



## African Journal of Biological Sciences

Journal homepage: <http://www.afjbs.com>



Research Paper

Open Access

### Participation of Religious and Doctrines Minorities in Nineveh in the Elections for the Iraqi Council of Representatives between 2005-2014

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#### Article History

Volume 6, Issue 9, 2024

Received: 26 Mar 2024

Accepted : 24 Apr 2024

Published: 20 May 2024

doi: 10.33472/AFJBS.6.9.2024.3474-3487

#### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to analyze the dynamics of religious and sectarian minorities in Nineveh and its representation in the Iraqi Council of Representatives through the elections that took place within a period of 2005 to 2014. Besides, between these years, there were three electoral cycles; along with the election of the January 2005 Transitional National Assembly election which was a transitional stage in the process of restructuring Iraq as a democratic, parliamentary constitutional state. Similar to other parts of Iraq population, the Iraqi minorities were also eagerly anticipating new leadership after the overthrow of the Ba'ath regime in 2003 because of the U. S invasion of Iraq.

Minorities participated for some of these electoral cycles getting a parliamentary seat in a proportion to their number and density in Iraq as it was observed in first and second electoral cycle 2005-2010 and 2010-2014. But their position and the number of the parliamentary mandates decreased in other cycles and especially, in the third one (2014-2018). This led to decimation owned to the fact that they spread their votes over many candidates within their regions through casting their lots with the different personalities who were vying for the seats within their respective parties without looking at whether they were qualified to undertake the task or not. This dispersion also limited their representation in the Council of Representatives as mentioned earlier.

**Keywords: Religious minorities and sectarian minorities – Nineveh, Iraqi Council of Representatives Elections**

**\*Research taken from a doctoral thesis entitled (Religious and Doctrines minorities in Nineveh 2003-2014), a study of their political role**

**Introduction**

Many arguments and reasons made an international coalition of allies especially USA and UK to invade Iraq in 2003 as codenamed "Operation Iraqi Freedom." Enabled Iraq to depose the Ba'ath Party regime which had been in power for thirty-five years from 1968 through force and oppression. Another major reason the coalition had to embark on this war was the evidence produced by America that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction, which was a threat to world peace and had declined to co-operate with the United Nations governing the dismantling of these weapons (War in Iraq, 2005, 9). Also, the U. S. accused the Ba'ath regime of supporting terrorist groups, especially after the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Centre Towers and the Pentagon in USA of al-Qaeda in Afghanistan (Sabir, 2015: 28.).

The topple of Ba'ath party pluralism in Iraq raised the march for liberty, majority rule, and most significantly the organization of a government that would be accepted by the various factions of Iraq. This aspiration was harmonized with other pre and post Saddam oppositions that signed power sharing deals after 2003.

From 2005-2014, Iraq has conducted three Council of Representative elections and the Transitional National Assembly elections prior to the formation of the Council of Representatives. These elections caused shifts

in several domains and ushered in new conflicts and issues that enhanced the focus on ethnic, sectarian, religious, and denominational matters. Political processes during the formation of coalition governments, usually based on ethnic and sectarian elements, affected the position of religious and sectarian minorities and their representation in the state, as the distribution of important positions in the state among the major forces with the majority of votes contributed to their exclusion (Kapiszewski, 2006, p. 16).

This research is about the Votes of the Religious and Sectarian Minorities of Nineveh including Yazidis, Christians, Shabak, and Kaka'i in the Council of Representatives Elections. These elections were considered as a new status of these minorities as a result of participation in the management of the state in the Council of Representatives.

The study is divided into four main sections, based on the number of elections held in Iraq during this period: the National Transitional Assembly election of 2005, the first election to the Council of Representatives in 2005, the election of 2010 and the 2014 election. The level of engagement, the vote cast and the seats gained by the respective minorities in these elections were as follows and for the following reasons as will be discussed in the next section of this study.

**First: The 2005 Transitional National Assembly Elections**

The election conducted on 30th January 2005 under the occupation of America made a new

political experience of Iraqis after the dethroning of Saddam Hussein. During this

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 election, 275 members of the Transitional National Assembly were elected for one year term. Its main responsibilities were to constitute an interim government of Iraq, draw up a permanent constitution, and conduct new elections for a new COR based on the permanent constitution.

The elections were held via proportional representation with a closed list while security situation remained volatile in Iraq. Thirty-five lists and electoral coalitions participated, representing the main components of the Iraqi population: Shia, Sunni, and Kurds. The United Iraqi Alliance, consisting of different Shia parties and headed by Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, who was the President of the Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council until his death in 2009, gained the highest number of the seats as 140. The Kurdistan Alliance list following the two major Kurdish parties of the late President Jalal Talabani occupied the second position with 75 seats. The Sunni Iraqi List headed by Ayad Allawi won 40 seats. The remaining seats went to smaller parties and coalitions (<https://www.parliamentiraq.com>)

Other religious and sectarian minorities in Nineveh besides Christians were not able to have independent vote in the Transitional National Assembly elections. This was done through candidates on other parties' lists and electoral coalitions, especially Kurdish and Shia parties. For instance, three Yazidi candidates were selected and won within the Kurdistan Alliance list: Tribal Sheikhs: Adil Nasser Haji from Dohuk and Haider Shesho from Sinjar from the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan and Kamiran Khairy Beg from the Yazidi prince's family from the Kurdistan Democratic Party (Author Interview, 22-1-2023).

Four Christians were elected to the Transitional National Assembly out of those who wanted to contest the post. Hence, Yonadam Kanna, head of the Assyrian Democratic Movement ran for election independently under the Assyrian National list and won solely one seat. Chaldean Democratic party leader Ablahad Afraim secured a seat in the parliament because of an alliance that his party formed with the Kurdistan Alliance. Furthermore, two new Christian females, Ibtisam Korkis Bhnem and Wijdan Salim Mikha'il, were elected members of Ayad Allawi's Iraqi List. (Kinna, 1-7-2022).

The Shabak community has been able to get two representatives to the Transitional National Assembly. Sami Ahmad Ali al-Shabaki, Shabak prominent personality, got in the Kurdistan Alliance list as did Haneen Qaddo, head of the Shabak Democratic Assembly who got in the United Iraqi Alliance list for Shia parties (Samarraui, 12-12-2022).

The Kaka'is were not very active politically in these elections largely because they are numerically small in Nineveh Governorate where they are mostly settled but are predominant in the Kirkuk and Sulaymaniyah Governorates. Thus, none of the Kaka'i Candidates stood in the transitional National Assembly elections and they did not obtain a political voice on their own right beyond the two dominant Kurdish factions, the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan that are recognized as the voices of the Kurds in Baghdad. Consequently, extending the votes from Kaka'i villages and towns in Nineveh, the majority of the population voted for these Kurdish parties (Salom, 2018, 52).

As mentioned above, this was the first legislative election since the demise of the Ba'ath party regime; however, it received a plethora of criticisms due to tactics of electoral frauds in the minority dominated regions of

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Nineveh province. In some of the polling stations such as Hamdaniya and Shekhan districts and Bartella sub-district in the Kurdistan region, ballot boxes did not reach the polling centers, whereas in other districts like Sinjar, Bashiqa and Bahzani sub-district in the Kurdistan region, ballot boxes arrived late on the election day. This caused concern among representatives of the minority. The representatives from the Yazidi people, along with Christian and Shabak Muslims stated their objections through a declaration addressed to the Independent High Electoral Commission of Iraq. They have accused certain entities in Mosul of conspiring NOT to send ballot boxes

to their areas pretending there are security risks to do so as they view this move as a way of denying them the right to vote (Al Wasat News ,15-2-2005/2). However, a Yazidi official attributed these conducts to the lacking security situation in Nineveh at the time in which Sunni Arabs did not participate in the election, while the local authority in Nineveh failed to send ballot boxes to the minority regions including Nineveh Plain that were relatively safer as Peshmerga forces controlled the area. This action adversely affected the number of people who went to vote in the affected areas (Baqsri, February 26, 2022).

