

# Women's Political Empowerment in Iraq After 2003

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## الملخص:

تقاس درجة التنمية البشرية في أي مجتمع بمدى مشاركة المرأة في الحياة السياسية، وقد عانت المرأة العراقية إلى جانب العديد من دول العالم الثالث من أزمة حقيقية تتعلق بمشاركة المرأة، ولعبت عوامل كثيرة في تقليل حصة وحجم مشاركتها، بما في ذلك الدور المتنامي للقوات الأمنية والجيش في الحياة السياسية وعسكرة المجتمع خلال حرب السنوات الثماني والأحداث اللاحقة التي أدت إلى تفكك المرأة وتقليص دورها. وقد برز دور المرأة في العراق بعد منحها حصة للمشاركة السياسية في الدستور العراقي الجديد بعد عام 2003. إن المشاركة السياسية للمرأة لا تتعلق فقط بالحصول على حقوقها السياسية ولكن أيضا حقها في شرعية التعبير الحر عن أفكارها في إطار مؤسسات وفتات المجتمع والمشاركة في صنع القرار السياسي وممارسته. لذلك، يجب توسيع المهارات السياسية للمرأة من خلال تحسين الفرص التعليمية، والدورات ذات الجانب القيادي، وطرح برامج التبادل، وإزالة الحواجز المؤسسية والقانونية التي تحد من المشاركة السياسية للمرأة العراقية.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** المرأة، الانتخابات، التمكين، المشاركة السياسية، العراق.

## Abstract

The degree of human development in any society is measured by the extent to which women participate in political life, and Iraqi women, together with many third-world countries, have suffered a real crisis concerning women's participation in the country's political life, and many factors have been played in reducing the share and size of women's participation in political life, including the growing role of the military in political life and the militarization of society during the eight-year war and subsequent events that led to the women's dissociation and reduction of their role. The role was only after women were granted no-election women share in Iraq's new constitution after 2003. Women's political participation is not only about obtaining their political rights but also about their political rights in the legitimacy of freely expressing their ideas within the framework of the institutions and groups of society and participating in political decision-making and practice. Therefore, women's political skills must be expanded by improving educational opportunities, leadership courses, and exchange programs, and removing institutional and legal barriers limiting Iraqi women's political participation.

**Keywords:** Women, elections, empowerment, political participation, Iraq.

## Introduction

Women have lived through a stage of political exploitation, not only that, but they have reached the point of wasting their energy, exploiting their efforts and ability to express themselves, prove their position, and try to obtain their simplest political rights. Women's political participation is not limited to the concept, or merely their access to their political rights, but is respect for their overall rights to the legitimacy of freely expressing their ideas within the framework of the institutions and

groups of society, and participation in decision-making, so the political participation of Iraqi women after the war of liberation from the dictatorial regime that prevailed before 2003 was associated with a set of political factors that can be counted from the outset. One of the most influential factors in this participation is the fact that political will and serious commitment at the decision-making level are factors influencing its effective political participation, so the evaluation of such participation cannot be achieved out of a vacuum but through the institutional work of which women are a part and other factors that prevent effective political participation. Iraq relies on a proportional representation system.<sup>i</sup> in elections, where voters can choose a specific political entity and candidate on a list. The provision of detailed lists of candidates by political bodies is of utmost importance since it guarantees an average percentage of twenty-five percent of women candidates. The distribution of female members in the House of Representatives adheres to the criteria specified in the rules established by the Independent High Election Commission. The revised Sainte-Lagué approach, implemented by the Commission's Council of Commissioners and ratified on 23-3-2018, guarantees the prioritization of seat distribution, irrespective of the applicant's gender. In each province, a single seat is designated for a female candidate following the election of the three male victors on the party list. If the target of twenty-five percent representation of seats is not achieved, the list specifies six further steps to ensure an adequate number of 83 seats for women.

While a significant proportion of women have been chosen to parliament under the woman-share system, it is worth noting that a subset of women are elected directly, irrespective of this proportion. Disseminate. In this manner, the proportion of women's representation was achieved, with 83 MPs securing a twenty-five percent position in the House of Parliament in 2018, and a further increase to 95% in 2021.

While the 25% women's share signifies a favorable advancement in terms of women's representation, it is important to note that women constitute roughly fifty percent of the population, accounting for around 49.4%. Therefore, the women who are categorized by gender do not meet the criteria for descriptive representation. The initial proposal put up by Iraqi women's associations suggested a gender share of 40% for women.

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Table 1 below shows the percentage of women to men in Iraqi provinces.<sup>iii</sup>

Region	Percentage of women	Women	Men	Total
Sulaymaniyah Governorate	52%	13	12	25
West Baghdad Governorate	25%	45	134	179
Kirkuk Governorate	24%	18	58	76
Karbala Governorate	20%	14	57	71
Diyala Governorate	19%	24	100	124
Al, Qadisiyah Governorate	18%	22	97	119
Babylon Governorate	17%	25	122	147
East Baghdad Governorate	16%	42	221	263
Dhi Qar Governorate	14%	19	120	139
Basra Governorate	13%	21	139	160
Al, Muthanna Governorate	11%	10	83	93
Dohuk Governorate	11%	3	25	28
Wasit Governorate	10%	14	129	143
Maisan Governorate	5%	5	97	102
Salah ad Din Governorate	4%	4	92	96
Nineveh Governorate	4%	7	177	184
Najaf Governorate	2%	2	118	120
Erbil Governorate	0%	0	2	2
Al, Anbar Governorate	0%	0	41	41
Total	14%	288	1824	2112
Total	14%	578	3625	4203

There are several questions were raised in this regard, including:

- 1- Do Iraqi women have a political role in the Iraqi parliament?
- 2- What challenges have Iraqi women faced in their political participation?
- 3- What will Iraqi women's future be in the upcoming elections?
- 4- Can Iraqi women lift social restrictions on customs and traditions under so many female candidates?
- 5- Are Iraqi women confident of their ability to reach the center of decision-making or empowerment if they get a seat in the next parliament?
- 6- Do Iraqi women aspire in the future to increase the share of women in politics?

#### **The difficulties that may be encountered during the research: -**

Any scientific research is surrounded by a set of difficulties that prevent its completion or disruption. In this research, the most difficulties faced by the lack of specialized objective scientific studies and the part related to scientific credibility and impartiality.

After 2003, Iraq faced significant challenges in democratic construction and the transition from a totalitarian regime to a system that defines public rights and freedoms, and accordingly, the research attempts to examine women's political participation in Iraqi parliamentary elections.

#### **The Research Methodology: -**

Overlapping scientific approaches have been used between the analytical legal method and the historical method, with the help of the comparative method, to reach scientific and cognitive neutrality as much as possible in this subject.

The research is based on the basic Methodology that there are a number of fundamental transformations that Iraqi society has undergone that have reduced the role of women in political life and therefore came a number of transformations that led to the disruption of their participation, especially after 2003 and despite this participation, which appeared clearly following the constitutional arrangements, women remained governed by sectarian and political balances and the circle of leadership axes of parties and blocs, which rarely find a distinct female voice despite the fact that the researcher From the high percentage of women's political participation after 2003 and their holding for political office, particularly in the 2014 and post-election, and the presence of a large and remarkable number of Iraqi women candidates, which reached about 3,000 Iraqi women, the largest in 10 years, as well as the descent of some of them into special women's lists, which indicates a marked increase in Iraqi women's confidence in their own potential in competition Man.

#### **The importance of the study**

Socially, women are half of society and life cannot be upright in the absence of women, so the issue of women's empowerment and political participation is one of the most important topics that attract the attention of many researchers and scholars.

#### **The Research Plan:**

The answer to these questions is through two topics, the first entitled "Political Participation of Iraqi Women, which was divided into two demands, the first of which spoke about women's political participation before 2003 and the other demand for the political participation of Iraqi women after 2003, addressing the beginnings of the political participation of Iraqi women in Iraq, the stages of their arrival at the center of political decision-making, and then the form of political participation after the political change that took place in Iraq after 2003.

The second topic, entitled Indicators of the Future of Iraqi Women's Political Participation, and divided into two demands, the first spoke about the opportunities and possibilities of Iraqi women's access to the center of decision-making and political empowerment, and the second discussed the most important obstacles and challenges that women may face in their political work, highlighting the significant participation of Iraqi women in the nomination to parliament. To evaluate the political process in Iraq, where the process of evaluating women's political participation in parliamentary elections is a calendar of the political process taking place in Iraq, the fact that women are an important part of that process, where the political system is influenced by the nature of the electoral system, as well as to develop a future vision of what will happen during that stage.

### **1.1: The political participation of Iraqi women**

When engaging in political participation, we conclude that it includes a huge range of activities through which people express their opinions, develop those opinions and how they are managed, and find ways to participate in decisions that affect their lives. These activities range from developing thinking or other political, social, and other issues at all levels, joining different groups and organizations, and campaigning at the local or regional level, to the formal policy process, such as voting, joining a political party, or running for election.<sup>iv</sup>

Therefore, talking about the political participation of Iraqi women after the political change that took place in 2003 requires first talking about the feasibility of such participation, since the involvement of women in the political process is an integral part of the process of building democracy, the role of women in politics is very important, as it is a key defender of not only children's issues, education, and health care, but also the restructuring of economic and foreign policies as well.<sup>v</sup>

Perhaps most important of all is the role of women and their participation in the process of sharing political forces, i.e. what happens in new democracies, where politics is usually primarily concentrated under the control of a select few masculine leaders, so the role of women through their active participation in the political process in countries will contribute to giving women access to the center of decision-making, and as a result, the democratic foundations of governance are strengthened, so the importance of having more women in political participation is one manifestation of Power-sharing, which is one of the principles of building democracy.<sup>vi</sup>

### **1: Political participation of Iraqi women before 2003**

The issue of women is a principled issue that belongs to issues of democracy and issues of national liberation, so we believe that the call for women's rights takes more space with the national liberation movements of countries<sup>vii</sup>.

Democracy requires political participation by all members of society, but its application requires the broader participation of women, and laws and legislation may not discriminate between the sexes in this area, but it remains merely a theoretical official discourse that may not fully correspond to the distribution of power by type in reality, and the constitutions of many States may not contain clear and explicit discrimination in the area of political participation, but at the same time do not include the mechanisms guaranteeing the application of those texts, as well as the fact that there are Some constitutions expressly overlook the provision on women's right to political participation, and political participation means the entire voluntary activities of the individual and through which other members of society participate, whether in the selection of the ruling elite directly or indirectly, participation in decision-making, directing and controlling state policies, i.e. public participation The concept of popular participation in the democratic process refers to the engagement of ordinary individuals in activities aimed at exerting influence on government decision-making. This engagement can take several forms, including individual or group actions, as well as regular or impromptu actions., continuous<sup>viii</sup> or intermittent, violent, legitimate or illegal, effective or ineffective, in this sense participation is a social phenomenon that occurs as a result of human interaction with society by its members, groups, systems and institutions, so it includes collective action and its manifestations in all its forms and colors, for example<sup>ix</sup>, political participation in religious activity, and there is participation in service volunteer activities, as they are in their broadest sense, meaning the right of citizens. to play <sup>a</sup> certain role in the political decision-making process.<sup>x</sup>

Iraqi women, along with many third-world countries, have suffered a real crisis related to their participation in political life since the era of national rule in 1921, where many factors played in reducing the share and size of participation in political life, including the growing role of the military in political life and the militarization of society, during the eight-year war with Iran and the subsequent events that led to the women's marriage and reduction of their role and this role is no longer the only role given to women Elected to the new Iraqi constitution after 2003<sup>xi</sup>.

Iraqi women began to go out into public life at the end of the 19th century when Iraq was bowing under the rule of the Ottoman Empire, and the first girls' school was opened in Baghdad in 1890, in

which 90 girls were enrolled and recorded the first real contribution of Iraqi women to political life in the 220<sup>th</sup>-century revolution against British occupation, the first battle in its recent history.<sup>xii</sup> ( Fada Al -Azergia )The daughter of the city of Amara, who has created a series of poetic verses urging fighting, and the political changes she has brought to the fore to highlight the issue of women's liberation from their social constraints and outdated traditions and to demand their contribution to all aspects of public life, including political and economic. (Paulina Hassoun) is its editor-in-chief, an educational magazine that has tried to educate women to obtain their rights and education.

In addition, (Salma Al-Malaika), a poet from the 1930s and 1940s, called on the sons of Iraq to expel the alien British rapist and recommends in her poems the patience and vigilance of the colonialists and the betrayal of opportunists This era was characterized by the rise of several political and progressive entities, including the establishment of women's groups that have a unique democratic identity and progressive roots. These organizations actively involved and rallied women in diverse national, national, and social movements..<sup>xiii</sup>

Ms. (Hamida Al-Araji) published The Modern Woman magazine, which called for breaking down outdated restrictions and not distinguishing between men and women, and in the same context, Ms. (Hassiba Raji) issued The Girl of Iraq and its editor (Sakina Ibrahim), a magazine calling for renewal and launching bold ideas and forming a women's parliament that adopts political issues such as Palestine and British colonialism in Iraq, and then rolled out women's magazines in Iraq. (Nazik al-Malaika), a critic of modern Arab poetry and her poems, combined the struggle of the Iraqi, Algerian, and Palestinian individuals against the occupation, warning the occupiers and those who impersonate various methods to enter the Arab world<sup>xiv</sup>.

At the beginning of the formation of Iraqi national parties with progressive programs, which adopted women's issues and considered them as their main issues, which encouraged some women to belong to these parties, including the then-banned Iraqi Communist Party, which included women of different ages, degrees of employment and cultural and social levels, who attended secret meetings, performed party duties and participated in demonstrations and sit-ins, some of whom were arrested, as played by (Naziha al-Dulaimi, Alna Yusuf, Zakia Khalifa, Saida Mashal, Suad Al-Khairi) and Many other members play a major role in these parties without mentioning the role of Ms. Umnia Al-Rahal, the first woman to reach the status of a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, which is a qualitative step for women towards participation in the higher positions in political parties.<sup>xv</sup>

Awareness among women developed in 1944, when a group of women applied for a license to establish the Women's Anti-Fascism Committee, which aims to raise awareness among women of their rights and highlight the dangers of fascism to humanity, made a series of contacts at the regional and international level, participated in the World Women's Conference in Copenhagen in 1946 and joined the World Democratic Women's Union.

Women's organizations with different objectives were also established and the first women's organization of this kind, the Women's Committee against Nazism and Fascism, which, after the Second World War, was transformed into the Iraqi Women's Association and published the magazine " Women's Liberation".

Iraqi women have participated in national battles and political prisoners' issues, and here we recall (Adawea al-Rahal) when she was the astronomer as she advanced in a demonstration known as the Canon Jump in 1948 against the Portsmouth Treaty and during the setback that occurred after the leap because of repression by the ruling authority, the rule of martial law and the detention, torture, and heavy sentences of women.<sup>xvi</sup>

In 1952, she was appointed the first minister in Iraq and the Arab world, Dr.(Nazihah al-Dulaimi), who was appointed minister of municipalities, on the other hand, within the interim Iraqi Constitution of 1970, equal opportunities for all citizens, where in <sup>xvii</sup>1972 the Iraqi authority

established the General Union of Iraqi Women, which was considered the only outlet for the women's movement, and provided a broad activity within Iraqi society, an extension of The ruling regime, but the serious events that Iraq witnessed for the period (<sup>xviii</sup>1981-2003) Primarily included the Iraq-Iran conflict, which endured for 8 years, succeeded by the initial Gulf War .and the bloody military conflicts associated with economic sanctions by un security council resolutions (661) of 1990 and others. Such developments must have a major impact on Iraqi women.<sup>xix</sup>

In 1980, Iraq witnessed the first political participation of women in the legislature by nominating them to parliament and obtaining several seats in parliament, under Law No. 55 of 1980, in the election of the Iraqi National Council, where article (12) stipulated that "every Iraqi or Iraqi must be a voter or a candidate if the conditions stipulated in this law are met", that participation is regrettable. It was framed by a one-party philosophy, where the political system activated the role of women at the legislative level, but participation in political decision-making was linked to the political conditions of the political system, first, and at the expense of the party.<sup>xx</sup>

At the legislative level, legal legislation on women in Iraq has fluctuated and contradicted, the circumstances of the political system, since the legal legislation of the 1970s and 1980s was focused on activating the principles of equality and rights for women, as stated in legal articles 21,31, 32 and33, of the 1968 Constitution as well as the Constitution of 1970. She advocated non-discrimination based on sex, as well as freedoms of opinion, publication, and assembly.

As for women's political participation and contribution to the Iraqi political decision-making process, they remained poor and limited in their effectiveness, as the personality of Iraqi women did not leave an obvious impact on political decision-making, even though many women held ministerial positions in Iraq, where Dr. (Suad Ismail Khalil) appointed to the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in 1969-1968, and Dr. (Huda Salih Ammash) was nominated. As a member of the Qatari leadership from 2003-2001 and within three years, he is a political position that exceeds the position of ministry during the Baathist regime in Iraq<sup>xxi</sup>.

Table 2 below shows Iraqi legislation's positive and negative extent before 2003.

The year	Type of political system	Electoral Law and Constitution	Women's political rights	Women's political participation
1876	Ottoman Sultanate	Ottoman Basic Law	Negative	There's no.
1925	monarchy	Amendment of the First Basic Law	Negative	There's no.
1925	monarchy	Amendment of The Second Basic Law	Negative	There's no.
1958	The Republic.	Interim Constitution of the Arab Union	Positive	There's no.
1958	The Republic.	Amendment of the Third Interim Basic Law	Negative	There's no.
1963	The Republic.	Interim Constitution	Negative	There's no.
1964	The Republic.	Interim Constitution	Positive	There's no.
1967	The Republic.	Interim Constitution	Irresolute	There's no.
1968	The Republic.	Interim Constitution	Positive	There's no.
1970	The Republic.	Interim Constitution	Positive	There's no.
1980	The Republic.	National Council Law	Positive	16 women in the National Assembly

However, an important question comes to mind: did Iraqi women reach the source of decision-making or political empowerment in Iraq during that period?

The answer to this question is illustrated by understanding the natural form, and feasibility of its political participation under the former regime in Iraq, while not losing sight of the nature of Iraqi society in general, as there are several societal challenges facing women's participation in political work at the time, as one of the most serious challenges facing such participation in the gender relationship in Iraqi society in particular, and Arab society in general, is the prevalence of the traditional model of gender characterized by A set of qualities that can be summarized as follows:

1. Family centrality, rather than the centrality of the individual, where women and men play integrated but not necessarily equal roles.

2. Central to the role of a man as the sole breadwinner of the family, although his wife is a worker.
3. The authorities of the society impose limitations on gender mixing since they believe that the worth and respect of family members are intricately connected to the repute of males.
4. The presence of an imbalanced gender ratio in the private realm has a negative impact on women's ability to participate in the public sphere..<sup>xxii</sup>

As for the forms of political participation of women in Iraq and the Arab world in general, it can be summarized as follows:

1. Political participation in the election of representatives and representatives in parliaments.
2. Holding positions at the executive and legislative levels, engaging in trade union work.
3. Object to local, regional, and international policies and report to the relevant authorities.
4. Demonstrating in public places, striking, and organizing strikes to demand better living conditions.
5. Political expression through the media..<sup>xxiii</sup>

Therefore, in the presence of these societal challenges that have been faced and continue to confront Iraqi women as an integral part of Arab women, The preceding political system has facilitated the attainment of a certain degree of political independence. , but that freedom has unfortunately been linked to the philosophy of the ruling party and the controls and limits it drew for Iraqi women according to its will and political dictates at the time.

## 2: Political participation of Iraqi women after 2003

The political participation of Iraqi women after 2003 created a real opportunity for them to enter the political arena rightly and participate in the legislature, but the measure of success or failure of that participation seems to have relied on two main factors:

- I. The objective circumstances of the country: such as political stability and the establishment of the legitimacy of governance.
- II. Women's subjective conditions in parliament: they include motivation and desire + hard work + awareness of responsibility + knowledge and knowledge of the job.

Iraqi society continues to suffer from the fragility of the security situation because of weak political stability, and this has affected women's performance and political role, as the security aspect limits the movement of those who want to work, communicate, and follow up.

Despite these factors, their political participation was clear after the change in 2003, as they succeeded in competing with blocs and parties (even Islamist ones), to establish their political rights and occupy leadership positions in state institutions, and this would not have been possible without The impact of the women's feminist movement in Iraq, which has engaged in a clear activity, represented in holding meetings and meetings to establish their political rights, so the share came Women as one of the achievements of this activity, which enabled her to enter the Interim National Council, later in the National Assembly and then the House of Representatives in 2005, and the subsequent electoral cycles..<sup>xxiv</sup>

The Constitution Writing Committee prepared a permanent Iraqi constitution voted on by most of the Iraqi people<sup>xxv</sup>. On 15-10-2005, constitutional article (49) The focal point was on the advancement of women's political rights, specifically their involvement in legislative bodies established under the Government Administration Act and the 2005 Elections Act No. 16, which reinforced the text of that constitutional article<sup>xxvi</sup>.

The Iraqi Constitution also stipulated in article (47) paragraph (1) that the election law should aim to achieve the representation of women in at least a quarter of the number of members of the House of Representatives, as the inclusion of the women's shares of candidates in the name of at least one in three candidates will promote the election of women, while article 13/2 of the law specified the sequence of winners sealed by stipulating that at the end of every thirty winners regardless of the winners of the men<sup>xxvii</sup>.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that a total of 10 women were involved in the Constituent Assembly Writing Committee, constituting approximately 18% of the committee members. These women

were allocated to all six sub-committees responsible for the composition of the different chapters of the Constitution.

The positives of Iraqi women's participation after 2003, with women's representation reaching 33% of the number of seats in parliament, the highest percentage obtained by Iraqi women in the history of their political participation<sup>xxviii</sup>.

It is also noticeable that women's participation in political fields in many Arab countries, especially after Iraqi women's participation by 25% within the Iraqi parliament and six ministerial seats after 2003, while the participation rate of French women within the French parliament did not exceed 12%, and the British within the House of Commons 19% after they started their participation in 1948 by 1% and we find Arab countries such as Egypt, Jordan, and the Gulf states will not exceed 3% of their participation and some regional countries continue to suffer from women's denial of the ability to petition and occasionally the ability to participate in elections.<sup>xxix</sup>

Iraq's electoral law, which was set by the Coalition Provisional Authority, was ordered 96, which put women on the road map in politics, with Iraqi women occupying 78 of the 275 seats in the National Assembly, nearly a third of the highest in the history of the Iraqi parliament.<sup>xxx</sup>

Table 3 below shows Iraqi legislation's positive and negative extent after 2003.

The year	Type of political system	Electoral Law and Constitution	Women's political rights	Women's political participation
2003	Governing Council	Transitional State Administration Law	positive	4 women in the Council - 1 Minister
2004	Coalition Authority	Election Law 2004	positive	87 women in Parliament
2005	Republican Unionist	Permanent Order	positive	73 women in Parliament - 7 Ministries

The effectiveness of Iraqi women's involvement in political affairs has increased following the implementation of the women's share system in 2003. This system has facilitated the inclusion of Iraqi women in parliament and their active participation in political activities, such as participating in elections and nominations for parliamentary and local councils, as well as assuming public functions and managing societal affairs. However, it is important to note that their participation remains relatively insignificant compared to men. Furthermore, the primary obstacle hindering women's willingness to participate is the unreliable security situation that has persisted since 2003. Particularly the occurrences in (2006).

In the years leading up to 2003, women exhibited hesitancy towards political engagement due to the state's dominance over civil society institutions, which were operated for the benefit of the state. Consequently, the incorporation of women into the political sphere is a fundamental component in the establishment of democracy, given that their contribution extends beyond safeguarding childhood, education, and healthcare to reshaping foreign and economic policies..<sup>xxxi</sup>

In the second session of the House of Representatives on March 7, 2010, more than 6,539 of the country's 6,539 candidates competed for 325 seats and women won more than 80 seats in parliament.<sup>xxxii</sup>

The elections also saw one of the deputies win the highest votes in her province (Babylon governorate) and ranked sixth in the list of the highest votes in Iraq, on the other hand, we note in the general elections (2010) the second session of the Iraqi Parliament, Iraqi women won twenty-one seats in the council without the need for women's share.

In the parliamentary elections held on 30-4-2014, (22) women reached the new Iraqi parliament without the need for women's share, out of 83 parliamentarians, accounting for 25 percent of the total number of 328 members of the Iraqi Parliament. Three of them reached their numbers without the need for electoral list votes, bringing the distribution of female deputies in each province to 3 percent.<sup>xxxiii</sup>



On the other hand, we believe that economic and social factors play a major role in women's victory, as the areas of well-being have a marked increase in women's political work and are more effective than low-income areas that are attractive or supportive to men, as the field of politics is believed to be male and is also linked to education and community culture, as well as male domination of females, as well as the lack of education of women in the art of political leadership of society<sup>xxxiv</sup>.

## 2.1: Indicators about the prospective trajectory of political engagement among women in Iraq

Since 2003, women in Iraq have achieved the unprecedented milestone of being involved in political decision-making and assuming leadership roles within institutions. This development can be attributed to the enactment of laws by the Governing Council during the General Assembly elections, which allocated twenty-five percent of the assembly seating for women. It is evident that the next phase of political participation, both in general and specifically for women, is not contingent upon the constraints imposed by public order and the future circumstances in Iraq.

In the 2018 elections, over 2,000 women, accounting for 28% of the total candidates, participated in the parliamentary race. However, according to the Female Women Share Act, political entities are obligated to have a minimum of 25% female candidates on their lists. When a woman wishes to run for office, she must often secure the backing of a political party, the endorsement of tribal leaders, or both, and may be required to make commitments. Women have the option to pursue independent candidacy, however, this route might present significant difficulties, as they frequently rely on financial backing and assistance from political parties. Ensigam al-Garawe, a former member of Parliament, transitioned into the realm of politics after attaining considerable acclaim within the media industry as a proficient journalist.

During the 2018 elections for parliament, female candidates encountered instances of online threats and harassment, with a particular emphasis on derogatory remarks made regarding their personal lives. Occasionally, fabricated films were created with the intention of demeaning female candidates and excluding them from the competition. For instance, Ahmed Jassem, a candidate affiliated with the Victory Coalition and affiliated with the Dr. Haidar al-Abadi Party, resigned following the dissemination of a fabricated film depicting her engaging in sexual intercourse with a Saudi male. Furthermore, another woman, Faiq al-Sheikh Ali, fell victim to a defamation campaign due to a publication featuring her engaging in dance at a private gathering alongside her spouse.<sup>xxxv</sup> However, she continued to participate in the competition. These instances exemplify a much more troublesome occurrence of impeding women's democratic participation in elections through the creation of counterfeit photographs and films to tarnish women's reputations and dissuade them from engaging in the political sphere. To pursue justice from a different tribe. A youthful adherent shared a video in which he engaged in a kiss while simultaneously grasping an electoral poster in support of Al-Hasnawi. The family perceived the young guy as a threat to the reputation of Al-Hasnawi. The existing reliance on the local justice system and the limited involvement of the judiciary in instances involving violence and harassment against women, as well as women candidates, provide a significant barrier to achieving gender equality in the election process. In the 2018 democratic elections, 22 women secured sufficient votes to secure a place in parliament, not relying on gender as a determining factor.

An increase of 30 percent, 95 women were elected to the Iraqi parliament in the 2021 elections. Eight of these women received over twenty thousand votes, 33 secured the top spot in the provinces, and 14 more than women. However, this figure is expected to change after the Sadrist movement's withdrawal into the Iraqi parliament on account of political differences concerning the government's formation. On the Sadrist list, the number of women elected to parliament is 32.<sup>xxxvi</sup>

With regards to the representation of women in parliament, Iraq occupies the sixty-seventh position globally among an estimated 192 nations for which data is accessible. This figure is marginally higher than the average of 24.3% observed worldwide and surpasses that of the countries of the Middle East and the North African region by nineteen percent.<sup>xxxvii</sup> Upon assuming positions of power, women encounter further obstacles as decision-making authority remains vested in male political elites. Following the 2010 and 2014 elections, a significant number of voters held a negative perception of the performance of female lawmakers. According to the findings of the

UNDP World Development Report 2014, it was observed that women did not satisfy the expectations of voters, did not effectively advocate for gender equality, did not utilize the platforms they were given to address significant issues, and did not implement measures aimed at improving their desired future role. The topics of patriotic sentiment and impunity, the Social and Labor Affairs Committee, and organizations that provide a significant possibility for substantial reform. This restricts the extent of women's participation in Parliament and misrepresents the preferences of voters.<sup>xxxviii</sup>

The efficiency of those committees is compromised by gender-related opinions of women in politics. Additionally, voters may hold women parliamentarians in higher regard than male lawmakers and expect them to advocate for women's rights, even though male parliamentarians do not share these expectations. This may give rise to the aforementioned criticisms. the degree of survival that female parliamentarians can attain in the present milieu.

In addition, although the number of women running for parliament in 2018-2021 has increased, this representation has not moved to senior positions in government, the Cabinet after the 2018 elections does not have any ministers and the same situation is expected after the formation of the expected government<sup>xxxix</sup>.

### **1: "Opportunities and access for Iraqi women to the center of decision-making and political empowerment**

The problem of women's empowerment in Iraq is reflected in the fact that, despite the keenness of the official trends of the State since its founding, and with varying degrees of formal institutional empowerment opportunities (education, health, training centers, etc.). However, it has deliberately or unintentionally neglected the important fact that empowerment is not only technical but also a process that reflects a culture of parity and equality in all its dimensions.<sup>xi</sup>

Despite the improvement in women's empowerment rates in some leadership positions, much remains to be done in increasing the presence of women in leadership positions or decision-making and political empowerment positions.

Women have the potential to assume many positions within the political sphere. However, Iraqi women have obstacles in their pursuit of equitable and inclusive engagement in political affairs, stemming from personal, structural, and cultural restrictions.

The National Democrat Institute (IND) has produced public opinion polls that have provided valuable insights into the overall landscape of women's political engagement and involvement in public affairs in Iraq. In its July 2019 report, 61 percent of respondents acknowledged that women and men were treated differently, and 54 percent believed that women's rights were worsening. Although most respondents supported women's rights, gender biases at the expense of others were widespread in institutions and Iraqi society. According to a survey conducted by the National Democrat Center in July 2019, a majority of respondents, namely 58%, hold the belief that women frequently bear the responsibility for instances of harassment. In addition, women who choose to participate in governmental or public matters frequently experience apprehension for their safety, encounter personal attacks and harassment, and may even face violent violence against their families.<sup>xli</sup>

There are some indications that Iraqi women have all the elements of leadership, or access to the center of political decision-making, starting with electoral practice, where Iraqi women have each proved that they do not need the women percent in the constitution, as we have noted in previous sessions where Iraqi women won twenty-one seats in the first round without the need for the women's women share, and when comparing the number of votes received by the winners in 2010 The number of votes won by the 2014 Winners of the House of Representatives without the need for a share was found to be 42.48% higher than the (201338911) four winners of the 2014 House of Representatives, while the winners of the 2010 House seats received no share of the 2014 seats. (194927) votes, (Maha Adel Mahdi al-Douri) received the highest number of votes (31,949) in those elections, while (Hanan Saeed Mohsen al-Futlawi) (90,781) received the highest number of votes in the 2014 elections, the highest vote received by a candidate in those elections, with an increase of 64.80% of Ms. (Maha al-Douri), votes<sup>xlii</sup>.

This, if anything, shows that Iraqi women today can engage in political action without the need for the women's share set out in the Constitution, i.e., there can be competition between them and men in parallel.<sup>xliii</sup>

The latest statistics from the Standardization and Quality Control Agency also include:

- I. Sixty-nine percent of women head family and child NGOs in Iraq.
- II. In 2010, 36.8% of women held a special degree and 35% were general managers or assistant directors.

According to the third report on gender indicators, which has been widely received at the national and Arab levels, according to the Ministry of Planning about the Index of Statistics for Women and Men in Iraq, the Directorate of Human Development Statistics of the Central Bureau of Statistics pointed out in its report: Iraq is among the Arab countries with the highest representation of women in parliament, especially after the political change in the country in 2003 and the application of the system of women's share. In the elections of the Legislative Council and provincial councils, where the results of the 2005 elections showed that 87 women out of 275 women won membership of the National Assembly, membership of the National Assembly (31%) and 28% of the total members of local councils (27.3%) in 2006 and then returned and fell from what they were to (25.2%) in 2010. The number of members of the Iraqi Parliament for the parliamentary session of the 2010 elections was 325, with 243 members and 82 women members, an increase of 50 members from the previous 275 sessions, and in fact (200) male members and 75 women members. The distribution of members by provinces varied from the other province by population density in that province, where the total number of seats in provincial councils for 2007 - (744) seats, in addition to the provinces of the Kurdistan Region distributed (550) seats for men and (194) seats for women, and there was a difference between the provinces by several seats and population density, the province of Baghdad, which is the highest province with 48 seats, (36) Men's seat, compared to (12) seats for women.<sup>xliv</sup>

The statistics showed a decrease in women's participation in the 2010 legislative elections in four provinces (Nineveh, Salah al-Din, Muthanna, and Anbar) compared to the rest of the provinces that saw many women participating in the elections and the highest turnout in the Kurdistan region and Kirkuk and Karbala provinces.

Women can participate in public life by participating in public work and civil society institutions, with 69% of women heading non-governmental organizations working in the family and children (69%), according to the NGO database, and 36.8% of women holding a special degree (36.8%) who hold the position of director or assistant director-general in ministries (25%) in 2010<sup>xlv</sup>.

However, this was not enough, as, despite all the achievements made and achieved by Iraqi women, it is still men who monopolize political action, especially in parties and movements, and prevent women from taking their chances.<sup>xlvi</sup>

This is evident from the huge number of women candidates in the recent parliamentary elections, which reached about 3,000, a huge number compared to the numbers of female candidates in previous election cycles, but most of them failed in competing with men or competing with that male society and its customs so that the new electoral law did not do women justice as they had been waiting.

Thus, there were legal, political, and social reasons to limit the potential of Iraqi women to play an active role in the next legislature.

Thus, the determinants of women's access and performance in the legislature have been and continue to be linked to the dominance of senior party leaders and women's commitment to the party's agenda, which cannot be talked about as a sharp distinction in performance between men and women, and the vitality of women's parliamentary performance is closely related to that of men, i.e. the effectiveness of women's parliamentary performance must be linked to the effectiveness of parliamentary performance, which has been reflected like the modern political system. Described as a regime close to democracy, the constitutional situation is dominated by negative consensus and centralized executive power that confuses the functioning of the separation of powers.<sup>xlvii</sup>

## **2: The most important obstacles and challenges in the next phase for Iraqi women Obstacles to political participation:**

If we take women in general regardless of being members of Parliament as a model of research, the successive crises and wars in Iraq have created accumulated risks in the lives and livelihoods of the population, including women, of whom about 11.5% of all married women live exclusively, and terrorism and all kinds of material<sup>xlviii</sup>, moral and psychological types have played a role. It was

clear in reducing the activity and movement of society, and against the background of these repercussions Iraqi women faced great challenges in the face of successive crises, as there is no longer a deterrent authority and some laws have been suspended, thus becoming an open arena for violence and chaos, in return for which women were the first victims of multiple forms of crime and violations within that society, even indirectly.<sup>xlix</sup>

The continuing cycle of political violence witnessed and continues to be witnessed in Iraqi society appears to have overlapped with socially inherited violence against women, to be strengthened and reproduced on new grounds, forcing many women to leave their jobs or schools for fear of being killed or threatened by some radical Islamist groups for not adhering to strict Islamic dress, as well as forced displacement, which may have somewhat affected or somewhat identified their political participation.<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, we find that the control of the party or bloc over women deputies has had a clear impact on obstructing women's activity, as the commitment and care not to violate the party in the vote, was one of the obstacles that weakened function within parliament, especially since the commitment of the party and ideology is a feature of party life, but this feature has taken on a wider dimension in the control of Iraqi parties and entities over Iraqi women deputies unfairly and excessively, until the women's lost her full freedom and became The prisoner of her party, until the extent that one of the deputies complained that the head of her bloc prevented them from raising their hands and making interventions or discussing the laws, and she was breathing a sigh of relief when he left the room to try to participate.<sup>li</sup>

These difficulties and challenges that women deputies have been subjected to have been some of the most important reasons that have kept them away from the source of industry, decision-making, and oversight within the Council or participation in the development of legislation. Marginalization continues, and one of the most prominent forms was during the opening of the first session of the House of Representatives in 2010 after the structure of the presidency of the Council was formed by Mr. (Osama al-Nujaifi) as president of the Council, Mr. (Qusay Al-Suhail) as the first deputy, and Mr. (Atef Taylor) as a second deputy, which happened (Hanan Al-Futlawi) She was surprised that there were no women in the presidency of parliament, so she demanded that they be faired as women deputies through the standing committees of Parliament as a kind of goodwill.<sup>lii</sup> After the formation of Mr. (Nouri al-Maliki) government in 2010, which included 41 ministries, the share of women was only one, the Ministry of State for Women's Affairs, which went against the system of women's share, which gives women at least 10 of the 41 ministries that exist, and (Ala Talabani) launched her famous phrase saying (today the democracy has vanished in Iraq).<sup>liii</sup>

In a field study carried out by the Um al-Orphan Foundation to find out the problems faced by Iraqi women parliamentarians; the security situation was particularly bad during 2006 and 2007 due to the sectarian convulsion that prevailed on the Iraqi street one of the most important factors impeding their movement. On behalf of the above-mentioned political constraints, and social constraints that need a long time to overcome and overcome<sup>liiv</sup>.

## 2.2 Challenges of political participation

If parliament has been incapacitated and unemployed today for some time, why should parliamentary women deviate from this system, I say despite this bitter fact, today Iraqi women are waiting for important challenges for the next stage, the most important of which are:

- I. Loss of community support: Perhaps one of the biggest gains in recent years is the support of many forces for women and their demand for a greater role by civil society organizations, the media, and cultural elites, but today the big question is what we have gained from the women's women share in the Constitution? Some stressed that this share came without competent women deputies and that the parties benefited from the support of society for women's participation by pushing the weakest elements to ensure support and dependency. How will women elected to the new parliament be able to restore confidence, support society, and deal with high transparency in the face of women's elites monitoring their performance?
- II. Active participation in decision-making: as the above research has already indicated, the women's share of their objectives has been emptied, so that women's participation is

marginal, and does not participate in decision-making workshops, which are often outside the dome of parliament, so the next stage requires women in Parliament to arrange steps and priorities. Together to be a difficult figure in any negotiations, it will only be by activating and strengthening the parliamentary women's bloc, electing a periodic leadership, and imposing a participation rate in any special entitlement in ministerial portfolios.

- III. Women's money table: A road map or action plan for women during previous parliamentary sessions and women have been challenged to set clear goals and action plans for all Iraqi women, whether it be legislation or the adoption of special issues for specific segments of women or society with clear positions for women on the country's major issues without echoing what others are asking.
- IV. . The culture of advocacy and support for the protection of women's rights in Iraq is weakened today by the resurgence of illiteracy among women, particularly in rural areas, because of the new circumstances that Iraq is going through because of the events of the terrorist organization ISIL and the migration of thousands of Iraqi families, which have made thousands of women interested in providing protection, food, and shelter to a family before considering their political rights.
- V. The most important problem in all of this must be forgotten, namely, the imbalance in the performance of women parliamentarians themselves, as evidenced by the emergence of some of the bright names of women parliamentarians, and most of them are inactive.

Despite all these political, cultural, and social challenges and the legislation suffered by women in Iraqi society, which required the creation of a system of women's representation (Kuta), which is described as a positive intervention mechanism for women and a step on the path of equality, democracy, and political reform, there is still much to be expected of Iraqi women, as we look forward as we review the successes and achievements of shy women in Iraq to what distinguishes Iraqi women who have crossed the stages of marginalization and deportation and achieved a set of gains and are asking questions and calculations. The research looks forward to the status of Iraqi women reaching global indicators through unified national positions that make them one of those who are out of responsibility and within themselves. We look forward to political flags and elites that highlight women's successes and achievements and do not underestimate their rights. We look forward to women not being dragged behind the deteriorating performance of the legislative institution because of the political situation in the general country and to knowing that they have a role to play and perform their entitlements despite all the obstacles and discouragement they face occasionally.

## Conclusion

From the foregoing, it is clear that Iraqi women have occupied a large part of the active roles in all areas of political and economic life, where women's political participation demonstrates the awareness of society and its civilization and after the struggle of intellectual and political conflict and its intensification, especially after a year (2003), where, with its political presence within parliament and ministries, it was able to gain a clear presence despite the difficulties it faced after 2003. The seriousness of the political arena, as the circumstances of Iraqi women after decades to find a home to represent themselves in conferences and parliaments, because political participation is a political phenomenon, indicating that society has reached a certain stage of progress, but the weak role of women politicians in Iraq is due to the nature of political, psychological, social, cultural and economic variables, the most prominent of which were security constraints.

## The most important search results:

1. Expanding women's political skills, including improving educational opportunities, leadership courses, and program exchange.

2. Removing institutional and legal barriers limiting women's political participation.
3. Expanding women's access and access to government lounges, organizing political parties, managing public services, and establishing NGOs.
4. Encourage the development of communication with prominent women leaders, at the local level at home, and globally.
5. Work to remove the male perception that exists in Iraqi society and stand against women's assumption of sovereign positions.
6. Iraqi women today must realize that the qualitative transformation they seek should enhance their humanity and impose their personality, in other words, be human rather than the body, participate in political activities without hesitation, and be equal to men in all rights.

### **Recommendations:**

According to research data, the following can be recommended:

1. Women's political participation should be activated by women themselves choosing their representatives in elections.
2. Amending the guidelines for determining the women's share of women to clarify the rules on the allocation of seats to women candidates, including women candidates elected from outside the women's share to ensure simultaneous interpretation of the regulations, although the Women's Women share Act has ensured that women have 25% of the seats in the House of Representatives, this naturally leads to abuse in The absence of explicit regulations concerning the representation of women who obtain a sufficient number of results to occupy a seat apart from the women share can introduce a distortion in the implementation of the women sharing formula, provided that twenty-five percent of the votes are not obtained through the votes submitted. The legislation requires that a seat be assigned to a woman after the election of a man. However, in the case where a woman obtains a direct seat (e.g., 1st or 3rd place), it is not explicitly stated whether the allocation of a female's place by women shares will be determined by the first three nominees elected, irrespective of gender. This ambiguity may result in women being positioned at the bottom of the voting roster, thereby diminishing their public representation.
3. One potential amendment to the legislation involves the implementation of a system wherein women are allocated members and chosen for every fourth seat, irrespective of the genders of the preceding three elected members.
4. Amending the electoral law to require that the alternative to any deputy who resigns of the same gender at the moment, if a deputy resigns from her post, may be replaced by a man unless this replacement results in a violation of the Women's Women share Act, which provides for 25% for women to ensure that women are not nominated by parties, pressured to resign, and replaced by male candidates, so the electoral law must be amended to close this gap.
5. Women should abandon adherence to negative defense mechanisms and replace them with community participation mechanisms
6. Redefining the objectives of women's organizations, making issues of women's empowerment and participation in parliamentary elections a priority for their programs.
7. Employing education programs to define women's rights, particularly their right to political participation, to create their conscious future.
8. Spreading a culture of eliminating all forms of excellence against women and monitoring all abuses against women.
9. The need to address the cultural heritage as opposed to women's progress by giving women more opportunities in the management of public society.
10. Fighting backward values from family to society, some value patterns must be changed and positive values that have to do with the upbringing of generations must be cultivated.
11. Women should be aware of the negativity and appearance of their participation "in quantity and quality" and even their backwardness and poor effectiveness.

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