

## **Maliki government and Turkmen in Iraq**

HASAN KANBOLAT

Following the general elections held on March 7, 2010, Iraq's parliament gave a vote of confidence to the new "national unity" government. There are 13 state ministers in the 42-member cabinet and nine acting ministers.

Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki will serve as acting defense minister, interior minister and national security minister. The Oil Ministry, one of the top three important ministries, will be under Maliki's direct control. The Foreign Affairs Ministry has been granted to the Kurdistan Alliance and the Ministry of Finance has been given to the al-Iraqiya List.

The State of Law Coalition headed by Maliki took 13 ministries, of which five will be run by proxy. The al-Iraqiya List headed by Iyad Allawi won eight; the Kurdistan Alliance won seven, of which three will be run by proxy; the Iraqi National Alliance led by Ammar al-Hakim won 11, of which one will be run by proxy; the Sadr group within the Iraqi National Alliance won six, of which one will be run by proxy; and the United Iraqi Alliance led by Jawad al-Bulani took one ministry.

There are claims that a points system was used to determine which parties would have power in the government. According to the system, two seats in parliament are worth one point. The presidency costs eight points, the prime ministry 10, the position of parliament speaker six, the Defense Ministry, Interior Ministry, National Security Ministry and the Intelligence Ministry each cost four points, the service ministries each cost three and state ministries each two points. There are claims that groups forming the government exchanged their points for their preferred cabinet seats. However, it's hard to say that the Sadr group, the Iraqiya List or the Kurdistan Alliance are happy with the cabinet. For example, the Goran List within the Kurdistan Alliance had to withdraw from the cabinet because it could not take a service ministry.

The Turkmen in Maliki's cabinet are quite happy. Despite having learned the political system in Iraq later on and their dispersed population patterns, they were very successful in the general elections and in the cabinet's formation. The hard work of educated Turkmen to ensure the unity of Iraq and their refusal to take up an armed struggle has paved the way for them to obtain a better position in Iraq. Turkmen have been allocated three ministries.

More specifically, Izzadin al-Dawla from the al-Iraqiya List became minister of agriculture, Muhammad Jasim Jaffar from the Iraqi National Alliance became minister of youth and sports and Dr. Turan Müftü from the Iraqi Turkmen Front became state minister for provincial affairs. This is the first time the Iraqi Turkmen Front has been allocated a ministry. Müftü is a member of the Kirkuk Provincial Council. The biggest struggle for Turkmen now is winning the vice presidency. If Turkmen win the vice presidency, they will become more active in Iraqi politics. Among the candidates for the position are Muhammad

Mahdi al-Bayat, Iraqi Turkmen Front Chairman Sadettin Ergeç, and Kirkuk Deputy Chief of Police Turhan Abdurrahman. The Kurdistan Alliance may recommend Abdurrahman, who is very successful in Kirkuk, to the position of vice president in order to make him less active in the area. Turkmen claim that they were unable to agree amongst themselves on a candidate for the vice presidency both during Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jafaari's term in 2005 and during Prime Minister Maliki's term in 2009. Turkmen need to put aside internal disputes and agree on a candidate for the position of vice president. Since a person cannot be both a state minister and a member of parliament, Ali Hashim and Fevzi Ekrem, both ethnic Turkmen, will most likely become deputies as well.

There is a possibility that Maliki will bring up the issue of holding a census, which has constantly been postponed. The population census that was supposed to be held in October 2010 was delayed to December 2010 and then indefinitely. However, the outcome of the census could quickly incite bloodthirsty groups in Iraq, which is going through ethnic, religious and sectarian divisions. This is why conducting the census before ensuring stability and security could open the door to disaster. There is also a possibility that Maliki will hold the provincial elections in May 2011. From the way things are going, it does not look like politics in Iraq will be any calmer in 2011.