CONTROVERSY IN IRAQ AFTER SADR JOINS KHAMENEI, SOLEIMANI AT IRAN CEREMONY

-

12.09.2019

Asharq Al-Awsat (12 September 2019)

Baghdad - Fadhel al-Nashmi

The appearance of Iraqi cleric Moqtada Sadr next to Irans supreme leader Ali Khamenei Khamenei and the commander of the Quds Force of the Revolutionary Guard Corps, Major General Qasem Soleimani, has stirred controversy in Iraq.

The Iranian Fars news agency published on Tuesday a photo showing Sadr, who has been critical of pro-Iran groups in Iraq, joining Iran's supreme leader during a rare visit to Tehran to mark the Shiite holy day of Ashura.

Websites linked to the Sadrist Movement also released photos of Sadr distributing food in the Iranian city of Qom, adding that the visit had a personal and not a political motive.

However, Sadrs trip to Iran sparked controversy with some analysts supporting the visit, and saying Sadr was acting as a national leader who protects the interests of Iraq. Others criticized his visit and said they believe the Iraqi cleric has become pro-Iran, similar to other Iraqi political leaders.

Sadrs office did not comment on the clerics visit. However, Iraqi Shiite lawmaker and member of the Sadrist Movement Hakem al-Zameli said on Wednesday that Sadr was attending a ceremony in Tehran, which coincided with the presence of Khamenei and Soleimani.

Sadr holds good relations with all neighboring countries, the MP told reporters, adding that all parties respect his national honorable stands towards Iraq and the current regional crises.

Member of the Sairoon Alliance deputy Riyad al-Massoudi also commented on Sadrs appearance in Iran, saying that Iraqs relationship with regional countries is built on the respect of sovereignty and good neighborliness.

However, former Sadrist Movement activist Ghaith al-Tamimi, who is known for his public criticism of Iran, criticized Sadr, saying he can no longer be regarded as a national leader.

Head of the Iraqi Center for Political Thought Ihsan al-Shammari told Asharq Al-Awsat that Sadrs appearance in Iraq was a shock for his followers and his political allies because he is known for disagreeing with the Iranian policies in Iraq.

Sadrs visit to Iran holds several messages, mainly his aim to create a balance, after accusations for being close to Arab and Gulf states, Shammari said.

https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1898736/controversy-iraq-after-sadr-joins-khamenei-soleimani-iran-ceremony

---

Kaynak/Source: