

Babylon Brigade Plans to Rig 2025 Voting in Christian Areas

by [Yaqoub Beth-Addai \(/experts/yaqoub-beth-addai\)](#)

Mar 3, 2025

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

[Yaqoub Beth-Addai \(/experts/yaqoub-beth-addai\)](#)

Yaqoub Beth-Addai is an Iraqi expert on militias active in the Nineveh Plains region and Mosul.



Brief Analysis

Part of a series: [Militia Spotlight \(/policy-analysis/series/militia-spotlight\)](#)

or see [Part 1: How to Use Militia Spotlight \(/policy-analysis/how-use-militia-spotlight\)](#)

An Iran-backed brigade led by a U.S.-designated human rights abuser is preparing to repeat its unfair practices and dominate local Christian voting in this year's general election.

In the lead-up to Iraq's 2025 parliamentary election, [Rayan al-Kildani \(/node/18504\)](#), leader of the Babylon Movement and commander of [Kataib Babiliyoun \(/https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/profile-kataib-babiliyoun-50th-pmf-brigade\)](#) (Babylon Brigade), appears poised to replicate the tactics that allowed him to dominate Christian quota seats in the [2021 parliamentary election \(/https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/03/new-test-iraqs-democracy-and-stability\)](#) and [2023 provincial elections \(/https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/babiliyoun-movement-hijacks-all-four-christian-minority-seats\)](#). Notably, Kildani is a [U.S.-sanctioned human rights abuser \(/https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sm735\)](#), and Kataib Babiliyoun is the 50th Brigade of the Iraqi state-funded Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF).

The 2021 vote saw the Babylon Movement secure four of the five parliamentary seats reserved for Christians, a victory marred by allegations of electoral manipulation. Kildani's success was largely due to votes from non-Christian constituents, facilitated by his ties to Shia militias and Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). This influx of non-Christian votes effectively marginalized authentic Christian voices in the political arena and is set to happen once again.

Forcing NPU Families to Rig Elections

As previously reported, in March 2023 the [Nineveh Plains Protection Units \(/node/18005\)](#) (NPU) were forcibly submerged into the Babylon Brigade. Despite numerous NPU attempts to separate from the brigade, the Iraqi government has ignored these pleas and backtracked on promises to comply with the NPU's demands to be reinstated as an independent armed force. With the NPU under his command and control, Kildani has worked to undercut its independence and weaken its role in policing the Nineveh Plains.

In anticipation of the election, Kildani recently ordered every NPU member to collect twenty-five voting cards from friends and relatives so they can be used to cast votes in favor of Kildani's candidates. For Muslims serving in the brigade, the number is fifty cards per family. Noncompliance resulted in threats of job termination or fines of approximately \$66 per un-submitted card, leading many Christian soldiers to consider resignation. Reports also indicate that brigade members are compelled to engage with Kildani's social media content under threat of withholding salaries. With many families dependent on their NPU pay, members could be forced to comply, though NPU commanders have thus far remained united in refusing the illegal order. These coercive strategies are raising further concerns about the integrity of Christian representation in Iraq's parliament.



Figure 1: Bassam Sabah Yohanna (center-front), the regimental commander imposed on the NPU by the PMF's 50th Brigade, welcomes commanders from the PMF's 30th Brigade (Liwa al-Shabak) to a coordination meeting in the Nineveh Plains, December 9, 2024.



Figure 2: Milad al-Kildani, the associate (assistant) commander of the PMF's 50th Brigade, at the Nineveh Operations Command on January 2, 2025. Shown in the picture on his desk is the brigade's commander, Osama al-Kildani, brother of U.S.-sanctioned human rights abuser Rayan al-Kildani.

Hijacking the Christian Community

The Kildani mafia family remains deeply unpopular among Christian communities in Iraq. The Chaldean Catholic Church, the country's largest Christian denomination, has distanced itself from Rayan al-Kildani, emphasizing that he does not represent Iraq's broader Christian community. The "Christian street" has also repeatedly [rebuffed militia attempts \(/node/1655\)](#) to build a loyal constituency within the community. In addition to direct militia intimidation, demographic changes, and illegal land sales, allegations have surfaced regarding the Kildani family's operation of illicit establishments in Mosul, further tarnishing Rayan's reputation.



(/sites/default/files/2025-03/PMF%2050%20mourning%20for%20Soleimani%20and%20Muhandis.jpg)

Figure 3: PMF 50th Brigade officials at a January 11, 2025, mourning ceremony for slain terrorists Qasem Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis. The brigade held the ceremony at the local Nineveh headquarters of the "PMF General Directorate of Security and Discipline," which is led at the national level by U.S.-designated human rights abuser Abu Zainab al-Lami, a terrorist member of Kataib Hezbollah.

On February 13, Christian political groups submitted several demands to the Iraqi House of Representatives and Federal Supreme Court. These included withdrawing militias from communities in the Nineveh Plains and amending the election law for the House of Representatives and provincial councils to ensure authentic representation for Christians. At the same time, Christian religious and community leaders have been discussing the possibility of an electoral boycott. Without significant reforms and safeguards, there is a growing fear that the 2025 election will once again see the hijacking of Christian seats by individuals and groups that do not genuinely represent the community's interests.

In response to these challenges, Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani announced initiatives aimed at bolstering the Christian presence in local police forces and promoting new construction developments in the Nineveh Plains. Although these measures are a step in the right direction, many community leaders argue that they fall short of addressing the systemic problems. The pervasive influence of militias loyal to external actors continues to undermine genuine efforts toward stability and representation for Iraq's Christian minorities. ❖

PART OF A SERIES

[Militia Spotlight \(/policy-analysis/series/militia-spotlight\)](/policy-analysis/series/militia-spotlight)

[How to Use Militia Spotlight](/policy-analysis/how-use-militia-spotlight)

(/policy-analysis/how-use-militia-spotlight)



[Babylon Brigade Plans to Rig 2025 Voting in Christian Areas](/policy-analysis/babylon-brigade-plans-rig-2025-voting-christian-areas)

(/policy-analysis/babylon-brigade-plans-rig-2025-voting-christian-areas)



[Hassan Nasrallah's Funeral: Iraqi Militia Response and Attendance](/policy-analysis/hassan-nasrallahs-funeral-iraqi-militia-response-and-attendance)

(/policy-analysis/hassan-nasrallahs-funeral-iraqi-militia-response-and-attendance)

RECOMMENDED



BRIEF ANALYSIS

[Syria's Quest for Oil May Include Russian Shipments](/policy-analysis/syrias-quest-oil-may-include-russian-shipments)

Mar 5, 2025

•
Noam Raydan

(/policy-analysis/syrias-quest-oil-may-include-russian-shipments)



ARTICLES & TESTIMONY

[Bridging the Gap: Turkey Between East and West](#)

Mar 5, 2025



Anna Borshchevskaya

[\(/policy-analysis/bridging-gap-turkey-between-east-and-west\)](/policy-analysis/bridging-gap-turkey-between-east-and-west)



ARTICLES & TESTIMONY

[Make Iraq Independent of Iranian Energy](#)

Mar 5, 2025



Michael Knights

[\(/policy-analysis/make-iraq-independent-iranian-energy\)](/policy-analysis/make-iraq-independent-iranian-energy)

TOPICS

[Military & Security \(/policy-analysis/military-security\)](/policy-analysis/military-security)

[Terrorism \(/policy-analysis/terrorism\)](/policy-analysis/terrorism)

REGIONS & COUNTRIES

[Iraq \(/policy-analysis/iraq\)](/policy-analysis/iraq)