

# The de facto ruler of the Iraqi Shiites

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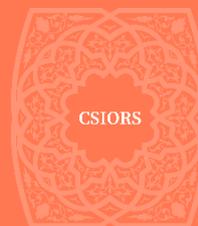
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## The de facto ruler of the Iraqi Shiites

By *Issam Khoury*

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## Introduction

The observer of the Iraqi scene, specifically the Shiite scene is puzzled. After the various Shiite forces and parties agreed in March 2021 to form the so-called (coordinating framework)<sup>1</sup>, we see them after several months and during the November 2021 elections in an unprecedented state of hostility. The head of the Sadrist movement, "Muqtada al-Sadr"<sup>2</sup>, who visited The Arabic Gulf states, known for their hostility to Tehran in 2017<sup>3</sup>, was not tense towards the Arab countries. He even blessed Al-Kazemi's visit to Saudi Arabia and the UAE in a tweet on April 4, 2022, stating (Iraq's openness to the Arab countries is a step in the right direction).



12:47 PM · Apr 4, 2021 · Twitter for iPhone

4

<sup>1</sup> The Coordination Framework, a coalition of Shiite parties, was established in March 2021 at the invitation of former Iraqi President Nuri al-Maliki, with the aim of organizing the discourse of Shiite parliamentary blocs for the benefit of the Shiite community, against the Sunni and Kurdish blocs.

<sup>2</sup> Muqtada al-Sadr is an Iraqi politician and militia leader. He is the leader of the Sadrist Movement and the leader of the Peace Companies, a successor to the militia he had previously led during the American military presence in Iraq, the "Mahdi Army.

<sup>3</sup> <https://arabic.cnn.com/middle-east/2017/08/13/moqtada-alsadr-visits-uae>

<sup>4</sup> [https://twitter.com/Mu\\_AlSadr/status/1378750977830961152?ref\\_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1378750977830961152%7Ctwgr%5Eae92f615fbfe669977aefe4649eede1e9db7d8a3%7Ctwcon%5Es1\\_&ref\\_url=https%3A%2F%2Fspnkarabic.ae%2F20210404%2FD8A3D988D984-D8AAD8B9D984D98AD982-D984D985D982D8AAD8AFD989-D8A7D984D8B5D8AFD8B1-D8B9D984D989-](https://twitter.com/Mu_AlSadr/status/1378750977830961152?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1378750977830961152%7Ctwgr%5Eae92f615fbfe669977aefe4649eede1e9db7d8a3%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fspnkarabic.ae%2F20210404%2FD8A3D988D984-D8AAD8B9D984D98AD982-D984D985D982D8AAD8AFD989-D8A7D984D8B5D8AFD8B1-D8B9D984D989-)



During the 2021 elections, Muqtada al-Sadr took a position against the coordinating framework forces loyal to Tehran, as he obtained 74 deputies through the "People for Reform" bloc, a result that highlights his growing popularity after he obtained the 2018 elections 54 parliamentarians. Meanwhile, the representation of the Al-Fateh bloc led by Hadi Al-Amiri<sup>5</sup> declined to only 14 deputies, after it was (47) in the 2018 elections.

Perhaps the biggest decline is for the "National State Forces" coalition led by the head of the Wisdom Movement "Ammar al-Hakim", which is allied with the Victory Alliance headed by former Prime Minister "Haider al-Abadi", where it obtained only 4 deputies after it had in the 2018 elections forty deputies. The only party loyal to Tehran, whose popularity has grown, is the State of Law bloc led by former Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki<sup>6</sup>, who obtained 34 deputies after his parliamentary share was (25 deputies) in the 2018 elections.

The coordination framework without the Sadrist bloc has 52 deputies in the 2021 elections, while the Sadrist movement alone has 74 deputies, and certainly, the Sadrists alone are unable to obtain the parliamentary majority, so the Sadrists allied themselves with the "Progress" bloc led by Prime Minister Muhammad al-Halbousi<sup>7</sup>. The Sunni bloc<sup>8</sup> that got 43 deputies, and with the Kurdistan Democratic Party led by "Masoud Barzani," which got 32 deputies<sup>8</sup>, this alliance got 149 deputies, which is not enough to get the parliamentary majority, so the three blocs began to search for expanding their alliances with the aim of obtaining Parliamentary majority.

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D8B2D98AD8A7D8B1D8A9-D8A7D984D983D8A7D8B8D985D98A-D984D984D8B3D8B9D988D8AFD98AD8A9-D988D8A7D984D8A5D985D8A7D8B1D8A7D8AA-1048573603.html

<sup>5</sup> Hadi al-Amiri is the leader and secretary-general of the Badr Organization, an Iranian-sponsored Shiite militia and political party based in Iraq. A U.S. federal indictment has linked al-Amiri to a 1996 attack in Saudi Arabia that killed 19 U.S. Air Force servicemen

<sup>6</sup> Nouri Kamil Muhammad-Hasan al-Maliki, also known as Jawad al-Maliki is secretary-general of the Islamic Dawa Party and was the prime minister of Iraq from 2006 to 2014 and the vice president of Iraq from 2014 to 2015, and 2016 to 2018.

<sup>7</sup> Mohammed Rikan Hadid al-Halbousi is an Iraqi Sunni politician who occupied previously the position of Speaker of the Council of Representatives of Iraq since 15 September 2018 until now.

<sup>8</sup><https://www.alyaum.com/articles/6018197/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D9%88%D9%84%D9%8A/%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%AC%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%AA/%D9%87%D9%84-%D9%8A%D9%86%D8%AC%D8%AD-%D8%AA%D8%AD%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%81-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%A8%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%8A%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%82%D9%8A%D9%8A%D9%86-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%B9%D8%A7%D8%AF%D8%A9-%D9%88%D8%B7%D9%86%D9%87%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AE%D8%AA%D8%B7%D9%81>



## The dilemma of the parliamentary majority

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The Iraqi parliament consists of 329 seats, which are distributed within a constitutional system based on a consensual democracy system similar to the Lebanese Republic, so that the president of the republic is a Kurd, while the speaker of the parliament is a Sunni, and the prime minister is a Shiite, and Muqtada al-Sadr's ambition was for one of his deputies to obtain a seat as prime minister By virtue of obtaining the majority of Shiite votes.

But this matter was not achieved due to the clear challenge that the leaders of the coordination framework backed by Tehran highlighted to the election results, as the coordination framework stated, in a statement published on October 11, 2022: "We announce our appeal against the announced results and our non-acceptance of them, and we will take all available measures to prevent voter tampering."<sup>9</sup>

The matter was not limited to the challenge to the electoral results alone, but was followed by a speech questioning the mechanisms of vote counting, and this questioning was accompanied by a media discourse challenging everyone who supported the "Sairoon Reform Bloc," and this matter did not allow the coalition (Al-Sadr, Barzani, and Al-Halbousi) to achieve a parliamentary majority that allows Al-Sadr was allowed to head the government, which prompted the Sadrist movement to announce the withdrawal of its deputies from Parliament with the aim of disrupting the work of Parliament, but within the Iraqi constitutional system, a parliamentary vacuum is not permissible, and therefore other blocs from the Shiite community have the right to fill the vacuum created by the "Sairoon Reform Bloc," and within With this equation, the coordinating framework forces had the authority to nominate the prime minister, and their preferred option was (Muhammad Shiaa al-Sudani)<sup>10</sup>, which made al-Sadr and his political movement lose everything, so he turned to the opposition and his supporters moved the street on August 29, 2022, to occupy the Green Zone, which led Armed clashes on August 30, 2022.

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<sup>9</sup> BBC, Oct 11, 2021: <https://www.bbc.com/arabic/middleeast-58866263>

<sup>10</sup> [https://arabic.rt.com/middle\\_east/1391846-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%82-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D9%86%D8%B3%D9%8A%D9%82%D9%8A-%D9%8A%D8%AC%D8%AF%D8%AF-%D8%AA%D9%85%D8%B3%D9%83%D9%87-%D8%A8%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%B4%D8%AD%D9%87-%D8%B4%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%B9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%8A-%D8%B1%D8%A6%D9%8A%D8%B3%D8%A7-%D9%84%D9%84%D9%88%D8%B2%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%A1/](https://arabic.rt.com/middle_east/1391846-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%82-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D9%86%D8%B3%D9%8A%D9%82%D9%8A-%D9%8A%D8%AC%D8%AF%D8%AF-%D8%AA%D9%85%D8%B3%D9%83%D9%87-%D8%A8%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%B4%D8%AD%D9%87-%D8%B4%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%B9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%8A-%D8%B1%D8%A6%D9%8A%D8%B3%D8%A7-%D9%84%D9%84%D9%88%D8%B2%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%A1/)



