



Iraq

Last update:	22 May 2017
Population:	36,423,395 million (World Bank 2015 est.)
Prime minister:	Haider al-Abadi
President:	Fuad Masum
Governemental type:	Parliamentary democracy
Ruling coalition:	State of Law, National Alliance, Arabiya, Loyalty to Anbar, Iraq Coalition, Mutahidun, Kurdish Coalition, Secular parties, Nationalist Coalition, Minorities
Last election:	13 April 2014 (parliamentary elections)
Next election:	April 2018 (parliamentary elections)
Sister parties:	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK)

From 1979 until 2003 Saddam Hussein and the Baath Party ruled the country. It was a secular, but Sunni-dominated regime. In 2003 Saddam Hussein was overthrown when a US led coalition invaded the country. Hussein was executed in 2006. In April 2014 parliamentary elections were held in Iraq. Haydar al-Abadi became the new Prime Minister and formed a government in September that year. One of the new government's main aims is to re-establish security in the country. Since early 2015, the country has been involved in a military campaign against the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

Political Situation

Iraq gained independence in 1932, after being a League of Nations mandate under British administration since 1920. The coup d'état in 1958 led to an end of the monarchy and a republic was established. From 1979 to 2003 the country was ruled by President Saddam Hussein. Until 2003 Iraq remained a de facto Arab nationalist and socialist one-party state. In 2003 the government of Saddam Hussein was overthrown by a US led invasion. The United States claimed they invaded the country because of the presence of weapons of mass destruction, such as chemical and biological weapons, and secondly to introduce democracy. These weapons of destruction were never found however. Saddam Hussein was captured by American forces in December 2003, and executed by an Iraqi military court in 2006. His party, the Baath Party, was dissolved. Many Baathists, such as former army and intelligence officers, later joined IS and have reportedly played a significant part in its rise.

In December 2011 all American forces officially left Iraq. Fourteen years after the ousting of Saddam Hussein the country is plagued by bureaucracy, conflicts and corruption. It is currently ranked 166th out of 177 countries on the 2016 [corruption perceptions index](#) of Transparency International.

In 2013 the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), a Sunni Arab rebellious group that was formed following a merger of different Iraqi insurgent groups, started expanding rapidly to parts outside Iraq. The group adopted the name of Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in 2013 and proclaimed itself an Islamic State (IS) in January 2014. The militant group has spread over central and northern Iraq and Syria, leaving a trail of death and destruction. In response to this threat, a US-led coalition of regional and Western powers started a campaign of air strikes in 2014. ISIS has lost a significant part of the territory it controlled in Iraq and Syria. The group's last major stronghold is the city of Mosul, located in North Iraq. The eastern part of the city has been liberated by Iraqi forces, the battle for the Western part is still ongoing

Iraqi Kurdistan

In 1974, the Kurdistan region in Northern Iraq was granted limited autonomy by the Iraqi government. However, Iraq continuously tried to get control of the area by military interventions up until 1991, after which a no-fly zone was established above the area in

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1991. One year later, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) was formed by the Kurdistan National Assembly. Iraqi Kurdistan consists of the governorates of Erbil, Sulaymaniyah, Duhok and Halabja.

A period of fragile peace started after the no-fly zone was introduced. The Kurdish people started to rebuild their society creating a parliamentary democracy. The main political parties – the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) worked together during the 1990s. However, power-sharing arrangements between the two failed, erupting into a civil war from 1994 to 1997. The election in 1996 resulted in the creation of two separate Kurdish states: one state based in Sulaymaniyah controlled by the PUK, while the other state based in Erbil and controlled by the KDP. In 2005, Iraq officially recognized the autonomous Kurdistan Region by a referendum. The two administrations were unified into one government and the Kurdish parliament established the Kurdistan Region Presidency (KRP) as an institution. Masoud Barzani was elected as the first President of Iraqi Kurdistan in January 2005 and was re-elected in 2009.

Elections

Electoral system

According to the constitution of 2005 Iraq is a parliamentary democracy with a multi-party system whereby the executive power is exercised by the prime minister, president and Council of Ministers. The president is elected by the Council of Representatives. He nominates the prime minister, who has to be approved by the Council of Representatives. The prime minister is the head of government and is the executive authority. The legislative power is vested in the Council of Representatives and the Federation Council. From the 328 seats in the Council of Representatives, 320 members are directly elected in multi-seat constituencies by proportional representation. The remaining eight seats are reserved for minorities. The Council of Representatives is elected for four years.

