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December 9, 2005

U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad condemned recent acts of violence directed at Iraqi candidates and campaign workers, calling the attacks "assaults on democracy and attempts to deny Iraqis the freedom to vote their conscience."

In a December 9 news release, Khalilzad said, "The Iraqis deserve an election that is free from intimidation and violence."

The ambassador also criticized individuals who have attempted to bribe voters.

"Those who are behind these attacks and attempts at fraud endanger their place in a democratic Iraq," he said. "In the end, we hope and believe their actions will backfire. Iraqi citizens will stand up to those who would intimidate them and vote for those who can bring them a better future."

Iraqis are scheduled to go to the polls December 15 to choose a Council of Representatives, which will form the foundation for a permanent, democratic government. The elected representatives will choose a presidency council, and the presidency council will in turn appoint a prime minister to oversee the affairs of government.

For additional information, see [Iraq's Political Process](#) and [Iraq Update](#).

Following is the text of Ambassador Khalilzad's statement:

The coming elections are a defining moment in building the new Iraq. The Iraqis deserve an election that is free from intimidation and violence.

The United States condemns recent attacks on Iraqi candidates for the December 15 elections. We denounce the recent killing of campaign workers in Mosul, Basra, Baghdad, and elsewhere, as well as the attacks in Najaf and Dahuk. These actions are assaults on democracy and attempts to deny Iraqis the freedom to vote their conscience.

These incidents have taken place alongside unacceptable acts of vandalism. Some even think they can bribe citizens to change their votes. Bribes and attacks should not impact the elections, whether or not damage is done or money is pocketed. The ballots are confidential and every vote is secret. The Iraqi people have the future of their country in their hands.

Those who are behind these attacks and attempts at fraud endanger their place in a democratic Iraq. In the end, we hope and believe their actions will backfire. Iraqi citizens will stand up to those who would intimidate them and vote for those who can bring them a better future.

The eyes of the world are on Iraq as this election moves forward, and the actions of these parties will be judged not only by Iraqis but also by the community of democratic nations. I call on all political parties to condemn acts of intimidation and support a peaceful, free and fair election on December 15. May God bless the people of Iraq.

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