## Sadr's political retirement

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Shiite forensic sciences always need a jurisprudential reference, and although Muqtada al-Sadr is the legitimate son of the important religious authority Muhammad Muqtada al-Sadr, who was killed by Saddam Hussein's regime, he does not possess sufficient legal knowledge to play the jurisprudential role established by his father, and this matter was known to his father, so before his death he recommended His followers follow each of the religious authority, Kazem Al-Hairi, and the reference Muhammad Al-Yaqoubi, and after his death, Muhammad Al-Yaqoubi stepped down from his position so that the religious leaders would be in the hands of Kazem Al-Hairi.

Al-Hairi was the most prominent supporter of Muqtada al-Sadr, and thanks to the relationship between the two parties, Muqtada al-Sadr obtained the approval of the Iranian party, as an Iraqi political leader, so his influence expanded in the Iraqi Shiite community, to be considered the most prominent leader of the religious Iraqi Shiites loyal to the project that calls for the unity of Iraq in full, so al-Sadr was accepted One of the Iraqi parties that advocate Arab nationalist thought.

While the other Shiite parties were clearly loyal to Tehran, and the reason was that they were originally made in Tehran and with the blessing of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, so most of their supporters were from the Shiite opposition who lived outside Iraq, in addition to the paid fighters who received monthly salaries on the recommendation of the leaders of those parties.

Within the Shiite jurisprudence there are texts that prohibit the killing of an innocent soul (whoever kills a soul without a soul or corruption in the land, it is as if he killed all people)<sup>11</sup>, so when the clashes occurred on August 30, 2022, which claimed the lives of 104 Iraqis, most of whom were from the Shiite sect, an order came A jurist from the jurisprudential councils in the Iranian city of Qom, with the aim of questioning the religious authority, Kazem Al-Hairi for his actions of the Sadrist movement in Iraq. In an official statement on August 30, 2022, Al-Haeri announced his retirement from work, and the necessity of obedience to his followers to the leader of the Islamic Revolution in Iran Ali Khamenei, in his statement, he referred to the leader of the Sadrist movement, Muqtada al-Sadr, with the necessity (that faith be accompanied by good deeds)<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> <https://alkafeel.net/islamiclibrary/hadith/wasael-29/wasael-29/29001.html>

<sup>12</sup> <https://baghdad-times.net/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D9%88%D9%84%D9%89-%D9%81%D9%8A->



ولابد لي من كلمات أخيرة أوصي بها أبنائي المؤمنين:

أولاً: على جميع المؤمنين إطاعة الولي قائد الثورة الإسلامية سماحة آية الله العظمى السيد علي الخامنئي (دام ظلّه)، فإنّ سماحته هو الأجدد والأكرم على قيادة الأمة وإدارة الصراع مع قوى الظلم والاستكبار في هذه الظروف التي تكالبت فيها قوى الكفر والشك... ضدّ الإسلام المحمدي الأصيل.

ثانياً: أوصي أبنائي في عراقنا الحبيب بما يلي:

أ- الحفاظ على الوحدة والانسجام فيما بينهم وعدم التفرقة، وأن لا يفسحوا المجال للاستعمار والهيمنة وعملائهم بإشعال نار الفتنة والتناحر بين المؤمنين، وأن يعلموا أنّ عدوّهم المشترك هو أمريكا والصهيونية وأذنانهم، فليكونوا أشداء على الكفار رحماء بينهم.

ب- تحرير العراق من أي احتلال أجنبي ومن أي تواجد لأتة أممية أو عسكريّة، وخصوصاً القوات الأمريكية التي جُمعت على صدر عراقنا الجريح بحجج مختلفة، وعدم السماح ببقائها في العراق بلد المقدّسات، وإنّ إبقاءهم يعتبر من أكبر المحزّمات عند الله تعالى، كما يتّنا ذلك في بيانات سابقة.

