Acknowledgements

We thank the Council of Ministers of the Kurdistan Regional Government for funding this delegation and arranging all the meetings we requested. The report was drafted by Gary Kent and agreed by the delegation.

List of members of the delegation

The delegation consisted of Co-Chairs Nadhim Zahawi MP and Meg Munn MP together with Vice-Chair Robert Halfon MP, Mike Gapes MP, Leo Docherty, the Director of the Conservative Middle East Council and Gary Kent, the Director of the APPG.

Who and what we saw

Karim Sinjari, KRG Minister of Interior; Asayish Directorate in Erbil; Safeen Dizayee, KRG Spokesman; Dr. Ashti Hawrami, Minister of Natural Resources; Falah Mustafa, Head of KRG Foreign Relations; Rudaw managers; MPs from the KDP, Gorran and the Christian list; Qubad Talabany, Head of Follow up and Cooperation Department; Masoud Barzani, President of Kurdistan Region; Genel Energy's Taq Taq oil field; Mar Mattay (St Matthew's) Monastery; Domiz Refugee Camp; Tamar Fattah, Governor of Duhok; Representatives of Syrian-Kurdish parties; Hugh Evans, the UK Consul-General; Nawzad Hadi, Governor of Erbil Province; the Citadel and its Mosque; and West Erbil Emergency Hospital.