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**IRAQ'S FIRST DEPUTY SPEAKER OF PARLIAMENT AND THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER OF THE KURDISTAN REGIONAL GOVERNMENT DISCUSS THE PROGRESS OF TALKS TO FORM THE NEXT GOVERNMENT**

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Iraqi News Agency (8 December)

Iraq's First Deputy Speaker of Parliament, Mohsen al-Mandalawi, met on Monday with a delegation from the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) headed by Deputy Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government, Qubad Talabani, to discuss the progress of talks between the parties that won seats in the recent parliamentary elections to form the next federal government.

The media office of the First Deputy Speaker of Parliament stated in a press release, received by the Iraqi News Agency (INA), that "First Deputy Speaker of Parliament, Mohsen al-Mandalawi, received at his residence a delegation from the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) headed by Deputy Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government, Qubad Talabani. During the meeting, they discussed the latest developments on the national political scene and the progress of the talks between the parties that won seats in the recent parliamentary elections to form the next federal government."

According to the statement, al-Mandalawi emphasized "the necessity of intensifying meetings between the various political forces at this critical juncture, in order to reach understandings regarding constitutional entitlements and form a strong government capable of serving the people and fulfilling their aspirations."

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