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Iraq's Controversial Assembly Law Stirs Debate

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Iraqi lawmakers face mounting pressure to reject a proposed law that risks further restricting freedoms of expression and peaceful assembly. Civil society groups warn the draft legislation, rebranded as the “Peaceful Assembly Law,” lacks transparency and may violate constitutional protections despite government assurances. The controversy emerges

amid ongoing crackdowns on activists and journalists using existing penal code provisions on defamation and public order.

Analysis of earlier drafts by Amnesty International revealed provisions allowing restrictions based on vague concepts like “public morals.” While parliament claims the revised version removes criminal penalties and aligns with Iraq’s international obligations, no official text has been made public. This secrecy fuels suspicions that the law could provide new tools to suppress dissent, particularly as temperatures rise over government failures to address corruption and infrastructure crises.



The legislation’s procedural timeline raises additional red flags. Initial readings occurred in December 2022 and May 2023 amid civil society outcry, yet recent amendments were negotiated privately without meaningful public consultation. Activists note the irony of drafting an assembly law through non-transparent processes, especially as authorities continue arresting critics under existing statutes. At least twelve journalists currently face prosecution for reporting on governance issues, according to local monitors.

As Iraq navigates complex political and environmental challenges, this legislative battle tests its commitment to democratic principles. The law’s potential passage could either mark progress toward protected dissent or signal deepening authoritarian tendencies. With constitutional rights hanging in the balance, the international community watches whether Baghdad will uphold its human rights obligations or further erode the civic space needed to address Iraq’s pressing crises. The coming parliamentary vote will reveal much about Iraq’s political trajectory.