Beat: Politics

PRESIDENT MACRON DE;IVDERD REMARKS IN PRESS CONFRENCE WHEN TRAVELLING IN BAGDAD

HE VISITED MOSSUL SITE OF ISIS

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USPA NEWS - French President Emmanuel Macron traveled to the Republic of Iraq for a two-day trip on the occasion of a Regional Conference for Cooperation and Partnership. President Emmanuel Macron traveled to the Republic of Iraq for a two-day trip on the occasion of a Regional Conference for Cooperation and Partnership (26 to 29 August). he went to Mosul, former stronghold of the Islamic State, (ISIS), during his second day of official displacement in Iraq and in Erbil, place of Kurdish resistance against the jihadist movement, while staying updated on what is happening in parallel in Afghanistan since the withdrawal of the American troops and the takeover of the Taliban from Kabul on August 14th. This synchronicity allowed the French President, visiting Baghdad, to discuss with HM the Emir of Qatar Thani about the ongoing evacuations of civilians in Afghanistan, and the possibility of extending them after the official withdrawal of any Western military presence from Kabul on August 31. President Macron delivered remarks during the press conference held in Bagdad, and answered questions from the French journalists who travelled with him from Paris to Bagdad, we publish the full transcript.

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.This is how French President Emmanuel Macron demonstrates both his attachment to this area of ??the Middle East and his curiosity naturally oriented towards a civilizational approach, by visiting both religious and Shiite sites (from a speech delivered to Notre-Dame-de-l'Heure, a Catholic church heavily damaged since 2003, which Unesco is in the process of rehabilitating) and strong symbolic places of the defeat of the jihadists of the Islamic State. Indeed, As early as Saturday morning, President Macron said, after a meeting with the Iraqi Prime Minister, his "attachment to the stability of Iraq", which "passes through the continuation of the fight against terrorism"On the other side of the Atlantic, the United States, under the leadership of former President Trump, had reduced their military troops to 2,500 soldiers in Iraq. - should be represented at a modest level. According to the French Presidency, "The fight against the Islamic State requires the maintenance of the United States".----------
President Macron delivered remarks during the press conference held in Bagdad, and answered three questions from the French journalists who travelled with him from Paris to Bagdad, we publish the full transcript, of the press conference.
The French head of state Macron, began his visit with an exchange with the Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq Moustafa al-Kazimi. Then, President Emmanuel Macron met with the President of the Republic of Iraq Barham Saleh. The French head of state visited Mosul, a former stronghold of the Islamic State, and Erbil, a place of Kurdish resistance against the jihadist movement, without losing sight of another theater of operations. In Baghdad, he met with HM Emir of Qatar Thani in an attempt to extend evacuations in Afghanistan.

FULL TEXT OF THE REMARKS BY PRESIDENT MACRON AT THE PRESS CONFERENCE IN BAGDAD --------
PRESS CONFERENCE BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC FROM BAGHDAD
PRESIDENT EMMANUEL MACRON « Mr. Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen, Honorable Ambassadors, Ladies and Gentlemen. I will meet you again for this press point at the end of the conference we have just held, Cooperation and Partnership Conference for Iraq, after the bilateral meetings which were held with the President and the Prime Minister, as well as that the exchanges that I was able to have with several counterparts present at the conference, in particular, the President SISSI, the Prime Minister of Kuwait, the Emir of Qatar and other representatives present. We will then have the opportunity to continue this journey by visiting the Speaker of the

Parliament, and then I will have, I will come back to, the opportunity to continue with different sequences today and tomorrow.
The first point I wanted to come back to is both our bilateral relationship and the meaning of this conference. Our desire, and this is the result of discussions we have had with President SALEH for two years now, was to help Iraq truly build its future and therefore work on both the fight against terrorism and regional stability. Indeed, Iraq has been the scene, in recent decades, of conflicts and multiple destabilizations. But very clearly, the last few years have been marked by the war against Daesh, on the one hand, and the presence of external destabilizations of several neighbors, the presence of militias which have contributed to weaken the state. Iraq's peace and stability can only be seen in an agenda of regional stability. The purpose of this conference was therefore above all to respond to these Iraqi difficulties, and it takes place in a geopolitical context which has not escaped anyone's notice, of recomposition of both regional and international forces which, I believe, has also shown that the Iraq had the capacity at this time to build an unprecedented forum for discussions and to allow the powers of the region who no longer spoke to each other, or who were not speaking to each other at the moment, to work together on this essential subject. So for me this is the most important aspect of the conference we just had.

