
AL-SADR SLAMS IRAN, US INTERFERENCE IN IRAQ GOV'T TALKS

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Firebrand Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr on Tuesday rejected Iranian and U.S. interference in the formation of the new Iraqi government.

Iran is a neighboring country that fears for its interest and we hope it will not interfere in Iraqi affairs, al-Sadr said in a statement in response to a question by one of his supporters.

The U.S. is an invader country; we do not allow it to interfere at all, he added.

Al-Sadr's Sairoon coalition won 54 parliamentary seats in the May 12 parliamentary polls, followed by a Hashd al-Shaabi-linked coalition (47 seats) and Prime Minister Haidar al-Abadi's Victory bloc (42 seats), according to the election commission.

The vote results, however, were greeted with widespread fraud allegations during the polls.

Al-Sadr's coalition did not win the majority needed to form a government alone but will play a primary role in selecting the next prime minister.

Al-Sadr said he hoped to establish a technocrat cabinet far removed from narrow sectarian biases.

Known for his hostile approach to the U.S., al-Sadr is one of few Shia leaders who don't have close ties with Iran.

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