

Iraq's Stolen Election: How Assyrian Representation Became Assyrian Repression

ASSYRIAN
POLICY
INSTITUTE



ABOUT ASSYRIANS

An estimated 1.5 million people globally comprise a distinct, indigenous ethnic group. Tracing their heritage to ancient Assyria, Assyrians speak an ancient language referred to as Assyrian, Syriac, Aramaic, or Neo-Aramaic.

The contiguous territory that forms the traditional Assyrian homeland includes parts of southern and southeastern Turkey, northwestern Iran, northern Iraq, and northeastern Syria. The Assyrian population in Iraq, estimated at approximately 200,000, constitutes the largest remaining concentration of the ethnic group in the Middle East. The majority of these reside in their ancestral homelands in the Nineveh Plain and within the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

Assyrians are predominantly Christian. Some ethnic Assyrians self-identify as Chaldeans or Syriacs, depending on church denomination. Assyrians have founded five Eastern Churches at different points during their long history: the Ancient Church of the East, the Assyrian Church of the East, the Chaldean Catholic Church, the Syriac Catholic Church, and the Syriac Orthodox Church. The majority of Assyrians who remain in Iraq today belong to the Chaldean and Syriac churches.

Assyrians represent one of the most consistently persecuted communities in Iraq and the wider Middle East.

**ASSYRIAN
POLICY
INSTITUTE**

ABOUT THE ASSYRIAN POLICY INSTITUTE

Founded in May 2018, the Assyrian Policy Institute works to support Assyrians as they struggle to maintain their rights to the lands they have inhabited for thousands of years, their ancient language, equal opportunities in education and employment, and to full participation in public life.

www.assyrianpolicy.org
f t i @assyrianpolicy

For questions and media inquiries,
contact us via email at info@assyrianpolicy.org.

IRAQ'S STOLEN ELECTION: HOW ASSYRIAN REPRESENTATION BECAME ASSYRIAN REPRESSION

November 27, 2018

COVER IMAGE BY KHLAPIEEL BENJAMIN.

Hundreds of Assyrians stage a protest against electoral fraud outside the Iraqi Kurdistan Parliament building on July 30, 2018.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Reine Hanna and Max J. Joseph served as primary authors and researchers. Editorial support was provided by Matthew Barber. For their support of the research and analysis that went into this report, the Assyrian Policy Institute would like to thank, in no particular order: Mardean Isaac, Michael Youash, Dr. Elmer Abbo, Susan Patto, Alexander P. David, and Noor Matti.

In addition to the above-named individuals, other individuals, government officials, parliamentarians, and organizations in Iraq provided extensive support and analysis. Their names have been withheld for security and privacy reasons.

Special thanks are due to the Shlama Foundation (www.shlama.org) for their extensive work documenting the situation of the Assyrian population in Iraq.

Table of Contents

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES	6
ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS REPORT	7
KEY FINDINGS	8
PART I: Introduction and Summary	10
Representation for Minoritized Communities	11
A “Christian” Quota	12
Voting for Minority Representatives	13
A Minority Quota Hijacked by the Majority	14
The Consequences of a Broken Electoral System	15
Overview of the 2018 Elections for Christian Representatives	16
Analyzing the Legitimacy of Assyrian Political Entities	17
The Numerical Superiority of KDP Proxy Parties	18
Methodology	19
PART II: Results of the 2018 Iraqi Elections for Christian Representatives	21
2018 Christian Electoral Lists	24
Proportional Representation	24
Winning Lists and Seat Allocation	24
Low Turnout Among Iraq’s Assyrians Contradicts IHEC Results	26
PART III: Election Interference from the Kurdistan Democratic Party	29
The Kurdistan Democratic Party	29
Historical KDP Interference in Elections for Assyrian Representatives	29
KDP Interference in the 2018 Elections for Assyrian Representatives	32
Mobilizing Kurdish Voters	33
Kirkuk Governorate	34
Erbil Governorate	39
Dohuk Governorate	44
Nineveh Governorate	47
KDP Patronage of Christian Religious Leaders	51
KRG Promoting Sectarianism Among Assyrians	51
Conclusion	53
PART IV: Election Interference from the Badr Organization	54
The Badr Organization	54
The Badr Organization’s Interference in the 2018 Elections for Assyrian Representatives	54

Rayan al-Kildani	55
The Babylon Brigades	56
The Babylon Movement Contesting the 2018 Elections	57
Babylon Movement Unseats Longtime Assyrian MP in Baghdad	61
Nominating a Christian Minister	63
Conclusion	64
PART V: Church Interference and Sectarianism Among Assyrians	65
Rejecting the Politicization of Church Leaders	65
Politics in the Nineveh Plain Pre-ISIS	67
The Chaldean Catholic Church	68
The Syriac Catholic Church	75
The Syriac Orthodox Church	77
Hate Speech Targeting Secular Chaldean and Syriac Assyrians	78
Conclusion	79
PART VI: An Election Marred by Allegations of Fraud	81
Allegations of Voter Fraud	81
Cancellation of Votes from Expatriates	81
Cancellation of Votes from Internally-Displaced Persons	82
PART VII: Conclusion	84
Minority Election Law Amendment Passed in Iraqi Parliament	84
Assyrian Protests Ahead of 2018 KRG Elections	84
Results of the 2018 KRG Elections	87
Overall Conclusion	87
RECOMMENDATIONS	89
FULL CANDIDATE LISTS	91
List 105: Firas Georgis Azeez Georgis	91
List 113: Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Popular Council	92
List 115: Beth Nahrain Union	93
List 131: Syriac Assembly Movement	94
List 139: Chaldean Coalition	95
List 144: Al-Rafedain Coalition	96
List 154: Abnaa al-Nahrain	97
List 166: Babylon Movement	98
APPENDICES	99
Appendix 1: Letter from Former MP Imad Youkhanna to IHEC	99
Appendix 2: IHEC Response Letter to Former MP Imad Youkhanna	100
Appendix 3: Official IHEC Regulations Regarding the Distribution of Seats	101
Appendix 4: Official 2018 Babylon Movement Campaign Pamphlet	104
Appendix 5: Official Statement by the Syriac Catholic Archdiocese	107
Appendix 6: Ballot from the 1992 Iraqi Kurdistan Parliamentary Elections	108
REFERENCES	109

List of Figures and Tables

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Seats Reserved for Minoritized Communities	11
Figure 2: Iraqi Provinces Represented by Christian Quota	14

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Electoral Lists Competing for Seats Reserved for Christians in 2018	21
Table 2: Total Votes for 2018 Christian Electoral Lists	25
Table 3: Christian Quota Seat Distribution in Accordance with IHEC Regulations	25
Table 4: Declared Winners of Christian Quota Seats in 2018 Iraqi Elections	25
Table 5: Top Candidates for Al-Rafedain Coalition	26
Table 6: Total Number of Votes for Christian Quota in Federal Elections Since 2010	27
Table 7: A Comparison of Votes for Christian Quota Seats per Province in 2010 and 2018	28
Table 8: 2018 Results for Christian Quota in Kirkuk Governorate	39
Table 9: 2018 Results for Christian Quota in Erbil Governorate	44
Table 10: 2018 Results for Christian Quota in Dohuk Governorate	46
Table 11: 2018 Results for Christian Quota in Nineveh Governorate	50
Table 12: 2018 Results for Christian Quota in Baghdad Governorate	62
Table 13: Major Assyrian Churches Represented in Iraq	66
Table 14: Christian Representatives in Iraqi Parliament from 2014-2018	68
Table 15: Assyrian Representatives in Iraqi Parliament from 2014-2018	68
Table 16: Votes for Chaldean Coalition in Assyrian Towns with Chaldean-Catholic Majority	74

Abbreviations Used in this Report

ADM	Assyrian Democratic Movement
API	Assyrian Policy Institute
APP	Assyrian Patriotic Party
BNDP	Bet Nahrain Democratic Party
HRW	Human Rights Watch
IDP	Internally-displaced person, someone who has been forced to leave their home but has been displaced within a country, in contrast to a “refugee” who has crossed an international boundary
IGC	Iraqi Governing Council
IHEC	Independent High Electoral Commission, the body responsible for conducting all elections and referendums in Iraq and implements these in accordance with the policies and procedures defined by the IHEC Board of Commissioners
ISIS	Islamic State; Daesh
IKP	Iraqi Kurdistan Parliament
KDP	Kurdistan Democratic Party
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government
KRI	Kurdistan Region of Iraq
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NPU	Nineveh Plain Protection Units
PMU	Popular Mobilization Units; Hashd al-Shabi
PUK	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan

Key Findings

- Deliberate interference of the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Badr Organization in the 2018 Iraqi parliamentary elections for Christian representatives, which included the methodical mobilization of tens of thousands of non-Christian voters, means this election cannot possibly reflect the will of the Christian Assyrian community in Iraq.
- A loophole in Iraqi electoral law has left the voting process for the selection of the Christian MPs who will fill the seats reserved by the quotas open to non-Christian voters, which enables powerful non-Christian parties to exploit the quota system. This negative trend has been detrimental to Assyrian interests from the establishment of the quota system. The same problem also afflicts the parliamentary elections of Iraqi Kurdistan.
- Through the strategy of creating and controlling Christian Assyrian proxy organizations—generally by rewarding loyalty with resources unavailable to independent Christian Assyrian parties—the Kurdistan Democratic Party was able to capture two of the five quota seats reserved for Christians. The Badr Organization, an Iranian-backed Shia Arab group operating militarily and politically across Iraq, also secured two of the five seats through the Babylon Movement, a nominally Christian, Muslim group used to extend and superficially diversify Badr’s presence in the north of the country. The absence of laws to protect the spirit and purpose of the Christian quota system—first by mandating that only Christian voters can select their representatives, and second by prohibiting the use of financial patronage by dominant groups to colonize the political landscape of marginalized ethno-religious populations—has therefore resulted in the near-complete elimination of independent Christian Assyrian political representation in Iraq’s 2018 parliamentary elections.
- The 2018 Iraqi parliamentary election results for the Christian quota demonstrate the growing sophistication of the proxy system that intrinsically destabilizes and enfeebles independent Assyrian political representation; also apparent is a process of increasing institutionalization that is entrenching this system.
- As a result of the 2018 elections, Assyrians have been effectively excluded from the political process in Iraq. Multi-dimensional interventions are required to overcome po-

litical exclusion, including: legally binding and monitored measures such as legislative reforms and community education initiatives designed to overcome deep-seated, systemic and institutional obstacles to the inclusion of marginalized groups in decision-making.

- The exploitation, lack of proper oversight and management, and abuse of the Christian quota system has fostered the development and growth of internal sectarianism among Assyrians by encouraging intra-Christian political competition—detrimental to an already fragile and disadvantaged community. The strategic conversion of churches into institutions of political party organization and competition has been particularly divisive for Assyrians as an ethnic group in ways that extend far beyond the superficial dispute over the name (where alternative ethnic identifiers such as Chaldean, Syriac, etc. are promoted in conjunction with denominational affiliation among members of a single ethnicity). Despite the widespread fraud, the 2018 elections indicate that the vast majority of Assyrians reject sectarianism and the politicization of the church leadership.
- Low voter turnout in Assyrian areas signals growing civic disengagement among Assyrians commensurate with the community’s disillusionment with the political process in Iraq. The findings outlined in this report are part of an ongoing pattern that has been observed for one decade.

Part I: Introduction and Summary

On May 12, 2018, millions of Iraqi citizens went to the polls to vote for their representatives. This year marked Iraq's fourth federal election since the fall of the Saddam Hussein regime fifteen years ago. In that time, the Assyrian population has dwindled from an estimated 1.5 million to less than 200,000 today.

The Iraqi state has repeatedly failed the most vulnerable groups in the country—both legislatively and materially—as it grappled with a newfound freedom from dictatorship. The 2018 elections took place four years after the

advent of ISIS. While it's true that all Iraqis were affected by the ISIS onslaught, Iraq's indigenous communities were specifically targeted and experienced a disproportionate degree of violence which threatens their existence. The lasting impact of this violence and destruction and the international

community's failure to address root problems has hindered healing and reconciliation.

Assyrians are allotted a minority quota of five "Christian" seats in the Iraqi Parliament. The quota system is intended to ensure the representation of minoritized communities, but it has constantly been abused by dominant parties and failed to yield positive results for the Assyrian community in Iraq. The manipulation of the Christian quota prevents independent Assyrian parties from retaining seats in parliament, thereby silencing their voices and sidelining their policies.

The elections in May took place less than a year after Assyrians displaced from the Nineveh Plain were able to return home in relatively small numbers and whilst many more remain internally-displaced. Many felt that conducting elections for Assyrian representatives was premature, given the trauma the community is still processing paired with the instability and lack of infrastructure in the Nineveh Plain.

This report, based on research conducted by the Assyrian Policy Institute between April and October 2018, focuses on events leading up to the May elections and analyzes the results. It will



An Assyrian woman from Dohuk photographed after voting in the Iraqi parliamentary elections held on May 12, 2018.

also examine how the seats reserved for Christians were stolen by major Iraqi and Kurdish political parties. In addition, the report describes historical interference in the elections for Christian representatives and documents a wide range of abuses and human rights violations in connection with the 2018 federal elections.

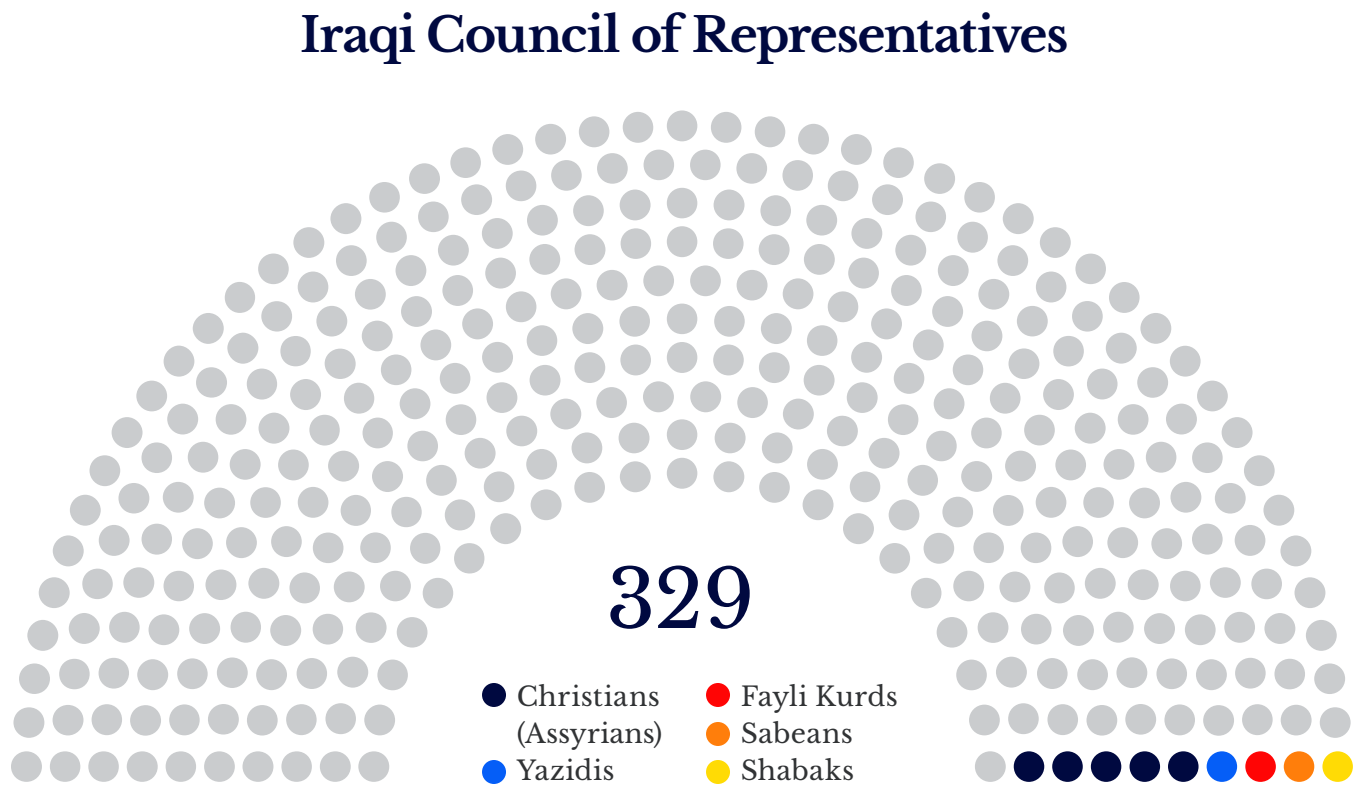
Representation for Minoritized Communities

Iraq, like many countries around the world, implements measures of positive discrimination in its political system in order to engage marginalized groups. To this end, seats for a certain number of parliamentarians are required to be filled by representatives of minority groups. This quota system is intended to guarantee minority representation where the absence of a

quota would result in inequalities and imbalances. However, many Assyrians believe that the quota representation system is deficient and that elected representatives lack the resources and capacity to make a meaningful impact on the political process. There is also a widespread perception among the Assyrian community that Assyrian representatives elected through the quota system are less respected and lack real power, and as a result, are marginalized within the parliament or fall under the control of their majority counterparts.

The Iraqi Parliament (officially called the Council of Representatives of Iraq), is composed of 329 seats, nine of which are reserved for minority communities. Five of these minority seats are reserved for “Christian” MPs. Yazidis, Fayli Kurds, Sabeans, and Shabaks are allotted one seat each. The minority quota system was implemented for the first time in the 2010 Iraqi elections.

Figure 1. Seats Reserved for Minoritized Communities in Iraqi Parliament.



Despite the allocation of quota seats, Christian candidates are free to run in the general election on non-Christian lists and often do. For example, Sargon Lazar, a member of the Assyrian Democratic Movement, unsuccessfully made a parliamentary bid in the 2018 elections as part of the State of Law Coalition party headed by former Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki.

It is important to note that there are two parliaments in Iraq—that of the central government in Baghdad (whose quota system was described above), and the Iraqi Kurdistan Parliament (IKP) in Erbil which contains representatives for the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). The IKP reserves 11 seats for minorities, including five for Assyrians. Elections for the IKP parliament were held on September 30, 2018.

This report will focus exclusively on the results of the 2018 Iraqi federal parliamentary elections. A separate report will be published by the Assyrian Policy Institute analyzing the results of the 2018 parliamentary elections in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI).

A “Christian” Quota

Assyrians, who comprise the overwhelming majority of Christians in Iraq,¹ have long expressed frustration over the categorization of their allocated seats on the basis of their faith as opposed to representation as an indigenous ethnic community. This religion-based system has fostered the development and growth of internal sectarianism among Assyrians by encouraging intra-Christian political competition with their associated external patrons—detrimental to an already fragile and disadvantaged community.

It should be noted that since the establishment of the Christian quota system in Iraq, there has been a disconnection between the official designation of these seats (as “Christian”) and the broader, ethnic identities of those contesting them. The electoral language defining these quota seats contradicts the language of the

Iraqi Constitution, which recognizes Assyrians and Chaldeans. The quota, as it is currently defined for Assyrians, puts forward a sectarian vision of this community based on religion, whereas Kurds and Arabs are identified as distinct *peoples* with their corresponding rights and entitlements within the political system of Iraq. Thus, there is a deliberate attempt to render Assyrians as having less agency than the dominant groups in the political sphere, *who are more than their popularly associated religious beliefs*, and are afforded privileges such as political positions based on their ethnic identity. For example, an unofficial power sharing deal that has persisted since 2004 has meant that the position of President, one which comes with great prestige and recognition, must be held by a Kurd.

Following the fall of Saddam Hussein, the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) was a provisional government that temporarily administered Iraq from July 2003 to June 2004. An Assyrian, Yonadam Kanna, served as a representative under the IGC. Kanna was recognized by his ethnicity rather than by his religious affiliation, even though he was the only Christian representative in the IGC. According to the U.S. Council on Foreign Relations, the IGC included:

...a diverse mixture of Iraqis—including recently returned exiles, tribal leaders, women, religious Muslim conservatives, and secular political leaders. Shiites, who account for 60 percent of the Iraqi population, are allotted 13 seats on the U.S.-appointed council; 12 seats are divided among Iraq’s main minorities: Sunni Arabs, Kurds, Assyrians, and Turkmen.²

The first elections of the Iraqi Kurdistan Parliament (IKP) (formerly referred to as the Kurdistan National Assembly) were held in 1992. In these elections, five seats were designated for Assyrians—four of which were won by the Assyrian Democratic Movement (ADM).³ No further elections were held in the Kurdistan Region for the following thirteen years; the next IKP election occurred in 2005, coinciding with

the election of the Iraqi Interim Government (another temporary administration that followed the IGC) and the governorate councils (bodies linked to each of Iraq's governorates—sometimes called “provincial councils”—responsible for fulfilling nationally-delegated responsibilities as well as lay the foundations for provincial government following agreement on a new Iraqi Constitution). In the 2005 IKP elections, the seats were reserved for “Assyrians/Chaldeans;” since the 2009 elections, the seats have been reserved for the “Assyrian Chaldean Syriac people.” However, despite this official designation, KRG officials typically refer to the reserved seats as the “Christian” quota seats.⁴

This religion-based classification that has been imposed on Iraq's Assyrian community and used to define them in a political context has contributed greatly to the deliberate dilution of the community's ethnic identity. This sectarian label consequently weakens their rights to land and self-determination as an indigenous people—a legacy from the Arabization campaigns enforced by the Baath Regime who identified them as “Arab Christians” or “Iraqi Christians”. This reductive classification has effectively resulted in the erasure of modern Assyrian history.

Voting for Minority Representatives

Minority candidates compete in the elections by running as part of electoral lists. Electoral lists can be comprised of members of a single political party or a coalition of multiple parties. Candidates may also choose to run independently. Each list has a name, though the name may differ from the names of the political organizations constituting the list, and is also assigned a number; throughout this report, the list number will be included alongside list names. The law mandates that each Christian electoral list with a full ten candidates must have one female candidate for every three

male candidates, meaning each full list must include a minimum of two female candidates.

Non-Christian voters were eligible to vote for Christian candidates, a phenomenon whose consequences are explored elsewhere in this report. Christian parties, lists and candidates, however, must run against one another within the allocated Christian quota.

For Christians contesting the elections, lists can include up to ten candidates with two candidates from each province with a sizeable Assyrian population:

- Baghdad
- Nineveh
- Kirkuk
- Erbil
- Dohuk

Individual candidates are ranked within each electoral list. Voters cast their ballot for a single list. The lists are semi-open, allowing voters the option to select a preferred candidate. If no individual candidate is selected, the vote will by default benefit the first candidate on the list. Voters are not limited to candidates running for their province of residence, meaning a resident of Dohuk can cast his or her ballot for a candidate in Baghdad.

There is no separate ballot for minority quotas; instead, the minority lists are arrayed among all other lists contesting the Iraqi elections. This means that anyone in Iraq has the option to vote for candidates to represent the Christian community.



2018 Iraqi parliamentary election ballot.



Figure 2. Iraqi Provinces Represented by Christian Quota.

A Minority Quota Hijacked by the Majority

Despite the fact that the Christian quota seats are intended to provide marginalized Assyrians a voice in the Iraqi Parliament, voting in the Christian quota election since its establishment in 2010 has not been restricted to Assyri-

ans and other Christian groups like Armenians. This means that non-Assyrians are able to vote in the very elections that determine the special representation of the Assyrians. The irony of this defective system is striking: the ostensible purpose for the quota is to protect the interests of an underrepresented minority, but this objective is undermined when the majority is able to override Assyrian wishes and determine who will fill the reserve seats.

In order to win seats in the parliament, major Iraqi political parties must mobilize hundreds of thousands of voters according to a calculation made against the total population. However, the lower number of Iraqi citizens voting for representation through the quota system means that a significantly lower number of votes is required to secure the fixed number of seats allocated to Christians. Thus, Assyrians often say that their seats are “cheaper.”

For years, Assyrian representatives have advocated for a special election that would be held for minority communities, appealing to both Iraqi and Kurdish authorities, as well as to the United Nations. All attempts leading up to the 2018 parliamentary elections proved unsuccessful.

Former Iraqi Assyrian MP Imad Youkhanna (in office from 2010 to 2018) wrote a letter⁵ to the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) dated January 4, 2018, calling for the protection of the “privacy and independence of the quota” for the 2018 election in order to prevent Arab and Kurdish voters from influencing the elections for Assyrian representatives.

The IHEC declined Youkhanna’s request in an official response letter⁶ dated January 29, 2018, stating that a special election for minorities was discriminatory—a perplexing line of reasoning since the same could be said about a quota of reserve seats for minorities. Despite the IHEC’s position, Assyrian voters feel that a minority quota is meaningless if the majority can vote in it.

In a May 7, 2018 interview with Assyria TV, newly elected MP Emmanuel Khoshaba, then-candidate on Al-Rafedain (144), highlighted this problem:

“A low voter turnout [among Assyrians] has made our [Christian] quota seats cheap. We’ve seen Kurds interfere in our elections time and time again. Their [the KDP’s] goal is the fragmentation of our people, the weakening of our parties, and by extension, our political will. They intentionally divide our seats to undermine our legitimate representa-

tives, and as a result, we do not have a free, unified voice in parliament to deliver our demands as a people...We have repeatedly asked for an amendment to the election law, because we have consistently seen the results altered by votes that came from outside our community.”⁷

In an interview with the API, MP Fareed Yaqo (elected to the Iraqi Kurdistan Parliament in 2018) said, “We’ve been trying to explain the proxy system as it relates to the minority elections to our American and European allies for years, but it can be complicated to understand. This patronage system, by design, has the effect of confusing Western officials.”⁸

WikiLeaks cables from 2009 to 2010 indicate that U.S. officials were aware of this problem, as highlighted below:

MP [Yonadam] Kanna told Poloff that he had maneuvered in Parliament...to prevent [the Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Popular Council] from easily claiming seats from the Kurdistan Region by asking its Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) allies to have some of its Muslim members vote for the Popular Council to swing the election. (COMMENT: One of the drawbacks of the quota system is that it does not ensure that only members of the protected community vote for that community’s seats. In the July KRG elections, representatives of the Assyrian Democratic Movement complained that the KDP had instructed Muslim party members to vote for KDP loyal Christians...END COMMENT.)⁹

The Consequences of a Broken Electoral System

To those who are not frequent observers of Iraqi politics, the issue of faulty and easily-abused minority quota systems may seem mundane and

even unsurprising in a country whose governmental systems and elections are often dysfunctional. However, the consequences of this problem are further-reaching than one might expect.

In addition to contending with extremist violence that has driven many Assyrians out of the country altogether, those who remain—in reduced numbers—feel perpetually embattled within the political systems that are responsible for ensuring their rights.¹⁰ The political dangers that beset Assyrians include the ongoing theft of Assyrian ancestral homelands, persistent campaigns to reduce Assyrian political agency making Assyrians increasingly dependent on larger political parties, and the effort to deny Assyrians an administrative role over those areas that are home to the greatest concentrations of Assyrian population but which are often not provided adequate security by the central and regional administrations.

These problems erode the survivability of Assyrians in Iraq, as they contribute to increasing marginalization while avoiding the healthy resolution of crucial security dilemmas that inform Assyrian well-being and safety in the country. These threats are also more damaging to the future longevity of the Assyrians than even the menace posed by extremist groups like the Islamic State; whereas the latter is visible and condemned by both the international community and Iraqi officials, the former constitute more subtle and hidden ways of undermining Assyrian rootedness in their homeland that are often not recognized by Western officials who engage with Iraq and are therefore ignored or remain un-confronted, even as the damage is done. A dysfunctional minority quota system, therefore, which fails to protect the fragile political representation of communities like the Assyrians, poses very serious risks and must be rectified.

Overview of the 2018 Elections for Christian Representatives

In elections characterized as fraudulent by a wide spectrum of the public, five new Christian representatives were elected in May 2018 to fill the five seats reserved for Christians in the Iraqi Parliament.

Crude Iraqi electoral law left the voting process for the selection of the Christian MPs open to abuse. This enabled powerful non-Christian parties to exploit the quota system. Through the strategy of creating and controlling Christian Assyrian proxy organizations—generally by rewarding loyalty with resources unavailable to independent Christian Assyrian parties—the Kurdistan Democratic Party was able to capture two of the five quota seats reserved for Christians. The Badr Organization, an Iranian-backed Arab group operating militarily and politically across Iraq, also secured two of the five seats through the Babylon Movement, a nominally Christian, Muslim group used to extend and superficially diversify Badr's presence in the north of the country.

The absence of laws to protect the spirit and purpose of the Christian quota system—first by mandating that only Christian voters can select their representatives, and second by prohibiting the use of financial patronage by dominant groups to colonize the political landscape of marginalized ethno-religious populations—has therefore resulted in the near-complete elimination of independent Christian Assyrian political representation in Iraq's 2018 parliamentary elections.

The election results for Christian seats demonstrate the growing sophistication of groups abusing the proxy system. The structure of this system splinters, destabilizes, and enfeebles independent Assyrian political representation, and worryingly, it is becoming increasingly

normalized and institutionalized by the dominant groups who benefit from it.

This negative trend has occurred in every federal, regional, and provincial election since 2003 and has been detrimental to Assyrian interests from the establishment of the quota system. The massive documentation supporting the alleged abuse of the quota system showed that it significantly impacted the election results and overshadowed the votes of the Assyrian community in Iraq.

Extensive irregularities were reported and will be detailed throughout this report. There was a massive difference between the number of votes cast in areas controlled by dominant non-Christian groups who dedicated time and resources to winning Christian quota seats this year compared to previous election cycles—this despite these embattled communities enduring genocide and destitution.

In areas administered or controlled by the KRG, the Assyrian Policy Institute received dozens of reports of intimidation and harassment against voters, electoral workers, and electoral monitors by KDP members and affiliates of KDP-backed Christian candidates. All KRG security forces are openly party political and have a history of engaging in voter intimidation. While the Assyrian Policy Institute has not been able to estimate an approximate percentage of voters in these communities who were forced into voting against their will, it will be evident that such pressure and threats were widespread in the following sections of this report. Disturbing developments since the 2017 Kurdish referendum have signaled increased risks for anyone who speaks out against injustice and abuse of power by the key actors which comprise the KRG.

After the results of the parliamentary elections were announced, the blatant election fraud created strong reactions among the Assyrian people. While this was not the first time such fraud has occurred, it was the first time that parties controlled by non-Assyrian entities secured the majority of seats allotted for Christians.

The Iraqi Supreme Court ordered a formal recount of the results, but the recount failed to reflect the reality of the electoral processes, which were marred by fraud, bribery, voter intimidation, and human rights violations against minoritized groups. Election officials, both local and international, failed to conduct adequate investigations into these violations.

Analyzing the Legitimacy of Assyrian Political Entities

If the Assyrian homelands of the Nineveh Plain constituted a politically stable administrative unit (such as a governorate) whose elections, governance, and mechanisms of representation operated within established, functional, and clearly-defined parameters, a diversity of competing political opinions and parties would be a healthy thing. In today's context of the disputed territories, however, this diversity does not exist because these political and administrative conditions do not exist.

An outsider who views the Assyrian political landscape may perceive an apparent variety of political persuasions and assume that these merely represent multiple options within a spectrum of political diversity. This apparent diversity, however, is illusory: a real dichotomy exists between organic Assyrian representation and artificial entities used by non-Assyrian parties with non-Assyrian interests and agendas—i.e. “proxy parties.”

When small Assyrian KDP-proxy parties achieve electoral victories over the organic Assyrian representation, it must be understood that the successes of these tiny groups are due to the powerful backing of the KDP in addition to ethically-questionable manipulation of the electoral system and sometimes outright fraud or other illegal measures. It would be a mischaracterization to view these parties as alternative Assyrian voices competing within a democratic space. Rather than representing

dissenting views among Assyrians within the boundaries of an established political arena, these proxy parties serve a far more drastic aim: the annexation of the Nineveh Plain to the Kurdistan Region.

What is actually at stake, therefore, is not the question of who will represent Assyrians within an established political arena, but rather the very nature of that political arena. Rather than allowing this arena to remain an Assyrian one, KDP proxy parties serve to advance the objective of dismantling the semi-independent Assyrian political jurisdiction that is viable in Nineveh (and which has already been functional in post-2003 Iraq) and to annex the Nineveh Plain to the Kurdistan Region. This necessarily means subsuming Assyrian political agency under Kurdish (and specifically KDP) political control.

Rather than a diversity of Assyrian parties organized around a multiplicity of positions, the majority of Assyrian parties are part of the KDP bloc. Opposite this bloc is the organic Assyrian representation, consisting of a much smaller number of parties. Our definition of “organic Assyrian representation” has nothing to do with political position; for a political entity to be legitimate it simply needs to have emerged from within the Assyrian community, to not have been erected by an external entity, and to not receive financial payouts from another party. At present, non-proxy “organic” Assyrian parties include the Assyrian Democratic Movement (ADM), Abnaa al-Nahrain, the Assyrian General Conference, and, more recently, the Assyrian Patriotic Party.¹¹ Of these, the ADM is the largest party.

More recently, other major Iraqi and Kurdish parties—most notably the Shia Arab Badr Organization—have exploited the Christian Assyrian identity and erected their own proxy organizations to further their interests. This development worryingly signals the further institutionalization of this proxy system and the near-complete marginalization of organic Assyrian representation in Iraq.

It should be stated that the Assyrian Policy Institute and the authors of this report are not affiliated with the ADM or any other Assyrian party. We also do not seek to support any particular party; rather, we aim to defend a political space within which any number of Assyrian parties can fairly contend for Assyrian representation. This would include Assyrians who join non-Assyrian political organizations to contest elections. This report does perform a critique of entities that we understand as illegitimate in that they undermine the fair and open political environment that we have described. The ADM has been the longest-standing but is not the only target of KDP efforts at neutralizing Assyrian political organizations outside of direct KDP control. The Assyrian General Conference was denied the capacity to operate in the KRI during Iraq’s earliest national elections following the fall of the Baath regime. More recently, Abnaa al-Nahrain has been targeted by the KDP as well, resulting in a decision by that organization to boycott the most recent KRG elections. Since the ADM and other non-KDP affiliated parties are often the targets of abuses and attempts to exploit the political system to marginalize their voices, we do speak out in their defense.

The Numerical Superiority of KDP Proxy Parties

Rather than promote a single, large Assyrian KDP affiliate, one of the KDP’s strategies with the proxies is to create a perception of numerical superiority vis-à-vis parties that oppose KDP policy. Additionally, the strategy serves to produce an impression of diverse Assyrian political participation which is in agreement with each other on key items of KDP policy. For example, this allows the KDP to point at the relatively fewer number of parties that oppose the annexation of the Nineveh Plains to the Kurdistan Region and brand them as a marginal faction of “Assyrian nationalists,”

while then pointing at the more numerous KDP proxies as evidence of a wide range of groups that ostensibly support annexation.

Ultimately, proxy parties amount to buying votes. The Assyrian community suffers from economic insecurity, political instability, and the threat of extremist violence; it is unethical to exploit these vulnerabilities by paying individuals to embrace and promote a particular policy. However, the KDP's leveraging of its superior financial resources to create a multiplicity of proxies has enabled its officials to successfully invoke a now-clichéd "lack of consensus" among Assyrians regarding the future of the Nineveh Plain.

