

# IBRAHIM AL-JAAFARI

This fact sheet provides information on Ibrahim al-Jaafari, whose name has been floated as a possible compromise candidate for Prime Minister, given his support from within the INA, especially from the Sadrist Trend.<sup>1</sup>

- Dr. Ibrahim al-Jaafari, a physician by training, joined the Islamic Dawa Party, a clandestine Shi'a Islamist movement, while studying medicine at Mosul University in 1966. Following the crackdown on members of Dawa in 1980, al-Jaafari fled to Iran, where he stayed for almost a decade and continued his activities on behalf of Dawa. Al-Jaafari moved to London in 1989, where he worked as spokesman for the Dawa Party. He returned to Iraq shortly after the 2003 invasion.<sup>2</sup>
- Al-Jaafari served as Prime Minister of Iraq's transitional government from April 2005 to May 2006. He presided over the marked rise of sectarian violence and the insurgency in Iraq and his term in office was one of the bloodiest periods in Iraq since 2003. Al-Jaafari was seen as incapable of stemming the rise in sectarian and insurgent violence; many viewed his government as complicit in the sectarian cleansing.<sup>3</sup>
- Following Iraq's first national election in January 2005, al-Jaafari was selected to continue as Prime Minister by the United Iraqi Alliance, but Sunni and Kurdish blocs objected strongly to his candidacy on grounds of his inability to reverse the worsening security situation.<sup>4</sup> Al-Jaafari was ultimately forced to step down from the post in favor of another Prime Ministerial candidate, Nouri al-Maliki, after months of increased pressure and tense negotiations.<sup>5</sup>
- Al-Jaafari broke from Dawa in late May 2008 to form his own party, the National Reform Trend, amidst growing conflict with Dawa's leadership.<sup>6</sup> The move was widely seen as an effort to improve his political prospects in advance of provincial elections (then scheduled for late 2008). He was formally expelled from Dawa in early June 2008.<sup>7</sup>
- Al-Jaafari has maintained a close relationship with the Sadrist Trend and the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI).
  - Muqtada al-Sadr was al-Jaafari's main backer during the government formation negotiations in 2006, even after he lost the support of the other main Shi'a parties.<sup>8</sup>
  - Sadrist support for al-Jaafari continues. He garnered the most votes in the Sadrist referendum for Prime Minister, an unofficial poll administered by the Sadrist Trend.<sup>9</sup>
  - Al-Jaafari's relationship with members of ISCI dates to his time in exile in Iran during the 1980s.<sup>10</sup> He was one of only a small number of Iraqi politicians to attend the funeral procession for Abd al-Aziz al-Hakim in Tehran.<sup>11</sup>
  - More recently, Jaafari was integral in the negotiations to rebuild the Shi'a electoral alliance in advance of the 2010 elections, along with members of ISCI.<sup>12</sup>
- Al-Jaafari ran in the March 2010 parliamentary election as part of the Iraqi National Alliance, the predominantly Shi'a bloc that included the Sadrists and ISCI. Al-Jaafari headed the electoral bloc; however, his party only won one seat in the election, his own.<sup>13</sup>

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Al-Iraqiya List warns of 'sectarian alignments', Iranian role - Iraq TV update," *Al-Sharqiyah TV*, Dubai, May 6, 2010, translated by BBC Monitoring Middle East - Political, May 7, 2010.

<sup>2</sup>Sharon Otterman, "Iraq: Ibrahim Jaafari," *Backgrounder*, Council on Foreign Relations, April 7, 2005; Andrew E. Kramer, "Ex-Premier is Expelled from Governing Party in Iraq," *The New York Times*, June 8, 2008; Martin Asser, "Profile: Ibrahim al-Jaafari," *BBC News*, April 7, 2005.

<sup>3</sup>Edward Wong and John F. Burns, "Iraqi Rift Grows After Discovery of Prison," *The New York Times*, November 17, 2005.

<sup>4</sup>Liz Sly, "Sunnis, Kurds try to Unseat Iraq's Shiite Prime Minister," *Chicago Tribune*, March 3, 2006; Robert F. Worth, "Shi'ites Get Demand: Drop Jaafari from Race," *The New York Times*, March 3, 2006.

<sup>5</sup>Jamie Tarabay, Melissa Block, and Robert Seigel, "Al-Jafaari Prepares to Step Aside in Iraq," *All Things Considered*, *National Public Radio*, April 20, 2006; Oliver Duff, "Iraqi PM agrees to step down to break political stalemate," *The Independent* (London), April 21, 2006.

<sup>6</sup>"Al-Jazeera TV reports on former Iraqi PM Al-Ja'fari's new political party" *AlJazeera*, May 31, 2008, translated by BBC Monitoring Middle East - Political, June 1, 2008.

<sup>7</sup>Andrew E. Kramer, "Ex-Premier Is Expelled From Governing Party in Iraq," *The New York Times*, June 8, 2008.

<sup>8</sup>Edward Wong and Joel Brinkley, "Iraq's Premier Is ASKed to Quit as Shiites Split," *The New York Times*, April 3, 2006.

<sup>9</sup>Khalid Farhan, "Former Iraq PM Jaafari wins Sadrists' referendum," *Reuters*, April 7, 2010.

<sup>10</sup>Patrick Martin, "Once-bitter rivals now a united force in Iraq vote," *The Globe and Mail* (Canada), October 21, 2009.

<sup>11</sup>Shiite cleric's death shakes up Iraq politics," *The Daily Star* (Lebanon), August 28, 2009.

<sup>12</sup>"Iraqi Shias form new alliance," *Aljazeera.net*, August 25, 2009.

<sup>13</sup>Caroline Alexander, "Iraq's Al-Jaafari Forms New Shiite-Led Political Bloc (Update 2)," *Bloomberg News*, August 24, 2009; Iraqi High Electoral Council Elections Results, [http://www.ihec.iq.English/announcement\\_of\\_results.aspx](http://www.ihec.iq.English/announcement_of_results.aspx).