

Remarks at the Ministerial Plenary for the Global Coalition Working to Defeat ISIS

Prime Minister of Iraq Haider al-Abadi

Washington, DC, March 22, 2017

PRIME MINISTER ABADI: (Via interpreter) In the name of God, most compassionate, most merciful, Secretary Tillerson, your excellencies, heads of delegations, ladies and gentlemen, peace of God be upon you.

Since our previous meeting for the global coalition, in this coalition against Daesh we have achieved many great victories. We were able to achieve all these victories by cooperating together and the brave fighting of the Iraqis on the ground, a fighting that went from south of Baghdad to its western part, and today we're fighting with bravery in Mosul. Before coming to this meeting in Washington, I was in Mosul, visited the front lines, found the Arab fighting side by side with the Kurd and the Christian with the Muslim and with the Yezidi and the (inaudible) and the Turkman. All of them believe steadfastly in the unity of Iraq and in the common determination and destiny for all against a enemy that wanted to break us apart and kill the minorities among us and to exclude a large part of the Iraqi society and communities and drive them out of their cities.

Our common and one-front response is an indicator of the failure of the efforts of Daesh. We are now undertaking all the efforts to make sure the displaced return to their cities and their villages, and we are trying to stabilize the liberated areas and stabilize many of these cities and villages. Over 70 percent of the residents of Fallujah, the city of Fallujah and the Ramadi, and more than 90 percent of the city of Tikrit have returned to their homes thanks to the efforts of stabilization and the return of all the necessary and essential services.

Ladies and gentlemen, you know the impact of the economic situation and the dropdown of oil prices while we also fight this very ferocious fight that costs us very much as well. Despite all of that, and thanks be to God, we were able to return stability to many regions. Even in Mosul as we fight against ISIS and Daesh and terrorism, we are at the same time simultaneously stabilizing, and we have opened 250 schools in the left side of Mosul while the ongoing fight in the right side of the city. We also open many hospitals, many medical centers, and we have tried hard to provide services to the citizens while we fight at the same time and fight the enemies, while also the enemies try to provide otherwise. This is the Iraq that we are trying to build, and we are very proud of our diversity in our unified country, and we are united within the boundaries of our country.

Today, as we fight ISIS in the final stages militarily in Iraq and we have given them very harsh blows to this enemy, we fought also the slogan of ISIS as if they pretend to build an empire and pretend to expand this empire. We prove today that this empire that they tried to build is today very much on the decrease, and we are trying to liberate today Mosul that they

attempted to make their own capital. We also sent a very strong message to the youngs that they – that Daesh try to appeal to. We see many Daesh members being killed and many those who tried to get recruited with ISIS. We are on the decrease. We have – we broke many of their dreams. Today, for that reason, Daesh is resorting to many terrorist attacks in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, and many other places in Europe in order to send a message that they are still standing and they want for those young people to go fight in its ranks.

Today, our fight on Daesh and against Daesh is a major victory. Today, we are in the stage of completely decimating Daesh and not containing it. We are not containing it. Containing Daesh is not – it's a very dangerous matter. We cannot go there. This is a terrorist group. It cannot be trusted. We cannot deal with it, it's organizing, killing, and chaos and destruction; a very corrupted ideology. There is no humanity to ISIS, and today is trying to oppress the human being in our modern world. Today, they're trying to sell women, sell children. This is a very heinous crime that they do sell women and children in Iraq and Syria.

This terrorist group must be decimated, must be completely killed. And what we have achieved in Iraq is that we forever can destroy and decimate this terrorist group by being allies, by unifying our efforts and remaining focused on destroying and decimating and Daesh and not to be distracted by regional differences and regional conflicts. In Iraq, as we decentralized, and since two and a half years after our government has come to place, we made many efforts to provide many powers to the various governorates. We have a local council in every governorate and we have a governor who is elected, and we deal with local councils and the governors as being local governments. Decentralization strengthens Iraq, and we provide more powers, more authorities. We are committed to that and we cannot ever go back on that, just as we launched our major project to stabilize and to return major, essential services through the liberation and through also having major committees in each governante that work with the governors to implements these projects.

Through this great cooperation we were able to succeed in seeing a lot of displaced returned to their homes. Today, we have a strong economic activity in these liberated cities, because the citizens are able today to resume their normal lives, their economic life, and support the local economy.

Over the past two and a half years, despite the terrorism of Daesh and ISIS, Iraq was able to increase its oil production. Today, Iraq can provide over 5 million barrels a day. Despite the harsh cost of the war and the destruction of the war, we were still able to progress and to provide essential services to the citizens.

In Iraq for the past 20 years, we have daily demonstrations by the citizens that are calling for their rights and expressing their views, and we respect that. We respect democracy in Iraq. Democracy today in Iraq respects the will of the people, and our security forces provide protection to these citizens who are expressing their views freely as long as they are doing it within the boundaries of the law and not attacking people's properties and so forth.

This is a great progress in a country that had seen sufferance and dictator oppression. If someone expressed his views, he was killed in the past. Today, we have done great strides in

that field and we provide such freedom to other regions. We will be victorious over ISIS with our democracy and our freedom and with our diversity. Daesh hates diversity. Daesh kills those who are opposed to their views.

Today, we demonstrate to the others that we remain united, despite the divergent perspectives in Iraq and the divergent affiliations. Iraq since its history has always seen such diversity and lived for centuries with such diversity. And I will also say that the structure in Samarra and that the tower that also saw the Mongol and the other occupations and remained resistant and with Daesh was destroyed. That shows the extent of the destruction that these terrorist groups have caused to the ziggurats and other historic monuments. I hope that we will all agree on a common definition that this is a terrorist group and other similar groups are terrorist groups. It is not sound and correct that we call Daesh that is a terrorist group when it's working against me, and then I don't do so when it's going to conduct its terrorist operations in other countries.

