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**Democracy and Transparency Project
Empowering Civic Participation and Freedom of Media
Elections for the House of Representatives in the Republic of Iraq
- 2025**

**Analytical Research Paper
On the Experience of Parliamentary Elections in Iraq
With an Appendix
Monitoring Report on Election Campaigns
And Hate Speech and Violence**



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Democracy and Transparency Project / Empowering Civic Participation and
Freedom of Media

Electoral Violence

Analytical Research Paper

On the Experience of Parliamentary Elections in Iraq

Dr. Mahdi Jaber Mahdi

With Appendix

**Monitoring Report on Election Campaigns
And Hate Speech and Violence**

Democracy and Transparency Project / Empowering Civic Participation and Freedom of Media

The Democracy and Transparency Project / Empowering Civic Participation and Freedom of Media aims to promote a conducive environment for political participation, free and fair elections, and an effective House of Representatives in Iraq, as well as to support independent media and access to information through:

Improving operational efficiency, integrity, and accuracy in electoral processes. •

Enhancing a favorable environment for conducting credible elections. •

The project includes multiple activities such as “forums, campaigns, team formations, workshops, and committee establishment.”

Funding: •

European Union, Iraq Mission

Partners: •

SHAMS Network for Election Monitoring

EIN Network for Election and Democracy Monitoring

TAMMUZ Organization for Social Development

Locations: •

All 18 governorates in Iraq

Duration: •

24 months, September 1, 2024 - August 31, 2026

General Objective: •

To promote a conducive environment for political participation, free and fair elections, and an effective parliament in Iraq, including independent media and access to information.

Specific Objective 1: •

To improve operational efficiency, integrity, and accuracy in electoral processes.

Specific Objective 2: •

To enhance a favorable environment for conducting credible elections.

Summary

First: Overview of the Report

This report is an analytical research paper titled "Electoral Violence in the Experience of Parliamentary Elections in Iraq 2025," prepared by Dr. Mahdi Jaber Mahdi as part of the "Democracy and Transparency Project." The report focuses on analyzing the phenomenon of violence accompanying the electoral process in Iraq, considering it an obstacle to democratic transformation. It aims to identify the causes of violence and provide legal and political recommendations to ensure the integrity of the Iraqi House of Representatives elections.

Second: Electoral Violence (Concept and Manifestations)

The report addresses electoral violence as a tool for political conflict aimed at influencing voter choices or excluding opponents. Key points include:

- **Forms of Violence:** These vary between physical violence (assassinations and assaults), symbolic violence (hate speech, political defamation, and slander, especially against women), and digital violence (the use of artificial intelligence and electronic armies for misinformation).
- **Drivers:** The report identifies "uncontrolled weapons" and political finance as the major incentives for violence, where elections shift from programmatic competition to a struggle for influence, using militias to intimidate voters and candidates.
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Third: The Role of Monitoring Organizations and National Networks

The report highlights a pivotal role for civil society organizations in addressing this phenomenon through:

- **Monitoring and Documentation:** These organizations have monitored and documented instances of violence and assaults against candidates and voters, providing a transparent database for the public.
- **Analyzing the Electoral Environment:** The organizations conducted field surveys (including extensive samples across all governorates) to measure the level of fear or confidence among voters.
- **Advocacy and Pressure:** Monitoring organizations play a role in advocating for the enactment of deterrent laws, educating citizens about their rights, and training candidates on how to deal with security threats and digital extortion.
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Conclusion: The report concludes that there is a need for independent executive will to support civil monitoring efforts and to activate deterrent laws against entities that use violence to undermine the will of the Iraqi voter.

Introduction

Electoral Violence in Iraq's Electoral Experiences Post-2003

Electoral violence in Iraq's electoral experiences since 2003 is a notable socio-political and cultural phenomenon, despite the presence of 16 experiences, including: 6 electoral experiences at the level of the Iraqi Parliament, 4 experiences at the level of provincial councils, and 6 at the level of the Kurdistan Regional Parliament. Analyzing the issue, its dimensions, manifestations, and assessing its outcomes is a vital and important matter to measure effectiveness and evaluate impact towards achieving effective preventive measures.

It is striking that the continuity of this phenomenon and the variety of its forms ultimately aim to enable candidates to obtain votes qualifying them for membership in parliament, regardless of the means employed. This issue is interconnected with others such as electoral political finance, misinformation, mobilization, instilling fear and terror among voters, and hate speech, in addition to electoral violence that is primarily fueled, funded, and supported by armed militias. All these methods form a connected chain of illegal means utilized by candidates, whether as individuals, political parties, or supporting armed forces in the electoral race.

Moreover, these practices began before the elections, continued during the voting period, and persisted afterward, with their results, repercussions, and impacts becoming more apparent. They initiated in the early stages of electoral preparations, intensified during the electoral campaigns that began on October 3, 2025, until they ended on November 8, 2025, and continued on the polling day, November 11, 2025, extending to the announcement of results and beyond, leading citizens to awaken to shocking realities and diverse massive incidents of violence and deception.

The research problem focuses on the subject of electoral violence and its impact on the electoral process at various stages, reflecting on democratic principles and mechanisms. In light of this, we aim to demonstrate the following hypotheses:

- Electoral violence has negative short-term, medium-term, and long-term effects on elections as a democratic practice.
- Electoral violence transforms elections from a mechanism for achieving democracy to a means of undermining it.
- The Iraqi experience exemplifies the role of uncontrolled weapons and militias in undermining democracy.

As we delve into the issue of electoral violence research-wise, we must not overlook several significant positives that characterized the sixth electoral cycle of 2025, including:

- A stable security environment and a secured situation.
- High and widespread levels of participation, according to official statistics, exceeding 56% of registered voters.
- A notable increase in the number of women candidates (2,248) compared to the 2021 fifth elections, where the number of female candidates was (950).
- Extensive vetting of candidates regarding membership requirements, as 751 candidates were disqualified before the elections, while 7,744 candidates were accepted. Despite the confusion accompanying the disqualification, it generally adhered to legal standards.

- The diligent work of the Independent High Electoral Commission in performing its tasks and following up on procedures "despite some criticisms and observations," and successfully preventing conventional fraud methods that existed in previous cycles.
- The growing role of civil society organizations and national monitoring and observation networks that played an effective role as partners in successfully following up on and completing the electoral process.
- Relatively lower rates of electoral violence compared to previous cycles.



The Concept of Electoral Violence: Its Forms and Characteristics (Monitoring the Iraqi Experience Post-2003)

Electoral violence aims to influence the electoral process and its results, taking various forms. It can be described as the use of violence or the threat of it to affect the election proceedings or to delegitimize them. This includes assaults on candidates, explosions at polling stations, intimidation of voters or election monitors, obstructing their access, or disrupting the electoral process. Electoral violence encompasses various domains and forms that impact both candidates and their supporters, as well as voters, and can be summarized as follows:

A - Direct Political Violence: Such as assaults, threats, and ultimately, killings.
B - Indirect Political Violence: Such as fear and intimidation.

The types of electoral violence can be summarized as follows:

1. **Direct Physical Violence:** This includes destruction and killings, aimed at individuals or property.
2. **Indirect Violence:** This includes threats and intimidation, extending to candidates and their supporters as well as voters, to prevent them from exercising their voting rights or to force them to vote for a specific party or individual.

3. **Institutional Violence:** This consists of manipulating election results through vote fraud, depriving certain groups of the right to vote, or using state power to suppress opposition.
4. **Verbal Violence:** This is a form of indirect violence manifested in inciting speeches, rumors, misinformation, and hate speech.
5. **Digital Violence:** This relies on modern communication tools and employs electronic armies for mobilization and recruitment, marketing or defaming candidates, and spreading falsehoods through various means, including cyber harassment, threats, disseminating private images, fake news, electronic stalking, extortion, and creating turmoil to sway public sentiment.

All these types, whether material or symbolic violence, organized or unorganized, aim to influence elections and their outcomes through coercion, pressure, or force.

The electoral experiences in Iraq since 2003 have witnessed all forms of electoral violence. A quick review of these experiences provides evidence supporting this claim. In the December 2005 elections, several verbal and physical attacks on candidates were reported, alongside multiple explosions on polling day. Reports from the March 2010 elections indicate that from the start of the campaign until the announcement of results, 288 people were killed, with 176 more killed after the elections. In the parliamentary elections held in April 2014, the first elections following the withdrawal of U.S. forces, polling stations were targeted, and security forces and some centers were subjected to attacks and bombings.

In the period leading up to and following the 2021 elections, there were various reports of violations and assaults, including the intimidation of candidates, voters, journalists, and monitors. In the provincial council elections in December 2023, several incidents related to electoral violence were recorded. This characterization extends to the Kurdistan region regarding both the Iraqi elections and those for the Kurdistan Parliament, including the burning of opposition party headquarters and the arrest of activists and leaders of some political parties.

The peak of violence occurred during the protests following the 2021 elections and the armed clashes between the Sadr movement and other Shiite Islamic parties in Baghdad in August 2021, resulting in over 30 fatalities. This led to the parliament being paralyzed and occupied by the Sadr movement before all 73 of its representatives withdrew and collectively resigned from the House of Representatives.

All of this confirms that electoral violence in Iraqi electoral experiences is not an isolated event but rather a phenomenon linked to the electoral process at various stages. It peaks before and during elections (explosions, intimidation) and sometimes after the announcement of results (protests, clashes, threats, boycotts, rejection of results).

Electoral violence is prevalent throughout Iraq, but it is concentrated in Baghdad and a limited number of governorates due to the fragility of the security situation at that time, in addition to areas characterized by sectarian and ethnic tensions, such as Kirkuk, where the risks of electoral violence are heightened. This is linked to the weakness of official institutions and their inability to address issues and their consequences, along with the lack of voter culture and peaceful competition, as well as the negative role played by some rival political forces in fueling hatred and animosities among competitors.

It is worth noting that accurate data on the number of incidents and their details for each governorate or polling center are not fully transparent, and not all incidents have been documented, despite the significant advancements in monitoring tools provided by the Iraqi civil society monitoring networks which have seen considerable growth both quantitatively and qualitatively. There may also be hidden cases of threats or intimidation that are not officially reported.

Election campaigns face numerous challenges ranging from blatant physical violations and misleading practices to hate speech that threatens social peace. A study published by the Alliance of National Networks and Organizations for Monitoring Elections, as part of the monitoring program for the 2025 Iraqi House of Representatives elections, relied on in-depth analysis gathered from a field survey that included 309 forms from 10 governorates. It found that the most common reported violations concentrated on the destruction and removal of candidate advertisements and tearing their images, with 126 reported cases—40% of the observed cases, which are considered highly dangerous—while cases of incitement to violence, explicit threats, defamation, and misinformation amounted to 10 cases. The survey also recorded instances of exploiting religious sentiment and sacred symbols, in addition to other examples of vote-buying and bribery.

The study concluded that the digital space has become the primary arena for political conflict, especially concerning violations related to hate speech and defamation.

Electoral violence has been linked to the electoral process at various stages since 2003. Notably, we observe an increase in the level of violence with the passage of electoral cycles. In the early electoral cycles of 2005 to 2010, electoral violence was less severe and widespread; however, in subsequent cycles, it became all-encompassing, reaching the current cycle.

In this regard, the severity of violations can be categorized into three levels:

1. **Critical Severity:** Threatening individuals' lives and the integrity of the process, such as explicit threats and vote-buying. This phenomenon became prevalent in these elections; for instance, on October 9, 2025, a polling day for special voting, a group was arrested in Kirkuk for purchasing ballots, possessing a large number of them.
2. **High Severity:** Affecting equal opportunities and exploiting public funds, such as systematic destruction and the use of state resources, which is evident and has been starkly practiced by influential power holders.
3. **Medium Severity:** Including procedural and organizational violations, such as tearing down and destroying advertisements, exploiting public spaces, incitement to violence, spreading false information, and exploiting religious sentiment and political use of religious symbols, bribery, nepotism, and exploiting persons with disabilities.

The characteristics of electoral violence in the sixth round of the elections for the Council of Representatives.

The sixth round of elections for the Council of Representatives was marked by a sharp and clear escalation of electoral violence, which was linked to several factors and causes, including:

1. The intensity of social polarization and the crystallization of social bases for political currents and forces.
2. The severity of social division along ethnic and sectarian lines, the dominance of sub-loyalties, and the decline of national identity.
3. The failure of the political class to fulfill its promises regarding development and stability led it to resort to fueling violence and hatred as easy means to mobilize and rally voters.
4. Political interests and ethno-sectarian social divisions have moved in parallel lines.
5. The influence of armed factions and their forces in poor areas allowed for the creation of a patronage network that turned voting into a means of submission in the absence of legal and judicial accountability.

Recent electoral campaigns witnessed various forms of electoral violence, with the most prominent characteristics being:

1. The severity of violence — in its various forms — accompanying electoral campaigns before election day, particularly hate speech, exclusion, negation, distortion, the use of foul language, exchanging accusations, and undermining the opinions and positions of opponents.
2. Weak programs and solutions related to the issues raised concerning public demands, relying solely on promises and slogans.
3. The rising inclination toward conflicts of sub-identities: Arab/Kurd, Sunni/Shiite, Muslim/Christian (to a lesser extent), as well as political and social conflicts within each identity: Shiite/Shiite, Kurdish/Kurdish, Sunni/Sunni, etc.
4. The political exploitation of religious and national symbols, involving them in conflicts and electoral propaganda, and invoking the sacred while claiming roles and functions far removed from the facts. A prominent example of this is the official stance of the religious authority, Sayyid Ali al-Sistani, who distanced himself from these conflicts and refused to interfere in political affairs, limiting himself to advice and guidance concerning religious matters. This led to reactions from other parties affected by this exploitation.
5. The politicization of quota seats for minorities through the overwhelming influx of votes from powerful factions, rendering the seats stolen by votes from military and militia forces, which do not reflect the will of the minorities.
6. Electoral media played a role in shaping public opinion that encourages and accepts electoral violence, weakening its enlightening and monitoring role as the fourth authority, and often turning into a follower of powerful forces and justifying their positions that fuel violence.
7. During this electoral cycle, the increasing role of artificial intelligence emerged as a dangerous player in shaping electoral awareness, creating images and faces that do not exist, sowing doubts, re-defining truth, and being used to create fake political content. The spread of this type of content in an environment suffering from weak media awareness negatively impacts

public opinion and causes widespread social division. This election witnessed thousands of instances of digital misinformation.

8. A lack, if not an absence, of a culture of tolerance, coexistence, and fraternity among diverse identities, focusing instead on particularities, distinctions, and differences, which provided a ground for hatred and exclusion.
9. The invocation of the past... the past was powerfully present in this electoral cycle and was employed to combat opponents by highlighting old positions, images, and statements to undermine rivals and attempt to convince the electorate of the other's flaws.
10. An increase in calls for boycotting and threats against those who participate, citing the corruption of the ruling elite and the failure of governments to achieve reform. These calls are led by the Sadr Movement under the directives of its leader, Sayyid Muqtada al-Sadr, while some boycotting factions, including certain civil society forces, limited themselves to declaring their political stance.
11. The reliance on a political discourse supported by force and violence through aggression against others and the display of power in dealing with them. This was evident in some incidents of violence as well as electoral speeches. For example, Mr. Mohammed al-Halbousi, the former Speaker of Parliament and leader of the Progress list for elections, stated in one of his speeches, "You have no dignity, you who have no power," meaning that a candidate's dignity depends on their strength and readiness for battles and fighting. He repeated this statement during an interview with Dijlah TV on November 7, 2025, just four days before the election.
12. Many of the political forces participating in the elections have armed factions that the constitution (Article 9) and the current parties law prohibit. Among these forces are Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq, Badr Organization, and the Rights Movement.

A complaint was filed by civil activists, including Dr. Abbas al-Kaabi, on September 9, 2025, to the Federal Court and the Independent High Electoral Commission, confirming the participation of armed factions in the electoral process and demanding their disqualification. However, the matter remained unresolved before or after the election. Here, the electoral process faced a complex test regarding the extent of political practices aligning with constitutional texts and party laws. While laws emphasize the prohibition of any entity with armed ties from participating in political life, questions arise about the criteria for enforcement. In this regard, Dr. Ghazi Faisal, Director of the Iraqi Center for Strategic Studies, stated (to Baghdad Today on October 21, 2025): "There are nearly 74 armed factions in Iraq that are prohibited by law from participating in the political process." The attempts of these factions to enter the Council of Representatives through elections represent a violation of articles 9 and 47 of the Iraqi constitution, which prohibit armed forces from participating in the peaceful transfer of power and prevent the formation of armed groups outside the military institution. The Political Parties Law No. 36 of 2015 confirmed this, specifically in Article 32, which states that "no political party or organization may be linked to armed formations or possess military wings in any form."

Ignoring these constitutional and legal texts places the Electoral Commission and the judiciary under direct responsibility for interpreting the reasons for accepting the candidacies of parties with armed affiliations.

It is noteworthy that reports from United Nations missions and human rights organizations have indicated that Iraq suffers from a systematic lack of transparency and full disclosure of investigation results, whether in files related to political violence, administrative corruption, or human rights violations. Investigations are opened under public pressure and closed under political pressure and political interests. According to reports from Amnesty International, Iraqi authorities have failed to provide clear results for thousands of investigations regarding cases of enforced disappearance and political assassinations, making Iraq one of the most complicated countries in the region regarding transitional justice.

Meanwhile, the special representative of the UN Secretary-General, Mr. Muhammad Hassan, drew attention to his remarks regarding Iraq presented to the UN Security Council on December 2, 2025, in which he praised the elections and their integrity but did not address the accompanying negatives.

Hate speech and its role in fueling electoral violence.

Hate speech in Iraq is closely associated with politics and directly correlates with its crises, taking on various forms and expressions of discrimination. The United Nations definition of hate speech applies here, as it refers to "any kind of spoken, written, or behavioral communication that involves an attack or uses negative or discriminatory language when referring to a person or group of people based on their identity."

Hate speech, which has become a notable feature in politics and society, plays a clear role in fueling violence, as the vocabulary of political insults expands into increasing fields and areas, deepening political rivalries while intertwining with concepts of loyalty and betrayal.

Insults have, as Dr. Mushtaq Aidan states in his article titled "Political Insults as a Historical Text of Conflict," published in the Iraqi newspaper Al-Tariq, transformed from a transient linguistic act into a politically effective phenomenon impacting both the political and social spheres. Political insults are linked to the rise of political chaos and sectarianism, where terms such as "collaboration," "treason," "subservience," "puppets," and "children of the embassy," among others, have become part of everyday political discourse and influential tools for distortion. This results in promoting discourse that lacks rationality and critical thinking, relying instead on distortion and hatred. Such discourses attempt to reshape collective thinking based on exclusion and to reconstruct public awareness in ways that serve the hate speech that has become pervasive in both official and popular contexts. This aims to achieve what French thinker Pierre Bourdieu terms "symbolic annihilation," where hate speech serves as a means of rejecting the different other and as a tool for morally executing individuals by stripping them of their legitimacy. All of this leads to a crisis of social trust.

Hate speech is characterized by emotional charge and populism, evoking feelings and anger while investing in impactful sentiments and positions, alluding to historical and social legacies, as well as sacred symbols, and using them in ways that engage the audience with the objectives of hate speech. This ultimately facilitates their recruitment into collective behaviors based on hatred and

marginalization of the different other. The acceptance of this approach reveals a mechanism more dangerous than direct repression, as it pushes citizens to think within a narrow framework that has been pre-established, making any other option seem unrealistic or unpatriotic, and even immoral in light of the dominance of a specific discourse.

Notably, representatives of the Shiite political sect promote the idea of "Shiite rule," which calls for sectarian governance, implying the exclusion of differing opinions. This, on the one hand, leads to the dominance of sub-identity while sidelining national identity, and is accompanied by an atmosphere of intimidation against any candidate who does not belong to the political sect through propaganda, deception, and creating obstacles against them, including malicious accusations to exclude potential alternatives. This may explain one reason for the absence of civilian and moderate members in the House of Representatives in the 2025 electoral cycle. The results entrenched comprehensive control by the exclusionary ideology embodied in political sectarianism through its slogans and policies that are based on hatred and the political exploitation of religious symbols in financially and politically funded campaigns. With these tools, voters enter the ballot box burdened with a single choice shaped by political sectarianism or ethnicity, to vote according to the predetermined directions and select the individual designated to them in advance without any thought, transforming the voting process into mere deception or a formal practice aimed at reproducing the same elite.

More than twenty years after the political change, slogans such as fear for the sect, fear for ethnicity, and fear for sub-identity have become weapons used by influential forces—both Arab and Kurdish, Sunni and Shiite—to instill fear among their voters in pursuit of their electoral votes. It is worth noting that Iraqi law penalizes incitement to hatred or ethnic discrimination under Article 372 of the Iraqi Penal Code No. 111 of 1969. Accordingly, hate speech not only distorts the electoral process but also tears apart the social fabric through its transformation into a tool for sectarian and ethnic polarization, thus entrenching discord and conflict within the social fabric and escalating tensions in conflict areas, leading to further negative repercussions of elections even after the results are announced. Information and confessions from many citizens have revealed terrifying truths about these procedures and how collective deception operations were organized.

The impact of electoral violence on voters and the electoral process.

Electoral violence as a complex phenomenon represents an intersection of multiple and diverse crises, along with economic, social, political, cultural, and psychological factors. Factors such as political and economic instability significantly contribute to the perpetuation of violence. A study issued by the World Bank confirmed that political violence in low-income countries increases by more than 400% compared to high-income countries.

In Iraq, electoral violence is linked to several factors, most notably:

1. The absence of effective legislation aimed at combating electoral violence and the reliance on outdated laws, including Penal Code No. 111 of 1969.

