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## **IRAQI PM MOBILIZES SUPPORTERS IN KIRKUK AHEAD OF MAY VOTE**

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30.04.2018

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Asharq Al-Awsat (29 April 2018)

Baghdad – Hamza Mustafa

For the second time since October, incumbent Prime Minister Haidar al-Abadi visited Kirkuk to garner support for the upcoming parliamentary polls, expected in Iraq on May 12.

During his first visit, on October 16, the Prime Minister was described as a pioneer after the Kurdistan Region's failed independence referendum.

On Saturday, Abadi was hailed as the leader of the Nasr (Victory) Coalition, which is competing with the Fateh (Conquest) coalition for a majority of seats in parliament.

The PMs visit to Kirkuk sparked concern among his Shiite allies more than among his competitors from other lists.

Thirteen candidates are running in the election for the Nasr Coalition list in Kirkuk, which includes Kurds, Arabs, Turkmen and other minorities.

The city of Kirkuk is secured in the presence of Arabs, Kurds, Turkmen, Muslims, Christians and other minorities, Abadi said from the oil-rich city.

He stressed that the Iraqi state does not differentiate between its people based on their ethnic or religious backgrounds.

He praised all Iraqi forces that fought against ISIS, including the army, the police and even the Kurdish Peshmerga, marking a shift from his stance last year.

During his October visit to Kirkuk, Abadi angered Kurdish leaderships because he did not hail the Peshmerga in his speeches.

Even when the premier visited Sulaimania and Erbil this week, he made sure to acknowledge the role of the Peshmerga in fighting ISIS.

Commenting on his visit to Kirkuk, spokesperson of the Nasr Coalition Hussein al-Adily told Asharq Al-Awsat that Abadi represents a national cause and an Iraqi project because his coalition includes all Iraqi elements.

His visit to Kirkuk aims to send several messages. He wants to prove that we are the sons of one country, that Iraq is starting to heal and that all disputes and problems should be solved through

dialogue, al-Adily said.

<https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1252671/iraqi-pm-mobilizes-supporters-kirkuk-ahead-may-vote>

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