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Iraq to begin manual recount of national election votes on Tuesday

World News

BAGHDAD (Reuters), 30.06.2018, 18:34 Time

USPA NEWS - Iraq will begin a manual recount of votes on Tuesday from a May parliamentary election clouded by allegations of fraud, a step towards the formation of a new parliament and government.

Only suspect ballots flagged in formal complaints or official reports on fraud will be recounted, a spokesman for the panel of judges conducting the recount said on Saturday.

“The manual recount will be conducted in the presence of representatives from the United Nations, foreign embassies and political parties; as well as local and international observers, members of the media, and the Ministries of Defence and the Interior,“ Judge Laith Jabr Hamza said in a statement.

In seven provinces where many complaints of fraud were made “” Kirkuk, Sulaimaniya, Erbil, Dohuk, Nineveh, Salahuddin and Anbar “” the recount will be conducted by the local electoral offices, Hamza said.

Those ballot boxes which had already been transferred to Baghdad will be recounted in the capital.

The recount has been a politically fraught issue with the leaders of winning blocs embroiled in negotiations for weeks over the formation of the next government.

Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, whose electoral list came third in the poll marred by a historically low turnout, and the winner, cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, entered into an alliance last week, less than two weeks after Sadr announced a similar alliance with second-placed Iran ally Hadi al-Amiri´s bloc, thus bringing the top three blocs together.

The recount will exclude Baghdad where a storage site holding half of Baghdad´s ballot boxes went up in flames earlier this month in an incident Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi described as a “plot to harm the nation and its democracy“.

Overseas votes in Iran, Turkey, Britain, Lebanon, Jordan, the United States and Germany will also be recounted, Hamza said.

Earlier in June, the outgoing parliament passed a law mandating a nationwide manual recount of all votes, but the panel of judges now in charge of the process said it would only be conducted for those problematic ballots.

Article online:
https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-13690/iraq-to-begin-manual-recount-of-national-election-votes-on-tuesday.html

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