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Cover Photo: *Iraqi students at the Eastern Secondary School in Baghdad, May 4, 2003.*

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Introduction

Iraq's progress toward democracy has been marred by violence, delays in reconstruction, and only intermittent nurturing of civil society. Despite these formidable obstacles, many Iraqis labor tirelessly for peace and stability. Among those strongly committed to a more stable Iraq are the country's women, who face an ongoing, uphill battle for political representation. In the face of challenges, women leaders remain committed to ensuring their voices are heard in the new Iraq.

The Conflict Prevention Project and the Middle East Program of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars ("the Wilson Center") and Women Waging Peace ("Waging") have worked with a wide range of institutions and individuals to encourage women's full participation in Iraq's reconstruction. They have helped the country's women leaders identify key priorities for ensuring security, promoting democracy and good governance, advancing women's economic rights and empowerment, building the body of constitutional law and legislation, and fostering the development of a vibrant civil society.

Since April 2003, the Wilson Center and Waging have worked with Iraqi women to promote their empowerment and inclusion in post-conflict planning and decision-making. Participants have represented diverse political, ethnic, and religious groups, including Iraqi expatriates from the United States, Europe, and the Middle East and women living throughout Iraq. Delegation members have included four of the six female ministers currently in the interim government, two members of the now-dissolved Governing Council, the first female judge in Iraq, Baghdad City Council members, and leaders from civil society and the private sector.

November 9–19, 2003, the World Bank, Wilson Center, Waging, and the American Bar Association—Central European and Eurasian Law Initiative (ABA—CEELI) hosted 20 Iraqi women in Washington DC for the conference "Building a New Iraq: Women's Role in Reconstruction." Members of this delegation of high-level Iraqi women leaders met with, among others, George W. Bush, president of the United States; Paul Wolfowitz, deputy secretary of defense; Paula Dobriansky, under secretary of state for global affairs; Sandra Day O'Connor, associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court; numerous members of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives; and James Wolfensohn, president of the World Bank. The delegation identified priorities to help guide the drafting of a constitution, progress towards full sovereignty, and preparation for elections. The results of their visit, summarized in this report, include a series of findings and conclusions to ensure women play a substantive role in Iraq's reconstruction. *See pages 13–29 for a detailed description of events.*



Lina Omar, Sawsan Al-Barrak, Nassreen Hayder Kader, Siham Hattab Hamdan, and Hind Makiya (left to right) take part in the conference "Building a New Iraq: Women's Role in Reconstruction" on November 12, 2003 at the Woodrow Wilson Center.

Subsequent to the November conference, further efforts have focused on capacity building, networking, and public discussion of women's empowerment. In December 2003, Waging, the World Bank, the United Nations International Development Fund for Women's (UNIFEM) Arab Regional Office, and Women for Women International hosted a follow-up conference with Iraqis in Amman, Jordan. *For a brief summary of that meeting, please go to page 31.* On February 26, 2004, the Wilson Center featured Nesreen Berwari, Iraq's minister for municipalities and public works, at a meeting entitled "Preparing for the Post-Post War Reconstruction in Iraq: What Has Been Accomplished and What Lies Ahead." *For an excerpt from her speech, please see page 33.*

Throughout the spring and summer of 2004, the Wilson Center and Waging have worked with numerous groups in Washington DC and New York City to ensure that Iraqi women's voices are heard in the United States. Efforts to increase women's participation in Iraq, identify gaps in programming, discuss strategies for fostering empowerment, and develop a plan for coordination and cooperation have been spotlighted. In March 2004, the Wilson Center hosted another meeting with a delegation of Iraqi women that included Rajaa Habib Khuzai, a member of the now-dissolved Iraqi Governing Council; Wisal Said and Eman Alwan, respectively counselor and second secretary at the ministry of foreign affairs; Amal Ma'malchi, nominee for deputy minister of higher education; Zainab Al-Suwajj, co-founder and executive director of the American Islamic Congress; and several others. *For a summary of that meeting, please go to pages 34–35.*

July 11–13, 2004, the Wilson Center held three days of workshops in Beirut, Lebanon for 28 Iraqi women entitled "*Building A New Iraq: Women's Role in the Political Process.*" Sponsored by the U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP) and hosted by the United Nations Women Centre at the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), workshops focused on political training and developing conflict resolution skills. *For a summary of those workshops, please see pages 36–38.*

The Wilson Center's and Waging's efforts have been possible only because they involve a wide range of partners and financial supporters, including ABA - CEELI, the Congressional Research Service, the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, the Iraqi Embassy to the United States, the Iraqi Women's High Council, the National Council for Women's Organizations, the International Republican Institute, the National Democratic Institute, the National Endowment for Democracy, Shevolution, the United Nations, the United Nations Foundation, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the U.S. Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), the U.S. Congress, the U.S. Department of State (DOS), the U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP), Women for Women International, Women for a Free Iraq (WAFDI), the World Bank, and Vital Voices.

1. For more information on the proceedings of the April 2003 conference in Washington DC and the role of women in post-war Iraq, see **Winning the Peace Conference Report: Women's Role in Post-Conflict Iraq, Revised Second Edition.** http://www.wilson-center.org/topics/pubs/womeniraq_2nd%20ed.pdf

Women in Iraqi Society

The history of Iraqi women is unique. Early in the last century, women began to push for independence and equal rights. Those in the upper class began enrolling in universities and entering the job market in the 1920s and 1930s.² At the same time, Iraqi women sought recognition as full citizens and permission to be in public without a veil.³

Women also contributed to Iraq's civil society. In 1952, the Iraqi Women's League (IWL) was founded to defend the rights of women and children. After 1958, the Kurdish Women's Federation (KWF) began to link women to the national independence movement, which called for democracy, autonomy for Kurdistan, and an end to British rule. Together, the organizations promoted women's political participation and social and economic rights, and combated illiteracy.⁴ Following the 1958 revolution, the women of the IWL pushed for and received laws granting women employment, education, and inheritance rights.⁵

The Ba'ath Period from 1968–1990

The 1968 coup that led to Ba'ath Party control of Iraq had significant implications for women. Under the 1970 constitution, women and men were—at least nominally—equal under the law.

As in many communist and socialist societies, women's inclusion was a key component of the social revolution. Women were explicitly given the right to vote and work outside the home. Education was mandatory for boys and girls through the age of 16. Women were strongly encouraged to attend university and acquire professional skills, and women-only colleges were closed.⁶

As more women gained skills in the 1970s, openings in the job market began to appear, a result of both the government's desire to include women in the work force and the exodus of men to fight in the Iran-Iraq War. Women soon held positions as career military officers, oil-project designers, and construction supervisors. The Unified Labor Code called for equal pay, benefits, and promotions for men and women. Women also advanced somewhat in the political field; in 1989, 27 women were elected to Iraq's 250-seat National Assembly.⁷ However, women did not comprise 50 percent of the work force, and even members of the Party admitted that women's status was not equal. Nor were all women on even ground; upper class women had more opportunities, and there were large gaps in education and income between rural and urban Iraqis.⁸

Efforts to promote equality avoided religion and related topics, and Party officials proved unwilling or unable to change family law, which was based on Islamic law and favored men. The Party maintained the 1959 Code of Personal Status, which brought together the wide variety of laws regarding familial and personal duties. Although not bound by any single Islamic tradition, it relied heavily on *Sharia*, or Islamic law. Judges were permitted to refer to Islamic law when they believed the Code to be unclear, inapplicable, or inadequate. Iraq

revised the Code in 1978, permitting annulment or divorce in the case of forced marriages, and granting women more child custody rights. Nonetheless, it was still conservative, allowing for early marriage and polygyny.⁹

The Ba'ath Party years saw the death of Iraq's civil society. Non-governmental organizations, the media, and women's groups became arms of the state. The General Federation of Iraqi Women (GFIW) was created by the Ba'ath Party, purportedly to ensure that regulations regarding women were complemented by capacity building and literacy programs, and to sponsor educational programs on women's legal rights.¹⁰ The group was viewed by many, however, as part of Saddam Hussein's efforts to consolidate control and shore up support for his regime. By 1989, membership in the GFIW reached 300,000 women in 21 federal branches¹¹—but often members had been forced to join.¹²

Saddam Hussein's regime undermined the rights of all Iraqis. Women's dissent was punished with the same ferocity as men's. Claiming to fight prostitution, government officials ordered the beheadings of hundreds of women dissidents, often requiring family members to display the severed heads for days. Police and army officers used sexual assault to gain information and elicit confessions; torture—including beating, shock treatment, and branding—was also a routine part of women and men's imprisonment.¹³

The Deteriorating Situation in the Post-1990 Period

Women's position was further eroded following the 1991 Gulf War. Threatened by the Shi'a uprising, Hussein cracked down on political dissidents. To strengthen his hold on the country, he appeased religious fundamentalists, social conservatives, and tribal leaders. This often involved passing anti-woman legislation. Strict observance of *Sharia* punishes adulterous women with death. But in the 1990s, women in Iraq were also being killed for arguing with their husbands, having relationships with men other than their husbands, or being the victims of rape; methods of execution included stoning.¹⁴ In 1990, Saddam Hussein passed a law exempting from punishment men who killed female relatives for such offenses. By 2002, the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women reported that more than 4,000 Iraqi women had been victims of honor killing.¹⁵

The effects of Iraq's harmful economic policies were exacerbated by harsh sanctions. Therefore, the years following the Gulf War brought setbacks in education and employment for women. Education, childcare facilities, and transportation—once free to Iraqis—became prohibitively expensive.¹⁶ Adult female literacy dropped sharply, and the number of women and girls in school began to decrease. More than 35 percent of girls abandoned formal education before completing primary school.¹⁷ Men and women left universities *en masse* for economic reasons, burdening the already saturated job market.¹⁸ These factors, often enough to keep women at home, were compounded by high unemployment in manufacturing, which displaced male workers into fields traditionally occupied by women. Today, although they compose 55 percent of Iraq's population, the UN estimates that women make up only 19 percent of Iraq's workforce.¹⁹

The contrast in the autonomous Kurdish region of Northern Iraq is stark. Left with almost no infrastructure following the Gulf War, the Kurds—with substantial international assistance—have transformed the region. Even prior to the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, women held high positions in the Kurdistan Regional Government, where three of the 20 ministers were women. In the office of Nesreen Berwari, then minister of reconstruction and development, women made up 60 percent of the staff and half of the engineers. The rebirth of civil society led to the formation of the Women's Network, a coalition of 20 women's organizations that came together across political party lines to play an important role in public life. The Network reviews policies that affect women and emphasizes the inclusion and consideration of women in political life.²⁰ Future prospects for women in northern Iraq are even better: 88 percent of children, almost half of them girls, are enrolled in schools. The number has tripled since 1991.²¹

Looking Forward: Iraq After Saddam Hussein

Since the U.S. invasion and ouster of Saddam Hussein, women have mobilized to demand a role in the leadership structures in Iraq. Meanwhile, an increasingly repressive climate has led to a curtailing of women's rights in some parts of the country. The July 2003 report by Human Rights Watch indicates that abductions and rapes of women and girls have increased.²² Nonetheless, women have demonstrated enormous capacity to mobilize and assert their rights.

Immediately following the war, little attention was paid to women's rights, and women were vastly under-represented in early post-war planning meetings. In April 2003, when Iraqi opposition groups met in Nasiriyah to discuss post-war self-rule, only four women (all former exiles) were among the approximately 120 delegates. Nonetheless, the meeting's participants outlined 13 principles for forming a new Iraqi government, including respect for diversity, particularly respect for the role of women.²³ Similarly, in late April 2003, when Jay Garner, the first U.S.-appointed interim administrator of Iraq, met with 250 Iraqis to discuss creation of an interim government, only six women were present—mainly as representatives of working groups of Iraqi exiles created by the U.S. Department of State before the war.

Though U.S. senior government officials like Deputy Secretary Richard Armitage admitted insufficient involvement of women in the early days of occupation, little was done to address the glaring gender imbalance.²⁴ Hundreds of women marched in Baghdad prior to the formation of the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) to demand women's inclusion among the now-disbanded 25-member IGC; despite this fact, only three women were named to the IGC: Songul Chapook, Rajaa Habib Khuzai, and Aqila al-Hashimi (who was assassinated in September 2003 and later replaced by Salma al-Khufaji). Women were not included in either the nine-member rotating presidential council or the committee working on constitutional reform.

Few women were appointed to senior leadership positions during the U.S. occupation. Progress was made when Rend al-Rahim became Iraq's diplomatic

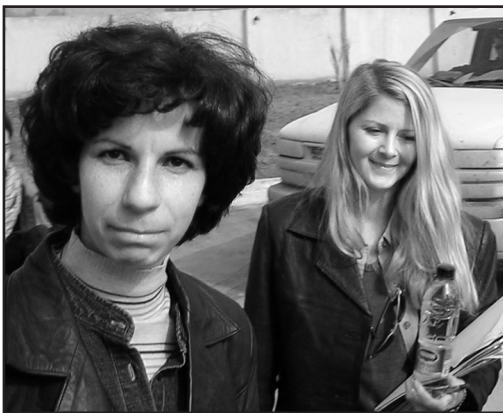
representative to the United States. But out of 25 ministries announced in early September 2003, only one was headed by a woman; Nesreen Berwari was named minister of municipalities and public works. According to the U.S. State Department, in April 2004 the U.S. Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) approved a list of deputy ministers that included seven women in the ministries of agriculture, transportation, culture, displacement and migration, electricity, environment, and higher education. However, none of these women took office. At the local level women fared somewhat better. They occupied six of the 37 seats on the Baghdad City Council; 81 served on neighborhood and district councils around the capital; and many women were elected to district, local and municipal councils in most other regions of Iraq.²⁵

The exclusion of women in positions of authority was off-set somewhat by USAID-financed programs to encourage the growth of civil society through job-skills programs, education, and human rights training. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and private-volunteer organizations (PVOs) labored to incorporate women in local governance efforts and media training.

Despite their under-representation in Iraq's transitional governance structures, women have been actively involved with the country's nascent civil society. The Kurdistan-based Iraqi Al-Amal Association, established in 1992 after the first Gulf War, opened its head office in Baghdad. It now counts more than 80 women's groups among its members.²⁶ The Women's Coordinating Committee meets monthly and represents over 50 local women's NGOs in over four governorates. The Women's Interest Group (WIG) was formed as a coalition working on gender issues and includes key representatives from the CPA, the Baghdad Mayor's Office, USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives, each of the Ministries, and Women for Women International.²⁷ Organizations such as the Iraqi Women's High Council, created in October 2003, were established to increase women's participation across all levels of government, monitor progress on the Iraqi women's agenda, improve health care and education of women and girls, and provide advice for women entrepreneurs.

Ironically, a turning point for women occurred in February 2004, when the former IGC passed Resolution 137, which would have abrogated Iraq's 1959 Personal Status Law for family law, reversing many of the rights and privileges enjoyed currently by Iraqi women. *For more information on Resolution 137, please see page 8.* An unintended consequence was the galvanizing of a women's movement, bringing together women from northern and southern Iraq, from religious and secular traditions, and from different backgrounds, including Sunni, Shiite, Kurd, Assyrian, and Turkomen. These women lobbied successfully for the repeal of Resolution 137.

