

A Commentary – from Iraq

March 9, 2011

The protest movement here in the Kurdish region has never really taken off in the capital city of Erbil. The Peshmerga loyal to Barzani's KDP party have clamped down hard by breaking up meetings of even three or four people on the streets. Soon after the protests started one doctor in Erbil tried to protest publicly against the corruption. He was immediately beaten and jailed then beaten some more. Fortunately for him, he also had Australian citizenship. The Australian government quickly intervened on his behalf and four days later he was released.

Last night we interviewed a woman who is one of the leaders of the protest movement here in Sulemaniya. She and her husband are part of a group of about 55 people who have come together over the past weeks since start of the protests, meeting regularly to keep the momentum of the movement strong and non violent. One of their key decisions has been the open microphone that is available to any protester. This group of 55 leaders are not speaking for the people but providing space for the people to speak for themselves. None of the political parties have joined in the protests but support for some of the smaller opposition parties has been voiced from the microphone. The range of opinions within protest movement is broad, some wanting a complete overthrow of the government while others want the present government to reform itself. So the leaders of the protest have no political interests beyond insuring that ordinary people who have been totally ignored in the political discourse here, are given a voice.

This woman is sleeping in different places each night, for fear of arrest or worse. One could easily assume that the rest of the group of 55 leaders are doing the same thing. This woman and her husband are both Canadian citizens. When asked if she thought that either one of them could expect the same sort of support from the Canadian government as the Australian government had provided to one of its citizens, she replied, "no, the Canadian government responses in these situations are too closely linked to the Americans.

Given the Canadian government's record the last few years in allowing Canadians of Middle Eastern descent to be tortured and killed in there countries of birth, I can only agree with that assessment.

Love to all, Allan