

Biography President Masoud Barzani

His Excellency Masoud Barzani was elected the first President of the Kurdistan Region by the Kurdistan National Assembly. He was sworn into office on 12 June 2005. In the July 2009 elections, he was re-elected to serve another term, winning around 70% of the popular vote. In his long political career, Mr Barzani has earned a reputation for upholding the principles of democracy and respect for the rights of all of Iraq's diverse peoples. Since the liberation of Iraq, he has been a stabilising force in the Kurdistan Region's and Iraqi politics, helping to maintain Iraq's unity through the federal system and working to build consensus in the federal government.



In his presidency Mr Barzani has established several institutions in the Kurdistan Region to develop its emerging democracy, strengthen alliances and improve the decision-making process. In January 2007 he established the Kurdistan Presidency Council, which includes the Deputy President (Mr Kosrat Rasul Ali), the Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the Kurdistan National Assembly, the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister and the Chief of Staff of the Presidency of the Kurdistan Region.

Mr Barzani also helped to form the Council of Kurdistan Political Parties which he chairs and includes the figureheads of the following political parties in Kurdistan: Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), Kurdistan Toilers Party, Kurdistan Democratic Socialist Party, Kurdistan Islamic Union, and Islamic Group of Kurdistan.

As President of the Kurdistan Region, Masoud Barzani has made official visits to several countries including: meeting with US President George Bush at the White House (25 October 2005), UK Prime Minister Tony Blair at Downing Street (31 October 2005), The Pope at the Vatican (14 November 2005), Italian Prime Minister Berlusconi in Rome (13 November 2005), King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia in Riyadh (13 March 2007) and King Abdullah of Jordan in Amman (19 March 2007).

Political career

As leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) since 1979, Mr Barzani has worked to achieve the party's goals of democracy for Iraq and autonomy, later federalism, for Kurdistan. Throughout the 1990s and until the collapse of Saddam Hussein's regime in 2003, he helped to bring the Iraqi opposition closer together.

After the liberation of Iraq in 2003, Mr Barzani was appointed to the Iraqi Governing Council, and held the rotating presidency in May 2004. He helped to achieve official recognition of the Kurdistan Region and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in the Transitional Administrative Law. Later in the drafting of the Iraqi constitution, with other members of the Kurdistan Alliance, he negotiated for a federal system to create more efficient and representative government, and to prevent a return to brutal dictatorship from the centre.

Mr Barzani's early life was dominated by major political and personal upheaval. He was greatly influenced by his father, the late Mustafa Barzani, leader of the Kurdish liberation movement. He was born on 16 August 1946 in the Kurdish town of Mahabad in Iran. After his father was forced into exile in 1947 to the former Soviet Union, Masoud Barzani stayed in Iraq with his mother, mainly under house arrest.

He was elected to the KDP's central committee in 1971 and later to its political bureau. He was one

of the representatives at the 1970 negotiations with the Ba'ath government that led to a (later reneged) agreement on autonomy for Kurdistan.

Following the Algiers Accord of 1975 between Iraq and Iran that led to loss of outside support for the Kurdish resistance, and then the death of his father, Mr Barzani started to rebuild the movement. He was elected President of the KDP in 1979. He was re-elected as the KDP's president in 1993 and 1999.

Mr Barzani played a key role in establishing the Kurdistan Front, an umbrella organisation of political parties of Kurdistan. Following the 1991 Gulf War, Mr Barzani coordinated the Kurdistan Front to support the uprising of Kurdish people in March of that year, leading to Saddam Hussein withdrawing his administration. The first ever free and fair election in any part of Iraq was held in the Kurdistan Region in May 1992, establishing the first Kurdistan National Assembly and the KRG.

After an armed power struggle between the KDP and PUK in the mid-1990s, Mr Barzani and Mr Jalal Talabani, leader of the PUK, signed the Washington Agreement peace settlement of 1998. Learning from this painful experience, both parties became committed to reaching consensus and developing institutions, so that they would never again resort to intra-Kurdish armed conflict.

Home and family

President Barzani wrote the book *Mustafa Barzani and the Kurdish Liberation Movement*. He is an avid reader and has a special interest in history, politics, the military and sport. He is fluent in Kurdish, Arabic and Persian, and understands English. He is married with eight children.

Mr Barzani has felt at close hand the harm done by violent dictatorial rule. The former Ba'ath regime killed three of his brothers, and 32 members of his family were among the 8,000 Barzani men and boys who 'disappeared' in 1983. His ancestral village of Barzan was destroyed 16 times by successive Iraqi regimes. He has consistently worked for Iraqi democracy and to protect the rights of the people of the Kurdistan Region, so that all may enjoy a better future.