

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
January 26, 2009

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ISW RELEASES IRAQI ELECTION FACT SHEET

WASHINGTON, DC – The Institute for the Study of War (ISW) today released a fact sheet on Iraq's upcoming Provincial Elections. With Iraqi elections being held on Saturday, January 31, 2009, the fact sheet provides timely information for those interested in the election. The fact sheet is available online at ISW's website (www.understandingwar.org), and can be viewed by going to <http://www.understandingwar.org/background/2009-iraqi-provincial-elections-fact-sheet>

Items from the ISW Iraq Election Fact Sheet

- A total of 502 parties have registered to participate in the election, and a total 14,431 candidates, including 3,912 women, will be vying for 440 open seats on the provincial councils of Iraq.
- 80% of the political parties had formed after the 2005 elections.
- There is an average of 33 candidates per position.
- 36 coalitions will participate in the elections.
- The Iraqi Provincial Elections are overseen by the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) in coordination with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).
- A provincial council is a governing body similar to an American state legislature.
- Under the Provincial Powers Law of March 19, 2008, provincial councils and governors are given significant authority. The councils have the power to make laws for the province and to allocate funds for projects within that province.
- Registration occurred over a six-week period beginning the week of July 21st, 2008 and ending August 28th, 2008. It was overseen by 6500 IHEC employees at 564 voter registration centers throughout Iraq.
- 2.9 million Iraqis (17% of the electorate) ensured they were on the voter registry, which was created using the Public Distribution System (PDS) database. The PDS is used to distribute food rations.
- The Election High Security Committee, comprised of senior security officials from the Iraqi Interior Ministry, Defense Ministry, Office of the National Security Advisor, MNF-I, Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) and UNAMI, advises the IHEC Board of Commissioners on matters of security.
- Iraqi voters will be able to vote at one of 42,000 stations in 7000 polling locations in Iraq.
- After waiting in line, the voter will provide a photo ID to an identification officer. After their identity is verified, the voter must sign or thumbprint next to his or her name.
- After polls close at 5:00 p.m., station managers of each polling place will oversee a hand tabulation of the ballots. The ballots will be placed on large tables and each ballot will be counted twice in order to reduce the chance of error. The station manager will announce each new step to the election observers, who will stand a reasonable distance from the tabulation tables and may not touch any ballot.
- As Provincial Elections approach, both Coalition Forces and IHEC have been preparing for the threat of civil unrest. In a change from 2005, security for the 2009 elections will be provided by the Iraqis. Despite these preparations, four provinces in particular (Diyala Province, Basra Province, Ninewa Province, and Anbar Province) are at an increased risk for civil unrest before and after the election.

ISW is a private, nonpartisan, not-for-profit institution whose goal is to educate current and future decision makers and thereby enhance the quality of policy debates. The Institute's work is addressed to government officials and legislators, teachers and students, business executives, professionals, journalists, and all citizens interested in a serious understanding of war and government policy.