

Nechirvan Barzani

Summary

Nechirvan Barzani is the president of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and deputy leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP). He comes from the prominent Barzani family who founded the party, which has been a key player in Iraqi Kurdish politics for decades. Prior to his current post, he was the prime minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) from 2006 to 2019, except for two years, making him the longest-running PM in the Kurdish region. He was born on 21 September 1966.

Education

Studied Political Science at Tehran University; date unknown. He did not complete the course.

Media, affiliations

He is behind the founding of the Rudaw Company in 2008. It published a weekly newspaper, later a Europe-based print edition and a website.

In May 2013 the company established Rudaw Media Network, which includes a prominent satellite TV channel, a radio station and a widely read multi-lingual website. The print editions are now defunct. He owns the media company, according to one of the co-founders of the network, which often has a pro-Ankara slant in coverage of Turkey-related stories that possibly reflects the owner's close ties with the Turkish government.

Social media: [Twitter](#); [Facebook](#)

Family

Married to Nabila Barzani, daughter of his uncle and KDP leader Massoud Barzani. They have five children, with eldest son Idris Nechirvan Barzani appearing in public as a "youth leader".

His father Idris Mustafa Barzani (1944-1987) is a former KDP leader.

His grandfather Mustafa Barzani (1903-1979) co-founded the KDP and led the party from its inception in 1946 until his death.

Brothers

Dilovan Idris Barzani (deceased)

Rawan Barzani, commander in the KDP's Zeravani armed force

Youssef Barzani, occupation unknown

Barz Barzani, occupation unknown

Abbas Barzani, occupation unknown

Mother: Nazdar Muhammad Agha (deceased), from the city of Sulaimaniyah

Uncle: KDP leader Massoud Barzani

Cousin: KRG Prime Minister Masrour Barzani is a touted rival for the future head of the party

Languages

Kurdish (mother tongue), fluent in Persian; proficient Arabic and English

His native Kurdish dialect is Badini Kurdish, a sub-dialect of the Kurmanji dialect that is widely spoken in Turkey and Syria

Alternative names, spellings

Also called Nechirwan among some Sorani Kurdish speakers in Iraqi Kurdistan and predominantly Kurdish areas in Iran

Timeline

2023, 17 May

[Congratulates](#) Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan during a phone call on the victory of the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) in Turkey's 14 May parliamentary elections, and "wished him success in the second round of the presidential elections".

2020, 20 April

Tells a news conference in Erbil that the [PKK's presence in Iraqi Kurdistan is "illegitimate"](#). Pro-PKK organizations and some commentators criticize him over the comments.

2020, 12 March

[Condemns rocket attacks on Iraqi base](#) north of Baghdad that housed US-led coalition forces fighting Islamic State (IS)

2020, 27 January

[Condemns rocket attack on the US embassy](#) in Baghdad, labelling it an act against the interests of the people of Iraq

2020, 22 January

Meets US President Donald Trump on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Davos, where Trump praises the Kurds as an ally in the fight against IS

2020, 8 January

Lauds Kurdish parliamentary factions in Iraqi parliament for boycotting a non-binding resolution calling on foreign troops to withdraw from the country, saying Iraq still needs US-led coalition troops to fight off jihadist insurgency

2020, 6 January

Offers condolences to Iran's Supreme leader Ali Khamenei on the killing of top Iranian military leader Qassem Soleimani in a US drone strike in Baghdad three days earlier. He described Soleimani as "an ally" in conflicts against IS and former Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein

2019, 23 November

Meets visiting US Vice-President Mike Pence and exalts US-Kurdish alliance that he labeled a "strategic partnership"

2019, 27 October

Comments on a US-led operation that killed IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in Syria as a "great step forward" in the fight against the group, but warns it is not an end of jihadist insurgency

2019, 17 October

Tells reporters in Erbil at a joint news conference with French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian that he is concerned about the humanitarian crisis resulting from an ongoing Turkish military offensive against Syrian Kurdish-led forces

2019, 7 October

Shares his concerns over ongoing Turkish military offensive in Syria's Kurdish region with visiting Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov in Erbil, urging Moscow to help protect the rights of Syrian Kurds

