

Maliki calls for wide cease-fire

by UPI

BAGHDAD - Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki called for a cease-fire Friday by all armed militias, following the example set by Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr. Maliki issued his call in a statement released by his office, The New York Times reported. "This initiative is considered an encouraging step on the way of enhancing stability and security," he said. "It is a good opportunity to freeze the work of other militias from different political and ideological affiliations to protect the unity, independence and sovereignty of Iraq." Sadr announced the cease-fire after violence broke out Monday and Tuesday in Karbala between the Badr Brigade, the militia of the Supreme Islamic Council and his Mahdi Army, killing 52 people. Government forces or militia members loyal to the government allegedly provoked the fighting by attempting to keep Mahdi Army members out of the city during a major Shiite festival. Maliki said that his government isn't targeting Sadr's forces and promised that force would be used only "against individuals who commit crimes." The prime minister obtained his position with support from Sadr and his organization controls some of the ministries.

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