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the beginning of 2026 until mid-April



Monitoring Report by:

Peace and Freedom Organization  
(PFO)



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## Introduction:

Iraq has been experiencing a difficult political situation, particularly following delays in fulfilling constitutional entitlements stemming from the legislative elections held on November 11, 2025. The newly elected council of representatives failed to elect a president of the republic until April 11, 2026, when a president was finally chosen. Consequently, the remaining constitutional steps, such as appointing the prime minister and forming a new government, are still pending.

These failures have become more severe with the American–Israeli war on Iran, as it has become a bargaining tool and a source of pressure on all parties in the Iraqi political landscape, particularly the Shiite Coordination Framework and the Shiite political bloc. Thus, the candidates for the remaining presidential positions (state and government) have become subjects of bargaining among Iraqi political forces, either internally by pressuring other groups—even within the Shiite house itself—to accept a specific candidate who can confront Washington’s policies and does not follow a policy of balance, or externally by putting pressure on American interests if they refuse to accept the candidate supported by Iran to lead the government in Iraq.

Therefore, it is difficult to say that Iraq can easily complete the process of forming its institutions based on the November 2025 elections. Rather, the most likely scenario seems to be the continuation of the current situation as it is. The post-war phase will reflect on the «consensus» candidate mechanism, which is the standard mechanism for selecting a prime minister when political forces disagree internally, and the powers concerned with Iraq disagree externally specifically Iran and the United States regarding who leads the new government.

The results of that war will also be reflected in the American demand to prevent the participation of armed factions in the new government, as well as in the call to decouple from Iran as a whole. In all these cases, the “parallel weapon” in Iraq—referring to the arms held by non-state armed factions—will remain present.

In conclusion, it can be said that Iraq, during the American war on Iran (February 2026), has begun to experience a real impasse. The officially declared policy of balance or neutrality does not reflect the reality on the ground, which is witnessing active and significant involvement by Iraqi armed factions. Although these factions operate outside the structure of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), they continue to benefit from its security and political umbrella.

Forty days of the American-Israeli war on Iran have reflected several political issues inside Iraq, most notably the complexity of selecting and forming the government. It also reflected a security failure regarding the security role of the «PMF Authority,» in addition to sharp economic repercussions that the oil, electricity, and energy sectors in general have begun to witness. The Iraqi government fears that this war will result in economic sanctions on Iraq due to the behavior of armed factions supporting Iran. In fact, it is expected that Iraq will face sanctions if it moves toward choosing a figure for the position of Prime Minister who does not have Washington’s approval. All of this will remain subject to the outcomes and results of the American war

on Iran in the foreseeable future.

On the other hand, following the parliamentary elections in the Kurdistan Region in October 2024, there were expectations among the Kurdish public for the swift formation of a government capable of meeting the region's needs and addressing economic pressures, particularly the crisis of delayed and suspended salary payments, as well as political pressures driven by developments in Iraq and the wider region.

However, the opposite occurred; the delay extended for nearly a year and a half—the longest period since the region's inception—with both parties insisting on their demands, even at the expense of the interests of the region's citizens.

The economic and social situation—particularly the right to work, trade union freedoms, and social security—was affected by the war in Irian, as well as in the periods before and after it, experiencing major disruptions and challenges. However, during the war, it suffered severe shocks, as thousands of jobs were lost and the right to work was significantly undermined. Unemployment rose sharply, reaching unprecedented levels, and with the increase in prices of basic daily goods, coupled with limited job opportunities, poverty deepened, leaving thousands below the poverty line without a clear policy to address it.

