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## “Expand the air strikes”

by Masoud Barzani

Today the people of Kurdistan and Iraq are threatened by a fanatical and barbaric terrorist organization that wishes to dominate Middle East. We are resolved to defeat this threat with the help of the United States and our friends around the world.

There can be no overstating how perilous the situation is. The terrorist blitzkrieg of the Islamic State has swept from Syria into Iraq, with its goal of conquering and controlling [a large swath of the world](#). While some of its more [distant aspirations may be beyond its grasp](#), Iraq and other parts of the Middle East and Central Asia are not.

The slaughter and [destruction in Syria](#) and [parts of Iraq](#) are the unvarnished template of what can be expected in any part of the world where they will rule.

We are the United States’ staunch allies in the region, and we have the only force in the area with the means and will to protect thousands of lives from the horrors that these terrorists bring. But we cannot do it alone.

It is true that the antecedents of this crisis are political. The same was true of the rise of Nazism. But now that the [terrorists have become an operating military force](#), this is no longer a political crisis; it is a security crisis, and the world must act to [prevent genocide and the slaughter of innocents](#). Any position held by the terrorists should immediately be considered a target, not just those [around Irbil](#) and [Mount Sinjar](#). This fight will have to be waged by the civilized world at some stage. The longer the delay, the more difficult the fight will become.

Our pesh merga military is positioned to be the [vanguard of the civilized world along a broad front](#). We have [stood with United States before](#), in 1991 and 2003 against the regime of Saddam Hussein, and we are doing so again. But in the wake of recent advances by Islamic State forces, Kurdistan shares a 600-mile border with the terrorists, and [we desperately need more coordinated assistance](#). We hope that the U.S. airstrikes against terrorist positions on Friday were just the beginning. [U.S. intelligence assets could help reduce the terrorists’ ability to launch surprise attacks](#). Deliveries of heavy weapons are urgently needed for the pesh merga to achieve gains on the ground.

Terrorists have captured a great deal of U.S. heavy [weaponry from the Iraqi Security Forces](#). With the addition of territory comes the ability to terrorize new populations, to indoctrinate and [recruit military-age men](#), to raise revenue through taxation and control of oil resources and to extend their intelligence network. The stronger they become, the harder they will be to defeat.

We are thankful to our friends on Capitol Hill and in the White House for the support that they have given us over the years. Only because the situation is absolutely urgent do we humbly ask our friends to help us again.

This past week, the terrorists launched a new offensive directly targeting Kurdish-protected towns, including the Mosul dam area, the Sinjar district and the [Rabia crossing](#) into Syria.

For centuries, this area of Iraq has been home to multiple religions and sects. Not anymore. As a first order of business, [terrorists ordered Christians to convert to Islam](#), pay an exorbitant tax or suffer deadly consequences. Those not conforming have been killed in the most horrific of manners. For the first time in the history of Iraq, Mosul is virtually empty of Christians. Hundreds of thousands of residents, including Christian and Yazidi religious minorities, are at immediate risk of being slaughtered. There can be no doubt that this fits the description of genocide.

Meanwhile, as a result of the conflict in Syria and the terrorist advances in Iraq, the Kurdistan region has received more than a million refugees and internally displaced people.

Video provided by Central Command shows the U.S. military dropping food and water supplies in northern Iraq. Some of the video does not have audio. (AP)

The pesh merga face an enemy that has vastly superior U.S. weaponry. It is essential that we receive military support from the United States and other friends immediately. Every day that the terrorists are able to operate freely brings more loss of life, a mounting humanitarian crisis, destruction and horror.

Every religion, state and community must voice its support for civilization and humanity. And those countries with capacity to help — first and foremost the United States — must understand that this is an urgent danger and act accordingly. We must stop the terrorists now. With air support and military equipment, we can.

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