2019, 26 July

Rudaw TV co-founder Rebwar Karim Wali, a prominent pro-KDP pundit known for his close ties to Nechirvan, tells the Kurdish Service of the Voice of America (VOA) that the long reported internal power struggle between Nechirvan and newly appointed KRG Prime Minister Masrour Barzani is "true" and that it is quite serious within the KDP. He gave the interview after the KRG's security agency –headed by Masrour- slammed the journalist in a statement for criticizing KRG's security forces a week after a Turkish official was assassinated in Erbil. The internal rivalry between the cousins first came to the surface at the KDP's 13th conference nine years earlier, according to Wali

2019, 21 June

Visits Ankara to discuss economic ties with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on his first foreign trip as Kurdistan Region president

2019, 10 June

Sworn in as the president of the Kurdistan Region

2019, 28 May

Kurdistan Region parliament elects him president; PUK and New Generation boycott the session despite a previous PUK deal on his appointment

2019, 19 February

KRG signs a 20-year gas sales agreement with Pearl Petroleum Company Limited, the Consortium led by Crescent Petroleum and UAE's Dana Gas

2019, January

Blames the presence of Turkey's Kurdish rebel group Kurdistan Workers' party (PKK) for Turkish airstrikes that killed and injured several Iraqi Kurdish civilians. His comments attracts criticism from non-KDP Kurdish journalists and pundits

2018, January – November

Makes major diplomatic efforts nationally and internationally to ease the backlash of the Kurdish independence referendum. Meets Iraqi PM Haider al-Abadi, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Russian President Vladimir Putin, French President Emmanuel Macron and US Deputy Secretary of State John Sullivan, among others

2018, 2 April

His brother Dilovan dies "suddenly" of a heart attack

2018, March

KRG signs a 10-year gas sales agreement with Pearl Petroleum and partners

2017, December

Lands in Paris from Baghdad in his first trip abroad following the Kurdish independence referendum to which Baghdad responded with a series of punitive measures, including a ban on international flights from and to the Kurdistan Region. At a joint news conference with Macron at the Elysee Palace tells reporters that "the referendum is over", and that the region is ready to open a new chapter with the Iraqi government, which was interpreted as an endorsement of the French

president's offer to mediate between Baghdad and Erbil

2017, 24 October

Offers to “freeze” the results of the Kurdish independence referendum for the Iraqi government to halt its military offensives a week after Iraqi army and allied militias expelled Kurdish forces from oil-rich Kirkuk and other parts of the disputed territories

2017, 25 September

Casts ballot in the Kurdish independence referendum. In the months leading up to the vote, he avoided overt public campaigning for the separatist vote in which the Kurds overwhelmingly voted for the establishment of a Kurdish state and secession from Iraq. His position led some in the local media to suggest that he did not support the poll unlike Kurdistan Region President Massoud Barzani and his rival and KRG security chief Masrour Barzani

2017, 30 August

His cabinet is said to immediately pay 1bn dollars to UAE's Dana Gas and its partners to settle a case filed in London five years earlier

2017, 24 August

KRG signs a new deal with Norway's DNO and Anglo-Turkish Genel Energy to settle disputes on overdue payments and to increase production and restructuring payment for oil exports to Turkey

2017, 13 March

KRG's Ministry of Natural Resources reportedly finalizes a deal with Genel Energy on a 2015 amended agreement on natural gas production and oil export to Turkey

2017, 21 February

Russia's Rosneft joins Gazprom as a major investor in the Kurdistan Region by signing a deal worth 2.1bn dollars for pre-paid oil investment in the region for 2017-2019

2016, 17 June

Meets Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and Russia's oil giant Gazprom CEO Alexander Dyukovat at the sidelines of the St Petersburg Economic Forum. He asks Moscow to strengthen its economic and energy ties with the KRG

2015, 12 October

Expels Change Movement (Gorran) party ministers from his cabinet. Bars parliament Speaker and other Gorran MPs from entering capital Erbil on the same day, owing to disputes over Gorran's efforts in the parliament to amend the presidency bill which would have denied KDP leader Massoud Barzani another term in office or extension. Accuses Gorran of fuelling violent anti-

government protests. Erbil parliament halts scheduled sessions, the legislature suspended effectively and remains shut for the following two years

2015, 8 October

His government faces popular discontent after public sector employees go on strike in Sulaimaniyah province against austerity measures introduced to ease financial crisis amid the war against IS. Protests turn violent in some areas of Sulaimaniyah province, leading to less than a dozen deaths and hundreds wounded among both demonstrators and security forces