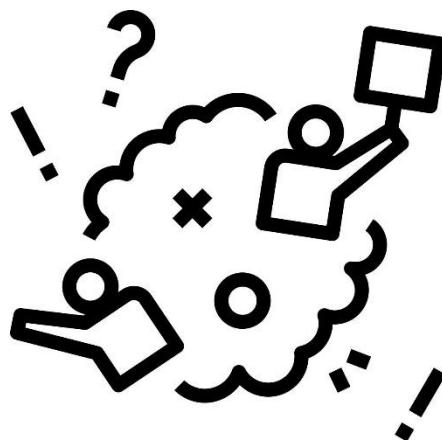
2. The presence and influence of armed groups outside the control of the state (Un-State actors).
3. The weakness of security and oversight bodies and their inability to implement procedures and regulations effectively.
4. Recurring complaints about vote rigging and objections to the results.

The main outcomes of the impact of electoral violence can be summarized as follows:

1. Decreased trust among voters and an increased tendency toward boycotting or abstaining from voting. This was evident in the 2021 parliamentary elections and the 2023 provincial council elections.
2. Reduced participation from specific groups, such as women, minorities, and displaced persons, especially from unstable regions.
3. Distorted results or the imposition of influence. Violence and threats enable powerful armed entities to impact election outcomes illegally or through intimidation of weaker parties.
4. Escalation of post-election conflicts through various means such as protests, appeals, and strikes, all leading to political instability.

It is noteworthy that the post-election announcement phase witnessed an increase in political disputes, which are more dangerous and complex than earlier stages, as the conflict shifted from the streets to the decision-making centers, highlighted by disputes over the formation and distribution of positions and gains, particularly given the conflicting interests and lack of consensus, leading to a new political crisis. This situation is not new to the political system in Iraq; for instance, the parliamentary elections held in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq on October 20, 2024, failed to reach an agreement among the winning parties to form a government by the end of 2025.

5. The diminishing opportunities for citizens to actively participate in political decision-making, rendering the voter not as a free citizen but rather as a client in the political bazaar, where the ruling political elites seek to control and subjugate them through various legal and illegal means. Thus, voting becomes not an exercise of citizenship but rather a representation of traditional loyalties.



Media and media manipulation: Their impact on electoral violence.

Media and its various channels play an increasingly important role in elections, influencing their outcomes by shaping public opinion. This impact intensifies with technological advancements and the digital revolution, alongside the proliferation of communication tools. Technology has facilitated the transition of electoral campaigns from traditional means to virtual spaces, broadening communication and increasing social and political polarization. Public opinion is a social product of mutual communication between groups and individuals and derives its nature from the social and political framework in which it operates.

Media creates interactive communication through the delivery of information to recipients, facilitating informational interactions that lead to audience control and domination over public opinion trends. The contradictory repercussions of the role of media and social networks are evident in the Iraqi context during elections, as they serve as both effective means of promoting participation and tools for misinformation and polarization.

The essence of media as a fourth authority should be to build, progress, and promote community development, as well as to monitor and alert against risks and to educate and hold accountable. However, it has transformed into a tool for political conflict, utilized in political party mobilization. The situation in Iraq during election phases has revealed the extent of exploitation of both overt and covert media in electoral propaganda and partisan conflicts. Thus, it can be stated that Iraq lacks free media and professional journalism.

Let's briefly examine the media sources and tools and their electoral impact:

1. **Satellite Channels:** The number of satellite channels in Iraq is around 70, the vast majority owned by the private sector, most of which are under the control of powerful political parties, often referred to as "loyalty media" protected by armed forces. Each channel reflects the positions and policies of its funders, frequently lacking professionalism and objectivity, justifying their bias either directly or indirectly. This media strategy has been employed electorally and similarly applies to radio stations. These media outlets are filled with talk shows that fuel hatred and hostility through the use of vulgar language, insults, and yelling, leading to audience disengagement. The negative role of some media institutions is highlighted by their reliance on defamation or allowing it from speakers.
2. **Social media:** social media has evolved from mere entertainment spaces into massive systems that reshape social awareness and modes of thinking, significantly impacting public opinion. They play a predominantly negative role in spreading rumors and misinformation, especially during the pre-election period. This is supported by what are called "funded electronic armies." For instance, independent female candidates faced digital smear campaigns that included discriminatory or sexual rhetoric aimed at discouraging their participation in elections. These practices violate Iraq's commitments under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, ratified in 1986.
3. **Media Manipulation:** This is closely linked to the previous two points and involves disseminating and marketing inaccurate information to achieve political interests and cause material and moral harm to opponents. Among the main objectives of media manipulation are inciting social conflicts, promoting political, sectarian, and ethnic agendas, stirring hatred, and

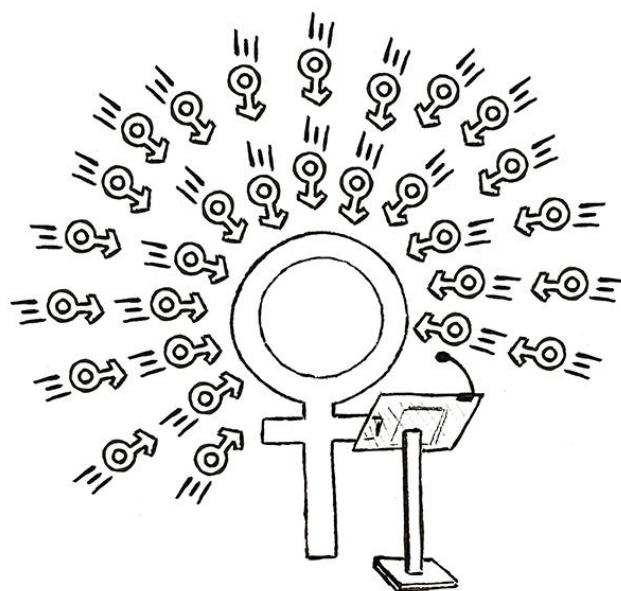
distorting political opponents, as well as settling regional and international scores. Media manipulation employs various methods to achieve its goals, including repetition, emotional appeals, misuse of terminology, distortion, and deceptive methods of information transmission and dissemination. The digital space has become a battleground for political conflict, especially concerning manipulation, distortion, and defamation. For example, a month before the elections, fabricated audio recordings were disseminated using artificial intelligence, attributed to officials including Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani. A report by the "Technology for Peace" group on September 8, 2025, revealed that 11 AI labs were used to create these digitally manipulated audio clips. The Iraqi Human Rights Observatory recorded over 1,000 misleading reports within one month before the elections in October 2025. This sentiment was echoed by monitoring networks and false news observatories, indicating a significant influx of inaccurate news and information contributing to political conflicts amid social division and rampant arms. On October 22, 2025, the observatory announced a concerning increase in legal and ethical violations affecting the principle of equal opportunity during election campaigns. Through its field teams, it observed over 120 electoral violations prior to the campaign's start in 11 provinces, which included early campaigning, misuse of public funds, and utilizing state resources in blatant violation of Article 2 of the Electoral Campaigns Regulation No. 4 of 2025. The observatory noted that the most alarming finding this cycle was the rise of sectarian and national incitement discourse in some campaigns, either through media outlets or social media platforms connected to candidates or political alliances. This discourse violates Article 38 of the Iraqi constitution, which guarantees freedom of expression without compromising public order. In recent years, the trend of "Shiite governance" with its closed sectarian content has rejected not only those outside it but even those within the same sect, specifically secular individuals, where they faced hate campaigns, defamation, and baseless accusations aimed at excluding them from participation and victory. This was evident in the most recent elections, where no secular candidates won even a single seat. Such incendiary language threatens societal peace and transforms the electoral process into a dangerous community polarization arena, undermining the foundations of democratic competition and increasing the fragility of the political environment in the country.

4. **Combating False and Misinformation:** The Independent High Electoral Commission has outlined procedures to address the dangers of false media, hate speech, and extremism by criminalizing these discourses and monitoring campaigns and social media while addressing violations accurately per law and electoral conduct codes. It has also worked on involving civil society organizations and organized dozens of training workshops, awareness campaigns, and guidelines for this purpose. On November 6, 2025, the Communications and Media Commission issued a series of directives to media organizations urging compliance with the electoral silence rules around November 8. It defined five rules for media coverage during the electoral process.

It is important to highlight the oversight role played by civil society organizations through national election monitoring networks that include dozens of organizations, notably the networks "Shams," "Tamouz," and "Ain." In August 2025, the initiative "Protecting Minds is Our Responsibility" was launched alongside the parliamentary elections by the NGO Department in partnership with the coalition of election monitoring networks in Iraq, aiming to reduce violence and reject hate speech and misinformation. Notably, there are no clear legal texts specifically for combating media

manipulation and fake news, which necessitates the enactment of a specific law for this issue. Currently, old laws, including the amended Penal Code No. 111 of 1969, are being relied upon. Additionally, the delay in issuing the "Right to Access Information" law creates fertile ground for rumors and media manipulation in an era thriving with the production of false news, especially with applications of artificial intelligence in audio and visual formats. All of this highlights the importance of obtaining information from official sources. It also necessitates the establishment of institutions and initiatives that monitor, analyze, and evaluate media content to verify news credibility and protect the community's right to knowledge and access to information, all while ensuring that these procedures do not infringe upon human rights and dignity.

In this regard, United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres stated: "Combating misinformation requires a sustained investment in building community resilience and acquiring media and information literacy."



Challenges of the electoral process and electoral violence.

The electoral process faces challenges that extend beyond procedural violations, as the battle has shifted from competing slogans and programs to struggles over material, financial, and security influence. Statistics and tangible data indicate that the challenges confronting the electoral process relate to power, authority, and money, transcending mere procedural infractions. Indeed, these violations are merely the result of such dynamics, alongside the weakness of institutions and laws, as well as inadequate implementation and deterrent measures. The key challenges can be outlined as follows:

1. **Systematic Physical Violence – High Violations**

- The proliferation and escalation of electoral violence due to the multiplicity of power centers and arms outside state control.

- Weak legal deterrence against sabotage and unlawful violent practices, which collectively serve to systematically marginalize competitors in the public sphere.
- The politicization of public spaces and endangerment of public safety, as influential forces treat the public sphere as private property.
- The state's weakness and its institutions in confronting partisan and armed political influence (militias).
- An imbalance of power between armed forces and civil society, aggravated by influence, money, arms, and media, as the ruling forces exploit these resources in the electoral battle through illegal means.

2. Institutional Corruption and the Challenge to Neutrality

- The hijacking of state neutrality, making it a participant in the electoral battle on behalf of the ruling forces that utilize state properties and convert institutions into centers for electoral propaganda.
- The erosion of free will through political money (vote buying and selling, electoral corruption, various forms of bribery: direct cash bribes, indirect cash bribes, and promises of appointments). All these factors represent a deliberate corruption of the free will of voters and exploitation of poverty.

Examples include:

- The unprecedented financial expenditure on electoral propaganda, bribes, and vote buying negatively impacting the electoral process and its outcomes. According to researcher Manar Al-Abidi (in Al-Mada newspaper, November 20, 2025), spending exceeds 2-3 trillion dinars, equivalent to 1.5-2.3 billion dollars.
- Monitors and agents: 2 million monitors were appointed by dominant parties and converted into guaranteed electoral votes for money.
- False appointments, a phenomenon of phantom brigades, were used to deceive voters with promises of recruitment in armed militias, based on contracts between candidates and their followers. Voters seeking military sector employment were required to bring at least 10 electoral cards in favor of the candidate. These issues became evident after the election day when the candidate abandoned their promises, revealing traps designed to mislead voters to gain votes. This deception was attributed to the winning candidate Mohannad Al-Khazraji from Badr Organization, who established a fake military brigade comprising 1,500 individuals. Following confirmation of this practice, the commission and judicial authority decided to revoke his membership. Similar cases circulated in the media from Diyala province and elsewhere.

