

Renewed Protests in Iraq

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As Iraq approaching the upcoming elections in October, 2021 the anti-government protests each week resumes in governorates of southern Iraq. Dhi Qar governor stepped down after that protesters called for his dismissal. In Muthanna, Najaf and Kut (Wassit) like Dhi Qar also protests resumed with calling for dismissal "the corrupted officials" there have been clashes between protesters and security forces and in the result several were wounded.

Resume the new wave of protests which considered as extension of October revolution 2019 nationwide protests, is an indication that the public lacks of confidence of any likely change to take place in the upcoming early elections. If the elections going to take place on time which is seven months from now and is for the first time since 2003 Iraq is going to hold early elections. Also the early elections seen as a solution of the accumulated political crises and to meet demands of public.

The Iraqi protests across Shia cities ended in early 2020 not just due to the pandemic concerns but also protesters hoped to change the directions towards change from the street to the election process under better elections law which is multiple electoral constituency system (divides 18 provinces to 83 electoral districts) according to the new elections law, voter can have better choice to elect its candidate especially since the law allows independent political candidates and ends the practice of political parties running on unified lists.

Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi's cabinet that got its legitimacy from protesters and with their support without electoral bloc received vote of confidence, is keep trying to mobilize protesters direct their efforts towards elections in order to have large presence in the future parliament and start change process from there, but there is no nationwide political front to represent protesters was formed yet and due to their different demands and polarity in addition to other reasons prevents establishment of such political front. Thereof again protesters instead " go to the election ballots" their call for uprising and removal of the system becomes slogan of this stage.

According to the available data and indications including the Gallup Middle East branch polls show that most of the Iraqis (more than %90) are willing to change and remove current sectarian system in Iraq (republic that was established since 2003) because nearly %85 believes that this system only serve a group and not the people. And this is not an easy mission to be accomplished because the militias and political parties dominates and have power over the electoral commission and big political blocs have ability to organize and maneuver the elections especially that all the elections from 2004-2018 reached similar results with some changes in the position of those parties to the large extent that in nature and structure are similar to each other.

Day after day protesters are become more hopeless to achieve the mission that have devoted more than 500 lives and thousands wounded people for, some of them think that their participation in the elections despite that will come out with small number and will not get anything else in the process therefore now they ask to boycott the elections and want to stay as pressure group to continue represent the dissatisfied people rather than go to the participate in the elections process and come out with small size bloc, because in the game of parliament numbers are important and often decision's made based on majority and minority principal. But some other protesters are with participation in the elections or at least prepare for the elections at this stage and then make the final decision. Therefore these protesters have started a campaign to renew biometric data and then talk on whether should participate in the elections or not?

Although the current Iraqi government's priority is to hold the elections and create opportunities for the new blocs and want to limit the militias but some believes that this cabinet even if it was not intentional was savior of the 2003 system (sectarian system) because of this new cabinet was not formed then was likely that after resignation of former PM Adil

abdul-Mahdi the regime totally would have been removed under the pressure of October 2019 protests. Therefore we cannot wait for such small opportunities especially that still perpetrators involved in killing protesters have not been prosecuted and there is hegemony of militias on many sectors and departments in Iraq.

These two views which is view of elections, uprising and street currently are in competition and conflict. Still is not clear whether elections will take place or not as there are doubts that political parties are willing to dissolve the current parliament and in such condition is likely new wave of protests resume across the country. But also likely that political parties can exploit protesters movement for internal reckoning and defeat their rivals especially governors as protesters are not united and lacks of experience. This is more likely to happen because previous experiences proved that even if protesters are very active and have loud voice but by the end the traditional parties that can play better as organized and have experience and more materials to play the game.