This cliché features in a 2009 report on "The status of Christians in the Kurdistan Region in Iraq," produced by the KRG representation to the UK (then headed by Bayan Sami Abdul Rahman, now KRG representative to the U.S.):

The KRG supports the principle of an autonomous region for minority nationalities, where they form a majority in an area. ... However, the KRG has not and does not believe in imposing the idea on any group or nationality, who should decide for themselves by democratic means how they wish to be governed. On this question, there is no clear consensus among political parties and groups representing the Assyrians, Chaldeans, Syriacs and Armenians. In the Nineveh 2009 provincial elections, Christian parties that are in favour of the Nineveh plains being incorporated into the KRG-administered areas fared much better than those that oppose it. Of the three main blocks fighting for the reserved Christian seats, the pro-KRG Ishtar Patriotic List won 66% of the vote, and the anti-KRG Assyrian Democratic Movement won 28%.¹²

Not mentioned is the fact that only those financial beneficiaries of the KDP support absorption into the KRI. (Notice also that Assyrian

parties that oppose annexation are referred to as "anti-KRG," as though Assyrian parties are somehow opposed to the KRG as an entity in principle, when in fact it is particular political policies that are opposed, and those specifically originating with the KDP and not characterizing the KRG as a whole.) Moreover, the KRG's 2009 report deliberately omits mention of KDP interference in the 2009 provincial elections described later in this report.

DO THE PROXIES REFLECT THE POLITICAL SENTIMENTS OF SOME ASSYRIANS?

Even if it becomes clear to outside observers that KDP proxy parties are engineered to effect the appropriation of Nineveh by the KDP, the question might be posed as to whether this does, in fact, reflect the actual will of a segment of the Assyrian population. In response to this, it must be remembered that—unlike the organic Assyrian representation—the KDP proxies would not even be able to exist if it were not for the cash payouts that attract individuals to serve as leaders and key members of these entities. The "artificial" character of the proxies is therefore evident: KDP financial patronage remains indispensable for purchasing the loyalties of persons who then serve as figures standing for policies that are otherwise unpalatable to the vast majority of Assyrians. Parties organized around the policies held by the KDP proxies would never form organically within the Assyrian community. Apart from KDP monetary interventions, there has never been an instance where an Assyrian party formed that was based on a popular notion that Assyrian homelands should be subsumed by the Kurdistan Region. When government officials from the international community, human rights advocates, NGO personnel, or other engaged outsiders interact with Assyrian political figures and party members, one question should constantly be posed: "Do you or your organization receive any financial compensation from a political party?"

The issues presented in this section extend be-

yond the problems surrounding the Christian quotas, which is the real focus of this report. These other issues are part of the constellation of interrelated political difficulties facing the Assyrian community—these must also be understood and kept in mind.

Methodology

This report is based on interviews conducted by Assyrian Policy Institute researchers by phone and Skype from April 2018 to October 2018. The Assyrian Policy Institute interviewed 76 Assyrians in Iraq, including voters, candidates, officials, representatives of non-governmental organizations, and internally-displaced persons. Follow-up interviews were conducted with some of these individuals. Additionally, four phone interviews were conducted with Iraqi-Assyrian refugees in Amman, Jordan in June 2018.

All individuals interviewed were informed of the purpose of the interview, and verbally consented to the use of information provided in this report. Names and identifying information of many interviewees have been withheld in the interest of their personal safety.

It should be stated that the Assyrian Policy Institute contacted representatives of the Babylon Movement, the Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Popular Council, Bet Nahrain Democratic Party, and the Chaldean Coalition, but requests for interviews were either declined or not returned.

Part II: Results of the 2018 Iraqi Elections for Christian Representatives

2018 Christian Electoral Lists

In the 2018 Iraqi parliamentary elections, there were a total of 68 candidates who competed for the five seats allocated for Christians. Sixty-seven of the candidates were spread across seven lists, while one individual ran as an independent candidate, not affiliated with any list.

This is the highest number of lists to ever contest the elections for Christian representatives in Iraq. 30% of the officially registered lists across the country (Christian electoral lists accounted for 7 of the 23 in total) contested for 1.5% of the 329 seats available in the Iraqi Parliament. The strange ratio between the rela-

tively few number of total candidates and relatively high number of registered lists indicates a proliferation of heads with no bodies, since the Assyrian population in Iraq is in no position to sustain or indulge these lists politically with enough support warrant their existence. It should be stated that there were other Assyrian candidates which competed on majority lists outside of the quota system.

The following table contains basic information about each electoral list competing for Christian quota seats and highlights notable candidates. For more detailed information about each electoral list and a full candidate list, see pages 91-98.

Table 1. Electoral Lists Competing for Seats Reserved for Christians in 2018.

LIST 105—FIRAS GEORGIS AZEEZ GEORGIS	
Political Parties	Description
N/A	Dr. Firas Georgis is a Professor of Political Science at the University of Baghdad. He is loosely affiliated with the Assyrian General Conference. He contested the elections as an independent candidate.
Notable Candidates: Firas Georgis	

LIST 113—CHALDEAN SYRIAC ASSYRIAN POPULAR COUNCIL

Political Parties	Description
Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Popular Council (also known as Majlis Sha’bi)	Founded by the KDP in 2007, the party is fully funded by the KDP and is considered the party’s “Christian wing.” The Popular Council is understood to be affiliated with KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani.

Notable Candidates: Rehan Hana (winner), Raed Ishaq (incumbent), Khazwan Elias, Faraj Issa Yaqub

LIST 115—BETH NAHRAIN UNION

Political Parties	Description
Beth Nahrain Democratic Party (BNDP)	Founded in 1974, the party was part of the Democratic Alliance of Kurdistan, and remains a KDP affiliate. The group also has ties to the Dawronoye (a fringe Assyrian group aligned with Kurdish factions in Iraq and Syria). The BNDP is understood to be affiliated with KRG Security Chancellor Masrour Barzani.
Chaldo-Assyrian Communist Party (also known as Chaldo-Ashor)	The Chaldo-Assyrian Communist Party is an affiliate of the Communist Party of Kurdistan.

Notable Candidates: Joseph Sliwa (incumbent), Oshana Nissan

LIST 131—SYRIAC ASSEMBLY MOVEMENT

Political Parties	Description
Syriac Assembly Movement	Also known as the Syriac Gathering Movement, the party was founded in Bakhdida (Qaraqosh) as a Dawronoye affiliate and later started receiving funding from the KDP.

Notable Candidates: Nashat Mubarak

LIST 139—CHALDEAN COALITION

Political Parties	Description
Chaldean League	The sectarian organization was founded by the Chaldean Catholic Church in 2016. One of its stated goals is to “promote and develop the consciousness of the Chaldean Nationality (ethnicity).” The Chaldean Patriarch is understood to be the group’s leader.
Chaldean National Congress	Founded in the United States in 2002, the fringe group is a KDP affiliate, and is funded by the KDP via the Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Popular Council.
Chaldean Democratic Union Party	Founded after the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq with the help of the KDP, the party was a component of the Democratic Alliance of Kurdistan.

Notable Candidates: Hoshyar Yalda (winner)

LIST 144—AL-RAFEDAIN COALITION

Political Parties	Description
Assyrian Democratic Movement (also known as Zowaa)	Founded in 1979, the ADM is the largest and most prominent “Christian” political party in Iraq. The party is headquartered in Baghdad with offices in nearly every city/village inhabited by Assyrians across Iraq, including the KRI and the Nineveh Plain. The ADM is politically opposed to the KDP’s agenda of annexing the Nineveh Plain to the KRI.
Assyrian Patriotic Party	Founded 1973, the Assyrian Patriotic Party was previously allied with the KDP. There was a change in party leadership in 2011, and since that time, the party has declared itself in opposition to KDP policy.

Notable Candidates: Yonadam Kanna (incumbent), Ann Nafi Aussi (former Iraqi Minister of Construction and Housing 2016-2018), Imad Youkhanna (incumbent), Emmanuel Khoshaba (winner)

LIST 154—ABNAAL NAHRAIN

Political Parties	Description
Abnaa al-Nahrain (also known as Bnay Nahrain and the Sons of Mesopotamia)	A splinter group of the ADM, this independent political party was formed in 2013 after disagreements with ADM leadership. The group opposes KDP policy.

Notable Candidates: Mikhael Benjamin, Muna Yaku, Basil Gorgis Hanna

LIST 166—BABYLON

Political Parties	Description
Babylon Movement	The Babylon Movement is a fringe group with little ties to the Christian community. It is pro-Iran and affiliated with the Badr Organization. Its affiliated militia, the Babylon Brigades, was founded by the Iranian-controlled Kata'ib al-Imam Ali and is mainly comprised of Shia Arab soldiers.

Notable Candidates: Aswan Salem Sawa (winner), Burhanuddin Ishak (winner), Faiez Abed Jahwareh

Proportional Representation

Iraq's electoral system is based on Proportional Representation, which is defined as “the conscious translation of a party's share of the votes into a corresponding proportion of seats in the legislature.”¹³ The system is designed to promote inclusiveness given Iraq's ethnic and religious diversity, and to prevent large political blocs from monopolizing the legislature, and by extension, the executive branch. Proportional representation is more likely to result in a coalition government that ensures representation of all social groups.

Winning Lists and Seat Allocation

The distribution of Christian quota seats is based on a modified version of Sainte Laguë, a highest quotient method for allocating seats in party-list proportional representation used in many voting systems. The competing Christian lists are ranked based on the total number of votes received. Then, the total number of votes for each list is divided by set divisors: 1.7 first, followed by 3, 5, 7, and 9. The seats are allocated to the lists with the highest quotients.

Table 2 on page 25 depicts the results of the 2018 elections for Christian representatives to demonstrate how this mechanism works in practice.

As seen in Table 2, the electoral lists are ranked according to the total number of votes received,

and the five seats are distributed to the lists with the five highest calculated quotients. Based on the data presented in Table 2, the five seats were allocated as follows:

- 2 seats for the Babylon Movement (166)
- 1 seat for the Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Popular Council (113)
- 1 seat for Al-Rafedain Coalition (144)
- 1 seat for the Chaldean Coalition (139)

According to the official IHEC regulations¹⁴ regarding the distribution of Christian quota seats approved by the Board of Commissioners on March 22, 2018, the candidates of all winning Christian electoral lists are divided by governorate and arranged according to the total number of individual votes received, regardless of the total number of list votes. The reserved Christian seat for each governorate is then awarded to the candidate with the highest number of votes. Electoral lists that won multiple seats in the quota receive the seats for their highest-ranked candidates. In the event that the highest-ranked candidates of two or more winning electoral lists contended for the same governorate, the seat is awarded in accordance with Sainte Laguë, meaning the electoral list with the highest calculated quotient receives the seat for that governorate. However, if it's an electoral list's second candidate, its second-highest quotient is used, and so on.

Based on IHEC regulations, the manner in which the Christian seats should have been distributed is reflected in Table 3, however, the seats were distributed according to Table 4, both on page 25.

Table 2. Total Votes for 2018 Christian Electoral Lists (excludes cancelled expatriate votes).

LIST	NUMBER OF VOTES	DIVISOR					SEATS WON
		1.7	3	5	7	9	
166	33,172	19,513	11,057	6,634	4,739	3,686	2
113	20,197	11,880	6,732	4,039	2,885	2,244	1
144	19,422	11,424	6,474	3,884	2,775	2,158	1
139	16,101	9,471	5,367	3,220	2,300	1,789	1
115	10,689	6,288	3,563	2,138	1,527	1,188	0
154	10,666	6,274	3,555	2,133	1,524	1,185	0
105	6,014	3,538	2,005	1,203	859	668	0
131	4,321	2,542	1,440	864	617	480	0
Total	120,582	Total Number of Seats					5

Table 3. Christian Quota Seat Distribution in Accordance with IHEC Regulations.

CANDIDATE	INDIVIDUAL VOTES	ELECTORAL LIST	PROVINCE
Aswan Salem	19,955	Babylon Movement	Nineveh
Yonadam Kanna	6,079	Al-Rafedain Coalition	Baghdad
Rehan Hana	5,458	CSA Popular Council	Kirkuk
Hoshyar Yalda	5,152	Chaldean Coalition	Erbil
Baida Khidir	833	Babylon Movement	Dohuk

Table 4. Declared Winners of Christian Quota Seats in 2018 Iraqi Elections.

PROVINCE	DECLARED FOR	REPRESENTATIVE
Nineveh	Babylon	Aswan Salem
Baghdad	Babylon	Burhanuddin Ishak
Kirkuk	Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Popular Council	Rehan Hana
Dohuk	Al-Rafedain Coalition	Emmanuel Khoshaba
Erbil	Chaldean Coalition	Hoshyar Yalda

Table 5. Top Candidates for Al-Rafedain Coalition in 2018.

AL-RAFEDAIN CANDIDATE	PROVINCE	NUMBER OF VOTES	POLITICAL PARTY
Yonadam Kanna	Baghdad	6,079	Assyrian Democratic Movement
Anne Nafi Aussi	Nineveh	3,409	Independent
Imad Youkhanna	Kirkuk	2,675	Assyrian Democratic Movement
Emmanuel Khoshaba	Dohuk	917	Assyrian Patriotic Party

For reasons that are unclear, the IHEC did not adhere to its own official procedure concerning the distribution of seats. This diversion meant that the Babylon Movement was awarded the seats for the governorates of its top two candidates without regard for the Sainte Laguë method. As a result, Al-Rafedain Coalition was awarded the seat for Dohuk Governorate and is now represented in parliament by Emmanuel Khoshaba.

Table 5 ranks Al-Rafedain Coalition’s top four candidates based on the number of votes received.

Khoshaba received the single seat allocated for Al-Rafedain Coalition, despite the fact that he placed fourth among its candidates. Despite a formal appeal from Al-Rafedain Coalition concerning the distribution of seats, the IHEC upheld its decision. IHEC’s failure to implement this regulation draws into question its impartiality, as many have interpreted it to be a deliberate attempt to marginalize the ADM. The

head of Al-Rafedain Coalition, Yonadam Kanna, has filed an appeal with the Iraqi Parliament which is still unresolved.

Low Turnout Among Iraq’s Assyrians Contradicts IHEC Results

Table 6 on page 27 depicts the number of votes cast for seats reserved for Christians since the establishment of the minority quota system in 2010.

It is important to note that a segment of the Assyrian community chooses to vote in the general election, and their votes are not reflected in Table 6, as these numbers are specific to the votes cast in for reserved Christian seats. For example, many Assyrians support the Iraqi Communist Party and in the 2018 elections voted for the Sairoon coalition.

More importantly, it should be noted that it is impossible to determine an accurate number of Assyrian voters through the years due to the fact non-Assyrian voters have consistently manipulated the minority quota system. Compounding this more broadly, there has also been no official census conducted by the state for decades due to turbulent and persisting land disputes between the Iraqi Government and the KRG since both entities often prefer to define legitimate “ownership” through crude demographic superiority.



Newly-elected Christian MPs attend the first parliamentary session following the 2018 elections. From left to right: Hoshyar Yalda, Rehan Hana, Aswan Salem, Emmanuel Khoshaba, Burhanuddin Ishak.

Table 6. Total Number of Votes for Christian Quota in Federal Elections Since 2010.

YEAR	NUMBER OF VOTES CAST FOR CHRISTIAN QUOTA
2010	73,315
2014	105,109
2018	120,582*

*Excludes expatriate votes, as expatriate votes in the 2018 parliamentary elections were cancelled.

Since the 2014 Iraqi parliamentary elections, the number of Assyrians in Iraq is believed to have decreased by at least 150,000. Large numbers of Assyrians were externally displaced due to the ISIS assault on Mosul and the Nineveh Plain in 2014, including Assyrians in areas not directly attacked. Assyrians steadily continue to leave Baghdad due to heightened religious intolerance and discrimination. They are also leaving the Kurdistan Region of Iraq owing to harmful KRG policies and unique socio-economic factors that have had crushing effects on the already-marginalized group.

The significant decline in the number of Assyrian voters was consistent with the rest of the country, as the 2018 Iraqi parliamentary elections recorded a historically low voter turnout at 44.5%.¹⁵

Despite the massive decrease in Iraq’s Assyrian population and the cancellation of expatriate votes (explained on page 81), the number of votes cast in the 2018 Iraqi parliamentary elections for the Christian quota seats has increased since the previous parliamentary elections. Incongruously, however, many areas inhabited exclusively by Assyrians saw historically low voter turnouts. Based on data documenting voter turnout in areas inhabited exclusively by Assyrians, the API estimates that voter turnout among Assyrians was less than 30%. In some areas, including Ankawa (home to the largest population of Assyrians in the KRI) the turnout is estimated to be less than 20%—less than half the national average.

Almost miraculously, voting trends across Iraq indicate a decline in interest and turnout with

each new election cycle except in the case of a persecuted minority still reeling in the aftermath of ISIS. If the Christian population in Iraq is estimated to be 200,000, the official 2018 results published by IHEC suggest that the voter turnout for the quota seats among Christian voters was at least 55%.

The improbability of this upward trend is emphasized when considering the significant rise in the number of votes for Christian quota seats in areas where Assyrians constitute a clear minority, particularly in southern provinces and Kirkuk.

Table 7 on page 28 compares the number of votes in various governorates for Christian quota in 2018 to those cast for the quota in 2018.

In some cases, the voter turnout more than doubled. With the exception of Nineveh Governorate, the number of votes recorded in the provinces listed in Table 7 exceed the entire Assyrian population in the area. The 2018 results suggest a 60% turnout in the Nineveh Governorate which was devastated by ISIS and whose returning Assyrian population had resettled less than a year before the elections took place.

The mass displacement of Assyrians in 2014 contributed to a decline in the number of Assyrian voters, but the low turnout also reflects low morale among members of the community.

“Voter turnout among Assyrians here was very low,” said a resident of Alqosh. “Their spirits are broken, especially after what happened with IS. They have voted time and time again and nothing has changed. They didn’t think that their participation in these elections mattered.”¹⁶

Table 7. A Comparison of Votes for Christian Quota Seats per Province in 2010 and 2018

NAME OF GOVERNORATE	NUMBER OF VOTES IN 2010 Estimated population: 500,000	NUMBER OF VOTES IN 2018 Estimated population: >200,000
Babil	1,682	4,097
Kirkuk	3,528	13,307
Nineveh	23,020	30,046
Basra	2,752	5,458
Najaf	921	2,604
Qadisya	1,141	3,237
Thiqaar	1,420	2,760
Erbil	674	2,290

Areas with diverse populations showed an egregious discrepancy between the number of votes cast and the number of Assyrian inhabitants. For example, the number of Assyrians in Kirkuk is reported to be 4,612.¹⁷ This number includes Assyrians of all denominations, including members of Chaldean and Syriac churches. However, the total number of votes cast in Kirkuk for seats reserved for Christians was 13,307, which is 289% of the estimated total number of Assyrians residing in Kirkuk without factoring in younger, ineligible voters. The number of recorded votes for the Chaldean Coalition (139) alone exceeded the total number of Assyrians in Kirkuk, totaling 4,815 votes.

In Alqosh, a town inhabited exclusively by ethnic Assyrians who adhere to Chaldean Catholicism and with a population of approximately 5,900,¹⁸ a total of 1,665 votes were cast which suggests a voter turnout of 28%. This trend was consistent with other districts inhabited by an Assyrian majority. For example, the voter turnout in Ankawa, which represents the largest concentration of Assyrian in the KRI, was less than 20%.

The ratio between the number of Assyrian voters in certain areas and the number of votes cast in those same areas indicates major irregu-

larities. Moreover, there were tens of thousands of votes cast from southern provinces with dwindling numbers of Christians or no Christian population at all. The results from each of the five provinces will be examined in greater depth in later sections.

The surge in votes cast for Christian quota seat candidates in the 2018 May elections despite plummeting numbers and voter apathy undermines the results and renders the elected representatives illegitimate. Deliberate interference of the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Badr Organization in the elections for Christian representatives, which included the methodical mobilization of tens of thousands of non-Christian voters, means this election cannot possibly reflect the will of the Christian Assyrian community in Iraq.

Part III: Election Interference from the Kurdistan Democratic Party

The Kurdistan Democratic Party

The Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) is the dominant Kurdish faction in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and currently has the largest share of seats in the Kurdistan Regional Government. The KDP has been led by the Barzani family from its earliest years in the mid-1940s. The party claims that it exists to combine “democratic values and social justice to form a system whereby everyone in Kurdistan can live on an equal basis with great emphasis given to rights of individuals and freedom of expression.”¹⁹ However, the KDP has been described as tribal²⁰ and autocratic²¹—and as the ruling party in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, is guilty of extensive human rights violations against Assyrians and other marginalized groups.²²

Former KRG President Masoud Barzani continues to lead the KDP, while his nephew Nechirvan Barzani leads the KRG as Prime Minister and his son Masrour Barzani serves as the Chancellor of the KRG Security Council—the two are locked in an ongoing power struggle which has resulted in two internal factions within the KDP. Assyrian political parties affil-

iated with the KDP are also divided along these factional lines.

Historical KDP Interference in Elections for Assyrian Representatives

Kurdish authorities have for more than a decade practiced a strategy of offering incentives to minority communities in exchange for their support for the KRG’s efforts to annex the Nineveh Plain, while imposing restrictions and penalties on those who do not. The KDP buys the allegiances of Assyrian political and religious leaders through a patronage system that fosters political divisions within the community. This patronage system also has the effect of obfuscating and muddling the voices of the Assyrian majority, making advocates, NGOs, and Western government officials less able to identify a clear picture of the local dynamics harming the community.

Many Western officials do not fully understand the destructive character and far-reaching effects of the patronage system. The United

States in particular, though voicing “concern” about its commitment to promoting democracy and protecting the freedoms of minorities, often ends up playing the role of an enabler of harmful KDP policies.

For example, U.S. aid intended to reach minority communities has traditionally been channeled through the KRG and as a result, does not reach the intended recipients. Instead, it has been used to strengthen the KDP system of patronage which has had detrimental effects on the community. A congressionally-mandated report issued by the U.S. State Department in 2007 acknowledged that aid specifically earmarked for Assyrians in the Nineveh Plain was being distributed unevenly by the KRG Ministry of Finance,²³ but there was no change to U.S. policy with regard to aid distribution. Even when aid is distributed to the intended recipients, if KDP officials control that aid distribution, they will often do so in a politicized manner—either providing it solely or primarily to party loyalists within the target population, or making a political show upon distribution, telling recipients that “the KRG is responsible for this generous help being offered to you.”

In addition to the co-optation of community figures is the creation and funding of alternative civil society groups that favor Kurdish annexation of the Nineveh Plain. This aspect of the patronage strategy was documented in 2009 by Human Rights Watch (HRW):

The goal of these tactics is...for Christians to abide by the Kurdish government’s plan of securing a Kurdish victory in any referendum concerning the future of the disputed territories. Kurdish authorities have tried to win favor with the minority communities by spending millions of Iraqi dinars to build a pro-Kurdish system of patronage in minority communities, financing alternative civil society organizations to compete with, undermine, and challenge the authority of established

groups, many of which oppose Kurdish rule. The KRG also funds private militias created ostensibly to protect minority communities from outside violence, which in reality serve to entrench Kurdish influence. Finally, the Kurdish leadership has enriched the coffers of some minority religious leaders, and paid for expensive new places of worship in order to win over minority religious establishments. This policy exacerbated rifts within each community. Many have welcomed the cash influx—the disputed territories of Nineveh comprise one of Iraq’s poorest, most ignored, and most underdeveloped areas, lacking many basic services and job prospects; for many impoverished families in northern Iraq, Kurdish patronage is often the only support available to families.²⁴

KDP interference in the 2018 elections for Assyrian representatives will be explored in the following sections, however, it is not a new strategy, but rather one that has become increasingly more sophisticated.

Past election results must be viewed with some reservation due to the very real and persistent problem of KDP electoral fraud. Election results have consistently showed that Kurdish villages with no Assyrian population have voted in large numbers for seats reserved for Christians.

The KDP has consistently wielded its influence to infringe upon the voting rights of Assyrians. For example, the KDP prevented Assyrians in the Nineveh Plain from voting in the 2005 parliamentary elections. As documented in a series of reports, the KDP blocked the delivery of ballot boxes to six major Assyrian towns and villages, including Bakhdida (Qaraqosh)—the largest town in the Nineveh Plain—Karamlesh, Bartella, Bashiqa, and Behzan.²⁵ The man charged with facilitating their delivery was Khasro Goran (Deputy Governor of Nineveh from 2003 to 2009 and senior KDP official). The ballot boxes were deliberately held in Er-

bil and up to 100,000 Assyrian voters and tens of thousands of other minorities were denied their right to vote.²⁶

A Bakhdida (Qaraqosh) district council member named Louis Markus Yacoub had been assigned to pick up ballot boxes for the 2005 elections, but he was detained and beaten by KDP intelligence forces known as the *Asayish*. He spoke to a reporter about the incident in 2008:

“Yacoub says the Peshmerga told him outright that they had arrested him to prevent him from picking up the fresh ballots, because they knew they would lose the elections if the Christians were allowed to vote.”²⁷

At the same time, the KDP mobilized Kurdish voters to influence the results of the Christian quota:

In December 2005, during Iraq’s first parliamentary elections, Barzani’s Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) bused hundreds of Peshmerga fighters and party loyalists to Christian villages on Election Day, where complacent officials opened the polls and allowed them to vote...Dozens of local officials filed formal complaints of election fraud and ballot stuffing with the Mosul governor, the central government in Baghdad, the United Nations, and the U.S. embassy, but never received a reply.²⁸

Thousands of voters waited outside of polling places, and were told by voting authorities that the ballot boxes were en route, but they never arrived. Some towns and villages never received their ballots, or were allowed to vote only when it was already too late. Others received ballot boxes that were already full. Assyrians took to the streets of Bakhdida in protest.

Following an investigation, the IHEC acknowledged that voter fraud and intimidation had occurred, and acknowledged that voting facilities in the Nineveh Plain were inadequate.²⁹ Officials affiliated with the KDP who were stationed in Nineveh Governorate undermined the voting process through tampering and in-

Thousands of Assyrian residents denied ballots in the 2005 provincial elections took to the streets of Bakhdida (Qaraqosh) in protest.



terference. Assyrians were prevented from realizing their full electoral potential as a result.

IHEC’s findings did not change the outcome of the 2005 elections, and there was no action taken to prevent future injustices. The Assyrian Democratic Movement has continuously filed complaints with IHEC about electoral injustice and KDP intimidation tactics on numerous occasions over the years.

In the 2009 provincial elections, Assyrians in the Nineveh Plain were pressured to vote for the KDP-backed Ishtar Patriotic List. The list was comprised of Assyrians who were either members of the KDP or compliant toward KDP policy. In some cases, the KDP offered incentives in order to secure votes for the Ishtar Patriotic List, including promises of money and employment. In other cases, the KDP relied on threats. University students were told their school bus services would end. Ration cards were confiscated. Locals were told they would lose their jobs if they did not vote as directed. Following the election, multiple voters confirmed that they had been fired from their jobs after voting against the KDP.³⁰

These issues were communicated to U.S. officials on numerous occasions. The following excerpt is from a July 2009 WikiLeaks cable documenting meetings between the U.S. Embassy and two former Assyrian representatives:

[MP Yonadam] Kanna accused [the KDP] of engaging in electoral fraud to

win the seat reserved for Christians on the Baghdad Provincial Council in January 2009 and claimed that they were already engaging in voter intimidation in the Kurdistan region in order to influence the July 25 elections. Kanna argued that the [Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Popular Council] will probably win two-to-three seats if it is allowed to continue with its heavy-handed tactics. In a separate conversation, MP [Ablahad] Sawa also expressed concerns about the [Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Popular Council's] Ishtar list and said that [KRG] Finance Minister Aghajan was using his office to direct money to Christian communities, in particular to displaced communities, in order to buy their votes.³¹

Despite this awareness, U.S. officials opted to dismiss the manifestly illegitimate nature of parliamentarians elected due to electoral interference from the KDP, and have continued to legitimize them through rhetoric and collaboration.

KDP Interference in the 2018 Elections for Assyrian Representatives

There are a number of serious problems caused by the KDP's interference in the electoral process. The KDP's creation and support (financial and otherwise) of proxy parties to rival independent Assyrian parties that oppose prejudicial KDP policies, in conjunction with the KDP's mobilization of thousands of votes from Iraqi Kurdish citizens generates a broader electoral injustice. It destroys Assyrian decisional autonomy leaving them exposed for increasing political manipulation. Other harmful practices that directly impacted the outcome of the election include a lack of fair and equal access to the media, intimidation and arbitrary practices by KDP affiliated intelligence and security forces that restrict free speech, and the parti-

sanship of the Peshmerga and *Asayish* which have created an intimidating atmosphere for Assyrian voters in areas under KRG control. These factors prevented the elections from being genuine, free, or fair.

The May 2018 Iraqi elections took place in a context of rampant intimidation of Assyrians in parts of the KRI and Peshmerga-controlled territory in the Nineveh Plain. The evidence gathered by the Assyrian Policy Institute in preparation of this report paints a clear picture of deliberate and calculated KDP interference in the May 2018 Iraqi elections. The API received dozens of reports of intimidation and harassment against voters, electoral workers, and electoral monitors by KDP members and affiliates of KDP-backed Christian candidates. The following sections will describe patterns of manipulation and instances of intimidation and abuse that have undermined the political process.

KDP support for Christian candidates in the 2018 parliamentary elections was divided based on the competing factions within the party—those aligned with KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani supported the Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Popular Council (113), while those aligned with KRG Security Chancellor Masrour Barzani endorsed the Chaldean Coalition (139) and Beth Nahrain Union (115).

At the start of the election season, the KDP announced its support for three candidates: Rehan Hana (Kirkuk), Hoshyar Yalda (Erbil), and Oshana Nissan (Dohuk).

In a since-deleted Tweet posted on May 19, 2018, head of KDP Foreign Relations and Senior Assistant to Masoud Barzani, Hemin Hawrami wrote, "KDP as the only multi religious party in Kurdistan, mobilized the Christian members & succeeded in wining [sic] 2 out of 5 seats of Christian quota. In total KDP now has 28."³²

In his tweet, Hawrami asserts that the KDP won 28 seats, a number that includes the two seats won by the KDP-funded Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Popular Council and the Chaldean



Hemin Hawrami
@heminhawrami

KDP has 28 seats. Duhok 10, Erbil 8, Mosul 6, Suli 1, Baghdad 1. KDP as the only multi religious party in Kurdistan, mobilized the Christian members & succeeded in wining 2 out of 5 seats of Christian quota. In total KDP now has 28.

5/19/18, 3:27 AM

21 Retweets 78 Likes

Tweet by head of KDP Foreign Relations Hemin Hawrami on May 19, 2018. It was deleted shortly thereafter.

Coalition. The significance of this statement from Hawrami is that it represents an open recognition that the KDP and the proxy parties are one and the same.

This is similar to a statement made in 2014 by Khasro Goran, current head of the KRG Electoral Establishment and a senior member of the KDP’s leadership council,

following the announcement of the results of the Iraqi parliamentary elections. He was quoted in the Kurdish news outlet Xendan saying: “We [the KDP] were expecting 28 parliamentary seats, but what has been announced so far is 25 seats, however, we’ve won additional seats by our loyalists and allies, such as the seat for the Shabaks and two seats allocated to the Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Popular Council, who are our allies and fully agree with the policy and positions of the Kurdistan Democratic Party.”³³

A member of the Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Popular Council, a KDP-proxy political organization, spoke to the API on the condition of anonymity and shared that the KDP had anticipated securing four seats in the 2018 parliamentary elections from the Christian quota through its multiple proxies.³⁴ Based on the election results, this prediction would have been accurate if not for interference from the Badr Organization examined in Part IV.

MOBILIZING KURDISH VOTERS

Since 2005, the KDP has consistently mobilized Kurdish voters to influence the elections for Christian Assyrian representatives at all levels of government. As previously indicated, Kurdish villages with no Assyrian population have consistently voted in large numbers for

seats reserved for Assyrians, and the May 2018 elections were no different.

The most glaring example of this harmful strategy in the 2018 federal elections can be gauged from the results recorded in Kirkuk, where the three KDP-backed electoral lists received a combined total of 10,731 votes from Kirkuk residents alone, a number that *exceeds the total population of Assyrians in the province*. As of January 2018, the total population of ethnic Assyrians of all denominations (including Chaldean Catholics, Syriac Catholics, Syriac Orthodox, and adherents to the Assyrian Church of the East and the Ancient Church of the East) is reported to be 4,612.³⁵ These statistics will be revisited in upcoming sections as they were critical to the KDP’s efforts to hijack seats reserved for Assyrians and led to the election of two KDP-backed candidates.

The number of votes for the Christian quota recorded in Kirkuk in 2018 is also belied when comparing the number of votes for reserved Christian quota in 2010 to those cast for the quota in 2018 as presented in Table 7 on page 28. In 2010, there was a total of 3,528 votes recorded in Kirkuk for candidates contesting for Christian quota seats. In 2018, there was a total of 13,307 votes recorded. This sharp increase in number of votes for Christian quota seat candidates irrespective of the demographic reality indicates a KDP strategy to secure representation in strategically important areas like Kirkuk by taking advantage of a disadvantaged group.

There are two main observable strategies the KDP employs in order to mobilize Kurdish voters to influence the elections for Christian representatives. The most effective is undoubtedly its exploitation of Peshmerga soldiers. The partisan nature of KRG security forces has enabled the KDP to maintain political power and secure significant victories in past elections through a controlled vote. Experts believe that without forced votes from security personnel, the major parties would sustain greater losses in parliament. Kurdish opposition parties have

campaigned against this practice for years with little success.

Kamal Chomani, a Kurdish journalist and fellow at the Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy, documented this strategy in an article published in September 2018:

The KDP and the PUK have a large number of members, militia forces, security forces members, and people on their payrolls, all of whom will be forced to vote for these parties. Moreover, the KDP and the PUK have a stronger media presence that can mobilize voters. Additionally, as in all other elections, the ruling parties can distribute cash to buy votes and use the government and military institutions to push people to vote for them.³⁶

KDP-backed Christian candidates Rehan Hana (Kirkuk), Hoshyar Yalda (Erbil), and Oshana Nissan (Dohuk) are believed to have received a significant number of votes from KRG security personnel. This claim will be substantiated in the upcoming sections.

Another strategy utilized by the KDP in its efforts to mobilize Kurdish voters to sway the outcome of the elections for Christian representatives is its effective use of the media. The KDP has long maintained a near monopoly on broadcast media in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, which results in an unfair advantage over opposition parties and limits access to information for Assyrian voters. Privately-owned stations, such as Rudaw, WAAR TV, K24, and Bas News, which are owned or controlled the ruling Barzani family³⁷ and the KDP,³⁸ consistently provided platforms to KDP-proxy parties and their political candidates while either criticizing or entirely ignoring oppositional parties. Examples of the KDP's use of media in this way in the 2018 campaign season are documented in forthcoming sections.

