
ABADI BANS MILITIA LEADERS FROM IRAQ ELECTIONS

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Militia leaders will be banned from running in Iraqs parliamentary and provincial elections next year, prime minister Haider Al Abadi said.

His comments come as Iran-backed Shiite armed groups have been emboldened by their role in defeating ISIL and as fears grow of Tehrans increasing influence in the country.

There must be a clear separation between political and armed groups, Mr Al Abadi said during a visit to a voter registration centre in Baghdad on Saturday.

The prime minister also confirmed the election would be held on May 15. He urged all Iraqis to cast their votes, vowing that Baghdads central government would provide a safe environment for the elections.

Its vital that people choose the politicians that they want, Mr Al Abadi said.

The elections will also take place amid an anti-corruption drive led by the prime minister and after the central government asserted control over the Kurdish region, which had threatened independence.

The governments anti-corruption campaign requires unity of all Iraqis in order to combat this issue, just like our defeat against ISIL, he said.

The Iraqi electoral commission suggested in late October that the elections would be held on May 12, however, the decision must be set by a resolution from Mr Al Abadis cabinet and the electoral commission.

The Iraqi constitution says elections must be held at least 45 days before the end of the current legislative term, and the date must be set by the cabinet of the ruling prime minister.

The last parliamentary elections were held in April 2014, where the ruling Shiite National Alliance formed an inclusive government of Kurds, Sunnis and Shiite politicians.

Iraqs electoral commission said an electronic voting system has been prepared for next years parliamentary elections.

The escalation of tensions between Baghdad and the semi-autonomous region of Kurdistan has made it unclear whether Kurdish parties in the central government will participate after their failed push for independence in late September.

The Kurdistan Democratic Party □ one of the main ruling Kurdish parties - has registered at Iraqs election commission but it is still unclear whether or no they will participate in the vote.

Relations between Baghdad and Erbil deteriorated after the Kurdish Regional Government went ahead with a referendum on independence for region. The September 25 vote saw an overwhelming response in favour of secession but was rejected by Baghdad as illegal.

In response, Baghdad unleashed an economic barrage against Kurdistan by halting all international flights in and out and launched a military operation that recaptured Kirkuk, its surrounding oil fields and other disputed areas. These areas lie outside of the Kurdish region but are claimed by both Baghdad and Erbil, the capital city of Kurdistan region.

Kaynak/Source: