



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

DELEGATION FOR RELATIONS WITH IRAQ

PRESIDENT

Press release

We have had an historic first ever mission to Baghdad and Erbil this week to discuss EU-Iraqi partnership. Key points concerned human rights and women's rights, principally Ashraf; the Arab Spring and its implications for Iraq; economic growth and inward investment; security; and the general political situation. We met all the highest level politicians barring the PM Nouri Al Maliki who was in South Korea. We met Al Nujeifi and the Council of Representatives; Zebari the Foreign Minister, President Talabani; and in Kurdistan President Barzani, the Speaker of the Kurdish Parliament and the Prime Minister of Kurdistan. We separately met Dr Saleh Al Mutlak and Dr Ayad Allawi. On Friday we are meeting some members of the Goran (Change) Opposition.

On Ashraf, we were deeply critical of the massacre that took place on 8th April. This was a breach of fundamental human rights and a direct contempt for the European Parliament which has sent two resolutions specifically on Ashraf, supported by a large majority of MEPs, asking the Iraqi government to respect the humanitarian rights of the 3400 people in Ashraf and not to resort to violence.

I said that our delegation is prepared to go back to Brussels and broker a long-term resolution to the Ashraf crisis, by seeking the agreement of the European Council of Ministers and the European Commission to the repatriation of the Ashraf residents to Europe, the US and possibly Canada. But we are not prepared to negotiate while staring down the barrel of a gun. We will not start to broker a resolution until the Iraqi government withdraws its troops from Ashraf, provides urgent medical attention for the critically wounded, ends the siege of the camp and restores peace and normality. We can then begin to broker a deal with the EU, US, UNAMI, UNHCR etc, but this is totally conditional on these demands being met, together with an independent Inquiry being launched into the massacre that took place on 8th April with those responsible for the killing of 35 unarmed civilians held to account.

We asked the Foreign Minister Zebari for permission to visit Ashraf but he said bluntly that this was out of the question.

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Erbil

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