

Diyala Govenship Shows Badr Leaning on Maliki to Remain Competitive

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Brief Analysis

Part of a series: [Militia Spotlight \(https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/series/militia-spotlight\)](#)

or see Part 1: [How to Use Militia Spotlight \(/policy-analysis/how-use-militia-spotlight\)](#)

As Militia Spotlight previewed, the tussle for leadership in Diyala underlined scramble for power that Badr's slow political descent is encouraging among militias and tribal powerbases.

Militia Spotlight warned almost a year ago that Diyala's elections and local government formation would provide important pointers about the [Badr Organization \(/node/17003\)](#)'s remaining strength and the rising power of its chief rival, [Asaib Ahl al-Haq \(/node/18601\)](#) (AAH).

The Political Result in Diyala

On August 1, 2024, ten of the fifteen members of the Diyala Provincial Council elected Adnan al-Jaber as the new governor of Diyala. Al-Jaber represents Nouri al-Maliki's State of Law (SoL), although Maliki has no representation in the Diyala council. How did this outcome occur? According to Maliki, appearing on iNews on March 26, 2024, he received the governorship because his overarching deal with the Talahof Nabni (We Build Coalition), led by Hadi al-Ameri, was for SOL to receive three governorships, and that Badr decided one of these should be Diyala. (Figure 1)

The senior non-governor positions included the Provincial Council Chairman, Omar al-Kerwi - a Sunni from Khamis Khanjar's Siyada list who leads a faction with [a long history of working with AAH in northern Diyala](#)

https://euaa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/publications/2022-02/2022_02_COI_Report_Iraq_Security_Situation_EN.pdf) - and the deputy chairman, Salim al-Tamimi, a former Badrist who defected to Asaib Ahl al-Haq (AAH). Thus, none of the top three officials in formal power positions in Diyala are from Badr, which has historically been viewed as a principality of the Badr Organization and Hadi al-Ameri.

Did AAH beat Badr in Diyala?

Diyala was [the only location in Iraq where Badr and AAH ran against each other in December's provincial elections](#) (<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/coordination-frameworks-four-way-split-provincial-elections-part-2-division-over>), and thus Militia Spotlight highlighted the issue of the election as one-to-watch [as far back as September 2023](#) (<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/coordination-frameworks-four-way-split-provincial-elections-part-2-division-over>) for a test of the Badr/AAH balance of power. The logic ran: if Badr (and related Diyala tribal representative Falah al-Fayyadh) could not collectively beat AAH on Hadi and Falah's home turf of Diyala, the tide may have turned decisively in Asaib's favour.

As [Inside Iraqi Politics \(https://x.com/UticaRisk\)](#) has chronicled, the Hadi-led Talahof Nabni list won the largest vote bloc (107,554, four seats) but only seemingly with the help of Maliki's SOL, which did not field candidates and which sent an unknown number of tactical votes in Nabni's direction. (To Nabni's haul, one might add the 29,961 votes (one seat) of the nominally independent Asar bloc of [acting parliamentary speaker Mohsen al-Mandalawi, a Badr ally, for now \(/node/18601\)](#)).

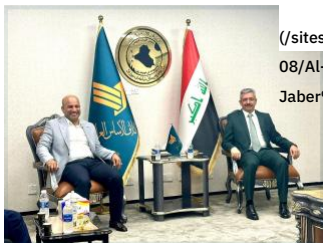


Figure 2. Diyala governor Adnan al-Jaber (left) and deputy provincial council chairman Salim Zaini al-Tamimi (right), August 2024

In contrast, the AAH-led list Tahalof al-Safwa al-Watani (National Elites Coalition, running locally as Diyala's Right), won 44,195 votes and only 2 seats. The reappointment of Omar al-Kerwi, [a former Islamic State local commander turned pro-AAH militiaman](#) (<https://ctc.westpoint.edu/irans-expanding-militia-army-iraq-new-special-groups/>), as council chairman keeps a figure at the heart of the council who is close to both AAH and Siyada list (73,890 votes, three seats) leader, [U.S.-designated politician Khamis Khanjar](#) (<https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sm847>). AAH used its left in the province to emplace as deputy governor, one of a number of Tamimi tribal leaders to defect to Asaib after ultra-violent intra-Badr feuding in Diyala. (On November 30, 2023, relatives of Salim were attacked in a local ambush that killed eleven men, women and children.)

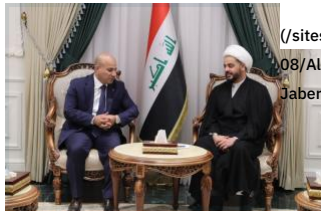
Implications for Badr-AAH balance of power

Badr leader Hadi al-Ameri has suffered [a bruising year in Diyala and across the environments where he is battling Asaib \(/node/18642\)](#) (such as Salah al-Din). He tried to dislodge his main proxy in Diyala (former governor Muthanna al-Tamimi) and replace him with Mohammed Jassim al-Omairi—son of [Hadi's pet judge Jassim Mohammed Abboud al-Omair \(/node/18642\)](#) i, the president of the militia-controlled Iraqi [Federal Supreme Court \(/node/18866\)](#). Now, Muthanna al-Tamimi and other Diyala chiefs can see that Hadi cannot win

even Diyala without Maliki's help, and the price of that was to leave Badr-supported Tamimis outside the local government, while AAH-aligned Tamimis got visible positions.



Figure 1. Nouri al-Maliki on iNews talking about Diyala governorship, March 26, 2024



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08/AI-

Jaber%20meeting%20Khazali%20after%20appointing%20him%20governor.JPG

Figure 2. Diyala governor Adnan al-Jaber with U.S.-designated terrorist Qais al-Khazali.

At national level, *Inside Iraqi Politics* calculates that Badr attained two governorships and two council chairman roles, versus one governorship for AAH (the U.S.-identified terrorist Adnan Fayhan in Babil) and two council chairman roles. This is practically on-par. If AAH's partners are factored in, the balance has shifted in Qais al-Khazali's favour. In terms of "shadow power" – state capture allowing domination of officials and thus financial flows of terrorism threat finance – AAH is probably outstripping Badr already and growing fast. For opponents of the Iran-backed militias in Iraq, the U.S.-designated terrorist organization Asaib Ahl al-Haq (<https://2017-2021.state.gov/state-department-terrorist-designations-of-asaib-ahl-al-haq-and-its-leaders-qays-and-laith-al-khazali/>) is increasingly the one-to-watch and the one to counter most urgently in fields such as terrorist threat finance.

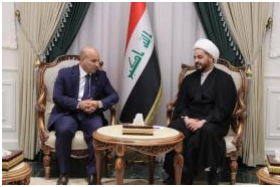


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