Provincial elections in the north of Iraq: The Kurdish parties and the non-governing Iraqi communities (Minorities)

An evaluation of the preliminary results of the Iraqi provincial elections of 31 January 2009 yields several important conclusions.

Firstly, the absence of violence and a significant decrease in **gross** election fraud shows the Iraqi people's support for the democratic process in Iraq.

Secondly, the size of turnout at 51% might be considered encouraging for the election held in a country that has only recently got rid of a fierce dictatorship and adopted democracy.

Thirdly, the election certainly shows a rejection of sectarianism by Iraqis, with some showing instead an Iraqi patriotism.

Important changes in the political make-up of the newly elected councils in the most of the cities in the north of Iraq redress much of the manipulation seen in the earlier elections. It also dramatically demonstrates the extent to which the region was governed unfairly by Kurdish parties with supported from the Peshmerga militia and their politicized security apparatus.

Therefore, if the outcomes of the present provincial elections are reflected in the results of the referendum on the Iraqi constitution, then the accuracy of the results for the referendum in Diyala and Nineveh provinces must certainly be questioned and the legality of the Iraqi constitution discussed.

Nevertheless, it is expected that a country facing huge challenges, like Iraq, should experience major election irregularities. The north of Iraq remains the most exposed region to electoral fraud and the non-governing communities (Minority) are still the most vulnerable to discrimination at the ballot boxes.[1]

The hegemony of Kurdish authorities in all civil and non-civil administrative centers in much of the Iraq's north has been a major concern for the non-Kurdish populations and a great deal of election fraud was expected. But relatively careful preparation of the voter lists, better organization and strict control of election centers and the replacement of Peshmerga with southern based units in **several regions** meant many pessimistic expectations proved unfounded.

Several factors made election fraud in the **north** of Iraq unavoidable and also difficult to detect. This generally included the unfamiliarity many people still have toward elections and the democracy. Meanwhile the prevalence of sectarianism and extreme nationalism, which are deep-seated in the civil and non-civil governmental administration also contributed to an environment in which election fraud could take palace.

Elements that disproportionally affected the election processes in the north of Iraq included:

1. **Large non-governing communities (Minority)**
   It is well known that hindering minorities from voting remains one of the most common accusations of voter fraud.[1] The most mixed of Iraq's mosaic of peoples is found in the

north of Iraq where the Turkmen are found importantly in Kerkuk province. But Turkmen are also the majority in many districts, sub-districts and tens of villages in the provinces of Mosul, Diyala and Salah al-Din provinces. The Erbil city, which United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) excludes from the so-called disputed regions, includes no less than one-third Turkmen. The Chaldo-Assyrian presence in Nineveh province is very noticeable and ancient. They dominate the Nineveh plain with the Yazidis and Shabaks. Chaldo-Assyrian is also found in Erbil and Kerkuk provinces. A large number of the Yazidi dwellings in the north and northwest of Nineveh province are also of historical. The population size of these non-governing communities (minorities) remains at least 15% of the total Iraqi population. Meanwhile, the larger Arab and Kurdish populations are distributed to the western and eastern halves of the northern Iraq, consequently.

One of the major problems facing the non-governing communities after decades of suppression from the Iraqi governments is their lack of any central political and communal structures. As a result they are easily exposed to external manipulation.

2. The Kurdish administration
Having only recently left behind the tough guerrilla life, after decades in the harsh mountain regions, the Kurdish administration remains characterized by an authoritarian mentality, and lack of the meritocracy. Its principle aim is the institution of a Kurdistan at any cost.
The education system was politicized and the Kurdish people have been educated from the early 1990s to believe that the north of Iraq is a fatherland which has been usurped by other nations.

3. Kurdish claims
Since 1961 when the armed Kurdish revolt started, Kurdish parties supported by militias aggressively fought the Iraqi state. They have claimed almost all the north of Iraq and in particular, the Kerkuk region.[2]

4. The post occupation situation
Kurdish political parties with their militias supported by the occupation authorities came to dominate almost all the north of Iraq after the occupation of Iraq. All the civil and non-civil administrative bodies of the Iraqi state were demolished and overwhelmingly replaced by Kurds in the north of Iraq.

