



Iraq's Electoral Preparations and Processes¹ Report No. 2

Highlights for September

- Continued lack of political agreement on the content of technical annexes to the electoral law, with Parliament suspending deliberations until 10 October.
- IHEC moves forward with preparations but continues to face significant challenges in the absence of a finalized electoral law, lack of clarity on the electoral budget, and continuing staffing gaps.

Electoral Legislation

On 26 September, the Council of Representatives discussed the technical annexes to the electoral law but again failed to reach an agreement on electoral constituencies. While certain working parameters were approved, a definitive formula to delineate constituencies was not endorsed.

The Council of Representatives agreed to use the 2010 population statistics of the Ministry of Planning to determine the size of the Parliament. It also approved a uniform set of criteria to be applied to all governorates in the finalization of constituencies and agreed that all constituency delimitation should be completed for all governorates simultaneously. Parliamentarians voted to respect geographic conditions, diversity of components and women's representation when distributing electoral constituencies.

As stated above, despite agreement on these principles, the precise formula to set constituency boundaries remains unresolved - with several proposals still on the table. These range from one constituency per seat (i.e. multiple constituencies in each governorate), to governorates divided into several 3-4 seat constituencies, and reverting to the previous formula under which each governorate is a single constituency.

The Council of Representatives has postponed the voting on electoral constituencies to 10 October. UNAMI's advisory note of 27 July highlighted the technical nature of the constituency delimitation exercise and proposed, in the interests of transparency and impartiality, input and involvement from institutions that have the capacity to generate, analyse and systematise such technical information. UNAMI reiterates its suggestion of a technical working group to draft the annexes, composed of

¹ This report, the second in a regular series issued on a monthly basis, is prepared pursuant to UN Security Council Resolution 2522, adopted on 29 May 2020. In extending UNAMI's mandate, the Council instructs that the Special Representative of the Secretary General and UNAMI shall: "further advise, assist and support the Government of Iraq and the Independent High Electoral Commission with efforts to plan and execute genuinely free and fair Iraqi-led, Iraqi-owned elections and referenda, including through regular technical reviews and detailed reporting on electoral preparations and processes, as part of the Secretary-General's regular reporting cycle."



United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI)
بعثة الأمم المتحدة لمساعدة العراق (يونامي)

Iraq's Electoral Preparations and Processes - Report No. 2
Baghdad, 06 October 2020

representatives from the Legal Committee of the Council of Representatives, the Ministries of Planning, Trade, Interior, and Displacement and Migration, the Independent High Electoral Commission, the Office of the Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers Secretariat. The UN could provide technical assistance and advice to this working group.

Electoral Budget

Another key requisite, the allocation of the electoral budget, is not yet in place. The Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) has submitted its budgetary request but funds have not yet been released, pending clarity on Iraq's 2020-2021 budget. In addition, the Council of Ministers has indicated the need to revisit the overall electoral funding requirements, in light of the country's current financial situation.

These delays on both the legal framework and the budget affect IHEC's ability to proceed with certain key activities, raising concerns regarding the operational timeline. UNAMI has stressed with Iraqi interlocutors, both in the government and in the parliament, the urgent need to set in place all these key requisites. It also continues to support IHEC in finalizing the operational timeline, and to move forward wherever possible with activities while the budget and legislation are being finalized.

Recruitment of IHEC Personnel

The IHEC legislation passed in December 2019 required both replacement of the IHEC Board of Commissioners and also new Directors General and department and section heads, at IHEC headquarters and in governorate offices. To date, IHEC has appointed managers for all governorate offices (on a probationary basis, subject to evaluation after completing three months in office). However, IHEC has yet to receive confirmation/approval from the Council of Ministers for the four IHEC HQ Director General positions, as required under the IHEC law. The recruitment of department and section heads at headquarters level is also not yet complete, with some key positions still occupied by interim personnel.

The slow progress on recruitment, coupled with issues raised regarding recent appointments, is a matter of concern, given the importance of an effective and professional IHEC team to the successful delivery of elections. Although UNAMI is not part of the recruitment process, it has provided advice to IHEC regarding recruitment. Once these key recruitments are finalized, a comprehensive capacity development process will be implemented with UNAMI support.



United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI)
بعثة الأمم المتحدة لمساعدة العراق (يونامي)

Iraq's Electoral Preparations and Processes - Report No. 2
Baghdad, 06 October 2020

IHEC quarterly report to Parliament

In compliance with the electoral law, IHEC has submitted its quarterly report to the Council of Representatives, through the parliamentary Legal Committee, for the second quarter of 2020. An IHEC delegation of three commissioners addressed the Legal Committee on 23 September. They faced intense questioning from the members of the Committee on a number of issues, including IHEC's views on constituency delimitation, biometric registration, selection of technical audit companies and the mechanisms adopted to select Directors General, managers and section heads.

Technical Electoral Preparations

1. Preparations for the resumption of voter registration

On 7 September, the High Committee on National Health and Safety approved a request from the Independent High Electoral Commission to reopen voter registration centres country-wide for purposes of biometric voter data collection and the distribution of voter cards (with a range of health safety measures in place to protect voters and registration staff). IHEC records indicate that 15.2 million voters have completed the biometric data collection process (from an electorate of 26.6 million). Voter card distribution remains below target: several million cards which have been printed, are not yet distributed. For the integrity and credibility of the electoral process, the Commission needs urgently to intensify its efforts to complete the biometric voter card registration/allocation process. On 13 September, UNAMI met with the Chairman of the Board of Commissioners to discuss measures to accelerate this work.

2. Visits to governorate electoral offices to assess readiness

During the month of September, a delegation led by Iraq's Chief Electoral Officer conducted field visits to IHEC governorate electoral offices (GEO) in Sulaimaniya, Erbil, Dahuk and Ninewa. It held meetings with GEO staff, governorate and security officials, as well as on-site inspections of IHEC warehouses to check logistical preparations for the opening of voter registration centres. Similar visits are planned to other governorates.

3. Audit of elections IT systems

IHEC is currently working on the estimated cost, form of tender, and scope of work for the audit. Meanwhile, UNAMI met on several occasions with the head of the Council of Ministers-mandated committee for the selection of the audit company. IHEC has asked UNAMI to share (again) a list of companies that have a proven track record in providing this type of audit services.

4. Invitations for international observers



United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI)
بعثة الأمم المتحدة لمساعدة العراق (يونامي)

Iraq's Electoral Preparations and Processes - Report No. 2
Baghdad, 06 October 2020

As in previous elections, IHEC intends to issue invitations through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for international partners to observe the upcoming elections. UNAMI furnished IHEC with a list of international organisations established in election observation. IHEC formed a committee on electoral observation, which is now working to finalise accreditation procedures and a code of conduct for international observers.

5. Election preparations and COVID-19 measures

Following discussions between UNAMI and IHEC on the potential impact of COVID-19 on the upcoming elections, IHEC has decided to form a committee (with UNAMI participation) to map out strategies and measures that can be adopted at all stages of electoral preparations to mitigate the potential impact of the ongoing pandemic. Lessons from other countries which have recently held elections under pandemic circumstances will be harnessed as IHEC develops its voter registration, vote counting and other procedures for the elections.