Notably, the judicial authority responsible for elections disqualified six winners after completing legal checks of all submitted appeals, totaling 853, on December 7, 2025. The results were sent to the Electoral Commission, which forwarded them to the Federal Court, officially validating the election results on December 14, 2025.

3. Escalation of Violence and Existential Threats

- Targeted political violence: Recorded incidents of violence, including the assassination of candidates (such as a candidate in Baghdad, armed assaults in Anbar, and arrests in Sulaymaniyah), confirm that competition has shifted to the realm of armed intimidation, creating an atmosphere of fear and self-censorship that forces opposition and independent candidates to withdraw or suspend their

activities. This increases fear among voters, undermining their free will and trust in the electoral process, leading many to prefer abstention or disengagement from voting.

- The entrenchment and horizontal and vertical expansion of hatred, with its negative societal ramifications deepening within the community following the elections.

4. **Challenge of Boycotting and Political Apathy:** Widespread disinterest among certain societal sectors, especially in urban areas, reflects a lack of trust in political elites manifested through electoral boycotts. This indicates that voter abstention constitutes a stance. Invalid ballots (which totaled 1,104,816) also symbolize rejection of the electoral process, as some voters deliberately void their ballots as a form of silent protest.



Electoral violence and politics in a rentier state.

Has violence become a phenomenon closely tied to the political scene in Iraq since 2003? To a large extent, the answer is affirmative, as this phenomenon extends beyond elections to encompass the overall political and social life in Iraq, yet it becomes particularly pronounced during electoral phases and is highlighted more in media and political discourse.

What contributes to the escalation of violence is the nature of the rentier state and its clientelist relationships, where the state acts as both financier and a cover for this approach since it allows influential forces to achieve their goals swiftly to ensure their primary interests in maintaining power. Violence, like the prevailing political norms in Iraq, is an antagonistic act that cannot be separated from the dominant social and cultural pattern. Every influential figure has tools to promote their policies and positions in the competition for sources of power and authority. Consequently, those managing the legislative and executive processes are groups of party leaders and militia chiefs who are not elected; they hold closed-door meetings and decide what they want under the banner of the Coordination Framework or the State Management Coalition. All these mechanisms of governance and control have resulted from a policy of quotas and the inclination to monopolize wealth and power based on force and violence.

Thus, the political scene is characterized by acute polarization, and electoral competition has transformed into an unpatriotic struggle supported by arms and conducted in the name of sect, ethnicity, and denomination. Voting is manipulated for party interests under the directives and impositions of powerful entities.

We observe the emergence of a parallel authority that possesses privileges and influence surpassing the state's ability to hold it accountable, with the boundaries between money, politics, and influence dissolving. The armed wings of the political parties participating in elections threaten the integrity of the electoral process. Everyone knows this constitutes a violation of the constitution and laws that prohibit the combination of political activity and armed wings.

The involvement of armed groups with security influence and weapons in the electoral race undermines public trust in the elections and their outcomes, weakening the elected institutions. These groups seek to establish a reality where security and political decisions are managed outside the constitutional framework, under slogans like "defending the sect." Using force and illegal influence to sway voter choices jeopardizes the essence of the democratic process and exposes election results to skepticism and challenge. Ignoring the law undermines the principle of equality among candidates and places the Electoral Commission under direct responsibility to explain the reasons for accepting the nominations of parties with armed wings, indicating institutional confusion within the commission and judicial bodies concerning their legal obligations and the pressures of political reality. Estimates indicate that armed groups enhanced their parliamentary representation by an additional 50 seats, bringing their total to 80.

The design of the electoral law according to the Saint-Laguë method and a threshold of 1.7 serves as a disguised form of dictatorship that hinders the chances of winning for opposing candidates. In light of this, parliamentary seats have diminished from being a title of popular representation to becoming gateways to influence and wealth. This is tied to how the members are selected, with electoral lists crafted in closed rooms based on party loyalty—where a significant number of

candidates succeed due to their list's votes rather than their individual efforts, highlighting a major flaw in the current electoral system—rather than on competence or experience.

Hence, the parliament reproduces the same centers of power that control the distribution of positions within the state, making it an extension of influence rather than representation. This mechanism has weakened the legislative and oversight functions of parliament in favor of the influence of block leaders, where decisions are not made in the parliament hall but in political offices that manage interests. This reality has contributed to the marginalization of the legislative authority, turning the deputy into a position for quick wealth and influence backed by power.

A quick glance at the report of the Parliamentary Observatory issued by the Madarak Foundation in October 2025 regarding the outgoing parliament illustrates significant failures in this regard, as not a single session was held with all members present, with 170 deputies not having their voices heard even once, and quorum is only achieved in instances where deals are struck among the political blocs representing sectarian and ethnic groups to pass laws in their favor, often referred to as "the single basket laws."

The crisis, therefore, lies not in the individuals but in the structure of political representation, where representative democracy becomes a formal façade managed from the outside, and the voter's voice becomes merely an echo of centers of influence and power, with the deputy becoming subordinate to those centers. Consequently, we witness a state of fragile stability on a ground ravaged by competing loyalties and the contradiction between arms and the state. While democracy is founded on the principle of popular will, practical experience reveals that this will is often reduced to narrow, pre-controlled options. Of course, these methods do not preclude the existence of limited opportunities for some candidates, as seen in the notable success of Deputy Amer Abdul Jabbar in Basra, who achieved success with limited resources, as well as the opposition "Maqouf" movement in the Kurdistan Region, which secured 5 seats in Erbil and Sulaymaniyah. In 2024, it garnered 4 seats in the Kurdistan Region elections. These examples and others indicate the presence of limited opportunities outside the dominance of money, arms, and media.

Civil society organizations and their role in combating electoral violence.

Civil society organizations actively contribute to the overall electoral process, dedicating a wide range of their activities to the issue of electoral violence. In addition to educating and raising awareness about the importance of elections and encouraging participation, these organizations monitor various aspects of the electoral process (before, during, and after voting) and oversee the performance levels of the Electoral Commission and governmental institutions in:

1. Monitoring practices of electoral violence.
2. Preparing periodic reports on the overall electoral process, particularly on levels of electoral violence and ways to counter it.
3. Communicating and coordinating with the Electoral Commission and relevant state institutions to follow up on and implement procedures.

4. Deploying observers across Iraq to monitor the electoral process.

The "National Networks and Organizations Coalition for Election Monitoring in Iraq" was formed, comprising eight major civil organizations with a significant presence in the country. They have issued six essential reports monitoring the levels of the electoral process and the performance of the commission, revealing violations, breaches, and infringements during the pre-election period, throughout election campaigns, on special election day, and after general voting. They also issued daily field reports during both special and general elections. High-level coordination with the commission regarding election standards, especially concerning the integrity and transparency of the process and voter freedom, was maintained.

Their reports indicated the monitoring of 1,100 diverse violations before the elections, which increased to 3,273 on the day of general voting.

Notably, the findings in Report No. 5 of the Election Monitoring Program titled "Monitoring Election Campaigns, Hate Speech, and Violence in the Council of Representatives Elections" highlighted: "Field monitoring data shows that the challenge was not in the ballot box as much as in the competitive environment that preceded it." The report stated: "While the detected violations—ranging from the exploitation of state resources, hate speech, and incidents of violence in specific areas—did not undermine the electoral process, they put the 'principle of equal opportunity' at risk. We find ourselves in a complex scene: procedurally successful elections, but burdened with violations that require serious action to guarantee that Iraqi democracy is not merely an 'event' that occurs in one day but rather a 'culture and practice' that respects the rules throughout the competition period."

The report also noted three behavioral patterns unusual for these elections compared to previous ones:

- Military-style campaigning
- Digital bribery
- Pavement wars

The report concluded that the electoral environment in Iraq suffers from structural distortions, where the state is not neutral and has become a partner in violations, the use of violence has become routine without subsequent punitive judicial action, and economic extortion is the most prominent violation in this cycle.

Key issues identified by monitoring networks included that the electoral process in Iraq still faces structural challenges requiring serious reforms, especially concerning field management, the neutrality of security agencies, and ensuring observers and citizens can access their rights without obstacles.

Civil society organizations have proposed a significant set of recommendations, including criminalizing electoral appointments, punishing abuse of power, and protecting public space. The monitoring and observation networks' proposals can be summarized as follows:

1. Urgent measures for immediate deterrence: Activating penalties and announcing the names of violators.
2. Medium-term measures: Judicial accountability and establishing a specialized judicial investigative body to pursue violations and take action.

3. Long-term measures: Structural reform, amending the Political Parties Law, and creating a permanent and independent observatory to monitor electoral funding.

Experience in Iraq indicates that the forces controlling political decisions implement reforms only under public pressure, as demonstrated by the Tishreen movement, which forced the political system to change the electoral law in the fifth cycle of 2021.

Due to the importance of the report, it is included as an appendix to this research.

Conclusions

In the context of this research, we found that the electoral process has succeeded in several important areas, but it lacks much to be in line with international standards, democratic principles, and to truly reflect the aspirations of Iraq and its people towards prosperity and stability, ensuring that it is free, fair, and just at all levels. This means addressing the deficiencies and challenges it faces, the most important of which include: electoral violence, security threats, financial and political corruption, the laws related to parties and elections, media and misinformation, among other important issues. These can be addressed if there is political will on one hand and continued peaceful civil pressure to achieve them on the other.

1. The elections and the electoral system in Iraq reinforce a state of components rather than a state of citizenship. This electoral system primarily serves the interests of powerful parties, the ruling elite, and political leaders, failing to achieve genuine popular representation. The clash of identities provides fertile ground for violence in general and electoral violence in particular, fueling hatred and corruption while producing dominance in the name of democratic legitimacy.
2. Among the contradictions of the electoral process is the security stability that was the most prominent factor in the success of the voting day, which is countered by the continued manifestations of electoral violence, the influence of armed groups, and the violations that accompanied the electoral scene. Socially, the drivers of electoral violence lie in Iraq's contradictory structure, where a digitally connected generation seeking dignified living and social justice exists alongside corrupt traditional elites and a political system still based on networks of loyalty, identity division, and violence, fostering a sense of hopelessness among the people, especially the youth.
3. Electoral funding, colloquially known as "black money," has transformed from merely an electoral violation into a political mechanism managing elections in Iraq. The weakness of legal deterrence has made it an effective tool. As long as the reality allows for the purchase of public will, the citizen is no longer a partner in change but a means to renew failure. Experience has shown that electoral funding is no longer just a support element; it has become a tool for changing stances, especially in poor neighborhoods and shantytowns, thus redefining popular participation as economic subjugation rather than free choice. This raises questions about the meaning of democracy and elections in a system where the will of the voter is determined by

corrupt material means. Money is used to manipulate public will and direct votes toward specific powers. This constitutes a violation of the principle of equal opportunity and establishes tendencies toward legalized forgery under the guise of legitimacy.

