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Elections in Iraq

2018 Council of Representatives Elections

Frequently Asked Questions

Middle East and North Africa

International Foundation for Electoral Systems

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Frequently Asked Questions

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Disclosure:

These FAQs reflect decisions made by the Iraqi elections authorities as of May 7, 2018 to the best of our knowledge. This document does not represent any IFES policy or technical recommendations.

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When is Election Day and who will be elected?

On May 12, 2018, Iraq will hold the Council of Representatives (CoR) election in all 18 governorates. All 329 seats in the CoR will be up for election. CoR members will elect the Iraqi president from among themselves within 30 days from their first convening. Out-of-country voting is scheduled to take place on May 10-11 in 20 countries. Special voting will take place on May 10 to accommodate special needs voting for the Iraqi security forces and others.

What type of electoral system will be used in this election?

An open list proportional representation system will be used in this election. Under this kind of electoral system, a voter may select both a political entity and a specific candidate within a list, or select a political entity only. A **political entity** is defined as one of the following:

- A party registered under the Council of Representatives (CoR) Elections Law No. 45 of 2013, which is presenting a list of candidates for election;
- An individual entity, such as an independent candidate; or
- A combination of the two aforementioned entities, such as a coalition of two or more political parties or individuals presenting a unified list of candidates for election.

The electoral system will use the 18 governorates as constituencies. Each governorate is one electoral constituency and allotted a number of seats proportional to its estimated population. Seats will be awarded based on each list's share of the valid votes in a constituency. This is done through calculations set out in the Independent High Electoral Commission's seat allocation regulations, utilizing the modified Sainte-Laguë method.¹

Will any seats be reserved for women or minority groups?

Nine seats are reserved for minority groups at the national level including: five seats allocated to Christians in Baghdad, Ninewa, Kirkuk, Dohuk, Erbil; one seat to Yazidis in Ninewa; one seat to Sabean Mandeans in Baghdad; one seat for Shabaks in Ninewa; and one seat for Fayli Kurds in Wassit. These seats are included within political entities' lists.

The law also requires that women candidates should comprise no less than 25 percent of political entities' (PE) lists, and that 25 percent of the seats in the Council of Representatives (CoR) must be held by women. When the list is submitted to the Independent High Electoral Commission for candidates'

¹ The use of the Sainte-Laguë method means that seats will be distributed among the candidates on the open list. The seats are first allocated to participating political entities based on the number of valid votes received. The candidates within each open list will then be re-ranked based on the number of votes obtained by each. The candidate who secures the highest number of votes within the open list shall be deemed the winner and so on for the rest of the candidates. The counting system has been changed slightly from the previously used largest remainder method due to a ruling by the Supreme Court that stated the previous method discriminated against smaller parties.

accreditation, there must be at least one female candidate listed after each three male candidates. Similarly, 25 percent of the seats in the CoR as a whole must be held by women. If the number of women who win from the PE lists falls below 25 percent of the seats in the CoR, a special mechanism is applied to re-rank candidates in governorates with the lowest share of elected women.

What is the Council of Representatives? What is its mandate?

The Council of Representatives (CoR) is the main elected body of Iraq. It consists of 329 members elected for four years, with two sessions in each annual term. The CoR passes federal laws, oversees the executive body, ratifies treaties and approves nominations of certain officials. It also elects the president, who then selects a prime minister from the majority coalition in the CoR.

The CoR approves appointments to the Federal Court of Cassation, the chief public prosecutor and the president of Judicial Oversight Commission (as proposed by the Higher Judicial Council). It also approves the appointment of the Army chief of staff, his assistants and those of the rank of division commanders and above, and the director of the Intelligence Service, as proposed by the Cabinet.

What is the legal framework for this election?

The legislative framework for this year's Council of Representatives (CoR) elections is based on the CoR Elections Law No. 45 of 2013 passed by the CoR and approved by the president on November 25, 2013, and published in the official Iraqi gazette on December 2, 2013.