As power was transferred from the CPA and IGC to an interim Iraqi government in late June 2004, continued advocacy by women's groups was instrumental in achieving political gains and representation. Though women were unsuccessful in their efforts



Salwa Ali Oumashi and Fern Holland in Iraq, where they worked to establish women's associations throughout South Central Iraq.

to obtain a mandatory 40 percent quota of seats for women in the legislature, they swayed the IGC to include a target of 25 percent participation by women at all levels of government within the interim constitution, also known as the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL).²⁸ Furthermore, the document includes an explicit provision that gender should not be a discriminating factor in determining the rights of Iraqis. These are important accomplishments, though to date the extent to which the TAL will bind the transitional government remains unclear. And despite these noteworthy achievements, when the first 43 Iraqi ambassadors were named in July 2004, only one was a woman.²⁹

Women continue to make significant political gains in Iraq, despite the ongoing security situation and general instability of the country. Numerous groups lobbied United Nations Special Envoy Lakhdar Brahimi, the United Nations Electoral Assistance Division, the CPA, and Iraqi political leaders to ensure women are included at all levels of the current leadership structures. As a result of their tireless efforts, Iraq's interim government met the TAL's 25 percent target for women's participation. Two women were appointed to the eight-member Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), which will oversee the election of the government in January 2005. Six of the 31 ministers appointed were women: Minister of Agriculture, Minister of Environment, Minister of Displacement and Migration, Minister of Labor and Social Affairs, Minister of Public Works, and Minister of State for Women.³⁰ In addition, women hold 25 percent of deputy minister positions.³¹ The hotly contested 100 member interim Iraqi National Assembly, which was approved without a vote in August 2004, achieves the 25 percent target with 25 seats held by women. It includes the three female members of the now defunct IGC. Nonetheless, advances in the political sphere remain tempered by the ongoing military presence, insecurity, deepening poverty, fear of imprisonment, rape, kidnapping, and increasingly repressive laws.

Iraqi women have paid a high price for their activism. After making headlines with the repeal of Resolution 137, several women reported receiving threats. On March 9, 2004, civilian employees Fern Holland and Salwa Ali Oumashi, organizers and participants in the November 2003 conference in Washington DC, and Robert Zangas were gunned down as they returned from the Zainab al-Hawra'a Center for Women's Rights in Karbala. During a memorial service at the Wilson Center, Chris O'Donnell, a friend and former colleague with the Office of Transition Initiatives at USAID who worked with them in Hillah, said, "Fern and Salwa had a vision and determination to support Shiite moderates, women, and human rights leaders; to help them organize, learn about democracy, and be prepared for elections... Fern and Salwa's vision for a post-war Iraq was beginning to take shape as their work was successfully introducing Iraqis to the principles of democracy. Iraqis were responding. It seemed for the first time, there was a growing excitement about Iraq's future."³²

Though women have not been proportionately represented in decision-making positions, the CPA has provided significant support and financing to assist women. According to Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, the U.S. has commit-



Hanaa Edwar, secretary of the Al-Amal Association, participates in the conference "Translating Experiences from Abroad" in Amman, Jordan. The Al-Amal Association is a non-governmental organization dedicated to reconstruction projects that improve the socio-economic conditions of Iraqi people.

The Struggle Continues: Resolution 137

by *Victoria Stanski*

The lack of women in Iraq's political posts posed a major threat on December 29, 2003 when conservative members of the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) introduced Resolution 137, which sought to abolish the 1959 Personal Status Law. The proposed legislation stated that family law would be shaped by Sharia, replacing Iraq's relatively secular family law with conservative Islamic rules. Polygamy, compulsory religious dress, and reduction of the marrying age would be sanctioned if the Resolution were upheld. Women would be denied the rights to: leave the house without their husband's permission; travel without a chaperone; continue education after marriage; seek divorce; choose a partner without familial consent; and retain custody of children.

Supporters of the law said it represented the diversity of religions and sects in today's Iraqi society. Opponents argued it would deny women's basic rights and divide Iraq's many sects and religions—thus threatening any hope for a democratic future in Iraq. Opponents to Resolution 137 also exclaimed that the legislation violated Iraq's international legal obligations under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (ratified by Iraq in 1986),³³ and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (ratified in 1994).³⁴ **Zakia Ismael Hakki**, the first woman judge in Iraq, said, "Resolution 137 will send Iraqi families back to the Middle Ages. It will allow men to have four or five or six wives and it will take away children from their mothers."³⁵

In addition, the IGC adopted the Resolution under highly suspect circumstances. When Resolution 137 was introduced and passed, the IGC was not at quorum; the law was discussed for only 15 minutes while several members of the council, including the three female members of the council, were absent.³⁶ One of the three female IGC members publicly denounced the decision and said she missed the vote. "I left the council for a meeting and when I came back, it was over," she said. "If

I was there, I would not have let it pass."³⁷ Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) administrator, Ambassador Paul Bremer, withheld approval of Resolution 137 but did not publicly disapprove of or condone it.

Immediately following passage of Resolution 137, outraged Iraqi women—from judges to cabinet ministers to non-governmental leaders—denounced the decision in street protests and at conferences. Drawing on international organizations for support, Iraqi women's groups used a variety of non-violent techniques at the grassroots and national level to protest. Women from all sectors of Iraq's society and from all ethnic and religious groups convened to create action plans, media campaigns, recommendations, and petitions. Hundreds of women demonstrated outside the CPA and IGC offices in Baghdad to demand a role in shaping the future of their country. In January 2004, the Fatima Al-Zahra Women's Association in Hillah launched a national petition to advocate for at least 40 percent women's representation in all facets of the Iraqi interim government. In a matter of days, the women collected over 11,900 signatures in Hillah alone and thousands more signatures were collected across Iraq. In order to be heard, women organized coordinated sit-ins on February 18, 2004 outside governorate offices in multiple cities.³⁸ Also, Iraqi women lobbied extensively to members of the IGC and CPA, targeting specific officials to persuade them to recall Resolution 137 and increase women's inclusion in reconstruction.

Iraqi women's advocacy efforts had immediate and long-term effects. As a result of the mass mobilization, the IGC repealed Resolution 137 on February 27, 2004. With the full council present, 15 members voted in favor of the repeal, 10 were against; majority rule dictated that Resolution 137 be discarded.³⁹ Women's mobilization in Iraq also signified a major shift towards establishing democratic traditions in Iraq. Women successfully demonstrated that constituents can and should play a central role within democratic structures. **Zainab Al-Suwaij** said, "The Iraqi women proved that they are capable of reaching their goals, and the upcoming period of time is going to show not only the Iraqis inside Iraq but also the international community how Iraqis are capable of reaching their goals and their hopes soon."⁴⁰

ted approximately \$27 million to help women with democratic organizing and advocacy. He stated, "Education for women is one of the highest priorities, and the United States has committed more than \$86.8 million to education projects, with special emphasis on ensuring that girls are registered and attending school."⁴¹ Programs such as the Iraq Local Governance Program (LGP) focus on women and governance, and fund initiatives by local women's groups to develop their own NGOs, civil society organizations, and professional associations. USAID has sponsored a number of workshops for women throughout Iraq. Additionally, U.S. government support has financed the creation of nine women's centers in Baghdad and eleven regional centers throughout Iraq. According to the State Department, centers in Al-Kut, Diwaniyah, Karbala, Al-Hillah, Mosul, Najaf, and Sulamaniyah were completed by the time of the transition in June 2004. Centers in Aqrah, Biara, Halabja, and Tawela will be completed by late 2004.⁴²

Similarly, a vibrant collection of women's NGOs and civil society programs exist for women. Women have founded domestic violence shelters, literacy and immunization programs, and orphanages. They have demonstrated, organized petitions, and implemented lobbying efforts to demand inclusion. In June 2004, the Iraqi Al-Amal Association, Iraqi Women's Network, and Consulting Committee for Women's Affairs in Iraq held the "National Conference Enabling Women to Participate in Democracy" in Baghdad.⁴³ More than 350 people attended the meeting that brought together women in government, civil society, and the private sector to create a series of recommendations for women's participation the democratic process.