The following sections will examine KDP interference in the 2018 parliamentary elections in the provinces of Kirkuk, Erbil, Dohuk, and Nineveh.

Kirkuk Governorate

The Assyrian population in the province of Kirkuk has steadily declined since the time of the Baath Party, owing to their harmful Arabization policies, and it plummeted further following the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq. Currently, less than 5,000 ethnic Assyrians remain in the city.

KDP “BOYCOTTS” ELECTIONS IN KIRKUK, ENDORSES REHAN HANA

Following the restoration of federal authority in Kirkuk in October 2017 after three years of de facto KRG control of the province, the KDP announced a boycott of elections in Kirkuk, stating “they will not give legitimacy to Iraqi occupation of the area.”³⁹ However, some believe that the KDP recognized early on that Kurdish factionalism would have cost them their two seats in Kirkuk, given the significant Turkmen and Arab demographic and the growing popularity of Kurdish opposition parties following the failure of the independence referendum.

Instead of contesting the elections in Kirkuk directly, the KDP attempted to hold onto its seats through its proxies, and instructed its base to vote for its Christian wing, the Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Popular Council, or the Kurdistan Socialist Party. The KDP had a greater chance of success mobilizing a small number of voters to win a seat by proxy than contesting the elections fairly which would have required tens of thousands of votes.



The KDP endorsed a young Assyrian attorney from Zakho, Iraq named Rehan Hana Ayoub (commonly known as Rehan Hana), a candidate for the Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Popular Council (113), who was vying for the Christian quota seat for Kirkuk. Hana was publicly endorsed at KDP events and KDP-affiliated accounts on social media urged followers to vote for her.

An article published on *Baghdad Today* on May 5, 2018 stated:

A source in the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) said on Monday that the party had asked its supporters in Kirkuk to vote for a candidate of the Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Popular Council.

The source told *Baghdad Today* that the 'Kurdistan Democratic Party planned to allocate a large number of voters in Kirkuk to vote for candidate No. 9 on list 113, Rehan Hana Ayoub of the Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Popular Council list.'

He added that 'the candidate is originally from the Dohuk Province' noting that she 'belongs to the Kurdistan Democratic Party' although this is not publicized.⁴⁰

REHAN HANA IN KURDISH MEDIA

In the weeks leading up to the elections, Hana received widespread exposure on KDP-affiliated media outlets, namely Rudaw, where she was depicted as a candidate who would advance Kurdistan's interests. Part of Hana's campaign promise was the expulsion of the Iraqi Army from Kirkuk. She quickly became a sensationalized figure in Kurdish media. She was also seen at KDP political rallies and appeared on Facebook Live promoting the Kurdistan Democratic Party list.

In a May 3, 2018 interview on WAAR TV (believed to be affiliated with KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani), an interviewer said the following to Hana:

"We know that based on Christian votes alone, you may not win. Many Muslims

have also shown they are ready to give you their votes, especially on social media. We know you have said you are a candidate for all of Kurdistan."⁴¹

A song by a Kurdish singer encouraging Kurds to cast their votes for Rehan received consistent airtime on major KDP-affiliated media outlets, including Rudaw and K24. The lyrics to the song are provided below (translated from the Kurdish language):

*All people of Kurdistan
Go and take part in the elections
Say "yes" for Rehan
Say "yes" for Rehan
For the existence of our nation
And we will hold our heads high
throughout the world
Say, say, say "yes"
For Rehan, say "yes"*

Many Assyrians complained that this song, and others similar to it, were clearly tools aimed at earning Kurdish votes for the Assyrian candidate. Hana posted the song to her official Facebook page and wrote a message in the Kurdish language thanking *all* her supporters.⁴²

Hana was also sexualized by KDP-affiliated media. For example, a segment on WAAR TV focused exclusively on Hana's physical appearance. A number of men at the Erbil Citadel were stopped and asked questions about her looks. The segment included an interview with Hana herself, where she accepted the praise. Similarly, Rudaw featured clips of



Candidate Rehan Hana appears on WAAR TV on May 3, 2018.



A photo posted to Rehan Hana's official Facebook page on Election Day depicting the ballot and identification card of a Kurdish man who had voted for her.

ning to mobilize at least 4,000 Kurdish voters from Kirkuk to ensure that Hana would win the seat for the province.⁴⁵ The results indicate that this was achieved. The majority of her votes are believed to have come from KDP-affiliated security forces. The Peshmerga, and other forces like the *Asayish* and *Zerevani*, are highly-politicized forces and are known to be used by the ruling parties to secure and maintain political power.⁴⁶ This clientelistic system was described in a report published by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace:

As salaries are paid through partisan commanders rather than apolitical ministries, Peshmerga soldiers are directly connected to and controlled by the main political parties rather than by the state institutions...Asserting the government's authority over the Peshmerga, rather than that of the parties' Political Bureaus, is crucial but unlikely to be fully achieved so long as the Peshmerga groups continue to function as vehicles for political patronage by the KDP and the PUK.⁴⁷

videos pulled from social media where men celebrated Hana's appearance.

In an interview with API researchers, an Assyrian man native to Kirkuk said, "Most of her votes came from Kurds. This happens every election. Where else would she have gotten her support? All of the people who like and comment on her Facebook posts are Kurds. All of the posts are in Kurdish. She doesn't represent us. She didn't even care about our votes, because she knew she didn't need them."⁴³

On Election Day, Hana posted an image to her official Facebook account depicting the ballot of a Kurdish man who had voted for her. Many Assyrian voters found the brazen post to be an insult. "[That post] is Rehan telling us she doesn't care about our votes, because she has Kurdish votes," said a man from Ankawa.⁴⁴

"FOUR THOUSAND" VOTES FROM KRG SECURITY FORCES

An Assyrian representative from Ankawa interviewed in preparation of this report relayed that his associate, an officer in the *Asayish*, told him ahead of the elections that the KDP was plan-

CONDEMNATION FROM THE ASSYRIAN COMMUNITY

These reports and the observable KDP interference prompted public condemnations from Assyrian parties independent of the KDP. On May 8, 2018, Abnaa al-Nahrain (154) published a statement condemning these practices:

Recently, just a few days before the 2018 Iraqi parliamentary elections, some data and information indicate a clear interference in the Christian quota election from parties not-representative of our people, led by the Kurdistan Democratic Party who are directing non-Christian KDP supporters to vote for a particular candidate, specifically in the province of Kirkuk. [...]

We in Abnaa al-Nahrain condemn these practices and protest them because they

demonstrate the disregard for the legitimate national rights of our Chaldean/Assyrian people, by exploiting the quota system which allow non-Christians to vote for its candidates. The KDP's interference is an attempt to seize these seats and disenfranchise those represented by them.

Therefore, we call for an end to these methods that manipulate the free will of our people, and instead demand that we are treated as true partners, where our rights are respected and we are free to elect our own representatives, based on our own vision and independent choice, in order to preserve our relations and common interests.⁴⁸

The Mayor of Tel Keppe District Basim Bello, who was illegally removed from office by the KDP and subsequently replaced by KDP member Adel Kiryakoza,⁴⁹ said the KDP did little to conceal its interference in the 2018 elections for Christian representatives. “The KDP has been involved in our elections since they established the Majlis Sha’bi [the Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Popular Council],” he explained. “But they used to do a very good job of hiding it. When we tried telling the Americans that the KDP was interfering in our elections, we were told to show proof. This time around, they did it openly. We can prove it now, but it might be too late to matter.”⁵⁰

INCONVENIENT ABUSE

The above quote from Basim Bello provides an opportunity to briefly delve into an important segue: the fact that vulnerable minorities—less organized or capable than the powerful dominant parties—are made to bear the burden of proof regarding all such abuses. Western governments, in particular the U.S., are often the only actors who can hold entities like the KDP accountable and successfully pressure them to back off from enacting harmful political measures and violations of human rights. Too often, however, claims made by minorities are treated with suspicion and unwarranted skepticism.

Examples of this can be seen in diplomatic cables from 2009 published by WikiLeaks; the U.S. official who authored the cable recounted being entreated by Assyrian figures about widespread KDP tactics of voter intimidation and manipulation of Yazidis and Assyrians in elections. The response of the author of the cable, however, was to downplay the seriousness of the allegations, citing a lack of evidence.⁵¹ It is not clear what form of evidence Assyrians could realistically be expected to produce regarding these electoral manipulation schemes, but the reaction of such Western officials is not unusual. The approach of the KDP to minorities in the disputed territories is now an established pattern that should, at this point, be very clear to observers, though members of minority communities remain discouraged at the lack of awareness or understanding regarding the seriousness of the abuses. For those who still doubt the legacy of voter coercion and fraud in northern Iraq, this present report is full of evidence regarding manipulative tactics targeting Christian populations in 2018; hopefully this report will put the issue to rest once and for all.

KDP TAKES AIM AT FORMER ASSYRIAN MP IMAD YOUKHANNA

Many Assyrians believe that the KDP was specifically targeting then Assyrian representative for Kirkuk Imad Youkhanna. Youkhanna,



Candidate Rehan Hana appears on Rudaw TV on April 24, 2018.



Former Iraqi-Assyrian MP Imad Youkhanna (in office 2010-2018) and Candidate No. 5 on Al-Rafedain list.

a Kirkuk native and a consistent critic of KDP policies, was first elected to the Iraqi Parliament in 2010, and had served two consecutive terms. He has been publicly attacked on numerous occasions by KDP officials.

For example, in November 2017, Youkhanna appeared on al-Arabiya, where he drew attention to the KRG Peshmerga’s abandonment of the populations in the Nineveh Plain and Sinjar through their organized withdrawals ahead of ISIS incursions in 2014. Later that month, Kifah Mahmoud—Media Adviser to former KRG President Masoud Barzani⁵²—appeared on the same program and responded to Youkhanna’s remarks. During his interview, Mahmoud asserted that Youkhanna was lying and stated: “If not for the Peshmerga, Imad’s wife and daughters who live in Kirkuk would’ve been in the hands of ISIS, bought and sold as sex slaves.”⁵³

In an in-person interview with the API on April 22, 2018, Youkhanna stated that he was aware of the KDP’s plan to mobilize Kurdish voters to secure the seat for Kirkuk, and acknowledged that his chances for reelection were therefore slim. “We have exhausted all options [to prevent KDP interference]. The only thing we can do at this point is hope that our votes are enough,” he said.⁵⁴

Three Assyrians interviewed for this report indicated that Youkhanna was their preferred candidate, but expressed they were discour-

aged from voting for him given the immense KDP project to mobilize non-Christian voters to oppose his candidacy. Posters promoting his candidacy were frequently vandalized, whereas those for KDP-affiliated Christian candidates were left intact and even celebrated as seen in a video aired on Rudaw.

“I wanted to vote for Imad [Youkhanna],” said an Assyrian man living in Ankawa. “But I felt like my vote would be wasted, because he didn’t really stand a chance against the KDP. We all knew this.”⁵⁵

Former Iraqi-Assyrian MP Imad Youkhanna (in office 2010-2018).



As mentioned earlier in the report, Youkhanna warned the IHEC of the impending electoral injustice in a letter dated January 4, 2018, through which he formally requested that elections for minority representatives be conducted separately from the general election, so as to prevent Arab and Kurdish communities from voting in the Christian quota and to protect the “privacy and independence of the quota.”⁵⁶

In an official response letter dated January 29, 2018, the IHEC declined Youkhanna’s request, stating that a special election for minorities was discriminatory.⁵⁷

Imad Youkhanna campaign posters vandalized in Ankawa, Erbil photographed on April 18, 2018.



“It was my greatest honor to serve my community as a Member of Parliament to the best of my abilities,” Youkhanna said after results were announced. “A great injustice has occurred here, but it’s one that has been happening for years. Regardless of the outcome, we are not discouraged. How many parliamentary seats did we have under Saddam? Our work will go on.”⁵⁸

ELECTION RESULTS IN KIRKUK GOVERNORATE

Hana was declared the winner for the seat in Kirkuk, unseating incumbent Imad Youkhanna. In this way, the KDP succeeded in retaining one of its two Kirkuk-based seats via its oldest Assyrian proxy.

The Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Popular Council obtained a total of 3,779 votes from Kirkuk alone, a number consistent with early reports that the KDP planned to mobilize 4,000 voters for Hana. The total number of votes cast recorded in Kirkuk was 13,307, which is nearly *three times the estimated Assyrian population in the province*. The discrepancy between the number of votes cast from Kirkuk and the number of Christian Assyrian inhabitants (of all religious denominations) is clear evidence that Kurdish voters influenced the elections for Christian representatives and stole the Christian seat for Kirkuk.

Erbil Governorate

Erbil, known to Assyrians as Arbela, is home to a significant number of Assyrians. The last re-

maining Christian Assyrian stronghold in Erbil is the city’s Ankawa suburb. Its population is estimated to be approximately 40,000. Roughly 80% of the town’s population is Assyrian, the majority being adherents of the Chaldean Catholic Church. Outside of Ankawa, there are another approximately 2,500 Assyrians spread across the districts of Shaqlawa, Soran, and Erbil city.⁵⁹

HOSHYAR YALDA ENDORSED BY KDP

The KDP-backed candidate in Erbil was Hoshiyar Yalda, the principal at a KRG school in Ankawa. He is a member of the KDP but ran as part of the Chaldean Coalition (139). He is also a member of the Chaldean League.⁶⁰

Assyrian KDP member Ano Abdoka (closer to Masrour Barzani’s faction of the KDP) serves as the head of the KDP committee in Ankawa and endorsed Hoshiyar Yalda. Abdoka openly campaigned with Yalda in the weeks leading up to the elections—the two made public appearances together and Abdoka also took to social media to urge voters to cast their votes for Yalda.



Table 8. 2018 Results for Christian Quota in Kirkuk Governorate.

NAME OF CANDIDATE	LIST	TOTAL VOTES
Rehan Hanna Ayoub	CSA Popular Council	5,458
Imad Youkhanna	Al-Rafedain	2,675
Karolin Makradej Hakoob	Babylon	640
Karolin Adwar Mikho	CSA Popular Council	473
Basem Habeeb Estivo	Al-Rafedain	437

Assyrian KDP member Ano Abdoka (center) at a KDP rally in Erbil on September 25, 2018.



Abdoka is also the head of Shlama, a political entity created and supported by the KDP. Shlama introduced a list to contest the 2013 Iraqi Kurdistan Parliament elections for Assyrian representatives but failed to win any seats. The 2013 Shlama list also included KDP member Lara Yousif, who lost the election but returned to the public eye in 2017 when she was illegally installed as the mayor of Alqosh in the Nineveh Plain (an area outside of KRG jurisdiction) by the KDP—without an election—even though Alqosh had a currently-serving democratically elected mayor.⁶¹ Shlama also unsuccessfully contested the 2014 Iraqi parliamentary elections. The Shlama list organized and branded itself as the National Unity Alliance for the 2018 Iraqi Kurdistan parliamentary elections held in September. Abdoka was accused of fraud, and subsequently faced a lawsuit alleging he had forged the 500 required signatures on the nominating petition when submitting the list’s filing requirements.⁶² Abdoka won the case, but locals remain unconvinced by the impartiality of the judicial court’s ruling.

KDP THREATENS VOTERS WITH UNEMPLOYMENT

Assyrians in Erbil, specifically those in Ankawa, were pressured to vote for Yalda and the Chaldean Coalition, including those not affiliated with the Chaldean Catholic Church. Several individuals interviewed by the API reported that they were forced to provide proof that they had

voted for Yalda by taking a photo of their ballot with their voter identification card visible in the picture—a practice rendered illegal by the Iraqi Government. They were required to send their photos immediately after voting to their employers and/or to select KDP members in Ankawa. Those who did not comply were told they would lose their jobs.

An Assyrian man from Ankawa who is employed by a KDP member explained, “We had to send the photos by text message right after voting. They didn’t want us to have the chance to get home and Photoshop the picture.”⁶³

Threatening unemployment is a longtime KDP tactic that has been used against Assyrians in past elections. For example, after the 2009 provincial elections, many Assyrians who had voted against the KDP-backed Christian slate reported they had been fired from their jobs.⁶⁴ Testimonies included Sabri Lisha Shaya, a resident of Tesqopa (Teleskof), who was employed by the KDP-funded Council for Christian Affairs for eighteen months. Prior to the election, he was told by two local officials to vote in favor of the KDP-backed slate, and to ensure his family voted the same way. Instead, Shaya chose to vote for the Assyrian Democratic Movement (ADM), and consequently lost his job.

Shaya stated, “When I went back to stand guard on Monday, two days after the elections, I was told by other guards that I had been fired from my job. I went to the office and asked...about the reason

Hoshyar Yalda (far right) with head of the KDP committee in Ankawa, Ano Abdoka (third from right), at the Chaldean National Congress office in Ankawa on April 29, 2018.



for my dismissal. He replied, ‘Because you voted for the Al Rafedain slate.’ Because of my fear to lose my income, I denied it in the beginning, telling them I had voted for Ishtar, but [he] said to me ‘You are a liar and I know for sure you voted for Al Rafedain.’ I replied that I am a free man and we live in a democratic country and I am free to vote for the party I believe will be best for our people. He said to me, ‘Then let the Assyrian Democratic Movement give you a job and feed you. You can go and complain to whoever you want.’”⁶⁵

API researchers spoke with a Chaldean Catholic Assyrian living in Ankawa who is an inactive member of the *Zerevani* (KDP militia special forces) but continues to receive a salary from the KRG. He said it was made clear to him that his salary would be cut if he did not vote for a KDP-endorsed candidate. “I was told [by local KDP leaders] I could vote for Hoshyar Yalda or Oshana Nissan [a KDP-proxy candidate in Dohuk],” he said. “Those were our choices.”⁶⁶

A young student who is currently employed by a personal associate of Abdoka’s recounted to API that he was interested in attending an Abnaa al-Nahrain political rally held in Ankawa, but did not out of fear of losing his employment.

“Ano [Abdoka] has eyes everywhere. It is common knowledge that other KDP members would take note of who was attending different events and report to him. That’s how he earns his salary. I’m not in a position where I can afford to lose my job.”⁶⁷

This strategy is not exclusively used against Assyrians, but against all those living under KRG

rule. According to the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace:

The personalization of power rests on an extensive system of patronage that was built by the KDP and the PUK, based on government employment. Of a total Kurdish population of 4.5 million in Iraqi Kurdistan, 1 million reportedly work in some capacity for the KRG.⁶⁸

KDP TARGETS ASSYRIAN LAW PROFESSOR MUNA YAKU

Dr. Muna Yaku’s candidacy for Erbil Governorate was targeted by the KDP. She made her parliamentary bid as part of Abnaa al-Nahrain list (154). Yaku is a Professor of International Human Rights Law at Saladdin University in Erbil. She was chosen to serve on the KRG constitution drafting committee by the Assyrian parties that held the majority of seats in the KRG Parliament at the time—the Assyrian Democratic Movement and Abnaa al-Nahrain. The committee commenced its work on May 25, 2015, but Yaku courageously resigned in protest on August 11, 2015 after the committee continued to dismiss her input and objectives regarding the rights of Assyrians. Her high-profile protest inspired both the Yazidi and Turkmen representatives to also withdraw from the committee.⁷³

Yaku’s withdrawal contributed greatly to halting the constitution drafting process indefinitely. The head of the KRG constitution committee met with Yaku following her withdrawal and attempted to negotiate her return. Yaku refused unless he agreed to her terms in writ-



Hoshyar Yalda with the head of KDP Ankawa committee Ano Abdoka on March 22, 2018.



ing. The committee had been allotted a period of three months to complete the draft, but when the minority representatives withdrew, the committee was left no choice but to request an extension from the Iraqi Kurdistan Parliament.⁷⁴ However, the parliament was effectively shut down later that month when former KRG President Masoud Barzani exiled the Speaker (a member of Gorran, a Kurdish opposition party) after he called for Barzani to step down due to the expiration of his term as president.

Representatives of Abnaa al-Nahrain political party interviewed by the API said they were informed by individuals affiliated with the KDP that votes cast in Ankawa were tampered with by the KDP, and that the machines had been pre-programmed to reject votes for certain candidates.⁷⁵ Abnaa al-Nahrain indicated to API researchers that their poll numbers projected a much higher turnout for their candidate Dr. Muna Yaku, who reportedly received only 224 votes from Ankawa, her town of residence, despite the fact that she is a very popular local figure.

Similarly, Al-Rafedain Coalition sustained significant losses in Ankawa. In the 2014 parliamentary elections, the list received upwards of 1,000 votes from Ankawa alone. However, in 2018, less than 200 votes were recorded for Al-Rafedain in Ankawa. While some attribute the steep decline to voter disillusion, many find

the sharp drop improbable and believe the number of votes for Al-Rafedain Coalition and Abnaa al-Nahrain recorded in Ankawa in 2018 suggest that Assyrian parties opposed to KDP policies were targets of fraud.

In a July 2018 report entitled *The 2018 Iraqi Federal Elections: A Population in Transition?*, the London School of Economics and Political Science Middle East Centre reported irregularities and

tampering with votes in the KRI which would support claims that independent Assyrian parties were targeted:

Voters and parties alleged more large-scale fraud across the KRI. Multiple cases of irregularities suggest electronic vote tampering through the pre-programming of machines and flash drives, and tampering with the online transmission of data. Reports from collection centres and polling stations, including by members of the IHEC, allege that machines that counted ballots were pre-programmed to give particular parties more or less votes than had actually been cast. A report by IHEC member Saad Kakeyi found discrepancies between results that were transmitted and results reported on flash cards. A Kurdistan Institute for Elections report found that 80 percent of stations and observers were not allowed to watch how data was transferred with flash drives. Opened ballot boxes showed sustained discrepancies between manual counts and electronic tallies. Manual counts also revealed thousands of duplicate ballots. There are multiple centres and stations where candidates voted that have no record of any vote for them.⁷⁶

Yaku explained to the API that in the weeks leading up to the May 2018 elections, some of her KDP-affiliated colleagues at the University of Salahaddin warned her that the KDP had declared in official meetings their intent to prevent her election to parliament by any means necessary.

However, Yaku says she did not face any harassment from the KDP, unlike some of her running mates. “They [the KDP] know that if I was ever directly threatened, I would speak out,” she said.⁷⁷

An Assyrian member of the Chaldean Syrian Assyrian Popular Council, a KDP-proxy political party, affirmed that the KDP had given direct orders to its members to deter people from



Dr. Muna Yaku at a May 4, 2018 campaign event in Bakhdida (Qaraqosh).

voting for Yaku. “They told us to make it clear to voters that a vote for Dr. Muna would essentially be a waste, because there was ‘no way’ she would be elected to the parliament,” he said, speaking on the condition of anonymity.⁷⁸

A number of Ankawa residents interviewed by the API in preparation for this report affirmed they had heard such rumors regarding Yaku’s candidacy. Some claimed it deterred them from participating in the elections altogether.

A Chaldean Catholic Assyrian who resides in Ankawa said he received a phone call from an Assyrian KDP member a day before the elections reminding him to vote for Hoshyar Yalda. He told the caller he would be voting for Dr. Muna Yaku and said the man responded saying, “There is no way we [the KDP] will let her be elected.”⁷⁹

“The KDP is trying to crush us. They are literally handpicking our representatives,” said an Assyrian woman from Ankawa. “They will humiliate someone like Dr. Muna, who fights for our rights, and put someone like Rehan [Hana], who represents their interests—not ours—in her place. They have the power to put Dr. Muna down and give Rehan a platform. In the end, the message we are given [from the KDP] is that we can either accept or leave. Either way, they win.”⁸⁰

ELECTION RESULTS IN ERBIL GOVERNORATE

Hoshyar Yalda was announced as the winner of the Christian seat for Erbil, replacing the Chaldo-Assyrian Communist Party’s Joseph Sliwa.

The bulk of the votes for the Chaldean Coalition are traced to Kirkuk residents. Kirkuk is home to 4,612 Assyrians of all denominations, including the Assyrian Church of the East, the Ancient Church of the East, the Syriac Orthodox Church, the Syriac Catholic Church, and the Chaldean Catholic Church. As mentioned earlier in this report, the Chaldean Coalition received a total of 4,815 votes from Kirkuk, a number that exceeds the total number of Assyrians living there, but received less than a thou-

sand votes from the city of Ankawa, which is home to upwards of 30,000 Chaldean Catholics.

The glaring discrepancy in the numbers demonstrates that the majority of these votes came from non-Assyrians. Due to the KDP’s observable support for the Chaldean Coalition alongside two other lists, it is appropriate to conclude that a significant percentage of the votes for the Chaldean Coalition came from Kurdish voters, rendering Hoshyar Yalda, the Chaldean Coalition’s winning candidate, an illegitimate representative.

BACKLASH FROM THE ASSYRIAN COMMUNITY

A number of Assyrians in Ankawa interviewed by the API said that the 2018 parliamentary elections have made them lose confidence in the political process and feel they have been effectively disenfranchised.

An Assyrian physician who is a member of the Chaldean Catholic Church, pointed to the election results which show that the Chaldean Coalition received 4,815 from residents of Kirkuk. “Who are the 5,000 people that voted for him [Hoshyar Yalda]?” he questioned. “We only have about 4,000 Christians total left in Kirkuk, and they are not all Chaldeans to support the Chaldean list. The results showed that there were more than 10,000 total votes out of Kirkuk for our quota. That’s more than twice the actual number of Christians we have in Kirkuk. The KDP clearly mobilized Kurds to vote in our election, and as a result, our voices are completely lost. If it wasn’t for Kurdish votes, Yalda wouldn’t have had a chance.”⁶⁹

Yalda, like Rehan Hana in Kirkuk, is also believed to have received the majority of his votes from Kurdish residents of Kirkuk. Initial results showed that Yalda’s list received nearly 5,000 votes from Kirkuk where only 4,612 Assyrians reside, yet less than a thousand from Ankawa, the largest Chaldean Catholic majority town with approximately 40,000 Christians.

Table 9. 2018 Results for Christian Quota in Erbil Governorate.

NAME OF CANDIDATE	LIST	TOTAL VOTES
Hoshyar Yalda	Chaldean Coalition	5,152
Hazem Yousif Gorgis	Beth Nahren Union	2,208
Muna Yaku	Abnaa al-Nahrain	1,101
Joseph Sliwa	Beth Nahren Union	809
Kawher Yohanna Awodish	Erbil	737

A Chaldean Catholic business owner living in Ankawa said, “Our city has always rejected KDP candidates, but Hoshyar [Yalda] campaigned as an independent so there was less resistance. But if he were a true independent, the KDP wouldn’t back him.”⁷⁰

Following his election to office, Yalda faced backlash as results indicated he had been voted in by the KDP. In response, he released an official statement on the Chaldean Coalition’s Facebook page, where he asserts that he is an independent: “I was invited to join the Chaldean Coalition’s list for the Baghdad parliament. I am an independent, I do not have any affiliations.”⁷¹

Many locals remain unconvinced. “If he was independent, he would’ve released this clarification immediately after the KDP endorsed him,” said an Assyrian man from Ankawa.⁷² Locals also expressed frustration over Chaldean Catholic Patriarch Louis Sako’s silence on the KDP’s endorsement of Yalda and the Chaldean Coalition, and felt he should have denounced the endorsement.

Despite Yalda’s position that the Chaldean Coalition is independent of the KDP, it joined the KDP’s “National Unity Alliance” for the September 30, 2018 KRG parliamentary elections.

Dohuk Governorate

Dohuk, known to Assyrians as Nohadra, is home to an estimated 30,000 Assyrians spread across the districts of Dohuk, Zakho, and Amedi, which includes the Sapna region. Many Assyrian villages in Dohuk have been abandoned over the years, while scores have been lost due to forced demographic change.⁸¹ Assyrians from Dohuk are steadily migrating out of Iraq due to various reasons, including crushing socio-economic factors, ongoing land theft, and repression of Assyrians.

KDP ENDORSES OSHANA NISSAN

The main KDP-backed candidate in Dohuk was Oshana Nissan, who ran as part of the Beth Nahrain Union list (115), which included the Beth Nahrain Democratic Party (BNDP), a small Assyrian political party with “little influence”⁸² based in Erbil and openly allied with the KDP, and the Chaldo-Assyrian Communist Party, the Assyrian branch of the Kurdistan Communist Party.

Nissan is a member of the BNDP. He is the brother of BNDP’s secretary general, Romeo Hakkari, and eyewitnesses report that he is sometimes seen with Fadhil Mirani, Secretary General of the Kurdistan Democratic Party Political Bureau.

In the months leading up to the September 2017 Kurdish referendum, Hakkari was publicly supportive of the proposed creation of a Kurdish state:



Hakkari also acknowledged the vital role of the President of the Kurdistan Region, Masoud Barzani, in promoting harmony and coexistence in the Kurdistan Region. Importantly, he stated that Christians have always supported Kurdish independence, and Christians believe they can only attain more rights if and when the Kurdistan Region becomes an independent state.⁸³

Hakkari was selected by the KRG to represent Assyrians as part of the “Kurdistani

referendum delegation” to Baghdad despite the fact that no member of his party held any elected office at the time.

The BNDP is aligned with Masrouf Barzani’s faction of the KDP. As indicated in the previous section, residents of Ankawa, Erbil were pressured by KDP members to vote for Nissan or Hoshiyar Yalda of the Chaldean Coalition (139).

According to locals, little is known about Nissan outside his KDP affiliation and articles occasionally posted to *Ankawa.com* (a popular Assyrian news website founded in 1999). Nissan is less visible in the media than his brother, however, he has made appearances at KDP events

where he has consistently offered praise for the Barzani family and the KDP. For example, after participating in an event celebrating the Barzani family in March 2017, Nissan posted the following message to his Facebook account:

During my participation in the special meeting entitled, ‘Barzani, the Symbol of Freedom and Co-Existence’

organized by the Directorate of Culture and Information of the Kurdistan Democratic Party on March 13, 2017, I gave a presentation entitled, “Assyrians/Christians in the Immortal Barzani Agenda” and highlighted the roots of Barzani’s positions, intellectual and human rights, towards our Assyrian/Christian people and the background of a culture of religious tolerance that has transcended the approach and aspirations of all the political parties in the Middle East, including the Kurdistan Democratic Party led by the immortal [Mustafa] Barzani himself.⁸⁴

The results indicate that the overwhelming majority of his votes, like those cast for Rehan Hana (Kirkuk) and Hoshiyar Yalda (Erbil), came from presumably Kurdish voters in Kirkuk and parts of Erbil with no Assyrian populations. Assyrian residents of Dohuk and Erbil Governorates reported patterns of voter intimidation tactics aimed at garnering support for Oshana Nissan similar to those described earlier in the section entitled “Erbil Governorate.”

Nissan also received widespread exposure on Kurdish media outlets, including K24, appearing on various programs in the weeks leading up to the elections. He was featured on Rudaw’s election-focused program “10 Pirsiyar” (“10 Questions”).

Although Nissan had the highest total number of votes of all Christian quota candidates vying for the seat for Dohuk, Beth Nahrain Union did not win a seat. The results will be examined on page 46.

Following the announcement of the initial election results, Nissan published an official statement to BNDP’s website where

Oshana Nissan speaking at Beth Nahrain Union campaign event on April 18, 2018 covered by K24 and KDP-funded Ishtar TV.



Oshana Nissan at KDP event entitled “Barzani, the Symbol of Freedom and Co-Existence” in March 2017.

he calls the Badr-backed Babylon Movement’s victory that gave the party two seats “an assault on democracy” and goes on to say:

The consequences of the disaster that took place a few days ago during the elections foreshadow a much greater and much more serious disaster in the coming elections, because the mere fact that the Babylon list won two of the five seats reserved for our Assyrian Chaldean Syriac people in the parliamentary elections means they are planning for the invasion of all our seats in the upcoming elections.⁸⁵

However, despite overwhelming evidence of successful KDP interference in Assyrian elections since 2005, in the same statement he asserts:

We must point out that Kurdish parties, left and right, never entered the battle for our quota seats or competed with our parties or political organizations as the Shia Arab militias have in this time, which is unfair to the lists of our people during the recent elections.

In light of this, we strongly urge the acceleration of the development of a special strategy or constitutional clause for elections to be held in the future to prevent this, beginning in 2022, because of the Shia list.⁸⁶

KDP ENDORSES KHAZWAN ELIAS

Nechrivan Barzani’s faction of the KDP supported the Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Popular

Council candidate for Dohuk, Khazwan Elias, an Alqosh native. Elias is also a member of the Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Popular Council’s executive committee.

The KDP primarily targeted residents of the Nineveh Plain to gain support for Elias. These tactics will be explored in the section entitled “Nineveh Governorate.”

ELECTION RESULTS IN DOHUK GOVERNORATE

Oshana Nissan received the highest number of votes of any Christian candidate in Dohuk Governorate, receiving 2,400 votes from presumably Kurdish voters in Kirkuk and parts of Erbil with no Assyrian population. However, in a diversion from IHEC regulations, the Christian seat for Dohuk Governorate was declared for Emmanuel Khoshaba, President of the Assyrian Patriotic Party, who ran as part of the Al-Rafedain Coalition (144). For more information see page 24.



Emmanuel Khoshaba, Candidate No. 2 on Al-Rafedain list.

Table 10. 2018 Results for Christian Quota in Dohuk Governorate.

NAME OF CANDIDATE	LIST	TOTAL VOTES
Oshana Nissan	Beth Nahrain Union	2,401
Khazwan Elias	CSA Popular Council	2,196
Mikhael Benjamin	Abnaa al-Nahrain	1,503
Firas Georgis	Firas Georgis Azeez Georgis	1,415
Emmanuel Khoshaba	Al-Rafedain	917

Nineveh Governorate

The Nineveh Governorate represents the most significant concentration of ethnic Assyrians in Iraq. Approximately 200,000 Assyrians were displaced following the 2014 ISIS invasion of Nineveh. While Assyrians have not returned to Mosul city in great numbers (according to the Ankawa-based NGO Shlama Foundation, only 64 total Assyrians remain today compared to 35,000 in 2014⁸⁷), upwards of 50,000 have returned to the Nineveh Plain.

The Nineveh Plain is a region in Iraq's Nineveh Governorate located northeast of the city of Mosul. It abuts the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, and is officially (though not entirely in practice) under the administration of the Central Government in Baghdad.

Prior to the advent of IS, the villages in the Nineveh Plain were inhabited by several ethnic and religious minority groups, the largest among them being the Assyrians. The Nineveh Plain is the only region in Iraq where the largest demographic group is Christian. The area is considered the ancient Assyrian heartland.

Following the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, security in the “disputed” Nineveh Plain was controlled by KDP Peshmerga forces until they abandoned their posts as ISIS approached in 2014. Since its liberation from the terrorist group, security is now divided between federal government forces and the KRG Peshmerga. The northern parts of the Nineveh Plain remain under Peshmerga control, while various militias and security forces operate in the southern

parts, including the Nineveh Plain Protection Units (NPU) which manages security in Bakhdi-da, Karamlesh, and Bartella. It should be noted that in areas under NPU control, the number of votes for parties independent of the KDP had significantly increased. For example, in Bakhdi-da—the largest Assyrian town in the Nineveh Plain—the number of votes for parties perceived and understood to be opposed to the KDP doubled when compared to votes cast in 2010.

