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America Defended Kurdistan. Did the Barzani Family Betray That Trust?

Why the Kurdistan Victims Fund Has Petitioned the United States Congress to Investigate Alleged Barzani Corruption, Fraud, Kleptocracy, and Human Rights Abuses

By the Kurdistan Victims Fund

On September 30, 2026, the United States completed its military withdrawal from the subnational Kurdistan Region of Iraq, ending a historic chapter of American courage, sacrifice, and noble military commitment to the freedom and security of the Kurdish people.

Concurrently, as American forces departed, the Kurdistan Victims Fund was completing a 525-page evidence report and Petition, developed over several years, and drawing upon official records, documentary evidence, investigative materials, and other substantive documentation originating from the U.S. Departments of State, Defense, Treasury, and Justice, asking the Congress of the United States to determine whether decades of American sacrifice, assistance, and protection has been systematically and unlawfully exploited through corruption, fraud, and private enrichment.

The military mission has ended. The obligation to account for American lives, American money, and the conduct of those who benefited from both has not.

There is a profound tragedy in this chapter of American-Kurdistan foreign and military policy. Few betrayals of American sacrifice would be more disturbing than the exploitation of decades of American military protection, financial generosity, and diplomatic support by those accused of converting that extraordinary national commitment into instruments of private enrichment, political power, and oppression.

In 1991, the United States began defending and protecting the Kurdish people of northern Iraq. For thirty-five years, Americans have committed military power, diplomatic influence, billions in taxpayer resources, and, most importantly, American lives to helping secure their freedom.

Today, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), which administers the autonomous Kurdistan Region of Iraq, is led by Prime Minister Masrour Barzani, a member of the powerful Barzani family that has long dominated the region's principal governing party, the Kurdistan

Democratic Party (KDP), and exercised extensive political, military, and economic influence and control.

American soldiers fought and died. American taxpayers paid. The Kurdish people deserved freedom, security, democracy, and accountable government.

As the evidence presented in the Petition raises the question: But what if the ruling family entrusted with decades of extraordinary American generosity, military protection, and sacrifice instead systematically exploited that commitment for its own private enrichment, consolidation of political power, and ruthless suppression of the very people whose freedom and security American servicemen and women sacrificed so much to defend?

That is the question at the heart of the *Petition for Congressional Investigation and Hearings* submitted beginning on October 19 by the Kurdistan Victims Fund.

This Petition was prepared with contributions from an exceptionally diverse group of individuals, including members of Congress, former White House officials, diplomats, attorneys, researchers, financial intelligence and enforcement professionals, and current and former employees of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP). Their combined experience and knowledge bring important American governmental, legal, financial, diplomatic, and firsthand Kurdish perspectives to the allegations and investigative questions presented to Congress.

Extensive documentary evidence of alleged systemic corruption, financial misconduct, and abuse of power demands Congressional investigation and accountability.

The result is an unprecedented evidence-based presentation of allegations concerning the Barzani leadership and associated networks, supported by court filings, investigative reporting, financial records, public documents, and firsthand accounts. It represents one of the most extensive and consequential presentations of alleged Barzani-linked wrongdoing and fraud ever formally submitted to the United States Government for investigation. Its allegations are now before Congress for independent examination.

A petition to Congress exercises a fundamental constitutional right: the First Amendment right to petition government for redress of grievances. It asks Congress to examine evidence, conduct hearings, demand accountability, and determine whether federal laws, American resources, or the public trust have been violated.

In the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, where serious allegations of political interference and ruling-family domination of the judiciary have long raised fundamental questions about judicial independence, those who challenge entrenched power may find little protection in the courts.

But this is the United States of America. Here, constitutional rights are not privileges granted by powerful families or their attorneys. No ruling family, however wealthy or politically connected, and no army of expensive Washington lawyers retained to defend its interests, possesses the authority to extinguish the First Amendment right to petition Congress and demand an

examination. The right to seek Congressional scrutiny belongs to the American people, and it cannot be extinguished by legal intimidation, political influence, or financial power.

The alleged financial misconduct is breathtaking in its potential magnitude, staggering in its scope, and deeply troubling in what it may reveal about the systematic exploitation of the United States and its taxpayers and the Kurdish people.

Our Petition asks Congress to investigate whether decades of diversion of American assistance, fraudulent defense contracts, money laundering, sanctions evasion, concealed wealth, and possible United States tax violations collectively constitute one of the largest coordinated financial frauds against the United States of America in modern American history. We ask Congress to establish the amount of any losses, identify those responsible, and determine what money can be recovered for American taxpayers.

In addition to our Petition to Congress, the allegations, together with relevant supporting evidence, are also being referred to The White House and more than two dozen United States Government investigative, law-enforcement, intelligence, and regulatory agencies for independent examination and appropriate action under their respective authorities.

Our Petition asks Congress to investigate allegations of a transnational, family-centered kleptocratic enterprise operating through the Barzani leadership and associated networks – an alleged system in which governmental authority, security institutions, public resources, private financial interests, and international intermediaries may have been used to concentrate wealth and political power, suppress dissent, and exploit American assistance.

Kleptocracy describes government corrupted into an instrument of private enrichment. It represents a fundamental betrayal of the rule of law.

At the center of our investigation request stands the Barzani family's ruling structure, including Prime Minister Masrour Barzani, other influential family members, and associated individuals and entities whose conduct warrants examination. The Petition asks Congress to determine whether evidence establishes coordinated criminal conduct, including fraud, bribery, money laundering, sanctions evasion, and serious human rights abuses, and to identify those individually responsible.

The allegations are extensive and disturbing.

First, fraud against American taxpayers. Congress must investigate whether American security assistance was diverted through inflated payrolls, fictitious “ghost soldiers,” manipulated military expenditures, and fraudulent procurement arrangements. Congress should establish how much American money, if any, was improperly diverted and who benefited.

Second, bribery and defense-contracting fraud. The Department of Justice has already initiated federal forfeiture proceedings alleging a scheme to defraud the United States, bribery involving Mansour Barzani, a senior Peshmerga commander and Barzani family member, money laundering, and proceeds connected to a multimillion-dollar Beverly Hills mansion. These

allegations remain unproven, but the federal case provides a concrete reason for broader congressional scrutiny.

Third, international money laundering, luxury real estate, and illicit enrichment.

Investigative reporting by the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project identified companies ultimately owned by five Barzani brothers that acquired dozens of American properties worth more than \$100 million, including luxury residential and commercial properties. The Petition also requests scrutiny of reported luxury holdings in Dubai, including nearly 300 villas and townhouses, and valuable properties in London. Ownership alone is not evidence of criminality. Congress should determine the source of the money, the actual beneficial owners, and whether diverted public revenues or other illicit proceeds financed these acquisitions while ordinary Kurdish families struggled with unpaid salaries and economic hardship.

Fourth, counterfeiting, oil trafficking, and sanctions violations. The Petition requests investigation of alleged trafficking in counterfeit American-branded goods, smuggling, and oil transactions involving Iran, including whether Barzani-linked networks knowingly circumvented United States and United Kingdom sanctions or facilitated prohibited transactions benefiting Iranian interests. Congress should determine who controlled the transactions, who received the proceeds, and whether American financial institutions were used.

Fifth, American tax violations and foreign influence abuses. Masrour Barzani's U.S. lawful permanent-resident status raises significant questions about worldwide-income reporting and compliance with American tax laws. Congress should also investigate whether American representatives, lobbyists, financial intermediaries, or other professionals knowingly concealed misconduct, misrepresented material facts, or misled federal officials on behalf of Barzani family interests.

Sixth, murder, kidnapping, torture, religious persecution, and grave human rights violations. The Petition describes allegations of killings, enforced disappearances, kidnapping, unlawful detention, torture, intimidation, and violent repression of Kurdish civilians, journalists, and political critics, including American citizens. Congress should determine whether governmental institutions and security personnel were used to silence critics, punish dissent, or shield responsible individuals from accountability.

