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## SUDANI CABINET AND THE GOVERNMENT PROGRAM

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## SUDANI CABINET AND THE GOVERNMENT PROGRAM

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## INTRODUCTION

**I**n all parliamentary elections held after 2003 in Iraq, different systems were applied due to changes in the electoral laws. The effect of the electoral system on representation, however, caused the differentiation of the political institution beyond the social transformation and prevented the healthy reflection of voter requests in the parliament. This division between the people and the political mechanism reached a peak with the October 2019 demonstrations. At the people's request, the prime minister of the time resigned, and the new government prepared a new electoral law. This electoral law benefited the Sadrist movement in Iraq, where different dynamics are present in the society beyond political variables. This system was used in the parliamentary elections held in 2021, but afterwards, a government crisis arose due to disputes between political entities.

Within the government crisis, in addition to none of the blocs that were formed in line

with the new election system being unable to reach the necessary majority to form a government, the political disputes deepened even more due to the country's chronic problems, and none of the parties managed to reconcile. The crisis was only resolved when the political party with the largest following, the Sadrist Movement resigned and substitute members chosen from other blocs took their place.

For this reason, it is important to explain the separation between the Iraqi Shiites, who became the main actors of the country, especially after the 2018 elections, which can be considered the background of the establishment of the government under the leadership of Mohammed Shia al-Sudani as well as the separation between the people and politics. The structure of the Sudani cabinet, its government program, and its first term in power can be considered a legacy of the 2018-2022 background, which is touched upon below.

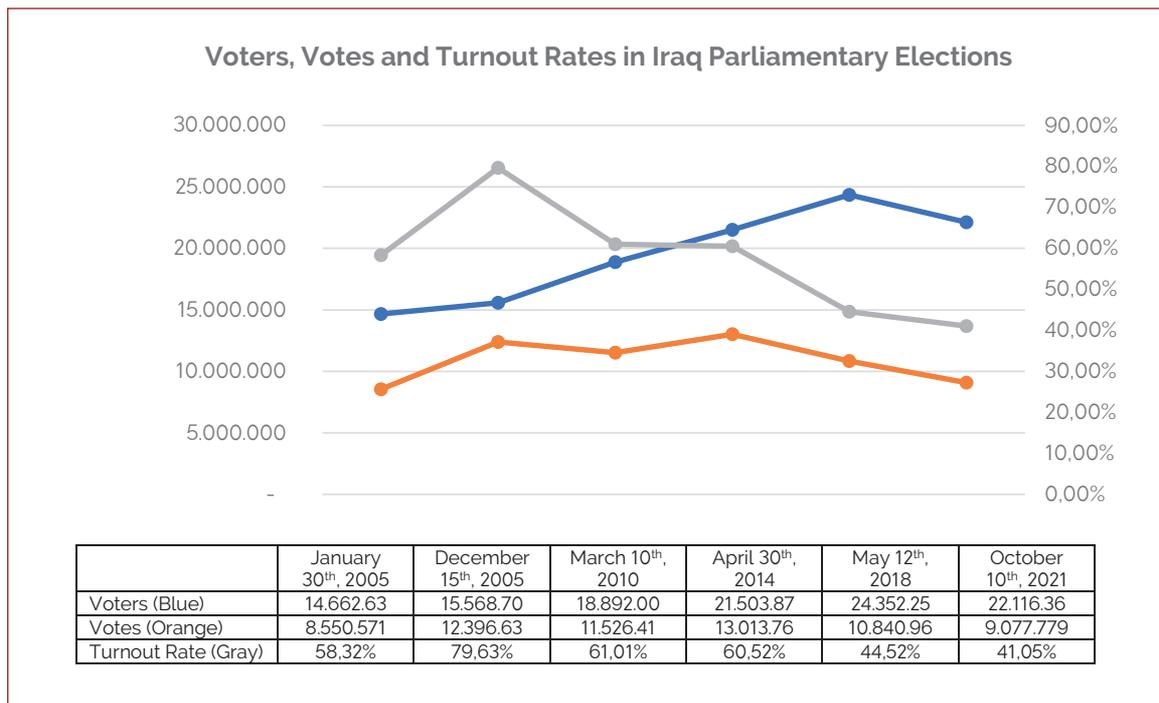
## BACKGROUND OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SUDANI CABINET



After the elections held on October 18, 2018, the failure of the Sadrist Movement and the Fatah Coalition to obtain a superior position to each other in the intra-parliamentary bloc paved the way for Adil Abdul-Mahdi to form the government as a consensus candidate. The anti-government demonstrations that started on October 1, 2019 in Baghdad and the southern provinces quickly wore down Abdul Mahdi's cabinet, which was already established on sensitive ground. Thus, after 2003, Abdul-Mahdi became the first Iraqi

prime minister to resign before the end of his term. However, after his resignation, none of the parliamentary blocs were large enough to form the government, resulting in a crisis in the country. Despite the precedent of assigning the largest parliamentary bloc to fill the vacant prime ministerial seat after Abdul-Mahdi, the inability to determine this in the parliament led to procedural debates. Instead of going by precedent, new consensus candidates were sought out.

Below is a table showing voters, votes and turnout rates in Iraq's parliamentary elections.



Even though Mohammed Tawfiq Allawi and Adnan al-Zurfi were tasked with forming the government by the president of the time, Barham Salih, the crisis continued due to their failure and only ended when the Director of Iraqi National Intelligence Service, Mustafa al-Kadhimi, formed the government. A large-scale consensus could not be reached by the political blocs on Kadhimi, but Salih's statement that he would start to "appoint his own candidates instead of those of the political blocs" if the Kadhimi cabinet could not get a vote of confidence brought with it "mandatory approval".

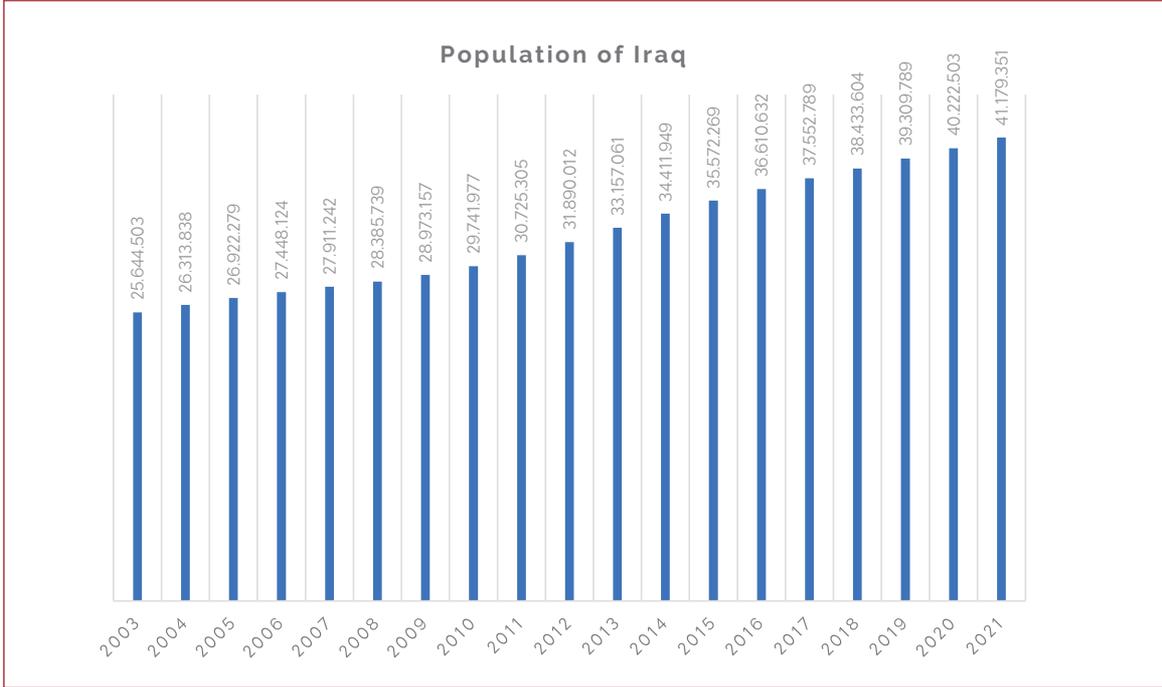
Kadhimi's cabinet, as included in the government program, has led the country to elections after the new election law was put into effect in order to meet the protesters' demand for early elections. According to the new law, the provinces designated as single electoral districts were divided into an equal number of

electoral districts with a quota for women, and it was decided that the candidates who received the most votes in these electoral districts would have the right to represent. As such, the first early election after 2003 was held in Iraq on October 10, 2021. Although electronic voting devices, which were also used in the 2018 elections, were used, it was observed that the security was much higher compared to previous elections.