KDP ENDORSES THREE CANDIDATES FROM NINEVEH

There were two KDP-backed candidates competing for the seat in Nineveh, including incumbent Raed Ishaq from Bartella and Faraj Issa Yaqub from Bakhdi-da (Qaraqosh). The KDP also pressured residents of the Nineveh Plain to vote for Khazwan Elias from Alqosh, who sought the seat for Dohuk. All three are members of KDP-proxy party the Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Popular Council (113). Elias is a member of the party's executive committee. Ishaq was first elected to the Iraqi Parliament in 2014.

In selecting its Nineveh-based candidates, the KDP exploited and promoted sectarianism among the Assyrian community. This practice is explored in depth on page 51.

DIRECT THREATS ON ASSYRIAN CANDIDATES

API researchers spoke to a popular Chaldean Catholic Assyrian candidate from the Nineveh Plain who ran as part of the Abnaa al-Nahrain list (154). The representative said an envelope with a bullet inside was left on his doorstep with no message in May 2018—in Iraq, this represents a direct threat on the recipient's life. This message served as a warning that his family should leave or they will be killed. The candidate asked that his name and location be withheld as he lives in a town under Peshmerga control. “I recognize that my candidacy was a threat to the KDP's aspirations in Nineveh.



Popular Council candidates Raed Ishaq (Candidate No. 1), Khazwan Elias (Candidate No. 2), Faraj Issa Yaqub (Candidate No. 3).

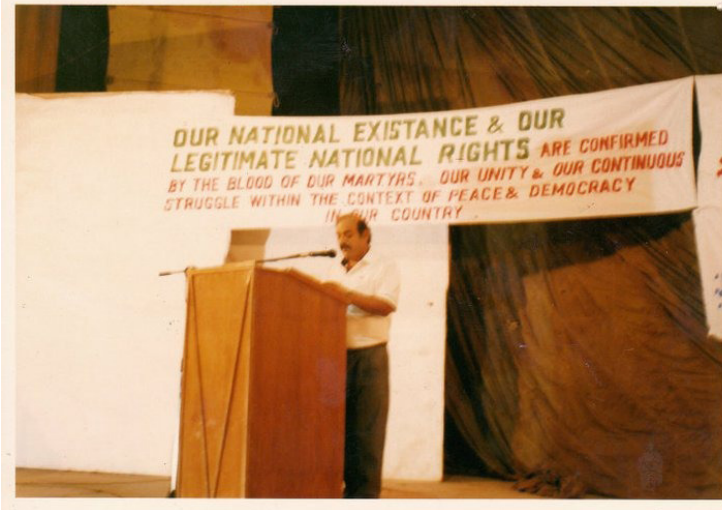
I risked my family's safety by contesting the elections," he told the API.⁸⁸

He subsequently received threatening phone calls from individuals who identified themselves as KDP members demanding that he withdraw from the election. He also said he was harassed by Peshmerga officers operating in the town on multiple occasions, particularly at checkpoints. He admitted that he considered withdrawing from the list, but was ultimately convinced by his colleagues that it was merely a scare tactic.

The KDP has a history of targeting independent Assyrian leaders who voice criticism of the KRG's policies towards Assyrians and other minoritized communities. In the 1992 elections in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, the Assyrian Democratic Movement secured four of the five seats allotted for Assyrian representatives. One of the elected representatives was Francis Shabo, a forceful advocate for Assyrian land rights who spoke openly about Kurdish encroachment on lands historically inhabited by Assyrians. Shabo was killed by high-ranking KDP member and known assassin Wahid Kovelî one year into his term in June 1993. Kovelî committed this assassination with impunity, remaining free until his death in 2017.⁸⁹ Kurdish authorities were unwilling to investigate or prosecute Kovelî which sent a powerful message to all Assyrian human rights activists and independent, legitimate politicians.

In 2005, Gevara Zia, also a member of the Assyrian Democratic Movement, was elected to serve in the Nineveh Provincial Council. However, he was unable to serve his full term due to his imprisonment on false charges of fraud brought about by his colleagues affiliated with the KDP. He was released nearly two years later after all charges were dismissed, but only after it was too late for him to submit his candidacy for the 2009 elections.⁹⁰

The late Assyrian MP Francis Shabo, assassinated by the KDP in 1993.



KDP CONTROLS VOTING BEHAVIOR OF ASSYRIAN SOLDIERS UNDER PESHMERGA COMMAND

The partisan nature of KRG security forces has enabled the KDP to maintain political power and secure significant victories in past elections. The KDP's leadership has consistently exercised its power to control the voting behavior of members of KRG security forces.⁹¹ This includes the *Heresat* (also known as the Nineveh Plain Guards Forces), a KRG-funded force comprised exclusively of ethnic Assyrians also referred to as the "Christian Peshmerga." At least 2,500 Assyrians are registered as part of the *Heresat*, and the force is linked to the Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Popular Council.⁹² A significant number of Assyrians also serve in the *Zerevani*, another sub-group of Peshmerga forces. These Christian forces (and their families) have been instructed by KDP leadership to direct votes to KDP-endorsed Christian candidates in past elections.

Assyrians of all denominations who are part of the *Heresat* and *Zerevani*, many of whom are residents of the Nineveh Plain, were instructed by their leadership to vote for one of the three Nineveh-based KDP-endorsed candidates affiliated with the Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Popular Council. Members of KRG-affiliated forces voted in a special election for armed forces held



Members of the *Heresat*, also known as the Nineveh Plain Guards Forces or the Christian Peshmerga, in March 2016.

on May 10, 2018 before Election Day, which locals say makes it easier for the KDP to monitor their votes.

An Assyrian from Alqosh who is a former member of the *Heresat* said to API researchers in an interview, “When they’re giving you your paycheck, they control who you vote for.”⁹³

Multiple residents from Alqosh confirmed reports that Assyrian KDP members went to the homes of *Heresat* soldiers in the days before the elections reminding them that their families were expected to vote for Khazwan Elias. An Assyrian member of the *Zerevani* said he was instructed to vote for Khazwan Elias, and was aware that other members, including non-Assyrians, received the same instructions.⁹⁴

“Last time [2014 elections], they [the KDP] told us we were to vote for the Shlama List, which had KDP members. Before that, it was the Ishtar List. This time, we were told to vote for *Majlis Sha’bi* [the Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Popular Council],” said a 38-year-old man in the *Heresat*.⁹⁵

HRW reported similar findings in a report entitled *On Vulnerable Ground* published in 2009:

In Qaraqosh [Bakhdida], Human Rights Watch spoke with members of an Assyrian militia financed by the KRG. They said that representatives from the Kurdish list told them they would lose their jobs and face eviction from their subsidized housing complex if they did not

vote for the Kurdish alliance. Kurdish officials also instructed them to inform other displaced Christians living in the area that they would also face eviction if they did not vote for the Kurdish list.⁹⁶

It is important to note that the Nineveh Plain Protection Units (NPU), which is politically championed and supported by the Assyrian Democratic Movement, did not vote in the special election.

HARASSMENT AT THE BALLOT BOX

Election observers accredited by the IHEC are allowed to observe voting and counting processes for the federal elections. An election observer affiliated with the Assyrian Democratic Movement said that three other observers were stationed at his polling place in Alqosh, including representatives of the KDP, the Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Popular Council, and the Chaldean League. He explained that the KDP representative recorded the names of every person who came to vote. “The KDP knows who is supposed to vote their way. If at the end of the day, the numbers don’t add up, they will have a good idea of who defied them, and they will harass them. People employed by KDP members might even lose their jobs,” he told API researchers.⁹⁷

The election observer told the API some voters felt pressured and compelled to expose their ballots to the KDP-affiliated observers before inserting them into the machine.

Election observers are not permitted to influence voters at the polling stations, but even where IHEC rules are enforced, the presence of the KDP is intimidating enough to prevent Assyrians from voting freely.

Table 11. 2018 Results for Christian Quota in Nineveh Governorate.

NAME OF CANDIDATE	LIST	TOTAL VOTES
Aswan Salem	Babylon	19,955
Raed Ishaq	CSA Popular Council	3,617
Anne Nafi Aussi	Al-Rafedain	3,409
Faraj Issa Yaqub	CSA Popular Council	3,172
Najib Sliwa Haido	Chaldean Coalition	2,637

ELECTION RESULTS IN NINEVEH GOVERNORATE

The seat for Nineveh was awarded to the Badr-backed Babylon Movement, which like the KDP, mobilized non-Christians to vote for Christian representatives. The Badr Organization’s interference in the elections for Christian representatives will be examined in Part IV.

The most notable issue with the reported results for votes towards the Christian quota in Nineveh is the implausible voter turnout. Less than 100 Assyrians remain in Mosul City, which means that the election results suggest that there was a 60% turnout among residents of the Nineveh Plain—who are still recovering from the ISIS onslaught and living largely in a state of poverty and destitution.

As presented in Table 7 on page 28, in 2010, when there were approximately 250,000 Christian Assyrians residing in Nineveh Governorate, there was a voter turnout of 23,020 recorded for the Christian quota. In 2018, the recorded number of votes for the Christian quota in Nineveh Governorate was reported to be 30,046—despite the fact that the population is now one fifth of what it was eight years ago. The surge in the number of supposed Christian voters in Nineveh is a flagrant example of the abuse of the minority quota system by non-Christians.

It is unlikely that Kurdish voters influenced the results in Nineveh Governorate due to the fact

that there has never been a large Kurdish population in Nineveh. While reports from previous elections documented the KRG bussing Peshmerga fighters to Assyrian villages in the Nineveh Plain to vote, there were no such incidents reported in 2018. Therefore, it can be safely assumed that the rise in the number of votes came from Shia voters mobilized by the Badr Organization.

While overshadowed by the Badr Organization’s interference, the results also suggest that the KDP’s interference significantly impacted the results. While the three KDP-backed, Nineveh-based candidates were unsuccessful, their votes were critical to the KDP’s efforts to secure seats reserved for Christians. The Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Popular Council received upwards of 40 percent of its votes from the Nineveh Governorate.

Despite significant pressure on residents of the Nineveh Plain to vote for the Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Popular Council, areas free of Peshmerga and Asayish control saw a significant rise in the number of votes for electoral lists opposed to KDP rule (Al-Rafedain Coalition and Abnaa al-Nahrain) when compared to previous elections.

KDP Patronage of Christian Religious Leaders

KRG authorities have strategically distributed vast amounts of material support to Christian religious leaders over the years in a bid to win the support of them and their followers. The KRG will financially incentivize clergy to support their political policies, particularly its long-term effort to annex the Nineveh Plain to the Kurdistan Region. The KRG has consistently funded lavish new places of worship and other church facilities, bypassing non-sectarian civil society organizations which are inclusive of all Assyrian religious denominations—locals recognize that this money comes with “strings attached.”

This practice has the effect of politicizing religious figures who should be serving the pastoral needs of the people. In 2009, a priest from Bakhdida told Human Rights Watch:

Before 2005 [Iraq’s first election year post-Saddam Hussein], no one cared about our communities or churches and then overnight we started to receive funding. The Kurds have a hidden agenda and are using money to co-opt Christians—it’s not because they want to help our people...I believe that anyone who disagrees with their agenda puts their life at risk.⁹⁸

Earlier in 2008, Ken Timmerman wrote for Newsmax:

In more than a half dozen locations I visited in the Nineveh Plain, Mr. Sarkis [Aghajan, then KRG Finance Minister] has built tenements to house Christian refugees – at least those who profess to support his political party, the KDP. But he is quick to cut the salaries of local officials and aid payments to refugees who express hostility to his political designs.

In a trademark program, he has financed the building of lavish new churches and Christian cemeteries throughout the region,

in an effort to win the support of church leaders for his political goal of integrating the Assyrian Christians into Kurdistan.⁹⁹

In the same piece, Jamal Dinha, then mayor of the Assyrian town of Bartela in the Nineveh Plain told Timmerman:

We have asked Sarkis to build schools, not churches [...] here in our town, Sarkis bought land for a cemetery. We say that he pays more attention to the dead than to the living.¹⁰⁰

This strategy has been used with all Assyrian churches, and as a result, church leadership would celebrate Assyrians affiliated with the KDP and even endorse KDP-affiliated candidates during election season. More troublingly, churches would attempt to discredit independent Assyrian parties like the ADM in meetings with Western officials, asserting that KDP-affiliated Assyrians were the legitimate representatives of the community.¹⁰¹

KRG Promoting Sectarianism Among Assyrians

In the first Iraqi Kurdistan Parliament (IKP) elections held in 1992 (formerly known as the Kurdistan National Assembly), there were five seats designated for Assyrians—four of which were won by the Assyrian Democratic Movement. No elections were then held for the next thirteen years until the 2005 elections, which coincided with the election of the Iraqi Interim Government and the election of governorate councils. In the 2005 IKP elections, the seats were reserved for “Assyrians/Chaldeans” and subsequently, since the 2009 elections, the seats are now reserved for the “Assyrian Chaldean Syriac people.” However, despite their official designation, KRG officials refer to them as the “Christian quota seats.”¹⁰²

The last decade has seen the formation of a new array of political and civil society organizations promoting separatist Chaldean and Syriac identities, all of which are supported by the KDP via rhetoric and actual material presence. Though multiple church denominations exist, Assyrians have long considered themselves a single people united by a common ethnicity. Ironically, those espousing a Chaldean ethnicity usually also believe that all those who identify as Assyrian, Chaldean, and Syriac comprise a single ethnicity; the disagreement therefore has more to do with the superficial question of the name, rather than any substantive matter of ethnicity itself, but this contention is abused in order to weaken the identity and solidarity of this people. The interference of the KDP is designed to exploit and exacerbate existing rifts to promote schisms dividing the Assyrian people to further their own national and territorial interests.

KRG intervention to promote the fracturing of a people and their identity by nurturing sectarian identities raises questions of cultural genocide. The KRG continues to engage in practices that deprive Assyrians of their identity by financially supporting the development and solidification of other identities rooted in religious denominational affiliation. Their policies deny Assyrians the chance to heal divides and reconcile, thereby recognizing their full political and social potential in Iraq as one component alongside Arabs and Kurds.

In the 2018 parliamentary elections, the KDP endorsed and supported the Chaldean Coalition and through their votes ensured one seat for the sectarian list. Moreover, they promoted sectarianism through the Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Popular Council, considered the Christian wing of the KDP. For example, in the Nineveh Plain, the KDP via the Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Popular Council selected candidates to appeal to members of each of the major churches represented in the region:

- Towns with a Chaldean Catholic majority (e.g. Alqosh) were pressured to vote for Khazwan Elias.

- Towns with a Syriac Catholic majority (e.g. Bakhdida) were pressured to vote for Faraj Issa Yaqub.
- Towns with a Syriac Orthodox (e.g. Bartella) majority were pressured to vote for Raed Ishaq.

Despite the fact that only one Christian candidate can win for Nineveh Governorate, the KDP imposed these three candidates on these communities, encouraging locals to vote for “one of their own.” This patronizing strategy suggests that Assyrians do not vote based on merit or qualifications, and instead encourages them to vote based on sectarian lines in order to maximize the total number of votes for the KDP list.

Of further note, sectarian Chaldean and Syriac Christian candidates have consistently failed to secure elected positions without KDP backing. In the 2009 Iraqi Kurdistan parliamentary elections, the United Chaldean List (comprised of the Chaldean Democratic Union Party and the Chaldean National Congress) failed to win any seats. In the 2010 Iraqi parliamentary elections, the Chaldean National Congress and the Chaldean Democratic Union Party contested the elections on separate electoral lists and again failed to win any seats. The May 2018 Iraqi parliamentary elections represented the first time a sectarian Syriac electoral list was formed to contest the elections, and it failed to win any seats.

Sectarian Chaldean and Syriac candidates seeking office have only been successful when contesting elections as part of a KDP bloc or KDP-backed coalition. For example, in the 2005 Iraqi parliamentary elections, Ablahad Sawa of the Chaldean Democratic Union Party secured a seat as part of the Kurdistan list. In the 2005 Iraqi Kurdistan parliamentary elections, the Chaldean Democratic Union Party and the Chaldean Cultural Society each secured one seat as part of the Democratic Patriotic Alliance of Kurdistan. In the 2009 Iraqi Provincial Council elections, the Syriac Assembly Movement secured a seat on the Nineveh Provincial Council as part of the KDP-backed Ishtar Pa-

triotic list organized by the Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Popular Council. Finally, as discussed in this report, candidate Hoshyar Yalda secured a seat in the May 2018 elections as part of the KDP-backed Chaldean Coalition.

Supporting sectarian candidates is part of the KDP's strategy to weaken the solidarity of the Assyrian people by providing formal platforms for divisive rhetoric. Incentivizing non-Kurdish individuals through money and status to promote KDP policies is a useful rhetorical device, both internally among the targeted community and externally to observers further afield. The output of these patronized individuals, through statements and interviews, is then amplified by party-political media organizations to aggrandize their relevance and influence – all minority communities in Iraq are affected by this phenomenon, including Yazidis, Shabaks, and Armenians.

Conclusion

The KDP clearly undermines Assyrians and other minoritized communities through a number of different strategies. These are implemented through a political system over which the KDP defines and asserts dominance over. This system has been shaped by the KDP in a manner which systematically marginalizes and oppresses groups that seek to remain independent of their patronage and resist their policies.

The KDP has deliberately sought to divide Assyrians in order to loosen inter-communal bonds of solidarity, quash collective political will, and ultimately, eliminate opposition to its policies. In pursuit of their interests, the party has interfered with the political and military organization of minority groups in order to maintain a system of dependency. This dependency is responsible for the disillusionment, lack of opportunities, and continual flight of Assyrians from their homeland.

The KRG refused calls for reform of the electoral system ahead of the September 30, 2018

Iraqi Kurdistan parliamentary elections, and—for the first time—rival Kurdish parties introduced their own proxies to compete for Christian quota seats. These parties serve propagandistic ends, using the Assyrian community as an arena for intra-Kurdish rivalry in the guise of legitimate representation. The staging of these rivalries within the communities of long-suffering and disadvantaged minorities compounds their misery and ramps up an already bleak demographic trend.

Part IV: Election Interference from the Badr Organization

The Badr Organization

The Badr Organization of Reconstruction and Development (Badr Organization), previously known as the Badr Brigade or the Badr Corps, is a pro-Iranian Iraqi political group led by Hadi al-Ameri. It was established by al-Ameri in 1983 as the armed wing of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI). The two separated after the SCIRI changed its name in an effort to disassociate itself from Iran, and the Badr Organization, looking to maintain relations, formed its own political wing. The Badr Organization is considered “Iran’s oldest proxy in Iraq” due to its close and abiding ties. Its name change occurred in 2003 in order to appear less militant, after the United States demanded it be disbanded following the U.S.-led invasion.¹⁰³

Following the split, al-Ameri became both the political and military leader of the Badr Organization. The Badr Organization has since become a serious political force in Iraq. According to a study by Stanford University:

“As a separate organization, the Badr Organization strives to obtain greater political influence, expand Shiite power in Iraq, and create an au-

tonomous Shiite province in southern Iraq. The group is a strong supporter of Iran’s Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei; the leader of the Badr Organization, [al-Ameri], described Khamenei as “the leader not only for Iranians, but for the Islamic nation.”¹⁰⁴

The Badr Organization was a key actor in the war against ISIS, fighting under the banner of the PMU, but it has also been accused of serious human rights abuses, particularly against Sunni Arabs.¹⁰⁵

The Badr Organization’s Interference in the 2018 Elections for Assyrian Representatives

While the Kurdistan Democratic Party’s interference in the Christian quota system stems back to the 2005 provincial elections, the 2018 parliamentary elections saw the Badr Organization manipulate the vote in their favor via the Babylon Movement (166).

In the last term, the Badr Organization held 22

seats in Iraq's parliament. The Badr Organization led the Fatah Alliance in the 2018 parliamentary elections, which also included various Shia Arab paramilitary groups affiliated with the Popular Mobilization Units (PMU). Al-Ameri was the head of the list.

The Fatah Alliance won 48 seats in the May 2018 elections. According to the Washington Institute, "Fatah's latest electoral gains include Harakat Babiliyoun (Babylon Movement), a Christian group formed by the Iranian-controlled Kataib al-Imam Ali; the party thus holds two out of the five seats allotted to Iraqi Christians."¹⁰⁶

Rayan al-Kildani alongside Badr Organization leader Hadi al-Ameri at an event in Baghdad in December 2015.



The Babylon Movement is a fringe group led by Rayan al-Kildani,¹⁰⁷ a self-described "Shia Christian" militiaman who resides in Baghdad with little ties to the Christian community. The Badr Organization has

officially vowed that "any violation to Babylon means a violation to Badr."¹⁰⁸

The Badr Organization won two of the five quota seats reserved for Christians via its proxy the Babylon Movement (166). Rayan al-Kildani's brother Aswan Salem was declared the winner for Nineveh, whereas a little-known candidate named Burhanuddin Ishak unseated longtime Assyrian MP Yonadam Kanna for Baghdad.

The evidence gathered by the Assyrian Policy Institute in preparation for this report indicates that the Badr Organization deliberately mobilized tens of thousands of Shia Arab voters to dwarf the votes cast by Assyrian voters for independent candidates and ensure a victory for the Babylon Movement. It also strongly sug-

gests the Babylon Movement engaged in misconduct and outright voter fraud.

The following sections will assess the Babylon Movement's relations to the Iraqi Christian community and examine their campaign conduct and strategy which was aimed at the Shia Arab demographic in Iraq.

Rayan al-Kildani

Rayan al-Kildani is not considered a legitimate representative of the community by Assyrians in Iraq, across all church denominations. Al-Kildani is a proponent of Chaldean separatism, but has been denounced by the Chaldean Catholic Church.¹⁰⁹

Al-Kildani's various affiliations and his ties to Iran are a source of deep concern for Assyrians in Iraq, as they fear the presence of his militia, the Babylon Brigades, gives the Iranian regime a presence in the Nineveh Plain. Al-Kildani has repeatedly made public appearances with Iraqi MP and head of the Badr Organization, Hadi Al-Ameri, who has been described as "the most powerful and pro-Iranian PMU leader."¹¹⁰ Al-Kildani has even accompanied PMU leadership in meetings with former Iraqi Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi.



Rayan al-Kildani, head of the Babylon Movement.

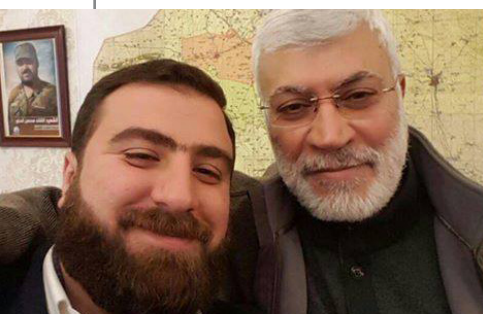
"Badr and Hashd [the PMU] treat Rayan [al-Kildani] as a prop," a man from Alqosh told the API. "He's an accessory. They take him on stage to give the impression that they're diverse. It's just for show."¹¹¹

Al-Kildani has also reportedly hosted senior Iranian military officer Qassem Soleimani in the Nineveh Plain and the two have been de-



Rayan al-Kildani accompanying Badr Organization leadership in meeting with former Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi in October 2015.

Guards responsible for their extraterritorial operations) commander and a special adviser to Qassem Soleimani.



Rayan al-Kildani with PMU Deputy Chairman Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis in January 2017.

Al-Kildani is also regularly photographed with Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, Deputy Chairman of the PMU with ties to the Iranian Quds Force, and Qais al-Khazali, who founded the Special Groups (cell-based Shia paramilitary organizations operating within Iraq, backed by Iran).¹¹³ Both men are designated as terrorists by the United States.¹¹⁴ Al-Kildani has frequently published posts praising al-Muhandis to his official Facebook page.

In August 2018, multiple news outlets reported that al-Kildani was a person of interest in a potential homicide case as an investigation was launched into the mysterious death of famed Iraqi plastic surgeon Dr. Rafeef Al-Yassiri on August 16, 2018.¹¹⁵

The Babylon Brigades

Al-Kildani is also the face of the affiliated Babylon Brigades, an overwhelmingly Shia Arab militia which is part of the PMU. Supported by the Iran-backed Badr Organization,¹¹⁶ the force includes only a handful of Christian soldiers,¹¹⁷ though it is presented as a Christian force and used to project diversity within the PMU.¹¹⁸

scribed as having a “close friendship.”¹¹² In April 2017, al-Kildani was received in Tehran by Iran’s Ambassador to Iraq Iraj Masjedi. Masjedi is also a senior Quds Force (a special forces unit of Iran’s Revolutionary

Guards responsible for their extraterritorial operations) commander and a special adviser to Qassem Soleimani.

Soldiers in the Babylon Brigades in November 2016.



According to the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, the militia was “formed by the Iranian-controlled Kaitab al-Imam Ali (Imam Ali Battalion).”¹¹⁹ Al-Kildani has been photographed with the militia’s infamous commander Abu Azrael (the “angel of death”).

At the start of the Battle of Mosul in 2016, a video of al-Kildani was released in which he tells his soldiers that the battle will be revenge against “the descendants of Yezid [a historical Sunni figure loathed by Shia].” In another video, al-Kildani says, “After Iraq is freed of Daesh pigs, the Babylon Brigades will break into two factions: One will go to Syria and the other to Yemen.”

Rayan al-Kildani photographed with Abu Azrael.



These statements demonstrate that al-Kildani’s motivations and interests are far from those expressed by the Christian Assyrian community in Iraq, whom he has no tangible relationship with.

The Babylon Brigades entered the Nineveh Plain at the end of its liberation, and are currently operating in the towns of Tel Keppe (Tal Kayf) and Batnaya, which have both yet to see the return of their Assyrian inhabitants due



to their presence—as opposed to the town of Bakhdida (Qaraqosh) which is secured by the Nineveh Plain Protection Units (NPU), where upwards of 25,000 Assyrians have returned, the highest return rate of any Nineveh Plain town.

Al-Kildani has openly voiced his desire to eliminate the NPU's presence in the Nineveh Plain, and has unsuccessfully sought support from residents and local church leaders.

On July 15, 2017, the Babylon Brigades attacked an NPU base in the town of Bakhdida, after the NPU had detained six Babylon Brigades soldiers caught stealing ancient artifacts from religious sites and looting homes in the area. Following the incident, the Babylon Brigades and allied Shia PMU-forces were expelled from the district.¹²⁰

The Babylon Movement Contesting the 2018 Elections

The Babylon Movement made its first parliamentary bid in the 2014 elections, though collectively its ten candidates earned only 6,672 votes and failed to win a seat. However, in 2018, al-Kildani's list led all Christian lists with upwards of 30,000 votes, despite the fact that very little is known about most of its candidates.

The Babylon list included ethnic Assyrians, including some who self-identify as Chaldeans, and ethnic Armenians. Al-Kildani was the public face of the campaign, though he was not a candidate. In certain instances, including at events and in campaign videos published online, al-Kildani was presented as a candidate—which violates IHEC rules and is grounds for disqualification.

Notable candidates on the Babylon list included al-Kildani's brother, Aswan Salem, who was the top candidate on the list and won the Christian seat for Nineveh Governorate and Burhanuddin Ishaq who was declared the winner for Baghdad Governorate. Salem was a soldier in the Babylon Brigades. Ishaq is a retired brigadier general who served in the Iraqi Air Force prior to the US-led invasion of Iraq.



Official campaign flyer with Aswan Salem (left), Candidate No. 1 on the Babylon list and his brother, Babylon Movement head Rayan al-Kildani.

In 2014, al-Kildani's brother unsuccessfully ran for the Christian seat for Baghdad Governorate as part of the Babylon list, receiving a total of 2,329 votes. However, in 2018, he ran for the seat for Nineveh Governorate and led all candidates with a reported total of 19,955 votes. This extreme increase is evidence that Salem received votes from non-Christians, as the only alternative would be that 40% of the Nineveh Plain's Christian residents voted for a man who never campaigned in their villages. Moreover, the number suggests that Salem as an individual received more votes than the ADM, the largest Christian Assyrian political party in Iraq, which is simply implausible.

A well-known Assyrian community leader from Alqosh told API researchers that Al-Kildani had attempted to bribe him in order to join his list, promising him a ministerial position following the elections, but he declined.¹²¹

Faiez Abed Jahwareh, the mayor of Alqosh who was deposed by the KDP-dominated Nineveh Provincial Council in July 2017, was also part of the Babylon list, though he is not a member of the organization. Jahwareh's removal from office and the KDP's subsequent installment of KDP member Lara Yousif as the town's mayor sparked outrage from the residents of Alqosh, who protested the decision and sought intervention from Baghdad.¹²² In the days following his dismissal, Jahwareh joined al-Kildani in Baghdad, where they advocated for his reinstatement as mayor of Alqosh.

Jahwareh's appeal was also supported by the Assyrian Democratic Movement, Abnaa al-Nahrain, the Assyrian Patriotic Party, and the Iraqi Communist Party, which has a strong presence in Alqosh. In March 2018, an Iraqi federal court ordered that Jahwareh be reinstated as mayor of Alqosh, but he has yet to return to office as the KRG maintains effective control of the town due to the Peshmerga presence despite the fact that it is federal territory.¹²³

Locals expressed disappointment over Jahwareh's decision to join the Babylon Movement's list. One Alqosh resident explained, "It's unfortunate that Faiez [Jahwareh] legitimized Rayan [al-Kildani] in this way. Rayan has no connection to this town outside of the fact that he was born here."¹²⁴

A member of the Assyrian Democratic Movement from Alqosh said to API representatives that he does not regret backing Jahwareh on the mayoral issue. "It was never about Faiez as an individual. It could have been anyone else, and we would have taken the same stand. I don't support the Babylon Movement, but Faiez is still the rightful mayor of our town."¹²⁵

A soldier from the Nineveh Plain Protection Units (NPU) who participated in the protests said he felt Jahwareh's candidacy on the Babylon Movement list was an insult to all NPU soldiers. "We stood with him and protested for him. Some of our soldiers were even threatened. We are sons of the Nineveh Plain, but he chose to side with a force of Shia Arabs."¹²⁶

Votes from Iranian-backed PMU Forces in Nineveh

The Babylon Movement led all lists in the Nineveh Governorate, receiving a reported 9,581 votes from local residents in the province. This is a significant rise when compared to the 2014 parliamentary elections, in which the Babylon Movement received only 6,672 *total* votes. The only plausible explanation for this drastic rise in the space of four years was the powerful backing of the Badr Organization and its close affiliation with the PMU, which resulted in the mobilization of tens of thousands of Muslim voters to influence the results of the quota.

Rayan al-Kildani escorting PMU Deputy Chairman Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis in the Nineveh Plain in October 2017.



The Babylon Brigades has upwards of 1,000 Shia Arab, Shabak, and Kaka'i soldiers registered as part of its militia. These soldiers, and their families by extension, were instructed to vote for the Babylon Movement.

However, the Badr Organization and PMU leadership are also believed to have mobilized additional PMU soldiers to vote for the Babylon Movement, particularly in Nineveh Governorate, where it received roughly a third of its total votes. The Badr Organization has significant control over the PMU operating across Iraq:

Some factions have more than one brigade within this [PMU] system: the most notable being the Iranian-aligned Badr Orga-

nization...Having numerous brigades of its own, Badr formally fills multiple slots in the Hashd ordinal system. Badr also set up other militias in the system that superficially appear to be independent.¹²⁷

The surge in the number of voters for the Christian quota in Nineveh Governorate was a flagrant example of the abuse and co-optation of the Christian quota system. As depicted in Table 7 on page 28 and explained again on page 50, the number of voters for Christian representatives has risen considerably since 2010, despite the fact that the Christian population in Nineveh has plummeted in the last eight years.

The discrepancy between the number of votes between 2010 and 2018 in Nineveh leaves no doubts concerning the Badr Organization's interference in the elections for Christian representatives, and is a clear indication that the 2018 election results cannot be considered a reflection of the will of the Assyrian people in Iraq.

A Campaign Targeting Shia Arab Voters

Rayan al-Kildani was not a candidate on the Babylon list, but he was indisputably the face of the campaign. He appeared on all campaign banners and was the main subject in most Babylon campaign videos. Assyrians interviewed by the API believe his campaign was not targeting Christian voters whatsoever, pointing to his extensive campaigning in southern provinces. Several noted that the overwhelming majority

of the tens of thousands of accounts engaged on his official Facebook page appear to belong to Muslim Arabs.

During the Iraqi campaign season, al-Kildani held rallies in southern parts of Iraq such as Najaf that were well-attended by

Muslim Arabs. Video coverage of his campaign events show large crowds of men and women in Islamic dress.¹²⁸ Individuals interviewed in preparation of this report said they were unaware of any campaign events held in areas with majority Christian populations. The API has confirmed that the Babylon Movement did not hold a single campaign event in al-Kildani's hometown Alqosh.

In the months leading up to the elections, al-Kildani was photographed praying at sites considered holy for Shia Muslims, which many Assyrians feel was an attempt to appeal to Shia Arab voters.

In addition to Babylon Movement campaign rallies, al-Kildani appeared at campaign events held by the Fatah Alliance, led by Badr Organization head Hadi al-Ameri, where he was publicly endorsed.

Further evidence that al-Kaldani's campaign was supported by Muslim Arabs is plentiful. For example, a photo posted online depicts Muslim women in Islamic dress at a restaurant in Basra holding pamphlets with al-Kaldani's face printed on them.

Al-Kildani hired popular pro-Iranian Christian Lebanese journalist Ghadi Francis to appear in campaign videos. Francis is a controversial figure due to her ties to Hezbollah, as well as appearances she's made wearing a hijab despite her Christian faith.¹²⁹ This is in addition to Ghadi being photographed praying at Shia Muslim religious sites and publicly singing songs in



Babylon Movement campaign rally held on May 6, 2018 in Najaf where Rayan al-Kildani delivered a speech.



Rayan al-Kildani photographed praying at a religious site considered holy for Shia Muslims.



Official Babylon Movement campaign poster featuring Rayan al-Kildani.

Iraqis at a restaurant in Basra posing with a Babylon Movement campaign pamphlet. To view the pamphlet, see Appendix 4.



praise of Shia religious figures. Al-Kildani and Ghadi appear together in a video published by Afaq TV, an Iraqi satellite television channel based in Baghdad, where they celebrate the birthday of Imam Ali who Shia Muslims recognize as the first imam.¹³⁰ The day is a public holiday in Iran. These actions were not designed to resonate with the Christian Assyrian community of Iraq, and as such, Babylon’s campaign priorities alienated Christians.

In a Babylon campaign video published on April 21, 2018, Ghadi appears before a massive portrait of al-Kildani and states:

“Rayan al-Kildani is the secretary general of the Babylon Movement. He’s leading an independent list, number 166—punch one. You can support him from all provinces. The people of the south love Rayan al-Kildani. They love him in the north. The people of Najaf love him, and Karbala, and Basra, and al Diwan-*iy*a, and Theqab, and Babel, and Muthanna, and Amara. Am I right? You love al-Kildani, and if you want a new option for the country, he doesn’t have any political background. You can vote for him from all provinces in Iraq. Wherever you are, punch number one. For those who ask can I vote for him from my province? Yes, you can, and so can everyone from all provinces. Vote 166, punch one.”¹³¹

The areas named by Ghadi in this particular campaign video do not have a sizeable Christian presence, yet the Babylon Movement was clearly targeting voters in these areas.

