



By BRIAN MURPHY Associated Press Writer | 2009-jan-31

PREVIEW |

Passing through razor-wire cordons and police checkpoints, Iraqi voters Saturday took another step in the nation's quest for stability in provincial elections that were carried off without major violence but tarnished by claims of flaws and threats of challenges.

Even before a single ballot was counted, Iraqi officials were basking in the successes — watching millions of voters wave the purple-tinted fingers that have become symbols of the country's hopes for a workable democracy.

President Barack Obama hailed the elections as significant, peaceful and important steps toward Iraqis taking responsibility for their future.

But election observers and others were examining a growing list of complaints, including claims that hundreds of people — perhaps more — were wrongly omitted from voting lists in areas across Iraq.

"There was huge amount of confusion," said Afram Yakoub, a Belgium-based election monitor who visited polling sites in the Mosul area in northern Iraq. "Names were on the center voter registry but did not appear on the (polling) station registry."

The leader of the second largest Sunni bloc in parliament, Saleh al-Mutlaq, accused the Shiite-led government of a deliberate ...