

# Moment of truth rapidly approaching for Iraq PM Abdul Mahdi

Author:

Suadad Al-Salhy

ID:

1572471458450101100

Thu, 2019-10-31 00:39

BAGHDAD: Whether or not the government of Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi can survive the unrest in Iraq is likely to depend on how his allies and opponents respond to the protests and to the resultant demands of influential Shiite cleric Muqtada Al-Sadr, politicians and analysts told Arab News on Wednesday.

There have been mass demonstrations in Baghdad and seven southern, Shiite-dominated provinces since the beginning of October in protest against corruption, high unemployment and a lack of basic day-to-day services. Abdul Mahdi and his allies ordered a brutal crackdown on the protesters, killing at least 147 and injuring more than 7,000. This succeeded in halting the demonstrations for two weeks.

However, the protesters returned to the streets last Friday in even greater numbers after domestic and international pressure led to a pledge from security forces that they would not use live ammunition against demonstrators. Even so, at least a further 100 people were killed and more than 5,500 injured according to the Iraqi Higher Commission of Human Rights, in clashes with guards at the offices of political parties and armed factions, during which the buildings were attacked and set on fire. The resumption of the protests was accompanied by additional demands, including the resignation of Abdul Mahdi's government, changes to election law and early parliamentary elections.

Al-Sadr, who controls the largest parliamentary bloc and the biggest armed faction in Iraq, has announced his support for the demands of the demonstrators. He has millions of followers and the ability to mobilize large numbers to join the protests. In a message published by his office on Sunday, he called on Abdul Mahdi to resign and call early, UN-supervised parliamentary elections, appoint new members of the Independent High Electoral Commission, and change the country's electoral laws.

On Tuesday, Abdul Mahdi responded by saying that his position as prime minister was decided by political and parliamentary consensus, in which Al-Sadr and his allies were key partners.

This response, seen by some as a "blatant" and "unprecedented" challenge to Al-Sadr, hastened the return of the cleric from Iran. He flew to Najaf hours later and went straight from the airport to join the protests in the heart of the city.

In addition to adding momentum to the demonstrations with his presence, he also called on Hadi Al-Amiri, leader of the Iran-backed Al-Binna'a coalition, the second largest parliamentary bloc, and the biggest ally of Abdul Mahdi, to work with him to force Abdul Mahdi from office and address the demands of the demonstrators.

Al-Amiri responded to this request late on Tuesday evening after a three-hour meeting with his Shiite allies. In a letter sent to the media, he said: "We will work together to achieve the interests of the Iraqi people and save the country."

A prominent Shiite commander who participated in the meeting told Arab News: "The meeting was limited to the leaders of Al-Fattah (the political wing of the pro-Iranian armed factions) to discuss how to respond to Al-Sadr's request.

"Adel (Abdul Mahdi) is finished; we were not discussing this. This (his dismissal) is something that was agreed upon some time ago. The problem now is how to announce this. All the leaders of the armed factions have problems with Al-Sadr and their disputes with him have existed for years. None of them wants to give him a popular or political victory."

Al-Sadr on Wednesday said that the response from Al-Amiri and his allies suggested that "the resignation of Abdul Mahdi now will deepen the crisis." However, in a direct message to Al-Amiri and his allies, Al-Sadr added: "The survival of Abdul Mahdi (as PM) means more bloodshed and the transformation of Iraq to another Yemen or Syria, therefore I will not participate in any more alliances with you."

A prominent Shiite leader familiar with the negotiations said: "Al-Fattah leaders have abandoned Abdul Mahdi ... but they want to teach Al-Sadr a lesson and do not want to surrender to him too easily. They are now seeking to procrastinate and buy time, and will continue to publicly state their support for Abdul Mahdi until the last possible moment.

"After a while, they will sit down with Al-Sadr to agree a new government – but I suspect that before then, Abdul Mahdi might preempt them and resign."



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Iraq protests](#)

[Adel Abdul Mahdi](#)  
[Muqtada Al-Sadr](#)

Iraq prime minister's fate in limbo as crowds of demonstrators swell  
Cleric Al-Sadr urges rivals to help oust Iraq's prime minister

## [US military gives more details on Al-Baghdadi raid](#)

Thu, 2019-10-31 00:12

WASHINGTON: The head of United States Central Command said Wednesday that Daesh leader Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi was buried at sea after a weekend raid on his compound.