The law was amended twice. The first amendment was introduced through a Supreme Court ruling in January 2018, and created a requirement for candidates to have a bachelor's degree or its equivalent. In February 2018, the Iraqi Parliament voted in favor of a 20 percent quota for parliamentarians who do not hold a bachelor's degree, revoking the earlier Supreme Court ruling. Another amendment by the CoR increased the number of seats from 328 to 329, adding an additional minority seat in Wasit. Additionally, the Independent High Electoral Commission issued regulations for the 2018 electoral process; these provide guidance for local election officials and set out election operations processes.

Who is eligible to vote?

To qualify to vote, a voter needs to prove that he or she is:

- An Iraqi citizen, at least 18 years of age in the year of the elections;
- Legally qualified to register to vote. The legal criterion requires that a person is of sound mind (not ruled by a court as mentally incompetent) and has not been convicted of a crime. A crime is categorized as an action punishable by more than five years of imprisonment;
- Listed in the voter register; and
- In possession of an electronic card and a photo ID, or a biometric voter card.

Will there be out-of-country voting?

Iraqis living abroad who are qualified to vote will be able to do so in the out-of-country voting process on May 10-11, 2018, based on their identified place of origin. The Independent High Electoral

Commission will open 14 country offices in the following countries: Australia, Canada, Denmark, Sweden, Egypt, Germany, Iran, Jordan, Netherlands, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, Syria, and United States of America. Additionally, six polling centers will be opened in Austria, Belgium, Lebanon, Finland, Norway, and New Zealand.² Out-of-country voters may use the following forms of identification to confirm their eligibility to vote: a national card, a civil status ID, a *jinsiyah* (nationality) certificate, retirement identity card, a 1957 nationality booklet, an electronic or biometric voter card, or a valid Iraq driving license, one of which should have a photo, date of birth, and place of residence (or birth) in Iraq.

What is the candidate registration process?

To qualify as a candidate, one must:

- Be an Iraqi citizen, at least 30 years of age;
- Have a bachelor's degree or equivalent (at least 80 percent of candidates on each list);
- Not be convicted or imprisoned for crime or felony or dishonourable misdemeanour;
- Not be a member of the armed forces or security services or head of an independent body³ during the candidacy; and
- Not be employed by the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC), including as a member of the Board of Commissioners (BoC) and senior officials, except those who completed their services no less than two years from the date of nomination.

To be eligible to nominate candidates for the 2018 Council of Representatives elections, a political entity must be certified by the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) prior to December 25, 2017 (with the exception of independent candidates, who can submit a single list candidate to be approved by the IHEC BoC).

The registration period for political entities concluded December 25, 2017. A total of 205 political entities were ratified.

The registration period for political coalitions lists concluded on January 11, 2018. Originally, a total of 88 lists were registered (23 coalitions, 45 political parties, and 20 independent candidates). However, one independent candidate later withdrew, bringing the number of contesting political entities to 87.

The registration period for candidates concluded on February 15, 2018. A total of 7,140 candidates' names (1,991 female and 5,149 male) were submitted to the Justice and Accountability Commission, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Defense, and Ministry of Interior so they could verify qualifications before the IHEC certified the final list. The vetting process concluded on April 10 with a total of 7,187 candidates (approximately 29 percent of them women) approved to run in the elections.

² The polling centers are managed by the country offices to which they are assigned.

³ Independent bodies are independent commissions which are part of the government but outside the executive, legislative and judicial branches, such as the IHEC, Independent High Commission for Human Rights, etc.

What is the election management body which will implement the Council of Representative elections?

The Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) is responsible for conducting all elections and referendums in Iraq and implements these in accordance with policies and procedures defined by the IHEC Board of Commissioners (BoC).

Established by the Council of Representatives (CoR) in May 2007, the IHEC is an independent electoral authority consisting of nine members appointed by and under the supervision of the CoR. The IHEC is comprised of nine commissioners who elect a chief electoral officer (CEO) from among themselves to serve for one year, with the CEO position rotating each year among the nine commissioners. The CEO heads the IHEC administration and is a non-voting member of the IHEC BoC. The IHEC has 19 Governorate Electoral Offices – one in each governorate except Baghdad, which has two, a regional office in Kurdistan and a headquarters office in Baghdad with permanent staff. The IHEC also recruits ad-hoc poll workers staff for elections events.

