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## **IRAQ PM-DESIGNATE VOWS NEW INDEPENDENT CABINET WITHIN WEEK**

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Iraq's premier-designate Mohammad Allawi announced on Saturday that he would submit his cabinet to a parliamentary vote within days, promising it would be stacked with "independents", a key demand of influential cleric Muqtada al-Sadr.

The country's capital and Shia-majority south have been rocked by demonstrations since October demanding an end to corruption and a total overhaul of the ruling class, AFP said.

For the past four months, Iraqis have been protesting in Baghdad and nine Shia provinces in southern Iraq, calling for basic services and more jobs, leaders to be held accountable for corruption, new electoral laws and the end of foreign interference. More than 550 demonstrators have been killed and about 25,000 injured.

Allawi, a two-time communications minister, has until 2 March to propose ministers to parliament, which must grant them a vote of confidence.

Iraqi officials have quietly expressed scepticism that he would be able to complete it in time. Still, Allawi surprisingly announced he would submit the lineup early.

"We're nearing a historic achievement: completing an independent cabinet of competent and impartial people, without the intervention of any political party," Allawi said on Twitter.

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