

1 May 13: Former Prime Minister Maliki Reverses Opposition to Prime Minister Kadhimi's Government, Easing Transition. Former Prime Minister and State of Law Coalition leader Nouri al-Maliki stated that his coalition would support Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi's efforts to provide government services, maintain the sovereignty of the state, and improve security. Maliki had denounced Kadhimi's candidacy and boycotted his May 7 vote of confidence to ascend to the office of the prime minister. Maliki told Iraqi outlet Shafaq that his party had previously rejected Kadhimi's cabinet because of its use of the ethno-sectarian quota system in selecting cabinet ministers. His support may ease Kadhimi's transition; Maliki has deep roots in many ministries which can be leveraged to help or hurt the sitting government's objectives.

2 May 13: Kadhimi Reportedly Seeks Iranian Financial Support. Iranian Ambassador to Iraq Eraj Masjedi told the Iranian news outlet IRNA that Prime Minister Kadhimi requested Iranian assistance in solving Iraq's financial challenges. Masjedi added that US pressure on Iraq to roll back Iranian financial involvement in Iraq has "gone nowhere" and that Iraq is dependent on maintaining relations with Iran.

3 May 14: Protesters Block Road to Wasit Oil Field to Relay Demands to Prime Minister. Protesters gathered peacefully and blocked the road into the Adhab oil field in Wasit province. Demonstrators told Iraqi news outlet NINA that the demonstrations do not aim to halt production, but rather to "deliver the demands of the people to the federal government." The liquid and gas department of the Adhab oil field told news outlets that protesters' entry into the oil field halted the production of liquid gas. A delegation of Kadhimi's advisors met with protesters and activists at the field to receive the protesters' demands and relay them to the prime minister for consideration, according to a statement from Kadhimi's office.

4 May 15: Russian President Congratulates Kadhimi, Invites him to Moscow. Prime Minister Kadhimi received Russian Ambassador to Iraq Maxim Maximov, who conveyed congratulations from Russian President Vladimir Putin on Kadhimi's government formation and invited the new prime minister to Moscow. Iraqi news outlet Shafaq reported that Kadhimi also invited Putin to visit Baghdad and stated that Iraq "is counting on the role of Russia" to achieve stability in the region and in the fields of oil, gas, and electricity.

5 May 15-19: Turkish President Congratulates Kadhimi, Promises New Energy Partnerships. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan called on May 15 to congratulate Prime Minister Kadhimi on his government formation. A statement issued by Kadhimi's office indicated that the two leaders expressed mutual desires to strengthen their partnership and enhance bilateral relations. Kadhimi invited Erdoğan to Baghdad. On May 19, new Iraqi Minister of Electricity Majid Mahdi Hantoush met with Turkish Ambassador to Iraq Fatih Yildiz to discuss energy partnerships between the two countries. The two stressed the importance of a coming project to link the electrical grids of the two countries, allowing energy imports from Turkey through northern Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan.

6 May 16: Fifth "New" Shi'a Militia Group Announces Existence with Video of Attack on US Convoy. Another previously unknown Shi'a militia group calling itself Saraya Thawra al-Ashreen al-Thaniya, or The Second 1920s Revolution Companies, announced its presence with a video circulated on Telegram. The video claimed a February 10 attack on a convoy carrying weapons for US troops in Babil Province in an operation the new group called Victims of Victory. That attack consisted of a homemade explosive device that set fire to one truck and caused no injuries. The name of the new group is a reference to the 1920 Iraqi revolution against the British Mandate. This group is different from the 1920s Revolution Brigades, Kata'ib Thawrat al-Ashreen, an Iraqi Sunni insurgent group that later aligned with ISIS.

7 May 16: Kadhimi Opens Dialogue with Iran-backed Proxy Leaders at Popular Mobilization Forces Headquarters in Baghdad to Demonstrate Leverage. Prime Minister Kadhimi visited the headquarters of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) in Baghdad, where he delivered a speech stressing the importance of cooperation between the PMF and the Iraqi Army. Kadhimi emphasized that the key function of the PMF is to serve as an anti-ISIS bulwark. Kadhimi stated that the PMF is an official legal entity that is essential to the security of the nation. Kadhimi met with PMF Chairman and National Security Advisor Faleh al-Fayyadh as well as current PMF Chief of Staff Abdul Aziz al-Mohammedawi (Abu Fadak) and PMF Central Security Director and US-designated terrorist Hussein Falih al-Lami (Abu Zaynab al-Lami). Both Lami and Abu Fadak are senior officials in US-designated terrorist organization Kata'ib Hezbollah. Kadhimi also brought with him the four leaders of the Hawza militias, those groups viewed as closest to Iraq's highest religious authority Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, likely to increase his leverage in discussions. The Hawza groups split from the PMF on April 21 and are now under the direct command of the prime minister. The secession of the Hawza groups aggravated the Iran-backed PMF leadership, which fears that more groups will leave the PMF.