A subsequent campaign video showed Muslim Arab voters from various parts of Iraq, including the areas named above, pledging their votes for the Babylon Movement.¹³² For example, in the video, a man named Mohammed from Samawah stated he would be voting for the Babylon Movement. Another man also named Mohammed from Nasiriyah appears in the video and pledges his vote for the Babylon Movement. The video continues to show a number of Muslim Arab voters pledging their votes to the Babylon Movement. Both Samawah and Nasiriyah are Shia Arab-majority cities.

In the weeks leading up to the elections, al-Kildani appeared on a number of Arabic television programs. In an interview on Iraqi Media Network (Al Iraqiya) al-Kildani stated:

“Today, all of Iraq is with us [the Babylon Movement], Iraq loves me—Muslims love a Christian. This message will reach the whole world. People of Basra, Najaf, Amara—the people of Mosul. Thanks be to God, we have proven that there is no [foreign] country supporting us. Today, there were [Muslims] in Basra who volunteered to put up our banners, and our team has gone to Najaf and the holy



Screen capture of an official Babylon Movement campaign video released on May 1, 2018 in which a man named Mohammed from Nasiriyah pledges his vote to Babylon.

Karbala, and all provinces of Iraq—Mosul and Salahaddin. There are people putting up our posters and we don't know who they are. They print our photos from Facebook and hang them in the streets..."¹³³

The election results indicate that al-Kildani's campaigning in the south was successful, as the majority of votes for the Babylon Movement were cast in southern districts with small numbers of Christians or no recorded Christian populations. For example, there are an estimated 1,400 Assyrians of all church denominations in Basra, and yet 1,776 votes from Basra for the Babylon Movement alone.

The majority of provinces in the south recorded significantly higher numbers of votes for Christian candidates seeking election through the quota than previous elections. The impossible rise in the number of Christian voters between 2010 and 2018 in these areas is implausible considering the rapid decline in the Christian Assyrian population in Iraq.

In 2010, when the Christian Assyrian population in Iraq was perhaps half a million, the total number of recorded votes for Christian seats in Muthanna Governorate was 674. In 2018, when the total number of Christian Assyrians in Iraq is believed to be less than 200,000, there were 2,290 votes recorded in Muthanna. This pattern was exhibited in a number of other provinces (see Table 7), and the new votes cast disproportionately benefited the Babylon Movement.

Although other Assyrian candidates are believed to have received small numbers of votes from non-Christian citizens—namely Assyrian MP Yonadam Kanna from Al-Rafedain Coalition (144), retired Iraqi soccer star, coach Basil Georgis Hanna from Abnaa al-Nahrain list (154), and independent candidate Firas Georgis (105)—these votes did

not have a significant impact on the outcome of the elections and do not appear to be part of a systemic process of electoral interference.

ALLEGATIONS OF MISCONDUCT

The Babylon Movement offered monetary incentives to Assyrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon in exchange for their votes. API representatives spoke to four refugee families in Jordan by phone who affirmed they had either been offered money or had heard rumors of such practices. Refugees were asked to send a photo of their ballot to a designated Babylon Movement representative in exchange for \$50 USD.

"I know a family here [in Jordan] who accepted," said an Assyrian refugee living in Jordan who said he himself voted for Abnaa al-Nahrain. "Fifty dollars is a lot of money for refugee families struggling to survive."¹³⁴

The Babylon Movement also sought to buy votes from Assyrians in Iraq. A man from Karemlesh reported to API researchers that he was offered 60,000 Iraqi Dinars (approximately \$50 USD) by a member of the Babylon Movement to vote for the Babylon Movement electoral list.¹³⁵

In April 2018, a video surfaced online depicting members of the Babylon Movement offering money to Iraqi refugees by phone in exchange for votes.

Babylon Movement Unseats Longtime Assyrian MP in Baghdad

It is estimated that approximately 20,000 Assyrians remain in Baghdad today. The population of Assyrians in Baghdad has significantly declined since 2003 as a result of violence and persecution targeting Christians, which reached its peak in 2010 with the horrific attack on a Syriac Catholic Church that left 58 dead and more than 70 injured.

Iraqi Arabs in Karbala posing with a Babylon Movement campaign poster photographed on April 30, 2018.





highest votes of any candidate for Baghdad, and the second-most votes overall behind Aswan Salem of the Babylon Movement in Nineveh, who received the majority of his votes from non-Christians. However, the seat in Baghdad was declared for a largely unknown candidate named Burhanuddin Ishak.

IHEC results show 6,079 votes for Yonadam Kanna (excluding expatriate votes; in 2014, he received thousands of votes from expatriates), yet only 941 votes for Burhanuddin Ishak, the declared winner. Based on the official IHEC regulations concerning the distribution of quota seats discussed previously (see page 24), Al-Rafedain Coalition should have been awarded the seat for Baghdad, but instead received the seat for Dohuk.

Since the establishment of the Christian quota system in 2010, the seat for Baghdad was held by Assyrian MP Yonadam Kanna. Before the fall of Saddam Hussein, Kanna served in the Iraqi Kurdistan Parliament and subsequently served as the KRG Minister of Housing and Public Works (1992 to 1999) and later as the KRG Minister of Industry and Energy (1999 to 2001). He was the only Assyrian to serve on the Iraqi Governing Council from 2003-2004 and was first elected to the Iraqi Council of Representatives in 2005, prior to the establishment of the Christian quota system.

When the initial results were announced in May, Kanna filed an appeal with IHEC and was confident that the distribution of seats would be modified in accordance with the law. In a June 19, 2018 interview on SBS Assyrian he stated: “There was an error in the distribution of seats. We won one [seat]. According to Sainte Laguë, the seat for Baghdad is ours...In a meeting with IHEC officials...they themselves acknowledged this error, and said they would rectify it.”¹³⁶

He currently serves as Secretary General of the Assyrian Democratic Movement, the largest Christian Assyrian political party in Iraq.

However, when the “recount” results were announced in August 2018, there were no changes to the distribution of Christian quota seats and Kanna’s appeal was denied. Kanna says that the IHEC cannot be considered an independent institution, and he believes the May 2018 elections

Kanna contested the elections as the head of Al-Rafedain Coalition (144). He received the

Table 12. 2018 Results for Christian Quota in Baghdad Governorate.

NAME OF CANDIDATE	List	Total Votes
Yonadam Kanna	Al-Rafedain	6,079
Burhanuddin Ishak	Babylon	941
Basil Gorgis Hanna	Abnaa al-Nahrain	919
Hikmat Daoud Jaboo	Chaldean Coalition	893
Badri Mikhael Warda	Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Popular Council	626

demonstrate that some of Iraq’s most powerful political parties have significant influence over what should be a neutral body.¹³⁷ He has since filed an appeal with the Iraqi Parliament which is still unresolved.

Kanna has made numerous public statements accusing both the KDP and Fatah Alliance (which the Badr Organization led) of stealing quota seats reserved for minoritized communities and “confiscating the free will” of the Assyrian people. In an interview with API researchers, he stated, “Due to the observable fraud that occurred, the election results for the minority quota seats cannot be considered a legitimate representation of the will of the people. This didn’t happen only to our community, but this is the case with Shabaks, Turkmen, and Yazidis as well.”¹³⁸

Al-Kildani published an official statement on May 29, 2018 mocking Kanna following the announcement of the initial election results and addressing his assertions that the Badr Organization had interfered in the elections for Christian representatives. The statement read:

Statement in Response to the Losing MP Yonadam Kanna:

On what planet is the losing parliamentarian Yonadam Kanna living? On what basis does he make his accusations? [...]

Yesterday, we saw the MP who has served for more than ten years, a member of the former Iraqi Governing Council...the recent loser Yonadam Kanna on an American media channel say the quota was seized by the Fatah Alliance, claiming that the votes for the Babylon Movement came by way of the Fatah Alliance. Therefore, it is necessary to address the remarks made...With respect to Fatah and all coalitions of Iraq, the victory of the Babylon Movement is not owed to anyone other than the free voters of all Iraqi society. We have not been supported by any party... Proudly, the Babylon Movement deserves the credit for removing old faces and giv-



Yonadam Kanna campaigning in an Assyrian village in the Nineveh Plain on May 4, 2018.



Aswan Salem hosts a campaign event in Al-Rusafa District in Baghdad on May 4, 2018.

ing a new glimmer of hope to our people. We are an independent movement and we won the support of our people. If you used to be a follower of the major parties, that doesn’t mean that everyone who wins is a follower. The Babylon Movement changed the equation, you should congratulate us and accept the results.¹³⁹

Nominating a Christian Minister

Newly-elected Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi announced his nominees for the Iraqi Council of Ministers on October 24, 2018. Among them was the sister of Rayan al-Kildani,



Two Iraqi Arabs in Karbala posing with a Babylon Movement campaign poster, photographed on April 28, 2018.

35-year-old Asma Salem, who was nominated to serve as the Minister of Justice.¹⁴⁰

reengaging the Assyrian people in the electoral process and restoring public faith in the quota system will be a major challenge.

All nominees must be approved by a parliament vote. Assyrian politicians and representatives of NGOs expressed concerns over Salem's nomination, which they attribute

to the Badr Organization's political maneuvering, and questioned her qualifications. These concerns were more broadly inspired by a fear that her nomination would signal a nepotistic increase of power for al-Kildani, whose brother is now a member of parliament as part of his list and whose sister is awaiting confirmation to a ministry position.

Fourteen ministers were approved as of October 24, 2018. Parliament is expected to vote on the remaining eight ministers at a later date. Iraqi law mandates that one of the 22 ministry positions must be fulfilled by a Christian. However, it was subsequently announced that a Christian would be appointed to serve as Minister of Immigration instead.

Conclusion

The Badr Organization's interference in the 2018 elections for Christian representatives signals the further institutionalization of the proxy system. While KDP interference in Assyrian political affairs has persisted for more than a decade, this was the first time that multiple non-Assyrian entities successfully claimed seats reserved for Christians. This has resulted in a complete loss of confidence in the electoral process among Assyrians.

While the Iraqi Parliament finally passed an amendment to the electoral law in June 2018 (this development will be revisited in Part VII),

Part V: Church Interference in Elections and Sectarianism Among Assyrians

On the international stage, Assyrians are often visually and symbolically represented by members of religious clergy. Through this association, Western officials, including the United States, legitimize church leaders as political representatives. The conversion of churches into institutions of political power, party organization and competition has been particularly divisive for Assyrians in ways that extend far beyond the superficial dispute over a name (where alternative ethnic identifiers such as Chaldean, Syriac, etc. are promoted in conjunction with denominational affiliation among members of a single ethnicity).

Assyrian churches in Iraq have generally abstained from openly and formally endorsing any political party, but this does not mean that church leadership figures have been neutral in past elections. The 2018 Iraqi elections did however mark the first year that religious clergy were directly involved in the formation of an electoral list.

Despite the widespread fraud, the 2018 elections indicate that the vast majority of Assyrians rejected sectarianism and the increasing politicization of the church leadership. However, an uptick of increasingly divisive rhetoric

from all Christian sects, including incidents of hate speech at political rallies and on social media, has deepened social tension.

The following sections will examine the ways in which the various churches attempted to influence the elections for Christian representatives and will assess their impact.

Rejecting the Politicization of Church Leaders

Table 13 on page 61 depicts the five major, patriarchal Assyrian churches in Iraq.

Assyrians across Iraq have for years complained of interference by their own churches in political and governmental affairs, particularly those in the Nineveh Plain where the absence of proper order since the 2014 ISIS invasion has seen the expansion of the role of the church.

A resident of Alqosh told the API, “The [Chaldean] church has far too much power now. They’ve strayed from their clerical duties. They have essentially taken the role of a government structure without the consent of the people.”¹⁴¹

Table 13. Major Assyrian Churches Represented in Iraq.

NAME OF CHURCH	PATRIARCHATE	CURRENT PATRIARCH	DESCRIPTION
Assyrian Church of the East	Erbil, Iraq	Mar Gewargis Sliwa III	The Assyrian Church of the East is a continuation of the historical Church of the East formed in the first century. The term “Assyrian” was added in 1976.
Chaldean Catholic Church	Baghdad, Iraq	Mar Louis Sako	The Chaldean Catholic Church is Catholic offshoot of the [Assyrian] Church of the East formed in 1551.
Ancient Church of the East	Baghdad, Iraq	Mar Addai Giwargis II	The Ancient Church of the East emerged as the result of a schism within the [Assyrian] Church of the East in opposition to reforms introduced in 1964.
Syriac Orthodox Church	Damascus, Syria	Mor Ignatius Aphrem II	The Syriac Orthodox Church traces its origins to the early Christian community of Antioch.
Syriac Catholic Church	Beirut, Lebanon	Mor Ignatius Joseph Younan III	The Syriac Catholic Church is a Catholic offshoot of the Syriac Orthodox Church, formed after a schism in 1667.

A resident of Tesqopa shared a similar sentiment, “The church leaders do not represent us for the simple fact that they’re not elected. They don’t answer to us. If they’ve been bought by the KDP, it doesn’t matter what happens or what we say or what we want.”¹⁴²

Assyrians interviewed by the API also expressed strong feelings against the profiling of religious leaders as their political representatives. “It’s frustrating to watch bishops and priests speak on our behalf in Washington, D.C. or at the EU or anywhere else. Arabs and Kurds are not represented by imams in these settings, but we Assyrians are apparently stuck in the days of the Ottoman Empire,” said an Assyrian man from Ankawa. “It’s patronizing and suggests that we are not capable of selecting our own leaders based on how we wish to build our future. Americans aren’t led by their religious

leaders, so it’s strange that they would impose this practice on us.”¹⁴³

The API’s findings were consistent with a September 2017 report issued by the Middle East Research Institute which stated:

The Christian community appears to generally agree that the way forward in addressing the issue of rule of law, is to ward off the influence of the religious institutions and the political parties over governmental institutions. This whilst minimising the presence of the latter in Nineveh Plain...Divisions of Christians consider the religious leadership to be politicized, and have thus preferred to exclude them from future efforts of reconciliation. Changing current boundaries by introducing new administrative

units along ethnic lines appears to be favored by the Christian community as a means to address the weak rule of law. The assumption is that such a move will decrease the number of conflicting actors, as well as their clout on public institutions, leading to decreased disagreements.¹⁴⁴

The exploitation, lack of proper oversight and management, and abuse of the Christian quota system has fostered the development and growth of internal sectarianism among Assyrians by encouraging intra-Christian political competition—detrimental to an already fragile and disadvantaged community.

Politics in the Nineveh Plain Pre-ISIS

These disparate political movements and ideologies are a modern phenomenon. It is important to analyze the political situation in the Nineveh Plain prior to the ISIS invasion in 2014.

There were 22 political party offices active in eight of the major towns inhabited by Christians in the Nineveh Plain (Alqosh, Bakhdida, Bartella, Bashiqa, Karemlesh, Tel Keppe, Tesqopa, and Sheikhan). Of these, more than a third belonged to the Assyrian Democratic Movement (ADM), which had offices in the four majority Chaldean Catholic towns of Alqosh, Karemlesh, Tel Keppe, and Tesqopa, one in the majority Ancient Church of the East village of Sharafiyah, one in the majority Syriac Orthodox town of Bartella, another in the majority Syriac Catholic town of Bakhdida (Qaraqosh), and one in the mixed town of Sheikhan. The ADM also possessed an office and broadcasting station for their TV and radio stations in Bakhdida.¹⁴⁵

The Assyrian Patriotic Party and the Bet Nahrain Democratic Party each had an office in the majority Chaldean Catholic towns of Tel Keppe and Tesqopa respectively. The Chaldo-Assyrian Communist Party had two offices in the majority

Chaldean Catholic towns of Alqosh and Tesqopa.¹⁴⁶

Had the local Christian populations in these towns and villages been against the Assyrian identity, they would surely have driven the Assyrian political parties out and not allowed them to operate freely within them and gain members among them. This was obviously not the case.

In contrast, the Chaldean Democratic Union Party, which espouses the idea of a separate “Chaldean nation,” only had offices in two Chaldean Catholic majority towns—Tesqopa and Alqosh, and the Democratic Union Party, which similarly espouses the idea of a separate “Syriac nation” only ever had an office in the Syriac Catholic town of Bakhdida.¹⁴⁷

This observation is strengthened when one considers the representatives elected by the Iraqi Christian community. No members of Chaldean or Syriac sectarian parties have been voted into any of Iraq’s parliaments by Iraqi Christians in order to represent them. Prior to the establishment of the quota system, the Chaldean Democratic Union Party had a representative in the Iraqi Parliament, however, he had contested the federal elections as part of the Kurdistan list led by the KDP.

In a May 2018 interview with Assyria TV, then-candidate Emmanuel Khoshaba stated, “From the first elections held in 2005 until now, our people have never voted for those who divide us [based on church denominations]. They have only voted for unifying voices.”¹⁴⁸

This can be gauged from the 2014-2018 Christian representatives in the parliaments of Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan as presented in Table 14 and Table 15, respectively.

All four political parties elected in 2014 through the Christian quota system to the Iraqi Council of Representatives and Iraqi Kurdistan Parliament promoted the ethnic unity of these groups. The KDP did not contest ethnic unity through its main proxy, recognizing that sectarianism was unpopular and would fail to earn community support, as it proved in 2018.

Table 14. Christian Representatives in Iraqi Parliament from 2014-2018.

IRAQI COUNCIL OF REPRESENTATIVES			
REPRESENTATIVE	PROVINCE	CHURCH AFFILIATION	PARTY AFFILIATION
Yonadam Kanna	Baghdad	Assyrian Church of the East	Assyrian Democratic Movement
Imad Youkhanna	Kirkuk	Assyrian Church of the East	Assyrian Democratic Movement
Joseph Sliwa	Erbil	Chaldean Catholic Church	Chaldo-Assyrian Communist Party
Raed Ishaq	Nineveh	Syriac Orthodox Church	Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Popular Council
Louis Garo Mansour	Dohuk	Chaldean Catholic Church	Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Popular Council

Table 15. Assyrian Representatives in Iraqi Kurdistan Parliament from 2014-2018.

IRAQI KURDISTAN PARLIAMENT		
REPRESENTATIVE	CHURCH AFFILIATION	PARTY AFFILIATION
Yacoob G. Yaco	Assyrian Church of the East	Assyrian Democratic Movement
Lina Azarya	Assyrian Church of the East	Assyrian Democratic Movement
Srood Maqdasy	Chaldean Catholic Church	Abnaa al-Nahrain
Kamal Yalda Marqoz	Chaldean Catholic Church	Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Popular Council
Waheeda Yaku Hormuz	Chaldean Catholic Church	Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Popular Council

The Chaldean Catholic Church

The majority of ethnic Assyrians currently residing in Iraq adhere to the Chaldean Catholic Church. The Chaldean Catholic Church is a Catholic offshoot of the [Assyrian] Church of the East. In 1551, a segment of Assyrians, encouraged by Roman Catholic missionaries, split from the Church of the East and united with the Roman Catholic Church. The union was intermittent until 1830 but has continued uninterrupted since. The followers of the Chaldean Catholic Church are generally accepted to be indigenous ethnic Assyrians, although a mi-

nority of Chaldeans (particularly in the United States and Australia) have in recent times begun to espouse a new Chaldean ethnic identity defined entirely by their church affiliation.

Since the publication of an official statement by the Chaldean Catholic Church in October 2017 denouncing the church's ethnic Assyrian identity, Chaldean Catholic Patriarch Louis Sako has consistently called on his parishioners to "adhere to their Chaldean identity."¹⁴⁹

Sako's sectarian statements are in direct contrast with those of his predecessors, namely the late Chaldean Patriarch Raphael Bidawid (Patriarch from 1989-2003), who in a 2003 interview stated:

I personally think that these different names serve to add confusion. The original name of our church was the 'Church of the East'...When a portion of the Church of the East became Catholic, the name was 'Chaldean' based on the Magi kings who came from the land of the Chaldean, to Bethlehem. The name 'Chaldean' does not represent an ethnicity. We have to separate what is ethnicity and what is religion...I myself, my sect is Chaldean, but ethnically, I am Assyrian.¹⁵⁰

It was Sako himself that called for the reunification of the Church of the East in 2015,¹⁵¹ proposing a merger of the Chaldean Catholic Church, the Assyrian Church of the East, and the Ancient Church of the East. In an official statement published on June 23, 2015, Sako wrote: "I propose that we adopt a single denomination for the church: the Church of the East as it was for many centuries, and that we not maintain the factional denominations."¹⁵²

In a September 2018 interview with Rudaw, Sako put forward that Chaldeans, Syrians, and Assyrians are part of a single ethnic group:

If we take the Kurds as an example, there are Badini Kurds who speak Badini and Kurds in Sulaimani who speak Sorani and we have Faili Kurds, too. But they all together make up the Kurdish nation. Each one with its own specifications. Here with us it's the same. The Chaldeans have their own qualities and

the Assyrians and others the same. But in essence we're all one people and these identities have taken shape in the last 500-600 years...Doesn't matter what name we have or what identity, what's important is to be given our freedom and let us decide what

we want and what we do...You're a people with three names and we're the same way as one people and we've tried hard to unite but politicians don't let us.¹⁵³

According to this quote, Sako believes in the notion of unity among Assyrians of all denominations, but that belief is tested when political ambitions are not fulfilled. For example, in the same interview, he asserts that Chaldeans did not have any representation in the Iraqi Kurdistan Parliament, despite the fact at the time the statement was made, three of the five elected Christian representatives were members of the Chaldean Catholic Church.

Dr. Efrem Yildiz, a Chaldean Catholic Assyrian and Vice Chancellor at the historic University of Salamanca in Spain, recently wrote an open letter to the Patriarch, urging him to serve the spiritual needs of the community as opposed to exacerbating divisions.¹⁵⁴

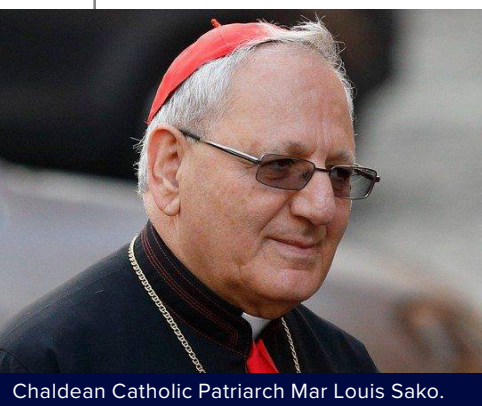
Creation of the Chaldean League

The Chaldean League is a new organization founded by the Chaldean Catholic Church after the advent of ISIS, though Sako first announced his intentions to establish the organization in February 2014. In an official statement, Sako called for the Chaldean League's formation.¹⁵⁵

Plans to create the Chaldean League were revisited in a February 2015 synod meeting of the Chaldean Catholic Church held in Baghdad. According to a news report:

The prelates, who called for unity and communion in the Chaldean Church at a critical time when a rebellious bishop and rebellious priests and monks have challenged the hierarchy, have agreed to continue plans to create a 'Chaldean League' and a 'patriarchal appeal court' to examine cases involving the Chaldean clergy.¹⁵⁶

According to the Chaldean League's website, the group held its first general conference in



Chaldea Catholic Patriarch Mar Louis Sako.

Ankawa, Erbil which commenced on September 25, 2016.¹⁵⁷ Despite initial reports that Sako's intentions were to "unite Catholic laity in a fragmented Iraqi society",¹⁵⁸ the Chaldean League excludes Syriac Catholics and one of its stated goals made public after this meeting is "promoting and developing the consciousness of the Chaldean Nationality (ethnicity)."¹⁵⁹

Although the Chaldean League elected a president and executive board at its inaugural conference in Ankawa, it is understood by Assyrians of all church denominations, including members of the Chaldean Catholic community, that Sako is the group's leader.

The establishment of the Chaldean League was met with strong opposition worldwide from members of the Chaldean Catholic community, as well as other Assyrians. Following the backlash, the Patriarchate released a statement meant to clarify his intentions:

It is essential to assure that the Chaldean Church is maintaining its independence, does not support or oppose parties and we are not intending to do so despite the rumors, which are far away from the truth.

It is correct that the Patriarchate criticizes the performance and subservience of some, but that doesn't mean that we want to be a political power or authority. Also, the Patriarch never sought to be either a national leader for Chaldeans or a Christian political figure. He has enough responsibilities and burdens, even though it is his duty as a father and shepherd to defend the oppressed, poor and displaced, following the example of Jesus Christ, particularly under such political, social and security circumstances that resulted from multiple conflicts as well as the emergence of ISIS and its impact on the region. [...]

The same thing applies to the Chaldean League that was criticized as if it is dividing the united Christians...The Chaldean

Delegates participating in the inaugural Chaldean League general conference held in Erbil in September 2016.



Patriarchate was the founder of the Chaldean League initiative on the condition that it won't be political or biased, and won't be coached by the Patriarchate.¹⁶⁰

There is currently no secular Chaldean leadership in Iraq independent of the Chaldean Catholic Church. Assyrians of all denominations feel the Chaldean League was established by the church to create the illusion of secular Chaldean leadership. The fact that an institution such as the Chaldean League did not begin at the grassroots level and was only founded in 2016 draws into question its legitimacy as a political actor.

There are vast examples of Chaldean Catholic Christians in leadership positions at various levels, however, these individuals self-identify as Assyrians. For example, former Iraqi Minister of Immigration and Refugees Pascale Esho Warda (2004-2005), former member of Iraqi Kurdistan Parliament Dr. Srood Maqdasy (2014-2018), and the current Mayor of Tel Keppe District Basim Bello are all Chaldean Catholics who identify as Assyrians and promote unity among Assyrians that transcends religious denomination.

Firas Georgis, Professor of Political Science at the University of Baghdad who contested the May 2018 elections as an independent Christian candidate, expressed his opposition to the creation of the Chaldean League in an inter-



Mayor of Tel Keppe District Basim Bello photographed in the Nineveh Plain post-liberation in late 2016. Bello is a Chaldean Catholic.

view with API researchers: “The formation of the Chaldean League will have negative consequences in the long term. It is creating division within our community. Instead of building unity to overcome the challenges we face as a people, we are further fragmenting our community. As an Assyrian from the Chaldean Catholic Church, I am strongly against this.”¹⁶¹

Despite contesting the 2018 Iraqi elections, the Chaldean League defines itself on its website as “a non-political and non-profit worldwide organization built on philanthropic, ethnic, social and national grounds.”¹⁶²

The Chaldean Coalition

The Chaldean League entered the 2018 Iraqi elections as part of the Chaldean Coalition, which also included the Chaldean National Congress and the Chaldean Democratic Union Party. Chaldean Catholic Patriarch Louis Sako caused serious controversy in the Assyrian community when he publicly endorsed the Chaldean Coalition ahead of the May elections.

Both the Chaldean National Congress and the Chaldean Democratic Union Party are affiliated with the KDP. In the 2005 parliamentary elections (prior to the implementation of the minority quota system), the latter se-

cured a seat in parliament as part of the Democratic Patriotic Alliance of Kurdistan headed by Masoud Barzani and Jalal Talabani.

The Chaldean Coalition was comprised of individuals of varying political ideologies, although the majority of its candidates were affiliated with the KDP, including the declared winner for Erbil Governorate, Hoshyar Yalda. Sources told the API that the Chaldean Patriarch is believed to have put forward six of the list’s ten candidates through the Chaldean League, while the Chaldean National Congress and the Chaldean Democratic Union Party each nominated two candidates for the list.

The lack of a unified position among the candidates on important issues reflects the list’s underlying purpose: promoting Chaldean sectarianism and entrenching the Chaldean Catholic Church’s position in political affairs.

CONTROVERSY OVER CHALDEAN CATHOLIC PATRIARCH’S INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICS

In the months leading up to the elections, Sako called on Assyrian politicians to “unify” under a “unified” Christian list, abandoning the widely-used and accepted “Chaldean Syriac Assyrian” label.¹⁶³ The move was incredibly unpopular among secular groups.

In an October 2017 interview with Al-Monitor, former Iraqi-Assyrian MP Joseph Sliwa, a Chaldean Catholic Assyrian from Ankawa, said he rejected the Patriarch’s calls to identify only as “Christians” and would continue to use a term that respects the community’s unifying ethnic identity.¹⁶⁴ Sliwa sought reelection in 2018 as part of the Beth Nahrain Union list (115).

“I am absolutely for separating religion from politics, including the clergy. The objectives of religion focus on moral and spiritual areas. Meanwhile, politics and its functions are different in terms of the administration of the state, and the clerics have nothing to do with it,” Sliwa said.¹⁶⁵

Dr. Muna Yaku, Professor of Law at the University of Salahaddin and the Assyrian representative on the KRG constitution committee, sought office as part of the Abnaa al-Nahrain list (154), and indirectly responded to Sako in an interview with Al-Monitor, where she said decisions regarding the political future of Iraq's Christians should be made by elected officials and secular leaders, not Christian clerics: "Would a cleric accept the head of a political party entering his church and initiating the Sunday Mass instead of him?"¹⁶⁶

"I want to understand who made clerics the official spokesmen for the Christian community," she subsequently wrote on her Facebook page.¹⁶⁷

In an interview leading up to the May 2018 elections, then-candidate Emmanuel Khosha-ba echoed similar sentiments:

"With respect to all clergy, religion should be kept far away from politics. Sectarianism is negative for all of Ir The Chaldean Coalition's alliance with the KD aq, whether Muslim or Christian. If I accept sectarianism as a Christian, then how can I be opposed to the involvement of Muslim clerics in my country's politics? If we truly want a democracy, we must separate religion from politics," he said.¹⁶⁸

Many viewed Sako's calls for unity as disingenuous, given his leading role in the establishment of the Chaldean League, a sectarian organization that only succeeded in creating further division within the Christian Assyrian community.

"[Sako] claims he wanted unity, but no one believes he was sincere. How can there be so-called unity among parties with contradicting principles? He was making plans for his Chaldean list the whole time, he just wanted to be able to say he tried achieving unity before making clear his sectarian intentions," said an Assyrian from Ankawa who is a member of the Chaldean Catholic Church.¹⁶⁹

On the occasion of the Assyrian New Year, observed each year on April 1, Sako released a

statement which endorsed the Chaldean Coalition list (139), writing:

I think that the upcoming elections are an opportunity to change the current policies and administrative procedures that are not compatible with the new reality, so I urge everyone to go to the polls and vote for the best.

Here I must pay tribute to the autonomy of the Chaldean Coalition and its program to achieve the state's citizenship and full citizenship in a national and humanitarian spirit.¹⁷⁰

Sako also endorsed the Chaldean Coalition in a subsequent interview.

In the weeks leading up to Iraq's official campaign season, Sako released multiple statements urging Chaldeans to "wake up"¹⁷¹ which many people interpreted as the Patriarch's attempt to mobilize his parishioners to vote for the sectarian Chaldean slate and say only fueled sectarian tensions among members of the community.

Despite early reports of Chaldean Catholic leaders urging parishioners in Iraq to support the Chaldean Coalition in the 2018 elections, most Chaldean Catholics interviewed for this report said they did not feel pressured by clergy to vote for the list. An Assyrian man from Ankawa who is a member of the Chaldean Church said he believes the church leadership felt the backlash immediately and that the community response deterred their efforts.¹⁷²

In May 2018, Sako released another statement where he claimed "the church does not directly intervene in politics," but went on to write:

As a shepherd and a father, I urge everyone, especially the Iraqi Chaldeans at home and abroad, to participate in the upcoming parliamentary election on the 12 of May 2018 and vote for those who are best suited to serve them and Iraq. [...] On the other hand, I advise the Chaldean activists to think careful-

ly about establishing a political party to be named as “Chaldean Union” (Huyada Kaldaya), which may include the parties on the scene, and attracts competent individuals at home and abroad, excluding opportunists and talkative people.¹⁷³

In this statement, Sako demonstrates his intent to consolidate all Chaldean actors into one unified Chaldean political party to bolster its chances of winning in future elections.

Dr. Firas Georgis, a Chaldean Catholic Assyrian, says he was approached by representatives of the Chaldean League about joining the Chaldean Coalition, but he declined. He told API representatives, “Our church leadership should be focused solely on matters that relate to the church. They should not involve themselves in political affairs. It’s actually in their interest to refrain from politics. They

have an important role to play for our people, especially in these times, but their place is not in the political arena. They should focus on helping our people heal and guide them in their Christian faith. That’s what our community needs from them.”¹⁷⁴

An Ostensible Success

Chaldean and Syriac sectarian movements espoused by KDP-backed fringe groups have historically been rejected. This is true even in Ankawa, a suburb in Erbil with approximately 40,000 Christians—most of whom adhere to the Chaldean Catholic Church. A clear example of this was reflected in the 2009 Iraqi Kurdistan election results in the city of Ankawa, where a combined slate called the “Unified Chaldean List” consisting of the two exclusive Chaldean parties—the Chaldean Democratic Union and

the Chaldean National Congress—garnered just over 200 votes in a city of tens of thousands of Chaldean Catholic Christians.¹⁷⁵

While the separatist Chaldean list failed to earn a seat in the Iraqi Kurdistan Parliament in 2009, the Chaldean Coalition was able to secure a single seat in the federal parliament in 2018. There was one major factor that contributed to an ostensibly successful outcome in the 2018 elections: direct support from the Kurdistan Democratic Party in the form of thousands of votes from Kurds. The election results clearly indicate that had it not been for the KDP’s involvement, the Chaldean Coalition would have performed poorly.

As discussed in earlier sections (see Part III: Erbil Governorate), the KDP’s support for the Chaldean Coalition was unmistakable. The coalition’s candidate for Erbil, Hoshyar Yalda, was formally endorsed by the KDP and campaigned with public figures affiliated with the KDP. The KDP successfully mobilized Kurdish voters in Kirkuk to support his candidacy.

The Chaldean Coalition’s alliance with the KDP was further evidenced by its decision to formally join forces with the KDP for the September 2018 KRG elections as part of the KDP-led National Unity Alliance electoral list.

The church’s open alignment with KDP policies disappointed members of the Chaldean Catholic community. During a town hall-style meeting held in Ankawa in August 2017, Chaldean Patriarch Louis Sako responded to a question from a parishioner regarding the KDP’s system of patronage and how it was affecting the community’s political parties by publicly acknowledging that the ADM [which by his definition included its splinter group Abnaa al-Nahrain] is the only party that is free of KDP patronage.¹⁷⁶

“The [Chaldean] church worked actively to garner support for the Chaldean Coalition both in Iraq and diaspora,” said a Chaldean Catholic Assyrian from Ankawa. “They were not as successful as they thought they would be. They

University of Baghdad Professor Firas Georgis who contested the 2018 elections as an independent candidate (list 105).



know Hoshyar [Yalda] wouldn't have been elected if not for Kurdish votes. The number simply do not allow anyone to say otherwise.”¹⁷⁷

The 2018 federal parliamentary election results demonstrate that efforts by the Chaldean Catholic Church and the affiliated Chaldean League ultimately failed to mobilize large numbers in areas with significant Chaldean Catholic communities. This fact is illustrated in Table 16.

