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## **IRAQ'S PRESIDENT CALLS FOR ELECTORAL REFORM, NATIONAL DIALOGUE**

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Asharq Al-Awsat (17 October 2019)

Baghdad - Hamza Mustafa

Iraqi President Barham Salih said that time has come to restore the peoples confidence in the countrys political system.

The central commission of inquiry is preparing to announce the results of investigations into the deaths of over 100 people and the injury of more than 6,000 during recent demonstrations, as the government struggles to meet some of the protesters's demands.

The President called for a radical amendment to the election law as part of the reform of the political system, which was severely disrupted after the demonstrations, while calling for a comprehensive national dialogue on a unified vision for the crisis.

Salih met with representatives of the UN and electoral commission and a number of university professors, media professionals, activists, specialists and legal experts.

During the meeting, Salih said low turnout in the 2018 elections was a clear sign on the need to amend the general election law.

A presidential statement issued after the meeting noted that Iraq is heading toward tremendous changes, saying there is a need for major reforms to restore confidence in the system.

It called for a serious and purposeful review of the election system that provides Iraqis with a guaranteed chance to express their point of view across the country."

The President asserted the call for a national dialogue to address the shortcomings of the government.

Former head of the electoral commission in Iraq Mekdad al-Sharifi believes the amendments that Salih is working on help achieve justice and equality more than the current law.

However, Sharifi told Asharq Al-Awsat that the amendment faces administrative problems, including disagreements between the provincial councils and the Ministry of Planning on the establishment of new districts.

Another problem is that the law being drafted by the President abolishes symbolism, meaning, a political leader can no longer get hundreds of thousands of votes, and therefore a number of candidates within the same list can win even if they didnt receive the necessary votes.

Sharifi believes political parties would oppose such a move for failing to serve their interests.

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