As it can be seen in the table, the 2021 elections had the lowest turnout among all the elections examined. It could be said that this is caused by a decline of belief in elections and the political process.

In this context, it can be seen that the threat created by the distance between the people and the politicians has turned into pressure for the government. It can be assumed that the separation between society and the political mechanism will lead to problems of

Below is a graphic displaying Iraq's population estimation according to the World Bank.



Source: The World Bank

legitimacy in politics. In fact, after the 2018 elections, the first of the two elections in which the turnout fell below 50 percent, the problems related to the administration in the country increased, and the increasing separation between political formations caused the escalation of these problems. On the other hand, there is a direct link between the change in the definition of voter as "persons that receive the electronic election card from Iraqis who have the right to vote" and the announced turnout in the 2021 elections. Since, if the number of voters would be counted as in previous elections, the turnout rate would remain at 37.28 percent.

Although there is no precise data on the Iraqi population due to the inability to take a census, according to the estimates of the World Bank, it is not possible for the turnout rate to exceed 40 percent. In fact, when the ratio of the number of voters to the populati-

on in 2018 is adjusted for 2021, the number of voters in the country corresponds to approximately 26 million. Based on this assumption, the turnout rate drops to 34.91 percent.

It is possible to establish a connection between the decrease in the turnout rate in the elections and bottlenecks in the political process. After the 2021 elections, which had the lowest turnout rate, it was observed that the period between the elections and the establishment of the government was the longest period experienced post-2003.

In fact, in the elections held before the 2021 elections, the average time between the election and the formation of the government was 167 days. In the 2021 elections, this period had more than doubled to 382 days.

From there, in 2010, after the establishment process of the government, which took longer than usual, the Al-Wataniya coalition led

by Ayad Allawi in the elections was the first formation, but it was delayed due to legal objections that Shiite groups wanted to establish the government. The Federal Supreme Court of Iraq declared that the largest intra-parliamentary bloc would form the government instead of the largest elected coalition. And

in the 2014 elections, Shiite groups forming blocs within the parliament even though they entered the elections separately caused disputes about who the prime minister would be. Despite these disputes, they managed to form the government, but this precedent caused delays in subsequent elections.

Below is a table showing important dates regarding the parliamentary elections held in Iraq after 2003.

#	Election Date	Announcement of Election Results	Parliamentary Meeting	Establishment of the Government
1	January 30, 2005 <sup>1</sup>	February 13, 2005 <sup>2</sup>	March 16, 2005 <sup>3</sup>	May 3, 2005 <sup>4</sup>
2	December 15, 2005 <sup>5</sup>	February 10, 2006 <sup>6</sup>	March 16, 2006 <sup>7</sup>	May 20, 2006 <sup>8</sup>
3	March 7, 2010 <sup>9</sup>	March 26, 2010 <sup>10</sup>	June 14, 2010 <sup>11</sup>	December 22, 2010 <sup>12</sup>
4	April 30, 2014 <sup>13</sup>	May 25, 2014 <sup>14</sup>	July 1, 2014 <sup>15</sup>	September 8, 2014 <sup>16</sup>
5	May 12, 2018 <sup>17</sup>	August 9, 2018 <sup>18</sup>	September 3, 2018 <sup>19</sup>	October 25, 2018 <sup>20</sup>
6	October 10, 2021	December 27, 2021	January 9, 2022	October 27, 2022

<sup>1</sup> "Attacks in Iraq on Election Day", *CNN*, 30 January 2005

<sup>2</sup> "Shiites Win Most Votes in Iraq Results Show", *The New York Times*, 13 February 2005.

<sup>3</sup> "Iraqi Parliament meets for first time", *ABC News*, 16 March 2005.

<sup>4</sup> "New Iraqi government sworn in", *The Guardian*, 3 May 2005.

<sup>5</sup> "High turnout in Iraqi elections", *The Guardian*, 15 December 2005.

<sup>6</sup> "As results of Iraqi election are announced, Annan urges quick formation of Government", *United Nations News*, 10 February 2006.

<sup>7</sup> "Iraqi Parliament briefly convenes", *ABC News*, 16 March 2006.

<sup>8</sup> "Iraq's new unity government sworn in", *CNN*, 20 May 2006.

<sup>9</sup> "The 2010 Iraqi Parliamentary Elections", *New York Times*, 11 March 2010.

<sup>10</sup> "Iraqi elections an historic achievement, UN says as results are announced", *UN News*, 26 March 2010.

<sup>11</sup> "New Iraqi parliament to hold first session June 14", *France 24*, 8 June 2010.

<sup>12</sup> "After Months, Iraqi Lawmakers Approve a Government", *New York Times*, 22 December 2010.

<sup>13</sup> "Security Council welcomes timely, peaceful parliamentary elections in Iraq", *UN News*, 30 April 2014.

<sup>14</sup> "Official Election Results Announced 25th of May", *Iraq-Business News*, 5 May 2014.

<sup>15</sup> "Iraq's parliament fails to agree on formation of new government", *The Washington Post*, 1 July 2014.

<sup>16</sup> "Parliament swears in unity government", *BBC News*, 8 September 2014.

<sup>17</sup> "Iraqis vote in first elections since IS defeat", *BBC News*, 12 May 2018.

<sup>18</sup> "Recount shows Iraq's Sadr retains election victory, no major changes", *Reuters*, 10 August 2018.

<sup>19</sup> "Rival blocs vie for majority as new parliament meets", *Al-Jazeera*, 3 September 2018.

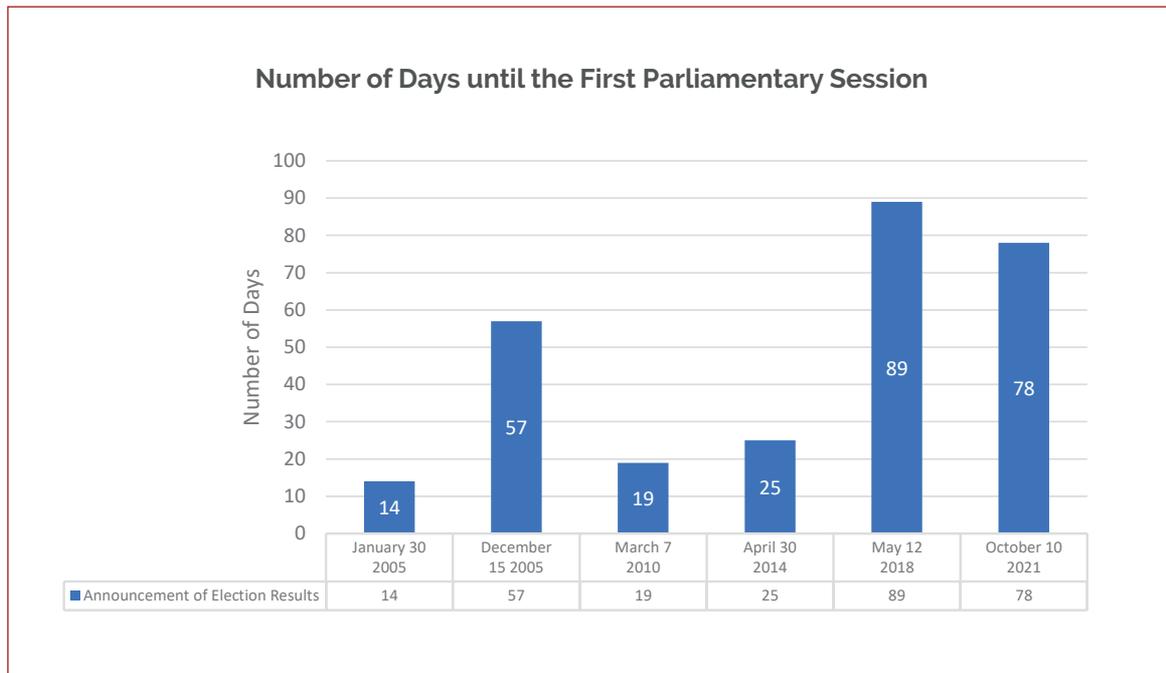
<sup>20</sup> "Iraq's New Prime Minister Forms Government Five Months After Election", *The Wall Street Journal*, 25 October 2018.

