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# The 9th Cabinet in Actions

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## Authors

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## Intro

Mohammed Shia al-Sudani's cabinet has completed its second month. Shia has now entered a phase of implementation and decision-making. The complete form of government has yet to be formulated due to internal conflicts within the Shiite coordination framework. The main poles of this conflict now are the coalition of Nuri al-Maliki and the armed movement led by Qais al-Khazali. The first is the political supporter of the government, and the second is the armed supporter represented by Khazali. Behind the scenes, both government backers are fighting each other for the top positions in government.

## Shia's Priority

Earlier, Al-Sudani had stressed that his government's priority would be to prosecute the "highly corrupt," but in his short time in office, there were two shocking developments in the anti-corruption case; Nour Zuhair, the first accused of "theft of the century," was released, so he could sell his property to pay back the rest of the money. The amount of the returned so far is only 317 billion dinars out of 3.7 trillion Iraqi dinars, constituting 10% of the stolen amount.

The Iraqi Commission of Integrity has announced that the court agreed to reopen the trial of the former retirement director and Qi-Card manager—those accused of bribery and embezzlement of public funds worth billions of dinars during the Kadhemi era. The former retirement director was sentenced to six years in prison and the other one by four years. The verdicts were final on appeal, but these will likely be reduced during this review. These two developments have led to despair, criticism, and doubts about the ability of the new government to fight corruption, which has turned from an individual case into a complex system. If prime ministers want to fight it, there are solid obstacles and other defenders.

## Sensitive Positions

Internally, Sudani is trying to appease the parties of the coordination framework by increasing the number of advisers and hiring more. Besides this, sensitive security positions are witnessing great competition. While Al-Sudani knows that giving these positions to the Shiite armed groups creates a big problem with the United States and the international coalition.

## Deadlock

Due to the internal dispute within the coordination framework, many things remain stuck in the government, most notably how to deal with oil prices and the dinar against the dollar. This delayed the possibility of approving the budget until February and March 2023. It is clear that with the funding, the government will be able to implement effective economic and social plans and programmes, which is a precedent in post-2003 Iraq.

## Sunni Conflict and Desire

Concerning the political Sunni component, considered one of the main components forming the government, only the internal problems among them dominated, and their disputes impacted the situation. When Azm was firmly determined to remove Mohammad al-Halbousi, the Speaker of Parliament appeared on tv saying that 2023 is decisive and the political process may collapse during that year. These statements make it difficult for the government, which needs calm, to implement its agreements.

Some Sunni statements are heavy, others are very sensitive, such as the withdrawal of the PMF, "Hashed" from the cities, and others are related to revealing the fate of the absent Sunnis. It is possible to prove in practice genocide by the Shiite forces during the ISIS war.

## **Sudani between Erbil and Baghdad**

Although the conflict between the two Kurdish powers may have never been as intense as it is now, the consequences at the level of Baghdad are still unclear due to the internal Shiite struggles. Regarding the issues between Erbil and Baghdad, the federal government chose the easy way to deal with the problem by sending 400 billion dinars to the Kurdistan Region and discussing establishing a transitional phase for the oil issue. This solution is considered a short-term one because the long-term agreement requires the readiness of the two parties in addition to the political will, which is not available in the Kurdistan Region and Baghdad. This comes at a time when the deadline for settling the oil law set by the Federal Court is only six months, and half of this period may expire until the end of the parliamentary recess.

## **Dinar vs. Dollar**

On the general level, instead of a quick and comprehensive change, the prime minister has become accustomed to the dollar's rise. In contrast, his government's "Shia coordination framework" campaign has consistently called for its decrease.

## **Shia's Plans and Actions**

Indirectly, Al-Sudani is also trying to replace some officials and governors. For this purpose, he entered his government officials from the general director and the minister's advisors in a trial to evaluate them for 3-6 months aiming to replace those imposed on him against his will. Al-Sudani will not be able to replace them for political reasons, but by the end of the day five governors will be changed.

Regarding the implementation of the government's main slogan of providing services, the government has committed itself to build 2,000-5,000 thousand schools and distributing half a million plots of land with soft loans as investment steps. Moreover, the government returned to its old habit once again to satisfy the unemployed by expanding the social welfare numbers, confirming contract holders, and making contracts for those who work as public servants. Although this step is considered a "disaster" by economists and experts, high oil prices help to hide it because Iraq now has the largest cash reserves in its history, 90 billion dollars.