

## Iraqi Elections:

### What, How, and Who

Jan 24, 2005



#### Brief Analysis

Iraq's elections are ready to go forward, but conditions are “far from ideal” in Kofi Annan's words, due to the growing insurgency, disagreements within the Shiite community, and the logistical difficulties of Iraq's first ever-free elections. The soon-to-be-elected Transitional National Assembly will play a vital role in Iraq's transitional process because it will pick the transitional president and run the constitution-writing process that will dictate Iraq's future government. It is worthwhile to take a look at how the elections will be conducted and at the candidates running in them.

The Three Iraqi Elections Three elections are scheduled for January 30, 2005, in Iraq. The first election will produce a 275-member Transitional National Assembly. This election will treat all of Iraq as one constituency, with each voter casting a vote for either an independent candidate or party, or for a list representing several parties. Currently there are 111 lists representing 7,785 candidates, all approved by the Independent Electoral Commission in Iraq (IECI). Each candidate must be thirty years of age and the following parties are prohibited from running: parties associated with militias, former senior Baathists, and current members of the armed forces. Each seat in the Assembly will be allocated to parties or candidates by the exact proportional representation they get for their list in the popular vote.

The second election will produce a provincial council in each of Iraq's eighteen provinces. Voters will elect forty-one members for each provincial council with the exception of Baghdad, where fifty-one will be elected. The IECI has thus far approved 382 lists representing around 9,000 candidates.

The third election will be held in autonomous Kurdish areas to elect a Kurdish National Assembly that will unite under one elected body the dual administrations in Irbil and Suleimaniyah. Four hundred ninety-nine candidates, representing the two major Kurdish parties and seventeen smaller parties, will be competing for 111 seats in the Assembly.

The final computer database containing the names of all candidates is still being prepared. Preliminary figures show about 19,000 candidates to be competing in all the elections. A vast majority of the candidates are running on party slates. Overall, 223 political parties and thirty-three coalitions have registered to take part in either the local or national elections.

The legal framework for the Iraqi elections comes from the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL), which among other things defined the National Assembly's responsibilities and set a timetable for the transition to a permanent government. In addition, election procedures are governed by orders signed by L. Paul Bremer, chief administrator of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), on the advice of the now defunct Iraqi Governing Council (IGC). Order 96 established Iraq's electoral system and Order 97 established the rules governing Iraqi candidates and stipulated that 25 percent of the candidates must be women.

The Voters Due to the election's tight timetable and the ongoing insurgency, a census or a full re-registration of Iraq's

eligible voters would have been too difficult to conduct. Instead, the initial list of those registered was based on the lists of those eligible to receive rations under the UN oil-for-food program during Saddam Hussein's regime. These lists could then be modified during the period through December 15. More than 2.1 million people went to local election offices to ensure that eligible members of their households could vote. Approximately 650,000 new voters were added during that registration period, bringing the number of eligible voters to 14,550,000. Voters were supposed to be able to register at 540 centers throughout Iraq, although ninety of these centers were closed because of security issues. Additionally, due to security concerns, Iraqis in the Anbar and Ninawa provinces will be able to register up until and on election day.

Iraq will be served by 5,220 polling centers broken down into 29,000 polling stations, with 1,454 of these centers in Baghdad divided into 8,081 polling stations (these figures do not include Anbar province). There are five to six stations or booths per center. The election will be overseen by 1,000 core election officials and 6,000 provincial officials employed by the IECI, headed by Abdul Hussein al-Hindawi, with technical assistance being provided by around a hundred international advisors, forty of whom are from the United Nations. The polling stations will be manned with 600 full-time elections staffers and 194,000 poll workers.

The Parties and Candidates For the Transitional National Assembly elections, the IECI has approved 111 lists representing more than 7,785 candidates competing for Assembly seats. Campaigning began on December 16 and ended January 23, 2005. Since December 15, however, forty-seven parties, most of them Sunni, have decided to boycott the elections. The following material covers the major lists and candidates:

The United Iraqi Coalition (UIC). By far the most prominent list of candidates, the UIC primarily represents the Shiite majority and was completed in consultation with Grand Ayatollah Ali Hussein al-Sistani. The list consists of 228 candidates among sixteen parties made up of Arab Shiites, Arab Sunnis, Failis (Kurdish Shiites), Turkmen, and Yazdis (a small ethnic group living in the Kurdish-dominated north). Atop the list is Abdel Aziz al-Hakim, head of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI). The number two candidate is Ibrahim al-Jafari, Iraq's interim vice president and head of the Dawa Party. Other significant members of the Coalition include Ahmed Chalabi, head of the Iraqi National Congress Party (INC), who is number ten on the list of candidates. A notable exclusion from the alliance is Muqtada al-Sadr, who refused his support.

The Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP). This Sunni party headed by Muhsin Abd al-Hamid, a former IGC member, submitted a list with 275 candidates. Though the IIP withdrew from the elections on December 27 after its repeated calls for the elections to be delayed were rejected, the party remains on the ballot due to electoral rules.