After the 2021 elections, as in 2018, the parties that entered the elections were unable to form a parliamentary bloc with high enough numbers to establish the government, which formed the basis for delays. This situation caused the government for the 2021 elections to be the most delayed government established after 2003.

The constitutional calendar losing its functionality played a part in the extraordinary delays after the 2021 elections. The fact that there was no limit to the final announcement of the election results in the Constitution caused the objection process to be open-ended, and there were no sanctions for violating time limits. Although the objection process did not last as long as the 2018 elections, it has led to an extension in the process for more than two months.

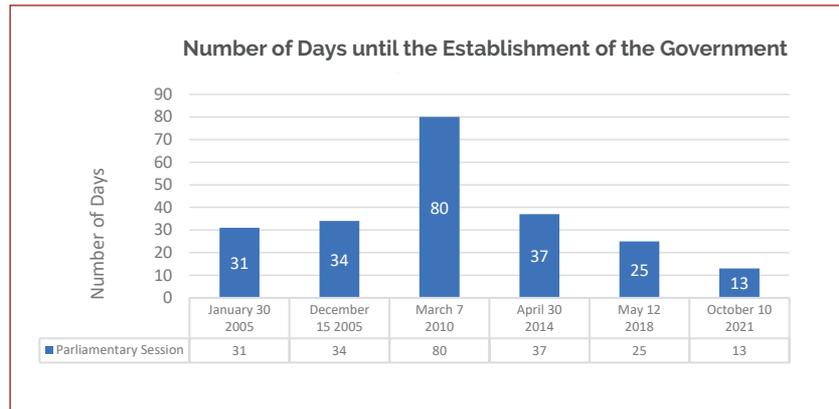
The constitution sets a 15-day time limit on the first session of parliament, which is the last stage before the start of the intra-parliamentary election processes. Beyond the delay in 2010, however, as mentioned earlier, this period was exceeded in all elections other than the 2021 elections. On the other hand, although the disclosure of the results of the 2021 elections is delayed, the rapid meeting of parliament has been considered a sign that the process will function in accordance with the calendar. However, after the first session of the parliament, this expectation disappeared. According to the Constitution, in addition to the speaker of the council, two deputies should be elected. However, in the session, Mohammed al-Halbousi was chosen for the second time as the Speaker and no deputies were appointed.<sup>21</sup>

*Below is a graphic displaying the election dates and the number of days until the announcement of the final election results in Iraq.*



<sup>21</sup> Ahmed Rasheed and Haider Khadim, "Iraq's new parliament elects speaker in first step towards establishing a govt", *Reuters*, 10 January 2022.

*Below is a graphic displaying the number of days from the announcement of election results until the first session of parliament.*



**CONSTITUTION OF IRAQ, ARTICLE 55**  
The Council of Representatives shall elect in its first session its speaker, then his first deputy and second deputy, by an absolute majority of the total number of the Council members by direct secret ballot.

Within the establishment of the government process, despite the disruption in the elections, the 30-day calendar was initiated for the presidential election according to the Constitution due to the election of the speaker of the parliament. However, the inability of the political groups to establish a consensus on the prime minister candidate who was expected to establish the government led to both the topic of the Presidency remaining in the background and the proposal of president candidates that were not agreed upon being suggested by actors that wanted to further the process.

The process of progressing in line with the calendar faced a new predicament. In addition, beyond candidate discussions, the discussions of the political parties on the form of the government led to the exacerbation of the debate against the presidential candidates who are

expected to be appointed by the Prime Minister candidate. For this reason, no consensus could be reached by mainly the PUK and the KDP for the position that became a Kurdish and even a PUK quota. However, with the resignation of the Sadrist Movement, the process was able to continue with deputies elected from other blocs taking over. At this stage, the 2021 elections took the longest for the establishment of the government after the first session of the parliament. In fact, despite the extraordinary delay in 2010, this process was completed on average in 85 days, and after the 2021 elections, this process lasted almost four times longer with 291 days.

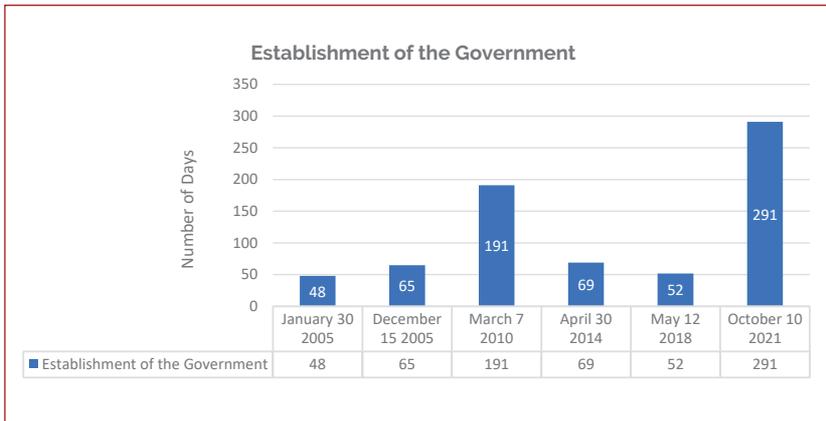
Below is a graphic displaying the number of days from the first session of the parliament to the establishment of the government.

It can be seen from the graph, that in all processes other than the first session of the parliament, the 2021 elections exceeded average expected delays. In fact, the process could only continue with the resignation of the Sadrist Movement, and if the resignation decision had not been taken, the political system was under the threat of complete collapse.

Despite all the discussions and disruptions, the Sudani cabinet took office<sup>22</sup> with a vote of confidence on October 27, 2022. Following the resignation of the Sadrist Movement, the State

Administration Coalition, established under the leadership of the Shiite Coordination Framework, became the dominant force behind the government. This situation indicates that the government should act swiftly to make up for the extraordinary delay. To regain the effect of the October 2019 demonstrations on politics and restore the public's trust in the political system, the government needs to quickly utilize the decision-making mechanism. Furthermore, it is expected that the government will take steps towards resolving Iraq's long-standing issues in this direction.