2015, 15 August

KRG's Judicial Council, a body dominated by the KDP, advises the KRG to extend the presidential tenure for KDP leader Massoud Barzani, to the dismay of all the other Kurdish parties, including KDP's strongest ally, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK)

2014, 22 June

Re-elected and sworn in as KRG prime minister

2014, 4 June

Tells Kurdistan Region parliament that his cabinet has signed a 50-year energy deal with Turkey, including the export of the region's crude oil to the international market and natural gas production. The deal strains KRG's relations with the Iraqi government while Kurdish opposition and other parties slam the pact for lacking transparency

2014, 23 May

The first batch of KRG's crude oil officially transported to the international market via Turkey's port of Ceyhan, says Turkish media

2013, 23 December

Arrives in Baghdad and hands over a proposal to turn the town of Halabja into the fourth province of the Kurdistan Region

2013, 2 December

Tells Erbil International Oil and Gas Conference that a deal with Turkey to export KRG's oil as well as natural gas production is "irreversible" despite pressure from the Iraqi government

2013, 24 November

Meets opposition Gorran leader Nawshirwan Mustafa and asks his party to join the next KRG cabinet. Gorran asks for four ministerial portfolios, to which he later agreed

2013, 31 October

Arrives in Istanbul and meets Turkish PM Recep Tayyip Erdogan to discuss energy ties, while unconfirmed articles say that the visit aims at finalising a long-term oil and gas deal

2013, 23 January

Tells reporters in Erbil that the KRG is confident US oil giant ExxonMobil would stick to its agreement with the region on oil exploration despite Baghdad's pressure for the oil major to abandon the Kurdish region

2013, 17 January

His cabinet announces awarding Chevron an oil exploration contract in the Kurdistan Region

2012, 6 April

Sworn in as the KRG prime minister

2010, 16 November

Visits Turkey where he separately meets PM Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu. Some local commentators criticize the visit because he met foreign leaders despite not having a post in the KRG. At this point, Nechirvan's only post is that of KDP deputy leader

2010, 11 December

Appointed KDP deputy leader at the party's 13th conference, ahead of which local privately owned media reported intensified rivalry between him and his cousin Masrour. Nechirvan kisses hand of KDP leader and his uncle Massoud on stage, which local private media interpreted as bowing down to the authority of his uncle —seen as a symbolic move to discredit claims of internal rivalry

2006, May 7

Nechirvan Barzani is sworn in as the prime minister of the Kurdistan Region. The establishment of the "unified government" marks the end of the two, parallel Erbil and Sulaimaniyah administrations led by the KDP and PUK respectively that had been in place since the mid-1990s

2005, 30 January

Campaigns for the Kurdistan Alliance electoral coalition led by the KDP and the PUK in three elections held on the same day. The list wins the majority of the votes in the Kurdistan Region parliamentary election, wins considerable votes in the Iraqi parliamentary poll, and comes out victorious in the provincial council election in the Kurdistan Region and in Kirkuk and Ninawa provinces

2004

Continues the active role he had played for years in KDP-PUK reconciliation committees, which two years later leads to the formation of a unified KRG cabinet following the first internationally-recognized elections in the Iraq and the Kurdistan Region

2003, 3 February

Represents the KDP at an Ankara conference of Iraqi opposition parties ahead of the US-led invasion of Iraq

1999, November

Appointed as the prime minister of the KDP-led administration in Erbil

1998, November

Backs Ankara Process Declaration by the US, the UK and Turkey which backs a KDP-PUK reconciliation effort known as the Ankara Process, after years of armed clashes between the two parties. The trilateral declaration made it clear that unity of both parties would be supported and sponsored based on a commitment to eliminate all PKK bases in the Kurdistan Region

1996, November

Appointed as the deputy prime minister in the KDP-led administration in Erbil

1991

Reportedly takes part in the armed uprising that led to the withdrawal of the then Iraqi army from most parts of the Kurdistan Region

1989

Elected to the KDP Political Bureau at the party's 10th conference

1987, 31 January

His Father Idris Barzani and senior KDP official dies of a heart attack in Iran

1975

Flees to Iran with his family after a Barzani-led revolt against the Iraqi government to expand Kurdish autonomy fails

1966, 21 September

Born in the Barzan area of Erbil province

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