As such, I was able to recall, in the fight against terrorism, that France has been involved, as you have known for several years, alongside the Iraqi women and men and within the framework of the international coalition. This fight was carried out with great courage by the combatants in Iraq. I want to remind you and pay tribute to them once again, and I will have the opportunity to do so tomorrow by meeting several families of combatants and peshmerga combatants. I think this is something that should not be forgotten in this period. But we continue to remain engaged, because while we have defeated the Territorial Caliphate, the battle against Islamist terrorism is not over. As such, I was able to express very clearly the fact that France remains and will remain engaged in the international coalition as long as the Iraqi government wishes and that the security of Iraq will depend on it, and this whatever the choices. of our allies, to be very explicit. As you know, France contributes to the tune of more than 800 soldiers in the region to the international coalition and the fight against Daesh, with two main locations which are Iraq and in particular Erbil, and I will have the opportunity to 'elsewhere tomorrow, to go to our special forces at Camp Grenier, so named in tribute to our fallen soldier in the fall of 2017; on the other hand, the H5 base in Jordan with our airmen, plus the contribution of many other support forces and in particular our base in the United Arab Emirates. This is the first pillar that I mentioned on which France has recommitted itself, and I believe that this conference today was able to mark what is also a very important element: the commitment of all stakeholders, I mean all stakeholders, in the pursuit of the fight against terrorism.----------
The second element is stability through the preservation of Iraqi sovereignty. You know, the militias are very present on Iraqi soil. There have been several incursions into the north of the country which are also linked to terrorist activities taking place from Iraqi soil to Turkey. There are very clearly today multiple incursions which weaken this sovereignty. Our desire, both in a bilateral framework and through this conference, is very clearly, on the one hand, to strengthen the capacities of the Iraqi State, to continue to cooperate by strengthening investments and the training of the Iraqi State. Iraqi army, but also through discussions, exchanges - and it was also one of the interests of this conference - to engage the main neighbors to cooperate in order to reduce interference and precisely allow more cooperation with the Iraqi forces.----------
The third element that we have mentioned in the framework of this agenda for stability and development in Iraq are obviously economic issues. Fight against terrorism, stability and sovereignty and then progress, if I may say so, and economic development, because, as we know, we can only achieve lasting stability if there is real progress. So progress is first and foremost that which goes to the populations who have been displaced. There are many. I would like to reiterate here the commitment that is ours, and I salute the commitment of the Iraqi government in this matter, for all the communities that have been displaced, in particular the Yazidi community, of which 200,000 members are still displaced. .

PRESIDENT EMMANUEL MACRON « In this regard, I welcome the presence of Nadia MURAD, Nobel Peace Prize winner in our delegation and here with us, she carries a precious commitment. Sinjar remains a real victim of the destabilizations and conflicts that remain, and in a situation of insecurity because this region is a victim both of the terrorist activity carried out by some and of the bombardments carried out by the Turkish army. So there is both a work of stabilization, but also a work of economic development, of sustainability. I will also have the opportunity to say it again later to Nadia MURAD, and we continue to work with the Yazidis, we have invested a lot in health, in education, in accordance with our commitments in matter. I mean here that we will continue to remain engaged on all these subjects alongside the Yazidis. This is an important point of this development strategy that I mentioned earlier, with financial commitments that I will have the opportunity to reclarify and in particular the construction of the hospital in Sinjar where we continue to be collectively mobilized to support all displaced people in the strategy I mentioned.
This strategy also of progress and economic development, it is essential in a context where Iraq continues to develop from a demographic point of view, and as I recalled this morning, there are more than 500,000 young Iraqis each year. entering the labor market. So there is the need to find economic projects, to help the development of the country. This is obviously what is at the heart of our bilateral relationship, through projects in energy, transport, development to which we have returned, water treatment where French