What are the primary duties of the Independent High Electoral Commission?

The main functions of the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) are detailed in Article 4 of the IHEC Law No. 11 of 2007. These include:

- Establishing and updating the voter registry;
- Regulating registration and certification of parties for elections;
- Regulating and certifying candidate lists for elections;
- Accrediting elections observers, party and media agents;
- Adjudicating all electoral complaints and appeals (which are appealable only before a special judicial electoral panel);
- Certifying tally procedures;
- Declaring and certifying elections and referenda results (except Council of Representatives results);
- Setting regulations and instructions to ensure a fair electoral process;
- Certifying the structure and senior appointments of the electoral administration; and
- Setting financial policy for the IHEC.

How was voter registration conducted?

The voter registration update (VRU) ahead of the Council of Representatives elections took place from December 17, 2016 to November 9, 2017, and was accessible to voters across 1,079 voter registration centers. Voters were not permitted to register in more than one district.⁴ The biometric VRU for this election was closed on November 9, 2018. There are 23,109,138 voters listed on the final voter register,

⁴ Each identified area for which a number of seats have been allotted in accordance with the provisions of the Council of Representatives Elections Law No. 45 of 2013.

with approximately 293,943 internally displaced persons included. Voter lists were posted for seven days starting November 10, for public scrutiny during an exhibition and challenge period.

How many polling center and polling stations will there be?

Polling centers (PCs) serve a coordination role, with one or more polling stations (PSs) located within the center. PCs will be established in schools, and each center will have a predetermined number of PSs, with a maximum of 550 voters allocated to each station. Approximately 253,000 polling staff will serve in the elections.

Regular Polling Centers

Voting in regular centers will take place in accordance with the final voter list. The Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) will serve voters through 8,148 regular PCs and 51,194 regular PSs.

Polling Centers for Special Need Voting (SNV)

Using information submitted by the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Interior, the IHEC created a special voter list. The list contains: election staff eligible to vote who are working on Election Day; voters working for the armed forces; the police personnel of the Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Interior, other security institutions, and detainees who will vote on May 10. These 947,577 voters have been removed from the final voter list and placed on the SNV list. There will be 486 PCs and 2,181 PSs established for armed forces and 108 special PSs for detainees.

Polling Centers for Conditional and Out-of-Country Voting (OCV)

There will be 136 PCs and 684 PSs for OCV voters who will cast their vote on May 10 and May 11. Finally, approximately 3,000 PSs (including 502 PSs at IDPs camps) for voters who are internally displaced and voting on May 12 will be established.

Polling Centers for Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF)

The PMF will vote on May 12 using a special ballot.⁵ The total number of established PCs will be 36 with 123 PSs in five governorates: Baghdad, Kirkuk, Anbar, Sulaimaniya and Ninewa. The total number of the PMF voters is 47,400.

What are the rules on campaigning?

Fundamental principles of the electoral campaign are equality between all candidates, neutrality of the electoral administration and transparency of the campaign. Campaigning and campaign paraphernalia cannot be displayed in government buildings, religious sites or polling locations. Laws on campaigning also prohibit certain content, such as government logos and images of religious figures who are not

⁵ The PMF are volunteer forces that were formed to combat the Islamic State (IS) separately from the Iraqi military, and later incorporated under the authority of the government of Iraq.

running as candidates. The electoral campaign period started on April 14, 2018, at 12:00 a.m., and concludes at 7:00 a.m. on May 11, 2018, 24 hours before Election Day.

What are the rules for campaign finance?

The Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) has defined expenditure limits for political entities and candidates. The ceiling for a candidate is capped at 250,000 Iraqi dinars (approximately \$210 USD) multiplied by the number of voters in the constituency. The ceiling for a political entity (which may include a coalition of individuals and/or parties) is capped at 250,000 Iraqi dinars (approximately \$210 USD) multiplied by the number of candidates on the political entity's list multiplied by the number of voters in the constituency.

Political entities and candidates are required to submit preliminary financial reports specifying their campaign income and expenditure no later than seven days after Election Day. Final reports should be submitted to the IHEC within 30 days of announcement of the results.