## **Laying off Workers in the Private Sector:**

*Within the series of crises affecting various local sectors, private sector workers in Iraq face increasing pressures due to the overlapping impacts of the war and internal imbalances in the labor market.*

- In Basra, owners of oil companies have warned of the potential layoff of around 40,000 workers due to supply disruptions and fluctuations in the dollar exchange rate, signaling a possible widespread unemployment crisis.
- Actual layoff cases were recorded, including the termination of services for about 80 workers in a foreign company without prior notice, amid demands for the Ministry of Labor to intervene.
- In the tourism sector, several governorates—including Wasit, Baghdad, Erbil, Nineveh, Basra, and Najaf—witnessed mass layoffs of employees in tourism companies due to the suspension of flights and the decline in cross-border activity, as well as the halt of tourism, including religious tourism. Meanwhile, other companies sought to reduce workers' wages by varying percentages, reaching up to 50% or more.
- This is in addition to the closure of bakeries and ovens due to the rise in liquid gas prices to record levels, as most bakeries in Iraq have either stopped operations or reduced their activity, leading to the layoff of thousands of workers in this sector.
- Furthermore, work has stopped in most hotels and restaurants, resulting in the layoff of hundreds of workers in this facility as well. High unemployment rates have increased, reaching over 20% according to some sources, alongside the high poverty rate already present in the country.
- Daily work, daily wage workers, and truck drivers involved in transporting oil and gas have also stopped working. Collectively, the number of workers laid off during the period of the American–Israeli war

on Iran, and its effects on Iraq, is estimated at around 100,000, despite the absence of official statistics in this regard.

## Risks to Workers and Employees of Civil Society Organizations:

Since the end of 2025, Iraqi and Kurdish civil society organizations, along with foreign non-governmental organizations operating in Iraq, have faced significant financial constraints. No large or medium-scale funding has been recorded in Iraq, except for limited small-scale support. Furthermore, there is no local funding available for independent non-governmental organizations in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region.

As a result, many foreign organizations operating in Iraq have been forced to leave the country and lay off their staff. Most local organizations have lost their projects and, consequently, have resorted to dismissing their employees. The number of workers in this sector is estimated to be in the thousands.

In our follow-up of several organizations, some that employed around 100 male and female staff members in 2025 now have only five employees remaining in 2026. Other foreign organizations, which had around 200 employees, have withdrawn entirely and laid off all their staff.

A major issue facing NGO workers is that most are not registered in social security, due to the non-profit nature of the sector and the requirement for employer contributions, which amount to 12% of total salaries. This places a financial burden on organizations and constitutes a violation of NGO workers' rights.

## Continuous Labor Protests Across Iraq



During the past three and a half months, demonstrations by workers and employees across government and non-government sectors, as well as profit-making companies, have become a prominent feature. Hundreds of protests have taken place in various areas of Iraq and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

A large portion of these demand-based protests—focused exclusively on worker and employee rights, without

broader political or general demands—was monitored and documented by our organization’s team from the beginning of 2026 until mid-April 2026.

- On January 2, 2026, hundreds of employees from the Ministry of Industry and Minerals held a protest demanding amendments to the Civil Service Law and the new salary scale.

- On January 7, 2026, dozens of employees of the South Refineries Company organized a protest in front of the company’s headquarters in Basra, calling for the implementation of ministerial decisions regarding the recognition of academic degrees issued since 2025.

- On January 18, 2026, dozens of Iraqi staff working with the Chinese company CEEC at the Rumaila solar energy project held a protest demanding full compliance with the Iraqi Labor Law. The company required Iraqi employees to work more than 10 hours per day, canceled transportation services, and forced them to use their private vehicles. In addition, salaries were delayed for more than a month and a half. The number of Iraqi employees is around 60, compared to approximately 1,000 Chinese workers, most of whom lack official work visas.

- On January 20, 2026, hundreds of 2023 medical and health profession graduates demonstrated in Baghdad in front of the Ministry of Health, protesting the delay in their appointment and the implementation of their administrative orders.

- On January 24, 2026, universities in Baghdad and the governorates closed their doors and entered a comprehensive strike, rejecting the decision to cut university allowances. The Ministry of Finance refused to receive salary lists for higher education staff. University representatives stated that the Ministry of Finance conditioned the removal of university service allowances in exchange for increasing salary funding. Strikers at several universities (Baghdad, Al-Iraqia, Al-Nahrain, Technology, Central Technical, Kut, Basra, Babylon, Maysan, Dhi Qar) held the Ministry of Finance directly responsible for the suspension. Other employees protested in front of the Green Zone against the Ministerial Council for Economy’s decision. Hundreds participated in these demonstrations.

- On February 1, 2026, dozens of Petrochemical Industries Company employees in Basra organized a protest due to salary reductions by the Ministry of Finance.

- On February 2, 2026, taxi drivers under the «Baly» company app in Basra renewed protests against the prices set by the app and the deductions imposed on drivers.

- In Baghdad, dozens of state employees with higher degrees (PhD and Master’s) and primary degrees organized a protest in front of the Ministry of Higher Education demanding the completion of their degree recognition files on February 2, 2026.

- In Maysan, on February 2, 2026, owners of agricultural lands in the Halfaya area participated in a protest demanding permanent employment status, as they work on contract in oil fields established on their lands.

- On February 3, 2026, a protest by Basra Paper Mill employees against a 15% salary cut.

- Workers at the Maysan Paper Mill demonstrated against a 15% salary deduction, which they deemed

illegal, on February 3, 2026.

- On February 4, 2026, for the second day, Basra Paper Mill employees protested against changes in pension contributions and deduction rates, which increased the financial burden on employees. A representative stated that the total deduction reached 25% (10% from the employee and 15% from the state previously, but now all on the employee), which is a clear injustice.
- Security guards at the FCC project in Shuaiba Refinery, Basra, demonstrated demanding conversion to formal contracts on February 4, 2026.
- Employees of the Petrochemical Company in Basra protested against salary deductions on February 4, 2026.
- Administrative graduates in Najaf demonstrated demanding government employment opportunities on February 4, 2026.
- On February 5, 2026, municipality workers in Afak District, Diwaniyah, went on strike due to the non-release of their delayed monthly salaries.
- On February 9, 2026, dozens of Hilla Textile Factory employees protested against a 15% salary cut.
- A protest by dozens of Fao municipality workers in Basra due to delayed salaries was held on February 9, 2026.
- On February 10, 2026, sanitation workers in Maysan called for the release of their monthly salaries, amounting to 210,000 Iraqi dinars.
- On February 11, 2026, hundreds of long-term graduates (more than five years since graduation) demonstrated in Baghdad and Maysan, demanding employment opportunities.
- Hundreds of temporary contract workers demonstrated in front of the Ministry of Education in Baghdad and the Diwaniyah Education Directorate demanding permanent employment status and salary allocation on February 11, 2026.
- Dozens of Food Security Authority contract employees appealed for the release of their salaries on February 11, 2026.
- On February 13, 2026, in Kurdistan, retirees expressed their rejection of continued delays and cuts to their salaries during a press conference.
- Middle Euphrates Railway employees in Samawah (Muthanna) protested for their delayed salaries on February 14, 2026.
- FCC staff at South Refineries Company protested demanding the regulation of their employment on February 14, 2026.
- On February 15, 2026, hundreds of workers in Basra municipalities protested against poor salaries and employment status, demanding a new salary scale and land plots.
- On February 17, 2026, hundreds of science and engineering graduates in Baghdad demonstrated for job opportunities.
- A demonstration by FCC project workers in front of South Refineries Company after their contracts were rescinded took place on February 17, 2026.
- On February 22, 2026, employees of «Anton Oil» inside the Majnoon oil field production authority demonstrated for two months of delayed dues.
- On March 4, 2026, hundreds of municipality employees in Diyala protested in front of the

governorate building against a 15% salary deduction for the second consecutive month.



- In Babylon, on March 14, 2026, dozens of higher degree holders in the Ministry of Education protested the cut of university service allowances. Some participants stated the demonstration included administrative staff and sanitation workers protesting deductions blamed on funding shortages.



- Security guards at Chinese oil companies in Halfaya, Maysan, protested against their dismissal without prior notice on March 14, 2026. About 250 guards are affected.

- On March 16, 2026, a large number of higher degree employees demonstrated in front of the Ministry of Education in Baghdad and the Education Directorate in Basra against the cut of university service allowances.

- On March 30, 2026, teaching staff in the Ministry of Education protested in Baghdad against the retroactive deduction of professional allowances from full-time caregivers.

- In Diwaniyah, on March 30, 2026, dozens of graduates demonstrated for appointment opportunities.

- On April 6, 2026, employees of the Badush Cement Plant protested for contract service recognition and promotions.

- In Kirkuk, on April 6, 2026, newly appointed employees (holders of higher degrees and top-performing graduates) protested delays in their salaries for more than a year, despite having performed their duties since December 4, 2024. They noted that 16 months of unpaid arrears remain outstanding.

- Dozens of volunteer lecturers in Kirkuk also demonstrated for permanent employment status on April 6, 2026.

- On April 9, 2026, Oil Institute graduates continued protests for the third day in front of the Ministry of Oil demanding jobs, facing clashes and assaults by security forces.

## Occupational and work-related fatalities:

According to our organization's reports and other parties, more than 80 workers lost their lives in 2025 due to a lack of occupational safety and health equipment, lack of serious monitoring, low worker awareness of risks, and weak legislation in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region. This dangerous pace continues in 2026, requiring immediate intervention. Despite the difficulty in obtaining official statistics, our team monitored several cases since the beginning of 2026 until April 15, 2026:

1. On January 12, 2026, a worker died in a car repair shop in the Bingird area, Sulaymaniyah.
2. On January 12, 2026, a Chinese foreign worker died in a work accident inside the Ratawi field site, Basra.
3. On January 20, 2026, an Indian foreign worker died at the Mass Steel Factory in the Bazian area, Sulaymaniyah.
4. During January 2026, two workers died from poisoning in an asphalt factory in Khalis, Diyala.
5. On February 1, 2026, a female worker in a factory in Sharazur, Sulaymaniyah, died from a fall.
6. On February 6, 2026, two workers (Iranian and Bangladeshi) died after falling into a tank at a thermal and water insulation factory.
7. On the night of February 7, 2026, two employees of the Electricity Department in Garmian, Sulaymaniyah, lost their lives.
8. On February 7, 2026, a worker died and dozens were injured in a fire at the Baiji Refinery, Saladin.
9. On February 22, 2026, a Syrian foreign worker died after falling from the upper floors of a construction project in Sulaymaniyah.
10. During February 2026, a worker died and others were injured after a concrete block collapsed during pouring at the Shatra International Stadium project, Dhi Qar.



11. On March 15, 2026, a mobile worker in the Bingird area, Chamchamal, died in a car accident.
12. On March 15, 2026, a daily labor worker died at a work site in Erbil while waiting for a work opportunity.
13. On the night of March 18, 2026, a security guard died in a housing project in Sulaymaniyah after falling from upper floors.
14. On March 25, 2026, two workers died in Duhok due to an electric shock at a residential project.
15. On March 26, 2026, a security guard lost his life in the Laylan area of Kirkuk on his way back from work due to flash floods and flooding.
- 16.
17. In Dhi Qar, on March 28, 2026, an Afghan worker in his thirties died in a work accident inside a private iron and steel factory south of Nasiriyah. The worker sustained a fatal injury while operating a machine.
18. On April 6, 2026, a construction worker died from an electric shock in Samawah, Muthanna Governorate, while working in one of the areas of Samawah.
19. On April 7, 2026, a worker in a lighting project in Darbandikhan District, Sulaymaniyah Governorate, lost his life during work as a result of an electric shock.
20. A worker died in a restaurant in Al-Hashimiyah District, south of Hillah in Babylon Governorate, and another was injured on April 9, 2026, in a fire resulting from a gas cylinder explosion during their work.
21. Two workers lost their lives due to an electric shock while working on the maintenance of power lines.

The incident occurred during the performance of their duties. The incident took place on March 14, 2026.

The victims, aged approximately 30 and 59, were carrying out maintenance work when the accident occurred.

In total, from January 1, 2026, to April 15, 2026, 25 male and female workers lost their lives during work. Notably, for the first time, our team monitored the death of a female worker. There are 6 foreign workers (Arab and Asian) among the cases. It is worth mentioning that on November 19, 2025, the Ministry of Labor announced the deportation of 34,000 foreign workers who entered Iraq illegally during 2024-2025.

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