[TR] Turkish broadcasting authority suspends Iraqi Kurdish TV channels

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Turkey's private broadcasting regulator (RTÜK) has ordered the removal of three Iraqi Kurdish TV channels from the Turkish satellite system. It said that the three channels Rudaw, Kurdistan 24 and Waar TV should no longer be available in Turkey. Rudaw was particularly of note because of its perceived close relationship with Massud Barzani.

Barzani, a Kurdish politician and president of the autonomous northern Iraqi region of Kurdistan since 13 June 2005, had helped to organise an independence referendum in Iraqi Kurdistan. Despite being banned by the supreme court of northern Iraq, the referendum had gone ahead on 25 September 2017, both in the autonomous region of Kurdistan and in other provinces claimed and largely controlled by it, but which are officially under the control of the Iraqi central government. According to the electoral commission, 92% of voters in the Iraqi part of Kurdistan voted for independence in the referendum. However, the referendum was not legally binding and the Turkish government opposed it on the grounds that it would destabilise the region.

The RTÜK explained that its decision to ban the Iraqi Kurdish channels, which was taken on the day of the referendum, was made because the three broadcasters were not based in Turkey and did not hold a Turkish broadcasting licence. In recent months, RTÜK has taken a number of measures against Kurdish channels.. In October of last year, TV broadcasters Med Nuce TV and Newroz TV were embroiled in a legal dispute over their transmission via the Eutelsat Hot Bird satellite. Ronahi, Sterk and the News Channel, which were carried via the same satellite, were banned in Turkey by the RTÜK in May.

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