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## **IRAQ PARLIAMENT HOLDS OFF VOTE ON KEY MINISTERS**

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Deep-seated mistrust and political divisions in Baghdad further delayed the election of several key ministers on Tuesday.

Iraq's parliament convened to no avail, leaving a number of empty positions - including defence and interior - several months after polling.

On October 25, lawmakers gave their stamp of approval to 14 of the country's 22 ministries, with the finance, foreign affairs and oil ministers named. But disaccord among MPs meant the remaining eight portfolios were not put to a vote at the time.

But as lawmakers gathered for Tuesday's session in Baghdad's Green Zone, a copy of their agenda distributed to Agence France-Presse did not include a vote of confidence on the empty posts.

Instead, they were to discuss the 2019 budget, form parliamentary committees and address the mysterious deaths of thousands of fish in the Euphrates.

No new date was announced for a vote of confidence.

In Iraq, major political decisions are typically taken by consensus after drawn-out negotiations among different coalitions jockeying for power.

Those rivalries are widely blamed for the delay in completing the ministerial lineup.

The interior and defence portfolios, key ministries in Iraq which has just emerged from a three-year fight against ISIS, are being temporarily headed by Prime Minister Adel Abdel Mahdi.

Some parliamentarians have insisted that nominated ministers be vetted by Iraq's "debaathification" council, to ensure none were members of ousted dictator Saddam Hussein's ruling party.

Iraq held elections in May for the 329-member parliament, which has selected Barham Saleh as president.

The new government faces an immense task in rebuilding a country ravaged by the war against IS, fierce sectarian infighting and the US-led 2003 invasion.

It will also have to deal with the scourges of corruption, power shortages and decaying public services.

Iraq is governed by a power-sharing arrangement which reserves the post of prime minister for a Shiite Muslim, parliament speaker for a Sunni, and the presidency for a Kurd.

<https://www.thenational.ae/world/mena/iraq-parliament-holds-off-vote-on-key-ministers-1.788815>

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