Electoral law

The Kurdistan Parliament has 111 seats and consists of one elected chamber. In 2009 amendments were made to the election law to increase the inclusiveness of all groups. The minimum age of parliamentary candidates was lowered from 30 to 25. The quota of female MPs was increased from 25 to 30 percent of the legislature and seats reserved for minority Christian and Turkmen communities were increased to five seats each. Elections are held every four years. Every citizen of the Kurdistan Region with a minimum age of 18 years and on the electoral registering is eligible to vote in a direct, universal and secret ballot.

Parliamentary Elections

Parliamentary elections of 2014

On 30 April 2014 the elections for the Council of Representatives of Iraq took place in which the State of Law Coalition won by obtaining 92 out of 328 seats in the parliament according to the ElectionGuide. Voter turnout was 52 percent. The coalition is headed by the Islamic Dawa Movement, of which its leader is Nouri al-Maliki, and consists of 9 other Shia parties.

The US embassy in Baghdad said the election was "a testament to the courage and resilience of the Iraqi people, and another milestone in the democratic development of Iraq". However, the chairman of the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) had reported some irregularities.

After the new President of Iraq, Fuad Masum, designated Haider al-Abadi to form a new government he succeeded in forming one in two months and became the new Prime Minister. Al-Abadi, a Shi'i, included members of all major groups in the government – Shias, Sunnis, and Kurds – as he aimed to unify the country against the threat of the Islamic State.

According to the electoral law there is a 25 percent women quota for the parliament, meaning that 83 out of the 328 seats are appointed to female parliament members. According to the IHEC 22 out of 83 female MPs won their seats in 2014 without relying on the quota for women. Yet only 3 out of these 22 women won through independent votes and not through the votes granted to their lists.

Election results:

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Political Party	Seats
State of Law coalition	92
Sadrist Movement	34
Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq	31
United for Reform Coalition/ Muttahadun	28
Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP)	25
Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK)	21
Al Wataniyah	21
Other Sunni Parties	15
Al- Aribayah Coalition	10
Change List (Goran)	9
Other Shia parties	9
Fadilah	6
National Reform Trend	6
Iraq Coalition	5
Kurdistan Islamic Union	4
Other	17
Total	328

Iraqi Kurdistan parliamentary elections of 2013

On 21 September 2013 parliamentary elections were held in Iraqi Kurdistan with a voter turnout of more than 73 percent. The race seemed to be between the major Kurdish parties KDP and PUK, however, the Change List surprisingly put itself between both of them. The main winner of the elections was the KDP with 38 seats, after which the Change List followed with 24 seats. PUK ended on the third place with 18 seats. PUK and the KDP were running as individual parties for the first time since 1992. In a reaction deputy head of PUK, Barham Salih said "the loss is harsh, but denying the people's will would be shameful".

Election results

Political Party	Seats
Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP)	38
Change Movement (Gorran)	24
Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK)	18
Islamic Union of Kurdistan	10
Islamic Movement	6
Communist Party (Freedom List)	1
Kurdistan Communist Party	1
Turkoman Development List	2
Erbil Turkoman List	1
Turkoman Change and Reform List	1
Turkoman Movement List	1
Al- Rafidain List	2
Chaldean- Assyrian- Syriac Council	2
Abna Al- Rafidain List	1
Barwan Isan Mergoz Batros	1
Total	111

Aftermath

The elections in Iraqi Kurdistan did not run smoothly. The IHEC decided to postpone declaring the election results because fraud accusations were made by the Movement for Change against the PUK and the KDP. After eight months of negotiating, the KDP, Gorran, the PUK, IUK and IM agreed to form the government.

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Social Democratic Parties

Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK)

Party Leader: Mam Jalal Talabani

Number of seats: 21 (Iraqi parliament), 18 (Kurdistan parliament)

<http://www.pukmedia.com/>

The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) was founded on 1 June 1976. It was founded as a response to the end of the first Kurdish uprising that started throughout the 1960s and ended in March 1970 with an agreement between the Iraqi government and the Kurdish people. The PUK used to be a coalition of at least five separate political entities, of which the most significant was Mam Jalal Talabani.