companies are very strongly involved. , but this is also at the heart of the regional agenda that we developed in this conference, which aims to identify major structuring projects in terms of infrastructure, which will make it possible in particular on the Baghdad-Aqaba axis to which we have come back several times this morning, but to have projects in the area of ??water, energy, rail, and infrastructure, which are again extremely important.----------

As you can see, the goal of this international conference was really to hammer home a simple message: neither interference nor indifference, but a clear commitment from the whole region and from France to help Iraq to be fully stable, sovereign, in peace, and ensure development for its population and in particular its youth. All this comes in support of the work of President SALEH and the reformist momentum of the KAZIMI government, which I want to salute here. Courageous reforms have been undertaken, the electoral process is also carried out with great courage and the confirmation of the elections on October 10, which is also for us a very important point which has been recalled and which, I think I can say, made it possible to start this conference in the best possible conditions.

These are the elements that I wanted to quickly bring to your knowledge after these first steps. We will, as I said, in a moment go to Parliament because first of all I am accompanied by an eminent parliamentary delegation and I thank our French parliamentarians for coming in numbers and in force, but because Parliament will play an extremely important role in providing a legal framework for this cooperation and continuing the work that has been started. This visit is also for me dedicated to the bilateral relationship with Iraq and we have built a partnership which obviously involves the fight against terrorism, stabilization actions, this regional agenda and many important projects, but it is is also the occasion, with the cultural, intellectual and religious delegation which accompanies me, to go to meet all the components of the Iraqi people in its diversity. I believe that this is what corresponds to the very history of France. We have a long history with Iraq and here I want to salute the commitment that has been ours for a long time, of the various communities, in particular of what is being done with regard to the Christian communities and the Christians of the East. I welcome the presence of Monsignor GOLLNISCH by our side here. It is also the meaning of the historical commitment that Danielle MITTERRAND had through her foundation and the role she played with regard to the Kurdish people. It is also the whole meaning of our intellectual, cultural and educational action. Mr. PERSONNAZ is leading a mission on behalf of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and we are developing this cooperation with schools and religious heritage. We have been able to carry out useful actions here and we will continue to do so. ALIPH has carried out an extremely important action and I salute here the President and her General Delegate who carry out extremely important work and have contributed to the restoration of several extremely important monuments, whether cultural or religious in Iraq, in partnership with the French Development Agency or Unesco, and the Arab World Institute have been carrying out extremely structuring work for several years with and for the Iraqi people in all their diversity.----------

I will be going to Al-Khadimiya shortly with the Prime Minister, Shiite shrine and place of study. It is also a mark of respect and recognition for all Shiites, and I believe it is also a first for a French President. I will then go later in the evening to Erbil, which will allow me tomorrow morning to be at the side of our troops. But I will be in Mosul tomorrow. Mosul, which still bears the scars of Daesh's crimes. I will bring messages and gestures of solidarity to its inhabitants. I will meet with representatives of Christian communities. We will also make important commitments, including to help restore several expected places and I will have the opportunity to announce it tomorrow. I will also have the opportunity to go again to the Sunni community, and then, I will also meet the Kurdish authorities and Kurdish fighters, as I mentioned, to express to them France's solidarity, its support. , like the support that I was able to express earlier to the Yazidis. So you see, it is also through, if I may say so, this journey, this journey, which aims to recognize the wealth and all the components of the Iraqi people that we will dedicate the continuation of this trip at the end of this conference. I will now answer your questions."