The region remains unmonitored by the international community and there are no international human rights organizations, such as Human Rights Watch or Amnesty International, in the region. The UNAMI monitors the whole of Iraq with a staff of only forty one human rights officers, and they have not entered the most vulnerable region in Nineveh province, Nineveh plain.

Indeed, instead of increasing its reports on the region, UNAMI decreased its reporting from a bimonthly report to an annual report in 2008.

Meanwhile the inexperienced Kurdish forces administer the region with an iron fist, while the non-Kurdish population suffers psychologically and economically:

a. Mass intimidations, thousands of arrests, assassinations, kidnappings, deprivation of work and disappearances **are neither registered nor investigated**.
b. Tens of thousands of Kurds were appointed to the governmental offices, while the number of Peshmerga militants increased two or three-fold. The large Iraqi armies in Mosul recruited 80% Kurds and the Kurdified administrations give contracts to Kurdish contractors who employ Kurdish workers. The Kurdish authorities receive 17% of the Iraqi reserves which is more than twice the eligible share, while other communities are deprived from any financial support. The standard of living for the Kurds has greatly increased, whilst that of the rest of the population decreased

dramatically. This has significantly increased the vulnerability of the non-Kurdish peoples.

5. **Change of the demography**
   The Kurdified administrations brought hundreds of thousand of Kurds and established them in most parts of the newly controlled regions.

It was under such a severely unbalanced psychological, administrative, economic and military situation that the Iraqi provincial elections were held in the north of Iraq. The reports of authorities from the Iraqi non-governing communities, which barely reach the international media, registered some of the election irregularities and frauds:

Turkmen regions

Khanaqin - Diyala

Khanaqin, to which the Kurds lay claim, is a town where even by the middle of the twentieth century Kurds constituted less than half of the population. But a process of Kurdification was intensified following the 2003 occupation. Even so, Khanaqin is not included in Kurdish region, but the Kurdish parties rule the region and they dominate the administration while the Peshmerga dominate the region militarily.

Almost all the staff in the election centers were from the Kurdish community, mainly Kurdish teachers who get their salaries from Kurdish regional government, and the centers were guarded by Kurdish militias.

The district still has a considerable Turkmen and Arab population. Three members in the city council were from Turkmen groups who could not resist uninterrupted intimidation by the Kurdish political parties changed allegiances to side with Kurdish parties.

Most of the national observers could not notice any international observer in Diyala region. Because Khanaqin was given to the Kurds, it should be asked if UNAMI observed the election processes in this region. If yes, with how large staff and for how long in each election center?

It is also worth noting that there were nineteen election centers, 159 election stations and around 60,000 voters in the region. In addition to the manipulation practiced in election centers, buses transferred approximately 20,000 Kurds, from the northern boundaries of the district which border the Kurdish Sulaymaniya province and its Kalar district into the election centers.

Voters were also intimidated into voting for Kurdish parties. At the end of the election period, after the observers of the Turkmen and Shia parties were sent away from the election centers, the staffs within the election centers filled ballots for the Kurdish parties.

During voting, Turkmen observers were put in places that made it difficult for them to watch the voting processes properly. Some sources say that there were ballot boxes opened during the election processes and that the observers representing non-Kurdish groups were not allowed to participate in counting processes. Election center staff was also frequently completing ballots papers for voters.

It is telling that the turnout of most of the election centers in Khanaqin reached over 90% and in some centers 100% and in many cases 90% were awarded to Kurdish parties, while the general turnout of the Diyala region is 57% and that of all Iraq 51%.

Other reliable sources also mentions that ballot boxes from all the cities in Diyala region were handed to the military authorities at the evening of election day except the boxes of Khanaqin which were submitted the following day at 13:00pm.

