



(Washington Times, 2019)

## Violent Protests Erupt in Iraq: Call for Regime Change and an end to Iranian Hegemony

**October 4th, 2019**

On Tuesday, October 1<sup>st</sup>, violent protests broke out in the capital city, Baghdad, of Iraq. The demonstrations were protesting the government, specifically the Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi, who was elected only one year ago.<sup>1</sup> Specifically, Iraqis took to the streets calling for better services, more jobs (stemming from high levels of unemployment), and an end to corruption.<sup>2</sup> Over the past two days of anti-government uprisings, violence has sprung up around the country, most of the internet has been blocked, and an indefinite curfew was put into place in Baghdad.<sup>3</sup>

The Iraqi government's response to the protests are unprecedented, leaving nearly 20 people dead, and hundreds more injured in only three days. Mahdi claimed that he would bring more jobs to college

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/nation-world/article235746022.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://edition.cnn.com/videos/world/2019/10/03/iraq-baghdad-protests-curfew-wedeman-nr-sot-vpx.cnn>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/nation-world/article235746022.html>

graduates in Iraq, but didn't give any response to the other requests of the protesters. Prior to the protests, Prime Minister Mahdi removed one of the highest ranking military officials in the country, Abdul Wahaab al-Saadi in a move to consolidate power.<sup>4</sup> Al-Saadi was seen as one of the most influential military leaders in combatting ISIS and corruption over the past years.

While Iran's role in Iraq has transformed over recent months, as Iraq is caught in between the tensions of the United States and Iraq, the millions of people who are expected to cross the border into Iraq from Iran may also add to these tensions. The Iranian government has warned those making the Arbaeen pilgrimage to wait to cross the border, until the protests calm down.<sup>5</sup>

However, civilians view this move by Mahdi as a direct effect of Iranian influence within Iraq, and have been seen protesting the Iranian support for Shiite militias and groups within Iraq. The Iranian ambassador to Iraq has been summoned to the foreign ministry following a statement he made after the protest broke out, regarding Iranian aggression in Iraq.<sup>6</sup> Early this morning, Prime Minister Mahdi made a statement trying to subdue the protestors, despite his efforts, the people of Iraq have not responded positively, and continue to experience provocations by Iraqi forces.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ft.com/content/6922ff3a-e5b9-11e9-b112-9624ec9edc59>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-protest-iran/ahead-of-pilgrimage-iran-border-crossing-closed-due-to-iraq-unrest-idUSKBN1WI0OS>

<sup>6</sup> <https://en.radiofarda.com/a/iraq-warns-iran-s-ambassador-for-his-remarks-as-death-toll-in-protests-climbs/30197918.html>

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