As Iraq heads toward the formation of its first democratically elected government, success in the electoral system will be critical to women's visibility. The designed electoral process will allocate 275 seats in the Iraqi legislative assembly on the basis of the proportion of votes cast nationally. Independent candidates and groups of concerned citizens, as well as political parties, will be able to put forward lists of candidates. The threshold to win a seat will be about 26,000 votes. One in three candidates on each party's list will be female, in an effort to ensure that women make up at least 25 percent of the Assembly.⁴⁴

Women organized to take part in the Iraqi National Conference that brought together over 1,100 delegates—including more than 275 women—to choose a 100-member temporary National Assembly. The Assembly will have a limited mandate to check Prime Minister Iyad Allawi's interim government. The National Conference took place August 15, 2004.

While some question whether enough eligible, capable women will be available for the ballot, one Iraqi government official recently suggested women have no choice but to be ready, and thus will be. Ambassador Swanee Hunt and Christina Posa note, "Women's participation might provide Iraq with the stabilizing force needed to stave off the potentially disastrous divisions of the country into ethnic states."⁴⁵

With more than \$20 billion in pledges of international support, the challenge in Iraq will be to channel assistance quickly and correctly. It will be important to

fund organizations that work in cities and rural regions. While Iraqi women and their allies labor under difficult security conditions, those outside the country must ensure that the movement does not lose momentum. To this end, on March 8, 2004 Secretary of State Colin Powell announced two initiatives of the U.S. Department of State to support women's participation in Iraq: the U.S.-Iraq Women's Network (USIWN) is a public-private partnership aimed at connecting U.S. and Iraqi women's organizations; and the \$10-million Iraqi Women's Democracy Initiative will support programming in education for democracy, leadership training, political training, teaching entrepreneurship, NGO coalition-building, organizational management and coordination, and media training.⁴⁶

Often, the advancement of women is perceived to be less important than more immediate concerns such as security. But there is nothing more important than a commitment to supporting stability, reconstruction, and a peaceful political transition in Iraq, which will only be accomplished if the rights of more than 55 percent of Iraq's population are guaranteed. Nesreen Berwari summed up the situation; "It would be a pity if we liberate Iraq only to imprison its women."⁴⁷

Iraqi women's efforts have generated short-term results and facilitated broader changes within the leadership structures of Iraq, all of which have advanced the development of democracy in Iraq. As particularly effective organizers and advocates, women have contributed to the beginning of a major social and cultural change in Iraq. They have successfully demonstrated that they can and should play a central role in Iraq's political arena. Women will be critical in creating stability and security in Iraq, and they merit even greater political space. Their commitment to Iraq's political transition to democracy makes them critical actors in the promotion of sustainable peace within Iraq.

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“Building a New Iraq: Women’s Role in Reconstruction”

WORLD BANK

NOVEMBER 10–11, 2003

The World Bank provides loans, policy advice, technical assistance, and knowledge sharing in its effort to fight poverty and improve the living standards of people in the developing world. The delegation’s time at the World Bank included an overview of its policies and programs, an in-depth look at the situation in Iraq, an examination of priority issues for reconstruction, and the creation of a gender action plan to facilitate the active involvement of women as the country rebuilds. Bank representatives explained that the organization is best equipped to assist women in Iraq through leadership training, both within and outside of government circles; education on economic rights and issues; and capacity building. Throughout the two days of meetings, officials also stressed that their role was to inform members of the delegation about their options for reconstruction in Iraq, not to make decisions for them.

Nadereh Chamlou, senior adviser and gender coordinator of the Middle East and North Africa Region Program (MENA), and **Mustapha Nabli**, regional chief economist and director of social and economic development for MENA, welcomed participants as they opened the meeting. **Hasan Tuluy**, director of operations for MENA, provided a detailed overview of World Bank processes and noted the importance of involving Iraqi women as part of the official development of loan packages, rather than allowing for informal inclusion. When **Ali Agha**, executive director for Iraq at the World Bank, said that Iraqis must take a leading role in reconstruction efforts—identifying areas for improvement, setting priorities, and implementing programs—participants made suggestions on the spot, calling for literacy courses, computer centers, and women’s initiatives. **James Wolfensohn**, president of the World Bank, joined the group for the opening session. He emphasized the Bank’s commitment to Iraq’s reconstruction and to the vital role of women in that process. He stressed the Bank’s dedication to working within an Iraqi framework and commented on the need for the members of the delegation to make project proposals, suggest areas for development, and provide guidance for implementation. “Your presence is more than symbolic; we need your help. The role of women and their participation is central.... Without gender involvement, you cannot have effective development. Our objective is to work with you and learn what you think we can do with you to make effective development and implementation plans in your country.”

As it can loan money only to formally recognized sovereign governments, the World Bank’s role in Iraq was limited during U.S. occupation. In preparation for the establishment of a sovereign government with which it can work, the World Bank partnered with the United Nations to conduct the *Joint Iraq Needs*

Assessment, which evaluated the condition of the country's essential sectors.⁴⁸ **Joseph Saba**, World Bank country director for Iraq, introduced the members of the Bank's Iraq team, who detailed the study's findings for the delegation. A key concern to team members was the revitalization of Iraq's economy, including creating a new currency, providing for an economic underpinning in the constitution, and creating a realistic budget that takes into account the needs of the country. An overview of the financial sector highlighted Iraq's banks and the newly licensed foreign banks that have begun operations in the country. The presentation on the educational system focused on the enrollment and attendance of girls, which signals the role women will play in future development, as well as the need to reform curricula, textbooks, and teacher training. The discussion of Iraq's health care infrastructure, once the best in the region, addressed participants' questions about the high cost of life-saving medicines, the training of doctors and nurses, the construction of new hospitals, mental health care, and care for chemical attack victims, among other issues of critical importance. Further discussions addressed sanitation, agriculture and food security, water resources, and transportation infrastructure. In all cases, experts cautioned participants that a necessary first step is a more thorough evaluation of needs and priorities; without this, resources will be wasted through inappropriate programs. Team members stressed that once on the ground, the Bank would work with local institutions and staff as much as possible, to allow for Iraqi ownership of the project.

The group spent much of the second day creating a gender action plan for capacity building in Iraq. The session began with a discussion of gender and law, and an examination of the World Bank gender policy with **Gita Gopal**, lead specialist and gender coordinator at the World Bank Institute. The group decided to create a network of Iraqi women leaders, members of which would use their extensive contacts with women and men in different sectors to identify possible partners for the World Bank. The Bank would then work with these and others to build women's capacity in the health and education sectors, and to establish the economic rights of women, with a focus on labor markets and employment. Gopal cited affirmative action and legal aid as avenues through which the Bank could facilitate women's participation in reconstruction. Participants, determined to play an active and informed role in development planning and implementation, were eager for programs that would build women's leadership and management skills, increase their ability to leverage funds, and train them in democracy and civic leadership. Key to the action plan was a follow-up meeting in Amman, Jordan in December 2003, in which female and male participants would receive capacity building training in gender and leadership. *For more details on the December 2003 conference in Amman, please see the account on pages 31–32.*

In addition to the sessions described above, the delegation met with a number of the Bank's directors. They also attended discussion lunches hosted by **Mamphela Ramphela**, World Bank managing director, and **Elaine Wolfensohn**, as well as Iftar receptions hosted by **Frannie Leautier**, vice president of the World Bank Institute, and **Shengman Zhang**, World Bank managing director.⁴⁹

**WOODROW WILSON INTERNATIONAL
CENTER FOR SCHOLARS
NOVEMBER 12–14, 2003**

The Iraqi delegation spent three days in meetings with prominent representatives from the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, which aims to unite the world of ideas and the world of policy through research and discussion, and the Hunt Alternatives Fund initiative Women Waging Peace, which is dedicated to the inclusion of women in peace processes around the world. The Iraqi women participants worked together to craft and hone specific policy recommendations for the inclusion of women in Iraq's reconstruction, which formed the basis of productive discussions with U.S. policy-makers.