The PUK is a social democratic party and its principal values are democracy, human rights, and the right to self-determination. The party strives to provide equality in job opportunities, to promote the independence of individuals, to prevent oppression and to eradicate racial and gender-based discrimination. In the years after its founding PUK ruled together with the KDP until disagreements drove the parties apart, and a civil war followed from 1994-1998.

Other Parties

State of Law Alliance

Party Leader: Nouri al-Maliki

Number of seats: 92

In October 2009 former Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki announced the formation of the Shiite State of Law alliance (SLA), distancing himself from the Iraqi National Alliance (INA). The alliance was announced as a nationalist, non-sectarian political list, but this failed after not attracting significant Sunni or other minority participation. The alliance comprises 34 parties of which the most prominent are:

- Islamic Dawa Movement (Da'wa - PM Maliki)
- Independents bloc (Minister of Oil Hussein al-Shahristani)
- Da'wa Tantheem (Tantheem - Hashim Nasr Mahmoud)
- Islamic Union of Turkomans of Iraq (Abbas al-Bayati)
- The National List (former INA chairman Hachim al-Hassani)
- National Emergence Movement (Khalid Sadi Yawar Awad al-Dulaimi)
- National Council for Iraqi Sheikhs (Abd al Hussein abd al Atheem Nour)
- Assembly of Competent People for the Future of Iraq (GOI spokesman Ali al-Dabbagh)
- Alliance of Iraqi Banners (Anbar Sheikh Ali Hatem Abd al-Razzaq)

Al Wataniyah, Al Arabiya & other Sunni Parties

Party Leader:

Number of seats: 44 (in total)

Al Wataniyah and Al Arabiya were founded after the Sunnis had largely supported the Iraqiya Party in the 2010 elections (92 seats). However, its leader Ayad Allawi was not able to create a majority coalition. Therefore the Sunni Arabs split their votes among three major parties: Al Wataniyah, Al Muttahidin and al Arabiya. Leader Muqtada Al-Sadr.

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Al-Sadr movement

Party Leader: Muqtada Al-Sadr

Number of seats: 34

The Al-Sadr (Sadrist) movement was first announced as the Al-Mahdi army, established by Muqtada Al-Sadr to “liberate Iraq”. Muqtada called for political resistance against the “occupation”, but that turned into intense military confrontations with the Multi National Forces and other Shia parties. Between 2003 and 2008 it promoted a strong anti-Western discourse until the army got uprooted by the US. The Al-Sadr movement nevertheless continued to play an active role in Iraqi politics.

Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI)

Party Leader: Sayyid Ammar al-Hakim

Number of seats: 29

The ISCI is a Shiite party in the government of Iraq. The ISCI was formed in 1982 under the name of the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) to provide an opposition to Iraqi aggression towards Iran. The SCIRI was founded by Ayatollah Sayyed Mohammed Baqir al-Hakim. After the war ended, the party continued to oppose the regime of Saddam Hussein. They advocated theocratic rule for Iraq and conducted a low-level, cross-border guerrilla war. In opposing the regime, SCIRI has signed multiple agreements with The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP). In addition to their main office in Teheran, the SCIRI has had offices in London, Syria, and Vienna. They are also represented by accredited agents in Canada, Australia and other countries.

Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP)

Party Leader: Masoud Barzani

Number of seats: 25 (Iraqi parliament), 38 (Kurdistan parliament)

<http://www.kdp.info/>

The KDP is a Kurdish party based in the northern governorates of Dohuk and Erbil and was founded in 1946. KDP is one of the oldest parties in Iraqi Kurdistan. It strives for independence of Iraqi Kurdistan. The party is regarded as being populist and nationalist. The current leader of the KDP is Masoud Barzani, who was elected in 1979 and has been re-elected ever since. In June 2005 he was elected as the President of Iraqi Kurdistan.