*Below is a graphic displaying the number of days from the first session of the parliament to the establishment of the government.*

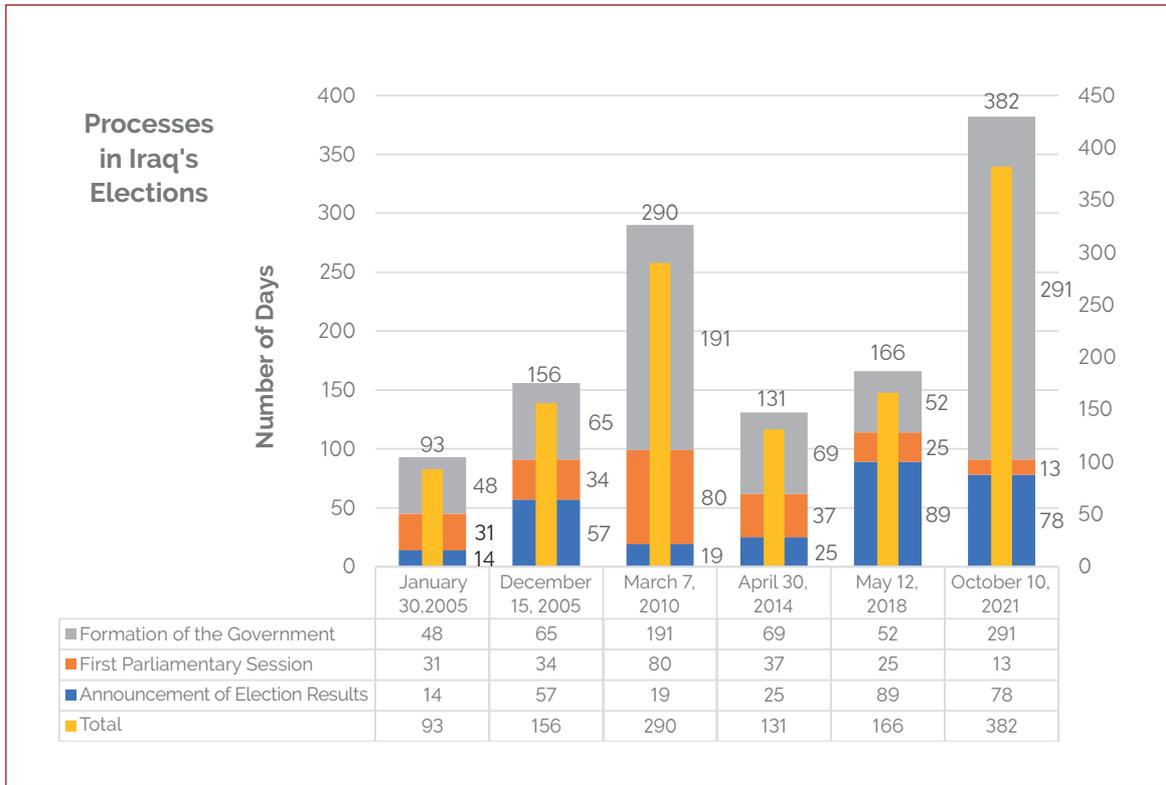


## CONSTITUTION OF IRAQ, ARTICLE 72 (2/B)

The President of the Republic shall continue to exercise his duties until after the end of the election and the meeting of the new Council of Representatives, provided that a new President of the Republic is elected within thirty days from the date of its first convening.

<sup>22</sup> "Iraq's parliament votes to approve new PM, government", *Al Monitor*, 27 October 2022.

Below is a graphic displaying the number of days from the parliamentary elections to the establishment of the government.



## OVERVIEW OF THE SUDANI CABINET



The divisions among Shiite groups, which have become the dominant force in Iraq, have resulted in increased administrative problems for the country. Despite Muqtada al-Sadr's electoral victory, the unity of other Shiite groups in the opposition wing has exacerbated this problem and paved the way for the formation of a government without Sadr, despite the election results. At this stage, Sunnis and Kurds also supported the establishment of the government, but the main driving force behind the government was the Shiite Coordination Framework, which was the union of all Shiite groups except the Sadrist Movement.

With the complete vote of confidence received by the 21 names presented to the parliament by Mohammed Shia al-Sudani on October 27, 2022, the quorum of two-thirds of the council of ministers was reached. Accordingly, the temporary government led by Mustafa al-Kadhimi completed its term, and the transfer of power was peacefully accomplished. The names of candidates for the Ministry of Environment and Ministry of Cons-

truction and Housing were not presented to the parliament in the expected 23-member cabinet list. The main reason for this was the disagreement between the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) over ministerial sharing. After more than a month since the cabinet took office, on December 3, 2022, the Iraqi Parliament convened and gave a vote of confidence to Nizar Amedi as the Minister of Environment and Bengin Rekani as the Minister of Construction and Housing, in line with the agreement reached between KDP and PUK. 23

Sudani, appointed as Prime Minister, can be said to be an important figure in terms of ensuring the people's support. Sudani is known as the first person without a second citizenship in another country among those who have been appointed as Prime Minister since 2003. In addition, his living in Iraq during the Baath period allows him to better understand the society that transformed after 2003. In addition to this experience, he entered politics in the Dawa Party after 2003 and assumed

<sup>23</sup> "Iraqi Parliament Approves Remaining Ministers of PM Sudani's Cabinet", *Basnews*, 3 December 2022.

positions such as the governor of Maysan, the Minister of Human Rights, the Minister of Industry, and the Minister of Labor and Social Affairs, which show his experience within the

government. However, being recognized as a politician who has not been subject to a corruption investigation constitutes the strongest aspect of being Sudani in the people's view.

*The table showing the Sudani cabinet formed 419 days after the elections and expected to govern Iraq until 2026 unless an early election is held, is provided below.*

#	Position	Name	Alignment	Upper Alignment
-	 Prime Minister	Mohammed Shia al-Sudani	AL-Furatain	Shiite Coordination Framework
1	 Deputy President and Foreign Minister	Fuad Hussein	Kurdistan Democratic Party	Kurdistan Democratic Party
2	 Deputy President and Oil Minister	Hayan Abdul Ghani Abdul-Zahra	State of Law Coalition	Shiite Coordination Framework
3	 Deputy President and Planning Minister	Muhammad Ali Tamim	AL-Taquadum Movement	Sovereignty Alliance
4	 Finance Minister	Taif Sami Mohammed	AL-Furatain	Shiite Coordination Framework
5	 Minister of Defense	Sabit Muhammed Said Riza el-Abbasi	Decisive Reform Movement, Azem Alliance	Sovereignty Alliance
6	 Interior Minister	Abdul Amir Al Shammari	AL-Furatain	Shiite Coordination Framework

7		Health Minister	Saleh Mahdi Mutalib	Supreme Council	Shiite Coordination Framework
8		Minister of Migration and Displacement	Ivan Faik Jabru	Babylon Movement	Babylon Movement
9		Minister of Transportation	Rezak Muhaibes Acami el-Saadavi	Badr Organization	Shiite Coordination Framework
10		Water Resources Minister	Aoun Diab Abdullah	Tasmim Alliance	Shiite Coordination Framework
11		Labour & Social Affairs Minister	Ahmed Jassem Saber Al-Asadi	Fatah Alliance	Shiite Coordination Framework
12		Youth & Sport Minister	Ahmed Muhammad Hussein Al-Mubarqa	State of Law Coalition	Shiite Coordination Framework
13		Education Minister	Ibrahim Namis Yassin	Azem Alliance	Sovereignty Alliance
14		Trade Minister	Atheer Daoud Salman	Azem Alliance	Sovereignty Alliance

15		Minister of Justice	Khaled Shwani	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
16		Minister of Electricity	Ziyad Ali Fadhil	Islamic Virtue Party	Shiite Coordination Framework
17		Communications Minister	Hiam Abboud Kazem	Akd al-Vatani	Shiite Coordination Framework
18		Minister of Agriculture	Abbas Jabr Obada	State of Law Coalition	Shiite Coordination Framework
19		Higher Education Minister	Naim Abdul Aboudi	Al-Sadiqoun (Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq)	Shiite Coordination Framework
20		Minister of Industry	Khalid Najim	Al-Taquadum Movement	Sovereignty Alliance
21		Minister of Culture, Tourism, and Antiquities	Ahmed Fakkak Ahmed Bederni	Al-Taquadum Movement	Sovereignty Alliance
22		Environment Minister	Nizar Mohammed Saeed Amidi	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
23		Housing & Reconstruction Minister	Bangen Rekani	Kurdistan Democratic Party	Kurdistan Democratic Party

The formation of the cabinet has shown that the quota-based power-sharing system, called "muhasasa," which was used to determine the appointment of the last two ministers in particular, has also been applied in the Sudani cabinet. In this context, it can be said that the muhasasa system forms the basis of many chronic problems in the country. Although the system contributed to the integration of all political actors into the system in the transition from a dictatorial regime to democracy after 2003, it also created patronage and

corruption in bureaucracy and institutions. After the elections, the positions seized by the parties through the quota system are used in line with the interests of the party and group identity rather than public interest.

