



[Iraqi Parliament Passes Controversial Changes to Election Laws](#)

The recent amendments to Iraq's election laws have sent shockwaves through the country's already fragile democratic fabric. With the passing of these contentious amendments, the prospects for independent candidates and smaller parties to secure seats in future elections have been severely diminished. The move, backed by the Iranian-supported Coordination Framework, threatens to further entrench the ruling coalition's power and make it increasingly difficult for opposition parties to mount any meaningful challenge. The Iraqi parliament's 206 to 12 vote in favor of the bill raises eyebrows, considering the conspicuous absence of the remaining members during the eight-hour session. The amendments, which have faced staunch opposition from independent parliamentarians and political blocs, will redraw electoral maps and revert to a single electoral district per governorate. This change has been met with widespread disapproval and protests, as it is seen as a power grab by the ruling coalition.

In the aftermath of the 2019 anti-government protests, the previous election law, backed by the United Nations, was designed to increase the chances of independent candidates and grassroots movements winning seats. The new amendments, however, seem to undo the progress made in promoting a more inclusive and democratic electoral process. The major political parties stand to gain at the expense of smaller parties and the voices of those who emerged from the 2019 protests.

The Coordination Framework's backing of the amendments comes as no surprise, given the coalition's disappointing performance in the 2021 elections. The new electoral law is an attempt to consolidate power and regain lost ground. But this maneuver also highlights a more sinister reality - the erosion of democracy in Iraq and the increasing influence of Iranian-backed parties. We have seen instances of democratic backsliding in this region, and it raises concern for a more rapid increase in that backsliding to continue to occur, given recent circumstances. However, there is something to be said about the Iraqi people during this showcasing, the demonstrations against the new amendments exemplify the Iraqi people's resistance to this encroachment on their democratic rights. From Baghdad to the southern provinces, where opposition to government corruption runs high, citizens have taken to the streets to protest the changes. With local elections scheduled for November 6 and general elections yet to be announced, the tension surrounding the new electoral law is palpable.

As the curtain falls on this chapter of Iraq's tumultuous journey toward democracy, we must take stock of the critical lessons that emerge from the recent amendments to the country's election laws. These changes, which pose a genuine threat to the democratic process, serve as a stark reminder that the quest for a truly inclusive, representative, and transparent political system is far from over. The ruling coalition's calculated move to consolidate power by making it increasingly difficult for opposition parties to challenge their dominance also exposes the fragile nature of Iraq's democracy. It is a testament to the resilience and determination of the Iraqi people, who continue to fight for their rights and the promise

of a more equitable future, that they refuse to be silenced in the face of these challenges. The international community must recognize the gravity of this situation and respond with the same level of commitment and resolve demonstrated by the citizens of Iraq. Global leaders must stand in solidarity with the Iraqi people, offering their unwavering support and leveraging their influence to ensure that democracy in Iraq is not only protected but allowed to flourish.

In these trying times, we must also remember the power of the collective voice. Through unity and collaboration, the people of Iraq and their allies can work together to overcome the forces that seek to undermine their democratic rights. By fostering a culture of dialogue and cooperation, we can pave the way for a brighter future - one where the pillars of democracy stand strong and true, and the will of the people prevails.