

**The opinion of the male and female electorate in the nomination of women as candidates in the upcoming elections and the factors that could affect the chances of winning in the Iraqi parliament elections**

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**Iraqi women Journalist's Forum (IWJF) in cooperation with the National Endowment for Democracy (NED)**

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The Iraqi Women Journalist's Forum has worked annually to prepare field studies by using statistics as the main source in its media campaigns, those campaigns were utilized as an essential part of its work in the field of standing up for community issues and human rights, Thus, the survey included a set of questions (21 questions) related to participation in elections and other questions concerning whether women's will get votes in the elections or not , the opportunities available according to the districts and communities to which the candidate belongs, the role of political parties , media and other institutions in supporting the political campaigns of women candidates and the factors influencing their chances of winning.

**Aims of Survey:** The main goal is to determine the reasons for the society's reluctance to elect women candidates in the elections, in contrary to voting for men candidates.

**Methodology and Tools for Survey:** The survey questionnaire was designed with the participation of a group of the organization's staff and volunteers from media and women activists with up to 30 participators. It was presented to a number of specialists in the opinion polls, it was also presented to the representatives of the targeted governorates to consider their notes before releasing it in its final form. The questionnaire covered two parts, the first one was regarding general information about the respondents (Gender, age, academic attainment, social status, and finally the governorate) and the second, the survey questionnaire.

The survey was put into action during the period from 1 July 2017 to 15 March 2018. The sample size was 610 questionnaires distributed to the targeted governorates in the survey, the number of individuals surveyed was 591 male and female with age group of (18 - 51), the number of non-responders reached (19) individual, meaning that the response rate is greater than 95%.

The survey sample for 2017-2018 was designed to be unequal according to the population and ethnic density of the six surveyed governorates. In addition, the sample size of each governorate was determined separately for the age group (the voting age) to distribute the sample size on (gender - social status - academic attainment). As follows:

Baghdad: 250 members of both sexes

Basra: 100 members of both sexes

Dhi-Qar: 50 members of both sexes  
Diyala: 50 members of both sexes  
Anbar: 60 members of both sexes  
Kirkuk: 100 members of both sexes

### **Summary of Results Analysis:**

- The category of young people who have a university degree are the most responsive to participate in the survey, and this gives a realistic reflection on the role of youth in change it also gives a positive impression of the role of educated youth in spreading the participatory culture regarding influencing and decision-making in the community.
- There is a societal awareness in the sample of the poll about the importance of their participation in the elections. This indicates the important fact that there is a careful and progressive development in the voter's psychological behavior towards the transition from the rule of authoritarianism to the consultative approach within social and institutional scope.
- The preference was to vote for men candidates in the elections, although it came to a slight difference compared to the voting for women, the majority of votes for men came from the section of men respondents, while women respondents had dissimilarity in their preferences in voting for women candidates as it came high in Basra and Diyala governorates in contrary to Baghdad and that may be due to the intense focus on Baghdad as the capital of the country and its population density and electoral weight.
- The survey found that respondents in most governorates of both sexes were free to choose their candidate, but this freedom fell among the women voters in Anbar province, and this reflects the nature of the tribal society there, in addition to the result of the armed conflicts in that province.
- The results showed that kinship does not affect the decision of the voter in the elections and that came to a percentage of 74%, most of the voters who came with that decision were from the section of post-graduate degree holders, Baghdad was the highest in this choice by 84%, Kirkuk in contrast was the highest by voting for the opposite by 40%. Post-graduate degree holders are more objective in dealing with these issues, especially their concern about the nature of community participation.
- The survey proved that young people with a level of high education tend to adopt civil orientations and that civil societies are more supportive of women candidates.
- The poll reflected the man's acceptance to run the election campaign for his wife or female relative by 55%, and Basrah was leading the poll concerning men's support, and this is very accurate because most of the campaign managers now and in the previous parliamentary sessions were and still are men working for women, noting that the capital Baghdad was the weakest among Cities polled in support of men's management of the campaign, as it scored 44%.
- The respondents in the survey of both sexes stressed that the financial independence of women affects the candidacy of women in the elections by 65%. This result supports the demands of the Iraqi women's movement in the economic empowerment of women.
- The results of the survey from both sexes indicate that women have the same ability as men to conduct a successful political campaign, which is 60%, the most of votes to emphasize these results came in Basrah with 75%. This result reflected the emergence and evolution of the psychological alignment of voters towards liberation from the guardianship dilemma and to make women equal to men as a "cognitive factor" capable of exercising their cultural and cognitive role in society.