4. The phenomenon of political apathy and reluctance to participate stems from various causes, including the citizen's lack of trust in the elections and their ability to bring about change. Meanwhile, the influential forces benefit from this reluctance, as it allows them to focus on motivating their supporters; decreased turnout serves the interests of political parties with mobilizable bases. A broad segment of voters does not distinguish or care between a capable candidate and one who buys votes or incites tribalism. Generally, we can say that the political culture in Iraq remains captive to tribalism and sub-identities, making society susceptible to mobilization and incitement in every electoral cycle.
5. Despite multiple cycles since 2003, elections have not become an effective tool for selecting genuine representation or renewing the elite due to the distortion of their legal and organizational structures and the continuous influence of political money, uncontrolled weapons, and corrupt patronage networks that have proven their ability to rally the public more than electoral programs. The increasing presence of the duality of money and weapons has been clearly reflected in the elections and their results, where the Iraqi experience has shown that the triad of money, weapons, and political influence constitutes the largest controlling factor in the electoral process and the overall political system. Ultimately, the success of the electoral process is not measured solely by participation rates but by the extent to which it genuinely represents the popular will.

Based on the preceding, an important question arises regarding the future of Iraq after the elections and which option the ruling elite will adopt. Will it move towards a state that respects the constitution and law, with a decision-making center capable of controlling chaos and uncontrolled weapons and restoring the monopoly of violence and wealth, or will it remain under a pattern of multiple centers of political and military decision-making and expand areas of influence and identity mobilization at the expense of the state?

In light of experiences from past electoral cycles, we find that the ruling political forces have not matured to manage the challenges rationally, ensuring respect for electoral results, and transitioning from a competition for power to a national responsibility to prevent the country from sliding into deeper crises. Efforts should focus on transforming the electoral process from a marketplace of false promises into a contract between the citizen and the state, based on integrity, efficiency, programs, and strict oversight.

Recommendations

To ensure the success of elections as a democratic practice, enhance citizen trust, and develop effective oversight mechanisms for monitoring and implementing election-related laws, the following recommendations can be adopted:

1. **Amend the Electoral Law:** Adjust the electoral law to ensure fair representation and equal opportunities, emphasizing the importance of building an electoral system that achieves transparency and justice, transforming the electoral process into a genuinely free democratic practice.
2. **Implement Strict Laws Against Political Financing:** Enact stringent laws to pursue political money, as its negative impact on the electoral process is as dangerous as paper fraud. Additionally, legislate a law regulating uncontrolled weapons and prohibiting their use.
3. **Legal Deterrence:** Establish necessary legal deterrence to build trust in the electoral process. Deterrence cannot be achieved through laws alone; an independent executive will is required to withstand various pressures and enforce penalties.
4. **Criminalize Public Office Abuse:** Make it a crime to use public positions for electoral campaigning and adopt effective financial monitoring that sets spending limits and reveals funding sources.
5. **Protect Candidates and Observers:** Ensure the protection of candidates, activists, and observers by adopting rapid and effective mechanisms, enhancing security at polling stations, and documenting incidents of attacks against candidates and monitors, creating a transparent database. Additionally, train candidates on how to handle threats.
6. **Revise Quota Elections:** Modify the method of electing quota seats to ensure fair representation for minorities and prevent interference from dominant parties in influencing them.
7. **Limit Minority Quota Elections:** Restrict the election of minority quotas to their own citizens without intervention or participation from other ethnicities.
8. **Protect Women's Quota:** Although the women's quota is crucial for ensuring female representation in parliament, it does not guarantee independence in decision-making or freedom of performance due to male party dominance. Empowerment requires creating a supportive social and political environment that allows women to have freedom of position and independent opinions within parliament, necessitating organized efforts involving women and legal frameworks that secure rights.
9. **Enhance Communication and Coordination:** Activate and strengthen communication, coordination, and partnership between official institutions, especially electoral commissions, and civil society organizations and monitoring networks.
10. **Develop Joint Programs:** Prepare joint programs among relevant governmental bodies, the Electoral Commission, and civil society organizations to raise awareness about the importance of elections, the role of citizens, and to promote electoral culture and methods to combat fraud, deception, and misinformation.

General Framework

Operational Success in a Challenging Competitive Environment

The Iraqi parliamentary elections of 2025 represented a real test of the state's ability and its institutions to protect the democratic path. In the interest of fairness and objectivity, it must be acknowledged that the electoral process achieved notable technical and logistical success; the Independent High Electoral Commission managed the polling day with high fluidity, and security forces succeeded in securing thousands of polling centers, preventing widespread security violations that could disrupt voting or lead to the collapse of the entire process. Iraq has once again demonstrated its capability to organize a massive constitutional entitlement and maintain the peaceful transfer of power as a general framework for governance.

However, this "structural success" should not obscure the view of the "substantive blemishes" that accompanied the electoral campaigns. Field monitoring data indicates that the challenge was not in the "ballot box" as much as it was in the "competitive environment" that preceded it.

The observed violations — ranging from the exploitation of state resources, hate speech, and incidents of violence in specific areas — did not undermine the electoral process, but they put the "principle of equal opportunity" at risk. We are facing a complex scene: elections that are procedurally successful, but burdened with violations that require serious attention to ensure that Iraqi democracy is not merely an "event" conducted on a single day, but a "culture and practice" in which rules are respected throughout the competition period.

This report aims not to diminish the achieved accomplishments, but to highlight the gaps that some parties exploited, with the purpose of addressing them and fortifying future electoral experiences.

Methodology of the Report

This report relies on an exclusive database collected through field monitoring forms and electronic observation. The data sample consists of 2,166 forms that have been validated and processed. The data covers the time period of the electoral campaign and includes all Iraqi provinces (18 provinces) with varying percentages based on the intensity of observation and electoral activity.

Analysis Methodology

The following methodology was adopted in preparing this comprehensive report:

1. **Digital Validation:** Isolation of incomplete forms and standardization of the names of provinces and entities.
2. **Quantitative Analysis:** Calculation of frequencies and percentages for each type of violations and their geographic distribution.
3. **Qualitative Analysis:** Analysis of open fields (e.g., incident details) to extract behavioral patterns, names of frequently mentioned entities, and innovative methods of legal circumvention.
4. **Cross-Referencing:** Linking the type of violation to the province and the entity responsible (party/independent candidate/state employee).

Demographic Map for Monitoring (Sample Distribution)

Before delving into the details of the violations, it is essential to understand "where the observers' eyes were." The distribution of forms shows a high concentration in specific provinces, reflecting either intense electoral activity or concentrated monitoring by observation networks.

Table of Form Distribution by Province (in descending order):

S. N	Province	Number of Forms	Approximate Percentage	Monitoring Density Classification
1	Basra	703	32.5%	Very High Density
2	Erbil	218	10.0%	High Density
3	Nineveh	191	8.8%	High Density
4	Baghdad	144	6.6%	Medium Density
5	Sulaymaniyah	134	6.1%	Medium Density
6	Maysan	126	5.8%	Medium Density
7	Diyala	94	4.3%	Medium Density
8	Al-Muthanna	82	3.7%	Acceptable Density
9	Anbar	77	3.5%	Acceptable Density
10	Duhok	74	3.4%	Acceptable Density
11	Kirkuk	61	2.8%	Low Density
12	Salah ad-Din	60	2.7%	Low Density
13	Babil	58	2.6%	Low Density
14	Al-Diwaniyah	54	2.4%	Low Density
15	Karbala	40	1.8%	Low Density
16	Dhi Qar	29	1.3%	Limited Density
17	Najaf	11	0.5%	Limited Density
18	Wasit	10	0.4%	Limited Density

Demographic Indicator Analysis

It is observed that Basra alone constitutes one-third of the data, meaning that any general analysis of Iraq will be significantly influenced by what occurs in Basra. Therefore, in the subsequent sections of the report, we will separate Basra and analyze it as an independent case study to ensure that its numbers do not overshadow those of other provinces. In contrast, the "Central Euphrates" provinces (Karbala, Najaf, Babil) exhibited low representation.

General Scene of Violations

Based on a comprehensive survey of the data, the violations were classified into primary categories:

Hierarchical Arrangement of Violations (from Most Common to Least Common)

1. First Place: State Exploitation

- **Number:** 430 cases.
- **Description:** Involves the use of government vehicles, coercing employees to promote candidates, utilizing government buildings, and misappropriating public service projects (paving, electrical transformers) for the benefit of candidates.
- **Significance:** This is the most concerning indicator, suggesting a lack of separation between "party" and "state."

2. Second Place: Physical Violence Against Campaigning

- **Number:** 424 cases (almost equal to first place).
- **Description:** Tearing down posters, burning signs, and toppling billboards.
- **Significance:** Indicates severe on-the-ground tensions. The competition here is zero-sum; it's either me or no one.

3. Third Place: Violation of Electoral Silence

- **Number:** 173 cases.
- **Description:** Continuing campaigning up to polling day or near polling centers.

4. Fourth Place: Political Money

- **Number:** 148 cases.
- **Description:** Distribution of cash, recharge cards, food baskets, and promises of employment.
- **Note:** This figure only represents what was observed "with the naked eye," and the hidden number is often multiples of this due to the secrecy of these operations.

5. Fifth Place: Exploitation of Official Symbols

- **Number:** 100 cases.
- **Description:** Using the state emblem, images of official leaders, or military ranks in campaigning.

Preliminary Insight into Behavioral Patterns

We observed three unusual behavioral patterns that emerged in this election compared to previous ones:

1. **Militarization of Campaigning:** Numerous instances were recorded of candidates appearing in military attire or with excessive military protection and using threatening language in their discourse.
2. **Digital Bribery:** Transitioning from distributing cash in sealed envelopes to distributing "mobile credits" and creating paid "WhatsApp groups," which was clearly evident in data from southern provinces.
3. **Sidewalk Wars:** Competition is no longer solely for votes but also for "spatial territory." The forms are filled with complaints regarding the complete occupation of sidewalks and medians, turning campaigning from a means of identification into a source of public nuisance.

Executive Summary

This report is based on a quantitative and qualitative analysis of 2,166 field monitoring forms, covering 18 Iraqi provinces. The analysis reveals substantial deviations in the standards of "integrity" and "equal opportunity," where the state's capabilities and resources have turned into key tools in electoral campaigns, coinciding with a significant increase in both physical and digital violence.

2. Key Statistical Indicators

- **Monitoring Focus:** Basra province topped the scene with 32.5% of the total data, followed by Erbil (10%) and Nineveh (8.8%).
- **Institutional Dominance:** The violation of "exploitation of state resources" ranked first with 430 cases (19.8%), indicating a lack of separation between the party and authority.
- **Field Violence:** "Assault on campaigning" came in second with 424 cases, reflecting an adversarial competitive environment.
- **Political Money:** 148 cases of confirmed vote buying were recorded, with a noted shift toward digital methods.