It can be said that the distribution of duties in the Sudanese cabinet is similar to all cabinets formed after 2003. This structuring of the system can be predicted to cause the continuation of distrust between society and politics and even have a negative impact on trust in state institutions.

*The table below shows the distribution based on identity and political formation that emerged as a result of the sharing of the Sudani cabinet in accordance with the muhasasa system.*

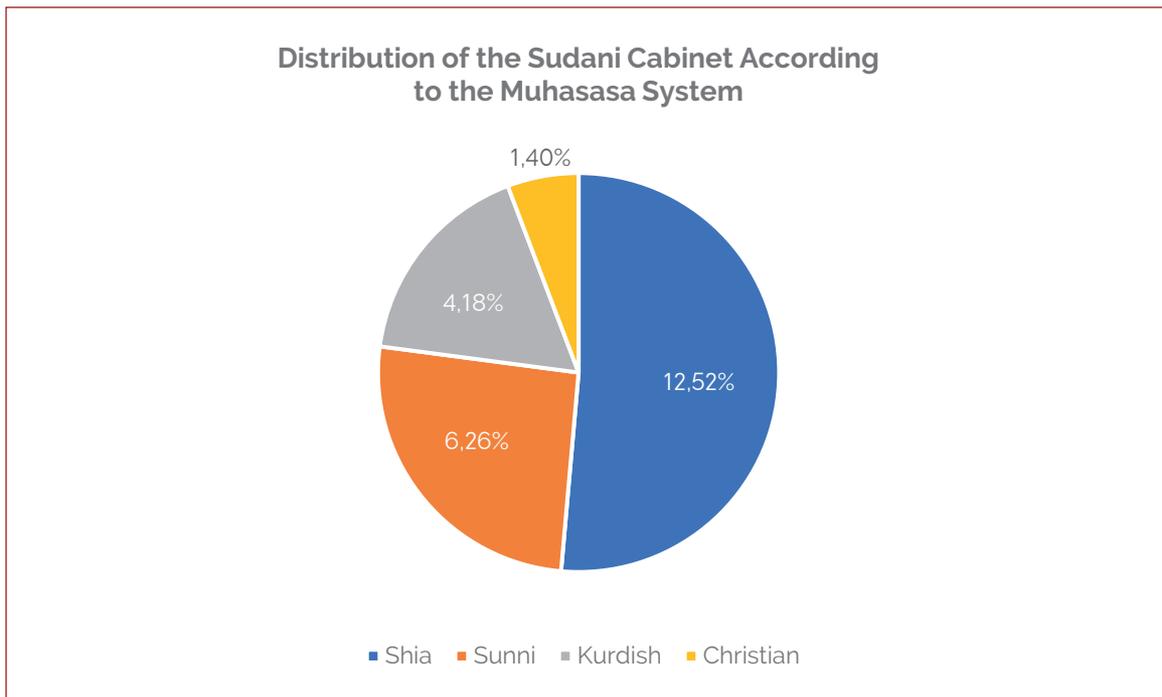
Political Entity	Ethnic/Religious Identity	Number of Ministers
State of Law Coalition	Shia	3
Al-Furatain	Shia	2
Badr Organization	Shia	1
Islamic Virtue Party	Shia	1
Meclisi Ala	Shia	1
Fatah Alliance	Shia	1
Akd al-Vatani	Shia	1
Al-Sadiqoun	Shia	1
Tasmim Alliance	Shia	1
Azem Alliance	Sunni	3
Al-Taquadum Movement	Sunni	3
Kurdistan Democratic Party	Kurdish	2
Patriotic Union of Kurdistan	Kurdish	2
Babylon Movement	Christian	1

In light of the table above, it can be said that the al-Furatain Movement is the biggest winner of the cabinet. The party, which has two members of parliament, has obtained the positions of Minister of Interior and Minister of Finance in addition to the position of prime minister. These appointments can also be interpreted as a step that helps with Sudani's work. On the other hand, the State of Law Coalition being the formation with the highest number of ministers among the Shiites indicates that the formation will continue to maintain its effectiveness among Iraqi Shiites and politics. On the other hand, although there were conflicts over the position of the Minister of Interior between the Badr Organization, the Fatah Alliance, and the State of Law Coalition, the fact that the Fatah Coalition did not

obtain the position shows that they aren't one of the winners within the Shiites.

From the point of view of Sunnis, it can be seen that a total of six ministerial positions were shared between the two political formations. However, Halbusi's Al-Takadum Movement appears to be more dominant compared to the Azem Alliance. Even though some balance was established between the two, the distribution within the Azem Alliance was affected by the separation between Hamis el-Khanjar and Muthanna al-Samarrai. It could be said that two ministers are closer to al-Samarrai and one to al-Khanjar. As a result, despite the balance established, the al-Taqadum Movement is internally stronger than the Azem Alliance.

*The graph below displays the identity-based distribution resulting from the distribution of the Sudani cabinet in line with the muhasasa system.*



*The number of ministers in the new government and the percentages of ministers in the cabinet according to ethnic and religious distinction*

In terms of Kurdish political parties, a similar balance seems to have been established as with the Sunnis, but it is seen that the superiority of the KDP over the PUK in terms of the votes they received and the number of MPs they have was not taken into consideration in the distribution of duties in the cabinet. At this point, the election of Abdul Latif Rashid, a presidential candidate nominated independently by the KDP, may have been effective. For the KDP, pushing PUK to the sidelines in politics may be more meaningful in terms of the party's approaches to Iraqi and KRG politics.

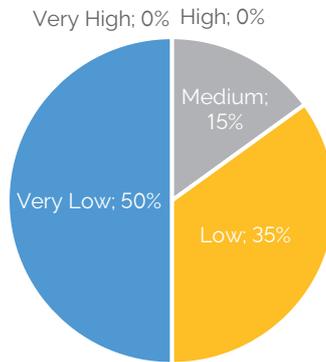
The number of ministers in the new government and the percentages of ministers in the cabinet according to ethnic and religious distinction

In line with the muhasasa system, the distribution of positions in the Sudani cabinet was affected by ethnic and religious identities. In addition to this, quotas have been distributed among political groups that operate based

on ethnic and sectarian identities. Within this context, in the 23-member cabinet, Shiites, which have become the dominant actors in the country since 2003, are represented by 12 seats, Sunnis by six, Kurds by four, and Christians by one. While Christians, who are one of Iraq's minority groups, have a place in the cabinet, the fact that Turkmen, the third largest component of Iraq, don't have representation in the cabinet is another factor showing that the quota system does not provide representation. Thabit Bishar, who is known by his Turkmen identity, is part of the cabinet. However, Bishar obtaining a vote of confidence for the defense ministry position from the Sunni quota shows that Turkmen were not given a ministry based on their identity and were ignored. At this stage, the fact that Turkmen cannot take part in the cabinet with their Turkmen identities show the deficiency in Turkmen political representation. On the other hand, it is expected that the current cabinet structure will have an impact beyond politics.

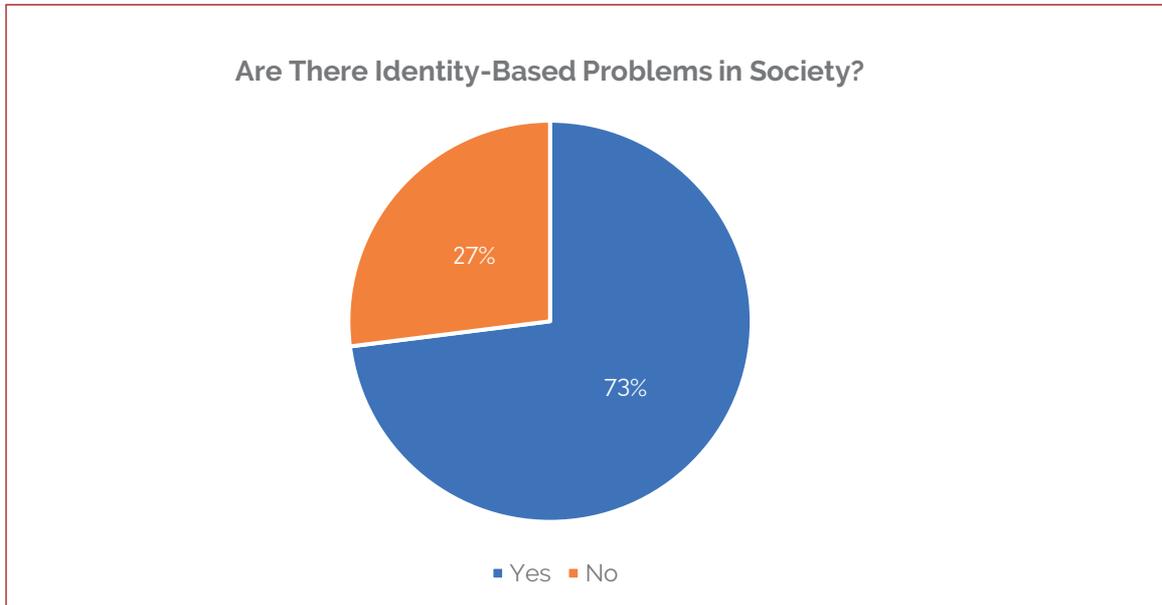
*Below is the survey conducted by the Human Security Collective between 2016 and 2019 about measuring the trust people have in government institutions.*

### Trust Between The People and Government Institutions



■ Very High ■ High ■ Medium ■ Low ■ Very Low

*Below is the survey conducted by the Human Security Collective between 2016 and 2019 about problems in society based on identity.*



By virtue of its structure, the continuation of the quota system by the Cabinet can have a negative impact on society. In this sense, it is unlikely that a significant improvement can be expected in terms of the trust of Iraqi people in state institutions, as most of the Iraqi people believe in the existence of identity-based problems. At this stage, it can be inferred that approximately three-quarters of the population feel "unrepresented." According to the data presented above, more than three-quarters of Iraqis do not trust state institutions. In addition, the fact that none of the participants expressed a very high or high level of trust clearly shows the reflection of the problem on society.

In addition to its impact on society, the *muhasasa* system can be regarded as the beginning of a state of tension and potential disagreement within the government.

The absence of a powerful political entity outside of the government can lead to the opposition taking a role in the government.

Therefore, it can be considered normal for there to be different positions among government actors regarding the decisions made by the government formed through various parties. For example, a decision made by Prime Minister Sudani may satisfy Shiite groups but result in opposition from Sunni or Kurdish groups. Furthermore, even if identity-based quotas are taken into account, it is likely that groups that engage in politics under the same identity may come into conflict, especially regarding high-level appointments. Therefore, it can be said that the absence of a bloc loyal to Sudani within parliament is a vulnerability for the government in this regard. In addition, actors within the government, such as armed non-state actors like the Shiite Coordination Framework, can be considered another vulnerability due to the continued influence of non-state armed actors on politics, which is one of Iraq's chronic problems.

As a result, it can be seen that there is strong quantitative support for the govern-

ment in parliament, based on the formations within the government. However, the relationships between these actors may also have a damaging effect on the government. Furthermore, the government's ability to gain social support through this broad participation is one of the most important factors that will determine its future. At this stage, it can

be assumed that the political formations within the government will want to engage in activities that will support their voter base. In this regard, it can be said that Sudan's ability to balance the actors within the government and respond to the demands of society will be an important factor in determining the government's future.

## OVERVIEW OF THE GOVERNMENT PROGRAM



Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani presented the names of the ministers who will be in the cabinet and the government program to the Iraqi Parliament based on Article 76, Paragraph 4 of the Iraqi Constitution. Following the legal procedure, the individual ministers on the list were approved, and the government program was approved by a simple majority and received a vote of confidence. The government program received 250 votes of approval.<sup>24</sup> The program was shaped within the framework of an agreement reached among the political components that make up the majority government. The plan aims to reform the economy, finance, and service sectors; improve poverty and unemployment issues; combat administrative and financial corruption; and stop the waste of public property. Additionally, the main goals of the program are to combat inflation and ensure market stability in the economy, establish security and stability in military and political areas, enforce laws, improve Iraq's prestige, and meet the demands of the peop-

le, especially the demands of the protesting youth.

The new government's program is claimed to be based on the principle of all state institutions coming together to build a society based on providing decent living conditions, justice, equality, and progress. In this context, it has been emphasized that especially the ministries and non-ministerial organizations need to undertake great national responsibilities within the scope of constructing strategic and detailed plans for the implementation of the government program.

It was stated that the promises of the government to the people were based on these priorities:

- Combating administrative and financial corruption,
- Addressing the issue of unemployment and creating job opportunities for young people, regardless of gender,

<sup>24</sup> Nour H. Ayoub, Iraq's new government outlines priorities, *Al Monitor*, 31 October 2022.

- Supporting the poor, disadvantaged, and low-income individuals,
- Implementing reforms in the economic and financial sectors, particularly in the agricultural, industrial, and banking sectors, and supporting private industry,
- Urgently starting work to improve and develop the services that affect the lives of Iraqis.

Principles to be considered in order to realize the implementation of government programs and the goals stated above are given below:

- The government pledges to fulfill its duties through the program and considers the program a key criterion in evaluating its performance.
- The responsibility of the government is a shared responsibility where everyone assumes their role. This responsibility strengthens the spirit of cooperation and development. The government emphasizes adherence to the decisions of the Council of Ministers and their adoption. Violation of this principle is considered a deficiency in fulfilling the duties.
- The axes of the government program form the foundations on which a detailed government program is prepared. The government program also adopts the strategic and implementation plans of the ministries

in a manner consistent with the requirements of the program and the duties reflected in the laws and regulations of the ministries.

- Transparency in the work and clarity in duties will be established, and the government's performance will be managed with moderation, maintaining confidentiality when necessary, and not disclosing the internal discussions of the Council of Ministers in accordance with the council's regulations.
- Within the framework of adherence to the government program and democratic principles, the government program and democratic curriculum will be reviewed annually or as deemed necessary by new developments. Accordingly, necessary corrections are made when there are deviations, and they will be expanded upon in the case of successful progress.

## **AXES OF THE GOVERNMENT PROGRAM**

The Government program of Iraq to be implemented for the realization of the goals above primarily depends on 23 axes. The axes stated within this framework are addressed below in detail. Below is a table displaying these axes according to the priorities of the government. The transition from green to red in the table shows the reduction in priority.

#	Program Axes
1	Social Welfare and Combating Poverty
2	Combating Unemployment and Providing Jobs
3	Immigrants, Redevelopment, and Minorities
4	Combating the Electricity Crisis
5	Healthcare Industry
6	Construction Industry and Municipal Services
7	Combating Corruption and the Waste of Public Resources
8	Agriculture and Water Sources
9	Trade
10	Industry
11	Petrol Industry
12	Finance and Banking Sector
13	Transportation and Communication
14	Education
15	Investment
16	Tourism
17	Population and Development
18	Human Rights
19	Foreign Relations
20	National Government and IKRG
21	Security and Stability of Iraq
22	Implementation of Strategic Projects
23	Laws and Legal Reforms

The first axis, "social welfare and combating poverty", promises to combat corruption and improve healthcare services. It is summarized in four main items, which are helping and increasing support to the poor within the scope of the Social Welfare Reform Project, planning appropriate activities to provide support to the elderly, disabled, and widows, supporting the Social Development Fund in poor regions through a joint project undertaken with the World Bank to improve conditions, and managing programs transparently with an electronic record system to facilitate access to vulnerable groups in society.

The second axis, "combating unemployment and providing jobs", focuses on various topics such as expanding the role of the private industrial sector in manufacturing, reviewing investment and banking systems, increasing production in various sectors, and establishing organized industrial zones, facilitating housing projects with the participation of the private sector, making institutions more functional to protect domestic products, promoting employment in the private sector, enacting retirement and insurance laws to secure the rights of employees, encouraging and facilitating the establishment of small

and medium-sized enterprises, establishing the Reconstruction and Development Fund to address infrastructure damage and improve services in poor provinces, and achieving the goals of the urban planning process.

The third axis, "displaced persons, reconstruction of liberated areas, and minorities", focuses on supporting the Fund for the Reconstruction of Liberated Cities, supporting and encouraging the return of displaced persons in liberated areas, protecting minorities, addressing the root causes of external migration from Iraq, and rebuilding specific areas in Nineveh, especially in Sinjar.

The fourth axis, "combating the electricity crisis", promises to carry out the maintenance and rehabilitation of power plants, make plans for addressing transportation and logistical blockages, complete electricity projects, and prioritize generating electricity from solar energy.

The fifth axis is the "healthcare industry". In this article, the reforms to be made in the healthcare industry through the completion of hospital projects, financial support of medical centers, the implementation of the Health Insurance Law, providing medicines to citizens more easily, the expansion of primary and secondary medical services, and the prevention of burden on hospitals are discussed.

In the sixth axis, "construction industry and municipal services," issues such as completing the requirements of the seawater desalination and electricity generation project in Basra, finalizing all projects that are 70 percent complete, making plans to improve services for citizens, and supporting projects planned to solve issues such as the housing crisis, lack of schools, and inadequate road network through the Development Fund for Iraq were discussed.

In the seventh axis, "combating corruption and the waste of public resources," issues such as supporting the Commission of Integrity and the Federal Financial Control Bureau, implementing anti-corruption procedures previously prepared by international parties for the fight against corruption, reviewing projects that cause waste of public property, re-earning money taken out of Iraq, developing mechanisms that are part of the anti-corruption program, and taking preventive measures through instructions were focused on.

In the eighth axis, "agriculture and water resources," support for farmers, development of long-term agricultural plans to meet their needs, development of marketing plans to protect local products, planning for the conversion of irrigated agriculture projects in the central and southern regions of Iraq to closed irrigation systems, improvement of drainage and irrigation systems, adoption of procedures for conscious water use, and international cooperation to combat climate change and drought are among the issues addressed.

In the ninth axis, "trade," issues such as increasing incentives and support for local products to enhance competitiveness, reducing economic dependence on oil trade through investment incentives, controlling imports, enabling the Producer Protection Law and the Consumer Protection Law, and balancing trade through bilateral economic agreements conducted through the Department of Foreign Relations were focused on.

In the tenth axis, which is the "industry" section, issues such as preparing improvement plans for institutions affiliated with the Ministry of Industry, enabling the coordination committee for the industrial sector, operating some of the currently suspended factories in cooperation with the private sector, and ensuring cooperation with relevant institutions to

support and develop small and medium-sized enterprises were focused on.

The eleventh axis, which is the "petrol industry," has been addressed in more detail compared to other sections, and innovations to be made have been examined under sub-headings such as the petrol industry, export industry, refinery industry, gas industry, petrochemical industry, storage industry, and distribution industry. In this context, issues such as increasing production capacity and quality, using associated petroleum gas (APG), developing exports made from southern ports and developing a sustainable export system with Türkiye at the Ceyhan Port in the north, building intermediate petrol storage depots, and developing an electronic system to control the mobility of petrol have been discussed.

In the twelfth axis, which is the "finance and banking industry," issues such as restructuring the public budget, developing rational solutions to reduce external loans, adopting a roadmap for providing continuous fund guarantees for sustainable economic and social development, promoting local products and maximizing exports, customs and tax reform, increasing border controls, making a plan to reduce the percentage of dependence on oil revenues to 80% within three years, and banking reform have been discussed.

In the thirteenth axis, which is "transportation and telecommunications", issues such as restructuring the transportation sector and activating transit passages using Iraq's geographical position (thus creating profit over other countries that Iraq can control), improving services in the telecommunications field, and developing a national joint-stock telecommunications company project-managed in partnership with an international company to improve internet and telecommunications services have been discussed.

In the fourteenth axis, which is "education", issues such as improving the quality of education, collaborating with the private sector for the construction of new school buildings, creating merit-based positions in education, increasing scientific competence in undergraduate and graduate education, immediately implementing the updated National Education Strategy (2022-2031) with the support of UNESCO, and carrying out reforms based on the Technical and Vocational Education and Training Strategy (TVET) (2014-2023) were focused on.

In the fifteenth axis, "investment," the review of current procedures related to investment and providing support to investors, preparing plans regarding investment lands, and resolving the issue of organized industrial zones are discussed.

In the sixteenth axis, "tourism", issues such as offering incentives to the private sector in order to make Iraq a center of tourism, particularly religious tourism, and making investments in archeological zones and shrines in order to boost the economy were focused on.

Under the seventeenth axis titled "population and development," issues such as pursuing supportive policies to achieve the goals and objectives of Sustainable Development 2030, collaborating with regional and international organizations, completing preparations within two years for a general population census to provide comprehensive population data, measuring and reducing poverty, and preparing a five-year national development plan for 2023-2027 have been addressed.

Under the eighteenth axis titled "human rights and empowerment of women," the establishment of a unit under the Prime Ministry to monitor and detect human rights violations and negative conditions in police stations and detention centers, the formation of a legal

team to follow up on the work of previously established investigation committees and legal procedures, the monitoring of the work of the central national committee under the Ministry of Interior responsible for combating human trafficking, the submission of reports to the Prime Ministry every three months, the establishment of an expert team to combat drug trafficking and use, the strengthening of rehabilitation centers, the review and enforcement of the Freedom of Expression, Assembly, and Peaceful Demonstration Law and the Counterterrorism Law, the repeal of Law No. 13 of 2005, and the empowerment of women through laws and support for widowed/divorced women through social protection programs have been discussed.

In the nineteenth axis titled "foreign relations", issues such as developing relations with neighboring countries, Gulf Cooperation Council countries, and Arab countries; highlighting Iraq's leadership role in regional and international organizations; adopting the principle of preventing Iraq from turning into a corridor or headquarters for attacks on other countries; demanding that other countries not interfere in Iraq's internal affairs; protecting Iraqis both inside and outside the country; strengthening embassies; making efforts to facilitate visas for Iraqis; and enhancing the reputation of the Iraqi passport were discussed.

Under the twentieth axis, titled "national government and IKRG", a project is envisaged to resolve the problems between the Baghdad and Erbil governments in accordance with the constitution, particularly the need for the Oil and Gas Law and its implementation.

