

Iraq's Parliament Speaker Calls for Arab Solidarity

By Daniel Schearf
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Iraq's parliamentary speaker has called on Arab nations to better support Iraq ahead of an Arab parliament's conference. Arab countries have been reluctant to show diplomatic support for Baghdad since the U.S.-led occupation. Daniel Schearf reports for VOA from the northern Iraqi city of Irbil.



AP Photo

The speaker of Iraq's parliament, Mahmoud Al-Mashhadani, welcomed representatives of Arab parliaments arriving Sunday in the northern Iraqi city of Irbil.

Delegates of most Arab nations are here to attend an annual meeting of the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union Tuesday to discuss areas of mutual concern.

Mashhadani said the hosting of the conference in Irbil, the capital of Iraqi Kurdistan, showed those who dislike the new Iraq that the country was united. He called on Arab nations to show more support for the new Iraqi government.

He says the government is going to ask that all Arab countries give assurances they support Iraq's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Many Arab nations have refused full diplomatic relations with

Speaker of Iraq's parliament,
Mahmoud Al-Mashhadani
(2007 file photo)
post-Saddam Hussein Iraq.

Iraqi leaders have been urging Arab nations to accept their government as fully legitimate and resume normal diplomatic relations.

Mashhadani thanked Baharain for its diplomatic support.

He says security concerns have prevented the opening of embassies in Iraq. But Bahrain has opened its embassy and is diplomatically active. He says it has helped Iraq's process of national reconciliation.

All Arab countries except Libya are taking part in the Irbil conference. Libya decided not to participate in protest to the U.S. military presence in Iraq.

The situations in Iraq, the Palestinian territories, Lebanon, the Sudan, and Somalia are expected to be high on the conference agenda.

CDR Diana Sorrentino, USNR