
IRAQ: SISTANI URGES STATE TO CONTROL WIDESPREAD ARMS USE

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Iraq's top Shiite cleric Ali al-Sistani on Friday condemned recent killings and kidnappings of protesters, urging the state to assert control over the widespread use of weapons.

He also called on the armed forces to remain professional, loyal to the state and free from foreign influence, a representative of Sistani said during a sermon on Friday in Kerbala.

Armed forces "must be loyal to the nation, and free from foreign interference," he said.

Iraq has been rocked by anti-government protests for more than two months. More than 440 people have been killed since Oct. 1, according to a Reuters tally.

Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi said he would resign last month after Sistani withdrew his support for the government.

On Thursday, demonstrators lynched a teenager accused of attacking a protest encampment in Baghdad, police and witnesses said.

Police said a dispute between a 17-year-old male and protesters culminated with the body of the youth being strung from a traffic light near Tahrir Square, the epicenter of the months-old anti-government protest movement.

Video streamed live online showed security forces withdrawing before a crowd dragged a man along the ground while people kicked him.

His body was then strung up by the feet from a traffic light.

<https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/2034221/iraq-sistani-urges-state-control-widespread-arms-use>

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