- Two-thirds of the respondents stressed out the importance of support from civil society organizations and associations for women in the elections with the same level of support for men candidates, with one-third of the surveyed women demanding a greater role for organizations and associations in encountering some of the challenges and accusations women is facing such as lack of knowledge, discrimination based on gender and lack of credibility, and that require these organizations to take a bigger role in supporting women.

The confirmation of respondents on the objective aspect in the process of selecting candidates in terms of preference for competence and experience over the political, religious and tribal affiliation, Basra exceeded the selection of the criterion of efficiency by 65%, however, the respondents of Kirkuk province preferred religious and tribal affiliation in their choices by 54%. (An important observation, because of the ethnic diversity of the province and the existence of a conflict over its identity, we find that there is a national and tribal alignment in the province, the existence and sustainability of this alignment depends on the realization of the concept of citizenship and the individual's sense of justice and equality of opportunities and rights)

- The results of the survey show that the level of education affects electoral behavior in two ways: First, the lower level of education represents a stronger base in selecting the candidates on a tribal and religious basis. Second, the level of high education increases the likelihood of choosing the candidates on the basis of personality and competence.

- The results of the survey indicated an equal ratio between the social groups that support the women's victory in the elections. The category of tribes and relatives<sup>1</sup> and the category of intellectuals<sup>2</sup> were equal percentages, both 32%. The analysis data for these percentages indicate the following:

- The prevalence of tribal concepts in the selection, which is an indicator of one of the negative, non-objective manifestations. In the same context, tending to vote for contacts and friends constituting in total 61.9%, that all against the objective voting of the intellectual section of respondents which came to 32%. (Increasing electoral awareness and deepening the concepts of democracy over time will lead to dismantling tribal concepts due to the absence of need for them and because of their qualitative opposition with the inevitability of social rationalism, which emphasizes the importance of equality of opportunity and achieving Community and Gender Justice)

- The sample reached conclusive belief that the clerics and the Islamic authorities which they represent, do not favor the women's victory in the elections, only with a slim majority of 6%. It seems that political Islamization has failed to maintain a positive attitude towards women and their role in society by trying to diminish their role in a narrow framework, according to the poll.

The respondents stressed out that the social media sites are the most influential media tool in the electoral education of women and especially the young ones (as the social media is becoming the language of the world and the most influential means of public opinion).

- The results of the survey found that the media did not keep pace with women's issues, as its level did not exceed the average, but even came close to the weak, and this reflects the negative role of media in dealing with women issues and putting them in a harsh form ranging from the attractive appearance and the shallow culture of the entertainment programs or ugly appearance in a harsh form and neglecting sensitivity and femininity, especially in political interviews. in addition to the deliberate absence of the cultural, civil and scientific role of creative examples of artists, novelists, and prominent academics.

- Preference of the objective aspect in the analysis of selection, where 55% of the respondents preferred the scientific and administrative efficiency of women candidates for other qualifications and the highest sample was in Basra 65%.

- Despite all the notes recorded by the observers on the performance of women in parliament, but the poll registered the percentage of 72% that their performance was acceptable, these results came due to the superiority of a group of parliament women by advancing the interrogation platforms also they have a significant role in detecting the files of corrupt officials and the city of Basra is the highest in confirmation that the female parliamentary has succeeded.

- The answer of the respondents according to governorates reflected degrading the city of Baghdad, in civil and cultural aspects compared with Basra<sup>3</sup> because of the migration from the provinces to Baghdad, which reflects the nature of the conflict between civilian Baghdad and newcomer Baghdad in addition to the concentration of political conflict in the capital, especially as the electoral importance in it. In addition to the superiority of tribal and religious, nature, especially in Anbar, Thi-Qar, and Kirkuk. The results also reflected the progress of Basra in the cultural and civil aspects. This gives the impression that the tendency to change reality is greater in the society of Basra.