The Iraqi Party (al-Iraqiya). This list was submitted on December 15 by the Iraqi National Accord Party, establishing the candidacy of party leader and interim prime minister Iyad Allawi. This coalition consists of other INA members, other political parties, as well as tribal figures and independents, and boasts 240 candidates.

The Kurdish Alliance. This list consists of twelve parties and 165 candidates. The most prominent parties are the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP), headed by Mas'oud Barzani, and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan Party (PUK), headed by Jalal Talabani.

Independent Democratic Movement. Headed by former Iraqi foreign minister Adnan Pachachi, this list contains sixty-three candidates, including Kurdish, Arab, Sunni, Shiite, Christian, Turkmen, and Sabeen candidates. The list was originally bolstered by the support of several Iraqi ministers, but the minister of planning, Mahdi al-Hafidh, and Ayham al-Samera'i, minister of electricity, jumped ship to join the al-Iraqiyyoon coalition. Pachachi has said he will participate in the elections but has called repeatedly for postponement. The People's Union. This list is made up of an independent candidate and the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP), the oldest communist party in the Arab world. The ICP, headed by Hamid Majid Moussa, submitted a list of 275 candidates, ninety-one of whom are women.

The Iraqis (al-Iraqiyyoon). Headed by interim president Ghazi al-Yawar, this party consists mostly of tribal leaders. Defense minister Hazim al-Sha'lan and the minister of industry, Hachim al-Hassani, are also supporters.

Constitutional Monarchy Movement. Headed by Sherif Ali bin al-Hussein, claimant to the Hashemite throne in Iraq—out of power since 1958—this list has 275 candidates.

National Front for Iraq's Unity. A 216-member list made up of Sunni political parties and tribes, this list is headed by Hassan Zeidan Khalaf al-Lahibi, who was arrested by Coalition forces on December 31, prompting this party to boycott the elections on January 12.

Justice and Future Coalition. This is the Turkmen front, whose list is composed of 275 candidates and two parties.

The Iraqi Expatriate Vote The Iraqi expatriate vote is also expected to play a significant role in Iraq's January elections. Of Iraq's four million expatriates, between 1,208,500 and 2,059,000 are estimated to be eligible to vote. Fourteen countries have agreed to establish polling centers for Iraqi expatriate voting, with Syria, Jordan, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Iran boasting the largest number of Iraqi expatriates. The International Organization for Migration, based in Geneva, is coordinating this effort, for which they have a \$92 million budget. Voter registration will be conducted from January 17 to January 25, and voting will occur in the same station where the voter qualified from January 28 to January 30. Ballots will be available in Kurdish and Arabic, and voters will have a finger marked with indelible ink to prevent repeaters. To register, Iraqis must have been eighteen or older by December 31, and they must present an Iraqi passport or two other documents—a photo ID, and one proving that the voter is either an Iraqi citizen, a former Iraqi citizen, or that the voter's father was born in Iraq. These documents could include a foreign passport showing place of birth as Iraq or Iraqi ID card. Any eligible person can vote at the place he has registered, so, for instance, an Israeli citizen born in Iraq could register to vote in Jordan or the United States and vote there.

In the United States there will be five polling centers, located in Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, Nashville, and Washington, D.C. Between 230,000 and 240,000 of the U.S. Iraqi expatriate population of 360,000 is eligible and expected to vote. In Iran, up to 120,000 people of an Iraqi expatriate population of around 200,000 are eligible and expected to vote. Seventy polling centers have been established in Kermanshah, Khuzestan, Khorasan, Qom, Tehran, and western Azerbaijan. There have been many complaints on behalf of SCIRI that not enough Iranian expatriates are being allowed to vote. Below is a table of the estimated Iraqi expatriate populations of the 14 countries that have agreed to participate in the Out-of-Country-Voting (OCV) project:

Country/Estimated Iraqi Expatriate Population Australia, 75,000 Canada, 36,000 Denmark, 26,000 France, 8,000 Germany, 75,000 Iran, 200,000 (Est. 120,000 eligible to vote) Jordan, 450,000 (Est. 180,000 eligible to vote) The Netherlands, 44,000 Sweden, 91,600 Syria, 500,000 (Est. 250,000 eligible to vote) Turkey, 40,000 United Arab Emirates, 250,000 USA, 360,000 (Est. 240,000 eligible to vote) (Source: OIM) After the Elections The Transitional National Assembly is responsible for electing a president and two deputies from its members, by two-thirds majority vote. This Presidency Council will in turn unanimously appoint a prime minister, also a member of the assembly who must also be approved by the assembly by a simple majority vote. The Assembly must also draw up a constitution by August 15, 2005, to be submitted for a referendum on October 15, 2005. The plan is to hold the elections under that constitution on December 15, 2005, and a fully constitutional government to take power by December 31, 2005. If the constitution is rejected then there will be new Assembly elections by December 15, 2005, and the process of drafting a new constitution is restarted. There is also provision for a delay of six months if not enough progress is made on the constitution by August 15, 2005.

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