

Fallujans Differ Over Incoming Government

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Many back Ghazi al-Yawir as president, but have mixed views about the new administration.

The appointment of Sunni tribal leader Sheikh Ghazi al-Yawir as Iraq's new interim president has met with widespread approval in Falluja, the predominantly Sunni centre of anti-Coalition insurgency.

But opinion on the new government in general, however, was highly divided, with some hailing the restoration of sovereignty and others convinced that the new government would be a Coalition puppet.

"Assigning al-Yawir as a transitional president of Iraq can be considered a positive step, at this stage and under these circumstances," said tribal leader Sheikh Dhari al-Muhammadi.

"Congratulations to Sheikh al-Yawir on his appointment as president, and I hope he is able to put an end to all the chaos and instability in Iraq," says Basim Ali, 22, a Fallujan studying arts and history at Baghdad University.

Others supported Yawir - leader of the prominent northern Iraqi Shammar tribe who normally wears tribal dress in public - because of his recent criticism of the Coalition, and because the Coalition allegedly resisted his nomination, preferring instead Sunni politician Adnan al-Pachachi, who eventually declined the post.

"I felt very happy when Sheikh Ghazi al-Yawir was chosen as a president... because he was nominated by the Iraqi Governing Council not by the Coalition authority, and I respect al-Pachachi for his stance when he declined the post and left it to al-Yawir," said taxi driver Muhammad Salman, 32.

Salman also praised the selection of Ayad Allawi as prime minister. A Shia and a physician, Allawi belonged to the Baath party in his youth, and his Iraqi National Accord attracted many former regime intelligence and military officials.

"Choosing Ayad Alawi was suitable, as he is a former Baathist. The situation in Iraq is unstable and required such character like Ayad Alawi to be able to control it," Salman said.

"Dr Ayad Alawi is a good man and can restore the situations to normal, and the appointment of Sheikh Ghazi al-Yawir was also appropriate because our society is tribal," said history teacher Muhammed Khamis, 45.

Other Fallujis withheld judgment, waiting to see how effective the new government would be in asserting Iraqi sovereignty.

"It is not significant who is the president, but the important thing is who will... dismiss the Americans from Iraq, or at least reach a peaceful resolution on the withdrawal of the American forces," said Muhammed Hussein, 24, studying education and geography at Baghdad University.

Others, meanwhile, were sceptical about any Iraqi leader approved by the Coalition, comparing him to the outgoing Coalition-appointed Iraqi Governing Council.

"We must not be tricked by politics, because al-Yawir is nominated by the Americans," said tribal leader Sheikh Amir al-Esawi

"I expect from this moment al-Yawir will back down from carrying out any policies using the excuse [that the Americans will not let him]. This means he will never do anything new in the near future," Esawi said.

"We rejected the Governing Council, appointed by the Americans, from the beginning. It was not elected by Iraqis," said taxi driver Ahmed Jasem, 24. "This means that we also reject appointing al-Yawir.

Still others feared that Yawir's tribal affiliation would be divisive.

Grocer Omar Mohammed, 37, said that he would have preferred Pachachi, "Choosing al-Yawir might create sectarian and tribal problems between Iraqis because he belongs to one of the prominent tribes in Iraq."

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