

**1 Apr 22: Unidentified Militants Target Dhi Qar Oil Refinery with Mortar in Third April Attack on Oil Interests.** Unidentified militants fired one mortar shell that landed near the Dhi Qar Oil Refinery, approximately 10 km south of Nasiriyah. Unidentified militants previously launched two rockets at the East Baghdad Oil Field in the Nahrwan area, approximately 30 km southeast of Baghdad on April 18 and three Katyusha rockets targeting Zubair oil field in the al-Burjasiya area of Basra on April 9. No group claimed the attacks.

**2 Apr 22: Iraq Continues to Allow Imports from Iran Despite Border Closure.**

Anonymous residents of Basra Province told Middle East Eye that Iranian trucks continue to enter Iraq through the Shalamchek border crossing in Basra despite the coronavirus-related border closure. The trucks are reportedly supported by "powerful militia groups and untouched by local security services," according to the anonymous source. Naeem Sabah, a dean of the Economy Department at the University of Basra, claimed that "more than 90 percent of [Iraq's] goods are imported, mostly from Iran," making it difficult to stop the imports. Residents of Basra interviewed by reporters stressed they are more concerned about COVID-19 than they are about the availability of food and called on Iraqi authorities to stop these imports.

**3 Apr 22: Bloc Led by Influential Sunni Political Figure Demands Kata'ib Hezbollah and Liwa al-Tufuf Withdraw from Qaim, Anbar Province.**

Jamal Karbouli's National Movement for Development and Reform bloc, also known as the Solution bloc, demanded that the Kata'ib Hezbollah and Liwa al-Tufuf PMF militias leave Qaim and its surroundings in Anbar Province "immediately" and "compensate the local people affected by its actions." Karbouli is an influential Sunni politician and powerbroker. The militia groups reportedly occupied 1,600 farms in Qaim, preventing the owners from growing crops for the last 3 years. The party also called on the Iraqi government to pay more attention to border areas such as Qaim and how they are affected by Shi'a factions, likely referring to the Iran-backed factions within the PMF.

**4 Apr 22-23: Caretaker Prime Minister Mehdi Likely Separates Hawza Brigades from the PMF on Behalf of Grand Ayatollah Sistani, Undermining the Legitimacy of Iran-backed PMF Factions.**

Caretaker Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mehdi issued an executive order separating four Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) brigades known as the Hawza militias from the PMF chain of command and placing them instead under the direct authority of the prime minister. The brigades include the PMF's 2nd, 11th, 26th, and 44th brigades: Firqat al-Imam Ali, Firqat al-Abbas, Liwa Ali al-Akbar, and Liwa Ansar al-Marjayiah, respectively. These units are considered the closest and most loyal to Iraq's highest Shi'a religious authority, Grand Ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani, and the religious authorities in Najaf. In a joint statement, the Hawza militias said that they will continue to cooperate with the PMF but are considering joining the "rest of the forces," likely referring to the regular Iraqi Security Forces, and called upon other PMF brigades to make this transition as well. The Hawza militias previously objected to the appointment of Iranian proxy Kata'ib Hezbollah figure Abdul-Aziz al-Muhammadawi or "Abu Fadak," as Popular Mobilization Commission Chief of Staff due to his strong Iranian ties.

**5 Apr 22-23: Prime Minister-designate Kadhimi Threatens to Withdraw Nomination after Shi'a Blocs Reject Cabinet Picks.**

An anonymous source claimed that Prime Minister-designate Mustafa al-Kadhimi met with the heads of seven Shi'a blocs to resolve outstanding disputes about his proposed cabinet on April 22. The meeting reportedly included State of Law coalition leader Nouri al-Maliki, Conquest Alliance leader and Iranian proxy Hadi al-Ameri, Towards Reform parliamentary leader Nassar al-Rubaie, and US-designated terrorist organization and Iranian proxy militia Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq political representative Adnan Fayhan. Wisdom Trend leader Ammar al-Hakim did not attend the meeting. Shortly after the meeting, an anonymous source leaked a list of the ministers reportedly discussed at the meeting to all major Iraqi outlets. An anonymous source from the State of Law Coalition told Iraqi news outlet Shafaq on April 23 that Kadhimi threatened to withdraw his nomination after Shi'a blocs rejected his cabinet choices. The source claimed that Kadhimi will reportedly make "final amendments" to his cabinet but will "withdraw ... without hesitation" if political blocs raise any further objections.

**6 Apr 22-24: Proposed Cabinet of Prime Minister-designate Kadhimi Leaked.**

Iraqi media outlets published a list of the proposed cabinet appointments of Prime Minister-designate Kadhimi on April 22. The list included several technocratic appointees and two representatives of Iraq's popular protest movement but fell largely along party and ethno-sectarian quota lines. Five positions did not have nominees listed, including the powerful offices of the minister of interior and minister of defense. The list is not final; it is possible that not all positions will be filled before Kadhimi presents his cabinet to Parliament for a vote of confidence. Asaad Abdul Sadah, a member of parliament from nationalist Shi'a cleric Moqtada al-Sadr's Toward Reform bloc, told Iraqi news outlet Shafaq on April 24 that the cabinet list was leaked for political purposes and that more lists would likely be leaked to discredit candidates or provoke Iraq's popular protest movement.

**7 Apr 23: Kata'ib Hezbollah Claims that Prime Minister-designate Kadhimi Agreed to Form Joint Committee to Investigate Soleimani Assassination.**

Iranian proxy militia and US-designated terrorist organization Kata'ib Hezbollah (KH) released a statement claiming that Prime Minister-designate Mustafa al-Kadhimi requested a meeting to "clarify" his involvement in the January 3 US drone strike that killed Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) Quds Force Commander Qassim Soleimani and Popular Mobilization Commission Deputy Chairman and KH leader Abu Mehdi al-Muhandis. During the meeting, Kadhimi reportedly agreed to form a joint committee to investigate the "circumstances of the crime." KH first accused Kadhimi on March 2 of giving the US intelligence that led to the strike.

**8 Apr 26-27: US Renews 30-day Sanctions Waiver, Allowing Iraq to Continue Iranian Energy Imports.**

The US issued a second 30-day waiver to the Iraqi government on April 26, thereby allowing Iraq to continue importing Iranian energy and circumventing US sanctions on Iran. This waiver will expire on May 26. The US government will reassess waiver renewal once a "credible government is formed in Iraq," an anonymous State Department official told Reuters. This is the eighth waiver the US has given to Iraq and the second 30-day waiver in a row; sanctions waivers usually cover 90-120 days. A spokesperson for the Iraqi Ministry of Electricity (MoE) gave an interview to Kurdish media outlet Rudaw in which he said that while the MoE was exploring ways to diversify Iraqi energy reliance and was considering Turkish imports, it would be impossible to create a new energy plan without a fully empowered Iraqi government to release funds and approve projects.

**9 Apr 26: Kurdistan Regional Government States that It Will Hand Over Entire Oil Portfolio in Exchange for Share in Iraqi Federal Budget.**

Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) Planning Minister Dara Rashid gave a press conference stating that the KRG is ready to hand over its entire oil quota of 250,000 barrels per day and its entire regional oil portfolio to Iraq's State Organization for Marketing of Oil. The KRG would do so in exchange for financial shares in the Iraqi federal budget and the entitlements of the oil companies operating in KRG oilfields. Caretaker Prime Minister Mehdi previously called on the Ministry of Finance to cut payments of KRG public employee salaries, halt budget transfers to the region, and take back all 2020 fund transfers on April 16 in what was likely an attempt to pressure the KRG into relinquishing its oil portfolio.

**10 Apr 27: Shi'a Blocs Attempt to Oust Kurds from Foreign Affairs and Finance Ministries.**

A member of parliament from the Iranian political proxy Conquest Alliance bloc, Mukhtar al-Musawi, claimed that an agreement exists between Shi'a blocs to remove Kurdish political appointees from the positions of finance minister and minister of foreign affairs. Musawi argued that the finance minister should be from Iraq's capital, Baghdad. Kurdish members of parliament vehemently rejected that argument. In a draft of his cabinet leaked April 22, Prime Minister-designate Kadhimi proposed keeping current Finance Minister Faud Hussein in office. Hussein is a member of the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP).

**11 Apr 27-28: Shi'a Political Parties Remain Deadlocked over Prime Minister-designate Kadhimi's Cabinet as Rumors Suggest an Effort to Reinstate Caretaker Prime Minister Mehdi.**

An anonymous source told the Iraqi Kurdish outlet Rudaw that the leaders of the Shi'a blocs held a meeting on April 27 at the home of Hadi al-Ameri, an Iranian proxy leader of the Badr Organization and of the Conquest Alliance parliamentary bloc, to discuss the formation of Prime Minister-designate Mustafa al-Kadhimi's government despite earlier reports that the meeting had been canceled. The source stated the meeting resulted in an agreement to continue to support Kadhimi but did not resolve disagreements over appointments to Kadhimi's cabinet. Riyad al-Massoudi, a member of parliament from nationalist Shi'a cleric Moqtada al-Sadr's Toward Reform bloc, issued a statement on Twitter the next day warning of attempts by unspecified parliamentary blocs to reassign caretaker Prime Minister Mehdi as a fully empowered prime minister until early elections can be held.



- Major Cities
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- Demonstration
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- Religious Figures
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**Key Takeaway:** The government of Iraq remains beset by competing domestic and international forces, a political conflict that threatens to further destabilize the Iraqi state. Iraq's highest Shi'a religious authority, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani likely worked with caretaker Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mehdi to remove key militias loyal to Sistani from the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF). The order places these militias under the direct command of the Office of the Prime Minister, a move which will be viewed by Iraqis as a vote of no confidence by Sistani in the remaining Iran-backed PMF factions and leadership. Simultaneously, Iraq's Shi'a political blocs, led by the Iran-backed Conquest Alliance, are frustrating Prime Minister-designate Mustafa al-Kadhimi's attempts to form a cabinet, calling into question whether Kadhimi will be able to overcome the partisan and ethno-sectarian deadlock to form a government. Additionally, Iran-backed parties are taking steps to weaken opposing ethno-sectarian groups by claiming some cabinet positions for Shi'a blocs rather than for their usual Kurdish occupants.

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