Foreign contributions are prohibited. Non-compliance with campaign finance rules will result in fines and potential lawsuits if an electoral crime was also committed.

What rules should media follow during the electoral campaign?

Media in Iraq is regulated by the Communication and Media Commission (CMC). The Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC), in consultation with the CMC, produced regulations governing the media during the election period. These regulations stipulate the roles the CMC, the IHEC and the judiciary play in controlling the media.

According to the Code for Media during Elections issued by the CMC, the Iraqi Media Network, as a publicly funded media broadcaster with a legal obligation to educate and inform Iraqis, shall provide free air time for political debates and political discussions allowing each candidate to appear at least once during elections programs.

The media campaign period for all political entities, coalitions and candidates ends 24 hours before Election Day. The IHEC may withdraw media accreditation from media entities that violate these regulations. Violations may be referred to the CMC for action.

Where can one find information about the elections?

The Independent High Electoral Commission's (IHEC) public outreach and voter education campaigns are conducted in up to four languages (Arabic, Assyrian, Kurdish, and Turkman). The campaigns use TV and radio, newspapers, large-scale material and direct outreach to voters through symposiums, public meetings, call centers and websites to reach the target population.

Information about the election process can be found on IHEC's website at www.ihec.iq and in English at www.ihec.iq/en. The website contains information on elections and the electoral process in Arabic, English and Kurdish. Regulations, procedures, press releases and outreach products are uploaded daily. The IHEC has Arabic Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/IHEC.Official/>), Twitter and Flickr pages.

What are the new technology improvements in the electoral system?

The Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) has continued to introduce technology to the electoral process. In September 2013, the IHEC Board of Commissioners (BoC) took a formal decision to implement an automated voter registration system to prevent fraud and improve accuracy of the voter list.

In September 2017, the BoC decided to introduce electronic voting and results transmission systems for the May 12 elections. This was a significant step towards automation of the Iraqi elections.

What is the automated voter registration system?

Automated voter registration (AVR) is the process of registering voters using biometric information and subsequently using this data to remove duplications from the voter list.

The first stage of the implementation undertaken by the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC), which started in January 2014, included implementation of the system; manufacture and distribution of electronic cards; and use of electronic cards in the 2014 Council of Representatives elections in conjunction with existing paper-based identification systems. This stage also included biometric registration of civil servants and IHEC employees between January and February 20, 2014. A second phase of biometric voter registration took place between June 2014 and November 9, 2017. The IHEC anticipates continuing biometric voter registration for future electoral events. During the elections, the IHEC will use voter verification devices to verify the identity of voters. The device will read the voters' data from the electronic or biometric voter card. It will also scan voters' fingerprints to confirm identification.

Figure 1 Biometric Registration Kit



What is the new electronic voting, counting, and results transmission system?

The 2018 elections will be the first time the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) will use technology for results counting and transmission of results from the polling stations to the tally centers at the IHEC headquarters on Election Day.

Figure 2 Electronic Device



Scanner lids will be placed on top of ballot boxes. Voter will mark the ballot with a special “stamp pen” and insert it in the assigned slot in the scanner for casting ballots. The scanner scans the casted ballots, reads the marks, and sorts and counts ballots. The scanner will store the data, send it electronically to the IHEC national office through a Very Small Aperture Terminal (V.SAT) satellite system, and then will provide a printed results report.

What are the electronic card and biometric voter cards?

There will be four types of electronic/biometric voter cards issued for this election:

- **New electronic biometric voter cards** – these have been printed for persons who visited voter registration centers before November 9, 2017, and registered biometrically. The card contains personal and biometric data of the voter, as well as assigned polling location information.
- **New electronic voter card (non-biometric)** – these have been printed for “first-time” voters, i.e. those who turned 18 since the last elections, but did not register biometrically. The card contains the voter’s personal data and assigned polling location information, but no biometric data.⁶
- **New biometric voter card for security forces** – these contain personal and biometric data of the voter, as well as assigned polling location information. The serial number of the card is different from those on the regular voters’ cards.
- **“Old” electronic voter card** – these were distributed for the 2014 elections. The card contains personal data of the voter as well as assigned polling location information.