ج- أدعو المتصدّين للمناصب والمسؤوليات للقيام بوظائفهم الشرعيّة والتي عاهدوا الشعب على تحقيقها، والابتعاد عن المصالح الشخصية والفئوية الضيقة، التي جرّت الولايات على أبناء الشعب العراقيّ المظلوم، ففي ذلك أمان لهم وعزّة للشعب واستقرار للبلاد.

د- على العلماء وطلبة الحوزة الدينيّة والنخب الثقافيّة والكتّاب الواعين والمخلصين العمل على نوعية أبناء الشعب، حتّى يميّزوا بين العدو والصديق ويدركوا حقيقة مصالحهم ولكي لا يتمّ استغفالهم والاستخفاف بهم ونزع الطاعة منهم فيما لا يعرفونه ولا ينفعهم، وحتّى يتعرّفوا على مكائد الأعداء ومؤامراتهم فيستأصلونها، أو على الأقلّ لا يقعوا فريسة لأهدافهم المغرضة والضالّة.

هـ- على أبناء الشهيدين الصديقين (قدّس الله سرّهما) أن يعرفوا أنّ حبّ الشهيدين لا يكفي ما لم يقترن بالإيمان بهما بالعمل الصالح والانبات الحقيقيّ لأهدافهما التي ضحّيا بنفسيهما من أجلها، ولا يكفي مجرد الادعاء أو الانتساب، ومن يسعى لتفريق أبناء الشعب والمذهب باسم الشهيدين الصديقين (رضوان الله تعالى عليهما)، أو يتصدّى للقيادة باسمهما وهو فاقد للاجتهاد أو لياقي الشروط المشترطة في القيادة الشرعيّة فهو -في الحقيقة- ليس صديقاً مهما ادعى أو انتسب.

و أوصي جميع المؤمنين بحشدنا المقدّس ولابدّ من دعمه وبأيديهم كقوة مستقلّة غير مدمجة في سائر القوى، فإنّه الحصن الحصين واليد الضاربة والقوة القاهرة للمترتصين بأمن البلاد ومصالح أهلها إلى جانب باقي القوات المسلّحة العراقيّة، كما يتّنا ذلك وأكّدناه مراراً.

ز- لابدّ من إبعاد البعثيين المجرّمين والمفسدين، والعلماء عن المناصب والمسؤوليات في البلاد، وعدم تمكينهم بأي شكل من الأشكال، فإنّهم لا يريدون الخير لكم، ولا تهتمهم سوى مصالحهم الحزبية وخدمة أسيادهم من المسمّ... تعميرين والصهيونية وأذنانهم.

﴿رَبَّنَا لَا نُؤَدِّعُنَا لِنُؤْخَذَ مِنْ تَسْمِينَا أَوْ أَهْطَأْنَا رَبَّنَا وَلَا تَحْمِلْ عَلَيْنَا إِيْرَارًا كَمَا حَمَلْتَهُ عَلَيِ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِنَا رَبَّنَا وَلَا تُحَمِّلْنَا مَا لَا طَاقَةَ لَنَا بِهِ وَاعْفُ عَنَّا وَارْحَمْنَا إِنَّكَ قَوْلَانَا فَانْصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ﴾. سورة البقرة: الآية: 286.

وأخّر دعوانا أن الحمد لله ربّ العالمين.

1 / صفر المظفر / 1444 هـ

This statement embarrassed Muqtada al-Sadr, prompting him to announce his retirement from political work as well, but he did not announce to his supporters the need to follow the guidelines of the Iranian Islamic revolution, as Al-Hairi did. With this step, Al-Sadr made the decision of his religious supporters free, and close to the discourse of Shiite references with Iraqi passion such as Sistani.



## The gift for the coordination framework

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Al-Sadr's retirement was a gift to the coordination framework, and it did not prompt them to appease Al-Sadr and discourage him from his decision, but rather made them speed up the restructuring of Parliament, with the aim of naming (Muhammad Shia Al-Sudani) prime minister. Parliament convened on September 28, 2022, and its first decision was to reject Al-Halbousi's resignation with the approval of 222 parliament members, and by virtue of this decision, Al-Halbousi declared the right of the new deputies to choose the prime minister.