8 May 17-18: Kadhimi Complies with Protester Demand to Search for Missing Persons and Commemorate "Martyrs." Prime Minister Kadhimi visited the Ministry of Interior in Baghdad on May 17 to meet with new Minister of Interior Othman al-Ghanimi. In the meeting, Kadhimi stressed that the role of the ministry is to focus on citizens and fight corruption and ordered that "all the capabilities of the ministry" be directed toward finding the "kidnapped and the disappeared," referring to protesters kidnapped by unspecified forces since October 2019 as well as other missing persons. On May 18, Kadhimi ordered the formation of a special committee linked to his office to compile a list of all demonstrators and security forces injured or killed between October 2019 and May 18, 2020. The list will be published in Iraqi media and will be the first official Iraqi attempt to document the violent attempts to suppress Iraq's popular protest movement. The list will also serve as a first step to "honor the martyrs, to rehabilitate them, and to compensate the families of the victims," according to a statement from Kadhimi's office.

9 May 17: Canadian, British, EU Embassies, and World Bank Face Political Backlash after Raising Pride Flag. The embassies of the European Union (EU), Canada, and the United Kingdom, as well as the World Bank Middle East and North Africa office flew the LGBT+ Pride flag in recognition of the International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia. A broad spectrum of politicians and clerics condemned the commemoration as insensitive and offensive, particularly during Ramadan, and demanded apologies. An MP for the political wing of the Iranian proxy militia and US-designated terrorist organization Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq, Hassan Salem, called the raising of the flag "amoral and ... disgraceful" and called on the embassies to be closed. The British and EU embassies deleted their tweets commemorating the occasion.

10 May 18: Kadhimi Appoints Major General Qassim al-Muhammadi as Commander of Ground Forces. Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi's military spokesperson, Brigadier General Yahya Rasool, announced that Major General Qassim al-Muhammadi would succeed Iraq's new defense minister, Juma Inad, as the commander of Iraq's ground forces. Muhammadi served as the commander of Iraq's desert forces, Jazeera Operations Command, in Anbar Province from 2016-2020. He took a leave of absence from that position after he was twice wounded in operations against ISIS in Anbar.

11 May 18: Pro-PMF Mob Storms Saudi TV Station in Baghdad after Report Linking Muhandis to 40-year-old Terrorist Attack. "Dozens" of angry supporters of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) attacked the Saudi-owned channel MBC 1 in the al-Waziriya district north of Baghdad after the channel suggested that the deceased de facto PMF leader and US-designated terrorist Abu Mehdi al-Muhandis was involved in the 1981 bombing of the Iraqi Embassy in Beirut. The studio attack caused no injuries but did cause "severe damages" to the office. MBC 1 said that it was working with authorities to find the perpetrators.

12 May 18-19: Kadhimi Instructs Cabinet to Pay State Employee Salaries in Full. The Office of the Prime Minister published a statement via Twitter affirming that Prime Minister Kadhimi ordered all state employee salaries to be paid for the month of May without deductions. It is unclear whether Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) employee salaries will be paid by the federal government. On May 18, the Council of Ministers sent an official letter to the KRG indicating that the salaries of KRG public employees are not the responsibility of the Government of Iraq (GoI), indicating that the GoI may not include Kurdish public servants in this announcement.

13 May 19: Unidentified Militants Target Green Zone with Katyusha Rocket. Unidentified militants fired one Katyusha rocket from Palestine Street in Baghdad's Idrisi neighborhood in the early morning of May 19; the rocket landed on an empty house near the US Embassy inside the Green Zone and caused no casualties. No group claimed responsibility for the attack, and some Iraqi outlets reported two rockets. The attack was likely in response to the May 17 raising of the LGBT+ Pride flag by the British, Canadian, and EU embassies that drew broad condemnation from Iraqi political, religious, and militia figures.



- Major Cities
- Iraqi Security Forces
- ISIS
- Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG)
- Demonstration
- Anti-ISIS Coalition
- Iran
- Iraqi Council of Representatives
- Iranian Proxy Militias
- Religious Figures
- Iraqi Prime Minister and Cabinet

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Key Takeaway: New Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi seeks to balance a variety of opposing forces in Iraq. After a week of executive orders and appointments generally viewed as favorable to the United States, Kadhimi called the Iranian-dominated Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) heroes who are essential to the anti-ISIS fight in a visit to PMF headquarters. Kadhimi needs to maintain his ties with the PMF and Iran's proxies in Iraq to prevent militia-led civil unrest and ultimately state collapse. However, Kadhimi also made a point of showcasing his leverage over the PMF by bringing with him the leaders of militias that defected from the PMF in April. Those defections risked organizational fracturing and offended PMF leadership which remains under Iranian, rather than Iraqi, government control. Iran continues to work to demonstrate its influence over Iraqi affairs in other areas; the Iranian ambassador told Iranian media that Kadhimi asked for financial aid from Iran and said that Iraq remains "dependent" on Iran for financial support despite US pressure to sever those ties.

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