
PERSISTENT POLITICAL INFIGHTING IS RISKING IRAQ'S HARD-WON GAINS

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Nine months after holding elections and three months after government formation, Iraq remains without ministers of defence, interior, education and justice. Vacancies in the ministries responsible for security and justice raise concerns about the stability of a country that has emerged from a bitter battle against ISIS and internal armed conflict. The absence of a strong minister of education is an indicator of how much the educational sector in Iraq has regressed. The vacuum at these four ministries casts a shadow over Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdis efforts to lead. Even more importantly, keeping the ministries of defence and interior without clear leadership weakens any efforts to limit the role and influence of militias and armed groups.

The lack of appointments is due to political infighting and deal-making at the cost of having the best candidate for the job. At the heart of the disagreement is the insistence of the Al Binaa bloc, led by former prime minister Nouri Al Maliki, on the appointment of Fali Al Fayyadh to the position of Minister of Interior. This is the same Fali Al Fayyadh who was the official head of the Popular Mobilisation Forces, or Hashd Al Shaabi, in the previous government. Mr Al Fayyadhs appointment would mean a further step in solidifying the presence and influence of militias, mainly backed by Iran, in Iraqs security apparatus.

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