The electronic and biometric cards will be active only for Election Day from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. and will be deactivated for 30 days after being used to vote. They cannot be used to vote twice.

The Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) decided that all voters would be issued **electronic voter cards in 2014**. These cards do not contain biometric information such as fingerprints or facial information. Only the data from the existing voter registration database is used in the production of the card. This card (see *Figure 3*) is used to locate the voter’s record in the polling station voter verification device.

⁶ The new electronic cards were also reprinted for those voter registration centers whose voter cards were destroyed by the Islamic State (IS) in Ninewa, Anbar, and Kirkuk.

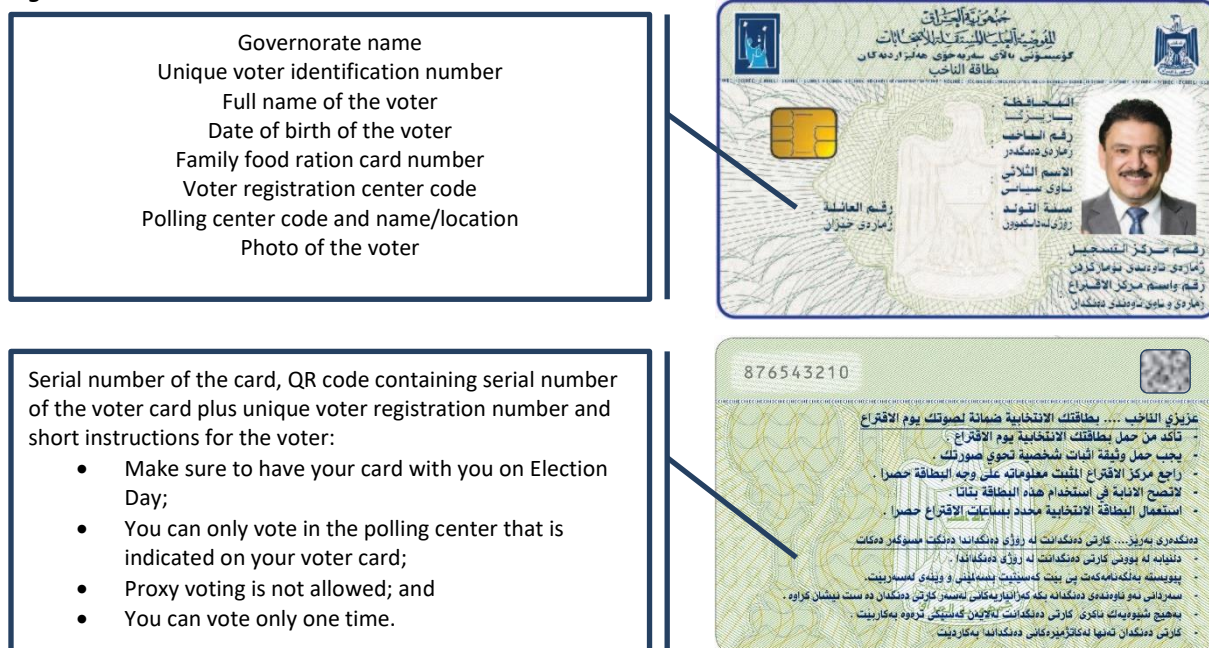
Figure 3 Electronic Card



A **biometric voter card** is issued by the IHEC for each Iraqi voter; if a voter has been biometrically registered before November 9, 2017 (cut-off date for registering voters for this election) but has not picked up their biometric card before elections, they will not be able to vote. The IHEC began a continuous **biometric registration** in June 2014 and will continue capturing eligible voters for future elections.

The biometric card has the following types of voter's data: governorate name, voter's number, voter's full name, date of birth, family number, voter registration center number, name and number of polling center, station number and voter's sequence in station list as well as the voter's biometric data (ten fingerprints and a photo). The electronic verification device reads the data on the card, takes the voter's fingerprint from the left-hand thumb and then the voter is allowed to vote.

Figure 4 Biometric Card



What are the basic rules for Election Day?