The bulk of the votes for the Chaldean Coalition are traced to Kirkuk residents. Kirkuk is home to 4,612 Assyrians of all denominations, including the Assyrian Church of the East, the Ancient Church of the East, the Syriac Orthodox Church, the Syriac Catholic Church, and the Chaldean Catholic Church. As mentioned earlier in this report, the Chaldean Coalition received a total of 4,815 votes from Kirkuk, a number that exceeds the total number of Assyrians living there. The glaring discrepancy in the numbers demonstrates that the majority of these votes could not have come from self-identifying Chaldeans.

In Ankawa, a city of approximately 35,000 Chaldean Catholics, the Chaldean Coalition mustered only 825 votes. It is important to also factor in the KDP's intimidation tactics targeting residents of Ankawa aimed at garnering support for Yalda examined earlier in this report. The results from Chaldean Catholic majority areas indicate the community's rejection of sectarianism within the Assyrian community.

On September 24, 2018, Chaldean Catholic Patriarch Louis Sako chaired a meeting with four of the five Christian representatives elected through the quota system. MP Emmanuel Khoshaba (Al-Rafedain) was not in attendance. Sako congratulated the representatives on their victory in the May 2018 elections, thereby dignifying the manner in which they were elected and disregarding the legitimate grievances of the Christian community. In an official press release concerning the meeting, the Chaldean Catholic Patriarchate claimed that the “church does not politicize, nor is it partisan.”¹⁷⁸ Many Assyrians feel the Patriarch's actions downplay the seriousness of the electoral injustice that occurred.

September 2018 meeting chaired by Louis Sako with MPs Hana, Ishak, Sawa, and Yalda.



Table 16. Votes for the Chaldean Coalition in Assyrian Towns with Chaldean Catholic-Majority Population.

NAME OF TOWN	POPULATION	TOTAL NO. OF VOTERS	NO. OF VOTES FOR CHALDEAN COALITION
Alqosh (Nineveh)	5,900	1,665	127
Ankawa (Erbil)	40,000	5,500	825
Baqopa (Nineveh)	185	79	2
Karamlesh (Nineveh)	1,400	427	11
Tesqopa (Nineveh)	4,378	828	138

The Syriac Catholic Church

The Syriac Catholic Church is estimated to comprise roughly 20% of Iraq's Christian community, primarily concentrated in the Nineveh Plain. It is a Catholic offshoot of the Syriac Orthodox Church and traces its origins to 1667 after the election of a pro-Catholic patriarch caused a schism. Its adherents are generally accepted to be ethnic Assyrians, although there is a small sectarian movement within the church community espousing a separatist Syriac identity.

The Syriac Catholic Church endorsed the Syriac Assembly Movement list (131) following a series of meetings held in Bakhdida (Qaraqosh) that included clergy and local community leaders throughout April 2018. The meeting was called reportedly after Syriac Catholic Church leaders expressed concern over the fact that there were 15 candidates from Bakhdida—the largest Assyrian town in the Nineveh Plain—contesting the elections on various lists, which they said would make it difficult for any Bakhdida native to win. However, some locals believe that the church felt the number of candidates would divide the Syriac Catholic vote, and therefore lessen the church's influence. The clergy and town leadership eventually decided to endorse the Syriac Assembly Movement.

Following the April 2018 endorsement, the Syriac Catholic Church received immense backlash for its reported endorsement of an electoral list. A Bakhdida resident who supported Abnaa al-Nahrain list expressed her frustrations to the API, "It's not appropriate for the church to choose between its parishioners. They are sup-

posed to be spiritual leaders for all. The people should vote based on their own beliefs, not based on how the church tells them to vote. This is not right, and it's an insult to all the candidates who deserved the community's support."¹⁷⁹

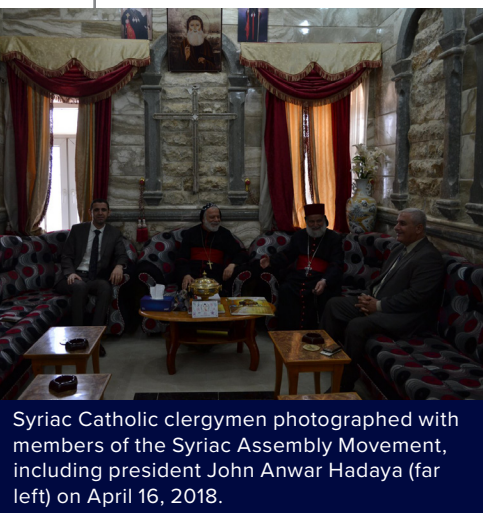
A resident of Bakhdida who is a member of the Assyrian Democratic Movement expressed similar sentiments, "In all true democracies around the world, there is a separation of religion and politics. We will never advance as a community if our churches continue to interfere."¹⁸⁰

Despite its participation in the meeting, on April 27, 2018, the church released a statement denying it had endorsed any party or candidate:

On behalf of the Syriac Catholic Archdiocese of Mosul, Kirkuk, and Kurdistan, I write to inform our people about misinformation that is being spread concerning the upcoming elections. There is news circulating that the Church has endorsed Dr. Nashat Mubarak [Syriac Assembly Movement] and these rumors have caused a great controversy among our people. We would like to clarify that the Archdiocese of Mosul, Kirkuk, and Kurdistan has not interfered in any way or endorsed any candidate. Our attitude towards all candidates is the same and contradicts the information being spread. We have not endorsed any candidate. We want to make it clear that we are not interfering in the outcome of the elections.¹⁸¹

A community leader from Bakhdida who is a member of the Syriac Catholic Church and participated in the meeting offered the following "clarification" on his Facebook page following backlash from the community:

The people of Bakhdida are all dear to us without exceptions, regardless of differences in political affiliations, and we are united under one slogan: 'Bakhdida first.' This idea was reinforced in a meeting among an elite group of community leaders—religious and secular—to analyze the upcoming Iraqi parliamenta-



Syriac Catholic clergymen photographed with members of the Syriac Assembly Movement, including president John Anwar Hadaya (far left) on April 16, 2018.

ry elections. I have noticed that a large number of people from Bakhdida are running to fill the seats of the Christian quota (at least 15 candidates) scattered among six lists, and this elite group determined that no candidate from Bakhdida had the chance to win one of the seats in the quota because of this dispersion. It is in the interest of the elite group to fulfill their desire to deliver one of the sons of Bakhdida to the parliament, regardless of the list to which he belongs.

After many meetings which spanned about one month between its members and all Bakhdida candidates to analyze the various quota lists and assess the chances of success and the possibility that at least one will be elected to the next parliament. The elite group has worked for equality and neutrality among all candidates. It turns out that there is very slim chance for any of our candidates to win, even though Bakhdida is one of the largest Christian electoral centers in Iraq. After extensive discussions and deliberations, it became clear that the most suitable option was to choose one of the lists. On this basis, the elite has decided to support the list of the Syriac Assembly Movement in the hopes of a victory for one of its candidates for Bakhdida.¹⁸²

An API researcher spoke to him after he posted this statement where he offered further justification: “I don’t belong to any party or movement. Everyone makes decisions thinking about how they can build their children’s futures. As an Assyrian, I am thinking about how I can build my children’s future on this land. I want to preserve what we have left.” He did not comment on the group’s sectarian nature.¹⁸³

According to locals, the Syriac Catholic Church also supported a Syriac Catholic candidate named Faraj Issa Yaqub who serves on the church committee in Bakhdida. Yaqub was part of the KDP-proxy Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Popular Council list (113).

The Syriac Assembly Movement

The Syriac Assembly Movement, also known as the Syriac Gathering Movement, is a political party founded in Bakhdida (Qaraqosh) as a Dawronoye affiliate (a small network of Assyrians wholly funded and controlled by the PYD¹⁸⁴), and later started receiving funding from the KDP. The group is led by John Adwar Hadaya, and currently holds the reserved Christian seat on the Nineveh Provincial Council occupied by his father, Adwar Matti Hadaya. Hadaya was elected to the provincial council in 2005 with the support of the KDP as part of the KDP-backed Ishtar Patriotic List, which included the most prominent KDP-proxy, the Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Popular Council, as well as six other KDP proxies and/or affiliates.¹⁸⁵

The Syriac Assembly Movement list was comprised exclusively of Syriac Catholic Christians and included only seven candidates. Therefore, it would be wrong to view the Syriac Assembly Movement as a “unifying” movement amongst all Syriac Christians. The Syriac Orthodox Church and its parishioners were not involved nor supportive of the list—highlighting its sectarian nature even within the context of the schism within the Syriac Orthodox Church which produced the Syriac Catholic Church. The head of the list was Dr. Nashat Mubarak.

The Syriac Assembly Movement obtained the least votes of all seven lists. Dr. Firas Georgis, who ran independently as a single candidate, obtained more votes than the Syriac Assembly Movement’s seven candidates combined.

The formal endorsement from the Syriac Catholic Church did not result in



massive mobilization in support of the Syriac Assembly Movement. In all of Nineveh Province, home to the largest community of Syriac Catholic Christians in Iraq, the Syriac Assembly Movement received only 2,002 votes. Bakhdi-da alone has a population of 25,000—the majority of them members of the Syriac Catholic Church. This highlights the community’s rejection of sectarianism.

The Syriac Orthodox Church

The Syriac Orthodox Church (officially the Syrian Orthodox Church until 2003¹⁸⁶) traces its origins to the early Christian community of Antioch. Its adherents are generally accepted to be ethnic Assyrians, although a minority of Syriac Orthodox Christians have in recent times began to espouse a separatist Syriac identity defined entirely by their church affiliation. It is estimated that approximately 9% of Iraq’s Christians are part of the Syriac Orthodox Church, with the majority concentrated in the Nineveh Plain.

The Syriac Orthodox Church did not support the sectarian Syriac Assembly Movement, an electoral list comprised exclusively of Syriac Catholics (discussed in the previous section) which was endorsed exclusively by the Syriac Catholic Church.

The Syriac Orthodox Church endorsed a single candidate for the 2018 parliamentary elections: incumbent Raed Ishaq who sought reelection as part of the KDP-proxy Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Popular Council list (113).

Ishaq is a Bartella native, a town with a Syriac Orthodox majority. Locals described Ishaq as “unreliable” to the API, and most seemed to believe he sought the office for the salary. A report released by the Iraqi Government in 2018 showed that Ishaq had one of the worst attendance records of all Iraqi parliamentarians between 2014-2018.



Raed Ishaq at a campaign event held in his hometown Bartella on May 10, 2018.

At least one other individual from Bartella was initially slated to run as a candidate on the Abnaa al-Nahrain list in the May elections, but he was pressured by a Syriac Orthodox bishop to resign. The individual explained to the API that the bishop made it clear he would permit only one Bartella native to contest the elections. He claimed the bishop said he did not want the Syriac Orthodox vote divided.¹⁸⁷

Members of the Syriac Orthodox Church reported to API representatives that members of the clergy were openly endorsing Ishaq during mass. They explained that many community members felt pressured to vote for Ishaq. A number of Assyrians interviewed for this report, including Bartella residents, complained about the church’s continued support for Ishaq despite the fact that he performed so poorly as a representative.

“It’s frustrating that the [Syriac Orthodox] church won’t give someone else a chance when Raed [Ishaq] has proven he doesn’t care,” said a resident of Bartella. “It makes us lose faith in their intentions.”¹⁸⁸ Some locals also complained that other candidates were not allowed to campaign freely in their town.

Ishaq did not win his reelection bid, although he did receive the highest recorded votes from Bartella.

Hate Speech Targeting Secular Chaldean and Syriac Assyrians

The majority of lists competing for Christian quota seats, regardless of political affiliations and ideologies, were secular in nature and included candidates from all denominations, including members of the Chaldean Catholic Church, the Syriac Catholic Church, and the Syriac Orthodox Church. These candidates were targeted by sectarian activists from the various churches.

Five candidates from various non-sectarian lists who adhere to Chaldean or Syriac churches were interviewed by the API in preparation of this report. All five of them affirmed they had been personally been subject to hate speech from members of their churches both in Iraq and abroad because they identify as Assyrians.

A Chaldean Catholic Assyrian candidate who ran as part of the Abnaa al-Nahrain list said that his children, who live abroad, were harassed and told that their father was a race traitor.¹⁸⁹

Sectarian rhetoric was used by both members and supporters of the parties that comprised the Chaldean Coalition and the Syriac Assembly Movement.

On May 8, 2018, at Chaldean League campaign event promoting the Chaldean Coalition (139) held in Fairfield, New South Wales, Australia, the Director of the Sydney Branch of the Chaldean League Samir Yousif stated:

“Whoever comes to you and says ‘I have Chaldeans on my list’—whoever they are—you answer this person by telling him the Chaldeans on that list are bound to your [Assyrian] agenda. We have to be careful—we mustn’t allow those who have sold themselves to buy us. I know there are people who say that many of the Chaldeans on these lists are individuals who have worked for our peo-

ple, and many of these candidates claim they are independents. These are all lies, because they are on lists with foreigners [Assyrians]. If you look at their [Assyrian] media, you don’t hear them say that they have independent Chaldeans with them...Today, it’s our duty to wake these people up and get them on our side. It’s too late for this election, but for future elections. For now, you all have to go and vote for list 139, because this is the only Chaldean list and the only list that will represent the interest of Chaldeans... They [Assyrians] include Chaldeans on their lists only to earn Chaldean votes, so that Chaldeans won’t have their own representatives. Up until now, we’ve been silent about this, but we will not be silent any longer.”¹⁹⁰

The statement caused outrage among some of the attendees who challenged the Chaldean League’s rhetoric and classification of Assyrians as “foreigners.”

Hate speech also circulated online during campaign season. Many Assyrians felt that the religious leadership has encouraged this behavior through their endorsements of sectarian lists, and passively endorsed it with their inaction. “Our church leaders should be preaching unity, at least as Christians, and we should turn to them to end this type of rhetoric. Instead, they are fueling it and empowering those who do not speak for the majority,” said a Chaldean Catholic Assyrian woman from Ankawa.¹⁹¹

An Assyrian woman from Bakhdida said, “Each person has the right to identify as they wish, and no one should tell him what to call himself—including the church. Regardless of church affiliation, we are one people. I hope one day we can agree to a name, but until that day, we have bigger problems that deserve our attention. It’s disheartening that the church leaders are adding fire to this dispute.”¹⁹²

Assyrians of all denominations have expressed frustration over the profiling of religious lead-

ers as opposed to secular leaders who promote unity like former Iraqi Minister of Immigration and Refugees Pascale Isho Warda and former Member of the Iraqi Kurdistan Parliament Dr. Srood Maqdasy, both members of the Chaldean Catholic Church who identify as Assyrians.

This is a practice frequently utilized by the KRG, but also by foreign officials, including the United States. For example, on August 20, 2018, Brett McGurk, Special Presidential Envoy for the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS at the U.S. Department of State met with Chaldean Archbishop Bashar Warda and posted the following message to his official Twitter account: “Productive meeting with Archbishop Bashar Warda and [U.S. Ambassador to Iraq] Silliman today in Erbil discussing accelerated U.S. support for Iraqi Christians, Yazidis, & other religious minorities overcoming the terror of ISIS.”¹⁹³

In response to the meeting, former Iraqi Assyrian MP Imad Youkhanna published the following statement:

We are surprised by the insistence of the [United States Government] to deal with our indigenous Chaldean-Assyrian community as a religious component as opposed to an ethnic component, as is the case with other components [in Iraq], despite our continuous demands in years past.

We do not have political parties religious in character, like Shia and Sunni do, but the U.S. does not engage Muslim religious leaders. This is one of the reasons our people have been targeted as Christians by extremists, because it creates the impression that we are only Christians, instead of an indigenous component alongside other components of Iraqi society.

This is a flawed practice used by Americans as well as Europeans that reduces and weakens our political capacity and will, which they justify by saying we are not united. This raises the question of

whether or not the Shia parties agree with one another, or the Sunnis, or the Kurds? Not only do they have differences, but their differences have led to violence, sectarian policies, corruption, and their inability to manage the state all these years ultimately led to the rise of ISIS. Yet [US officials] still meet with them.

The situation in our homeland today was not caused by the differences in [Assyrian] political parties, even if some of them are have performed poorly or if they are proxies of other organizations... Where are the West’s democratic principles? Why aren’t they applied here?

We reject this conduct, and we continue to ask that they deal with us equally as they do with other peoples in Iraq. End this flawed policy that is unfair to our people. Religious leaders can and should be engaged on matters related to them, such as humanitarian issues. But it is very wrong and harmful to our community to engage them on political affairs, or to build policies based on the views of religious leaders. [...]

We call on our religious leaders to refrain from engaging foreign leaders on political matters, which only draws them into conflict. Instead, we encourage them to focus on church affairs, which should not be mixed with politics, and serve their communities and parishioners to benefit the public good.¹⁹⁴

Conclusion

Iraq’s May 2018 elections delivered a number of clear messages about Assyrian politics in Iraq, not least the compromised position and posturing of church leadership despite the perception that they are neutral representatives of the community. The Chaldean Coalition and the Syriac Assembly Movement were endorsed and

supported by the Chaldean Catholic Church and the Syriac Catholic Church, respectively, and yet they failed to mobilize significant numbers of the Christian community. The Syriac Assembly Movement received the lowest number of votes overall. While the Chaldean Coalition won one seat through the quota system, evidence shows that without votes from Kurds and pressure from the KDP, they would not have been able to mobilize enough votes to claim a seat.

Despite the widespread fraud, the 2018 elections indicate that the vast majority of Assyrians reject sectarianism and the politicization of the church leadership. Therefore, for Western officials to continue to recognize church leaders as legitimate representatives of the Assyrian community is flawed and further violates the already weakened democratic process they should be strengthening in Iraq.

Part VI: An Election Marred by Allegations of Fraud

Allegations of Voter Fraud

Iraq's May 2018 elections were marred by allegations of fraud, which prompted the Iraqi Supreme Court to order a manual recount. A number of election officials were put on trial in connection with fraud, which included allegations of "vote-buying."¹⁹⁵

IHEC received upwards of 1,000 complaints following the election. While the results of the recount showed little difference from the initial results, many still contend that widespread fraud took place owing to abuse of the new electronic voting system. According to one report:

On election day, some candidates say the receipts produced by the boxes did not match figures uploaded to the central count, and some candidates say some boxes returned zero votes for themselves when they were where the candidates themselves voted. Nor do the USB serial numbers from the boxes necessarily always match.¹⁹⁶

Past and present Assyrian representatives interviewed by the API in preparation of this report expressed their lack of confidence in IHEC,

and it is evident that this belief is a reflection of a broader one held by the majority of Assyrians.

Despite the IHEC's supposed findings following the official recount, the community continues to believe that the Babylon Movement benefited from vote rigging, although the API cannot provide tangible evidence to validate these particular claims.

Reports of fraud in areas administered by the KRG was also rampant, leading a coalition of Kurdish opposition parties to formally reject the results. As mentioned earlier in the report, Assyrian parties do have sufficient anecdotal evidence to merit their belief that voter fraud indeed occurred in the KRI.

Cancellation of Votes from Expatriates

Iraqi citizens living abroad have the right to vote in Iraqi parliamentary elections. Due to the persecution of Assyrians in Iraq since the 2003 US-led invasion, the majority of Iraqi Assyrians are now living outside their native country.

The Assyrian population in Iraq has steadily declined since the start of the Iraq War in 2003. While all Iraqis suffered during these years, the Assyrians sustained greater losses in proportion to their numbers. Those who were left with no choice but to leave Iraq have since permanently resettled in Western countries, while tens of thousands displaced since the rise of ISIS are awaiting resettlement in countries like Jordan and Lebanon, where many of them have remained engaged in Iraqi politics.

Iraqi expatriates were allowed to vote on May 10-11, 2018 in 21 countries, including countries with sizeable Assyrian communities like the United States, Canada, Australia, and various European nations.¹⁹⁶ Thousands of Assyrian refugees awaiting permanent resettlement in countries like Jordan and Lebanon also participated in the elections. However, due to widespread allegations of fraud, it was later announced that expat votes would not be counted.¹⁹⁸

When the initial announcement was made that expatriate votes would be cancelled, it was stated that expatriate votes towards minority quotas would still be counted. However, these results were never formally publicized, and were not included in the results published following the “recount.”

It remains unclear how many Iraqi expatriates of Assyrian background participated in the 2018 elections. However, in 2014, there were approximately 10,000 votes cast from the Assyrian diaspora.¹⁹⁹ While this number may seem small, it is incredibly significant in the context of the Christian quota, and the exclusion of these votes unquestionably impacted the outcome.

While the decision to cancel expatriate voting results was made to reduce voter fraud, many Assyrians feel it only further marginalizes their community since the proportion of Assyrians now live outside of Iraq. It seems unfair to punish members of a community for fleeing persecution by barring them from participation in a democratic process.

It remains unclear why the IHEC invalidated out-of-country voting universally rather than investigating and invalidating votes coming strictly from countries where fraud or allegations of vote-buying occurred.

On August 10, 2018, the IHEC published the results of the recount, but they have since been removed from the IHEC website. The results remained largely unchanged from initial results announced in May. According to the IHEC, fewer than a dozen MPs lost their seats after the recount.²⁰⁰

IHEC’s assertion that there was “almost no difference” between the initial results and the recount results is questionable considering the decision to cancel expatriate results due to allegations of fraud was upheld despite this supposed finding. Had the expatriate results been counted, independent Assyrian political parties would have benefited greatly.

Cancellation of Votes from Internally-Displaced Persons

Despite the liberation of the Nineveh Plain in early 2017, thousands of internally-displaced Assyrians have yet to return. At the time of the May 2018 elections, several Assyrian IDP camps were still in operation in Erbil and Dohuk, including *Ashti* camp in Ankawa.

Research has shown that those displaced by violence usually vote at lower rates than those who are not directly affected.²⁰¹ Many internally-displaced Assyrians have little incentive to partici-



An Iraqi Assyrian refugee after casting his vote in Amman, Jordan on May 10, 2018.



IDPs living in Ashti camp in Ankawa photographed in 2015.

pate in the political process and have lost confidence in their representatives. Assyrian IDPs are concerned with their pressing day-to-day challenges, and many have concluded that politicians are largely unresponsive to their daily needs.

Special polling stations were set up for Iraqi citizens forcibly displaced by violence in IDP camps and in various parts of cities they currently inhabit, but bureaucratic obstacles prevented many Assyrians and other displaced persons from voting.

The 2018 elections introduced a new electronic voting system that required voters to have a new identification card. IHEC officials announced that internally-displaced persons would be allowed to vote using their identification documents and old voting cards,²⁰² but many Assyrians who fled Nineveh Province in 2014 say they were denied the right to vote on the day of the election.

Several internally-displaced Assyrians living in Erbil Governorate were interviewed by API researchers and reported that they had been denied the right to vote, despite presenting adequate documentation as previously described by IHEC officials. One man from Bakhdida reported that he traveled to three different polling places in Erbil and was denied his right to vote in each location.

“Our villages and our people were abandoned to *Daesh* [IS],” he told the API. “Nobody cared about us then and this is proof that nobody cares even four years later after everything we’ve been through.”²⁰³

Some internally-displaced Assyrians were told they would have to vote within their province of birth. For example, an Assyrian man reported to API researchers that he was told he would have to travel to Mosul to vote. The man was both unable to travel to Mosul due to lack of mobility and unwilling due to lasting security concerns.

Assyrian IDPs interviewed by API researchers indicated they had faced pressure from KDP members in the weeks leading up to the elections. Some IDPs living in camps administered by the Chaldean Catholic Church in Erbil said they were pressured to vote for Hoshyar Yalda of the Chaldean Coalition (139).

One man claimed he was told by a KDP member that if he did not vote for Yalda, his family would be evicted from the camp.²⁰⁴

Assyrian representatives also relayed to the API that they had received reports that ballots were pre-marked for KDP-backed candidates before they were issued to IDP voters.

A July 2018 report by the Middle East Centre reported similar findings:

In the Nineveh and Dohuk provinces, reports claimed that the KDP intimidated and coerced internally displaced people (IDP) voters in camps, and tampered with and even discarded hundreds of ballot boxes. In rural areas and locations with high populations of IDPs, ruling parties were also accused of intimidating displaced Iraqi families to vote for Kurdish parties.²⁰⁵

Widespread reports of voter fraud and intimidation targeting IDPs led the Iraqi Council of Representatives...it is likely that Assyrian candidates affiliated with the KDP would have received even higher votes.

Part VII: Conclusion

Minority Election Law Amendment Passed in Iraqi Parliament

Following the outcome of the 2018 parliamentary elections, where four of the five seats reserved for Christians were won by proxies of the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Badr Organization, the Iraqi Parliament finally passed an amendment to Election Law No. 45 of 2013 which is intended to restrict voting in the Christian quota exclusively to Assyrians and other Christians. The law was passed by the Iraqi Parliament on June 6, 2018 and ratified by the Iraqi Supreme Court on June 21, 2018.²⁰⁶

Only two of the five sitting Assyrian parliamentarians elected through the Christian quota were present for the vote: Yonadam Kanna and Imad Youkhanna, both members of the Assyrian Democratic Movement. Kanna and Youkhanna both voted in favor of the amendment.

Raed Ishaq and Lewis Garo, representatives affiliated with the Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Popular Council and Joseph Sliwa, member of the Chaldo-Assyrian Communist Party were not in attendance. Both the Chaldean Syriac Popular

Council and the Beth Nahrain Union (which the Chaldo-Assyrian Communist Party was part of), are affiliated with the KDP and benefited significantly from votes from Kurds in the 2018 elections, although the latter failed to secure a seat. Therefore, it is unsurprising that they were absent for the vote.

Assyrian MP Fareed Yaqo (elected to the Iraqi Kurdistan Parliament in 2018) says that they were told for years by United Nations officials that a restriction barring non-Christians from voting for seats reserved for Christians would be discriminatory. He offered an explanation for Iraq's June 2018 decision, "The only reason this amendment passed in Iraqi Parliament is very simply because the larger Iraqi parties are now affected by it. The Badr Organization stole two seats off of the Christian quota. Their rivals won't let that happen again."²⁰⁷

Assyrian Protests Ahead of 2018 KRG Elections

On the morning of July 30, 2018, hundreds of Assyrians gathered outside the Iraqi Kurdistan Parliament in Erbil, Iraq to demand an end to the KDP interference in the quota elections for

Assyrian representatives. Protestors called for an amendment to the election law within the KRG specifying that voting for minority quota seats be exclusive to voters of a minority background and minority elections to be held separately from general elections. Iraqi Kurdistan parliamentary elections were held on September 30, 2018.²⁰⁸

Following the flagrant interference in the 2018 federal elections and the passage of the amendment to federal Election Law No. 45 described above, Assyrians believed it would now be easier to reach an agreement on necessary reforms of the electoral system in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, but according to Assyrian representatives, the KDP blocked the motion for the proposed amendment from even being raised in the Iraqi Kurdistan Parliament earlier in July.

an Syriac component in the elections in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq in past sessions, and in the recent elections for the Iraqi Council of Representatives that took place in May, as a result of the exploitation of the legitimate seats for parties and blocs, namely the Kurdistan Democratic Party bloc and the Shia Fatah list due to loopholes in the law related to the reserved seats for minority components...In the [Kurdistan] region specifically, these practices are conducted by the Kurdistan Democratic Party bloc, with the behavior of other blocs the same methodology in the upcoming parliamentary elections, including Gorran....The will of these [minority] communities is always undermined in the elections and result in illegitimate representation due to votes from citizens outside these components in an attempt by major parties to acquire the reserved seats for their parties and blocs.²⁰⁹

Hundreds of Assyrians stage protest against electoral fraud in Erbil, Iraq outside the Iraqi Kurdistan Parliament building on July 30, 2018.



Between 2014 and 2018, seven of the eleven minority quota representatives in the Iraqi Kurdistan Parliament were affiliated with the KDP. Two of the five seats reserved for Assyrians were held by individuals affiliated to the KDP.

Galeta Shaba, President of Abnaa al-Nahrain said, “The KDP has stolen our seats. This is not just what you heard from the protestors today, but something KDP leadership has openly stated themselves.”²¹⁰

In the 1992 Iraqi Kurdistan parliamentary elections, there were separate ballots and ballot boxes for Assyrians voting in the quota. No then held in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq for thirteen years until 2005, at which point the special elections were voting was removed, but the quota seats remained. See Appendix 6.

MP Fareed Yaqo, a member of Assyrian Democratic Movement leadership elected to the Iraqi Kurdistan Parliament in 2018, told the API, “In the 1992 elections, only members of our community were permitted to vote in our elections.

The July 2018 protest was planned in response to the KRG’s refusal to amend the election law to meet these demands following the detrimental outcome of the Iraqi parliamentary elections.

The official protest statement addressed to the KRG Parliament (translated from Arabic) read:

The extent of the injustice and marginalization of the Chaldean Assyri-



President of Abnaa al-Nahrain Galeta Shaba delivers official June 30, 2018 protest statement on the steps of the Iraqi Kurdistan Parliament building.

This changed in 2005 and as a result our right to elect our representatives was taken from us. Today, we ask that this practice be reinstated, because in every election since we have seen our seats stolen from us.”²¹¹

A female protestor told the API, “They [the KDP] have not only stolen our seats, but they have stolen our lands. We are not asking for much. We are asking only for our rights. Our free will is not a threat to anyone.”²¹²

Following the July 30 protest, Kurdish leader Shaswar Abdulwahid Qadir, President of the New Generation Movement, tweeted: “I fully support the Chaldeans, Assyrians, Armenians cause and their struggle to choose their legitimate representatives without interference from the KDP and PUK. The minorities should be allowed to have a say in the election law the way [that] benefits them, not the way the KDP wants.”²¹³

In early September, the three independent Assyrian representatives in the Iraqi Kurdistan Parliament—MPs Yacoob G. Yaco, Dr. Srood Maqdasy, and Lina Azarya—issued a joint letter calling for the postponement of the elections in order to allow time to amend the election law to restrict voting to members of the Assyrian community. They did not receive a response.

On September 11, 2018, Abnaa al-Nahrain, which held one of the five seats reserved for

Assyrians in the Iraqi Kurdistan Parliament, announced their boycott of the upcoming elections due to the KRG’s refusal to amend the quota law. Their official statement read:

In recent years, in light of the continuous suffering, new alarming trends have surfaced regarding the undermining of our political representation of our people in legislative institutions. It is clear that the KDP has interfered in the selection of representatives for our people. This was evident in previous parliamentary elections in the Kurdistan Region and Baghdad, the most recent of which was the elections of the fourth Iraqi Parliament held earlier this year. Thousands of votes have been pumped into the quota from Kurdish and Shia voter blocs for the benefit of some candidates from our community who are either loyal or members of the KDP or Shia lists. This is done to distort the will of our people, and thus – the quota of its real value for which it was established—to preserve the rights of the Chaldo-Assyrians and enable them to elect their representatives without interference from others... The current quota law provided a legal loophole that gave justification for such interferences, as it allows people other than Chaldo-Assyrians to participate in the quota elections.

As we are now approaching the elections of the Regional Parliament scheduled to be held on September 30, there are many indications that it will unfold similarly to the national Iraqi elections which took place a few months ago in terms of fraud and dishonesty... Additionally, we believe the intention to interfere in the upcoming quota elections has been confirmed by the fact that the amendment of the quota law as requested by our people’s representatives in the parliament was not considered.

Despite the demands of our people's representatives in the Regional Parliament to amend this law, and despite the protest held in front of the [KRG] parliament building on July 30, 2018 for this purpose in particular—our legitimate requests have been disregarded. Additionally, there was no response to the jointly-written memo presented by Abnaa al-Nahrain Party and the Assyrian Democratic Movement on September 8, 2018 to postpone the date of the elections in order to allow for the amendment of the elections law, updates to the voter registry, and a solution to other issues impacting the electoral process.

Therefore, we in Abnaa al-Nahrain Party have decided to boycott the elections because the decision to uphold the current election law with relation to the quota, the blatant interference from those outside the Chaldo-Assyrian community, all intended to marginalize the votes of the Chaldo-Assyrian people.

We also ask our people to boycott the elections in order to preserve their dignity and their true voice. We pledge to our people that we will remain steadfast in our advocacy for them even without being present in parliament. Our resolve to fight was never for positions, but for the legitimate rights of our people to live with dignity on the lands of our forefathers.²¹⁴

Results of the 2018 KRG Elections

The KDP employed similar tactics in the September 30, 2018 KRG parliamentary elections, its support once again divided among two Assyrian lists. The PUK and Gorran also put forward their own Christian proxy lists (although the former was rejected), and contested the seats reserved for Assyrians, further demon-

strating the institutionalization of the proxy system in the political process.

Four of the five seats reserved for Assyrians in the Iraqi Kurdistan Parliament were won by KDP-proxy parties, a significant shift from the previous term where three of the five seats were held by parties independent of the KDP.

The KRG's refusal to implement reforms, even after the Iraqi Parliament passed an amendment to protect the quota system at the federal level, demonstrated its intent to continue its interference in the elections for minority representatives and bodes ill for the state of the democratic process in the region.

The KRG elections will be examined in-depth in a forthcoming report published by the Assyrian Policy Institute.

Overall Conclusion

The strikingly low voter turnout among Assyrians in the May 2018 elections—which contradicts the inflated numbers reported by IHEC and was significantly lower than the national average—reflected not only discontent and disillusion, but a rejection of the hijacking of the minority quota system and a complete loss of confidence in the political process in Iraq.

The low turnout is indicative of the overall low morale among Assyrians in the country. Most Assyrians, like other Iraqis, do not believe that genuine change can be achieved through their official representation. An Assyrian man from Dohuk who abstained from the vote told the API casting a ballot in this election would be “an insult to his people.” Others who chose not to vote expressed similar sentiments, calling the quota system a “humiliation” and a “mockery.”

Despite concerns expressed by Assyrian representatives who foresaw external interference prior to the implementation of the federal minority quota system in 2010,²¹⁵ Assyrians were optimistic in their belief that the five reserved seats would permanently guarantee their rep-

resentation in parliament. However, in less than a decade, these seats have been almost wholly co-opted by external groups, leaving Assyrians unable to select their own representatives. Major actors like the KDP and the Badr Organization are now competing with one another for seats reserved for Christians in a space where organic Assyrian representation can no longer contend.

Currently, two of the five seats reserved for Christian Assyrians in the Iraqi Parliament are occupied by the Kurdistan Democratic Party and two belong to the Iranian-backed, Shia Arab Badr Organization.

The system that was intended to ensure representation of minoritized groups at the highest levels in government has been exploited and has become another part of the machinery repressing Assyrians and depriving them of equality among their fellow citizens in the state of Iraq. The Christian quota system has only served to legitimize the voices of proxies who advance policies harmful to the interests of the Assyrian people in Iraq and beneficial to the external groups who back them with superior resources. These proxy political organizations were specifically created by the KDP and more recently others to occupy these spaces, and they have finally succeeded in sidelining independent Assyrian organizations.

The Christian quota system has caused far more damage to the Assyrian people in Iraq than any positive results it may have yielded. It has promoted sectarianism among Assyrians that is amplified by non-Assyrian actors to further their political interests, and it has completely destroyed any prospects of an organic political space for Assyrians. The lasting consequences have been detrimental to the already-beleaguered community and may be irreversible.

The Iraqi Government and its international partners have a very short window to show that they learned from the mistakes of the Christian quota system between 2010 and 2018. They ignored years of abuse and clear early warnings of electoral injustice and human rights viola-

tions surrounding the 2018 election campaigns. The result was the rampant fraud that robbed Assyrians of their representation.

Recommendations

To the International Community

- Acknowledge electoral injustice occurred in the 2018 elections for Assyrian representatives and have this reflected in the rhetoric and actions by relevant stakeholders;
- Condition ongoing international support to Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government to structural institutional reforms that ensure free and fair representation of Assyrians and other minoritized communities in the country;
- Condemn the KRG's policies of political interference, dependency, and patronage which target the Assyrian community in Iraq;
- Define the terms in which minority parties are wholly dependent on funding from larger parties, factor in the harmful effect this has on the democratic process, especially when assessing the legitimacy of these parties as representatives of popular will;
- Marginalize political actors that cannot demonstrate independence from major political parties, and treat them accord-

ingly when seeking political solutions via consensus;

- End the politicization of Assyrian clergy, as it debases the political process in Iraq.

To the Iraqi Government

- Acknowledge electoral injustice has occurred and have this reflected in the rhetoric and actions by relevant stakeholders;
- Condemn the KRG's policies of political interference, dependency, and patronage which target the Assyrian community;
- Commission an impartial investigation into the allegations of rights violations during the elections related to minority quota seats and hold those responsible to account as regulated by the law;
- Annul the results of the elections for Christian representatives and hold a special election based on the June 6, 2018 amendment to the electoral law regarding the quota system, as Assyrians cannot afford four years of illegitimate representation;
- Pressure the KDP and the Badr Organization to end electoral interference and invite neutral foreign observers to

guarantee legitimate elections (ending the practice of party appointments and foreign beneficiaries). These observers should monitor the election process and count votes in relevant areas;

- Change the sectarian characterization of the “Christian” quota seats from religion to ethnicity.

To the Kurdistan Regional Government

- Acknowledge electoral injustice has occurred and have this reflected in the rhetoric and actions by relevant stakeholders;
- Amend the KRG electoral law to restrict voting for minority quota candidates to members of minority backgrounds;
- End all funding to political and civil society groups which divide the Assyrian community and serve as proxies for Kurdish political parties that undermine the work of organizations independent of them and have this regulated by law;
- End all support, financial and otherwise, for sectarian organizations among the Assyrian community given via manipulation of the democratic process, resource allocation, and exploitative political designations and have this regulated by law;
- Cease the repression of political and civil society organizations which are independent of the major Kurdish political parties. Allow these organizations to operate freely and without fear and have this regulated by law.

Call To Action

- Meet with Members of U.S. Congress and other government officials to inform them of the electoral injustice that occurred in the May 2018 elections;
- Urge Members of U.S. Congress to make U.S. support for the Iraqi Government and

- Kurdistan Regional Government conditional on the fair treatment of Assyrians and other minoritized communities;
- Write to the Iraqi Ambassador to the U.S. and the Kurdistan Regional Government Representative to the U.S. to express concerns regarding the recent electoral injustices impacting Assyrians;
- Contact the media to inform them about the electoral injustice that has occurred in the elections for Assyrian representatives in Iraq and provide feedback on their coverage of related issues.

List 105: Firas Georgis Azeez

Dr. Firas Georgis Azeez is a Professor of Political Science at the University of Baghdad. He is a member of the Chaldean Catholic Church, and is loosely affiliated with the Assyrian General Conference. He contested the elections for Christian representatives as an independent candidate. Azeez has never held political office.



FIRAS GEORGIS AZEEZ GEORGIS (105)

CANDIDATE NO.	NAME	PROVINCE	NUMBER OF VOTES
1	Firas Georgis Azeez Georgis	Dohuk	1,415
		Total Votes	6,014

List 113: Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Popular Council

The Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Popular Council (also known as Majlis Sha’bi) was founded by the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) in 2007 and is considered the party’s “Christian wing.” It is fully funded by the KDP, and is understood to be affiliated with KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani’s faction of the party. With KDP support, the Popular Council has consistently secured seats reserved for Christians/Assyrians at all governmental levels. It currently holds one seat reserved for Christians in the Iraqi Parliament, and one seat reserved for Christians in the Iraqi Kurdistan Parliament.



CHALDEAN SYRIAC ASSYRIAN POPULAR COUNCIL (113)

CANDIDATE NO.	NAME	PROVINCE	NUMBER OF VOTES
1	Raed Ishaq Matti Daoud	Nineveh	3,617
2	Khazwan Rizallah Elias	Dohuk	2,196
3	Faraj Issa Yaqub Abdulmasih	Nineveh	3,172
4	Nahla Mansour Issa Lawrence	Erbil	359
5	Kawher Yohanna Awodish Beba	Erbil	737
6	Karolin Adwar Mikho	Kirkuk	473
7	Maysoon Matti Jajou Enwiya	Dohuk	387
8	Badri Mikhael Warda Mikhael	Baghdad	626
9	Rehan Hana Ayoub Shukur	Kirkuk	5,458
10	Dunia Rafael Odisho Shamoan	Baghdad	173
Total Votes			20,197

List 115: Beth Nahrain Union

Beth Nahrain Union was comprised of two political parties: Bet Nahrain Democratic Party (BNDP) and the Chaldo-Assyrian Communist Party (commonly known as Chaldo-Ashur). BNDP is a small party founded in 1974, which later became a part of the Democratic Patriotic Alliance of Kurdistan. It remains closely affiliated with the Kurdistan Democratic Party, and is understood to be part of Masrour Barzani's faction. The group also has ties to the Dawronoye (a fringe Assyrian group aligned with Kurdish factions in Iraq and Syria). Following the September 2018 elections in the KRI, BNDP holds one seat in the Iraqi Kurdistan Parliament.



The Chaldo-Assyrian Communist Party is an affiliate of the Communist Party of Kurdistan. The group was previously represented in the Iraqi Parliament from 2014 to 2018.

BETH NAHRAIN UNION (115)

CANDIDATE NO.	NAME	PROVINCE	NUMBER OF VOTES
1	Sabah Mikhael Barkho Gewargis	Nineveh	782
2	Khalida Elias Sleiman Butros	Nineveh	288
3	Ibrahim Hanoush Elias Hanoush	Kirkuk	348
4	Nithal Toma Orah Tomah	Kirkuk	184
5	Oshana Huzairan Nissan Oshana	Dohuk	2,401
6	Aziz Emmanuel Gewargis Elias	Dohuk	360
7	Joseph Sliwa Elia	Erbil	809
8	Hazim Yousif Gorgis Audish	Erbil	2,208
9	Faris Sami Yousif Malek	Baghdad	375
10	Sami Abdulahad Yousif Bahnam	Baghdad	161
Total Votes			10,689

List 131: Syriac Assembly Movement

The Syriac Assembly Movement was founded in Bakhdida (Qaraqosh) in the Nineveh Plain as a Dawronoye affiliate, and later started receiving funding from the Kurdistan Democratic Party. The list was comprised exclusively of members of the Syriac Catholic Church, and was later endorsed by Syriac Catholic clergy. The group has never held seats in neither the federal or regional parliament.



SYRIAC ASSEMBLY MOVEMENT (131)

CANDIDATE NO.	NAME	PROVINCE	NUMBER OF VOTES
1	Nashat Mubarak Sliwo Mansour	Nineveh	1,898
2	Maysar Kareem Mousa Mansour	Erbil	465
3	Loay Adel Yousif Butros	Kirkuk	147
4	Nabil Talat Nasser Fatuhi	Baghdad	99
5	Maher Behnam Yousif Butros	Dohuk	173
6	Nebras Zuhair Hanan Boulus	Dohuk	36
7	Dunia Rafael Odisho Shamoon	Baghdad	173
Total Votes			4,312

List 139: Chaldean Coalition

The Chaldean Coalition was comprised of three sectarian organizations, including the Chaldean National Congress, the Chaldean Democratic Union Party, and the most prominent among them, the newly-founded Chaldean League. The Chaldean League was established by the Chaldean Catholic Church in 2016. The Chaldean Patriarch is understood to be the group's leader.



The Chaldean National Congress was founded in the United States in 2002. The fringe group is a KDP affiliate, and is funded by the KDP via the Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Popular Council. The Chaldean Democratic Party was founded after the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq with the help of the KDP. It was a component of the Democratic Patriotic Alliance of Kurdistan (DPAK), through which it previously won a seat in the Iraqi Parliament.

CHALDEAN COALITION (139)

CANDIDATE NO.	NAME	PROVINCE	NUMBER OF VOTES
1	Najib Sliwo Haido Hirmis	Nineveh	2,637
2	Hikmat Daqoud Jaio Haido	Dohuk	893
3	Hoshyar Qardakh Yalda Putros	Erbil	5,152
4	Kafi Danno Bani	Nineveh	337
5	Hogar Andraws Yalda Sleiman	Erbil	333
6	Raed Jamal Nashat	Kirkuk	335
7	Uday Esam Wadee Elias	Baghdad	415
8	Bilsam Josef Patro Athanas	Kirkuk	227
9	Souad Marqos Marqos Mansour	Dohuk	720
10	Evan Faiq Yaqub Zaia	Dohuk	782
Total Votes			16,101

List 144: Al-Rafedain Coalition

Al-Rafedain Coalition was comprised of the Assyrian Democratic Movement (ADM), commonly referred to as Zowaa, and the Assyrian Patriotic Party (APP). Founded in 1979, the ADM is the largest and most prominent Assyrian (“Christian”) political party in Iraq. The party is headquartered in Baghdad with offices in nearly every city and village inhabited by Assyrians across Iraq, including in the KRI and the Nineveh Plain. The ADM is politically opposed to KDP policy, and politically champions and supports the Nineveh Plain Protection Units. The ADM was the only Assyrian (“Christian”) party that was represented in the Iraqi Governing Council, and has consistently held positions at all governmental levels since then. It has been represented in the Iraqi Parliament since its establishment in 2005. However, the party has been consistently targeted and marginalized by the KDP. The party now holds only one seat in the Iraqi Kurdistan Parliament.



The APP was founded in 1973 in Iraq, and was previously allied with the KDP. The leadership of the party changed in 2011 and has since declared itself in opposition to KDP policy. Following the 2018 May elections, the APP holds one seat in the Iraqi Parliament pending an appeal from Al-Rafedain leadership.

AL-RAFEDAIN COALITION (144)

CANDIDATE NO.	NAME	PROVINCE	NUMBER OF VOTES
1	Yonadam Yousif Kanna Khoshaba	Baghdad	6,079
2	Emmanuel Khoshaba Youkhana Bodakh	Dohuk	917
3	Anne Nafi Aussi	Nineveh	3,409
4	Duraïd Hikmat Zoma	Nineveh	662
5	Imad Youkhanna Yaco Youkhanna	Kirkuk	2,675
6	Virgin Hanna Karome Matti	Erbil	124
7	Hani Ibrahim Gorial Mikhane	Erbil	137
8	Basim Habib Estivo Matti	Kirkuk	437
9	Muna Sarhan Sindo Hirmis	Baghdad	316
10	Shamoon Shlemoon Isho Shlemoon	Dohuk	251
Total Votes			19,422

List 154: Abnaa al-Nahrain

Abnaa al-Nahrain is an independent political party formed in 2013 after a split within the Assyrian Democratic Movement. The splinter group parted ways with the ADM owing to internal disagreements among party leadership. Abnaa al-Nahrain opposes KDP policies. The party formerly held a seat in the Iraqi Kurdistan Parliament, but boycotted the 2018 elections in protest when the KRG refused to amend the electoral law to protect seats reserved for minorities.



ABNAAL NAHRAIN (154)

CANDIDATE NO.	NAME	PROVINCE	NUMBER OF VOTES
1	Mikhael Benjamin Dawod Youkhanna	Dohuk	1,503
2	Muna Youkhanna Yaku	Erbil	1,101
3	Basil Gorgis Hanna Isaac	Baghdad	919
4	Najib Sliwo Isaac Habish	Nineveh	637
5	Fatin Ghanim Khalil Behnam	Baghdad	449
6	Adel Mikha Daoud Jibo	Nineveh	810
7	Samer Sadala Marootha	Erbil	271
8	Waed Issa Sliyo Gorial	Dohuk	125
9	Ekhlas Matti Yaqoub Matti	Kirkuk	192
10	Ninif Gewargis Toma Giwargis	Kirkuk	502
Total Votes			10,666

List 166: Babylon Movement

The Babylon Movement is a fringe group with little ties to the Christian community in Iraq. It is pro-Iran and is a proxy of the Shia Arab dominated Badr Organization. Its affiliated militia, the Babylon Brigades, was founded by the Iranian-controlled Kata'ib al-Imam Ali. While its often presented as a Christian force, it is mainly comprised of Shia Arab soldiers. The Babylon Movement now holds two seats in the Iraqi Parliament.



BABYLON MOVEMENT (166)			
CANDIDATE NO.	NAME	PROVINCE	NUMBER OF VOTES
1	Aswan Salem Sadeq Sawa	Nineveh	19,955
2	Burhannidin Ishak Ibrahim Elias	Baghdad	941
3	Faiez Abed Mikha Jahwareh	Dohuk	765
4	Duraid Jamil Isho Saman	Erbil	662
5	Baida Khidhir Behnam Yacoub	Dohuk	833
6	Karmen Makradej Hakoob Alostian	Kirkuk	640
7	Ashur Yalda Benyamin Khoshaba	Kirkuk	354
8	Raed Nasser Shaya Yousif	Erbil	602
9	Fathel Toma Matti	Nineveh	333
10	Raghed Yousif Jibbo Yacoub	Baghdad	589
Total Votes			33,172

Appendix 1: Letter from Former MP Imad Youkhanna to IHEC

Republic of Iraq
Council of Representatives
Presidency Commission
Rapporteur Office

Office of Representative Imad Youkhanna
Ref. 4/H/32
Date: 4 January 2018

Re: Opening a Special Voter Register

Greetings:

Please be advised to develop a technique to open a voter register for the Christian community (the Assyrian Chaldean Syriac people), and the Armenian community, to be used on the election day while removing them from the general register. This is to keep the privacy of the Christian community and prevent other communities from interfering and voting from outside this demographic. Thus, the Christian community will be represented by candidates elected by the Christian community, and hence preserving the privacy and independence of the quota.

Kindest regards,

[Seal]

Representative Imad Youkhanna
Rapporteur of the Iraqi Council of Representatives
Member of Security and Prosecution Defense Committee

A copy of this document shall be sent to:

- Outgoing mail file



Appendix 2: IHEC Response Letter to Former MP Imad Youkhanna

Republic of Iraq
The Independent High Electoral Commission
Board of Commissioners

Ref. KH/18/166
Date: 29 January 2018

Attn: Iraqi Council of Representatives, Office of
Representative Imad Youkhanna

Re: Opening a Special Voter Register

Greetings from the Independent High Electoral
Commission:

In reference to your letter, No. 4/H/32, dated 4
January 2018, we would like to state the following:

The process of preparing the voter register takes
into consideration the application of standards
that verify the inclusiveness of all voters and that
no citizen who meets the terms and eligibili-
ty may be excluded. This is what was done on all
the electoral processes, with no discrimination on
a racial, sectarian, or denominational basis, be-
cause this contradicts the international norms;

Technically speaking about this type of data, this
is to state that there is no discriminative code in
the voter record database, and;

Regarding the statement “to keep the privacy of the Christian community and not to allow other
communities to interfere and vote from outside the community,” this is to state that this is not re-
lated to the voter record but to the voter election. All procedures followed by the Independent High
Electoral Commission guarantees the voter’s freedom in choosing any candidate or agency. Regard-
ing the hypothesis of voting inside or outside of the community, this is to state that this cannot be
prevented because voters have absolute freedom in voting and choice.

Kindest Regards,

[Signature]

Iyad Ajjaj Ayed
Secretary General
29 January 2018



Appendix 3: Official IHEC Regulations Regarding the Distribution of Seats



جمهورية العراق
المفوضية العليا المستقلة للانتخابات
كۆمیسۆنی بألی سه ره خۆی هه لێزارد نه كان
The Independent High Electoral Commission

استناداً الى الصلاحيات الممنوحة لمجلس المفوضين بموجب المادة (4) فقرة (ثامناً) من قانون المفوضية العليا المستقلة للانتخابات رقم (11) لسنة 2007 المعدل وقانون انتخاب مجلس النواب العراقي رقم (45) لسنة 2013 المعدل، تم اصدار النظام الآتي :-

نظام
(توزيع مقاعد مجلس النواب)
رقم (12) لسنة 2018

(القسم الاول)
المصطلحات

يراد بالمصطلحات ادناه ، المعاني المبينة ازلها :-

1. المفوضية: المفوضية العليا المستقلة للانتخابات.
2. المجلس: مجلس المفوضين في المفوضية العليا المستقلة للانتخابات.
3. مجلس النواب العراقي: المجلس المنتخب بموجب قانون الانتخابات رقم (45) لسنة 2013.
4. الدائرة الانتخابية: كل منطقة محددة خصص لها عدد من المقاعد وفقاً لاحكام قانون انتخاب مجلس النواب رقم 45 لسنة 2013 المعدل .
5. الاصوات الصحيحة: الاصوات الصالحة للاحتساب.
6. المقاعد العامة: المقاعد المحددة في المادة (11) من الفصل الرابع من قانون انتخاب مجلس النواب العراقي رقم (45) لسنة 2013 المعدل بعد استبعاد المقاعد المخصصة للمكونات.
7. المقاعد المخصصة للمكونات: المقاعد المخصصة في مجلس النواب العراقي للمكونات الواردة في المادة (11) فقرة ثانياً من القانون رقم (45) لسنة 2013 المعدل.
8. القائمة: قائمة الحزب السياسي او الائتلاف المشارك في الانتخابات.
9. قائمة المكون: قائمة تمثل حزب سياسي متنافس في الدائرة الانتخابية على المقعد المخصص للمكون.
10. القائمة المنقولة: قائمة حزب سياسي يحق بموجبها لمرشح واحد ان يرشح للانتخابات على ان يكون مسجلاً لدى المفوضية.

71

11. القائمة المفتوحة: وهي القائمة التي تحوي على أسماء المرشحين المعلنة على ان لا لا يقل عدد المرشحين فيها عن ثلاثة ولا يزيد عن ضعف عدد المقاعد المخصصة للدائرة.

12. القائمة المستنقفة: هي القائمة التي تفوز بعدد من المقاعد يساوي او يزيد على عدد مرشحينها.

القسم الثاني

عدد مقاعد مجلس النواب

يتكون مجلس النواب العراقي من (329) مقعداً منها (320) مقعداً عاماً توزع على المحافظات (الوائن الانتخابية) وحسب الجدول ادناه على ان توزع المقاعد المنبغية (التسعة) على المكونات (المسيح الشبيك، الصابني، الايزيدي، الكورد القليله) وحسب المحافظات المؤشرة ازاء كل منها:-

72

Appendix 3: Official IHEC Regulations Regarding the Distribution of Seats

جدول

ت	المحافظة	عدد المقاعد العامة	عدد مقاعد المكونات	عدد مقاعد المرأة
1	بغداد	69	(2) مقعد واحد لكل من المكون المسيحي، والصائني	17
2	نينوى	31	(3) مقعد واحد لكل من المكون المسيحي والشبكي واليزيدي	8
3	البصرة	25		6
4	ذي قار	19		5
5	السليمانية	18		5
6	بابل	17		4
7	الانبار	15		4
8	اربيل	15	(1) مقعد للمكون المسيحي	4
9	ندابي	14		4
10	كركوك	12	(1) مقعد للمكون المسيحي	3
11	النجف الاشرف	12		3
12	صلاح الدين	12		3
13	دهوك	11	(1) مقعد للمكون المسيحي	3
14	القادسية	11		3
15	كربلاء	11		3
16	واسط	11	(1) مقعد واحد للكورد القيليه	3
17	ميسان	10		3
18	المثنى	7		2
	المجموع	320		83

القسم الثالث

(توزيع المقاعد العامة)

توزع المقاعد العامة وفقاً لنظام سانت ليجو المعدل على نحو الاتي :-
الخطوي الاول: (توزيع المقاعد على القوائم)

- يتم حساب عدد الاصوات الصحيحة المدلى بها لكل قائمة مشاركة في التناقص على مقاعد الدائرة.
- يتم ترتيب القوائم المتنافسة في الدائرة الانتخابية حسب عدد الاصوات الصحيحة التي حصلت عليها من الاعلى الى الاندنى.
- يتم تقسيم الاصوات الصحيحة التي حصلت عليها القوائم على الرقم (1,7) ومن ثم الارقام الفردية (1,9,7,5,3... الخ) حتى تحصل على نتائج قسمة تعادل عدد المقاعد المخصصة للدائرة الانتخابية بعد ترتيب هذه النتائج من الاعلى الى الاندنى.
- يتم تخصيص مقعد للقائمة التي حصلت على اعلى ناتج قسمة ويخصص المقعد الثاني للقائمة التي حصلت على ثاني اعلى ناتج قسمة وهكذا دواليك حتى يتم استنفاد جميع المقاعد المخصصة للدائرة.
- اذا حصلت قائمتان او اكثر نتيجة القسمة على اصوات صحيحة متساوية تولها للحصول على مقعد وكان ترتيبها الاخير ضمن الدائرة الانتخابية تقوم المفوضية باجراء القرعة بينها بحضور ممثلها المخولين وتعد فائزة القائمة التي تحددها القرعة.

الخطوة الثانية (توزيع المقاعد على المرشحين)

- يعاد ترتيب اسمااء المرشحين داخل القائمة المفتوحة استناداً الى عدد الاصوات التي حصلت عليها كل مرشح من الاعلى الى الاندنى.
- يتم تخصيص المقاعد التي حصلت عليها القائمة على المرشحين وفقاً للفقرة (1) اعلام.
- اذا تساوى مرشحان او اكثر في القائمة الواحدة بعدد الاصوات فيتم تخصيص المقاعد بينهم عن طريق القرعة بحضور الممثل المخول للحزب او الممثلين المخولين للحزب السياسية المؤتلفة.

الخطوة الثالثة (حساب كوتا النساء)

- توزع جميع المقاعد على المرشحين الفئزين بغض النظر عن جنس المرشح.
- يضمن هذا النظام تحقيق نسبة مقاعد للنساء لا تقل عن 25% (83 امرأة) وفي حال عدم تحقق النسبة المذكورة وحسب ماورد في الجدول في القسم الثاني من هذا النظام لكل محافظة يتم اتباع الاتي :-

- يتم تخصيص مقعد من المقاعد التي حصلت عليها القائمة للمرأة بعد كل ثلاثة فائزين بغض النظر عن الفائزين من الرجال.
- في حالة عدم تحقق نسبة النساء في القائمة وفق الفقرة (1) اعلاه فيتم اتباع الاتي لاستكمال النسبة:-
- تحدد حصة كل قائمة من النساء من خلال قسمة عدد المقاعد المخصصة للقائمة على ثلاثة على ان تهمل الكسور العشرية.
- حساب العدد المتبقي من مقاعد النساء في كل قائمة فائزة من خلال طرح عدد مقاعد النساء الفائزات وفقاً للفقرة (أ) اعلاه من حصة القائمة من النساء.
- يتم تخصيص مقعد للنساء بعد كل فائزين اثنين من الرجال بغض النظر عن عدد الاصوات التي حصل عليها الرجال.

Appendix 3: Official IHEC Regulations Regarding the Distribution of Seats

Distribution of Seats to the Candidates of the Christian Quota

1. All candidates of winning electoral lists for reserved Christian quota seats are arranged according to the number of individual votes received from highest to lowest within the constituency they contested (Baghdad, Nineveh, Kirkuk, Dohuk, Erbil) regardless of their electoral list, and the seat of the constituency will be given to the candidate with the highest number of votes in each governorate, and the second seat for the highest votes in another constituency, and so on until all seats of the Christian quota are distributed to the candidates and electoral lists to which they belong.
2. If a single-candidate electoral list obtained a seat, then the candidate of this list has priority over all other candidates to obtain the seat for the constituency.
3. If two or more electoral lists obtained a seat, and both candidates contended for the same governorate, then the seat is awarded to the electoral list which had the highest quotient [in accordance with Sainte Lague]. If the quotients are equal in number, a draw will be held in the presence of the candidates or their representatives.

This procedure shall be effective starting from the date of its approval on 03/22/2018.
The Board of Commissioners

4- اذا لم يتم استكمال المقاعد المطلوبة للنساء وفقاً لما ورد اعلاه فيتم تخصيص مقعد للنساء من مقاعد القوائم التي حصلت على مقعدين ومن الاثنى الى الاعلى ويتم استبدال المرشح الفائز بالمقعد الثاني بالمرشحة الحاصلة على اعلى الاصوات ضمن نفس القائمة.

5- اذا لم تحقق جميع الخطوات في هذا النظام العدد المطلوب من مقاعد النساء فيتم تخصيص مقاعد القوائم التي حصلت على مقعد واحد فقط للنساء ومن الاثنى الى الاعلى الى ان يتم تحقيق العدد المطلوب وفقاً للآلية المرسومة في هذا النظام.

6- يستبدل المرشح الحاصل على اعلى الاصوات في القائمة الحاصلة على مقعد واحد في الدائرة الانتخابية الواحدة بمرشحة من نفس القائمة حاصلة على اعلى اصوات النساء في نفس القائمة.

القسم الرابع (مقاعد المكونات)

- 1- تخصص مقاعد المكونات (الصابئي، المندائي، الشبكي، الايزيدي، الكورد الفيلية) للقائمة الحاصلة على اعلى الاصوات من بين القوائم المتنافسة على مقعد المكون.
- 2- اذا تساوت قائمتان او اكثر للمكون الواحد بعدد الاصوات تقوم المفوضية باجراء القرعة بينهم لتحديد الفائز وبحضور المرشحين او الممثلين المخولين للأحزاب.
- 3- تمنح القوائم المتنافسة على مقاعد المكون المسيحي مقاعد وفقاً لاحكام القسم الثالث الخطوة الاولى من هذا النظام (توزيع المقاعد على القوائم).

توزيع المقاعد على مرشحي المكون المسيحي

- 1- يتم ترتيب جميع مرشحي القوائم المتنافسة الفائزة على مقاعد المكون المسيحي حسب عدد الاصوات التي حصل عليها كل مرشح ومن الاعلى الى الاثنى. وحسب سبب السببوات الانتخابية التسمية يتنقسمون اليهيسا (بغداد، بفسوى، كركوك، دهوك، اربيل) بغض النظر عن القوائم، ومن ثم يعطى مقعد الدائرة للمرشح الحاصل على اعلى اصوات المرشحين المتنافسين ضمن هذه الدائرة، ويعطى المقعد الاخر للمرشح الحاصل على اعلى اصوات المرشحين المتنافسين على دائرة اخرى، وهكذا الى ان يتم توزيع جميع مقاعد المكون المسيحي على المرشحين وقوائمهم التي ينتمون اليها.
- 2- اذا حصلت قائمة منفردة على مقعد فان مرشح هذه القائمة ستكون له الاولوية في الحصول على مقعد الدائرة الانتخابية.
- 3- اذا حصلت قائمتان منفردتان او اكثر على مقعد وكان مرشحوها من نفس المحافظة فيتم تخصيص المقعد للقائمة الحاصلة على اعلى نتائج قسمة وعند تساوي نتائج القسمة يتم اللجوء الى القرعة بحضور مرشحي القوائم المنفردة او ممثلهم المخولين.

يعد هذا النظام نافذاً من تاريخ المصادقة عليه من قبل مجلس المفوضين في
2018/3 / 22

مجلس المفوضين

7

Appendix 4: Official 2018 Babylon Movement Campaign Pamphlet

COVER

Al-Kildani

Truth

166

Candidate No. 1

You can vote for us in all Iraqi districts

RIGHT COLUMN

Truth

- We could've used bigger words for our slogan or made promises, but would you be inspired by promises?
- We're all sick of the repetition and the lies that have become the core of politics in Iraq.
- We won't make promises for reconstruction and jobs today only to abandon you after the elections.
- We won't visit your governorates to win you over with promises that would be insulting to your dignity. You who gave Iraq something worth more than money.
- All Iraqi households have shed blood.
- All households have martyrs.
- Our commitment to you will be one simple word: Truth.

Why?

- Because truth is the rare currency in the reality of Iraqi politics.
- Because truth is what's needed for our country's money to be put where it belongs.
- Because truth is what distinguishes us from everyone you know and have elected before, only to have them let you down.
- Truth is the real key to your hearts.

MIDDLE COLUMN

166

- 166 is the number of our independent party. We could've joined another Iraqi party, but we decided not to carry their past.
- Babylon has no experience with any political positions or responsibilities.
- We're not afraid of anyone, and no one can silence us. Our history is our witness.
- 166 is the voice of those who have no voice in the Iraqi Parliament.
- We are the weary people and will be the ambassadors of your hardships in the parliament. That is our promise.
- We don't favor one group over the other, and we won't be the voice for one group but not the other.
- Our people from the north to the south who have known us in the field of victory can now translate their appreciation.
- Our people in Baghdad who are keen on having us present can now vote 166.
- And anyone from our Iraqi nation can vote for the Babylon Movement 166 in all governorates.

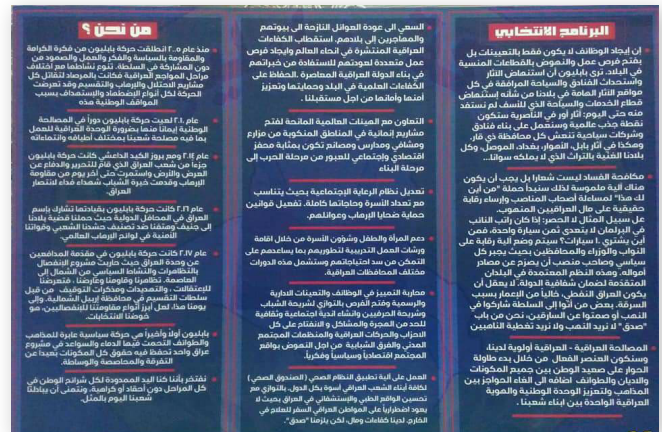


Appendix 4: Official 2018 Babylon Movement Campaign Pamphlet

RIGHT/MIDDLE COLUMNS

Party Platform

- Providing jobs is more than appointing people to existing positions, but creating new job opportunities and reviving the forgotten sectors in the country. Babylon sees that the revival of heritage cities and the establishment of hotels and tourist facilities in important archaeological cities in our country would revive the service and tourist industry which unfortunately has been neglected until today. The Ziggurat of Ur in Nasiriyah would be a global attraction site. We will work to build hotels and develop tourist companies that will revive all of Dhi Qar Governorate. The same for the Babylon archaeological site, the Mesopotamian Marshes, Baghdad, Mosul, and across our country that is rich with culture that no other nation has.
- Fighting corruption isn't just a slogan. There must be a tangible plan in place. Therefore, we will start by asking "where did you get this from?" to investigate those in high positions and establish real oversight for the stolen money of the Iraqi people. For example, without limiting it to this, if the salary of a Member of Parliament doesn't exceed the price of one car, how can he purchase ten cars? A financial oversight system would be put into place to monitor parliamentarians, ministers, and governors so that all politicians are forced to declare their sources of income. These systems are in place in developed countries to guarantee transparency in their government. It doesn't make sense that oil-rich Iraq lacks in development due to theft. Some of those in power have either participated in corruption or kept silent about it. We won't steal or cover up for those who do.
- Reconciliation among Iraqis is a priority for us and we will actively work towards this by establishing a national dialogue between all components, doctrines, and groups in addition to breaking the barriers between doctrines to strengthen national unity and the unifying Iraqi identity of our people.
- We seek to return displaced families to their homes and those externally-displaced to their country. We want to attract competent Iraqis from all over the world to create different economic opportunities to bring them back and partake in building a modern Iraq. We want to take care of our people by protecting them and keeping them safe for the sake of our future.
- We want to cooperate with international organizations to establish developmental projects in disaster areas including farms, hospitals, schools, and factories to provide economic and social incentives in the area and advance from war into redevelopment.
- We want to modify the social welfare system to suit families and their needs. We will activate the laws to protect victims of terrorism and their families.
- We will fight discrimination in jobs and administrative and official positions. At the same time, providing opportunities for youth and artists and building social and cultural clubs to end migration and problems and to open up to all parties, Iraqi movements, civil society organizations, and youth groups for the advancement of our society economically, politically, and intellectually.
- We will work on a mechanism for the application of a healthcare system for all Iraqis, following the lead of other countries. At the same time, we will improve the medical and hospital system so that Iraqi citizens do not have to travel abroad for treatment. We have competent medical professionals (doctors) and money, but we have to have "truth."

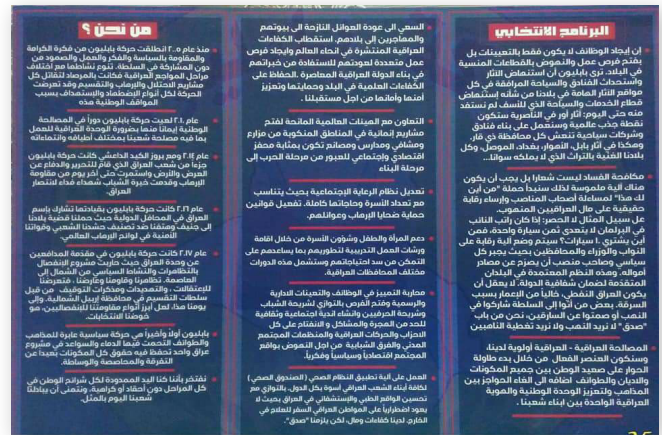


Appendix 4: Official 2018 Babylon Movement Campaign Pamphlet

LEFT COLUMN

Who are we?

- Since 2005, Babylon Movement began with the idea that resistance through politics, intellect, work, and strength without holding a position of authority. It participated in various activities through the different phases of the Iraqi suffering: It fought all settlement projects, terrorism, and division of Iraq and for that, the movement has been attacked and targeted for its patriotism.
- In 2010, the Babylon Movement played a role in the national reconciliation in Iraq, believing in the necessity of Iraqi unity to work for the interest of our nation and all its different ideologies and views.
- In 2014, with the rise of ISIS, the Babylon Movement was part of the Iraqi people who rose to liberate and defend our land and will continue to do so until the last day of fighting terrorism, sacrificing the best of its youth for the victory of Iraq.
- In 2016, the Babylon Movement participated, through its leadership, in international events. We raised the issue of our country in Geneva and called against listing our Popular Mobilization Units and security forces as terrorist groups.
- In 2017, the Babylon Movement was at the forefront of the demonstrations of the unity of Iraq as it fought against the secession of the Kurdistan project through demonstrations and political activities from the north to the capital. We demonstrated, resisted, and opposed and therefore were arrested, threatened, and received arrest warrants from the pro-division authorities in Erbil. To this day, our most prominent type of resistance is running in the elections.
- Babylon overall is a political movement for all doctrines and groups, where everyone comes together for a united Iraq where the rights of all of its parts are protected from discrimination.
- We are proud that we have been a hand extended to all classes of our nation at all times with no hatred or spite and we wish that our people would treat us the same way today.