Of particular humanitarian and moral gravity is the genocide of the Yazidi religious minority. In August 2014, ISIS perpetrated atrocities against Yazidi men, women, and children, including mass murder, rape, sexual slavery, kidnapping, and forced religious conversion. United Nations investigators concluded that Barzani-commanded Peshmerga protective forces, without adequately warning the Yazidi population, abruptly withdrew from Sinjar as ISIS advanced, leaving the Yazidi population defenseless, and exposed to the ensuing campaign of mass murder, rape, sexual slavery, and religious persecution. Our Petition asks Congress to determine what Barzani-linked political and military commanders knew, who ordered or authorized the withdrawal, whether civilians could have been protected or evacuated, and whether any responsible official knowingly facilitated, enabled, or failed to prevent extraordinary atrocities against this persecuted religious minority. The perpetrators of the

genocide have been identified. The responsibility of those entrusted with protecting its victims demands independent investigation.

Of particular national-security concern is an allegation involving the possible kidnapping and killing of a United States government agent in Kurdistan. Congress must establish the individual's identity, the circumstances and cause of death, whether a homicide occurred, and whether anyone connected to Barzani-controlled security institutions participated. This allegation requires careful, independent examination.

These grave allegations demand investigation. The victims are not merely American taxpayers. They are also the Kurdish people, whose aspirations for accountable government have confronted allegations of corruption, repression, and concentrated family power.

We are not petitioning Congress against Kurdistan. We are petitioning Congress for the Kurdish people – and for the American people who sacrificed to protect them.

We ask Congress to hold public hearings, obtain records, subpoena witnesses where warranted, conduct a forensic accounting of American assistance, trace suspicious financial transactions, examine the alleged misuse of security institutions, and refer substantiated violations to appropriate federal authorities.

American soldiers did not fight and die on the battlefields of Iraq so that members of the Barzani family could allegedly and unlawfully exploit American protection, military assistance, and public resources to amass extraordinary private fortunes.

As the United States Supreme Court declared 1882 in *United States v. Lee*, 106 U.S. 196, 220 (1882), “No man in this country is so high that he is above the law.”

Not American officials. Not American intermediaries accused of knowingly facilitating corruption and fraud. And not foreign rulers accused of unlawfully enriching themselves through the exploitation of American taxpayer funds, military protection, and sacrifices purchased with the blood, sacrifice, and treasure of the American people.

Congress must also rigorously scrutinize the documented allegations of misconduct of American citizens and professional intermediaries and banks who may have knowingly facilitated the Barzani family's alleged fraud, corruption, money laundering, or the concealment of illicit wealth on behalf of Barzani family interests.

If evidence establishes that any knowingly facilitated fraud against the United States, laundered illicit proceeds, concealed stolen assets, or participated in sanctions violations, they must face appropriate legal accountability. Lawful representation of foreign clients is not wrongdoing. But professional status, political connections, or prior government service cannot immunize anyone from responsibility for proven unlawful conduct.

America defended Kurdistan's freedom. Congress and the White House must now determine whether members of the Barzani family's exercise of power – and any American intermediaries

who knowingly assisted in unlawful conduct – betrayed the trust of both the Kurdish people and the United States, and whether billions of dollars were stolen through the alleged corruption and exploitation of that historic partnership. Congress must direct and oversee a comprehensive international asset-recovery effort, calling upon appropriate authorities to trace, freeze, seize, forfeit, and recover proven illicit proceeds through applicable legal mechanisms and cooperation with the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Iraq, British Virgin Islands, and other jurisdictions.

The United States of America must pursue the recovery of every dollar proven stolen from the American people, wherever that wealth has been hidden, whoever possesses it, and however powerful those responsible may be – or pretend to be.

This editorial is published with the authorization and approval of the Board of Trustees of the Kurdistan Victims Fund (KVF).

PUBLICATION NOTE: The complete Petition for Congressional Investigation and Hearings, submitted by the Kurdistan Victims Fund to the United States Congress, is available for public reading at <https://kurdistanvictimsfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/10/Petition-to-Congress-12-Oct-2026.pdf>