Following a welcome and introduction by **Ambassador Hattie Babbitt**, senior vice president of Hunt Alternatives Fund, **Haleh Esfandiari**, Director of the Middle East Program at the Woodrow Wilson Center, and **Carla Koppell**, interim director of the Conflict Prevention Project at the Woodrow Wilson Center, participants moved into a workshop on democracy-building by **Heba El-Shazli**, deputy regional director for the Middle East and North Africa Region at the National Democratic Institute. She encouraged them to discard the notion that democracy was solely a Western or American concept, citing everyday examples of democratic representation. El-Shazli encouraged participants to organize around the common hope of the development of Iraq and its women and to work across different backgrounds. Reiterating that only Iraqis can determine what is suitable in their country, El-Shazli said, "You are aware of your society, and you know your restraints. You know exactly what is accepted and what is not. We have to depend on *you*."

Perhaps the most important—and most challenging—portion of the conference was the creation of detailed recommendations for the inclusion of women in five areas of Iraq's development: strengthening civil society, crafting constitutional law and legislation, leading governance and decision-making, ensuring economic rights and empowerment, and providing security and security sector reform.⁵⁰ Participants identified key issues they would need to address for women's inclusion in Iraq's reconstruction, discussed and analyzed potential solutions, and crafted recommendations to help guide the process, paying special attention to successful implementation. Resource experts were available to discuss the benefits and shortcomings of ideas, and to counsel participants on approaches that have worked in other contexts. Following the initial development session, the delegation, drawn from a wide range of ethnic groups, religious backgrounds, and political parties in Iraq, worked for three days to reach consensus. The group discussed its findings with policy-makers, and the final versions of the recommendations were distributed to decision-makers in the United States and Iraq. *To read the delegation's final findings and conclusions, please see pages 16–20.*



Heba El-Shazli conducts a working session on November 12, 2003 at the Woodrow Wilson Center entitled, "Building Democracy in Iraq - Challenges and Opportunities Given Experiences Around the World."

Findings and Conclusions on Women's Role in Reconstruction

WOMEN'S ROLE IN CONSTITUTIONAL LAW AND LEGISLATION

The formation of a new constitution and a new body of legislation are milestones along the path toward sustainable peace. The principles and rights enshrined in the constitution become the guidelines by which other laws are formed, policies developed, and programs implemented. It is key that the temporary and permanent Iraqi constitution and related legislation and processes:

1. Represent the interests of the entire Iraqi population, without regard to race, ethnicity, language, social origin, religion, or sex. The members of the constitutional drafting committee should include representatives of all interested groups.
2. **In the short term**, empower women within the constitutional process through a 50 percent quota for women on the constitutional drafting committee.
3. Allow for affirmative action on behalf of certain previously disadvantaged groups, including women. **Immediately** abolish all laws and regulations that violate the internationally recognized rights of women and enact laws to prevent the abolition of all laws and regulations that benefit women. Create a monitoring committee to ensure equal rights and opportunities for women.
4. **Immediately and throughout the process**, create educational and media programs to raise Iraqis' awareness about the Constitution.
5. **In the medium term**, provide for an independent judicial branch and, over time, ensure a well-trained judiciary.
6. **Throughout the process**, be respectful of the religious sensibilities of society, in order to promote the acceptance of the Constitution by the people.
7. Protect and guarantee the rights of all ethnicities and religions.
8. Ensure the separation of powers among the executive, legislative, and judicial branches.
9. **Immediately** form a committee of women lawyers and other qualified professionals that will define and protect women's rights and, over time, guarantee the effectiveness of the above.

WOMEN'S ROLE IN STRENGTHENING CIVIL SOCIETY

The creation of a vital civil society in Iraq will be key to the country's rehabilitation and reconstruction. To ensure a vibrant sector that can monitor and partner with the country's new government, it will be essential to:

1. **Immediately** ensure that the donor community utilizes a high standard for gender balance that is broadly and consistently applied. This would include, for example, having strong women's representation among the donor leadership and hiring Iraqi women for reconstruction tasks.
2. **Immediately** secure funding to provide women with education, legal aid, and training in business and management skills, particularly accounting, program development, grant proposal writing, and program monitoring and evaluation. **In the long term**, these funds should be distributed or administered by local women's organizations.
3. **Immediately** focus NGO training on organizational development (structure and management), fundraising and proposal writing, media and public relations, advocacy training, coalition building, program development, and information technology.
4. **Immediately** begin to use media as a tool to reach out to and educate communities about their constitutional rights and responsibilities, as well as wider issues relating to democracy and civil society.
5. **Immediately** clarify the relationships between NGOs and the government. Detail specifics related to NGO registration, qualification, and funding.
6. **Immediately** intensify and accelerate the creation of women's organizations in the south and center of the country, while continuing to support those that exist in other parts of Iraq.
7. **Immediately** encourage the creation of legitimate, provincial-level mechanisms that can elect national representatives to facilitate coordination among women's groups.
8. **In the medium term**, establish direct links between US and other international NGOs and Iraqi NGOs.
9. **In the medium and long term**, build on and expand efforts to create civil society networks, particularly among women. Representation should be both geographically and ethnically diverse. Additionally, increase transparency in the selection of participants and the development of recommendations at conferences that bring together NGO and other civil society representatives.
10. **In the medium to long term**, create a media network focused on women's priorities, issues, and concerns to ensure that their voices are heard.
11. **In the medium to long term**, support organizations that provide aid to vulnerable groups, such as victims of sexual crimes, domestic abuse, and the previous regime; widows; orphans; and the infirm.
12. **In the long term**, establish a permanent institute on gender to increase attention to gender issues in Iraq.

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN DEMOCRACY, GOVERNANCE, AND DECISION-MAKING

In the lengthy process of democratization, key components of good governance must be addressed by local and international actors in order to aid the transition from violent conflict to democracy. For effective implementation of these structures, women's inclusion is essential. Moving forward, it will be key that all concerned parties:

1. **Immediately** create mechanisms for ensuring women's full participation in all transitional and permanent national, regional and local governing structures developed in Iraq, possibly through women-only elections or the selection of women for participation in governing bodies.
2. **Immediately and throughout the process**, establish a 50 percent quota for women in all levels of government; this quota would apply to all government representatives and employees.
3. **Immediately** create and institutionalize links between the Governing Council and other developing national governing structures in Iraq, and local communities, municipal bodies and other provincial governing entities.
4. **Immediately** move forward with the appointment of at least five female deputy ministers, as agreed to by the Governing Council.
5. **Immediately and throughout the process**, ensure and encourage the appointment of qualified, welltrained women judges throughout Iraq.
6. **In the short term**, create a Gender Advisory Council that reports to the Prime Minister. This Council would be chaired by either a Minister for Gender Affairs or the Minister for Human Rights, whose portfolio and title would be expanded to Minister for Human Rights and Gender Affairs. The council and the Minister would oversee and monitor the work of gender focal points within each Ministry to ensure that women's needs and concerns are mainstreamed into work in all sectors. **In the long term**, assess the need for creating a Ministry of Gender Affairs.
7. **In the short and medium term**, support the women on the Governing Council and those in other emerging governing structures in Iraq. This could be achieved through formalizing relationships between the women governing at the national level and civil society, women's groups, and women in key ministries (e.g., a cross-sectoral women's caucus).
8. **In the short and medium term**, train women governing at the national, provincial and local levels to further enhance their communication and administrative skills.
9. **In the short term and throughout the process**, initiate media campaigns to promote issues raised by women to give them a platform.
10. **In the short, medium, and long term**, provide democracy education for the entire Iraqi population, with at least one training provider per province and ongoing educational programs.
11. **In the medium and long term**, continue to develop a National Plan of Action for women for which all women at all levels can advocate. This plan would build and reflect the Beijing Platform for Action created at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995.

