In a devastating political misstep, in September 2017 the Kurdistan Regional Government held a referendum asking if residents in the KRG and in the disputed "Kurdistani areas" wanted to become an independent state. To no one’s surprise, 93 percent voted yes. The local, regional and global backlash was immediate and severe. The referendum transpired in the wake of a brutal military campaign against ISIS, a multi-year dispute with Baghdad, rampant corruption and financial collapse. The punitive response to the vote has forced the region to its knees: the Kurdish leadership is in disarray, the people devoid of hope, and prospects for the future are dim.