One of the major obstacles facing Turkmen voters was that in many cases voters were allocated election centers many kilometers away from their residence. Furthermore, the curfew for vehicles which was declared a day before election in Diyala province continued until the 2:30pm on election day. This inhibited large numbers of Turkmen voters from reaching their election centers:

- ✓ Villagers from Ash Tuken had to travel 15 kilometers to reach the ballot box in Jabbara
- ✓ Villagers from Dahliki, Seyid Jabbar, Sari Gul, Irjan, Tel Nakkar, Yasat and Devi-Dan had to travel 20 kilometers to reach the ballot box in As Tuken.
- ✓ Villagers from al-Haddam, Um al-Gizlan, Bani Zayd, Hora Sinaydij, Shishan al-Kabir, Shishan al-Sagir had to travel 22 kilometers to reach ballot boxes in Narin region in Kara Tepe.
- ✓ Villagers from Ali Saray al-Sufla, Ali Saray al-Ulya and al-Hidhab had to travel either 5 kilometers to Kara Tepe or 30 kilometers to Kashkul.

Kara Tepe

Two major factors assisted the Kurdish lists in winning the majority in a well-known Turkmen Kara Tepe region:

- ✓ The long distance between a voter's residence and the election centers combined with a vehicle curfew hampered hundreds of Turkmen in trying to cast their ballots. Such an obstacle was much smaller for Kurdish voters who in many cases violated the curfew.
- ✓ The region was controlled by Kurdish militant parties after occupation and the Kurdified administration appointed about two thousand Kurds from outside Kara Tepe to government offices. This significantly increased the number of Kurdish voters.

Furthermore, the Turkmen staff in government offices in Kara Tepe was threatened with the loss of their positions if they did not vote for a Kurdish list and many were made to swear to vote for the Kurdish lists.

It should also be clarified which subsection of the Kara Tepe population suffered more from the following irregularities:

- ✓ Absences of the names in the voter lists,
- ✓ The mistakes in the names of voters
- ✓ Closure of some election centers an hour earlier at 5:00pm.

Telafer

Telafer is a well-known Turkmen region and one of the largest districts of Iraq. The Kurdish Regional Government includes it in their so-called Kurdistan map and continuously exposed the region to aggressive attacks by the Kurdish Peshmerga and occupation troops, which displaced about 50,000 inhabitants to different regions in and out of the province. In general the election fraud to which the Turkmen regions were exposed was found mostly in the Nineveh province, where no international observers were found other than two election observers from UNPO and one from the Assyria council of Europe[3]:

The major election problems were made by the offices of the Independent High Electoral Commission. The voter lists of 6 offices in Telafer were not found which included 1,657 families. The number of voters within these families totaled 6628. The same took place in other Turkmen regions, in Iyadhiya sub-district where thousands of families could not find their names on the

lists. With large numbers of Kurdish staff work in the electoral office of Mosul province, it is highly possible that they did not send these lists to election centers deliberately.

The second most important factor which hampered Turkmen voters from casting their ballots was that election centers in different Turkmen regions were many kilometers away from the election centers where the curfew for vehicles was active. According to some sources about half of the voters, which accounted for around 100,000 people were registered in Telafer of whom about half of the registered voters could not cast their ballots.

The majority of the displaced families, which are numbered in their thousands suffered severely from the aforementioned factors. Other voters could not vote either because their names were not found in the voter lists or the election centers were from their homes. Other groups of displaced Turkmen families were not allowed to renew their voter lists.

In different election centers in Telafer and in Iyadhiye red pens were used instead of blue which rendered large number of votes illegible.

Chaldo-Assyrian Regions

As it is well known that the Kurdish political parties which benefit from the unbalanced political, administrative and economical condition between the Kurds and other Iraqi communities in the north of Iraq has recruited several groups from different non-Kurdish communities in return for promotion and wealth.

