

Al-Zaidi' Government on Petroleum Issues and WDC Visit

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The Iraqi Council of Representatives/ the Parliament voted on 14 May 2026 endorsing the new government headed by PM Ali Al-Zaidi and approved its *Minhaj* (preliminary program) for his government.

Same day, Al-Zaidi received a call from Tom Barrack, the US President Donald Trump's Special Envoy, congratulating him and expressing Trump's readiness to cooperate with him and his government.

Presenting the *Minhaj* by the new government and accepting it by the Parliament is a Constitutional prerequisite to form and confirm the new government, and the government should, based on the *Minhaj*, submit its *Barnamaj* (detailed program), according to which it will be accountable.

The Government' *Minhaj*

The *Minhaj* consists of a preamble, fourteen Sections, and implementation pillars. Sub-section "Second," the third section, "Energy," includes nine items on "Oil and Gas".

After careful reading and applying a methodology of textual and contextual analysis, it became clear that most of the nine items are characterized by generality, vague wording, rhetorical style, repetition, and a weak understanding of and disregard for the realities and requirements of the oil sector and established norms and concepts in the oil industry.

However, the most significant issue is the *Minhaj*'s failure to address a number of important and pressing issues, thirteen of which have been identified.

I have suggested to the Ministry of Oil, as it is the entity responsible for the petroleum sector, that it take into consideration the remarks raised in my assessment of the *Minhaj* when preparing the components of the oil and gas matters within the detailed government program/Barnamaj. The oil and gas sub-section should specify priorities, objectives, programs and initiatives, procedures, performance indicators, timelines, costs and funding sources, responsibilities, supporting entities, and any other matters the Ministry deems necessary to include and emphasize in the government program.^[1]

My detailed assessment published in Arabic on May 30, 2026, can be viewed via the links listed below.

Barrack visit and Al-Zaidi hasty statements

On June 16, Barrack held a meeting with Al-Zaidi in Baghdad, raising specific issues and formally inviting Al-Zaidi to Washington by mid-July. A week later, Al-Zaidi began issuing statements pertaining to petroleum. Briefly, he intends to

- 1- grant “highest priority” to the American oil companies-AOCs.
- 2- offering 500tbd to replenish the American Strategic Petroleum Reserve-SPR.
- 3- proposed “Energy and Development Fund”-EDF to finance AOCs in Iraq, starting by 500tbd, reaching to 2mbd.

Moreover, he hinted the possibility of 4-exiting OPEC.

By reviewing Al-Zaidi statements and assessed them against facts, data and formal credible material evidence, I conclude that:

- 1- They are not mentioned in the government’ *Minhaj*.
- 2- They contravene the Constitution, many laws and even the undertaken of the *Minhaj* itself.
- 3- Also, Iraq has no capacity, technically and financially, to earmark that much of oil to the American oil companies.
- 4- Exiting OPEC premises on a very thin ice and is not supported by MoO own data.

The details of my assessment were made on two occasions: a lengthy interview with reputable Iraqi Journal, “Al-Thaqafa Al-Jadida”^[2] and a vibrant debating event convened by the excellent “Al-Mushtarak” platform^[3]. Both are in Arabic and accessible through the provided links. Both were circulated widely and reposted on many websites and debating groups.

MoO and Media Sources Hail the Visit Outcome

A rush of formal statements and media sources, both Iraqi and external, positively appraising the visit and its outcomes. They say 48 “documents” were signed, and some even tagged two-digits billions of dollars in foreign direct investment deals will be fluxed into the Iraqi economy. Such deals, could lead, as usual normative thinking predicts, to a series of positive results such as higher employment, increase oil production and exports, enhance the fiscal balance-sheet of the annual state budget, and the list could go longer.

This type of “wishful mindset” thinking ignores, or forgets or unaware of many relevant facts:

First, as far as petroleum sector is concerns, almost all what was signed are documents with no legal binding implications. What matters in reality is signed

contracts. Experience in Iraq petroleum sector tells there is a rather long way between signing such documents and the fruition in concrete definitive contracts.

Second, some of the signed documents are already signed prior to PM visit, e.g., documents with HKN and Chevron. So why they are included!!??

Third, between 2004 and 2008 the Ministry of Oil-MoO signed 50 Memorandum of Cooperation-MoC where the American Oil Companies-AOCs had the lion-share. What has been the actual impacts and performance of such MoCs!!??

Fourth, even signed contracts with AOCs did not deliver. ExxonMobil exited WQ1 and all its PSCs with KRG. Occidental-Oxy terminated, early, its junior participation in the Zubair oilfield consortium. And recently, Schlumberger contract for Akkas Gas field appears in limbo, and possibly terminated.

Fifth, MoO said, 5 July, it has signed a 5-year agreement with Halliburton regarding the integrated management of the Bin Omar and Sindbad oilfields. But both fields are already contracted to other companies, and the MoO says nothing on the legal implications of this confusing matter.

The Parliamentarians reaction

Three parliamentarians sent formal questions to both the PM and the Minister of Oil concerning the visit. And some 27 parliamentarians signed, 19 July, a formal request to invite the Minister of Oil to make a statement before the parliament. The Minister himself asked, 21 July, the parliament to invite him for the same purpose.

That said, it is rather early to make any serious assessment of the visit, its results and possible outcomes in different time horizon. The basic problem is the absence of complete Transparency of what was formally discussed and the full details of the signed documents; time will tell whether the outcomes will be genuine or hollow!!

Norway
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[1] Oil and Gas Issues in the New Government's Minhaj (2026-2029): Vague Texts and Neglect of Important Matters

قضايا النفط والغاز في منهاج الحكومة الجديدة (2026-2029) نصوص فضفاضة واغفال المسائل الأساسية

<https://www.mushtarek.org/groups/679b938b7fd0bd55baff8b70/posts/post/6a1bf8cf5587206b341ee17e>

[2] حوارات في الشأن النفطي العراقي في مجلة الثقافة الجديدة

<https://althakafaaljadedda.net/index.php/dialogues/1099-hwar-fy-alshan-alnfty-al-raaqy-m-alkhbyr-alnfty-alastadh-ahmd-mwsy-jyad>

[3] تصريحات ومواقف لا مبرر لها وبتوقيت غير ملائم قبل زيارة واشنطن (ندوة حوارية)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wPbXDX7wfGM&t=20s>