We have to be unifiers. The threat of ISIS is a threat to the entire region if we are to be very lenient towards it. We must destroy this threat and in this scope we must destroy ISIS. If we continuously cooperate – and I call on everybody in this global coalition to continue the cooperation to decimate Daesh and not contain it – we are able to kill Daesh and destroy it in this final stage.

Also, as we fight this war, we started a program of reform in Iraq to simplify all procedural and bureaucratic procedures in Iraq, and also fighting corruption. The citizens have every right to know where the wealth of the people is going. The oil of the Iraqi people and the wealth of the Iraqi people is for the Iraqis, not for other place, not for other region, not to other countries. This wealth is for all Iraqis regardless of other affiliations, other beliefs. We all believe that terrorism is a plague as dangerous as corruption, and corruption is as dangerous as terrorism because it leads to very dangerous consequences.

The collapse of some army – Iraqi army units and some other forces when Daesh came in, it was due to corruption. The soldier cannot fight if he sees his officer and his superior is corrupt and cannot work with devotion if he sees that his superior is corrupt. And I know this is a very difficult issue and I know there are many opposing our reforms in that regard. This is an institutional corruption as well, and has been festering for a long time; however, we are determined to eradicate it in order to rid Iraq of this evil. Corruption and terrorism are a common plague and we are cooperating to fight against the goal of the terrorists who try to use corruption to further their goals.

We are determined to fight ISIS. There is an Iraqi today force fighting – the counterterrorism unit of the Iraqi army – and the Peshmerga are with us for the first time in the history of Iraq fighting side by side. Today, Iraqis are fighting side by side with the Peshmergas, not against each other, but together against the terrorism of Daesh. This is not a matter of interests, it is the relationship between the Iraqi army and the Peshmerga has been sound and excellent, and there is a great deal of cooperation and understanding. I can say very much and affirm that the Iraqi army today has earned the respect of the Iraqi citizens. We work for all the Iraqis, and

this is our direction as well for our security internal forces and our military forces, and to all the other units, that their goals is to protect the Iraqi citizen and not to oppress the citizen, providing security for the citizen, protecting the citizen. And we hold accountable any violation that we can assert by law that is violating the human rights and the dignity of people. We have also demonstrated that we hold people accountable for that.

Also, there are volunteers from the Iraqi people who also participated in the fight from the various groups of the Iraqis – Sunni, Shia, Turkmen, Yezidis, Christians, the (inaudible), and other the – all the other governorates fought with us, with the Iraqi forces, under the umbrella of the Iraqi forces, to fight and decimate Daesh.

Also, we had the law on the PMF, the law on the PMF, based on the – how it was adopted by the parliament. The PMF accordingly is under the general commander of the armed forces, and that is the prime minister. The PMF is within the system of the Iraqi Government, is under the Iraqi discipline and the – we cannot consider it as a security apparatus, cannot only be involved in security and military scopes, because we have the elections coming up. It must not – it – also, other political groups who hold up weapons must not also enter into the elections. We must separate the weapon from the political effort and the political track, and no weapon must be outside the scope of the government. The constitution of the Iraq state is very clear on that. No weapon that is outside the umbrella of the government, and those who will do so are doing so against the law. We consider them outlawed, and we will fight them accordingly.

Therefore, the law on the PMFs will bring those brave fighters who came and sacrificed themselves, fought bravely, and sacrificed everything to defend Iraq and defend all the citizens, are under the umbrella of the Iraqi leadership and command and under the Iraqi law, and no one can carry weapons outside that system. We are very keen on absorbing all the citizens in order to maintain the dignity of this country and destroy terrorism.

This threat threatens the entire world, threatens the region, just like you said, Mr. Secretary. This heinous terrorism is very dangerous. This is a very dangerous group. We were talking about al-Qaida and its terrorism, and the terror al-Qaida groups are still there. Now we have moved to the terrorism of ISIS – very dangerous terrorism, and other terrorist groups. We must combat and decimate this threat and this terror, because it's draining our resources, draining our efforts, and draining our economic means and preventing economic progress and modernity. We must fight terror and terrorism, and that requires us to change our way of doing things and our way of governing.

Terrorism is exploiting the injustice that is happening in the region, and exploiting the regional conflict that is happening in the region. When there is a regional conflict, there is void, and where there are regions that are suffering from void, terrorism will exploit. Therefore, I call on containing the regional differences and the regional conflicts, because these are the main – one of the main reasons to seeing these groups rise that's in Syria and Libya and other places, where these groups are rising because of all of that.

We welcome all the support that is offered to Iraq, and thank everyone who supports in the global coalition that supports Iraq. This coalition proved that we can fight together terrorism; we all have common interests. Iraq is not begging for support, and is not asking for support from a position of weakness, but we all are asking for it altogether, all in the same boat, all on the same ship, facing this terrorism. And we fight side by side on the ground, and we benefit from all the logistical support and all the air support that is being given to us and to our forces as we move forward to the next phase to protect our borders and rebuild our countries – our country.

We have the mean to deal with that. We have absorbed and we are working with all the components of Iraq. I can't pretend that we have resolved all of our issues, but these problems go back to many years in the past when Saddam and the Baath regime oppressed the Iraqi people and fought many wars in the region, and destroyed the means of the Iraqi people until 2003, and the heinous terrorist attacks by the terrorists on Iraq who came from around 100 countries from all over the world. We have to cooperate to contain these and destroy this terrorism, these terrorists, and prevent them from expanding their efforts. And again, not containing ISIS, but destroy and decimate Daesh.

And thank you. Peace of god be upon you all. Thank you for listening.

Source: <https://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2017/03/269039.htm>