The Chaldo-Assyrian regions suffered from the same two major obstacles which inhibited thousands of the voters from casting their ballots. First, the absence of voter lists and second, the large distance between the voter houses and election centers in the presence of curfew for vehicles. Being the Chaldo-Assyrian regions in Nineveh plain dominated by Kurdish militant Peshmergas and security services, it is highly possible that these obstacles in front of the voters introduced deliberately. The displaced Assyrians are accounted by tens of thousands who suffered also like Turkmen of Telafer from not finding their names in the voter lists. According to the only international observer of UNPO, the families who fled Mosul in November 2008 are accounted to 3500 families. The Chaldo-Assyrian Council representative in Brussels, who believes that important election fraud took place inside election centers.

In addition to the election frauds, the collaborator Chaldo-Assyrian groups appeared to violate the election processes in favor of the pro-Kurdish Assyrian list. This can be concluded from the events during campaigns, voting processes and in the results of the elections in different regions.

The Chaldo-Assyrian candidates and independent election observers enumerates the major election frauds in Nineveh Plain as follows:[4]

- ✓ The pro-Kurdish Chaldo-Assyrian Sarkis Agajan, minister of finance in the Kurdish government, has about 2,600 militants in the Nineveh province who were paid by Agajan. These militants played an important role in directing the Chaldo-Assyrian voters to cast for the Ishtar list by intimidation and promises of cash pay or jobs.
- ✓ The Christian religious representative Luwis Kassap used the Churches in Kara Kuş to campaign for the pro-Kurdish list. During Sunday religious ceremonies he asked the congregation to vote for a pro-Kurdish Ishtar list saying that it was the list of the Churches. Furthermore, Kassap waged wide slander campaigns against the candidates of the Rafidian list.
- ✓ Getting large sums of money from Kurdish parties, the pro-Kurdish religious groups organized large numbers of activities during the period of election campaigning.

- ✓ To frighten the voters and the Chaldo-Assyrian parties, which were not working with the Kurdish parties, an attempt to kill the director of election campaigns of the Rafidain List was foiled. Others were exposed to physical assault.
- ✓ Christian students were threatened that the bus service allocated to bring them to schools and universities would be stopped if they did not vote for a pro-Kurdish list.
- ✓ During the curfew which was applied to the Nineveh Province, cars from the Churches and the pro-Kurdish Christian groups were used freely to transfer specific voters to and from the election centers particularly from the villages.
- ✓ The families in the three hundred flats of the churches, which were built by the Kurdish Regional Governments funds, were threatened so that they would vote for pro-Kurdish Chaldo-Assyrian list.

Other reports stated that:
- ✓ The voters were strongly pressed in the election centers to vote for pro-Kurdish Assyrian list.
- ✓ Names were omitted from the voter lists in the election centers.
- ✓ In many cases, it was founded that people were given cash money and asked to swear to vote for specific lists.
- ✓ As in other areas, the high turnout in the Chaldo-Assyrian regions under Kurdish militia control, is most probably due to the filling of unused ballots by the staff of the election centers in favor of Kurdish or pro-Kurdish lists. The abnormally high votes for those lists sometimes reached to 90%, and appear to support this possibility.
- ✓ In some centers in Duhok, where large numbers of displaced Chaldo-Assyrian voted, the center's staffs were almost all Kurdish and claimed that the ballot papers ran out.
- ✓ The pro-Kurdish Ishtar slate has been accused by Chaldo-Assyrian in the Nineveh province of using the threat of loss of aid and security to force Chaldo-Assyrian to vote for them.

Yazidis Regions

The election observers of the Yazidi Movement for Reform and Progress, which is headed by Yazidi member of the Iraqi Parliament Amin Farhan, registered large numbers of election fraud in the Yazidi regions: Shaykhan, Sinjar, Tilkeif districts and al-Kus, Baashiqa, al-Qayrawan and al-Qahtaniya sub-districts.