3. Geopolitical Analysis of Violations

The data illustrates that the map of violations varies according to geopolitical geography:

- **Kurdistan Region:** The most prominent violation is "exploitation of institutions" (schools, universities, government projects) for the benefit of ruling parties, accompanied by security restrictions on competitors.
- **South (Basra and Maysan):** The prominent violation is "street conflict" (tearing down images, use of firearms, and burning headquarters), along with organized vote buying through social media applications.
- **Western Regions (Anbar and Salah ad-Din):** The most significant violation is "armed and tribal conflict," where the use of live ammunition in electoral disputes has been documented.

4. Emerging and Dangerous Phenomena

1. **Digital Bribery:** The shift from distributing "blankets" to distributing "credit cards" and establishing "WhatsApp groups" to collect identities in exchange for money, making it hard to trace.
2. **Militarization of Campaigning:** The use of heavy weapons (rocket launchers in Maysan) and live ammunition (Salah ad-Din) to settle electoral competition.
3. **Phantom Employment:** Exploiting youth needs by distributing fake "employment application forms" within polling centers.

5. Evaluation According to International Standards

When comparing the results with international standards for electoral integrity:

- **State Neutrality:** (Failed) - State resources are employed for executive candidates.
- **Election Security:** (Fragile) - The presence of uncontrolled weaponry and repeated physical assaults.
- **Integrity of Votes:** (Violated) - Vote selling has become a public and socially **شبه مقبولة** practice.

Statistics and Data

Digital Violation Statistics Table

This table illustrates the most prominent violations that topped the scene in each province:

Violation Statistics Table

Governorate	Number of Forms	Violation No. (3)	Violation No. (2)	Violation No. (1)
Erbil	218	Campaigning on Silence Day (21)	Use of Official Symbols (26)	Exploitation of State Institutions (88)
Nineveh	191	Vote Buying (28 cases)	Exploitation of State Institutions (33)	Assault on Campaigning/Tearing (46)
Sulaymaniyah	134	Campaigning on Silence Day (15)	Assault on Campaigning (38)	Exploitation of State Institutions (41)
Duhok	74	Campaigning on Silence Day (13)	Assault on Campaigning (18)	Exploitation of State Institutions (29)

Precise Textual Evidence (Details of Incidents from the Forms)

First: Erbil Governorate

Erbil was characterized by the intertwining of the party with the government, with notable documented testimonies including:

- **Exploitation of Global Events:** The global event (TEDx) was exploited by a senior official in the regional government to convey electoral messages for the ruling party, claiming that "people know who serves them."
- **Blocking Public Roads:** Documentation of the closure of the road (Salah al-Din Resort - Erbil) to place a large advertising billboard, causing traffic disruption. Similar incidents occurred in front of the Ministry of Peshmerga.
- **Armed Violence:** Recording of a shooting incident and a physical altercation at an electoral event.

Second: Nineveh Governorate

Nineveh became a battleground for innovative bribery and tearing:

- **Sports Bribery:** A candidate distributed 2,500 free tickets to a Zakho club match as part of their electoral campaign.
- **School Bribery:** Distribution of school bags featuring candidates' images to students.
- **Exploitation of Bridges:** A candidate exploited pedestrian bridges and vehicle crossings to hang giant posters, which in one instance caused a traffic accident due to driver distractions.

- **Civil Initiative:** A female candidate announced the initiative "Plant a Tree for Every Sign Torn" after 30 of her signs were vandalized.

Third: Sulaymaniyah Governorate

The conflict here was predominantly political and media-related:

- **Organized Sign Wars:** Observations of teams removing stickers and immediately placing their own in their place.
- **Media Suppression:** Observers documented security forces intervening to stop the airing of a talk show on NRT, with a clear threat to shut down the channel if the program was broadcast.
- **Ambiguous Campaigning:** A candidate put up stickers titled "It's the Same Al-Badr" without mentioning their name, raising controversy and suspicion until it was revealed as a promotional tactic.

Fourth: Duhok Governorate

Dominance of a single party and collusion with security:

1. **Absence of Security Neutrality:** Documentation of party supporters attacking campaign materials in front of a police officer who did not intervene to stop them.
2. **Tribal Discourse Against Women:** Observations of speeches at a tribal gathering calling for not voting for women and restricting votes to male candidates from the tribe.
3. **Exploitation of Schools:** Documentation of campaigning and distribution of election cards at schools.

Data from the governorates of the region **shows a pattern of institutional dominance**, where the ruling party not only relies on traditional campaigning but also utilizes security forces, schools, and public events in its favor, accompanied by systematic repression of competitors and media silencing or security neglect of assaults.

Nineveh:

- Assault on Others' Campaigning: 46
- Exploitation of State Institutions: 33
- Purchase/Influence on Votes: 28
- Campaigning During Silence Period/Election Day: 14
- Use of Official Symbols: 10

Sulaymaniyah:

- Exploitation of State Institutions: 41
- Assault on Others' Campaigning: 38
- Campaigning During Silence Period/Election Day: 15
- Use of Official Symbols: 6
- Early Campaigning: 3

Duhok:

- Exploitation of State Institutions: 29
- Assault on Others' Campaigning: 18
- Campaigning During Silence Period/Election Day: 13
- Purchase/Influence on Votes: 8
- Use of Official Symbols: 6

The electoral monitoring environment in the governorates of the region (Erbil, Sulaymaniyah, Duhok) and Nineveh differs fundamentally from the rest of Iraq. The data reveals a clear pattern of "polarized conflict," where state institutions and security forces turn into direct tools in the struggle.

1. Erbil Governorate: Center of Power and Display of Influence

Erbil ranked second nationally in the number of forms submitted (218 forms), but it leads Iraq in the percentage of "exploitation of state institutions" compared to total violations.

A. Breakdown of Violations by Numbers

- **Exploitation of State Institutions:** 88 cases (highest on the list).
- **Hate Speech and Defamation:** 32 cases.
- **Use of Official Symbols:** 26 cases.

B. Dynamics of Violations (Qualitative Analysis)

Indicated a complete intertwining of the party and authority:

- **Political Utilization of Public Events:** This constitutes a violation of the principle of neutrality in cultural events.
- **Blocking Roads:** Multiple instances were recorded of vital roads being closed (such as the Salah al-Din Resort road) to install large advertising billboards for specific candidates, reflecting a sense of "ownership of public space."

2. Nineveh Governorate: The Open Battleground

Nineveh is the most complex governorate, where Sunni, Kurdish, and Shiite forces clash. The data shows it has turned into an "open market" for vote buying.

A. Breakdown of Violations

- **Sign Wars:** 46 cases (highest in the governorate).
- **Exploitation of State Institutions:** 33 cases.
- **Vote Buying:** 28 cases (very serious indicator).

B. Methods of "Covert Bribery"

The data revealed innovative methods for vote buying that go beyond cash:

- **Distribution of Football Tickets:**
- **School Bags:** Distribution of school bags featuring candidates' names.
- **Exploitation of Infrastructure:**

C. "Tree Initiative": Civil Response to Vandalism

In a notable precedent, the report documented a positive reaction from a female candidate whose 30 signs were vandalized. Instead of retaliating in kind, she announced a campaign to plant a tree for every sign torn down, reflecting a maturity in dealing with electoral violence.

3. Sulaymaniyah Governorate: The Exclusionary War

Sulaymaniyah is characterized by a sharp clash between "traditional authority" and "emerging opposition."

A. Prominent Phenomena

- **Forced Replacement of Campaign Materials:** A systematic strategy was observed where teams removed opponents' posters and placed their own immediately, sending a symbolic message of territorial control.
- **Media Suppression:** Observers documented a serious incident of security forces intervening to prevent the airing of a talk show, with a clear threat to shut down the channel, constituting a grave violation of electoral media freedom.
- **Deliberate Ambiguity:** A case was recorded of a candidate placing ambiguous stickers featuring a slogan without initially mentioning their name, a controversial promotional tactic.

4. Duhok Governorate: The Iron Grip

Duhok is the least vocal in the media, but the data indicates near-total dominance by the ruling party with systematic marginalization of competitors.

A. Evidence of Control

- **Security Collusion:** A documented case of an assault on opposition campaign materials occurred in front of a police officer who did not intervene. This documented testimony confirms the absence of neutrality among local security forces.
- **Discrimination Against Women:** In a socially significant incident, a tribal speech was recorded urging against voting for women, calling to limit votes to male candidates from the tribe, reflecting the challenges faced by women in tribal areas.
- **School Violations:** Use of certain schools as arenas for campaigning and distribution of election cards.

The analysis of the northern governorates reveals a clear variance in "dominance tactics":

1. **Erbil and Duhok:** Dominance through "state institutions" and security forces.
2. **Sulaymaniyah:** Dominance through "silencing voices" and media warfare.
3. **Nineveh:** Dominance through "money" and vote buying in a chaotic environment.

Baghdad, the South, and the West

1. Digital Violation Statistics Table (by Governorate)

This table summarizes the nature of the "electoral battle" in each governorate:

Digital Violation Statistics Table (by Governorate)

Governorate	Number of Forms	Most Prominent Violation (Rank 1)	Most Prominent Violation (Rank 2)	Special Note
Baghdad	144	Exploitation of State Institutions (88)	Assault on Campaigning (23)	Administrative Chaos
Basra	703	Assault on Campaigning/Tearing (68)	Campaigning on Silence Day (20)	Digital Political Money
Maysan	126	Assault on Campaigning (52)	Vote Buying (14)	Heavy Armed Violence
Anbar	77	Vote Buying (21)	Assault on Campaigning (13)	Assassinations
Salah al-Din	60	Exploitation of State Institutions (29)	Assault on Campaigning (15)	Tribal Clashes

2. Textual Evidence and Incident Details (From Field Monitoring)

First: Baghdad Governorate

Baghdad suffered from the transformation of its institutions and streets into private property for candidates:

- **Violation of Government Institutions:** Large banners for candidates were observed hanging in front of and on the walls of government hospitals.
- **Deliberate Traffic Paralysis:** Repeated complaints were made regarding the placement of advertising billboards in "traffic islands" and intersections in ways that obstruct visibility and impede traffic flow.
- **Boycott Movement:** A political phenomenon was recorded in Sadr City, where groups hung banners on street poles explicitly calling for "refusal to participate in the elections."
- **Service-related Violence:** An incident in the Al-Ridwaniyah area arose from a dispute over a "pipeline project," demonstrating the use of services for extortion.

Second: Basra Governorate (Digital Corruption)

Basra revealed the modern face of vote buying:

- **WhatsApp Cabin:** A women's WhatsApp group was uncovered, managed for the purpose of vote buying. The supervisor requested women to bring "national ID" photos and family voter cards in exchange for 100,000 dinars per vote, while directing insults at inactive members.
- **Involvement of Official Media:** An employee of the "Iraqi Media Network" (state channel) was observed exploiting their position to promote candidates via social media platforms.

- **Tearing War:** Basra recorded the highest number nationally for tearing down images (68 cases), reflecting the intensity of the conflict between the Shiite factions there.

Third: Maysan Governorate (Violence Zone)

Maysan is deemed the most dangerous in terms of security according to the data:

- **Use of Heavy Weapons:** A terrifying incident involved the targeting of a candidate's home in the Al-Khalij neighborhood with a rocket launcher, necessitating the intervention of the operations commander.
- **Gunfire at Offices:** Live ammunition attacks targeted offices belonging to political parties.
- **Targeting Women:** Widespread defamation campaigns targeted female candidates, casting doubt on their academic credentials without evidence.