JOURNALIST : Hello Mr. President. I have two questions for you, one on the conference: we listened to the speeches, the interventions of each other, in a generally quite civilized tone, we heard the Iranian speak in Arabic, so a lot of good will, but is there a follow-up mechanism for decisions that will be adopted? Maybe you can also tell us if then behind closed doors this civilized tone remained civilized, or was there perhaps a little more exchange I would say "acrimonious" or something like that. ? Then my second question is, you said it this morning, you repeated it earlier that France therefore did not make its decision to stay in Iraq dependent on another American decision. Does that mean that in the event of an American withdrawal at the end of the year, whatever the American decision, France will commit to remaining militarily in Iraq? And from an operational point of view, do we have the means to stay in Iraq without American cover?----------

PRESIDENT EMMANUEL MACRON?So on your first subject, you are right that the tone was calming. I think it is also linked first of all to the work that we have been carrying out for a year since we had almost imagined doing this conference a year ago with the President and the Prime Minister. It is because there has been a lot of work to approach and engage Iraq and France with all the stakeholders. Then, I think there is also an awareness of all the powers of the region, which the contemporary context requires to re-engage in discussions and to cooperate. Does that mean that all differences or disagreements disappear? No. But the collective choice was made not to approach them in a way I would say too direct or brutal and therefore there was no aside in this direction either. The same tone prevailed in the asides or the lunch we had afterwards. This is deliberate because the will is to truly create this

unique format - where by the way, for the first time I think in a very long time, you had around the table a Minister of Foreign Affairs from Saudi Arabia and the United Kingdom. Iran who were talking and exchanging on the same topic - and trying to carry on.
So it is to do this that we first recorded and all approved a decision where the terms of fight against terrorism, stability, fight against interference, are explicitly written, but where we also recorded a process of follow-up of this conference, follow-up through which we will have delegates who will work together, first to ensure that the commitments made are well kept, then to go further in the identification of projects and funding needs and mobilization of international donors. We have noted that there will be regular meeting points, one probably at the ministerial level between three and six months, and one at the level of heads of state and government by 10 to 12 months, and we also noted that this follow-up could be done in Aqaba.
On what is then about our forces present here and about the work which is ours: I said it, the French presence in Iraq is on the one hand in a respectful way with the Iraqi sovereignty. We have only intervened from day one at the request and with the consent of the Iraqi authorities, and within the framework of the international coalition, with a single and simple object which is the fight against terrorism. Whatever the American choices, we will maintain our presence to fight terrorism in Iraq, as long as the terrorist groups continue to operate and as long as the Iraqi government asks us for this support. These are the only two conditions that are ours. We have carried out the studies that allow me to tell you that we have the operational capacities to ensure this presence, whatever the American choices. We will adapt our system because France still has the same line: we are fighting against Islamist terrorism. It is our commitment in the Sahel, it is our commitment here. With a grammar of international affairs which is always the same: we do so in support of the States, at the request of the latter and with demands vis-à-vis these States. It is within this framework that we also intervene here. »

