
Iraq's Parliament: The Most Expensive in the World and the Cost of One Term

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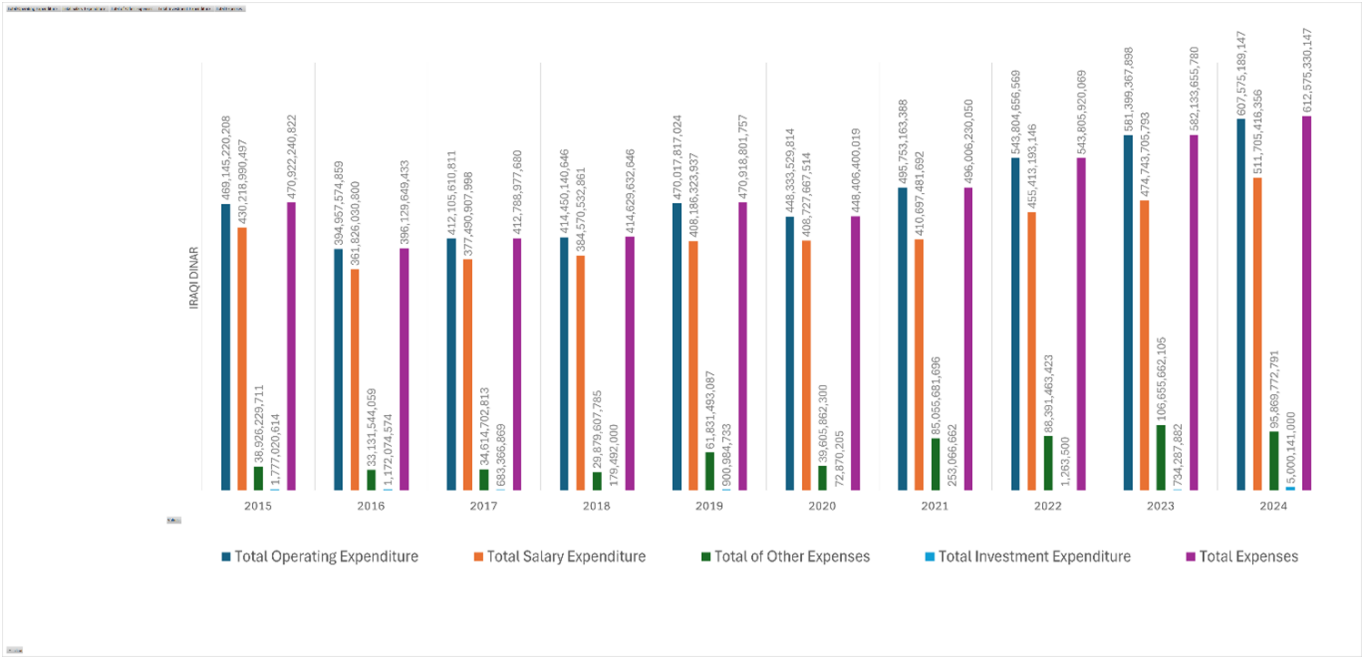
According to data from the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC), 7,768 candidates from 18 provinces are competing for 329 seats in the Council of Representatives. Although the number of candidates varies significantly across provinces in terms of demographics, it is clear that Iraq has the **most expensive parliament** and parliamentarians among nations with parliamentary and federal systems, with the next closest country trailing far behind.

According to data from Iraq's Independent High Electoral Commission, the number of coalitions and political parties in Iraq has been increasing year by year, as has the number of candidates registering. For example, in [the first parliamentary term](#), there were 6,655 candidates, but for the upcoming election next month, the number has risen to 7,768 candidates, marking an increase of 16%.

Similar to the rise in the number of candidates, the Iraqi Parliament's expenses have also been growing. According to data from the Ministry of Finance on expenditures, the expenses of the parliament and its institutions have increased by an average of 3.1% annually. Over the past ten years (2015-2024), total expenses have risen by 30%. In 2015, total expenses were 470 billion dinars, while in 2024, they reached 612 billion dinars, as shown in the first graph.

Of the 30% increase in expenditure over the past decade, the majority has been directed towards operational expenses. Specifically, salary expenses accounted for 18%. The total expenditure on salaries for employees of the Council of Representatives and independent institutions affiliated with the Iraqi Parliament has risen from 469 billion dinars to 607 billion dinars annually.

Graph 1: Expenditures of the Iraqi Parliament and Independent Institutions Affiliated with it (2015-2024).



