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Iraq

Iraq, winds of hope

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Since the end of July, and despite continued terrorist attacks by the so called Islamic State (IS) against Iraqi civilians, massive popular demonstrations have taken place in the capital Baghdad and several cities in the south of the country, [1] mainly to denounce corruption in the country and the political bankruptcy of the ruling sectarian political parties. Demands of the protesters notably included the dissolution of parliament, the end of the domination of the clergy on the structure of the Iraqi state and the modification of the Constitution to end the sectarian quotas. The demonstrations also condemned the continuing failures and power outages, deteriorating public services and increasing social inequalities.

The underlying causes of this widespread anger, whose sources are much deeper, are above all the growing authoritarianism and lack of social justice, with over 35% of Iraqis living below the poverty line. Furthermore, the repression by the security services and Shia reactionary militias linked to the government, of a protest demanding the provision of electricity in an area located at the north of the city of Basra, causing the death of a protester and leaving 4 wounded, has also ignited the spark of protest.

Even if conservative parties allied with the government and religious figures called to participate in the massive protests in an opportunistic attempt and to coax the movement, while without mobilising their membership, the demonstrators, for the most part made up of youth and with a substantial female presence, were challenging the political system as a whole ...

These massive demonstrations calls for a secular state in opposition to a confessional state, against the division between Sunni and Shi'a populations, for women's rights and equality, and clear condemnations of sectarian political parties with placards notably saying "the parliament and the Islamic State are two sides of the same coin", "Daech was born out of your corruption", "the Human does not survive with religion but bread and dignity", "in the name of religion, they act like thieves", "no to sectarianism, no to nationalism yes to humanity", "there is no end to corruption in a sectarian and nationalist regime", etc ...

Former Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, whose eight years, from 2006 until 2014, in office were marred by allegations of corruption, authoritarianism and alienation of the Sunni population and who still has an important influence in the Iraqi regime, especially in the security services and various Shi'a sectarian militias, was particularly targeted by protesters who chanted slogans demanding that he'd be tried for his crimes and corruption cases. An Iraqi parliamentary inquiry has also found former prime minister Al-Maliki and 35 other officials responsible for the fall of Iraq's second city, Mosul, which fell smoothly into the hands of the IS in June 2014. He was notably accused as commander in chief of the army, to have sought to centralize control of the army in its services and to have played an important part in the weakening of the army particularly in appointing commanders chosen for their loyalty rather than their competences.

Militia groups linked to the former Prime Minister and / or to the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) have not actually hesitated to attack protesters with knives in cities such as Baghdad and Kerbala, while the local security forces remained silent, resulting notably with more than thirty wounded in Baghdad and including dozens in Karbala.

In addition to this, a large crowd in the city of Kerbala, a highly symbolic Shi'a location, has also not hesitated to condemn the hegemonic influence of Iran on the Iraqi government and its interventions in the internal affairs of the country singing "Karbala is free, Tehran out! Out!" after Shi'a sectarian militia groups, called "popular mobilization forces" trained and organized by the Iraqi regime with the direct assistance of military officials of the IRI to fight the

Islamic State, and Shi'a clergymen chanted slogans glorifying the Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. The militias then attacked the demonstrators.

Few days later, still in the city of Kerbala, the demonstrators tried to storm the building of the province and local government, but security forces repelled them.

This massive popular movement was also accompanied by strikes in some sectors, particularly in the energy and industry fields, opposing privatization and for better working conditions.

The Iraqi government led by Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, from the Shi'a Dawa Islamic fundamentalist movement, reacted to these protesters by voting new laws against corruption and suppressing important political positions (notably of three deputy prime ministers and three vice-presidents, including Nouri al-Maliki) and privileges of ministers and deputies to try to stop this movement. The program proposed by the Parliament also addressed the "immediate and comprehensive reduction" of the large number of bodyguards of officials, the abolition of "special provisions" granted to officials and finally the abolition "of sectarian quotas". The plan proposes that politicians are no longer selected according to their religious or ethnic affiliation, but according to "their competences, honesty and experience" .

These measures are nevertheless probably only propagandist and a way to calm the rising wrath of the Iraqi popular classes, because the main beneficiaries of the sectarian regime are these same deputies that voted these law.

We must show our solidarity with the Iraqi popular masses, who have suffered of local oppressions, from the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein to the sectarian and reactionary parties in power since 2005, in addition to the IS, and of the interventions of regional, the IRI and the Gulf monarchies and international imperialists actors, especially of the USA since the embargo in 1991 to the military intervention and occupation from 2003, in their struggle for democracy, social justice, equality and against sectarianism.

The massive popular protests in Iraq are a sign of hope in a region dominated and crushed by bloody dictatorships and reactionary forces.

[Syria Freedom Forever](#)

[1] To see pictures and videos of the demonstrations: <https://syriafreedomforever.wordpress.com>
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