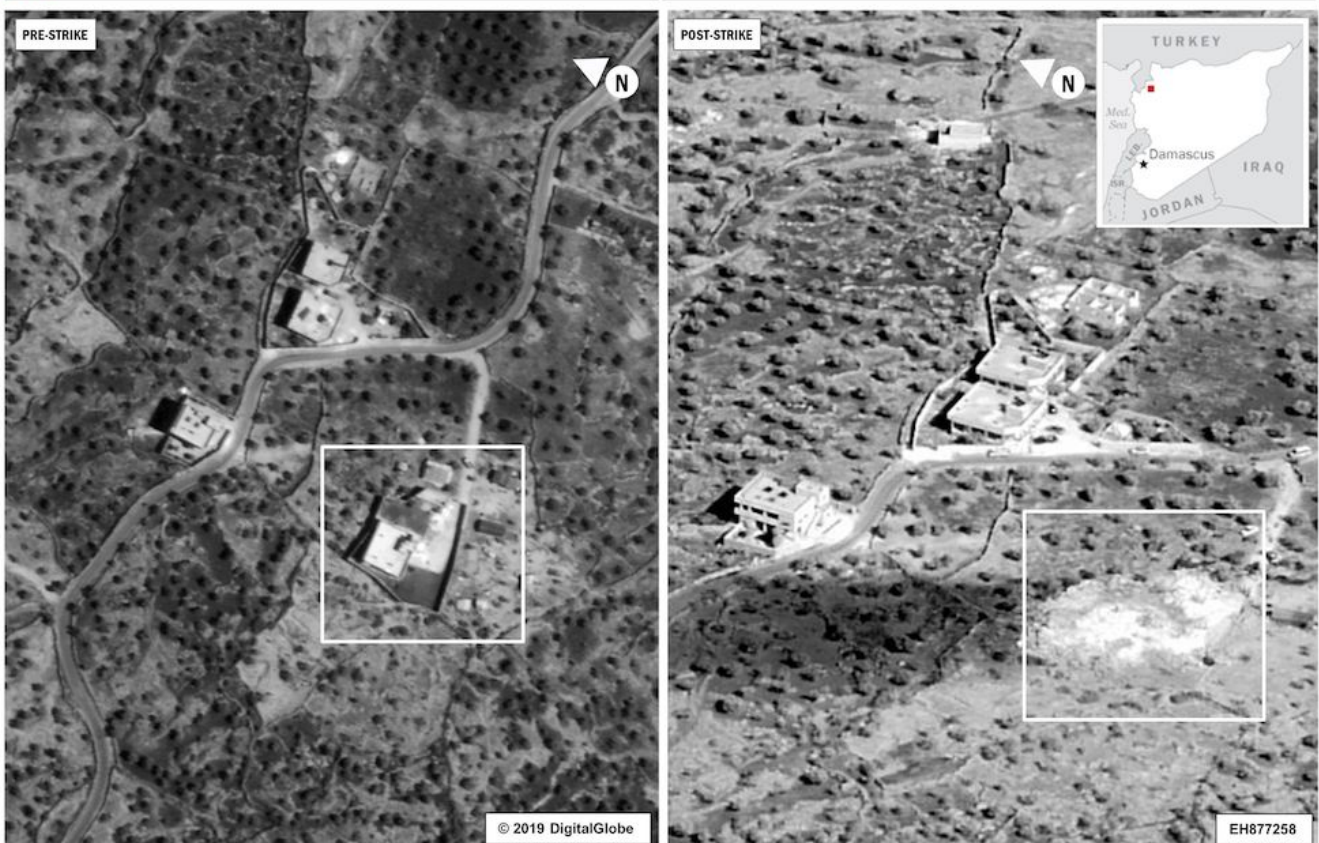
Gen. Frank McKenzie told reporters that Al-Baghdadi died after he exploded a suicide vest just before US troops were going to capture him.

McKenzie said two children, under the age of 12, were killed in the explosion set off by the Daesh leader.

The US said earlier that three children were killed.

US forces raided the compound in northwestern Syria on Saturday. There were no US casualties.