According to data from the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and a report by the Welsh Parliament in Britain, which compares the salaries of parliamentarians across 16 countries worldwide, Iraqi parliamentarians are the highest paid. Their annual salary reaches 216 million dinars, which is three times the salary of parliamentarians in countries like Sweden, Ireland, France, New Zealand, and Finland. It is also twice the salary of parliamentarians in countries such as Britain, the United States, and Germany.

This distribution of oil wealth within the institution has made Iraqi parliamentarians the most expensive in the region, as well as in several European countries, and even in two of the world's major democracies, Britain and the United States. The basic annual salary for an Iraqi parliamentarian is 96 million dinars, not including the salaries for bodyguards. In recent terms, each parliamentarian has been allocated 16 bodyguards, although previously, the number was as high as 40 bodyguards.

In reality, figures in Iraq tend to emerge more through disputes than through official publications. For instance, a recent disclosure by an Iraqi parliamentarian revealed that he gave half of his monthly salary—9 million dinars—to his party. If this is accurate, the parliamentarian's total salary would amount to 18 million dinars per month. When factoring in the cost of bodyguards as part of a parliamentarian's expenses in Iraq, the annual total reaches 288 million dinars, which far exceeds the salary of parliamentarians in the countries listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Parliamentarians' Annual Salaries in the Iraqi Parliament and Other Countries (2024-2025)

Legislature & Assembly	Annual Salary (Local Currency)	Annual Salary (Sterling)	Annual Salary (Dollar)
Northern Ireland Assembly	£52,000	£52,000	\$69,684.02
Riksdag, Sweden	SEK 900,000	£86,717	\$20,400.78
France	€79,200	£80,04	\$92,101
Eduskunta, Finland	€85,644	£73,196	\$96,401.30
Senedd (Welsh Parliament)	£72,057	£72,057	\$96,566.38
Scottish Parliament	£72,196	£72,196	\$96,742.84
New Zealand Parliament	\$28,600	£76,729	\$102,818.86
Iraq (Only Salary without Body Guard)	96,000,000 د.ع.	£83,600	\$109,344.00
Storting, Norway	NOK 1,171,000	£83,609	\$112,036.06
UK Parliament (Westminster)	£95,346	£95,346	\$122,403.64
Oireachtas, Ireland	€113,679	£94,501	\$126,631.34
Parliament of Victoria	\$205,798	£103,949	\$130,291.66
United States	\$US0174,000	108032	\$144,762.88
Bundesrat, Germany	€134,726	£111,998	\$150,077.32
House of Commons, Canada	\$203,100	£113,564	\$152,215.96
Iraq (Salary & per member)	216,000,000 د.ع.	£183,600	\$246,024.00
Austrian Parliament	€223,660	£194,213	\$260,258.82
Iraq (Salary & Bodyguard)	288,000,000 د.ع.	£244,800	\$328,032.00

Sources: Welsh Independent Remuneration Board, IPU (Inter-Parliamentary Union) global data on national parliaments, US Congress, Iraqi parliamentarian salaries.

Note 1: One pound is valued at \$1.34 and 0.00085 dinars.

Note 2: The base salary increases depending on the parliamentarian's qualifications, such as holding a master's or doctoral degree.

Note 3: The Iraqi salary data is based on information published by the Justice Group parliamentarian during the current parliamentary term.

Note 4: The number of bodyguards previously was 40, but is now reduced to 16. However, the specific arrangement of these 16 bodyguards can vary between parliamentarians.

While Iraqi Parliament and its parliamentarians are among the most expensive globally, Iraq's political system is far from democratic. According to [the Freedom House index](#), Iraq scores only 31 out of 100 in its 2024 report on freedom and democracy. The report states: 'Iraq holds organized and competitive elections, with participation and representation from various political, religious, and ethnic groups. However, in practice, democratic governance in Iraq is hindered by corruption, militias operating beyond the law, and the weakness of official institutions. State officials and powerful militias frequently violate citizens' rights through both legal and extralegal means.'

Moreover, when analyzing candidates based on the population ratio and demographics, it appears that there is approximately one candidate for every 80 families in Iraq. However, a significant gender disparity exists among

candidates. According to the latest demographic census of Iraq's population, males make up 50.1%, and females 49.9%. Despite this, male candidates for parliament represent 69.8% of the total, while females account for only 30.2%. The majority of female candidates are nominated to occupy the women's quota seats in electoral districts.

Lastly, the \$2 billion allocated for each parliamentary term and its associated institutions comes at a time when the country still relies on laws enacted before 2005 for most of its legislation. Iraq has also been unable to pass an oil and gas law, which is crucial, as it constitutes 91% of state revenue and 85% of the gross domestic product.