

Readout of Secretary Kerry's Call with Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari



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Yesterday Secretary Kerry called Iraqi Foreign Minister Zebari to discuss recent developments in Iraq and the region. The Secretary thanked the Foreign Minister for his efforts to help organize a unity meeting of Iraq's political and religious leaders at the end of May and the meeting between Prime Minister Maliki and KRG President Barzani on June 9. He noted that he was encouraged by the positive tone of these meetings and urged Iraqi leaders to build on these steps by continuing direct dialogue and taking concrete action to address political differences. The two agreed on the importance of a unified approach against violence and the need to address legitimate grievances peacefully and in a manner consistent with the Iraqi constitution.

The Secretary and Foreign Minister also discussed Iraq-Kuwait relations and the Secretary noted that he was impressed by the recent progress the two nations have made toward resolving remaining UN Chapter VII issues. The Secretary stated that this was a clear example of determined and persistent diplomacy paying off. He assured the Foreign Minister that the United States would continue to work to help Iraq improve relations with other neighbors in the region.

The Secretary and the Foreign Minister also discussed the situation in Syria. The Secretary reaffirmed that the United States continues to work aggressively for a political solution with the goal of a second Geneva meeting, but that the use of chemical weapons and increasing involvement of Hizballah demonstrates the regime's lack of commitment to negotiations and threatens to put a political settlement out of reach. The Secretary expressed our concern about the increasingly sectarian nature of the Syrian conflict on both sides, including atrocities committed in recent days in Qusayr and in Deir EzZor. In that light, the Secretary noted his

appreciation for the Foreign Minister's statement on June 11 discouraging Iraqis from joining the fight in Syria. The Secretary further urged that Iraq take every possible measure to help end the military resupply of the Assad regime and thereby increase the pressure that will be necessary to advance a political solution.

The Secretary mentioned that he looks forward to seeing the Foreign Minister in Washington under the auspices of the Joint Coordinating Committee established by the Strategic Framework Agreement. We will work with the Government of Iraq to find a date for this important meeting to take place in the coming months.