



[Iraqi Protests Encounter an Increase in Death Toll](#)

More than 450 people have died since anti-government demonstrations demanding more jobs, better public services, and an end to a corrupt failing political system began early October in Iraq. Iraqi officials said recent casualties had increased to 25 dead and more than 100 injured after unknown gunmen targeted anti-government demonstrators this past weekend. The attack last Friday, leading into the early hours Saturday, was among the deadliest since the protests began. Dozens of protesters have also gone missing and have yet to resurface after an attack took place on a parking complex that was being used as a sit-in.

As Iraq's Foreign Ministry summoned four Western envoys over their criticism of the deadly attack against protesters over the weekend, hundreds gathered for a funeral march on Monday to honor the death of victim, Fahem al-Tai, who was killed in a drive-by shooting as he was returning home from a protest in the city of Karbala.

Activists have called for large-scale marches from other cities towards Baghdad, but paramilitary leaders have cautioned that such protests would be further catastrophic. "It will bring the most massive chaos yet to Baghdad," said Qais al-Khazali, the head of the prominent Asaib Ahl al-Haq armed faction, who was blacklisted last week by the United States. Asaib Ahl al-Haq is one of the most powerful groups in Iraq's Hashd al-Shaabi security force (also known as the PMF), a network of armed groups officially integrated into the Iraqi state security forces. Over this past weekend, Hashd al-Shaabi chief Faleh al-Fayyad ordered the factions to stay away from rallies.

U.S. troops based in Iraq have faced an increase in rocket attacks on their positions. Four rockets slammed into an Iraqi base early Monday morning wounding six Iraqi troops but no American forces. U.S. defense officials have blamed several of the attacks on Iran-backed factions in Iraq.

The Iraqi Parliament accepted Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi's resignation on December 1st, posing a major challenge for Iraq's fractious political class. The challenge now is to agree on a candidate that satisfies what protesters are calling for, while reconciling the competing interests of Iran and the United States. Abdul-Mahdi's government will stay in a caretaker capacity until the Iraqi Parliament forms a new government.