JOURNALIST: « Hello. Regarding Afghanistan, there was a first contact yesterday between France and the Taliban. Are they committed to the possible continuation of the evacuations? Are these evacuations the sine qua non for any dialogue with them? In addition, you met the Emir of Qatar earlier. What did you say to yourself? How can Qatar help France in the pursuit of these evacuations of Afghans? »----------
PRESIDENT EMMANUEL MACRON « Qatar has played an important role for several months, at the request of the Americans and the previous administration, to lead, first to shelter, then to participate in negotiations with the Taliban. In this context, I want to salute the role of the Emir of Qatar and all of his diplomacy who have carried out in-depth work and who, in particular in the context in which we live, play an extremely important role and useful. As you know, our American allies are in the process, in accordance with the commitments they had made with the Taliban, to close the military airport through which we have carried out evacuation operations since mid-August last and which has made it possible to 'evacuate 2,800 French, European and Afghan nationals, for an overwhelming Afghan majority, whom we wanted to protect or repatriate, ourselves having stopped these operations yesterday. We are in the process of conducting discussions, they are still fragile and very provisional, which is why I will be extremely careful in my response. But yes, there are discussions that have started with the Taliban on the subject of humanitarian operations and the ability to protect and repatriate Afghans who are at risk.
Then, yes, we have work that we are doing jointly with Qatar, among others, to allow these operations to be carried out because Qatar, in the context of the discussions they have with the Taliban, has the possibility - I'm talking about still conditional - perhaps to organize airlift operations, in any case reopening certain air lines under security conditions which remain to be defined. That is why I will remain very cautious, but which would allow evacuation operations in a necessarily different framework and within a framework necessarily and systematically negotiated with the Taliban, and in particular with operations to secure the Taliban.
For what concerns us and to be very clear because I know that there is a lot of anguish in many families, we have on all the Afghan women and all the Afghans who have been reported to us, and who seem eligible precisely for the asylum procedure, but which are in any case to be protected given what they are, the fight they carry, we have each time that we have obtained this information to contact them, transmitted titles, certificates to these women and men. Several hundred of them, moreover, have already had them, who could not reach the airport. We evacuated over 2,200 in the critical period, but there are still many hundreds that are on site. So our goal is for us to be able in the days, weeks or months to come, through this cooperative work with Qatar, in discussions with the Taliban, to carry out targeted evacuation operations to protect these women and men that we have identified, to whom we have given these provisional titles. This, very clearly, is a condition for us of any form of political engagement and therefore ultimately a procedure which would engage France as our allies with regard to the Taliban. I have had the opportunity to say this on several occasions. There are important lists that have been negotiated, that have come out of G7 communiques and others.----------
But for me, the essential prerequisites to claim to discuss the future and to have some elements of recognition or political commitment, it is first of all that the Taliban absolutely respect humanitarian law and the protection of Afghans who wish to go out and benefit from this protection and in particular from constitutional asylum. For artists, for intellectuals, for journalists, magistrates, for many women, it is essential. This is the first condition. The second condition is respect for a clear commitment and a red line towards all terrorist groups, and verifiable clarity in this regard. The third is respect for human rights and in particular for the dignity of women and their

rights. These subjects are important and our will is to have coordinated action, this is what we decided in G7. This is what we are now also deciding with our partners. I had this discussion with all the partners in the region who also wish to coordinate with us in this process of political management of a phase which is going to be inevitably chaotic, strongly destabilized, but where we must hold some firm principles.
To give you the figures very precisely on evacuations: I have had the opportunity to recall this on several occasions, but I want to give the framework here. France, as you know, which has not been engaged militarily since the end of 2014, has already evacuated and protected more than 830 auxiliaries of the French army, plus families, in the period preceding the crisis we have just experienced. We did this over the long term, in peace by going to find all those who presented themselves by checking their titles, by protecting their families. We then, within the framework of the right to asylum, constantly carried out our work and did our duty, France having received the request of several tens of thousands of Afghans and Afghans in recent years. On average, 10,000 per year were presented, and France having one of the highest protection rates in Europe: 89% protection rate, much more than other European countries. These are the Afghans who came to us for asylum. Third element: before the peak of the crisis in mid-August, we evacuated all of our local staff and their families to protect them, which represents around 630 people. This is a job we did last spring. We have sometimes been criticized for saying: "You see things too pessimistically". I am delighted to have been lucid and not pessimistic. We were able, outside of these emergency operations, to protect all the staff of our embassy and our nationals. Then from the heart of the crisis, we have been able to evacuate exactly 2,834 people from Afghan soil, including 142 French people, 17 Europeans, and therefore, as you can see, more than 2,600 Afghans to be very precise on the figures and this, through fifteen flights from the United Arab Emirates since August 17. This work has been made possible thanks to the commitment of our diplomatic teams, at the quayside crisis center, which I would like to thank, since its leader is alongside the Minister today and will be called upon to take on imminent responsibilities for French diplomacy here. This allows me to greet all the teams at the crisis center and also the teams obviously present in Kabul: the ambassador, his staff, but also our soldiers and our police, there you have it. »

