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## **IRAQ'S PARLIAMENT TO VOTE ON EMBATTLED FINANCE MINISTER**

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Rudaw, 06 September 2016

Iraq's national assembly is expected to vote today on whether veteran Kurdish politician Hoshyar Zebari can continue as the country's finance minister following a question-and-answer session with on August 27.

Zebari told Rudaw he is hopeful he will survive the possible vote of confidence in the deeply divided parliament and described the efforts to remove him from office as "politically motivated" and "without substance."

"I have broad support not only among those factions that we know, but also among the Shiite and Sunni blocks," Zebari said, hoping the Kurdish lawmakers would unanimously stay behind him despite political differences.

But not the entire Kurdish block in the Iraqi parliament appears to back the minister, who is from the ruling Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP). A petition has been signed by many of the Kurds in his favor.

"If a vote of confidence is held in the parliament, I will not vote for him," said Kurdish MP Muthanna Amin from the Kurdistan Islamic Union (KIU), which has four seats in the Iraqi parliament.

Amin told Rudaw the answers that Zebari provided in the questions session last August were not "trustworthy." He said his fellow KIU lawmakers would vote individually "according to their conscience."

But Zebari says the Kurdish factions in the Iraqi parliament should demonstrate unity and avoid "collision."

"We need to have a common stance on some issues as a Kurdish front in Baghdad," Zebari said, regretting the position of some Kurdish lawmakers in his case. He said other Kurdish ministers in the Iraqi capital could face similar efforts to remove them, while he thought the Kurdish block should be "more united."

Kurds hold 62 seats in Iraq's 328-seat parliament and three ministerial posts in Prime Minister Haidar al-Abadi's government.

To win a no-confidence vote the majority of the parliament -- 165 lawmakers -- need to cast their vote against the minister. But at present only 100 MPs have signed a petition that supports the no-confidence vote.

Efforts are also underway to block the no-confidence vote to take place on Tuesday. Lawmaker Shirin Raza said the KDP faction had prepared a petition signed by 85 MPs that called for the annulment of the no-confidence vote. Several other ministers were expected to sign the petition, Raza predicted.

Zebari has been the finance minister since October 2014. Before that, he was Iraq's foreign minister since 2005. Lawmakers, in particular from the Shiite Daawa Party, have accused Zebari of mismanaging the country's finances, which the minister denies.

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Kaynak/Source: