

---

# **Iraqi Protests in the long-term: Change the System or Instability?**

31-10-2019

**Authors**

Rudaw RC

By Ziryan Rojhelati |

After religious break of martyrdom anniversary of Imam Hussein, on 25th the Shia street rise up again and this Friday recorded as bloody one in the new Iraqi history. The multi demands of protesters means reject the current political system of Iraq. The government procedures and parties in power which through suppression and incentives work could not calm down the protesters. The recent developments reasons are obvious from longtime ago and it was predicted the situation to be explode. Therefore more importantly talk about the reasons now the important question is what will happen? What are the consequences of these protests? Will they lead to change political system or deepen the roots of instabilities?

Crisis after Crisis

### Most important Crises in Iraq post-2003

Crisis	Clarification	Result
Identity	Shia-Sunni war (2006-2007)	Shia Dominance, international support for Iraqi government to control the situation
Terror	Al-Qaeda -ISIS	Temporarily controlled by support of other countries (The threat is still there)
Identity	Kurdish Independence Referendum	Arab dominance with regional and international support
Legitimacy	Shia Protests 2018-2019 continue	Is continue

In the past 16 years Iraq continues to face crisis although Iraq has been through many crises but most important one is the recent protests which is the fourth crisis that challenged the new political system which is questioning legitimacy of the system.

The government path to control this crisis which is incentives and aggression which is difficult to work out in the long term. The growing youth population of Iraqi Shias which demand for jobs and better life is not just economic demand but its political demand also got nationalist origins.

The government packages for "reform" does not seem to be practical. First of all divide shares which has been used as a mechanism to shut Kurds and Sunnis' demands by Shia authority is creating a big internal issue for the Shia groups. Each party got military force and foreign backing and through this ask for its own share. Making promises to employee people and distribute money and land to stop protests is only to enlarge the rentier state which pays to buy citizen loyalty! This can be a temporary solution but never is a radical one.

Another government option through using force to stop and end protests likely temporarily control the situation but eventually will have no result. In the 1980s there were series of bread revolutions in this region that took place in Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt. Also when we look at the past factors behind people demonstration either were economic or one dimension political. For example protests and revolution occurred in the sake of food or identity but the new era of middle east is era of raising awareness of individuals so no longer ideology and religion can prevent political and material

demands of people which now are multi-dimensional one. In the past thirty years despite strong aggression of the political regimes number of popular protests in the middle east did not reduce and even increased and Iraq is not skipped from this scenario.

In the past thirty years despite aggression at least 36 important protests took place in the middle east which most of them were in the last decade and time between protests was short this is an indication of the failure of aggression policy

Protests in the Middle East 1990-2019		
Country	Year	Result
Egypt	4 times: 2008,2011-2012,2013,2019	Regime Change and State Control
Iran	5 times:1999,2009, 2017,2018,2019	State Control
Turkey	4 times: 1999, 2006,2007,2013,2015	State Control
Iraq	6 times:1991Kurds and Shia, 1999, 2011 Kurdistan Region, 2013 Sunnis, 2015-2019 Shias	Changed the system, instability, continue
Saudi Arabia	2 times: 2010-2011, 2017 Qutaif	State Control
Yemen	2 times: 2011, 2014-2015	Civil War
Syria	3 times: 1999, 2004,2011	Civil War
UAE	2011	State Control
Jordan	2 times: 2011-2012, 2018	State Control
Lebanon	4 times: 2006-2008, 2011, 2015-2016, 2019	Instability, continue
Oman	2011	State Control
Bahrain	2 times: 2011-2012	State Control

The internal war ( Shia \_Sunni war,Kurd, Shia-Shia struggle) and fight on terror (Al-Qaeda-ISIS) and popular protests (2011-2019) are three main factors in destabilizing new Iraq. These factors lead the political system to collapse and it is possible the Iraq become a permanent failed state.

What will happen?

Now is more likely Adil Mahdi to be gone from power. But the issue is not only related to him due to mix political and religious tension with the protests and having gun in the hand of people and groups Iraq is one step closer to second internal Shia war.

If these protests continue, it is more likely ISIS get stronger. Due to Turkish army offensive to Rojava and protests Iraqi government brought security forces to control the situation of cities, this made golden opportunity for ISIS.

Some of the Shia groups want to use this to scare people and through this control the situation but despite the intention of these groups likely ISIS to become stronger is undeniable fact. According to the ministry of Peshmerga data in 2018 ISIS carried out 456 attacks in five governorates of disputed areas which in the result 1720 killed, injured and kidnapped. And in 8 months of 2019 ISIS carried out 181 attacks in the result 860 killed injured and kidnapped. This proves that the speech of former PM Abadi on his "victory" declaration on ISIS was not true

Another point is that if protests continue another wave of emigration to Kurdistan region will start if the region stays stable.

Due to the weakness of Iraqi army the military coup is less likely and even likely coup by PMF not due to all the Shia groups are not united if there will be such effort will lead to civil war. Therefore lasting protests and government incapability to control it may lead to direct Iranian interference or other country as happened in Syria.

Iraq is going to unknown . Iraq instability will damage kurdistan region but backing Mahdi's cabinet in this situation is not good. Its better for the kurds at this stage have more coordination with Iraqi sunnis because in the case of any suddent change not neccesarily all the constitutional rights to be protected. In addition kurditan region need more united voice for all assumption of Iraq . therefore meeting between president of Kurdistan region with the parties was important which can to be continue.