The elections will take place on Saturday May 12, 2018. Polling stations (PSs) will be open from 7:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. for regular and absentee voting. Voters are assigned to polling centers based on updated voter data during the voter registration period. Each PS will have a polling station voter verification device, a copy of its voter list to confirm the voter's identity, and electronic counting, sorting and results transmission devices. Voters will be listed in alphabetical order and each voter who wishes to vote will sign the voter list prior to casting a ballot. The ballot must be cast in person and proxy voting is prohibited. Indelible ink on voters' index fingers will be also used as a safeguard against possible multiple voting.

Will conditional voting be allowed?

Conditional voting allows voters not included on a voter list to cast a ballot and to have their ballot conditionally accepted while the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) verifies their eligibility. The IHEC Board of Commissioners has limited conditional voting to hospitals and prisons, out-of-country voting, VIPs,⁷ and certain categories of internally displaced persons⁸. These voters will be provided with a ballot and two envelopes. After making his or her selection on the ballot, the voter will insert the ballot in the envelope, seal it and complete the information on the front of the envelope including:

- Governorate for which the ballot is cast;
- Name, father's name, grandfather's name;
- Date of birth;
- Voter identification number (if available); and
- Public distribution system number (if available)

Voters failing to provide the required information will not be allowed to vote. On the basis of this information, if the voter is proven to be eligible for the governorate for which the ballot is cast according to the voter register, then the ballot will be counted.

How will internally displaced persons vote?

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) who are qualified to vote may vote based on their identified place of origin. Special provisions under Iraq's electoral laws also define an IDP as: "An Iraqi who has been forcefully displaced from his permanent place of residence to another place within Iraq after April 9, 2003, for any reason." The current number of IDPs is estimated at 1,600,000, of which 400,000 IDPs are eligible to vote in the upcoming elections. Polling stations will be available in all locations IDPs are present and those who return to their place of origin will find special polling stations there.

⁷ Members of Parliament, government members, ministries staff, etc.

⁸ IDPs voters in camps who registered with the IHEC prior to their displacement (e.g. for 2014 elections) and have been issued an old electronic voter card, but have lost their card and have not been able to return to their place of origin.

In anticipation of elections taking place at the end of 2017, the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) started registering IDPs on September 16, 2017. By November 10, 2017, 293,943 IDPs (52.57% men and 47.43% women) out of an estimated 400,000 IDP voters were registered biometrically. However, the IHEC has continued registration of IDPs through mobile teams to capture their biometric data so they can be included in the general voter register according to their place of origin for future elections.

On February 21, the Board of Commissioners approved conditional voting for IDPs living outside their place of origin who have neither electronic or biometric voters' cards and prepared for these scenarios:

1. Absentee Voting - IDPs registered to vote in their current place of displacement

IDPs who registered with the IHEC will be allowed to vote for their governorate of origin in their current governorate of residence at special absentee polling stations. An IDP must have expressed an intention to vote in the current place of displacement prior to November 9, 2017 in order to appear on the IDP voter list.

Approximately 292,793 IDPs have used this opportunity and are currently being issued new biometric voter cards. Registered absentee voters are subject to the same laws and regulations as regular voters. There will be a special database for four governorates – Anbar, Ninewa, Kirkuk and Salah Al-Din – loaded on the electronic voter verification devices.

2. IDPs displaced within the governorate of origin

An IDP with an electronic voter card, displaced within his/her governorate of origin, can vote in the designated polling stations where they currently reside. Polling procedures will be the same as for regular voters, using the standard ballot. A special database for the whole governorate will be loaded on the electronic voter verification device. This will apply to Anbar, Ninewa, Kirkuk and Salah Al-Din.

3. IDPs in camps who registered with IHEC prior to their displacement (e.g., for 2014 elections) and have been issued an old electronic voter card, but have lost their card and have not been able to return to their place of origin

The IHEC will open special absentee “conditional voting” polling stations for the IDPs who registered with the IHEC prior to their displacement, but lost the electronic card issued to them prior to the 2014 CoR elections. IDPs wishing to cast a “conditional ballot” will have to present a valid photo ID. Special absentee “conditional voting” polling stations will be opened according to IDP data from the Ministry of Displacement and Migration in all governorates. Voters will be given the opportunity to vote in those polling stations by conditional ballot.

How many poll workers are in a polling center and polling station?

A polling center will have six polling center staff: a polling center coordinator, a queue controller, two inspectors (one male, one female) and a technical supervisor. Each polling station has four members: a polling station manager, an identification officer, a ballot issuer, and a ballot box monitor.

When will polling stations be set up?

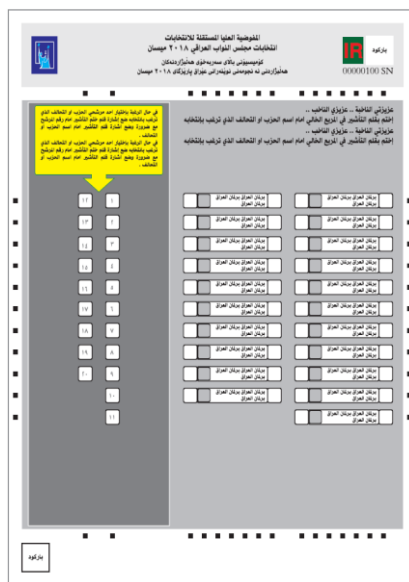
Poll workers will meet on May 11, 2018, with their polling center (PC) coordinator and station manager to set up the PC and station. They will perform an inventory of polling material and display voter lists and voter information posters. The PC coordinator and station manager will also assign tasks and organize the layout of the station for Election Day.

What are the steps for voting?

There are four steps for voting. First, the polling center queue controller checks voters' hands for indelible ink (which would indicate prior voting) and ensures voters have electronic or biometric voter cards. Second, election staff identify voters using the electronic voter verification device by scanning voter cards, taking electronic thumb prints, and scanning the ballot quick response code. Third, the voter signs the paper voter list (or uses a thumbprint in the case of illiterate voters), and the ballot issuer provides a ballot and basic guidance on voting. The last step is casting the ballot into the electronic voting, counting and transmitting device, and dipping the voter's finger in indelible ink.

What will the ballot paper look like?

Figure 5: Sample Ballot Paper



A total of 23.5 million ballot papers have been printed. The ballot paper (Figure 6) lists all competing political entities with their registration number, name and logo. A blank box is located next to each political entity to allow the voter to mark his or her preference. If the voter wishes to vote for a specific candidate, s/he should mark the box next to the candidate number in the candidates' area on the left-hand side of the ballot, in addition to the mark for the political entity. There are boxes for each of Iraq's governorates on top of the ballot box to be stamped by the identification officer, in order to identify the governorate where voting took place. Voters will have different ballots based on their governorate and whether they are a special needs voter.

The ballot also contains instructions on how to make selections in Arabic and Kurdish. Security features include: watermarks, UV ink, microtext, a Guilloche pattern (a technique used to engrave

intricate and repetitive patterns on ballot papers), infrared, carbon black, a unique serial number and a barcode to prevent tampering.

Who can be assisted with casting their votes?

A voter who requires assistance to vote – including those who are blind, illiterate, or cannot write due to a physical disability – may ask the polling station manager for assistance. The polling station manager

must not communicate the voter's choice to anyone. A relative to the fourth degree⁹ may also assist the voter, but no person may assist more than two voters. The polling station manager must explain to the relative the need to maintain secrecy of the voter's choice. Agents and electoral observers may not assist a voter and may not observe assisted voting.

What efforts are being made to accommodate voters with physical or sensory impairments?

For the forthcoming Council of Representatives elections, the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) has been proactive in identifying and responding to the needs of people with physical or sensory impairments. Public outreach materials are also being produced using less text, bigger fonts, and more images to help people with low vision. The IHEC is working with the Ministry of Transport to provide vehicles to take people who require assistance with mobility to polling centers.

When and how will counting of votes take place?

The counting of votes will be done electronically and without any human interference at the polling stations (PSs) using the electronic voting, counting and results transmission system immediately after the polls close. However, the counting process for absentee, conditional, and special needs voting will take place in each governorate's auditing center after closure of general voting.