JOURNALIST : « Hello Mr. President. Tomorrow, you recalled, you will be in Mosul, a city long in the hands of Daesh. What message are you going to convey, especially on the one hand on the site of the al-Nouri mosque where Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi had proclaimed himself kalif of the Islamic State? And then, you were talking a little earlier about the components of the Iraqi people, what message also for Eastern Christians here? Yesterday, it turns out that in Baghdad, we met Dominicans who do not really see how the Christians of the East, even beyond the reconstructions, could find a place in Iraqi society. Thank you. »
PRESIDENT EMMANUEL MACRON « So, I think it's one of the challenges, precisely, that all the components of Iraqi society find their place, as you say. I also think that our presence, our commitment, is that. It is the same common thread, moreover, which guides our friendly, I was going to say, affectionate commitment to Lebanon. This is because there are a few countries in the region which, through their history, carry this pluralism. France's vocation is to defend this, because it is the very condition for the stability of the region, because it is respect for its history and that is why we have been constantly committed to supporting Christians of the East, but also at the bedside of all minorities, all communities.----------
So, you reminded him, tomorrow I will be in the old city of Mosul, at the foot of the Al-Nouri mosque, the first construction of which is almost a thousand years old and with a recent history that has marked the life of the country with great cruelty. , in particular the presence of Daesh (ISIS). So on that, I just want to say, the message I will carry is that of a return to sovereignty, but of a return not just to normal, but also to culture and the possibility of worship in a peaceful way, but because the international community has worked on this site. The rehabilitation of these places is a priority for us and France is working in favor of this rehabilitation. We are doing it within Unesco, and besides, here I want to salute the project "Reviving the spirit of Mosul" which was launched by UNESCO and we are also doing it through the work that is being carried out. by ALIPH, which is working with the Louvre museum on the rehabilitation of the Mosul museum, which is neighboring and on which we are carrying out work. The message we will carry is a message of reconstruction in every sense of the word, of a commitment from France, from the international community to repair what has been done by some who have entertained a religion, who have distorted, diverted to carry a project of obscurantism, of crimes, of which the Iraqis, the Iraqi Muslims were the first victims.----------
Then, because we will also meet the Dominicans tomorrow, we will obviously have an exchange to recall the role of France with regard to the Christians of the East, in Iraq in particular, but more generally in the whole region. This message is there too, as I said, civilizational, but it is also geopolitical. There will be no balance if there is no respect for these communities. Iraq would not remain Iraq if there was not the possibility to... We will be on the site of Notre-Dame de l'Eure, but all the Christian communities say they are living their worship in peace and be able to pursue it. Therefore, I will have the opportunity in this capacity, at that time, to salute the admirable work of the communities in the educational, medical and social fields for the whole population, not simply for Christians. This commitment is always a commitment for peace and peaceful coexistence which must be safeguarded. As such, France supports this work, this is what I will repeat, within the framework of the Minorities Fund, since 2017, France has financed various projects in favor of the Christians of Iraq on the social medical level, for an amount total of 6 million euros. We also finance school projects, as I

mentioned earlier, to disseminate the Francophonie, but also its values ??of peace and peaceful coexistence in the region. The Eastern Schools Support Fund, which I announced the creation of in Jerusalem in January 2020, financially supports three schools in Iraq. I will remind you tomorrow, I asked that we could do more in the coming months, we talked about it with Monsignor GOLLNISCH and with Minister LE DRIAN and we are going to increase this work. Then, we will also have the opportunity to announce very concrete investments by France and ALIPH for the house of prayer and the rehabilitations that are expected. So it is a work of resistance in the dark times that we are living. But this work of resistance, it is essential and it is accompanied by France, in concrete projects, but also by the way which is ours, that is to say that with regard to the governments and all the region, we are constantly protecting and defending all of these communities and in particular Christians in the East. Voila." End of transcript. Source: Elysee

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