



مركز البيان للدراسات والتخطيط
Al-Bayan Center for Planning and Studies

Chances of small powers in Iraq's 2021 elections - Chances of Women

Prof. Dr. Falah Khalaf Al-Zuhairi



Al-Bayan Center Studies Series

About

Al-Bayan Center for Planning and Studies is an independent, nonprofit think tank based in Baghdad, Iraq. Its primary mission is to offer an authentic perspective on public and foreign policy issues related to Iraq and the region.

Al-Bayan Center pursues its vision by conducting independent analysis, as well as proposing workable solutions for complex issues that concern policymakers and academics.

Copyright © 2020

**www.bayancenter.org
info@bayancenter.org**

Since 2014

Chances of small powers in Iraq's 2021 elections - Chances of Women

Prof. Dr. Falah Khalaf Al-Zuhairi*

Introduction:

In the coming months, Iraq is on a new electoral date following a months-long popular movement whose basic demands were the dissolution of the Council of Representatives and the holding of early elections; Consequently, the tenth of October was agreed, and political parties and blocs began to reorganize their ranks to prepare for the elections and to contest the next cycle of the Council of Representatives. Earlier, the Council of Representatives voted on the Legislative Elections Act, the content of which differed from previous laws. The new Act adopted the multi-constituency system, which could affect the chances of small Powers if they wanted to participate in such elections, including women. Accordingly, this paper attempts to track the chances of Iraqi women in the upcoming elections by trying to answer the following question: What are the chances of Iraqi women in the upcoming elections of October 2021?

1. Iraqi Women's chances before the Quota

The vote of the Council of Representatives on the new electoral law raised a number of objections and fears from political and social forces. One of these concerns is that it has made Iraqi women who intend to run in the election race few or

** Researcher.

no changes compared with those of previous elections. Reasons for this include:

- Political parties and blocs nominate large numbers of men at the level of the single constituency to ensure that the largest number of seats are won in those constituencies, naturally at the expense of the category of women candidates, which makes it difficult for them to obtain a representative seat in these constituencies 1. (Check Annex no.3).

- From the previous point, it is clear that those parties and blocs that are intended to enter the electoral race are very likely to lose one representative seat; they, therefore, did not want to venture to put forward the names of women candidates who were less likely to win on her electoral lists. Therefore, they used the name of one female candidate as opposed to four or five male candidates in a single constituency, although the Independent High Electoral Commission stressed that political parties planning to run should present at least five women on their electoral lists to ensure equal opportunities for candidates, This is a sign of the unfairness to the women's component in the upcoming elections and of the fact that those parties and groups are not convinced of the importance of the presence of women in the Iraqi political landscape.

2. Women and the Quota system

The Iraqi Constitution gave women 25 % of the seats in the Council of Representatives. This proportion of the Quota system has contributed to dozens of women winning seats in the

Council of Representatives over the past years. Many women have made a political gain that has made Iraqi women a key factor in the political landscape. This does not negate the fact that there are parties who see access to Parliament through the nomination of women in electoral alliances, relying on the female component to gain as many seats as possible, taking advantage of this Quota system; This requires caution against this exploitation of the form of women's participation in the next Parliament, and despite the existence of this constitutional provision, which determines the proportion of women represented in the House of Representatives. However, Iraqi women today face major challenges in running in the upcoming legislative elections:

- Lack of ownership of funds and influence; Women cannot compete independently.
- Their limited potential and ability to form women's political parties (women cannot run far from the Quota system based on the Constitution and electoral laws).
- As a result, they comply with and are under the control of political parties and blocs; Hence their inability to deviate from the direction and will of those parties and blocs.
- The decline in the chances of influencing the mindset of the Iraqi voter who used to vote for the politically known names or those that had emerged in previous years, which is not in the interest of independent women who intend to run for the next election.

“As a result of all this, the Iraqi political landscape over the past

years has produced a stereotype of Iraqi women who have been in the midst of the political process and are seen as numerically complementary to their electoral lists as a result of the adoption of the Quota system in legislative elections, because some political parties have abused Iraqi women by their social role imposed by the underprivileged societal view of the gender-based issue, which has led to the consolidation of this stereotype of women and has subsequently contributed to a decline their chances in the elections.”

The adoption of the Quota system in elections – although it is a temporary measure until the democratic experience grows and the social changes that allow and enable women to express their rights and exercise without waiting for them to be granted and given as a legal grant – may be detrimental to, and impede, the growing effective participation of Iraqi women because the Quota system will contribute to women’s partisanship and make them abandon the idea of defending their causes in particular and public issues in general, and seek political empowerment by joining and engaging with political parties controlled by their leaders. Although the situation in Iraq has undergone significant political and social changes in recent years, this must be accompanied by a change in the system of laws that have reduced the role of Iraqi women. They must be given a greater opportunity and role to prove their existence as an important human resource capable of keeping pace with men in all social and political roles.

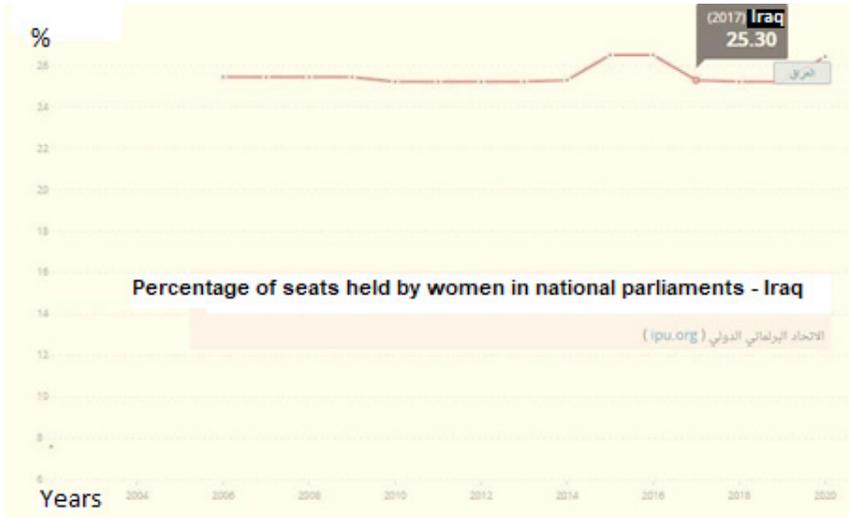
3.what can women do?

The first steps that the Iraqi women's sector can do at this stage are to organize themselves by any description: political party or women's bloc with the task of moving on influential women in important sectors of society; (civil society, government employees, private entrepreneurs, press professionals, intellectuals, academics... others) to develop social and political attitudes aimed at consolidating their presence in the political process as actors and influences that could be of benefit to them in the future; It then leads political parties and blocs to ally with them in coalition and non-subordinate terms, this will stimulate women's roles in the future, in general, and in all fields. It should be borne in mind that the output of the last elections in 2018 was marked by the emergence of a women's leadership of electoral lists in a number of central and Kurdistan provinces. The number of women with the number 1 in the electoral lists is about 8, "This is a new indicator given by a number of lists to show their intentions towards empowering women on the one hand and to confirm that there is a general civic trend towards some lists, that women's leadership is a major challenge that may break some degree of masculinity of the political landscape and the stereotype of women's participation in electoral lists. There may be clear competition in the voting process, and some women can win a parliamentary seat outside the framework of the women's Quota system."

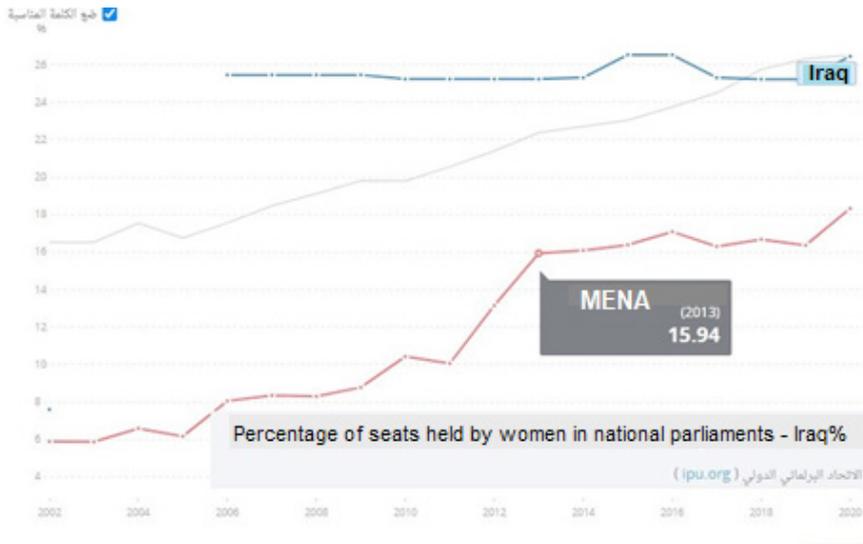
4.Future Analysis

According to sociologists and feminist activists, Iraqi society is inclined to the concept of masculinity, which gives men a greater role in various spheres of social, political, and economic life. This has led to a decline in the role of women in the general scene. The broad concept of masculinity in Iraqi society has cast a shadow over the mentality of the Iraqi voter, who, according to this community culture, prefers to vote for men at the expense of women; This is because the political landscape in Iraq and over the past years has focused heavily on men's political roles in return for the lack of visibility or empowerment of women in various areas; Which caused her to lose her equal opportunities with men.

Despite all the signs that have reduced women's chances in the upcoming legislative elections, it can be said that Iraqi women have a good chance of winning seats in the next Council of Representatives² (Check Annex no.1&2), that they can prove their political existence, that they have been able to assure the voters of their ability to manage service files away from suspicion of financial and administrative corruption compared with men, We hope that the upcoming legislative elections will witness the emergence of political currents capable of resolving services, political and security problems away from partisan conflicts and that Iraqi women play a prominent role in the upcoming political landscape as active and influential partners in the Iraqi landscape.



Annex no.1 Percentage of women's participation in the Iraqi Parliament by year



Annex No. 2 Percentage of women's participation in the Iraqi Parliament by years compared to the countries of the Middle East and North Africa

Total number	Females	Males
3244	950	2294

Annex no.3 Numbers of candidates for 2021 elections by gender