Since the occupation, the Yazidi community has been suppressed by the Kurdish militias. These militias spread rumours that those not voting for the KDP will be punished either by arrest or with the cessation of their ration cards. The head branch 17 of KAP, Sarbast and Kurdish soldiers from the Iraqi Third Military corps participated in the intimidation. A CD Video film proving these claims were given to the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq.

The replacement of the Kurdish Peshmergas by the Iraqi soldiers could not be completed in Yazidi regions. The domination of the election centers in Yazidi regions by Kurdish staff and the guarding of election centers by Kurdish Peshmergas almost removed the legal environment for fair elections. The pressure and intimidation to vote for the Kurdish list by Peshmerga militants were one of several major election frauds:

- ✓ In the al-Shamal sub-district almost all the staff of the election centers was Kurdish teachers appointed by Kurdish parties from the Duhok governorate. All are also well known members of Kurdish parties. These centers were guarded by militias from Kurdish parties.
- ✓ All the observers from the Yazidi parties who are opponents to the Kurdish parties were not allowed to enter the election centers in the districts of Shaykhan, Tilkef, al-Kush and sub-districts of al-Faruk and al-Tamim. For example, in Lalish election center, the observer from the Yazidi Movement for Reform and Progress Yousif Khadida Malko was

      not allowed to enter the center by Ali Huseyin, a member of the KDP, and the staff in the election center.

✓ All the ballots which were not used were completed by Kurdish staff after the close of voting and, therefore, the turnout in some centers was abnormally high.

✓ Campaigns for Kurdish parties and Kurdish candidates were continued in front of the election centers.

✓ The vehicle curfew was selectively applied by Kurdish Peshmerga, specially against the groups who were opponents of the Kurdish parties.

✓ The election centers closed at 7:00pm in several regions.

✓ At 5:00pm Kurdish militias entered houses and forced people to go to election centers and vote for the Kurdish list.

✓ The ballots of thousands of illiterates were filled by the directors of election centers in support of the Kurdish list.

✓ At 3:30pm on election day, the first candidate from the Kurdish list, Kasim Salih Huseyin entered the election center in the Third Qurtuba al-Mukhtalata (No. 321018) and visited all the election stations before meeting secretly with the director of the center, Kasim Osman, for twenty minutes. He remained in the center for one hour.

The following election fraud was registered in the election center in the village of Hardan in the sub-district al-Shamal located in the district Sinjar:

    a. At 10:10am, the director of the al-Shamal sub-district visited the center with his guards and after voting talked with the director of the center about the KDP voters.

    b. The number of staff was 38 of whom 34 were from Kurdish parties.

There was additional election fraud by Kurdish militias in the schools of Al-Andalus compound in the al-Shamal sub-district:

    a. At 10:00am, the director of al-Shamal sub-district, Khidr Rashsho, visited two centers with his guards and talked to the Kurdish staff in favor of voters for Kurdish parties.

    b. At 2:00pm, the commander of the Kurdish militia group with his armed guards entered the election center to show Kurdish hegemony and frighten the voters.

    c. At 2:00pm the deputy of the head of the Branch 17 of KDP of Sinjar (Khalid) entered another election center with KDP party authority, Ilyas Haji Barakat, and visited all the voting stations and asked for information about the voters of Yazidi Movement for Reform and Progress which is an opponent to the Kurdish parties.

The head of the city council in district al-Baaj, Jasim Muhammed Huseyin, is from Rambusi region and a member of the KDP who was appointed as a member of staff in the Rambusi election center. He was accompanied by an armed guard on his visit and he toured continuously in the stations of the two election centers. He interfered directly with voting processes and kicked an observer called Fadhil Khayri Biso.

The director of the al-Kahtaniya election center, Sido Khashsho Nafkhosh, who is also a member of the KDP staffer within the IHEC, and head of the city council in the sub-districts of al-Kahtaniya toured the election centers in the sub-district al-Kahtaniya, al-Jazeera, al-Adnaniya and al-Rambusi and asked the staff to encourage voting for the KDP.