Fourth: Western Governorates (Anbar and Salah al-Din)

The conflict here is tribal and armed:

- **Public Vote Market:** Anbar recorded the highest rate of "vote buying" (21 cases), with reports of individuals openly offering their votes for sale on Facebook.
- **Sharqat Battle (Salah al-Din):** An armed attack occurred on an electoral conference for a rival candidate, involving gunfire and widespread chaos.
- **Assassinations:** Data clearly indicated the assassination of candidate (Safaa al-Mashhadani) in the Baghdad/Anbar belt, casting a shadow of fear over independent candidates.
- **Blocking Roads:** A tribe blocked the road to the convoy of former Parliament Speaker (Halabousi) in protest against an assault by his protection detail on one of their members.

Summary Analysis (Center and South) of the Report:

"The map of violations in the center and south differs from that in the north; here we witness the militarization of campaigning reaching the point of rocket use in Maysan, and institutionalized bribery through WhatsApp groups in Basra. Additionally, Baghdad appears completely unable to protect its public space from the تجاوزات of candidates who have occupied sidewalks and hospitals with their campaigns."

Basra Governorate:

- Assault on Others' Campaigning: 68
- Campaigning During Silence Period/Election Day: 20
- Exploitation of State Institutions: 14
- Purchase/Influence on Votes: 11
- Use of Official Symbols: 5

Maysan Governorate:

- Assault on Others' Campaigning: 52
- Purchase/Influence on Votes: 14
- Exploitation of State Institutions: 8
- Campaigning During Silence Period/Election Day: 8

Dhi Qar Governorate:

- Assault on Others' Campaigning: 2
- Exploitation of State Institutions: 1
- Purchase/Influence on Votes: 1
- Campaigning During Silence Period/Election Day: 1

Anbar Governorate:

- Purchase/Influence on Votes: 21
- Assault on Others' Campaigning: 13
- Exploitation of State Institutions: 10
- Campaigning During Silence Period/Election Day: 8
- Incident of Physical Assault on Gathering/Headquarters: 4

Salah al-Din Governorate:

- Exploitation of State Institutions: 29
- Assault on Others' Campaigning: 15
- Purchase/Influence on Votes: 7
- Use of Official Symbols: 3
- Exploitation of Places of Worship: 3

The nature of violations in Baghdad and the South differs from that in the North. Here, it is not only about political dominance but also a "struggle for existence" between competing Shiite factions (the Coordination Framework vs. other parties), along with an intense Sunni-Sunni conflict in the West, often sliding into direct armed violence.

Types of Violations Table (What Happened?)

Order of Violations by Prevalence Across Iraq:

No.	Type of Violation Observed	Number	Percentage
1	Exploitation of State Institutions (vehicles, buildings, personnel)	430	19.8%
2	Assault on Others' Campaigning (tearing, vandalism)	424	19.5%
3	Hate Speech and Defamation (Item 2.2)	245	11.3%
4	Violation of Electoral Silence (campaigning on election day)	173	8.0%
5	Vote Buying (political money)	148	6.8%
6	Use of Official Symbols	100	4.6%
7	Early Campaigning	45	2.1%
8	Physical Assault (on a candidate or team)	41	1.9%

Governorate "Fingerprint" Matrix

Due to display issues in wide tables, I have converted the matrix into a bullet-point list highlighting the "most recurring" violations in the hot governorates:

1. Erbil Governorate:

- **Notable Violations:** Exploitation of State (88 cases), Use of Official Symbols (26), Violation of Silence (21).
- **Pattern:** Party dominance using state tools.

2. Basra Governorate:

- **Notable Violations:** Tearing of Campaign Materials (68 cases), Violation of Silence (20), Exploitation of State (14).
- **Pattern:** Street conflict and intense campaigning competition.

3. Baghdad Governorate:

- **Notable Violations:** Exploitation of State (88 cases), Assault on Campaigning (23).
- **Pattern:** Administrative chaos and encroachment on public property.

4. Nineveh Governorate:

- **Notable Violations:** Tearing of Campaign Materials (46 cases), Exploitation of State (33), Vote Buying (28).
- **Pattern:** Fierce competitive environment relying on money and vandalism.

5. Maysan Governorate:

- **Notable Violations:** Tearing of Campaign Materials (52 cases), Vote Buying (14).
- **Pattern:** Mutual violence among specific factions.

Fourth: Table of "Exploitation of State"

How Were State Resources Employed? (Results of Text Analysis)

Exploited Institution	Extracted Details from Texts	Recorded Number
Municipalities and Services	Use of "shovels," municipal vehicles, waste collection vehicles, and paving for electoral purposes.	79
Education	Exploitation of schools, universities, colleges, coercing students, and education directorates.	31
Government Buildings	Exploitation of state departments, ministries, hospitals, and district councils.	26
Religious Institutions	Exploitation of mosques, husseiniyyas, and waqf (for political campaigning).	20

Fifth: Table of "Vote Buying"

How Were Votes Purchased?

Bribery Method	Description	Recorded Number
Direct Cash	Distribution of money (in dinars or dollars) directly to voters.	50
Recharge Cards	Distribution of recharge cards (Asia/Zain) openly or secretly.	9
Material Goods	Distribution of food baskets, heating devices, blankets, and gifts.	7
Employment	Promises of hiring and distribution of fake contract forms.	6

Sixth: Table of Serious Security Incidents

Cases That Transcended "Violation" to "Criminal Offense":

Governorate	Type of Incident	Brief Description
Maysan	Rocket Attack	Targeting a candidate's home with a rocket launcher (RBG).
Salah al-Din	Gunfire	Armed attack on an electoral conference in Sharqat.
Baghdad/Anbar	Assassination	Reference to the assassination of candidate (Safaa al-Mashhadani).
Kirkuk	Threat	Gunfire from a pistol during an electoral event.
Babil	Injury	Falling of an advertising billboard caused a skull fracture to a citizen.

Anatomy of Political Money and

1. Exploitation of State: From "Public Service" to "Private Campaigning"

The exploitation of state resources was not merely individual cases but represented an "institutional pattern" in this election. Text analysis revealed that 55 cases directly related to the use of municipal mechanisms, 36 cases pertained to government buildings, and 28 cases involved educational institutions.

A. Violation of Campus and School Integrity

Schools and universities, which are supposed to be politically neutral zones, turned into rallying grounds:

- **Exploitation of Students:** Coercion or administrative guidance for students to participate.
- **Documentation of Large Advertisements:** Huge banners and campaign materials were placed at the entrances of universities and schools, making the educational institution appear to endorse a particular candidate.

B. Municipalities as Private Advertising Companies

- **State Mechanisms:** Terms such as "shovel," "municipal vehicle," and "cleaning" were frequently mentioned in the context of campaigning. Municipal vehicles were used to raise candidates' banners or clean areas designated for their election gatherings, representing a blatant misuse of public funds.

2. Vote Market: The Currency and Illusions of Fake Appointments

Financial corruption evolved from the traditional "blanket distribution" to more sophisticated forms.

A. Direct Cash

Nineteen documented cases of direct cash distribution were observed. The most alarming aspect is the linkage of money to "oath": coercing voters to swear on the Quran in exchange for receiving money, ensuring their votes and preventing withdrawal.

B. Digital Bribery

- **Recharge Cards:** The phenomenon of "distributing recharge cards" regained strength, especially in Nineveh and southern governorates. This is a "clean" and easily distributed form of bribery that is difficult to prove materially.

C. Illusion of Appointments

- **Appointment Trap:** Reports documented a candidate inviting youth under the pretense of available "appointments in the mobilization," only to be surprised that it was solely an electoral seminar, and that the application forms for appointments were merely bait to gather voter data. This practice represents a reprehensible exploitation of the youth's need for work.

Analysis of Electoral Violence and Campaigning Warfare

1. Militarization of Campaigning: When the Bullet Speaks

The data revealed 16 cases that included explicit references to weapons or serious injuries, which is a concerning number for a democratic process.

A. Targeting Offices with Firearms

- **Gunfire in Anbar:** The assault on a candidate's campaign materials in Anbar was documented using "live ammunition," not just tearing, reflecting a clear threat message.
- **Assassination Attempt in Salah al-Din:** The most dangerous incident involved an armed attack during an electoral conference in Sharqat, which included gunfire and resulted in chaos and a threat to public order.

B. Tearing Warfare

With 424 documented cases of assaults on campaigning materials, we are witnessing a street war. Notably, there is a geographical specialization:

- **In Rania (Sulaymaniyah):** The majority of posters were torn down on the first night of the campaign, indicating premeditated planning rather than spontaneous acts.

- **In Maysan:** Reciprocal tearing among candidates' images reflects significant internal division.

Conclusions

From this in-depth analysis, we conclude that the electoral environment in Iraq suffers from "structural distortions":

1. **State Serving the Candidate:** State institutions are no longer "neutral"; they have become "partners" in violations (universities, municipalities).
2. **Normalization of Violence:** The use of bullets and rocket launchers in electoral disputes has become a routine news item without subsequent punitive judicial action (especially when the perpetrator is connected to a minister or high-ranking official).
3. **Economic Extortion:** Exploiting poverty and unemployment through "fake appointment forms" represents the most significant ethical violation in this electoral cycle.

Field Stories

1. Field Stories: The Human Face of Numbers

Behind every statistical figure lies a human story reflecting the reality of Iraqi society and its interaction with elections. We present four documented stories from monitoring forms that represent the "colors" of the electoral spectrum:

Story One: "Expelled from the Mourning" (Social Accountability)

In Wasit Governorate (Al-Kut), monitors documented a striking social scene. A former member of parliament attended a mourning gathering to fulfill his duty and exploit the assembly for electoral purposes. However, the reaction from the attendees and the deceased's family was strong, leading to his collective expulsion from the council.

- **Significance:** This story indicates a growing sense of "punitive awareness" within the community. Voters no longer wait for the ballot box to punish politicians; rather, they exercise "direct social ostracism" in public spaces.

Story Two: "Tree Instead of Banner" (Civil Resistance)

In Nineveh, a female candidate faced a fierce vandalism campaign that targeted 30 of her banners. Instead of responding with violence or traditional complaints, she launched an initiative: "For every banner you tear down, I will plant a tree."

- **Significance:** A rare glimmer of hope. This reflects candidates attempting to change the rules of the game from "zero-sum conflict" to "constructive competition," seeking to gain popular sympathy through civilized and constructive behavior.

Story Three: "The WhatsApp Cabin" (Organized Corruption)

In Basra, one of the monitors uncovered a women's WhatsApp group managed by an electoral machine. Women are forced to collect images of "national ID cards" for their families in exchange for 100,000 dinars per vote, and members face reprimands and insults from the "supervisor" if the collection rate drops.

- **Significance:** Corruption has transformed into "organized administrative work." Vote buying is no longer conducted in dark alleys but is managed via smartphones with mechanisms resembling "network marketing."

