

Factsheet

Electoral system and seat allocation

The electoral system for the Council of Representative election is determined by the provisions of the Electoral Law of 2005, as amended in 2009. The Board of Commissioners of the IHEC has adopted regulation 21 of 2010 to implement these provisions. This regulation explains how votes are translated into seats, and how seats are awarded to candidates within each winning list.

Open list system

Political entities can either be parties, who participate by submitting lists of candidates, or individual candidates, who are also known as “single lists”. Political entities can submit up to two times as many candidates as there are seats in a governorate. 25 % of a list’s candidates must be women.

The election will be held on the basis of an “open list” system: voters will express their preference for a list, but they can also mark their preferred candidate within that list. The latter is referred to as an individual vote. The number of such individual votes will determine which candidates within a winning list will be awarded a seat.

Governorate seats

According to the Electoral Law, there are 325 seats in the Council of Representatives. 310 of these are known as governorate seats: each governorate has a certain number of seats determined by law, based on population figures. Each governorate is one constituency. This means that political entities compete for votes in the respective governorates, and results are calculated governorate by governorate. (This is why there are different ballots for each governorate for in-country voting).

A proportional system is used to distribute the governorate seats: seats are awarded based on each list’s share of the valid votes in a constituency. This is done in a number of steps or calculations set out in the IHEC seat allocation regulation.

To be awarded a seat, each list must have won a number of votes that is at least equal to the “electoral divider”. The electoral divider is different in each constituency. It is calculated by dividing the number of all valid votes cast for governorate seats by the number of those governorate seats. If a list’s vote total does not reach the electoral divider, the list will not win any seat.

A list cannot win more seats than it has candidates. Single lists, even if they receive a large share of the votes, will not receive more than one seat.

Within each winning list, candidates are ranked by the number of their individual votes, from highest to lowest. In principle, this ranking will determine which candidates will be awarded a seat. However, this initial ranking will be adjusted if necessary to fulfill women's quota. See below.

Component seats

Of the 325 seats in the Council of Representatives, 8 are reserved for minorities. These are known as component seats. There is one seat reserved for the Yazidi community in Ninewa, one for the Sabea in Baghdad, and one for the Shabak in Ninewa. Each of these three seats represents a separate constituency and a separate race. The list with the most votes in a constituency will win the seat.

There are also 5 seats reserved for Christians. Each of these seats is linked to one governorate: Baghdad, Erbil, Ninewa, Dahuk or Kirkuk. Nevertheless, the five seats constitute one national constituency, and all lists compete for the five seats at the same time. Seats are allocated in proportion to each list's share of the total valid votes, provided the list has reached the electoral divider. Within each winning list, seats are in principle awarded to candidate(s) with the most individual votes. At the same time, to win a seat, a candidate must be registered to run in the governorate to which the seat is linked, and all five winners must be registered in a different governorate. Adjustments will be applied and priority will be given to single lists if necessary.

Compensatory seats

The remaining 7 seats in the Council of Representatives (after 310 governorate seats and 8 component seats) are known as compensatory seats. Compensatory seats are awarded to winning lists in proportion to the governorate seats they won in the country as a whole. A winning list's compensatory seats are awarded to the candidate(s) who did not yet win a seat, and who received the list's highest share of individual votes when compared to candidates running for that list in other governorates.

Women's quota

The Constitution and the Electoral Law protect the participation of women in the Council of Representatives. If at least 82 women (25% of 325 seats) get elected through the processes described above, no additional steps are required in the distribution of seats. However, if the number of women is below 82, a special mechanism will be applied.

The governorates with the lowest share of elected women will be identified. These will need to increase the number of winning female candidates until the number in the Council of Representatives reaches 82. Within each of the governorates so identified, the winning lists with the lowest share of elected women will be identified, and these will need to increase the number of women, until the required number is reached for the governorate. Within each list so identified, the list of candidates will be re-ranked so that women candidates move up the list to winning positions to replace male candidates, until the required number is reached for that list.

This adjustment mechanism will ensure that there are at least 25% women in the Council of Representatives, although the percentage of women in each governorate and each list may vary.

More information on the IHEC website www.ihec.iq