



# KURDISTAN

## INDEPENDENCE REFERENDUM

25 SEPTEMBER 2017

### 01 | Who are the Kurds?



**25 - 35 million** inhabiting a mountainous region straddling the borders of **Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Iran** and **Armenia**



**4th-largest ethnic group** in the Middle East – largest group in the world without a permanent nation state



United through **race, culture and language** (no standard dialect)



Majority are **Sunni Muslims**

**Early 20th Century:** Kurds began to consider creation of a homeland (**Kurdistan**) after defeat of Ottoman Empire  
 Hopes dashed when Treaty of Lausanne (1923) set boundaries of modern Turkey with no provision for a Kurdish state - left Kurds with minority status in their respective countries

### 02 | Where are the Kurds?

**18 million**



KEY: = 1 MILLION KURDISH PEOPLE  
CIA World Fact Book, 2014



**2 million**

REST OF THE WORLD

Source: [https://thekurdishproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/11907164\\_1658887681023782\\_5337654842828259130\\_o.png](https://thekurdishproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/11907164_1658887681023782_5337654842828259130_o.png)

### 03 | Controversial Referendum

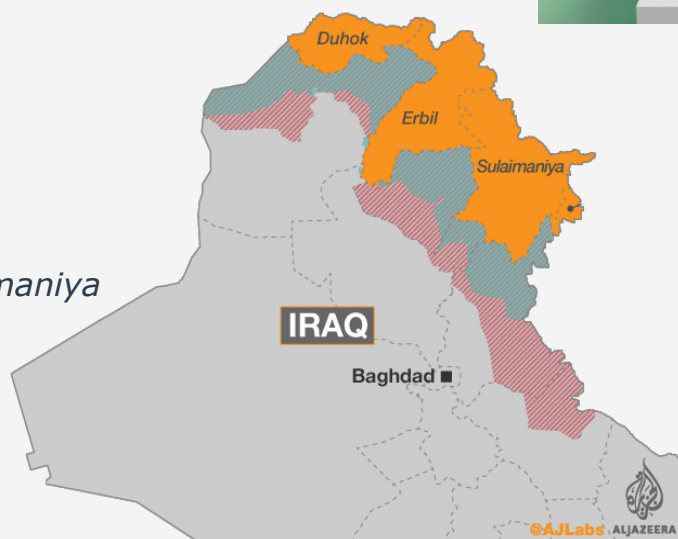
POPULATION  
**5.2 million**

CAPITAL  
**Erbil**

GOVERNED BY  
**Kurdistan Regional Government**  
Established in 1992, comprises the governorates of Duhok, Erbil, Sulaimaniya and Halabja

TYPE OF GOVERNMENT  
**Parliamentary democracy**

ARMED FORCES (PESHMERGA)  
**More than 200,000**



Officially under Kurdistan Regional Government (40,000km)

**Disputed areas**

Under Peshmerga control

Claimed by Kurdish Regional Gov.

Voting is meant to take place in the three provinces that officially make up the region - **Dahuk, Erbil and Sulaimaniya** - and "areas of Kurdistan outside the region's administration", including **Kirkuk, Makhmour, Khanaqin and Sinjar**

Source: <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/interactive/2017/09/kurdish-referendum-iraq-170917114747104.html>

### 04 | Support

Israel is the **only nation** to have openly supported the independence bid



### 05 | Opposition



**Iraqi Prime Minister** Haider al-Abadi formally demanded the suspension of the referendum on Kurdish independence

Iraq's **Supreme Court** also ordered that the poll must be postponed until questions over its legality were addressed

The **US, UK** and **UN** have voiced strong objections to the referendum

### 06 | Concerns

Vote could provoke further **instability** in Iraq and hamper the battle against the **Islamic State** (IS)

Neighbouring **Iran** and **Turkey** (home to Kurdish populations) fear a 'Yes' vote will bolster **separatist movements** in their countries



### 07 | Way Forward

Iraqi Kurdish leader Massoud Barzani has insisted the referendum will go ahead **BUT will not mean an immediate breakaway** from Iraq (whatever the result)

Iraq **cannot enforce** its demand for a suspension of the referendum