The PS manager with the support of PS staff will count the number of voters' signatures on the voters' list and categorize and count the unused, spoiled, and discarded ballots and enter the information on the reconciliation form, including the number of ballot papers received at the start of the day. The results will be transmitted via satellite to the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) directly after the end of for collection and tabulation. Should transmission fail, the PS manager will save the data on a USB to share with the IHEC.

The electronic device will also issue a detailed report of votes in each PS. A copy of the report will be provided to political party agents. A results report will not be printed at the PSs for special voting, as those results will be announced at the Governorate Electoral Office audit center at the end of the polling, sorting and counting process in the regular PSs.

When will elections results be announced?

Preliminary polling results will be announced on May 12, 2018. The certified results will be announced after complaints are adjudicated by the Electoral Judicial Panel, which has sole jurisdiction to adjudicate appeals on Board of Commissioners' final decisions.

⁹ A relative to the fourth degree refers to a relative separated by four distinct relationships. For instance, an individual is separated by his/her parents by one degree, aunts and uncles by two degrees, children of aunts/uncles (cousins) by three degrees, and cousin's children by four degrees. This measure helps protect against family voting, in which a close family member might sway an individual voter's decision.

Who will observe the Council of Representatives elections?

National and international elections observers accredited by the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) will be allowed to observe voting and counting processes for the Council of Representatives elections. The IHEC registers only organizations or networks of organizations, not individual observers. Observers will not be allowed to file official complaints based on their observations, but may submit concerns via public reports for the organization they represent. Political entity and candidate agents may be present at the polling station during polling and counting. Accredited media are free to cover polling, counting and sorting processes inside polling centers and polling stations.

What are electoral offenses?

Forging voter lists, knowingly submitting false registration information, undermining the secrecy of balloting, voting more than once, and altering the vote of another person are all electoral crimes punishable by a monetary fine and six months in prison. More severe crimes are insulting, defaming, or assaulting a member of the Independent High Electoral Commission or nominating oneself in more than one constituency, which are punishable by one year in prison.

What is the role of Iraq's judiciary in the electoral process? How will disputes be adjudicated?

Iraq has used a unified model of electoral complaint adjudication with complaints first being presented to the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC). The IHEC Board of Commissioners (BoC) has exclusive jurisdiction to resolve disputes arising out of the preparation for and execution of national, regional and governorate elections, and may delegate jurisdiction to resolve disputes in the first instance to the special committees created by the BoC. The Court of Cassation nominates an Electoral Judicial Panel with the sole jurisdiction to adjudicate appeals on BoC final decisions. The panel should issue decisions within 10 days, starting from the day that the appeal was referred to it by the BoC. All decisions made by the Electoral Judicial Panel are final. After all appeals have been adjudicated by the Electoral Judicial Panel, the BoC will certify the election results.

Resources

- The 2005 Constitution of Iraq ([English](#))
- The Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) [Law No. 11 of 2007](#)
- The Council of Representatives (CoR) Elections Law No. 45 of 2013
- The Coalition Provisional Authority Order No. 97 Political Parties and Entities Law of 2004

The IHEC Regulations can be found at: <http://ihec.iq/en>

- The IHEC Regulation No. 1 of 2018 Nomination of Candidates for the 2018 CoR elections
- The IHEC Regulation No. 2 of 2018 Accreditation of the Political Entities and Coalitions for the 2018 CoR elections
- The IHEC Regulation No. 3 of 2018 Accreditation of Local Observers for the 2018 CoR elections
- The IHEC Regulation No. 4 of 2018 Accreditation of International Observers for the 2018 CoR elections
- The IHEC Regulations No. 5 of 2018 Accreditation of Political Entities Agents for the 2018 CoR elections
- The IHEC Regulation No. 6 of 2018 Complaints and Appeals for the 2018 CoR elections
- The IHEC Regulation No. 7 of 2018 Voting, Counting, and Sorting for the 2018 CoR elections
- The IHEC Regulation No. 11 of 2018 Electoral Campaign for the 2018 CoR elections
- The IHEC Regulation No. 12 of 2018 Seat Allocation for the 2018 CoR elections