WOMEN'S ROLE IN ECONOMIC RIGHTS AND EMPOWERMENT

As economic power leads to political clout, women's equal position in the economic landscape is key to equity in other areas. In order to secure Iraqi women's full participation in the economic rehabilitation of Iraq, it is vital to:

1. **Immediately** abolish laws that act as an impediment to women's employment, including laws restricting women's right to work and travel, enter certain professions, or work particular hours. Laws promoting women's economic freedom must be part of the labor code. Throughout and following reconstruction, monitoring and implementing in this field is vital.
2. **Immediately** ensure the participation of women in all economic planning, decision-making processes, and policymaking. This should include the appointment of qualified women to key positions in finance and planning ministries and the inclusion of a gender focus for the Coalition Provisional Authority and the Iraqi Governing Council.
3. **Immediately** invest in the collection of sex-disaggregated data for all economic studies and reports.
4. **In the short term**, provide employment training to build women's employment capacities. The training, focusing on the needs of women, must reflect market needs, rather than addressing only those areas typically seen as "women's work."
5. **In the short term**, create an organization to link businesswomen throughout Iraq.
6. **In the short and medium term**, provide special grants, loans, and training for unemployed women.
7. **In the short, medium, and long term**, provide women equal access to economic and financial resources, including: credit, education, property, scholarships, and contracts. A percentage of all financial resources, technical assistance, and educational and exchange opportunities should be set aside for women.
8. **In the short, medium, and long term**, create youth programs targeting the 15–30 age group, with the aim of creating jobs and formal employment.
9. **In the short term**, create and maintain provisional safety nets for vulnerable women, including the elderly, the disabled, widows, and women with no means of support. Such safeguards could include but are not limited to pensions, social security, free or reduced-cost housing, insurance, and retraining programs.
10. **In the medium term**, create an organization, in coordination with the Iraqi government, specialized in collecting data on the skills of women seeking jobs and the needs of employers in the region, connecting women with jobs when possible.
11. **In the medium term**, introduce laws and regulations that provide for the well being of retirees and the elderly.
12. **In the medium and long term**, create a "gender friendly" infrastructure to aid women as they balance the demands of home and work life. Such an infrastructure would include, though would not be limited to, safe and reliable transportation, trustworthy childcare, sufficient security, and training incentives.
13. **In the long term**, develop, with the government, a favorable economic environment for women's economic participation.

WOMEN'S ROLE IN SECURITY AND SECURITY SECTOR REFORM

The current lack of security is an impediment to all aspects of life for Iraqis. There is a general perception that the violence is largely being perpetrated by a combination of forces including Ba'ath Party loyalists, Al Qaeda members, and other anti-American actors that have entered Iraq. There is also concern that the presence of U.S. military in civilian areas in some parts of Iraq creates fear and has caused civilian casualties, and that Iraqis contributing to the transition process—particularly women who have taken a lead in organizing civil society—are targets as they are perceived to be supporters of the U.S. As women directly experience the consequences of insecurity and violence at all levels of society and have important contributions, it is key that they play a significant role in the rehabilitation of the security sector. In the short term, with their guidance, it is necessary to:

1. **Immediately** ensure street lighting. Currently the lack of lighting in urban and rural areas, including highways, allows for increased burglaries, theft, kidnapping, and other forms of violence.
2. **Immediately** increase the numbers of Iraqi police across the country.
3. **Immediately** involve local councils in the selection of police, thus helping to ensure that the officers selected were not active members or officers of the former regime.
4. **Immediately** increase border security through the creation of border police, in cooperation with the Coalition Provisional Authority and the new Iraqi army.
5. **Immediately and in the short term**, increase the number of women in the police and security forces.
6. **In the short, medium, and long term**, hold training for the police and security forces that includes courses in communications, ethics, human rights, and gender.
7. **In the short, medium, and long term**, ensure good salaries and benefits packages for members of the new police and security forces, and in so doing make the positions more respectable and desirable, and less amenable to corruption. Provisions should also be made to distribute pensions to the widows of deceased members of the new security force.
8. **In the short, medium, and long term**, create community forums to ensure more responsiveness and the exchange of ideas between civilians and police forces regarding security issues.
9. **In the short, medium, and long term**, raise the awareness of women regarding security issues. As some 55 percent of the population, they need to be active participants in this reform. As natural networks within and among communities, women are well placed to monitor the local security situation informally. In moving forward, it will also be necessary for women to address their evolving notions of security.

"Women Leaders from Iraq: Perspectives on Reconstruction"

Public Meeting

November 13, 2003

At this central event at the Wilson Center, the Iraqi participants took part in a set of public panel discussions on the role of women in governance, the private sector, and civil society. They presented their opinions and outlined the recommendations then in development, addressing the public at large about issues central to women's participation in Iraq's reconstruction and development. This session began with introductions from **Lee Hamilton**, director of the Wilson Center, **Nadereh Chamlou**, senior adviser and gender coordinator of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Region Program at the World Bank, and **Ambassador Swanee Hunt**, founder and chair of Hunt Alternatives Fund and Women Waging Peace, and founding director of the Women and Public Policy Program at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government. Hunt moderated the first panel discussion, which addressed women's role in formal governing structures. The four panelists were **Songul Chapook** and **Dr. Rajaa Habib Khuzai**, both members of the Iraqi Governing Council, and **Nasreen Hayder Kader** and **Siham Hattab Hamdan**, members of the Baghdad City Advisory Council.

Chapook opened the discussion with a call for increased efforts to establish a strong and diverse civil society that fully includes women and represents all regions, ethnic groups, and religious backgrounds. She stressed the need for training and development programs in management and administration, fundraising, and media and public relations, also stating the necessity for mass media and information technology. Chapook noted the progress made in the Kurdish region while Saddam Hussein still ruled the rest of Iraq; she called on the newly freed areas to take this opportunity to emulate the north's example.

Echoing her colleague on the Governing Council, **Khuzai** explained the importance of women in Iraq's conversion to a democratic and stable society. She noted, however, that even as her country moves forward, Iraqis are being left out of discussions that greatly impact their future. Khuzai said she had grown increasingly concerned about the role of women within the Governing Council, particularly once the constitutional preparation committee was announced. She also worried about the role of the Council within Iraqi society. "Our limits were made clear," she said, calling for a more equal partnership with the Iraqi people. *To read an excerpt from Khuzai's speech, please see page 30 or visit www.womenwagingpeace.net.*

Shifting the conversation from national to local governance, **Hamdan**, who represents the volatile Sadr City district in Baghdad, cited the potential within the Iraqi people—and the lack of trust she feels on the part of the international community. Hamdan asked that Iraqis be offered the training necessary to reawaken their capacity for independence. She also raised the question of security, saying that until the streets are safe, Iraqi women will not be able to contribute fully to rebuilding efforts. Yet, all Iraqis are ready and willing to move for-

"The first time we held a demonstration, there were only 55 of us with pamphlets in our hands, asking for equality... The next year, we were hundreds. The following year, there were thousands of us in the streets." Ala Talabani, co-founder of the Iraqi Women's High Council

ward, she said, citing her own example. On this, her first trip outside of Iraq, Hamdan made her way to the United States alone. *To read an excerpt from Hamdan's speech, please visit www.womenwagingpeace.net.*

Kader closed the panel with a request: "The liberation of Iraq is just the first step.... I am asking you to keep going." In describing the election of the Baghdad City Advisory Council, she talked about the emergence in neighborhoods of people who would take charge and help each other. Elections were organized, and those who had naturally come to the fore were elected. For the next stages, Kader argued, Iraqis need instruction in the principles of democracy. Key also is the participation of women, she said. "It is not a democratic process without the presence of women."

