

Electoral Shifts Likely Following Deadline Extension for Candidates

By Jessa Rose Dury-Agri

Iraq's political parties will use a week-long extension on the submission of electoral list candidates to reshape unofficial and official electoral list alliances.

Iraq's Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) extended the submission deadline for electoral list coalition candidates from February 10 until February 15. The candidate lists determine how seats will be allocated after the election on May 12, 2018. Political alliances have become unusually fluid since January 11, IHEC's official deadline for alliance formation. The extension gives additional time for electoral list coalitions to establish the order and quota of member parties on their candidate lists. The bonus week also allows parties to split and join electoral list coalitions unofficially by coordinating their candidate list submissions. IHEC may also bend to political pressure and allow legal means for alliances to form officially.

Political alliances show signs of upcoming change.

Kurdish political parties met on February 6 to discuss the formation of a unified electoral list to run in Iraq's disputed territories in upcoming elections. Kurdish parties are attempting to overcome internal divisions to run on a unified list in oil-rich Kirkuk Province. Separately, Sunni Al-Watan al-Iraqi (Iraqi Homeland) party leader Mishan al-Jubouri of Salah al-Din Province announced his party's intention to join Vice President Ayad al-Allawi's Itilaf al-Wataniyah (National Coalition) electoral list on February 8. Jubouri split from the Hadi al-Amiri-led Tahalaf al-Fatah (Conquest Alliance) on January 16. Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi will use the additional week to form a consensus on Itilaf al-Nasr (Victory Coalition) candidates after Ammar al-Hakim's political bloc split on January 29. ISW detailed Victory Coalition fractures on February 2.