Shabak reports

Electoral irregularities started during the election campaigns when the posters of the non-Kurdish lists were removed. The candidates from the non-Kurdish lists were not allowed by Kurdish authorities to enter the region to campaign for their lists. Under the pressure of the Kurdish parties, the Independent High Electoral Commission obeyed several Kurdish pressures, for example, 24,000 voters in Nineveh region were added to the voter lists before a few days before the election when the legal time had ended.

"We frequently announced that the presence of the Kurdish Peshmerga in the Nineveh plain will influence negatively the election processes because these militants are going to use threatening and all types of intimidations against the population" said al-Qaddo, member of the Shabak representative in the Iraqi parliament. He continued by saying that the distribution of the security forces in the election centers were as follows: Polices forces and a few soldiers were stationed outside the election centers and large numbers of Peshmerga and pro-Kurdish elements inside the centers. The Peshmerga and pro-Kurdish elements were frightening and threatening those who would not vote for Kurdish lists. As an example, in the Khursanbad center of the Baashiqa there were three policemen, six soldiers, and twenty four Kurdish Peshmergas.

In many instances, the observers of the political parties were not allowed to participate in counting processes, the ballot boxes of the Darawish region, for example, were taken to Baashiqa but the observers were not informed about the whereabouts of the boxes before they went to Mosul.

The Kurdish authorities worked to annul the ballot boxes in which the majority of ballots were not for Kurdish list, for example, the boxes of Khazna Tepe center, where the Shabak list win 2,400 of 3,000 votes.

Some fifty ballot boxes were brought by the deputy director of the al-Shamal center, Nawwaf Ilyas, on the days after the election claiming that these boxes were forgotten.

Despite the fact that the original Shabak candidate won 13,000 votes, and while the pro-Kurdish Shabak candidate won only 2,500, Kurdish authorities worked intensively to reverse the outcome and show that their candidate had won the majority.

The Shabaks were continuously threatened by Kurdish militants who stated that they would not allow them to enter the Shaykhan and Baashiqa regions if the pro-Kurdish Shabak list did not win.

Due to the previous actions of the Kurdish militias and continuous intimidation on opponents, the observers of the non-Kurdish lists are now living in a difficult psychological condition.

Conclusions

Elections in the north of Iraq cannot be compared with any other elections. In any other election the competition is about who to administer a country, but in the north of Iraq, and due to the secessionist policies of the Kurdish militant parties, and strange approach of the UNAMI office in Baghdad, the competition is on, who own the immense Iraqi lands?

If the aggressive desire of the Kurdish parties to gain vast Iraqi land is taken into consideration then the organization of an impartial election in the north of Iraq in the present situation is going to be a kind of imagination.

Events during the electoral campaigns and the incongruity of the election results expose partiality in the large areas in the north of Iraq that are controlled by the Kurdish parties supported by the Kurdish militants and the politicized security services.

Pre-elections
The huge wealth of Kurdish parties is pitted against the modest finances of the other communities, particularly the minorities. This unbalanced economical condition deviates the equation of power toward the Kurdish and pro-Kurdish lists. Some politicians were either afraid or prevented form entering their regions to wage campaigns. There were also cases were campaign tools such as posters and pamphlets of the non-Kurdish lists were removed. Accusations were also made of vote-buying with cash payments being made after voters swore to support Kurdish or pro-Kurdish lists, and voters also faced threats that they would be dismissed from their jobs.

The long distances between voters voting centers combined with the absence of voter names from many voter lists deprived large number of non-governing community groups.

