

## **Iraqi general elections in the north: Perfunctory observation legalizes the fraudulent election and harms the non-Kurdish communities**

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The interest-dependent and security-first policy of the involved powers in the Iraqi issues over the past six years has hidden major threats and brutal violations of human rights. Passive approaches to these threats and violations have only served to anchor a sense of injustice in the Iraqi society and failed to lay the stability.

Despite fierce debate in the Iraqi parliament, a rigid Kurdish policy combined with pressure from different national and international authorities have forced the Turkmen and Arab Law makers of Kerkuk to accept the grossly flawed voter list for the upcoming Iraqi general elections:

**Statistics in Kerkuk province;** the number of Kerkuk voters registered primarily in 2004 were 474,336. This figure increased to 576,048,<sup>1-4</sup> when about 108,640 Kurds were accepted to register as voters in Kerkuk, during preparation of voter lists for the Iraqi general election of 30 January 2005. Later on, the number of Kerkuk voters in comparison with other provinces was disproportionally increased during the renewal of voter lists for Iraqi general elections 15 December 2005 adding 227,235 new voters, most of them were Kurds. This increased the number of voters in Kerkuk province to above 800,000.<sup>2, 5-8</sup> The electoral office of Kerkuk, which is administered by the Kurds, have announced before few weeks that the number of voters in Kerkuk province have grown further. The figure is still growing and it is possible that it will reach 900,000 by the deadline of renewing of the voter lists. For context, it is important to note:

- √ That the Kurdish parties dominated Kerkuk administration after occupation.
- √ That on the day of the fall of the Ba'athist regime in 2003, the population of Kerkuk numbered 830,000.

**Statistics in Kurdish region;** voter numbers in the Kurdish-administered area were listed as 971,953 in the 1992 election organized by the United Nations, but before the 25 July 2009 elections, the Kurdish administration has presented a list of 2,570,000 voters in the provincial elections in Kurdish region. If we consider the voter number of Kurdish region at 2009 by population growth equation:  $P_1 = P_0 (1 + t)^n$ , it is expected to be 1.8 million instead of 2,570,00. It is of note:

- √ That tens of thousands of Kurdish families moved to the so-called disputed regions after the 2003 occupation of Iraq
- √ That large numbers of Kurdish families fled after 1992.

Election processes are a complex operation involving many dimensions and phases. Significant election frauds can occur at any stage and in any instant during the process. Just for example, a type of fraud which is widely talked about in northern Iraq is use of two ballot boxes, one of which is put in front of voters and ignored and the second which is prepared by authorities and calculated. Therefore, major corruptions can be expected in all election stages. It can be considered that manipulation of election processes started when the Political Council of National Security started to prepare the draft law depending on the voter lists of 2004 and 2005 with the addition of natural increase in number of voters, the Iraqi Independent High Electoral Commission, which is headed by a Kurd, announced to considerable disbelief the loss of huge voter lists from 2004 and 2005.

There are two opportunities by which the European, American and other international authorities can help the Iraqis to prevent huge fraud in the upcoming elections in northern Iraq and to stop corruption of the political process by Kurdish authorities and consolidate ongoing abuse of administrative power.

**Firstly**, the recently recognised election law necessitates thorough investigation of the voter lists of Kerkuk province. A demographic shift of more than 5%, which is highly expected, will cancel the elections of Kerkuk province. The attempts of the Kurdish authorities to annex Kerkuk province together with a domination of the administration of Kerkuk province by Kurdish political parties will most probably hinder or corrupt the operation of investigation of the Kerkuk voter list.

**Secondly**, in the present state of affairs in the Kurdish-administered regions, Kerkuk province and other so-called disputed regions - in which live about 10 million people, it is clearly impossible to detect the election frauds with usual observation systems.

The questions which impose itself, how many international observers and how they:

- ✓ Can ensure careful and close observation of **all stages** of the election process.
- ✓ Can examine the inflated **voter lists**
- ✓ Watch tens of thousands of ballot boxes, prior to, during and particularly after election and during their transfer to counting centres.
- ✓ Participate in the process of calculation of millions of votes.
- ✓ Pay attention to the election process in districts and sub-districts.

We therefore urge the European and US authorities to:

- ✓ Organize meetings with the law makers, politicians and civil society organizations of Arabs, Turkmen, Chaldea-Assyrians, Yazidis and Shabaks in the region and discusses effective observation methods.
- ✓ Encourage and finance western expert individuals and organizations to participate in direct observation of all stages of election processes in the Kurdish-administered region, so-called disputed regions and Kerkuk province.
- ✓ Demand post-election examination of the abnormally inflated voter lists of Sulaymaniya, Erbil, Duhok province, so-called disputed region and participate actively in examination of voter lists of Kerkuk province.

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