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1 Anbar progressed to a ratio of 62%.

2 Basrah Exceeded with a ratio of 57% from the survey sample.

3 Review the answers on questions (8,12,14,17,20).

### **Recommendations:**

Any political stability must be accompanied by social, cultural and civil stability. There is no stable society without a political life that guarantees freedoms, including participation in the public life for all groups of society, especially women, thus, it is important that government play its role by granting women their freedom to take their part in social and political life according to their competence without discrimination.

- "Supporting the electoral democratic experiment and broadening the culture of political participation is a kind of peaceful protest practice" is an incorrect sentence because political participation through the elections is a democratic experience on one hand and a participation in ruling on the other hand. It is not a form of peaceful protest to rectify the situation and overcome errors through ballot boxes. Which is at the core of the Independent Electoral Commission's work in finding the most effective ways to raise awareness, education and gender sensitivity in word and deed.

- Not counting the number of electoral seats obtained by women either with the votes they got or with votes for their political party from the scope of the quarter provided within "quota" in the Constitution and election laws and this will give the opportunity for more women to access the legislative then executive authorities.

- The Iraqi government should take the necessary measures to implement Article 5 of the convention of "CEDAW" and Article 45-2 of the Iraqi Constitution concerning the change of social and cultural patterns of men and women behavior to achieve the elimination of tribal prejudices and practices that violate women's rights, restrict their progress and all other beliefs such as believing that there is a gender inferior or higher than the other.

- Add a punitive text to the section of electoral crimes in the election law of the Iraqi Parliament and the provincial councils concerning the criminalization and punishment of all who denounce women candidates or affect their reputation, and anyone who violate their electoral images with immoral behavior. In order to protect them and encourage them to run in elections safely.

- Increasing official and governmental awareness regarding the gender-sensitive budget with local planning to ensure that the needs of women in various fields are met and empowered in all areas, especially political ones. In addition, empowering and supporting women economically in a way that

guarantees their rights and abilities to ensure a decent living for their families, also providing financial assistance and social support to women who are mainly the providers for their families.

- Implementation of compulsory and free education in a real and wide-ranging scope, specifically for children and women. Child's labor led to many girls abandoning schools and a high illiteracy rate among them. Well-educated women are more aware of their duties and rights.

- Conducting specialized studies by the concerned organizations in cooperation with the Electoral Commission on the data of women candidates in each governorate and how to use media to support independent women by providing these data to the media institutions after the completion of protocols of voluntary work.

- The NGO Department should submit proposals to the General Secretariat of Ministers Council - Civil Society Organizations Department to encourage the work of civil society organizations that support women issues by providing facilities for women activities and events, especially with regard to the preparation of qualified candidates and electoral education.

- Supporting community organizations in awareness programs specified for women in preparation for the upcoming elections, in addition to supporting women and building their political enabling and empowering them by integrating them into the programs of political parties and organizations, promoting their positions within the supreme structures of parties and selecting efficient competencies to represent women in the state and politics, as quality and quantity.

- The international community, donors and local organizations must work hard and real to empower women and ensure and guarantee their rights, especially in the area of political participation.

- Local governments should reconsider their strategy to ensure the return of civic life through social and cultural programs and activities that address the noticeable degrading in civil life, especially in the capital Baghdad, and the state media (Iraqi Media Network, Media and Communications Organization) must adopt campaigns promoting the civil spirit in the capital and the rest of the cities.

- The modern media should play their role in changing the stereotypical image of women in the media by adopting a gender-sensitive media program based on a gender media strategy. The most important task lies with the Iraqi Media Network as the state official network to convince the public about the potential of women to lead social institutions and participate in decision-making.

- Training the candidates on media appearance by demanding from the government and the Electoral Commission to the Iraqi Media Network to invest in its training institute and build the capacities of female candidates.

- Invest in the social press correctly and write projects on this matter by the concerned organizations, that the supervision should be feminine after experiments proved that the media woman is able to deliver the voice of women.