During elections
During the elections, there were instances of Kurdish activists frightening, threatening and pressing voters to cast their votes for the Kurdish list. There were also instances where votes were transferred to the Kurdish list by election center staff who completed unused ballots in their favor. The curfew for vehicles was often violated inside and between the provinces. Specific voters were transferred inside cities and between the districts. Thousands of Kurds travelled:

- ✓ from Sulaymaniya voted in Khanaqin
- ✓ through Mosul dam basin to Sinjar
- ✓ from Erbil to Makhmur

Post-elections
The difficult situation of the election observers from non-Kurdish political list in the areas controlled by Kurdish Peshmergas was made more difficult by actions, such as the dismissal of Assyrian staff who were found not to have voted for the pro-Kurdish Ishtar list.[5]

Incongruity of the results
The turnout in the regions where the election centers were staffed mainly by Kurds and guarded by Kurdish Peshmergas proved abnormally high, and in some centers reached about 100%. In these regions the Kurdish list also won an abnormally high percentage of the votes, in some cases over 90%. When the election results of a minority group, such as the Chaldo-Assyrian, in the regions controlled by the Kurdish parties are compared with other regions, the pro-Kurdish list received many fewer votes.

Because significant electoral fraud can take place in a short time, the observation of an election center for few hours can be considered ineffective– especially if there are four hundred international observers assigned to the thousands of election centers, each of which has dozens of ballot boxes. Logically therefore, the positions of the international observers should be carefully determined. They should be developed in the regions that are most vulnerable to electoral fraud. During the provincial elections however, the most vulnerable regions lacked international observers. The large areas that UNAMI intends to divide between the ethnic Kurdish region and the Iraqi state were empty of international observers. In the most disputed and large Nineveh plain, there were only two UNPO observers.[5] In Khanaqin region, which was given by UNAMI to the Kurdish region, there were no international observers. The moral responsibility therefore rests with Staffan de Mistura who holds historical responsibility for the so-called disputed regions, particularly Khanaqin, which he granted to the Kurds without election. Mr. de Mistura should consider observing the elections in those regions before he thinks to remain in Baghdad or visit the other two provinces in the south.

Recommendations

➢ UNAMI should consider the following before parceling the lands in the north of Iraq:

- ✓ The disturbed psychological and economical condition of the non-Kurdish population in the north of Iraq which shifts the balance of power grossly toward the Kurds.
- ✓ Physiological and economical rehabilitation of the non-Kurdish communities to decrease their vulnerability.
- ✓ The great demographic changes, particularly Kurdification of administration, introduced by Kurdish parties which ruled the region with an iron fist since the occupation in 2003.
- ✓ The increase of the Kurdish populations in many important regions during 20th century.
- ✓ That there were almost no international observers in the so-called disputed areas
- ✓ How UNAMI could monitor the elections in the sensitive areas with so few staff, especially when it is well known that the movement of the UNAMI staff is strictly limited.

- The optimum choice to solve the boundary problems between the ethnic Kurdish federal region and the multiethnic Iraqi state is to generalize the Kerkuk law of 23:

    - The civil governmental administrations, the military, the police and the security forces should be fairly distributed between the communities in the region.
    - The demographical changes should be corrected.

_____

References:
1. Erin Ferns and Nathan Henderson-James "The Right Way to Report Voter Fraud" Posted by, Project Vote on August 8, 2008.
   http://www.alternet.org/blogs/democracy/94450/the_right_way_to_report_voter_fraud/
2. A map of so-called Kurdistan taken from the official website of the Kurdish Regional Government, http://www.turkmen.nl/1A_soitm/K_Greedy.pdf
3. The joint UNPO-Assyrian Council in Europe (ACE) election Observation Team "Preliminary Report: Iraqi Provincial Elections in Nineveh Province 2009" launched on UNPO website: http://www.unpo.org/content/view/9165/81/
4. The report of al-Rafidain list which is signed by Sami Habib Astipho, the candidate of the list, Imad Behnam Robil, the co-coordinator of the list, Ninos Gorgis Odisho, the authorized staff of the list, presented to the IHEC at 2.2.2009.
5. An Article titled "The Christians affairs attention office in Telskof dismiss several of staffs who did not vote for Ishtar list" published in the website Muntadayat Ainkawa. http://www.ankawa.com/forum/index.php/topic,266900.0.html