Story Four: "Rocket in the Neighborhood" (Language of Weapons)

In Maysan, the "Al-Khalij" neighborhood was awakened by the sound of a terrifying explosion. It was not a car bomb but a "rocket launcher" targeting the home of a candidate.

- **Significance:** When heavy weaponry is used in a residential area to settle electoral competition, we have transcended the stage of "violations" into the realm of "national security threats."

Conclusions

Based on the Analysis of 2,166 Forms, We Conclude the Following Strategic Findings:

1. **The State as a "Party" rather than a "Government":**
The most alarming revelation from the report is the systematic involvement of state institutions (officials, universities, schools, municipalities, and mechanisms) in campaigning for ruling parties. Administrative neutrality in Iraq is "almost nonexistent."
2. **Geography of Violence:**
Elections are not uniform across Iraq.
 - **North:** Institutional and influence struggles.
 - **South:** Existential conflict and brutal confrontations.
 - **West:** Leadership and tribal disputes.
3. **Transformation of "Vote Buying":**
Corruption has shifted from "individual bribery" (giving money to a voter) to "collective bribery" (paving streets, electrical transformers, fake appointments), effectively making the public treasury fund candidates' corruption rather than their private wealth.
4. **Violence Against Women:**
Female candidates have become the weakest link. They faced moral defamation (attacks on their honor), questioning of their qualifications, and assaults on their images, significantly more than their male counterparts.

Comparison of Results with International Standards

1. **"Equal Opportunity" Standard:**
 - **International Standard:** The "Copenhagen Declaration" and United Nations principles assert the necessity of separating the state from the party. The use of any public resource (buildings, vehicles, personnel) for a specific candidate is strictly prohibited to ensure competition is based on programs rather than state capabilities.
 - **Iraqi Reality (from Monitoring Data):**
 - **Result:** Serious and systematic violations.
 - **Evidence:** The report recorded 430 instances of state resource exploitation (19.8% of total violations), including the use of universities, schools, and municipal mechanisms.
 - **Gap:** Iraq completely lacks mechanisms for "neutralizing public administration." This undermines the principle of equal opportunity and renders competition "formal."

2. "Voter Freedom from Intimidation" Standard:

- **International Standard:** Voters and candidates must exercise their rights in a safe environment free from physical violence or threats. Electoral violence is considered a "red line" that undermines the legitimacy of the process in areas where it occurs.
- **Iraqi Reality (from Monitoring Data):**
 - **Result:** A "high-risk" environment.
 - **Evidence:** Documentation of 16 instances of firearm or heavy weapon use, along with 424 incidents of property damage (sign wars).
 - **Gap:** International standards do not tolerate the presence of "unchecked weapons" in campaigns. In Iraq, firearms are part of the "negotiating tools" in elections, especially in conflict areas.

3. "Secrecy and Integrity of Voting" Standard:

- **International Standard:** International law criminalizes "vote buying" and considers it political corruption. A voter's voice must reflect their free conviction and not be a commodity for sale.
- **Iraqi Reality (from Monitoring Data):**
 - **Result:** Social normalization of "bribery."
 - **Evidence:** Documentation of 148 instances of vote buying. The most alarming trend is the shift from "covert bribery" to "overt bribery" (WhatsApp groups collecting identities, publicly distributing recharge cards in front of centers in Nineveh).
 - **Gap:** The gap here is not only legal but also ethical and institutional. Voting has shifted from a "constitutional right" to a "commercial transaction" (your vote for a recharge card or a promise of appointment), stripping elections of their democratic meaning.

4. "Neutrality of Security Forces" Standard:

- **International Standard:** Security forces must remain impartial and focus on protecting the process, not participating in it.
- **Iraqi Reality (from Monitoring Data):**
 - **Result:** Security bias (in certain areas).
 - **Evidence:**
 - In Duhok: Assault on party campaigning in plain view of police without intervention.
 - In Salah al-Din: Assault by security forces on journalists covering elections.
 - In Baghdad: Use of military protection to intimidate competitors.
 - **Gap:** Security forces in the governorates are often subject to the political influence of the governor or the dominant party, making them a party to the conflict rather than a guardian of security.

5. "Freedom of Expression and Rejection of Hate" Standard:

- **International Standard:** Freedom of criticism is guaranteed, but "hate speech," defamation, and incitement to violence are strictly prohibited under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.
- **Iraqi Reality (from Monitoring Data):**
 - **Result:** Digital chaos and normative breakdown.
 - **Evidence:** 245 violation cases under hate speech. This included attacks on the honor of female candidates (in Maysan and Wasit), sectarian incitement, and accusations against competitors.
 - **Gap:** There are no effective controls on "electronic armies." The Iraqi digital space during elections is an open "moral assassination" battlefield, especially against women and minorities.

Summary Table: Assessment of Compliance

Area	Assessment Based on Data	Distance from International Standard
State Neutrality	Fail	The state and public funds are openly part of the campaign.
Election Security	Weak/Fragile	Presence of armed threats and widespread physical violence.
Integrity of Voting	Violated	Vote buying is a common and electronically organized phenomenon.
Media Freedom	Moderate	There is freedom, but it is accompanied by restrictions (NRT incident) and assaults.
Women's Participation	Hostile Environment	Systematic targeting, cyberbullying, and questioning of qualifications.

The comparison of monitoring data (2025) with international standards reveals that Iraq possesses a "structure" for democratic elections (including a commission, polling centers, and candidates), but it lacks the "essence" of democratic practice characterized by fairness.

Elections in Iraq, according to this data, are a "successful technical process" (in terms of logistical procedures), yet they are "politically unjust." Public funds and weapons tip the scales in favor of ruling parties even before the match begins.

Recommendations

Strategic Recommendations

To ensure the integrity of future elections, we present these recommendations to decision-makers, the High Commission, and the international community:

A. Legal and Procedural Recommendations (for the Commission and Judiciary)

1. **Criminalization of "Electoral Appointments"**: Enact legislation that considers the distribution of "appointment forms" or "promises of social sponsorship" during the campaign as a crime of fraud and forgery, leading to the immediate disqualification of the candidate.
2. **Penalty for "Abuse of Influence"**: Activate the legal provision that penalizes any government employee (school principal, university president, department manager) who permits electoral campaigning within their institution with immediate dismissal.

B. Security Recommendations (for Security Forces)

3. **Protection of Public Spaces**: Treat "tearing down banners" as criminal damage to property, and deploy special patrols in hot spots to prevent street wars.

C. Digital Recommendations (for Oversight)

4. **Cyber Monitoring Teams**: Form joint teams (National Security + Commission) to infiltrate and monitor "vote-buying groups" on social media platforms and penalize those involved.

Conclusion of the Report

This report, in its scope and detail, serves as a wake-up call. The data does not lie; it clearly states: the electoral process in Iraq is vibrant and dynamic, but it is burdened by violations that nearly strip it of its democratic essence. Reform does not begin on election day but rather by regulating the "competitive environment" months prior to elections and liberating the state from the grip of influential parties.

Appendix / Tables

Table 1: Geographic Distribution of the Monitoring Sample (by Governorate)

This table shows the density of monitoring and electoral activity, with Basra leading the list by a significant margin.

No.	Governorate	Number of Forms	Percentage of Sample
1	Basra	703	32.4%
2	Erbil	218	10.1%
3	Nineveh	191	8.8%
4	Baghdad	144	6.6%
5	Sulaymaniyah	134	6.2%
6	Maysan	126	5.8%
7	Diyala	94	4.3%
8	Al-Muthanna	82	3.8%
9	Anbar	77	3.6%
10	Duhok	74	3.4%
11	Kirkuk	61	2.8%
12	Salah al-Din	60	2.8%
13	Babel	58	2.7%

No.	Governorate	Number of Forms	Percentage of Sample
14	Diwaniyah	54	2.5%
15	Karbala	40	1.8%
16	Wasit	17	0.8%
17	Halabja	13	0.6%
18	Dhi Qar	12	0.6%
19	Najaf	11	0.5%
-	Total	2,166	100%

Table 2: Relative Frequency of Types of Violations

This table illustrates the ranking of violations from most common to least common. Note that "Exploitation of State Resources" and "Assault on Campaign Materials" together account for 40% of the overall landscape.

Type of Violation	Total Number of Cases	Percentage
Exploitation of State Institutions	430	19.8%
Assault on Others' Campaign Materials (Tearing/Vandalism)	424	19.5%
Violations of Hate Speech	245	11.3%
Campaigning During the Quiet Period/Election Day	173	8.0%
Buying/Influencing Votes (Political Money)	148	6.8%
Use of Official State Symbols	100	4.6%
Early Campaigning	45	2.1%
Physical Assault on Candidates/Campaign Teams	41	1.9%
Exploitation of Places of Worship	22	1.0%
Denial of Access to Voting	4	0.2%

Table 3: Geographic Matrix of Violations (Top Violations by Governorate)

This table is crucial for analyzing the "fingerprint of the Governorate," as it shows the predominant type of violation in each region.

Governorate	Exploitation of State Resources	Assault on Campaign Materials	Vote Buying	Use of Symbols
Erbil	88 (highest)	11	3	26

Governorate	Exploitation of State Resources	Assault on Campaign Materials	Vote Buying	Use of Symbols
Baghdad	88 (highest)	23	8	8
Basra	14	68 (highest)	11	5
Maysan	8	52	14	1
Nineveh	33	46	28 (high)	10
Sulaymaniyah	41	38	2	6
Diwaniyah	27	1	16	27
Anbar	10	13	21	1
Duhok	29	18	8	6

Table 4: Analysis of "Exploitation of State Resources" Mechanisms

These figures were extracted through keyword analysis in the text of the forms.

Category of Exploited Institution	Observed Keywords	Number of Cases
Municipalities and Services	(mechanisms, excavator, vehicle, paving, street, municipality)	79
Educational Institutions	(school, university, college, student, education)	31
Government Buildings	(department, ministry, building, directorate, health)	26
Religious Institutions	(mosque, prayer hall, religious endowment)	20

Table 5: Analysis of "Vote Buying" Mechanisms

This table reveals the innovative methods used for electoral bribery.

Buying Mechanism	Description Extracted from Texts	Number of Cases
Direct Cash Payments	Distribution of cash (dollars/dinars) in hand	50
Recharge Cards	Distribution of cards (Asia/Zain) in front of polling centers	9
Material Goods	Food baskets, blankets, and tangible gifts	7
Phantom Jobs	Distribution of "appointment forms" or promises of contracts	6

Table 6: Most Serious Recorded Security Incidents

This qualitative table documents cases that crossed from "violation" to "crime."

No.	Type of Incident	Location	Brief Details
1	Use of Heavy Weapon	Maysan	Targeting a candidate's residence with a rocket launcher.
2	Gunfire	Salah al-Din (Al-Shirqat)	Shooting attack on an electoral conference.
3	Assassination	Baghdad/Anbar	Reference to the assassination of candidate Safaa Al-Mashhadani.
4	Armed Threat	Kirkuk	Gunfire from a pistol at an electoral event.
5	Civilian Injury	Babel	A falling advertisement board caused a skull fracture.
6	Violence Against Women	Wasit	Arrest of a candidate with disabilities.

End...