Syria: Reported ISIS-Leader Al-Baghdadi Compound



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi](#)

[US Central Command](#)

GCC defense ministers: Al-Baghdadi's killing important step in eliminating Daesh cells Crown Prince congratulates Trump for US killing of Daesh leader Al-Baghdadi

---

## [US House of Representatives recognizes 'Armenian genocide'](#)

Author:

Wed, 2019-10-30 01:16

WASHINGTON: The US House of Representatives took the historic step Tuesday of passing a resolution officially recognizing the "Armenian genocide," a move sure to anger Turkey amid already-heightened tensions with Washington. Cheers and applause erupted when the chamber voted 405 to 11 in support of the resolution "affirming the United States record on the Armenian Genocide," a first for the US Congress where similar measures have been introduced but never reached the floor for a vote.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said she was honored to join her colleagues "in solemn remembrance of one of the great atrocities of the 20th century: the systematic murder of more than 1.5 million Armenian men, women and children by the Ottoman Empire."

The Armenians say the mass killings of their people from 1915 to 1917 amounted to genocide, a claim recognized by some 30 countries. Turkey strongly denies the accusation of genocide.





Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Armenian Genocide](#)

Why the Armenian Genocide won't be forgotten Turkey condemns French declaration of Armenian genocide commemoration day

---

## [Jordan recalls envoy to Israel to protest detention of two citizens](#)

Author:

Reuters

ID:

1572382322900933500

Tue, 2019-10-29 20:32

AMMAN: Jordan recalled its ambassador to Israel for consultations in protest at Israel's refusal to heed its demands to release two citizens it said were illegally detained for months without charges, the kingdom's foreign minister said on Tuesday.

Ayman Safadi said in a tweet he held the Israeli government responsible for the lives of Hiba Labadi and Abdul Rahman Miri whose "health conditions have severely deteriorated," adding this was a first "step." He did not elaborate.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Jordan](#)

[Israel](#)

[detention](#)

[ambassador](#)

Jordan's king calls for investment in country's youth  
Saudi King receives King of Jordan, Indian PM Modi

---

## [Egypt, Ethiopia to meet in Washington over Nile dam](#)

Author:

AFP

ID:

1572382426660941900

Tue, 2019-10-29 20:30

CAIRO: Egypt's foreign minister confirmed Tuesday that his country would take part in mediated talks in Washington next month over a controversial dam Ethiopia is building on the Nile.

Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia “will meet in the United States on 6 November... to break the deadlock in the ongoing negotiations regarding the Renaissance Dam,” Sameh Shoukry said at a press conference held with his German counterpart Heiko Maas.

Addis Ababa insists its \$4 billion hydro-electric barrage is necessary to provide the country with much-needed electricity.

But Egypt fears the structure could drastically stem the flow of the Nile, on which it depends for around 90 percent of its water supply.

After calling for international mediation to break the stalemate in nine-year talks, Cairo accepted a US invitation to meet earlier in the month, but no date was set.

Shoukry noted Tuesday that US officials would be present at the talks acting as “intermediaries that can draw divergent viewpoints closer together...to bring about a fair and just agreement.”

A US official said earlier this month that President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi had asked US President Donald Trump to get involved in the dispute when they met in September on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly.

Trump agreed to reach out to Ethiopia and offered the “good offices” of Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin to mediate, the official said on condition of anonymity.

Ethiopia and Egypt’s leaders met on the sidelines of Russia’s Africa summit on Thursday to discuss a contentious dam project on the River Nile, a diplomat said.

Russia, which was hosting an Africa Summit in its Black Sea resort of Sochi in an attempt to revive its Soviet-era influence on the continent, has said it is ready to play a role in resolving the conflict.

Last week, Ethiopia’s Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed told parliament that “no force can stop Ethiopia from building the dam.”

Abiy, who won this year’s Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts to heal tensions with neighboring Eritrea, emphasised however that negotiations would be the best way to resolve the issue.

The Nile is a lifeline supplying both water and electricity to the 10 countries it traverses.

Its main tributaries, the White and Blue Niles, converge in Sudanese capital Khartoum before flowing north through Egypt to drain into the Mediterranean Sea.

Analysts fear the three Nile basin countries could be drawn into a conflict if the dispute is not resolved before the dam begins operating.





Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Egypt](#)

[Ethiopia](#)

[Nile](#)

[Washington](#)

[US](#)

[talks](#)

Egypt says accepts US invite to meet on Nile dam dispute  
Egypt to press for outside mediator in Ethiopia dam dispute