Mutahidun (The Uniters for Reform Coalition)

Party Leader: Osama Al-Nujaifi

Number of seats: 23

<http://www.muttahidoon.org/>

Mutahidun is a Sunni coalition made out of ten groups. It encompasses the major Iraq Sunni blocs, such as the bloc of former Awakening Movement leader Ahmet Abu Risha, the Ninewa-based Hadba list, the Future Bloc of former Finance Minister Rafia Al-Issawi, the Iraqi Islamic Party, and the Iraqi Turkmen Front. More information, see Al Watinayah.

Movement for Change (Gorran)

Party Leader: Nawshirwan Mustafa

Number of seats: 9 (Iraqi parliament), 24 (Kurdistan parliament)

<http://gorran.net/>

Gorran aims to take a totally different approach and to teach people there are other ways of politics away from the Stalinist style. The party thinks that the only achievable way to do this is to declare themselves a movement rather than a party.

Islamic Union of Kurdistan

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Party Leader: Salaheddine Bahaeddin
Number of seats: 10 (Kurdistan parliament)
<http://www.kurdiu.org/index.php/ku/>

Established in 1994 the Islamic Union of Kurdistan, also known as Yekgirtu, is considered to be a party with close links to the Muslim Brotherhood. However, in 2014 party officials distanced themselves from the Muslim Brotherhood, shortly after the movement was listed as a terrorist organization by the Egyptian government.

Kurdistan Islamic Group

Party Leader: Ali Bapir
Number of seats: 6 (Kurdistan parliament)
<http://kiknews.org/>

The Kurdistan Islamic Group is an Islamist movement established by Ali Bapir in 2001. The group has been linked to the terrorist group Ansar al-Islam, but in a statement in 2004 denied the existence of such links.

Biographies

Fuad Masum

President

Fuad Masum was born in 1938 being the son of Sheikh Mulla Masum, former head of the Association of Muslim Scholars in Kurdistan. Masum was the founding member of Talabani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan and served as its envoy in Syria and Britain. He became Prime Minister of the Autonomous Kurdistan Region in Northern Iraq in 1992.

Masum was overwhelmingly elected President of Iraq in 2014 by the parliament. He is the second ethnic Kurdish President of Iraq, succeeding Jalal Talabani. His election came as Iraq started to battle the uprising of the Islamic State. Masum is seen as being a soft-spoken moderate and known for keeping good relations with Sunni and Shiite Arab politicians.

Haider al-Abadi

Prime Minister

Haider al-Abadi was born in 1952 in Baghdad as Shia Arab. He joined the Islamic Dawa party at the age of 15, but Abadi's family came into conflict with the Saddam Hussein regime when the Ba-ath party seized power. Abadi studied electrical engineering in Baghdad and did his doctorate at the Manchester University in Britain.

Abadi had several jobs in the government under which Minister of Communications and Deputy Speaker of Parliament. Maliki had to resign in 2014 after Haider al-Abadi was designated to form a new government and became Prime Minister after he succeeded in forming the government.

Masoud Barzani

President Kurdistan regional government

Masoud Barzani is the first President of the Iraqi Kurdistan Region after the region had been divided between the KDP and the PUK. He was elected on 31 January 2005 and re-elected in July 2009 with 70 percent of the votes.

Barzani was born in 1946 as the son of Mustafa Barzani, who was a Kurdish nationalist hero. He took over leadership of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) after his father died in 1979. When the Iraqi government declared the Kurdistan Region a safe area and established a no-fly zone, Barzani evolved from a guerilla fighter to a political leader to run the region together with the PUK.

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Nechirvan Barzani

Prime Minister Kurdistan regional government

Nichirvan Barzani was appointed Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government in June 2014, leading the eighth Cabinet. Previously, he led the fifth Cabinet from 2006 to 2009 and the seventh cabinet from 2012-2014.

In his position as Prime Minister, Barzani has come up with a few strategic initiatives designed to improve the standard of living and the social and economic climate in Kurdistan.

Source

[U.S. Relations with Iraq](#)

[The World Fact Book](#)

[Global edge: Iraq Government](#)

[Kurdistan Region Presidency](#)

[Kurdistan Parliament](#)

[Irfad](#)

[Patriotic Union of Kurdistan](#)

[Election Guide: Iraq](#)

[Kurdistan Regional Government](#)

[National Democratic Institute: Iraq election watch](#)

[Aljazeera](#)

[State of Law Coalition](#)

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