

Iraqi National Election 2010 – FAQ

1. When will Iraq's national parliamentary election take place?

Iraq's Presidency Council announced that the national parliamentary election will take place on March 7, 2010. In this election, voters will elect 325 members of Iraq's Council of Representatives (COR).

2. When Iraqis go to the polls, will they vote for parties or candidates?

The Iraqi Parliamentary Election is based on an open-list electoral system, and voters may choose *either* a party, *or* a candidate and the party of that candidate. To the voters, the system will appear similar to that used for the provincial elections held in January 2009.

3. Who will administer the election?

The 2010 national parliamentary election will be led, funded and managed by the Government of Iraq. Iraq's Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) is the central institution tasked with administering the elections. IHEC was established by the COR in 2007.

IHEC receives technical assistance from the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and USAID implementing partner International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES). Together UNAMI and IFES work to ensure that Iraq's elections meet international standards.

4. How many seats are in Iraq's parliament?

In December 2009, the COR amended the national election law to increase the number of parliamentary seats from 275 to 325. The number of parliamentary seats was increased to more accurately reflect the country's population. The adjustment was also designed to ensure that the size of the COR complies with Article 49 of Iraq's Constitution, which stipulates that the parliament should represent the entire Iraqi people at a ratio of one seat for every 100,000 Iraqi citizens.

5. Do Iraq's parliamentarians have term limits?

Under the Iraqi constitution, COR members serve four year terms. There is no limit to the number of times one can be re-elected to parliament.

6. When were the last Iraqi elections held?

Iraq's current parliament was elected in December 2005. Iraq held provincial elections on January 31, 2009, and the Kurdistan Region held elections on July 25, 2009.

7. Are there special provisions for women candidates?

The Iraqi constitution calls for a parliament with a membership that is at least one-quarter female. This means that political parties must submit candidate lists that include at least 25% women candidates.

8. How will minority parties win seats?

Under the amended election law, eight seats in the new parliament will be designated for minority candidates. Five seats, voted for throughout Iraq in a single national constituency, will be designated for Christian candidates. In Ninewa, voters may choose to cast a vote for one seat for a Shabak or one seat for a Yezidi. In Baghdad, voters may select a candidate for one seat designated for a Sabean Mandeian.

9. Where will Out of Country Voting (OCV) take place?

Currently IHEC is still developing voting rules for Iraqis who may want to vote in the national parliamentary election from countries outside of Iraq. Updates are available at www.ihec.iq

10. How will Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) be able to vote?

Under the amendments to the election law made in December 2009, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are now defined as, "An Iraqi who has been forcefully displaced from his permanent place of residence to another place within Iraq after 9 April 2003, for any reason." IHEC continues to formulate regulations for IDP voting in advance of the election in March 2010. Updates are available at www.ihec.iq

11. What is the role of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) in the 2010 elections?

The United States supports UNAMI's efforts to assist the Independent High Electoral Commission and the Government of Iraq in the development of processes towards Iraqi national parliamentary elections in 2010. For more information about UNAMI's work, and its mandate under UNSCR 1883 (2009), please see: <http://www.uniraq.org>

12. What is the U.S. role in Iraq's parliamentary elections?

The U.S. does not play a direct role in Iraq's elections operations, but we are supporting the Government of Iraq when requested. U.S. partners are working closely with the GOI to provide technical advice to IHEC, as well as political party training and voter education. Embassy Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) engage with government officials, NGOs and political parties to assess election preparations. United States Forces in Iraq will advise, train and assist Iraqi security forces in support of the parliamentary election and in compliance with the Security Agreement.

13. Will the U.S. monitor Iraq's elections?

The United States will organize and support election monitor teams in March in selected locations. More importantly, Iraqi domestic election observers will play a key role on election day, as they will be active in every polling center in Iraq. The United States will join the UN and others in training some 200,000 domestic election observers from NGOs and political parties across Iraq.

14. How are Iraqis registered to vote?

From August 22 to September 30, 2009, IHEC invited Iraqi citizens to update their voter registration information in every province in Iraq. Iraq has a passive voter registration system based on registration in the Public Distribution System (PDS), or food ration database. This means that voters do not need to initiate their own registration; instead, they are automatically registered to vote when they register for a food ration card. IHEC estimates that about 18 million of Iraq's roughly 30 million citizens are registered to vote.

15. How can the media cover the elections?

Media outlets wishing to cover the elections should direct their requests to IHEC. The IHEC web site is www.ihec.iq/English. The IHEC Media Center can also address specific queries about the election process or candidates, and assist with requests for interviews.

It is important to note that members of the media must first obtain IHEC press accreditation if they wish to cover the elections from polling sites on Election Day. The IHEC web site provides information on how to apply for this accreditation.

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