

Iraq demands that Turkey pull its 'occupying' troops out of military base near Mosul

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05/10/2016



Outraged by Ankara's decision to extend the stationing of its troops in northern Iraq, 30 kilometers from Mosul, Iraqi MPs have called on the government to review its relations with Turkey and lodge a complaint against the "occupation" with the UNSC.

On Tuesday, the majority of Iraqi legislators spoke out against the Turkish parliament's decision to prolong the stationing of about 150 Turkish soldiers and some 25 tanks at the Bashiqa military camp in Iraq's northern Nineveh Province, which is located at the forefront of the battle with Islamic State (IS, formerly ISIS/ISIL).

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In a written statement, the MPs decried the decision, appealing to the country's prime minister, Haider al-Abadi, to summon the Turkish ambassador and file a complaint with the United Nations Security Council that would designate Turkey's military contingent as an "*occupying*" force, according to Rudaw news agency.

On Saturday, the Turkish parliament green [lighted](#) the extension of the Turkish military's engagement in both Iraq and Syria.

Since 2014, Turkish servicemen have provided training and support to Kurdish Peshmerga units and Sunni militia known as Hashd al-Watani forces at the camp, subject to agreement with the Iraqi government. However, on December 4 of last year, Turkey beefed up its military presence at the camp, allegedly to protect its advisers. The move infuriated Baghdad, which insisted that Turkey had not asked for permission from the Iraqi government to deploy additional troops, thus violating its sovereignty.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan refused to acknowledge this at that time, claiming that Turkey was acting within the scope of the previous agreement.

*“Turkish soldiers are in Basheeqa camp at the request of Haider al-Abadi in 2014. Now I am asking why he has been silent since 2014,”* Erdogan [said](#) in December, disputing claims that Turkey was intervening in Iraq.

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Speaking in the wake of the vote, Abadi publicly called for Turkey’s troops to immediately leave its territory, saying that *“the Turkish insistence on their presence inside Iraqi territories has no justification.”*

The prime-minister told journalists on Tuesday that Iraq has managed to enlist the support of the ‘international community,’ as well as the US-led international coalition, in its bid to remove the Turkish military from its territory.

While Iraq doesn’t want to be dragged into a military conflict with Turkey, it finds the actions of its government *“not acceptable by any standard,”* he [added](#).

Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Numan Kurtulmus stressed on Wednesday that Turkey’s military presence in the Bashiqa camp is intended solely to provide stability and train the local forces, and that Ankara does not aim to become an occupying force.

*“Turkey will not allow this to become a matter of debate,”* he told reporters as cited by Reuters.

Both Turkey and Iraq summoned each other’s ambassadors on Wednesday to discuss the growing rift between the two states.

Turkey’s foreign ministry also condemned the vote, the Daily Sabah [reported](#).

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Back in December, Iraq appealed to NATO to force Turkey to withdraw its forces, but the alliance found Ankara to

be in compliance with the terms of the training agreement.

Iraq's largest city, Mosul, fell into the hands of Islamic State in 2014, and Iraqi forces are currently preparing an offensive to retake the terrorist stronghold, aided by US-led anti-terrorism coalition.

If the operation is successful, Iraq wants to *"ensure Turkish troops do not exploit the power vacuum after achieving victory against Islamic State in Mosul,"* Abadi has stressed.

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