

Jubilant Scenes Amid Baaqubah Blasts

Author: [Aqil Jabbar](#)

Voters clap and jump for joy, seemingly unfazed by the violence.

Baaqubah residents celebrated participation in their first democratic elections in decades, as explosions reverberated around the city.

In Baaqubah, just north of Baghdad, many residents clapped and jumped for joy while standing in line to vote, despite the intermittent boom of explosions.

After polling stations closed here at 5 pm local time, militants attacked Iraqi security forces and election workers carrying ballot boxes.

Iraqi troops were unable to repel the attack, but US military reinforcements arrived to help them. As IWPR went to press, it was unclear whether the militants had been driven back.

"I quit my post because we couldn't resist the insurgents," said Saif Ahmed, one of the police officers who fled the scene.

Extremists had also set up checkpoints in the city to target residents that had indelible ink on their fingers, which indicated they voted.

Voter turnout was also strong in Hillah, just south of the capital in Babil governorate, despite violence also claiming lives. In one incident, a suicide bomber on a minibus killed four Iraqis.

Qais al-Hasnawy, a spokesman for the Babil office of the Independent Electoral Commission, said thousands of residents turned up at voting centres early in the morning.

"Iraqis voted and challenged all terrorists who tried to prevent them from exercising their rights, which have been usurped for many years," he said.

Ahmed Kadhim, a polling station manager, said voter turnout was high as 75 per cent in some areas and even the disabled turned out in droves to cast their ballot.

"Thousands of voters came, jostling and competing to dip their fingers in the henna of democracy [a reference to the indelible ink used at polling stations]," he said.

There were no initial reports of fraud or irregularities, election workers said.

"We didn't let anybody from the parties approach citizens or try to [persuade them] to vote for a certain list," said Emad Ali, an election monitor.

Elsewhere in Babil, a rocket hit a public hospital in the city of Mahawil , killing one person and injuring three others, said Captain Muthana al-Mamoory, Babil police spokesman.

Another rocket was launched in the al-Badi area of Mahawil but did not explode, and a mortar round landed near the al-Batool mosque, injuring three people.

Police also arrested a group of men accused of firing mortars in the town of al-Musiyyab. The men were riding in a minibus that contained rocket launcher, mortar rounds, machine guns and ammunition.

Aqil Jabbar and Yaseen Madhloom are IWPR trainee journalists in Iraq.

Location: [Iraqi Kurdistan](#)
[Iraq](#)

Focus: [Iraq](#)

Source URL: <https://iwpr.net/global-voices/jubilant-scenes-amid-baaqubah-blasts>