Following the presentations, members of the audience engaged the panel in a discussion covering a number of key issues. There was general agreement that the number of women in governance positions in Iraq should be increased, although there was some dispute as to the percentage of seats that should be set aside for women. In addressing the question of civil society, participants agreed that the Kurds in northern Iraq would be a good resource for the rest of the country; indeed, both Governing Council members said they already had been to the region.

Harriet Hentges, executive vice president and chief operating officer at the U.S. Institute of Peace, moderated the second panel, on women's role in civil society and the private sector. Speakers were: **Ala Talabani**, co-founder of the Iraqi Women's High Council; **Sawsan Al-Barrak**, co-founder and member of the Advisory Board of the Fatima Al-Zahra Women's Center; an Iraqi lawyer; and an Iraqi businesswoman.

Talabani addressed the problems women have faced over the past 35 years, including the crimes of Saddam Hussein's regime and the strictures of a patriarchal society. She cited the progress made in Kurdish northern Iraq since 1991 and recounted her experience starting the first women's NGO in Sulumaniyah. "The first time we held a demonstration, there were only 55 of us with pamphlets in our hands, asking for equality... The next year, we were hundreds. The following year, there were thousands of us in the streets." Talabani called on groups in the United States and around the world to reach out to Iraqis, provide training and capacity building in democracy, technology, and education, and help to create a network to bring Iraqi organizations into the international community.

Co-founder of the Fatima Al-Zahra's Women's Center, **Al-Barrak** said the organization has faced a significant obstacle: rejection due to fears that women's rights advocates will bring Western culture to Iraq. To combat this, she and other Women's Center leaders have met with friends, family, colleagues, and the clergy to reassure them about the Center's goals. Another challenge, she said, is the security situation in Iraq. Many women are afraid to travel to the Center, forcing it to curtail some of its activities, which include job training and financial assistance programs. Al-Barrak also called for educational programs that can be implemented to aid women, particularly those past the age of 40.

The Iraqi lawyer discussed the importance of women in public life in Iraq, including in reconstruction efforts. As an attorney and a religious scholar, she emphasized the support within Islam for women to play an active role in society. In particular, women must be represented in the development and writing of the constitution, she said. Citing important women in religious history, she explained that women and men must play equal roles in the growth and spiritual fulfillment of human beings, in public and private life. Further, she said, a woman's role as a mother is not inconsistent with education or social contributions, noting that during the wars in Iraq, women were able to balance their familial responsibilities with their country's need for a work force. "Women's capabilities are infinite, if they are given the opportunity."

Closing the panel was an Iraqi businesswoman. In addition to giving women their share of contracts, applying international labor standards, changing the attitudes about working women, and adopting affirmative action policies, she suggested the creation of a database to connect job postings with suitable candidates and a national association for professional women. She cited the importance of training and capacity building, particularly related to information technology, business administration, secretarial work, and the domestic arts. She also suggested micro-credit loans that will enable women to start small businesses, and advocated daycare programs and legislation to allow for flexible work hours for women with school-age children. The promotion of social welfare programs—including social security and care for the elderly, disabled, ill, widows, and those whose husbands are at war—are vital, she said.

Meetings in Washington

To present to U.S. policy-makers the recommendations they had developed, the Iraqi delegation visited several organizations within the Executive Branch. During a meeting at the **U.S. Agency for International Development** (USAID), deputy assistant administrator of the Bureau for Asia and the Near East, **Gordon West**, briefly outlined USAID's structure, programs, and goals, noting that the mission to Iraq is now the organization's largest and most important. USAID administrator **Andrew Natsios** named the five public services the organization has prioritized for its work in the country: rehabilitation of its schools in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, UNICEF, and UNESCO; attention to health care needs, particularly rehydration and immunization in cooperation with UNICEF and NGOs; improvement in the cleanliness of water through the rebuilding of the sewage system; the resurgence of agriculture; and the strengthening of local government, which will stabilize the country from the bottom up. Many Iraqi participants had questions or suggestions about USAID's upcoming efforts and distribution of resources, including special assistance to women—particularly in rural areas, health care, and



Songul Chapook addresses a filled auditorium at the Woodrow Wilson Center November 13, 2003.

education. **Vijitha Eyango**, senior gender and education adviser in USAID's Asia Near East Bureau, and **Dana Peterson**, deputy Iraq reconstruction adviser in USAID's Asia Near East Bureau, addressed each question in turn, explaining the many projects already underway to ameliorate these concerns, including restoring essential infrastructure, supporting vital health and education services, expanding economic opportunity, improving government efficiency and accountability, and providing humanitarian assistance.

Welcoming participants to the **Pentagon**, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs **Christopher Wilcox** stated that the women of Iraq would help make the country a valuable partner to the United States. **Colonel Addison Davis**, deputy chief for joint operations at the Joint Chiefs of Staff, presented that organization's situational overview of Iraq and addressed security concerns. **Joseph Collins**, deputy assistant secretary of defense for stability operations, discussed progress in the Department of Defense's five strategic priorities in Iraq: security; essential services (food, water and sanitation, health care, and power and electricity); economy; governance; and international participation. **Elizabeth Cheney**, deputy assistant secretary of state for Near East affairs, wanted to learn how the United States can support the cause of freedom across the Middle East.

Deputy Secretary of Defense **Paul Wolfowitz** noted his long-standing interest in democratic reform in the Muslim world and the Middle East and assured Iraqi participants that the United States is committed to their country. He responded to questions about Iraq's porous borders and the associated security, economic, and health problems; women's participation in the security sector and the judicial system; the development of civil society; and increasing religious intolerance. He added that Iraqis must determine and implement priorities, and that with laws setting women and men equal, women should be able to establish themselves as full partners in Iraq's future. Wolfowitz expressed his desire to see more women in security forces and suggested a connection between American female military officers and Iraqi women would help in this area. Saying the CPA would provide security for such events, he encouraged participants to make use of their right to demonstrate and to convey their ideas to the American people, who could then mobilize private and NGO support.

During a meeting with **Harriet Hentges** and other representatives from the **U.S. Institute of Peace** (USIP), the Iraqi delegation learned that USIP had just received an additional \$10 million grant for work in Iraq. Stressing that USIP's sole focus is the prevention and resolution of violence, Hentges remarked on the Institute's extensive experience working as a facilitator in post-conflict settings, with particular emphasis on preventing interethnic and interreligious violence, promoting issues related to the rule of law, and providing training in education. USIP's training program collaborates with a variety of governmental and non-governmental organizations around the world; skills offered are useful for women interested in becoming more active in public life and policy-making. Learning of participants' interest in constitutional development, Hentges said that USIP experts had reviewed 18 real-life cases of consti-

tutional development for strategies that could be used in Iraq. When participants suggested programs for the funding, establishment, development, and repair of a variety of social institutions, including women's centers, community health care centers, and orphanages, Hentges explained that while these are not areas in which USIP works directly, the organization can train communities how to make decisions about these issues. Collaborative problem solving and consensus building are skills local leaders will need to have, she said. Other issues raised included healing societies traumatized by violence and despair, and the importance of religious and ethnic tolerance.

The Iraqi participants were received at the **White House**, where they were greeted by National Security Adviser **Condoleezza Rice**, and where a number of delegation members met with **President George W. Bush** to discuss their strategies for Iraq's reconstruction. President Bush pledged that the United States would remain committed to the task of rebuilding Iraq, and he observed that women in the country have much to offer the fledgling Iraqi government.

Excerpt from the Remarks of President Bush with Members of the Governing Council of Iraq and Members of the Baghdad City Advisory Council

The Oval Office
November 17, 2003

It's been my honor to host one of the most extraordinary meetings I've had as the President of the United States. I'm seated here with five courageous, brave Iraqi women who believe in the people of Iraq, believe in the future of Iraq, who love their freedoms, who look forward to working to see that their nation is a free and peaceful country. The story of these five courageous leaders is a story of human tragedy, on the one hand, and human hope, on the other. And I am so honored that they're here.