Outside the parliament and on the outskirts of the Green Zone, supporters of the Sadrist movement were in a state of clash with the security forces, and mortar shells were used to target the vicinity of the parliament, and the clashes caused the injury of 133 people<sup>13</sup>. The Sadrist movement announced that the MPs from the Sairoon Reform bloc did not submit an official decision to announce their resignation, but rather avoid participating in parliamentary sessions.

Of course, this strategy may hamper the coordination framework project for a period, but it will not be fruitful unless the parliamentary elections are repeated anew as Al-Sadr demanded. In fact, this demand is very complicated and requires approval from all parliamentary blocs, including the coordination framework, and this is what the framework rejects.

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.alarabiya.net/arab-and-world/iraq/2022/09/28/%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%AA%D8%B4%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%A3%D9%85%D9%86%D9%8A-%D9%83%D8%AB%D9%8A%D9%81-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%A8%D8%BA%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%AF-%D9%82%D8%A8%D9%8A%D9%84-%D8%AC%D9%84%D8%B3%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%B5%D9%88%D9%8A%D8%AA-%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%84%D8%A8%D9%88%D8%B3%D9%8A>



## **Possibility of assassination or return from resignation**

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The Sadrist movement is liable to collapse without Muqtada al-Sadr, as he is the only heir to the family of Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr, and Muqtada al-Sadr is not married and has no children. From the exacerbation of events in Iraq, and their reach to the point of civil war that may affect the life of al-Sadr herself, and for this reason al-Sadr on more than one occasion made the decision to resign from political life:

- The first resignation: It was in 2007, the protest occurred in the American presence in Iraq, and then he left for Iran to settle there, for the purpose of study and learning, pledging not to return until the exit of the American occupier. In 2011, and before the US withdrawal, Muqtada al-Sadr returned to Iraq and became involved in politics, and his political current won 39 parliamentary seats.
- The second resignation: In 2013, al-Sadr announced his retirement from political work for the second time after confrontations between the Sadrist movement and other Shiite forces, but he returned to political work after several months.
- The third resignation: In 2014, he again announced his retirement from political work, closed the political movement's offices, and announced the dissolution of his political association with the representatives who represent his movement in Parliament, but after four years he returned to political work, and his movement won 54 parliamentary seats in the 2018 elections.



## The conclusion

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The coordinating framework is a grouping of several parties and parliamentary blocs, and its main leadership is not represented by the personalities of Al-Amiri, Al-Maliki, Al-Khazali<sup>14</sup>, and Al-Haidari, but the main leadership of this framework is in Tehran. and the Iranian Revolutionary Guard has many personalities who may play the role of an alternative to the current leaders in the event that they are liquidated in a civil war, or with air strikes, as happened with the assassination of Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis<sup>15</sup> on January 3, 2020.

As for the Sadrist movement, it has no alternative to Muqtada al-Sadr, hence the state of civil war within the Shiite house would be a disaster for the Sadrist movement unless al-Sadr supported security from Washington.

Indeed, Al-Sadr and the United States are not consensual, but in politics, there is nothing impossible. Therefore, if Washington and Israel are serious in their efforts to dwarf Iranian expansion in the Arab region, they should support the Arab countries against Tehran with intelligence and logistics, in order to provide Al-Sadr with what enables him to eliminate his opponents and restore the Shiites Iraqis for the Iraqi identity, and this matter is met with thirst by all Iraqis who have realized that the Iranian project in Iraq is a subversive project and cannot become a development project.

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<sup>14</sup> Qais Hadi Sayed Hasan al-Khazali (Arabic: *قيس هادي سيد حسن الخزعلي*; born 20 June 1974) is best known as the founder and leader of the Iran-backed Special Groups in Iraq from June 2006 until his capture by British forces in March 2007. As head of the Special Groups, Khazali directed arms shipment, formation of squads to participate in fighting, and insurgent operations, most notably the 20 January 2007 attack on American forces in Karbala. A former follower of Muqtada al-Sadr, he was expelled from the Mahdi Army in 2004 for giving "unauthorized orders" and founded his own group: Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq (AAH) also known as the "Khazali network" that was later designated as a terrorist group by the U.S. Department of State. [https://dbpedia.org/page/Qais\\_Khazali](https://dbpedia.org/page/Qais_Khazali)

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jan/03/abu-mahdi-al-muhandis-iraq-iran-militias-suleimani>