## **Second: The Iraqi Constitution and the 2005 Iraqi Council of Representatives Elections**

The first elections to the Iraqi Council of Representatives occurred under a new electoral system adopted by the Transitional National Assembly under Law No. 16 of 2005 (amed, 2023 ,58). On December 15, 2005 Iraqis went to the polls to vote for 275 members of the Council of Representatives for a four year term. In these elections, Iraq was divided into 18 electoral districts which are equivalent to the governorates of Iraq and each governorate was assigned a fixed number of parliamentary seats depending on its population even if the voter turnout was low. A total of 230 seats were assigned to the governorates, 45 other seats were assigned for proportional representation at national level. This was in compliance with the provisions of the Iraqi Election Law (Abdullatif, 14,2005) ,No. 16 of 2005 that envisaged election on a proportional representation basis where voters vote for closed party lists rather than candidates, and the candidates' list is determined by the order fixed

by the winning political party (iraqi facts, 22-10-2005, 1-4).

307 political lists representing different Iraqi forces and groups have competed in the elections, including minority ones for the first time since 2003 along with 19 electoral lists. Based on the final figures released by the Independent High Electoral Commission of Iraq, the Shia parties grouping under the United Iraqi Alliance won 128 seats and the Kurdistan Alliance consisting of the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan won 58 seats. Sunni, who boycotted the previous elections and some of them contesting for the first time secured 69 seats under the Iraqi Accord Front and the Iraqi National List. Smaller parties and coalitions received a smaller proportion of parliamentary seats.

A conclusion was reached revealing that the elections were in fact ethnic, religious and sectarian rather than based on political platforms of the participating parties and

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 movements. This trend extended the sectarian quota system that was put in place after the Ba'ath regime in Iraq and which divided power among new political elites according to their sect and religion (Al-Janabi , 2018, 5)

In Nineveh which concerned minorities, they were less effective in these elections compare to the Transitional National Assembly, holding less parliamentary contribution. Regarding the Yazidis, the Kurdish parties proposed only one back-up candidate in the Kurdistan Alliance list of the election. This particular candidate was only able to claim a seat in the parliament when another deputy from the list was promoted to the ministerial level, opening a seat for a Yazidi candidate. Thus, the Yazidis managed to secure only one seat in the Kurdish List in the parliamentary elections of 2005 to become a member of the Kurdistan Alliance with three seats in the Transitional National Assembly (Al-Sawt al-Laa, 28-2-2006, p: 4)

Some of the deceased Yazidis intellectuals and political leaders considered this treatment by the Kurdistan Alliance as political persecution. Consequently, Mirza Hassan Dnani, the Yazidi representative who advised the former president Jalal Talabani, resigned after the publication of the article which accused the Kurds of ignoring the Yazidis' requests. He urged the people not to vote for the Kurdistan Alliance unless they gave them a political status and made them relatively proportional in the election. This strategic mistake of the Kurdistan Alliance for the Kurdish parties in the parliamentary elections favored the Yazidi Movement for Reform and Progress that, participated in these elections for the first time

after its formation in 2004, and it achieved to gain a parliamentary seat by getting 21,908 votes in Yazidi regions in Nineveh, especial Sinjar ( dnani, 27-1-2023).

Christians voted in the elections with no interconnection or agreement of their parties and candidates within a single electoral list. Instead, they competed with two different lists: The Rafidain List of the Assyrian Democratic Movement, which gained a compensatory seat in the Council of Representatives when it failed to obtain any seats by vote in any of the electoral districts, and the Nahrein List of the Bet-Nahrain National Union Party, which received only 2,904 votes but got no parliamentary representation. Further, Christians secured another position in the Kurdistan Alliance list because the Chaldean Democratic Party joined the major Kurdish parties headed by Ablahad Afraim for the second term.

The Shabak and Kakai groups had limited parliamentary representation in the first parliamentary elections of the Council of Representatives. A significant number of Shabak voters in Nineveh voted for the United Iraqi Alliance because the Shabak Democratic Assembly formed a coalition with the Shia parties in Baghdad; thus, Haneen Qaddo won a parliamentary seat twice within the United Iraqi Alliance and was the only representative of the Shabak at the Council of Representatives at that time (muhram, 2020, 12-12-2022).

The Kakai did not have any candidates in these elections and failed to gain independent parliamentary seats; most of the Kakai votes went to the Kurdistan Alliance and Kurdish candidates in Nineveh (fatah kakai, 12-10-2023).

**Third: Elections to the 2010 Iraqi Council of Representatives**

The second term elections of the Iraqi Council of Representatives were conducted on 7th March 2010, but with some alterations in the nature of the electoral law and its system of proportionality. In the same month of December 2009, a new law was passed known as Law No. 26 which brought significant changes on the Electoral law and also on the increase of the seats in parliament from 275 to 325. According to Article 1, Paragraph 1, of this law, the number of parliamentary seats totals increased one for every 100,000 inhabitants by using the 2005 population data from the Ministry of Trade as well as the population growth rate of 2 annually. 8% for each governorate. In addition, this also led to change in the type of the electoral system from a closed list to an open list whereby the voters are able to cast their vote for individual candidates within particular list (iraqi facts, 28-12-2009, 16)

This specific electoral law also gave positive discrimination to minorities by allocating quota seats to them. Article 1, Paragraph 3, stipulated that minorities (Christians, Yazidis, Shabak, and Sabean-Mandaeans) would receive eight quota seats: Five for Christians from the governorates of Baghdad, Erbil, Kirkuk, Nineveh, and Dohuk; one for Yezidis from Nineveh; one for the Shabak minority from Nineveh; and one for the Sabean-Mandaeans in Baghdad (iraqi facts, 28-12-2009, 16)

The election results confirmed that the Iraqi National Movement (Iraqiya List) led by Ayad Allawi won the election by winning 91 seats while its rival the State of Law Coalition, led by the former Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki only won 89 seats. The Iraqi National Alliance led by Ammar al Hakim/ Chairman of the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq got seventy seats, the Kurdistan Alliance got forty-three seats; Kurdish Gorran or change Movement participated for the first time obtained eight

seats and the Iraqi Accord Front got only six seats.

The results also highlighted the particular involvement of a religious or sectarian minority with a view to the representation in the parliament than the previous elections. Besides the win by the minority quota system, he, his allies, his party, and the coalition party secured political representation in the Council of Representatives for this electoral period through other party and coalition lists. Several minority candidates competed for these lists and some of them secured their place in the parliament, which increased their representation level in Iraq's political sphere.

Sadly for the Yazidis, the candidates of this minority were able to win seven parliamentary seats in the country for the first time in Iraqi modern political history, during this particular election. Out of these, six were with the Kurdistan Alliance list: five KDP and one PUK candidates Each of the Iraqi lists received a minimum number of seats fixed by the quota system, for which the Kurdistan Democratic Party in Nineveh had won the largest number of votes after the KDP in the south; the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan in the central areas; and the Yazidis also got their quota seat in Nineveh, by the Yazidi Movement

This suggests that the Kurdish faction specifically the KDP held sway during the pre genocide period with most of the Yazidis in Sinjar and district of Sheikhan extending support to the KDP. This influence was particularly apparent in the Yazidi communities; the political leaders hoped to capitalize on this fact by participating within the KDP list striving for a seat in parliament. Furthermore, other political parties belonging to the Yazidis, and political movements contested in these general elections for the first time but they were not successful in gaining any seat in the Parliament. With the aim to win

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the Yazidi quota seat in Nineveh, four parties and political figures participated in the vote where the winner was the Yazidi Movement for Reform and Progress. Other rivals were the Yazidi Progress Party that ranked at 4, 953; the Independent Yazidi List that got 4, 562 votes and the Kurdistan Communist Party that nominated a Yazidi's representative but was only given 4,086 votes but failed to be voted. (Archives of the Elections Department, Branch 14, Kurdistan Democratic Party in Nineveh).

With reference to Christian participation, they also increased their parliamentary seats than in the previous election cycle particularly after five quota seats were reserved to them in accordance with the 2009 electoral law where Iraq was considered as one electoral district for the said seats. Several Christian formations and vote lists operated for these seats; the most noticeable of them – the Assyrian Democratic Movement in the framework of the Rafidain

List received three seats in the parliament, and the Chaldean Syriac Assyrian People's List – two seats.

When competing for the Christian quota seat in Nineveh, there were many Christian factions and individuals who sought the seat in the parliamentary representation; this way, the votes were divided, and the efficiency of the Christians' electoral involvement was compromised.

Table 1: Profile of the political parties and candidates vying for the Christian quota seat in Nineveh for the 2010-2014 elections; registered in Archives of the Elections Department, Branch 14, Kurdistan Democratic Party in Nineveh.

No	Electoral coalition or candidate	Number of votes	The result
1	Syriac Chaldean Assyrian Popular Council	8858	He won the seat
2	Al-Rafidain list	7667	He didn't win
3	Chaldean National Council	1069	He didn't win
4	ur national list	699	He didn't win
5	Ishtar Democratic Coalition	736	He didn't win
6	Sarkis Youssef Sarkis	297	He didn't win
7	Lawyer John Youssef	3694	He didn't win

Table(1)

As in these elections a quota seat for the Shabak has been allocated in Nineveh Province, all the Shabak political parties and figures have vied for this seat in contrast to the previous elections in which some of them had been running in the Kurdish and Shiite lists. These elections

witnessed four Shabak parties and independent political personalities vying for the party-list seat in Nineveh. The seat was taken by Muhammad Jmashid of the Shabak Free Council , and a friend of the Kurdish parties, with 11,755 votes over the 10,843 votes

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garnered by the rival list of the Shabak Democratic Gathering, led by Haneen Qaddo. This was the first time Qaddo had lost out in the polls without clinching a parliamentary seat since 2003. In the same elections, Hussein Zainal and Faris Bajalan, the independent Shabak candidates, scored 1,509, and 536 votes, respectively (Archives of the Elections Department, Branch 14, Kurdistan Democratic Party in Nineveh).

As for the Kaka'is, their political status did not change and the new 2009 provided the religious minorities in Iraq with minority quota seats but not the Kaka'is. The religious classification became a stumbling block to their political enfranchisement; they were labeled Kurdish Muslims. Thus, they never got a separate political voice and their votes went to the two main Kurdish party contenders from the KDP and PUK.

Based on the analysis of the outcomes of this election round of the Iraqi Council of Representatives, major political parties, namely Shiite, Sunni and Kurdish ones' impact on the minorities and individual candidates, the following factors can be identified. These factors shaped minority voters' votes and enabled major political coalitions to manipulate the election processes through different activities. The most severe activities consisted in influencing the lists of the minorities by supporting the favorable candidates within such lists or creating the lists in opposition to them and inducing their non-minority members or the security forces controlled by the governing party to vote for a minority candidate or the list in opposition to the competitor in order to guarantee the victory of the favored candidates. Of course, this influenced the work of the minority voters during the voting, especially because the major parties had rather significant financial and media support to achieve these goals, as

opposed to the scarce means of the minority parties .(sawa, 2-5-2022)

Sometimes, the association of major component parties and minority parties during any election was at the detriment of the minority parties or their issues, the parties being mainly formed and supported by the major parties. Hence, minorities could not dictate the terms of such alliances to the extent that alliances of major forces in elections helped balance of electoral interests by the two parties. Therefore, the minority parties received lesser advantage from the formation of alliance with major parties than the latter did. These alliances also caused the scattering of the minority voters' votes and reduced their parliamentary influence in the Council of Representatives (Sloum, 2016, p86).

Also, the 2009 electoral law provided quota seat to some of the religious minorites as well. Nevertheless, such political representatives of minorities considered it as discriminative since one minority was privileged against the other. The law did not prescribe quota seats for all the religious minorities in Iraq, including the Kaka'is from independent political status. In accordance with Article 1, Paragraph 1 of the law, Christians were given five quotas and one quota each was assigned to both Yazidis and Shabak, While the Ministry of Trade statistics of 2005 indicated the population ratio of 100000 per seat plus an annual population growth rate of 2. 8%, Yazidi and Shabak representatives insist on having one additional quota seat since their ratio in Iraq exceeds 100000 (iraqi facts, 28-12-2009, 1-4).