Appendix 5: Official Statement by the Syriac Catholic Archdiocese of Mosul, Kirkuk, and Kurdistan

Syriac Catholic Archdiocese
of Mosul, Kirkuk, and Kurdistan

[Published April 27, 2018]

On behalf of the Syriac Catholic Archdiocese of Mosul, Kirkuk, and Kurdistan, I write to inform our people about misinformation that is being spread concerning the upcoming elections. There is news circulating that the Church has endorsed Dr. Nashat Mubarak [Syriac Assembly Movement] and these rumors have caused a great controversy among our people. We would like to clarify that the Archdiocese of Mosul, Kirkuk, and Kurdistan has not interfered in any way or endorsed any candidate. Our attitude towards all candidates is the same and contradicts the information being spread. We have not endorsed any candidate. We want to make it clear that we are not interfering in the outcome of the elections.

We ask God to help our people.

Signed,

[Signature and Stamp]

Youhanna Boutros Moshe
Archbishop of Mosul, Kirkuk, and Kurdistan

SYRIAC CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE
OF MOSUL, Kirkuk and Kurdistan

أبرشية الموصل وكركوك
و كردستان للسرمان الكاثوليك

ܘܨܘܪܝܝܘܬܝܢ ܕܡܘܨܠ ܘܟܪܟܘܟ ܘܟܘܪܕܝܨܬܝܢ
ܕܟܘܪܕܝܨܬܝܢ ܒܝܪܫܝܝܘܬܝܢ ܕܡܘܨܠ ܘܟܪܟܘܟ ܘܟܘܪܕܝܨܬܝܢ

بصفتنا رئيس اساقفة ابرشية الموصل وكركوك وكوردستان للسرمان الكاثوليك، نكتب لرعيئنا لتعلمكم بقرارنا حول الانتخابات القادمة والاخبار التي تداولتها بعض وسائل الاعلام حول دعم الكنيسة لمرشح معين من بين المرشحين الاخرين .

تداولت بعض وسائل الاعلام في الايام الاخيرة بان الكنيسة اختارت المرشح نشات مبارك من ما احدث لك الخبر الي خلاف كبير بين ابناء رعيئنا وهنا ما نريد توضيحه، اننا في ابرشية الموصل وكركوك وكوردستان للسرمان الكاثوليك، نعلمكم باننا لا دخل لنا باي مرشح ولم نختار اي مرشح في الكنيسة كوننا نقف على مسافة واحدة من جميع المرشحين دون التفرقة بين الاخر وما تداولته بعض وسائل الاعلام وبعض الاشخاص حول خبر دعونا لاحد المرشحين نوكد لكم بان لاصحة للخبر ولن نتدخل في الامور السياسية مهما كانت النتائج.

ضارعين الي الرب يسوع ان يوفق الجميع لخدمة شعبهم.

يوحنا بطرس موشى
رئيس اساقفة الموصل وكركوك وكوردستان
للسرمان الكاثوليك

ملاحظة: نسخة من هذا الكتاب في:

- مطرانية وروساء الطوائف المسيحية في العراق
- الابرشيات الكهنية في ابرشية الموصل وكركوك وكوردستان

E-mail: khaddomouche1943@yahoo.com & mypm2011@inkhawa.com

Appendix 6: Ballot from the 1992 Iraqi Kurdistan Parliamentary Elections

The High Commission Election
Patriotic Council of Kurdistan:

Minority Ballot for the Assyrian Nation
(all church denominations).

Voter must select one of the following:

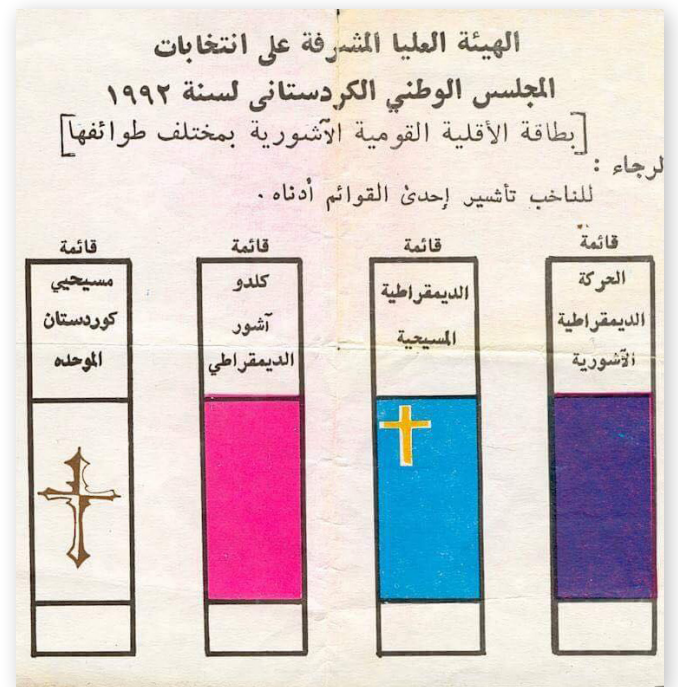
Right to Left

List:
Assyrian Democratic Movement

List:
Democratic Christians

List:
Chaldo-Assyrian Party

List:
Kurdistan Christian Unity (KDP)



References

1. "Population Project." *Shlama Foundation*. Accessed September 20, 2018. <https://www.shlama.org/population>.
2. Otterman, Sharon. "Iraq's Governing Council." *Council on Foreign Relations*. Last modified February 2, 2005. <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/iraq-iraqs-governing-council>.
3. "The Struggle to Exist." *Hammurabi Human Rights Organization*. February 2010. <http://www.aina.org/reports/acetste.pdf>.
4. "The Kurdistan Parliament." *Kurdistan Regional Government*. Accessed September 20, 2018. <http://cabinet.gov.krd/p/p.aspx?l=12&p=229>.
5. Appendix 1
6. Appendix 2
7. "Emanuel [sic] Khoshaba about the elections in Iraq." *Assyria TV*. May 7, 2018. <http://www.assyriatv.org/2018/05/emanuel-khoshaba-elections-iraq/>.
8. API interview with Fareed Yaqo by phone, June 29, 2018.
9. https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/10BAGH-DAD185_a.html
10. Hanna, Reine and Matthew Barber. "Erasing Assyrians: How the KRG Abuses Human Rights, Undermines Democracy, and Conquers Minority Homelands." *Assyrian Confederation of Europe*. September 25, 2018. www.erasingassyrians.com.
11. The Assyrian Patriotic Party (APP) was previously affiliated with the Kurdistan Democratic Party. It contested the January 2005 Iraqi parliamentary elections as part of the Kurdistan list. In the 2010 Iraqi parliamentary elections, it formed a coalition with Bet Nahrain Democratic Party and the Chaldean Democratic Forum, both known KDP affiliates. In 2013, it joined a coalition led by the KDP-created Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Popular Council to contest the Iraqi Kurdistan parliamentary elections. The APP has since declared itself in opposition to KDP policy.
12. "The status of Christians in the Kurdistan Region in Iraq." *Kurdistan Regional Government U.K. Representation*. December 2009. http://cabinet.gov.krd/uploads/documents/Status_Christians_Kurdistan_Region_Dec_09__2009_12_22_h16m26s16.pdf.
13. Reynolds, Andrew, Ben Reilly, and Andrew Ellis. *Electoral System Design: The New International IDEA Handbook*. Sweden: *International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance*, 2005.
14. Appendix 3
15. Arraf, Jane. "Light Turnout in Iraq Parliamentary Elections." *NPR*. May 12, 2018. <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2018/05/12/610638166/light-turnout-as-polls-open-in-iraq>
16. API interview with 30-year-old Assyrian man

- in Alqosh, Iraq by phone, June 12, 2018.
17. "Population Project." *Shlama Foundation*.
 18. *Ibid*.
 19. "A Living Symbol of Freedom." *Kurdistan Democratic Party—Iraq*. Accessed September 20, 2018. www.kdp.se.
 20. Hamakarim, Ako. "The Dim Future of Kurdistan." *The Washington Institute Fikra Forum*. September 23, 2017. <https://www.washington-institute.org/fikraforum/view/the-dim-future-of-kurdistan>.
 21. Monroe, Derek. "Kurdistan: The Next Autocracy?" *Foreign Policy in Focus*. June 13, 2013. https://fpif.org/kurdistan_the_next_autocracy/.
 22. On Vulnerable Ground: Violence against Minority Communities in Nineveh Province's Disputed Territories. *Human Rights Watch*. November 2009. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2009/11/10/vulnerable-ground/violence-against-minority-communities-nineveh-provinces-disputed>
 23. Timmerman, Ken. "Christians Face Extinction in Northern Iraq." *Newsmax*. April 24, 2008. <https://www.newsmax.com/KenTimmerman/christians-mo-sul-iraq/2008/04/24/id/337436/>
 24. On Vulnerable Ground, *Human Rights Watch*, 2009.
 25. Benjamen, Alda. "Assyrians in Iraq's Nineveh Plains: Grass-root Organizations and Inter-Communal Conflict." *Taarrii Newsletter*, 2011. https://www.academia.edu/833347/Assyrians_in_Iraqs_Nineveh_Plains_Grass-root_Organizations_and_Inter-communal_Conflict.
 26. "Assyrians Prevented by Kurds from Voting in North Iraq." *Assyrian International News Agency*. January 31, 2005. <http://www.aina.org/releases/20050131003708.htm>.
 27. Timmerman, Ken. "Christians Want Police Protection in Iraq." *Newsmax*. April 28, 2008. <https://www.newsmax.com/kentimmerman/christians-iraq/2008/04/28/id/337438/>.
 28. *Ibid*.
 29. "The Struggle to Exist." *Hammurabi Human Rights Organization*, 2010.
 30. *Ibid*.
 31. https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BAGH-DAD1785_a.html
 32. "A Leader in the Kurdistan Democratic Party Announces the Victory of Two out of Five Seats of the Christian Quota." *Ankawa.com*. May 19, 2018. <http://www.ankawa.com/forum/index.php/topic,875542.0.html>.
 33. "Khasro Goran: We Got 25 Seats and our Minority Loyalists had 3 Seats." *Ankawa.com*. May 5, 2010. <http://www.ankawa.com/forum/index.php/topic,739771.0.html>.
 34. API interview with a member of the Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Popular Council from Ankawa by phone, June 17, 2018.
 35. "Population Project." *Shlama Foundation*.
 36. Chomani, Kamal. "The Leadership Crisis of the Kurdistan Region Opposition Parties." *The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy*. September 20, 2018. <https://timep.org/commentary/analysis/the-leadership-crisis-of-the-kurdistan-region-opposition-parties/>.
 37. Chomani, Kamal. "Independent media fades in Iraqi Kurdistan." *Al-Monitor*. August 1, 2014. <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/07/iraq-kurdistan-free-independent-media-krgrudaw.html>.
 38. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. "2015 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Iraq." *United States Department of State*. April 13, 2016. <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/253137.pdf>.
 39. "KDP will boycott Iraq elections in Kirkuk, disputed areas." *Rudaw*. Last modified January 16, 2018. <http://www.rudaw.net/english/kurdistan/150120184>.
 40. "A source in Barzani's party reveals: We asked our supporters in Kirkuk to vote for this candidate heavily." *Baghdad Today*. May 7, 2018. <https://baghdadtoday.news/news/43806/%D9%85%D8%B5%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%AD%D8%B2%D8%A8-%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%B2%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%8A-%D9%8A%D9%83%D8%B4%D9%81-%D8%B7%D9%84%D8%A8>.
 41. <https://www.facebook.com/2123375694563655/videos/2166564686911422/>
 42. <https://www.facebook.com/2123375694563655/videos/2160306177537273/>
 43. API interview with Assyrian man from Kirkuk by phone, June 14, 2018.
 44. API interview with Assyrian man from Ankawa by phone, May 29, 2018.
 45. API interview with Assyrian member of the Iraqi Kurdistan Parliament by phone, May 26, 2018.

46. Fumerton, Mario and Wladimir Van Wilgenburg. "Kurdistan's Political Armies: The Challenge of Unifying the Peshmerga Forces." *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. <https://carnegieendowment.org/2015/12/16/kurdistan-s-political-armies-challenge-of-unifying-peshmerga-forces-pub-61917>.
47. *Ibid.*
48. Official statement by Abnaa al-Nahrain issued on May 8, 2018. <http://www.bnaynahrain.com/%D8%A5%D9%8A%D8%B6%D8%A7%D8%AD-%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%83%D8%AA%D8%A8-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%B9%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%8A-%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%B2%D8%A8-%D8%A3%D8%A8%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D8%A7%D9%84/>.
49. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. "Iraq 2017 International Religious Freedom Report." *United States Department of State*. May 29, 2018. <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/281228.pdf>.
50. API interview with Basim Bello by phone, July 12, 2018.
51. https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BAGH-DADI785_a.html
52. Najjar, Farah. "Barzani adviser: Kurdish secession is inevitable." *Aljazeera*. November 28, 2017. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/11/barzani-adviser-kurdish-secession-inevitable-171128062737525.html>.
53. "Imad Youkhanna: Peshmerga Forces Left our People and Withdrew from the Nineveh Plain without Warning." *Zowaa.org*. November 28, 2017. <http://www.zowaa.org/%D9%83%D9%81%D8%A7%D8%AD-%D9%85%D8%AD%D9%85%D9%88%D8%AF-%D9%85%D8%AA%D9%87%D9%83%D9%85%D8%A7%E2%80%8B-%D9%84%D9%88%D9%84%D8%A7-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%B4%D9%85%D8%B1%D9%83%D8%A9-%D9%84/#.W6QI8pNKjUr>.
54. API interview with Imad Youkhanna in Skokie, Illinois, April 22, 2018.
55. API interview with an Assyrian man from Ankawa, June 3, 2018.
56. Appendix 1
57. Appendix 2
58. API interview with Imad Youkhanna by phone, June 28, 2018.
59. "Population Project." *Shlama Foundation*.
60. "Babylon Magazine Conducts an Interview with Mr. Hoshiyar Yalda." *Ankawa.com*. June 30, 2018. <http://www.ankawa.com/forum/index.php?topic=889228.0>.
61. "Iraq 2017 International Religious Freedom Report." *United States Department of State*, May 2018.
62. API interview via Skype with a member of the Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Popular Council, August 16, 2018. His party filed the lawsuit against Ano Abdoka alleging he forged required signatures for the September 30, 2018 KRG elections. Supporting documentation was also presented but cannot be publicized in the interest of the individual's personal safety.
63. Interview with an Assyrian man from Ankawa by phone, June 7, 2018.
64. "Assyrians in North Iraq Fired for Not Voting for Pro-Kurdish Slate." *Assyrian International News Agency*. February 20, 2009. <http://www.aina.org/releases/20090220154846.htm>.
65. *Ibid.*
66. API interview with an Assyrian member of the Zerevani living in Ankawa by phone, July 15, 2018.
67. API interview with an Assyrian student in Ankawa by Skype, May 17, 2018.
68. Fumerton and Wilgenburg. "Kurdistan's Political Armies: The Challenge of Unifying the Peshmerga Forces." *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*.
69. API interview with an Assyrian man from Ankawa by Skype, June 1, 2018.
70. API interview with an Assyrian man from Ankawa by phone, July 23, 2018.
71. <https://www.facebook.com/200470550565723/videos/211122399500538/>
72. API interview with an Assyrian man from Ankawa by Skype, June 1, 2018.
73. Hanna, Reine and Matthew Barber. "Erasing Assyrians: How the KRG Abuses Human Rights, Undermines Democracy, and Conquers Minority Homelands." *Assyrian Confederation of Europe*. September 25, 2018. www.erasingassyrians.com.
74. *Ibid.*
75. API interview with two members of Abnaa al-Nahrain leadership via Skype, July 21, 2018.
76. Mansour, Renad and Christine van den Toorn. "The 2018 Iraqi Federal Elections: A Population in Transition?" *London School of Economics*

- and Political Science Middle East Centre*. July 2018. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/89698/7/MEC_Iraqi-elections_Report_2018.pdf.
77. API interview with Dr. Muna Yaku by phone, August 28, 2018.
 78. API interview with a member of the Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Popular Council from Ankawa by phone, June 17, 2018.
 79. API interview with an Assyrian from Ankawa by phone, July 8, 2018.
 80. API interview with an Assyrian woman from Ankawa by phone, September 1, 2018.
 81. Hanna and Barber, "Erasing Assyrians," September 2017.
 82. Ali, Sangar. "Christians lobby for Kurdish Independence." *Kurdistan24*. January 6, 2016. <http://www.kurdistan24.net/en/feature/acfebd7b-1bc6-4a03-8df6-747acc455deb/christians-lobby-for-kurdish-independence>.
 83. *Ibid.*
 84. <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=376201402762188&set=1169946714.-2207520000.1541455197.&-type=3&size=960%2C540>
 85. Official statement by Oshana Nissan published to the Bet Nahrain Democratic Party website, May 28, 2018. <http://www.bet-nahrain.org/index.php/2018-01-21-19-13-16/item/625-bb>.
 86. *Ibid.*
 87. <https://twitter.com/ShlamaF/status/1041713702427402242>
 88. API phone interview with a candidate on Abnaa al-Nahrain list who preferred that his name and location be withheld, June 22, 2018.
 89. "Justice for Francis Shabo." *Assyrian Policy Institute*. June 1, 2018. <https://www.assyrianpolicy.org/justiceforfrancisshabo>.
 90. "The Struggle to Exist." *Hammurabi Human Rights Organization*, 2010.
 91. Fumerton and Wilgenburg. "Kurdistan's Political Armies: The Challenge of Unifying the Peshmerga Forces." *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*.
 92. Hollingshead, Stephen and Paul Coyer. "Iranian Ambition." *The Imaginative Conservative*. April 5, 2018. <http://www.theimaginative-conservative.org/2018/04/iranian-ambition-paul-coyer-stephen-hollingshead.html>.
 93. API interview with a former Heresat soldier living in Alqosh by phone, June 18, 2018.
 94. API interview with a former Heresat soldier living in Dohuk by phone, June 20, 2018.
 95. API interview with an active member of the Heresat living in Alqosh by phone, June 18, 2018.
 96. On Vulnerable Ground, *Human Rights Watch*, 2009.
 97. API interview with IHEC observer in Alqosh affiliated with the Assyrian Democratic Movement by phone, May 27, 2018.
 98. On Vulnerable Ground, *Human Rights Watch*, 2009.
 99. Timmerman, Ken. "Kurdistan Minister—Rich Star, or Pawn?" *Newsmax*. May 1, 2018. <https://www.newsmax.com/kentimmerman/kurdistan-minister/2008/05/01/id/337439/>.
 100. *Ibid.*
 101. https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/06BAGH-DAD3958_a.html
 102. "The Kurdistan Parliament." *Kurdistan Regional Government*. Accessed September 20, 2018. <http://cabinet.gov.krd/p/p.aspx?l=12&p=229>.
 103. "The Badr Organization." *Counter Extremism Project*. July 28, 2015. <https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/badr-organization>.
 104. "Mapping Militant Organizations: Badr Organization of Reconstruction and Development." *Stanford University*. Accessed September 20, 2018. <http://web.stanford.edu/group/mapping-militants/cgi-bin/groups/view/435>.
 105. "Iraq: Possible War Crimes by Shia Militia." *Human Rights Watch*. January 31, 2016. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/01/31/iraq-possible-war-crimes-shia-militia>.
 106. Smyth, Phillip. "Iranian Militias in Iraq's Parliament: Political Outcomes and U.S. Response." *The Washington Institute*. June 11, 2018. <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/iranian-militias-in-iraqs-parliament-political-outcomes-and-u.s.-response>.
 107. Bennett-Jones, Owen. "The Christian militia fighting IS." *BBC News*. April 11, 2016. <https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-35998716>.
 108. McKay, Hollie. "Under threat? Iran's quiet infiltration over Iraqi Christian Communities." *Fox News*. December 24, 2017. <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2017/12/24/under-threat-irans-quiet-infiltration-over-iraqi-christian-communities.html>.
 109. Official statement by the Chaldean Patriarchate issued February 16, 2017. <https://saint-adday.com/?p=16448>.

110. "As Islamic State withers, the alliance against it is fraying." *The Economist*. August 31, 2017. <https://www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/2017/08/31/as-islamic-state-withers-the-alliance-against-it-is-fraying>.
111. API interview with an Assyrian man from Alqosh, Iraq by phone, June 14, 2018.
112. McKay, Hollie. "Under threat? Iran's quiet infiltration over Iraqi Christian Communities." *Fox News*. December 24, 2017.
113. Toumaj, Amir. "Qods Force commander to advance Tehran's influence as ambassador to Iraq." *FDD's Long War Journal*. April 23, 2017. <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2017/04/qods-force-commander-to-advance-tehrans-influence-in-iraq-in-new-role-as-ambassador.php>.
114. Lawrence, John. "Iraq Situation Report: May 23-25, 2015." *Institute for the Study of War*. May 26, 2015. <http://www.understanding-war.org/background/iraq-situation-report-may-23-25-2015>.
115. "The cause of the death of Rafiq al-Yasiri puzzles investigators in Iraq." *Erem News*. August 18, 2018. <https://www.erenews.com/entertainment/arts-celebrities/1460306>.
116. McKay, Hollie. "Under threat? Iran's quiet infiltration over Iraqi Christian Communities." *Fox News*. December 24, 2017.
117. Knights, Michael and Yousif Kalian. "Confidence and Security-Building Measures in the Nineveh Plains." *The Washington Institute*. July 14, 2017. <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/confidence-and-security-building-measures-in-the-nineveh-plains>.
118. Kalian, Yousif. "Iran's Inroads into Christian Iraq." *The American Interest*. December 21, 2017. <https://www.the-american-interest.com/2017/12/21/irans-inroads-christian-iraq/>.
119. Smyth, Phillip. "Iranian Militias in Iraq's Parliament: Political Outcomes and U.S. Response." *The Washington Institute*. June 11, 2018.
120. Official NPU statement issued July 15, 2017. <https://twitter.com/NinevehPU/status/886313852383760385>
121. API interview with an Assyrian leader from Alqosh, Iraq by phone, July 12, 2018.
122. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. "Iraq 2017 International Religious Freedom Report." *United States Department of State*. May 29, 2018.
123. "Assyrian Mayor of Alqosh detained and beaten by the Kurdistan Democratic Party." *Assyrian Policy Institute*. Last modified July 17, 2018. <https://www.assyrianpolicy.org/news/assyrian-mayor-of-alqosh-detained-and-beaten-by-the-kurdistan-democratic-party>.
124. API interview with resident of Alqosh, Iraq by phone, May 2, 2018.
125. API interview with a member of the Assyrian Democratic Movement from Alqosh, Iraq by phone, May 2, 2018.
126. API interview with an NPU soldier from Bakhda, Iraq, May 2, 2018.
127. <http://www.aymennjawad.org/2017/10/hashd-brigade-numbers-index>
128. <https://www.facebook.com/ryan.aliraqe77/videos/1734422179958638/>
129. Al-Khatib, Omar. "Ghadi Francis receives the banner of the Mahdi." *Orient News*. April 13, 2014. https://www.orient-news.net/ar/news_show/78651.
130. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j3sQo7IpWUY>
131. <https://www.facebook.com/ryan.aliraqe77/videos/1719285398138983/>
132. <https://www.facebook.com/ryan.aliraqe77/videos/1729375450463311/>
133. <https://www.facebook.com/ryan.aliraqe77/videos/1729033653830824/>
134. API interview with an Iraqi Assyrian refugee in Amman, Jordan by phone, July 23, 2018.
135. API interview with an Assyrian man from Karemlesh, Iraq by phone, July 12, 2018.
136. Interview with Yonadam Kanna on SBS Assyrian Radio, June 19, 2018. <https://feeds.sbs.com.au/sbs-assyrian>.
137. API interview with Yonadam Kanna by phone, August 24, 2018.
138. API interview with Yonadam Kanna by phone, August 5, 2018.
139. "Babylon Movement mocks MP Yonadam Kanna: On which planet are you living?" *Alghad Press*. May 29, 2018. <https://www.alghadpress.com/news/%D8%A7%D8%AE%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%82-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%A9/160141/%D8%AD%D8%B1%D9%83%D8%A9-%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%A8%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%88%D9%86-%D8%AA%D8%B3%D8%AE%D8%B1-%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84>

- %D9%86%D8%A7%D8%A6%D8%A8-
%D9%8A%D9%88%D9%86%D8%A-
7%D8%AF%D9%85-%D9%83%D9%86%D8%A7-
%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%A3%D9%8A-
%D9%83%D9%88%D9%83%D8%A8.
140. Aldroubi, Mina. "Iraq forms new government, five months after elections." October 25, 2018. <https://www.thenational.ae/world/mena/iraq-forms-new-government-five-months-after-elections-1.784304>.
 141. API interview with an Assyrian man from Alqosh, Iraq by phone, June 14, 2018.
 142. API interview with an Assyrian man from Tesqopa, Iraq by phone, June 16, 2018.
 143. API interview with an Assyrian man from Erbil, Iraq by phone, July 6, 2018.
 144. Wirya, Khogir and Linda Fawaz. "The Christians: Perceptions of Reconciliation and Conflict." *Middle East Research Institute*. September 2017. <http://www.meri-k.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Christian-Report.pdf>.
 145. "The Struggle to Exist." *Hammurabi Human Rights Organization*. February 2010.
 146. *Ibid*.
 147. *Ibid*.
 148. "Emanuel [sic] Khoshaba about the elections in Iraq." *Assyria TV*. May 7, 2018.
 149. Official statement issued by the Chaldean Catholic Patriarchate on October 9, 2017. <https://saint-adday.com/?p=19632>.
 150. Parpola, Simo. "National and Ethnic Identity in the Neo-Assyrian Empire and Assyrian Identity in Post-Empire Times." *University of Helsinki*. Accessed September 20, 2018. https://web.archive.org/web/20110717071922/http://www.jaas.org/edocs/v18n2/Parpola-identity_Article%20-Final.pdf.
 151. "Patriarch calls for Iraqi churches to unite after centuries of division." *Catholic Herald*. June 26, 2015. <http://www.catholicherald.co.uk/news/2015/06/26/patriarch-calls-for-iraqi-churches-to-unite-after-centuries-of-division/>.
 152. Official statement issued by the Chaldean Catholic Patriarchate on June 23, 2015. <http://saint-adday.com/?p=8699>.
 153. Jamal, Hiwa. "Time for an era of respect and openness in Iraq: Cardinal Sako." *Rudaw*. September 3, 2018. <http://www.rudaw.net/mobile/english/interview/03092018>.
 154. "Prof. Efrem Yildiz accuses Patriarch Sako for [sic] divisions within the Assyrian nation." *Assyria TV*. November 22, 2018. <http://www.assyriatv.org/2017/11/prof-efrem-yildiz-accuses-patriarch-sako-creating-divisions-within-assyrian-nation/>.
 155. Official statement issued by the Chaldean Catholic Patriarchate on February 9, 2014. <http://saint-adday.com/?p=4968>.
 156. Mahmoud, Joseph. "Out of the Synod comes a united Chaldean Church that is closer to refugees, says Baghdad patriarch." *Asia News*. February 9, 2015. <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Out-of-the-Synod-comes-a-united-Chaldean-Church-that-is-closer-to-refugees,-says-Baghdad-patriarch-33417.html>.
 157. "Chaldean Nation." *Chaldean League*. Accessed September 20, 2018. <http://www.chaldean-league.org/chaldean-nation/>.
 158. "Patriarch calls for 'Chaldean league' to unite Iraq's lay Catholics." *Catholic Culture*. February 18, 2014. <https://www.catholicculture.org/news/headlines/index.cfm?storyid=20526>.
 159. "Chaldean League Goals." *Chaldean League*. Accessed September 20, 2018. <http://www.chaldeanleague.org/chaldean-league-goals/>.
 160. Official statement issued by the Chaldean Catholic Patriarchate on March 19, 2016. <http://saint-adday.com/?p=11738>.
 161. API interview with Firas Georgis by phone, July 28, 2018.
 162. "About the Chaldean League." *Chaldean League*. Accessed September 20, 2018. <http://www.chaldeanleague.org/about/>.
 163. "Iraq elections: Mar Sako tells Christians that voting is the only way to ensure the community's future." *Asia News*. May 4, 2018. <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Iraq-elections:-Mar-Sako-tells-Christians-that-voting-is-the-only-way-to-ensure-the-community%E2%80%99s-future-43796.html>.
 164. Salloum, Saad. "Iraqi Christian politicians denounce church's intervention in politics." *Al-Monitor*. October 23, 2017. <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/10/christian-patriarch-louis-sacco-iraq-minorities.html>.
 165. *Ibid*.
 166. *Ibid*.
 167. *Ibid*.
 168. "Emanuel [sic] Khoshaba about the elections in Iraq." *Assyria TV*. May 7, 2018.
 169. API interview with an Assyrian man from

- Ankawa, Iraq by phone, June 22, 2018.
170. Official statement released by the Chaldean Catholic Patriarchate on March 31, 2018. <https://saint-adday.com/?p=23013>.
 171. Official statement released by the Chaldean Catholic Patriarchate on April 21, 2018. <https://saint-adday.com/?p=23352>.
 172. API interview with an Assyrian man from Ankawa, Iraq by phone, June 22, 2018.
 173. Official statement released by the Chaldean Catholic Patriarchate on April 30, 2018. <https://saint-adday.com/?p=23476>.
 174. API interview with Firas Georgis by phone, July 28, 2018.
 175. Hanna and Barber, "Erasing Assyrians," September 2017.
 176. <https://www.facebook.com/AnkawaNews/videos/1833388696971479/>
 177. API interview with an Assyrian man from Ankawa by Skype, June 1, 2018.
 178. Official statement released by the Chaldean Catholic Patriarchate on September 24, 2018. http://saint-adday.com/?p=25930&fbclid=IwAR1km4XH3H6BPkiIKtFcduA5Rg6K9QaP-8DgF_su_kQU3XrEkwiAslRXE4os.
 179. API interview with an Assyrian woman from Bakhdida, Iraq, August 11, 2018.
 180. API interview with a member of the Assyrian Democratic Movement from Bakhdida, Iraq, July 8, 2018.
 181. Appendix 5
 182. <https://www.facebook.com/behnam.aboosh/posts/605775299790368>
 183. API interview with an Assyrian community leader from Bakhdida, Iraq, April 27, 2018.
 184. Joseph, Max J. and Mardean Isaac. "Romancing Rojava: Rhetoric vs. Reality." Syria Comment. July 31, 2018. <https://www.joshualandis.com/blog/romancing-rojava-rhetoric-vs-reality/>.
 185. Aprim, Fred. "Overview of Assyrian Slates Running in the 2009 Iraqi Provincial Council Elections." Assyrian International News Agency. December 23, 2008. <http://www.aina.org/news/20081222201334.htm>.
 186. "The Syriac Orthodox Church." *Syriac Orthodox Resources*. Last modified May 9, 2004. <http://sor.cua.edu/Intro/index.html>.
 187. API interview with an Assyrian man from Bartella, Iraq by phone, May 4, 2018.
 188. API interview with an Assyrian man from Bartella, Iraq by phone, June 9, 2018.
 189. API phone interview with a candidate on Abnaa al-Nahrain list who preferred that his name and location be withheld, June 22, 2018.
 190. <https://www.facebook.com/Chaldean-LeagueAU/videos/1710235532364715/>
 191. API interview with an Assyrian woman from Ankawa, Iraq by phone, June 13, 2018.
 192. API interview with an Assyrian woman from Bakhdida, Iraq, August 11, 2018.
 193. https://twitter.com/brett_mcgurk/status/1031638343526821888
 194. <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=882412568623479&set=a.130111027186974&-type=3&theater>
 195. "Iraq to try election officials over fraud: judiciary." *The New Arab*. July 28, 2018. <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2018/7/28/iraq-to-try-election-officials-over-fraud-judiciary>.
 196. Rubin, Michael. "Iraq's election may have had widespread voter fraud." *Washington Examiner*. May 23, 2018. <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/opinion/iraqs-election-may-have-had-widespread-voter-fraud>.
 197. Jawad, Ali. "Iraqi expats in 21 countries vote in general election." *Anadolu Agency*. May 10, 2018. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/iraqi-expats-in-21-countries-vote-in-general-election/1141285>.
 198. Aldroubi, Mina. "Iraq election commission cancels thousands of votes." *The National*. May 31, 2018. <https://www.thenational.ae/world/mena/iraq-election-commission-cancels-thousands-of-votes-1.735750>.
 199. API interview with IHEC election judge in Skokie, Illinois, May 10, 2018.
 200. Aboulenein, Ahmed. "Recount shows Iraq's Sadr retains election victory, no major changes." *Reuters*. August 9, 2018. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-election/recount-shows-iraqs-sadr-retains-election-victory-no-major-changes-idUSKBNIKV041>.
 201. Ferris, Elizabeth. "Iraqi Elections and Displacement." *The Brookings Institution*. October 2, 2009. <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/iraqi-elections-and-displacement/>.
 202. Jalabi, Raya and Ahmed Aboulenein. "New electronic system to speed up Iraqi election results: elections chief." *Reuters*. April 23, 2018. [115](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-election/new-electronic-system-to-speed-up-iraqi-election-results-elections-chief-idUSKB-

</div>
<div data-bbox=)

NIHU1AZ.

203. API interview with an internally-displaced Assyrian man from Bakhdida, Iraq living in Ankawa, Iraq by phone, July 30, 2018.
204. API interview with an IDP living in *Ashty* Camp in Ankawa, Iraq by phone, July 21, 2018.
205. Mansour and Van den Toorn. "The 2018 Iraqi Federal Elections: A Population in Transition?" *London School of Economics and Political Science Middle East Centre*. July 2018.
206. https://www.iraqfsc.iq/krarat/1/2018/99_fed_2018.pdf
207. "Assyrians Stage Protest in Erbil Demanding an End to KDP Interference in Minority Elections." *Assyrian Policy Institute*. July 30, 2018. <https://www.assyrianpolicy.org/news/assyrians-stage-protest-in-erbil-demanding-an-end-to-kdp-interference-in-minority-elections>.
208. API interview with Fareed Yaqo by phone, June 29, 2018.
209. https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/6ae567_bef0c283fe8148fda6ab1393d80dd044.pdf
210. API interview with Galeta Shaba by phone, July 30, 2018.
211. API interview with Fareed Yaqo by phone, July 30, 2018.
212. API interview with an Assyrian woman from Dohuk by phone, July 30, 2018.
213. <https://twitter.com/ShaswarQadir/status/1023886487950118912>
214. Official statement by Abnaa al-Nahrain issued on September 11, 2018. <https://www.facebook.com/bnaynahrain/>.
215. https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/10BAGH-DAD185_a.html



www.assyrianpolicy.org

[f](#) [t](#) [@](#) [@assyrianpolicy](#)