



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on March 29, 2010

Opposition Candidates Arrested in Iraq After Maliki's Party Losses

Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki's party, the State of Law Coalition, lost the March 7 parliamentary elections in a fractured vote, but appears to have embarked upon a course of using political violence as a means of erasing the election results. "At least four Sunni Muslim candidates who appear to have won parliamentary seats in Iraq on the winning ticket of secular leader Ayad Allawi have become targets of investigation by security forces reporting to the narrowly defeated Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki," McClatchy news service reported March 27.



Maliki's party [won](#) just 89 of 325 seats in the national parliament, though it was a close second to the largest vote winner, Ayad Allawi's Iraqiya Party (91 seats). Though himself a Shiite, the former U.S. hand-picked interim prime minister Allawi had built coalitions with Sunnis who had largely boycotted the last election in 2005.

Neither party earned even close to the majority of 163 needed to control the 325-seat parliament and form a government on its own, a repeat of the [2005 election](#). Back in 2005, Maliki's Iranian-allied party won 128 seats and formed a coalition with Democratic Patriotic Alliance of Kurdistan (53 seats). Both ruling parties lost seats in [the 2010 elections](#) — with the State of Law Coalition shedding support to Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr's Iraqi National Alliance. Al-Sadr's National Alliance Party earned the third most seats, 70, and many [Western media have speculated](#) that the anti-U.S. al-Sadr (his militia, the Mehdi Army fought U.S. forces in the past) may emerge as a king-maker in the deal.

The Maliki-allied Kurdistan Alliance (43 seats) also lost support during the 2010 election to a Gorran (Change) party (8 seats), while smaller parties won the remaining 25 seats. "No way we will accept the results," the *New York Times* [reported](#) Maliki as saying March 27.

Maliki's remarks and the arrests of opposition candidates (some Sunni candidates have been accused in helping arrange suicide bombings) have led to speculation that the most recent round of elections will spark a civil war insurgency just as the 2005 election did. But the widespread participation of Sunnis in the most recent elections is seen by most observers as a positive step, so long as the election results are respected.

While U.S. officials are happy with the election results, the emergence of Iyad Allawi as a frontrunner may not be a positive step for human rights in Iraq. Allawi [personally executed](#) six suspected insurgents after being hand-picked as interim prime minister by the Bush Administration in 2004.

Photo of Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki: AP Images



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