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## **IRAQ: CONTROVERSY OVER CHOOSING PRESIDENT'S DEPUTIES**

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Baghdad - Hamza Mustafa

Iraqi Prime Minister Adil Abdul Mahdi announced that the post of deputy PM is abolished and has assigned ministers to the task, meanwhile, political blocs aspiring to take the position of vice-president are adhering to the Federal Supreme Courts decision, which confirmed the unconstitutional decision of former Prime Minister Haidar al-Abadi to abolish the position of Vice President in August 2015.

Legal adviser Ahmed Abadi believes that there is no relationship between the formation of the government and the position of vice-president because this position, regardless of the number of persons that occupy it, is not within the authority of the Prime Minister.

Abadi told Asharq Al-Awsat that the positions of vice-presidents of the republic are within the authority of the president only. As stipulated by the law, the selection of a vice-president should be submitted to the parliament for approval by absolute majority.

Nothing has been issued yet by the Iraqi Presidency to indicate President Barham Saleh will soon announce his deputy, or deputies, however, an informed political source indicated the president is waiting for the consensus of the blocs on this post, although according to the constitution, it is within his powers.

The source told Asharq Al-Awsat that the president is waiting for blocs nominations, taking into account this time there is a tendency to assign a second or third deputy to the Turkmen and not limiting it to Sunnis, Shiites and Kurds.

Within the Shiites officials, there seems to be an agreement to assign Nouri al-Maliki, head of State of Law Coalition and former VP, to this terms position, member of State of Law Saad al-Matlabi told Asharq Al-Awsat.

As for Sunnis, a top official revealed to Asharq Al-Awsat there were sharp differences within the component about who would assume this position if it was agreed to choose a second or third vice president, noting that Saleh al-Mutlaq, Khamis al-Khanjar, Osama al-Nujaifi and Jamal al-Karboli are all competing for the post.

However, Athil al-Nujaifi, Muttahidoon Party top official, denied reports that his brother Osama Nujaifi is a candidate.

Nujaifi told Asharq Al-Awsat that his brother, Ousama, decided to remain a member of the parliament.

Deputy head of the Turkmen Front, MP Hassan Turan, told Asharq Al-Awsat that the Turkmen are now trying to achieve the position of vice-president given they are the third nationalism in Iraq after the Arabs and Kurds.

He added that President Barham Salih and the political leaders in the country support this idea, especially since the Turkmen did not get a ministry in the current government.

"There is a tendency among some Shiite leaders to grant the post of vice president to a Shiite-Turkmen figure, which implies a silent conflict between Shiite-Turkmen and Sunni-Turkmen," indicated the source.

He added that this means a Turkmen figure other than Arashad al-Salihi could be named vice-president and Salihi will be given a ministerial position in Abdul Mahdis government.

<https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1440561/iraq-controversy-over-choosing-presidents-deputies>

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