In this regard, the Independent Yazidi List, which stood for the elections in 2010, went to the Federal Supreme Court of Iraq with a suit seeking a quota increase in the Yazidi minority based on this concept. In their judgment on June 14, 2010 The court fully supported them

*Dr.Saeed Khudieda Alo / Afr.J.Bio.Sc. 6(9) (2024)* stating that it is unconstitutional to provide a single seat to the Yazidi minority because they needed a number of seats proportional to their population, The estimated population of the Iraqi Yazidis based on the 1997 census other than the three Kurdish region governorates was calculated at approximately 273,319. Based on

the new population census yet to be conducted later for the 2014 election, the Federal Court suggested the Tripartite to increase the parliamentary representation for the Yazidis (Federal Court 11 /Federal/2010, June 14, 2020).

#### **Fourth - Iraqi Parliamentary Elections of 2014**

Political behavior of main actors and parties remained similar to previous elections and their share in the elections after 2005. Erstwhile in the parliamentary elections conducted on April 30, 2014 Shia electoral entities and Coalitions expectedly continued to have the upper hand thereby capturing majority of the parliamentary seats in their traditional areas of influence mainly the central and the southern part of Iraq. In this election, they won the 155 total seats in the parliament, and it became the largest faction. The number of seats won is as follows; the State of Law Coalition with 92 Seats, the Sadrist Movement with 33 seats and the Citizen's Coalition with 30 seats headed by the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq. Election alliances that were present in previous elections include the Sunni alliance who however, secured the second highest number of parliamentary seats, 60. The Kurdish Democratic Party as well as the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan remained the favorite parties for voters in the three provinces of the Kurdish region and occupied 23 and 19 seats correspondingly. In the same context, the Gorran Movement in Sulaymaniyah received nine seats, whereas the Islamic parties' alliance of the Kurdistan Islamic Union and the Islamic Group got five seats in the election.(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SQvOlvs7eo8&t=1003s>).

As for the representation of persons belonging to minorities in these elections, the status of minorities' political power remained virtually unchanged. But for the representation in the parliament, particularly for the Yazidis, there were some enhancements recorded. Their parliamentary representation was cut to 7 in the term beginning in 2010 to only two in the 2014 general elections. In the election of the Yazidi quota seat within Nineveh province, the Yazidi Movement for Reform and Progress held on to the seat and was represented by the candidate, Haji Kandour Simo from Sinjar city, with the movement's list of candidates garnering 14,910 votes(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SQvOlvs7eo8&t=1003s>) The list prepared by ex-Yazidi MP Mahma Khalil Qasim as Yazidi Democratic Front with the support from the Kurdistan Democratic Party obtained 5,433 votes(ali , 2018, 12) . The Yazidi Progress Party did not participate in serious contesting for the quota seat in this election but rather as a member of the National Coalition formed by Iyad Allawi contesting for the general seats in Nineveh province while getting 9,764 votes but was denied an outright victory on the general seats.(slum , 2018, 34)

Vian Dakhil Saeed was victorious in Nineveh through the women's list and earned 5,467 votes on the Kurdistan Democratic Party

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list (ali ,2018,12). No Yazidi candidate, who stood on other party lists or in other coalitions, 73 in total, won their seat. There were 28 Yazidis on the KDP list, 21 on the PUK list, 4 bidding for the quota seat, and some Yazidi hopefuls for the first time in the Sunni party list. These comprise 8 candidates across the United for Reform Coalition formed by Osama al-Nujaifi, the National Coalition with Iyad Allawi, the Arab Coalition led by Saleh al-Mutlaq, and the National Rimaah Coalition headed by Sarmad Adel Muhammad Yousuf and Anwar Muawiya. Also, 12 candidates participated under the Civil Democratic Alliance headed by the Iraqi Communist Party, which makes the number of Yazidi candidates equal to 73 .(majid hassan, 2019 , 14)

There are a number of reasons that can help explain the reduction of the votes for the candidates of Yazidi ethnicity, which resulted in their erosion of the power in the Council of Representatives. These include competition on the part of the major Kurdish and Arab political parties for the Yazidi votes. Unfortunately the Yazidi candidates were on the non-Yazidi party list in a large number and by fragmenting the Yazidi vote none of the candidates were able to secure a parliamentary seat.

However, efforts by the Yazidi representatives in the Iraqi Council of Representatives demanding the implementation of the Federal Supreme Court's ruling stipulating that the Yazidis should have additional quotas in proportion to the density of their population have not been undertaken. This inaction has been justified on the grounds that there has not been a formal census in Iraq for some time. However, it would seem to be associated with the major parties battle for power and their lackadaisical approach in providing a fair representation of the Yazidis (Dunani, 2023).

Furthermore, Yazidis' employment by all political parties was due to their party's tribal and regional allegiances, instead of their merit or political platform. In some of these programs, little emphasis was paid to issues of concern to the Yazidis such as service delivery, education and employment which was crucial to the Yazidis. But the emphasis was made on the ideological or generic factors associated with the political standoff between the regional leadership and the federal center. Furthermore, controversies of ethno-national affiliation and categorization of the Yazidis as Kurds, Arabs, or even as Yazidis of independent nationality weakened the political and ideological cohesion of the Yazidi vote and voice in the election campaigns. This division influenced the manner and the distribution of the votes among the Yazidis (Ali, 2018).

Furthermore, Peshmerga and Democratic Party of Syria selections of the Yazidi candidates were influenced merely by the tribal and regional origins of the candidates rather than their likelihood of effectiveness or the programs they constitute. These programs also paid very little attention to matters of concern to the Yazidis, notable among them being services, education, and unemployment that were accorded prominence by the Yazidi people. Instead, the emphasis was placed on ideological or indefinite concerns associated with the regional political struggle in the north and with the central power. In addition, the conflict of the Yazidis' ethnical or national affiliation that came down to their categorization as Kurds, Arabs, or a distinctly separate Yazidi nationality served to polarize the political and ideological constituents of both Yazidi voters and candidates. This division influenced also the voting pattern and the vote allocation amongst the Yazidis (Ali, 2018, p.36)

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The issue with the Christian community was not vastly different than in previous elections. Christian parties and political movements remained active and sought to capture all of the five parliamentary seats that were provided for by the quota system. During this particular election season, for the first time many parties as well as some leaders from different Christian folds were vying for these seats. Particularly, five parties were able to keep their seats in the Newly elected Iraqi parliament, they are Al-Rafidain list, led by the Assyrian Democratic Movement and its head Yonadam Kanna who won the seat in Baghdad with 9023 votes. Sargon Lazar Sliwa from the same list won in Kirkuk with 3,908 votes (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SQvOlvs7eo8&t=1003s>).

In Nineveh, there were some electoral lists and Christian organizations vying for the quota seat. The former lists were the Al-Rafidain list – 6,180; the Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Popular Council – 12,878; the National Bet-Nahrain Coalition headed by the Bet-Nahrain Democratic Party's Romeo Hakkari – 2,866; the Surayeh National Coalition led by its president William Khamo Warda who is the head of Hammurabi Human Rights Organization – 3, Among these lists the quota seat winners were from the list of Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Popular Council list where Raed Isaac Matti secured 4929 votes. Another candidate from the same list is Bolis Shamoun Isaac who won the quota seat in Erbil. In the first time, the Warka Democratic list that consists of a group of Christian symbols with support from the ICP succeeded in getting the quota seat in Duhok province where its candidate Azad Hormuz Nissan got 416 votes (Salum, 2018)(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SQvOlvs7eo8&t=1003s>)

Also in this election, interventions in Christian electoral lists were observed by major parties to compete for quota seat through having separate rival lists or supporting respective preferred candidates within Christian list. PUK provided support to the allied list of ADM and the KDP supported the Chaldeans, by supporting candidates from the Chaldean Democratic Union Party. Furthermore, the Iraqi Communist Party got only one of the Christian quota seats though did not make any win at other electoral district seats (Sawa, 2022). As a result some of the Christians considered that their quota in the Council of Representatives was in support of the parties that represent the Christians rather than the representatives of the Christian sects. In addition, some Christian lists got votes in provinces with no Christians due to Iraq being only one electoral district for Christians who are allowed to fill specific seats (2-7-2022). Shabak's political position in this electoral cycle has not shifted either: the Democratic Shabak Gathering continues to cooperate with Shia political actors. Nevertheless, there was certain differentiation as they ran for the general seats in Nineveh within the framework of Nineveh National Alliance with main Shia parties but did not interfere within the Shabak quota seat. She won one of the three out of the 31 seats assigned to Nineveh by receiving 10,910 votes in the elections. The Shabak quota seat was given to the Shabak Free Council which affiliated with Kurdish political groups especially Kurdish Democratic Party, the party that strongly supports the Shabak Free Council. Their list secured the Shabak quota seat in Nineveh province with 9,456 votes, a representative from the Sunni-Shabak group Salim Juma Khadr. Independent candidate Qusay Abbas, the former Shabak representative in Nineveh Provincial Council, attempted to win general seat in Nineveh and got

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6,410 votes but no seat for him (Abbas, 2022).

(  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SQvOlvs7eo8&t=1003s>).

During this round of elections candidates from the Kakais in Nineveh province are for the first time elected under the Kurdistan Alliance list (the list of the Kurdistan Democratic Party). There were other distinguished candidates such as Riyad Rashid Fattah Kakai who obtained 3,537 and Ghazi Sultan Taha Kakai who gained 2,210 MLA but none of these candidates succeeded to gain a seat in the council of representative to represent the Kakai community (Archive of the Elections Department, Branch 14 of the Kurdistan Democratic Party in Nineveh).

## Conclusion

The study reached a number of results related to the size and role of the participation of religious and sectarian minorities in Nineveh in the elections for the Iraqi Council of Representatives during the years 2005 and 2014. Perhaps the most important of them is the increase in the representation and role of these minorities in the Iraqi parliament with a different number of representatives for each electoral cycle, and it appears that the change The Baath regime in Iraq in 2003 provided a great opportunity for minorities to express their political opinions and aspirations. For the first time since the founding of the modern Iraqi state, the Iraqi Council of Representatives included this number of minority representatives. We mention, for example, that the number of minority representatives in this study was (13). During the electoral cycle (2010-2014), this was a historical precedent regarding the role of minorities in the Iraqi parliament.

However, all the electoral processes that took place in Iraq during that period were accompanied by interference by the large blocs

A Kakai writer and an academic used this explanation of how Kakai candidates could not easily get to the Council of Representatives: In the previous Iraqi elections, the electoral system was different and operated by open electoral districts for each province without quota seat for Kakais as Iraq's other religious and ethnic minorities. Because the Kakais failed to deliver sufficient voter turnout to win Nineveh a parliamentary seat, most Iraqi governments denied the Kakais parliamentary and administrative representation (Ibrahim Kakai, 2023).

and parties that controlled the political scene in Iraq after 2003, especially the large Shiite and Kurdish parties in the Kurdistan Region. In this area, there was a conflict. A major political effort by the Shiite and Kurdish parties for the votes of minorities in Nineveh and the seats allocated to them according to the quota system, and all parties tried, for their part, to compete to win the votes of minorities in Nineveh by nominating a large number of their supporters from the minorities on their electoral lists without taking into account competence and cultural standards. Rather, it relied on their tribal, religious, and sectarian influence to gain votes, and this resulted in the scattering of their votes among these candidates, which in turn affected the number of parliamentary seats. For example, the Yazidis had seven seats in the second electoral cycle (2010-2014), while this decreased. The number reached only two seats in the third session (2014-2018), and one of the most important reasons was the nomination of (73) Yazidi people on the lists of other parties and competition for the quota seat allocated to

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 them, which caused the dispersal and loss of the votes of Yazidi voters among this large number of candidates. Only one female candidate won, namely (Vian Dakhil Saeed), who won from the Kurdistan Democratic Party list at the expense of the women's quota, in addition to the Yazidi quota seat, which was won by the

Yazidi Movement for Reform and Progress. The chances of the other minorities, including Christians, Shabaks, and Kaka'is, were not much greater than the Yazidis in the same elections due to the political conflict between the large parties in their regions.

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