In the twenty-first axis, "security and stability of Iraq", ongoing dialogue with International Coalition countries is emphasized, as is the regulation of relationships, duties, and

powers among security institutions and monitoring their adherence to human rights principles. Other focus areas include increasing military competence, developing a special plan with a timeline to withdraw military forces from cities, integrating the work of intelligence agencies to combat crime, developing the combat capabilities and resources of the al-Hashd al-Shaabi, providing retirement benefits for the families of martyrs and veterans, and ending the uncontrolled proliferation of arms.

In the twenty-second axis, "implementation of strategic projects," the completion of the Faw Grand Port project and the construction of a land and rail network connecting the port with Iraq's neighboring countries are prioritized. The development of a water desalination plant and power generation facility in Basra, the preparation of new projects in the manufacturing and petrochemical industries, increasing efforts towards oil exploration, and the construction of new generation refineries to limit imports of petroleum-based products are among the topics addressed.

The twenty-third axis, "laws and legal reforms," discusses the government's law proposals. In this context, the government is seen as being committed to working on draft legislation on electoral law amendments, oil and gas law, retirement and social security law for the private sector, civil duty law, public-private partnership law, Federation Council law, and legislation for strategic, economic, and development agreements. Secondly, it is pledged to support the Independent High Electoral Commission for the conduct of parliamentary and provincial council elections in this axis. The third part discusses the political reforms planned by the government to achieve these objectives.

## **STATE ADMINISTRATION COALITION AGREEMENT**

The political formations that support the implementation of the cabinet and government program have signed a protocol. This protocol has been considered under the headings of implementation of the government program and legislative axis. In this regard, in the implementation axis, it is seen that all decisions of the interim government will be reviewed, investment support laws will be enacted, comprehensive customs policy will be implemented, the return of displaced persons will be ensured, provincial council elections will be held, effective tools for combating corruption will be created within 90 days, compensation for damages caused by military operations will be made, cooperation for finding the missing will be established, the implementation of the Sinjar Agreement will be ensured, the evacuation of headquarters held by others in Nineveh, Kirkuk, Diyala, and Salahaddin for all parties to be able to carry out their constitutional and political activities, completion of official procedures regarding security gaps, initiatives for the implementation of Article 140, the Accountability and Justice Commission to submit its report within thirty days from the formation of the government, withdrawal of military forces from

city centers, Baghdad-Erbil coordination, Kurdish-language schools outside the KRI to be brought under the Federal Ministry of Education, urgent teams to be formed from local police composed of the people of Kirkuk for the Kirkuk file, completion of the Oil and Gas Law in compliance with the constitution within six months, economic reform, reconstruction support, support for women, drug control, evaluation of the performance of governors and establishment of a committee to take legal and administrative measures based on the evaluation results are among the issues discussed.

The government program's legislative axis includes working towards passing the Federal Council (Senate) Law and the Federal Court Law within six months; changing the electoral law within three months; and holding elections within a year; efforts to define membership in terrorist organizations as a crime; changes to the Law on Anti-Terrorism and its extent; a law to cancel the decisions of the Revolutionary Command Council which was abolished in 2012, amendments to the Martyrs Foundation Law, the passage of the National Security Council Law, changes to the Unified National Card Law, a review of Law No. 72, and holding the Kirkuk provincial council elections on the same date as other provinces within one year from the date of the government's formation.

## FIRST EVALUATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GOVERNMENT PROGRAM



Description: Sudani cabinet swore an oath and began work after the vote of confidence.

As Iraq has been ruled by a temporary government for over a year, the establishment of a full-fledged government presents an opportunity to address the country's current chronic problems. However, despite this opportunity, the social dynamic that emerged with the October protests creates pressure on the government. This dynamic, which led to the resignation of the government and the emergence of new political formations supported by protesters in the country, forms the basis of this risk by covering a base ready to mobilize in line with government policies and potential new developments. Therefore, the government's activities present a fragile ground for the government's future by contradicting the demands put forward by the protesters. In this case, it can be expected that the negative perception of the protesters towards those who have been involved in politics since 2003 will also be at the center of possible reactions to the new government. In contrast, the demands of the protesters, such as fighting corruption, reducing poverty, improving pub-

lic services, and removing privileges granted to individuals for political reasons, create a basis for the government to pursue a populist policy. At this stage, it can be expected that the government will use this pressure on the supporting actors as leverage and take steps towards solving Iraq's chronic problems. In fact, Sudan's crackdown on the Basra-based oil smuggling network<sup>25</sup> shortly after taking office can be evaluated in this direction. Therefore, it can be expected that the balance that Sudan will establish between populism and long-term improvement will provide more than just an improvement in the country's current situation.

Within this balance, it is important for the parties forming the government to continue their support for the government, not only for the implementation of the government program but also for the government to remain operational. The fact that the Abdul-Mahdi government could not complete its term in office due to the withdrawal of the support it

<sup>25</sup> "Iraq dismantles the largest oil smuggling network in Basra", *Middle East Monitor*, 3 November 2022.

received clearly demonstrates the impact of political formations on national unity governments. At this stage, it can be said that Sudan also faces this danger. On the other hand, even if the government does not fall, the loss of support behind it is also one of the risks. In this sense, the collapse of the balance policy that the Sudani government aims to create is a danger. In fact, the presence of "unilateral" support behind Sudani indicates that this possibility may be realized in parliament and on the streets. Additionally, after members of the Sadrist Movement went onto the streets it's possible that large groups that are not represented in the parliament will stage protests.

The agenda of the Parliament outside of the government program can also wear down the government. After the 2018 elections, the change in the election law and the implementation of this law in the 2021 elections did not satisfy many political parties that support the government. The fact that the Sadrist Movement, considered the architect of the current law, is not represented in parliament motivates political parties to change this law. At this point, the Sudani government's supporters in parliament and the opposition on the streets may harm the government's stability. Even the delay in the 2023 fiscal year budget is openly attributed to differences of opinion among actors supporting the government in the Iraqi public. Such confrontations harm the government's functionality.

In addition to the pressure that politics can create on the government, there is a possibility that disadvantaged groups, reducing poverty, and improving public services, which are among the government's priorities, may not be satisfactory to the public. Although these issues are considered a priority by the government, they are very vulnerable to ex-

ternal factors. And the devaluation of the Iraqi dinar against the dollar may have a more negative impact on these issues. It can be said that the necessary resources for investments beyond the improvement of the daily lives of Iraqis may be eroded by this devaluation.

On the other hand, it is stated that the new agenda can be added to the government program as a result of the progress in this program. Despite this positive expectation, it can be seen that there is no defined method for when any agenda item will be considered completed or even for measuring the success of the item. At this stage, the lack of a concrete method for measuring the government's success makes it possible for the government to continue its duties with the approval of political parties and voters.

Finally, non-political actors such as militia groups may have a negative impact on the government's dynamic. Although the Sudani government can maintain Iraq's position on issues such as US-Iran tension, attacks by militia groups and other actors may lead to the country becoming a conflict zone. Although the government program includes a promise to "put an end to the uncontrolled weapons outside the official and legitimate institutions of the state", new militia groups continue to emerge and operate outside of state authority. Therefore, it can be said that the activities of non-state armed actors in Iraq will create a suitable basis for increased external pressure on the government.

One of the biggest shortcomings seen within the government program is terrorism. At this point, promises are made regarding the terrorist organization ISIS and the problems stemming from the fight against ISIS in Iraq. On the other hand, although not explicitly stated, a promise is made to prevent the threat

posed by the terrorist organization PKK towards Turkey with the expression "to adopt the principle of not turning Iraq into a corridor or headquarters for attacks against other countries", as stated in the constitution, but it can be said that no policy has been determined regarding the threat posed by the PKK to Iraq and its stance against Iraq.

Despite all these shortcomings and negativity, the fact that Sudani can maintain his support in parliament will create a suitable basis for increasing support from the public towards the government. It can be said that the perception of Sudani among Iraqis is quite positive, and he will establish social trust with policies that directly affect the people.





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