Two members of the Governing Council are with us... We're in the process of working with the Governing Council to put in place the necessary laws so that people feel comfortable about the evolution of the government. The Governing Council itself is

going to be making these decisions, and it's full of capable people....

... We will continue to work with the Iraqi people to secure the country. We fully recognize that Iraq has become a new front on the war on terror, and that there are disgruntled Ba'athists, as well as Fedayeen fighters and Mujahidin types and Al-Qaeda types that want to test the will of the civilized world there. And we will work with Iraqis to bring people to justice. We talked about the high price the Iraqi citizens are paying. There are a lot of brave and courageous Iraqi soldiers and police who are chasing down these terrorists, and they're paying a price for it....

... The Iraqi people want to be free. And we will continue to work with them to develop a free society. And a free Iraq is not only in the interests of these five courageous women; a free Iraq is in our interests. A free Iraq in a part of the world that is troublesome and dangerous will set such a good example. We're talking about an historic opportunity to change parts of the world, and Iraq will be the leader of that change.

It's important for American citizens to know that what is taking place in Iraq will be in the long-term security interests for their children and their grandchildren. And I want to thank these five pioneers for freedom who are sitting here with me today.

To that end, he asked participants for suggestions on how to more fully incorporate women into reconstruction processes. Bush emphasized that Iraq's transition to peace and democracy would benefit the United States as well. "A free Iraq is not only in the interests of these...courageous women; a free Iraq is in our interest." *To read an excerpt from President Bush's remarks, please see previous page.*

During its stay in Washington, the delegation made a number of visits to the **U.S. Department of State** (DOS), meeting with high-level officials in a number of departments. **Paula Dobriansky**, under secretary of state for global affairs, agreed with participants that the number of women in governing bodies is important, but also suggested Iraqi women to find ways to raise their voices and be involved in decision-making at all levels. She also encouraged participants to remain constructive while expressing dissent. **Charlotte Ponticelli**, senior coordinator for international women's issues, suggested ideas for mobilizing support for women's efforts in reconstruction and development. **Donald Steinberg**, director of the Joint Policy Council, stressed the importance of making women's issues mainstream. He urged members of the delegation to consider how they might raise their voices and who might be their allies. Following this meeting, participants attended a tea with the Cabinet Spouse Group and a reception hosted by DOS, Women for a Free Iraq, and the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies.

A discussion at DOS's Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs followed the November 15, 2003 announcement of a timetable for the transition of power from the Coalition Provisional Authority to the Iraqis; much of the conversation addressed this plan. **William Burns**, assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern Affairs, noted that women leaders would have a crucial role to play in shaping a brighter future for Iraq and the entire Middle East. He urged women to be active in every sector, including the political system, and congratulated them on their efforts to organize at the grassroots level throughout the country. "As important as the national process is, we have to support local efforts as well." Participants cited the need to train women and include them in the new government structures. Saying she wanted to ensure a prominent Iraqi delegation, **Alina Romanowski**, director of the Middle East Partnership Initiative, discussed with the group a February 2004 conference in Amman, the focus of which would be women in the law. **Philo Dibble**, deputy assistant secretary of state for Arabian Peninsula and Northern Gulf affairs, said that women need to take this opportunity to make themselves heard and take part in the process. **Ambassador Robin Raphel**, coordinator for Iraq reconstruction and senior vice president of the National Defense University, asked whether Iraqi women are comfortable playing a role in public life. Several participants assured her that women in Iraq are ambitious and ready to aid in reconstruction—and that nothing in their religious or cultural traditions would prevent them from doing so. A Governing Council member and a judge each related her conversation with the Grand Ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani, who said that, so long as women are qualified, they might hold the same positions as men.

Patricia Harrison, assistant secretary of state for educational and cultural affairs, gave participants a summary of recent achievements in Iraq. She noted that

the first 20 Iraqi Fulbright Scholars would come to the United States in January 2004 and said she was pleased with the large number of applicants, which indicates the need, intelligence, and talent of Iraqis. Participants raised questions on a number of subjects, including the role of science and technology in education; how to improve literacy rates for children and their parents; the need to educate teachers and students in new subjects and new methods of teaching; the need for new educational materials and supplies, including books and laboratory equipment; the case for Iraqi universities receiving international accreditation; and the need for counselors in schools. Harrison answered each question in turn, explaining relevant projects already underway. She cited the Afghan Women's Council, which brought Afghan teachers to the United States for training, as an example of a program that could be executed in Iraq. One participant argued that there is a disparity between plans made for education in Iraq and conditions on the ground, asking for an evaluation of the contracts awarded. Harrison thanked her for this feedback and encouraged each of the participants to email her with specific ideas and criticisms. Despite the work ahead, she said, she was optimistic about the future of Iraq's educational system. "The need is great; the opportunity is even greater."

"There is no effective development strategy in which women do not play a central role." Representative Diana DeGette (D-CO), echoing a statement of UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION – CENTRAL EUROPEAN AND EURASIAN LAW INITIATIVE NOVEMBER 15–19, 2003

The American Bar Association (ABA), the world's largest professional voluntary association, uses its reach to support and promote the rule of law in partnership with governments and NGOs around the world. In this series of meetings with the Iraqi delegation, the ABA sought to provide participants with information on how laws and legal systems in the United States and other countries work. Throughout sessions, presenters were clear that they did not seek to influence the development of Iraq's constitution, laws, and legal systems, but to provide Iraqis the information and means to create their own structures.

Following a formal welcome by **Lisa Dickieson**, director of the American Bar Association–Asia, **Bob Horowitz** of the American Bar Association—Iraq Initiative, and **Betsy Andersen**, executive director of the American Bar Association—Central European and Eurasian Law Initiative (ABA—CEELI), Iraqi participants were introduced to different aspects of the American legal system. **Ellen Jakovic**, a private attorney with the firm White and Case, **Judge Vanessa Ruiz** of the District of Columbia Court of Appeals, **Judge Rosemarie Annunziata** of the Virginia Court of Appeals, **Amy Jeffress**, an assistant U.S. Attorney in the District of Columbia, and **Joan Winship**, executive director of the International Association of Women Judges, each provided insight into their roles within the American judicial system. Each noted that, while overt barriers to women's success no longer exist, more subtle discrimination persists, notable because women are underrepresented in management positions and a significant wage gap between male and female attorneys con-

tinues to exist. Participants later met with **Judge Gladys Kessler** of the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, who shared her experiences and insights. The delegation also traveled to the Supreme Court for a private visit with **Associate Justice Sandra Day O'Connor**. Throughout these sessions, Iraqi participants had many questions dealing with the intricacies of the American judicial system and the impact of the presence of women as judges, lawyers, and jurors, and the foundational influence of the constitution.

A highlight of the ABA portion of the conference was a meeting with women representatives of the United States Congress. Following an introduction by Dickieson, **Senator Mary Landrieu** (D-LA) welcomed the Iraqi delegation, thanking them for their dedication “to making Iraq the country we all know it can be.” **Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton** (D-NY) spoke next, pledging her support for women’s inclusion in Iraq’s reconstruction. “I look forward to working with you to help you realize *your* goals and dreams—not ours.” **Representative Diana DeGette** (D-CO) echoed a statement of UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan: “There is no effective development strategy in which women do not play a central role.” **Representative Susan Davis** (D-CA) spoke optimistically of women’s future progress in Iraq. “We know you will make a difference. There’s no question.” Rounding out the panel was **Representative Carolyn Maloney** (D-NY), who told participants about a resolution she was drafting in support of women in Iraq. “I believe we can learn a great deal from you,” she said. (House Resolution 342 was passed on November 21, 2003, commending Iraqi women for their participation in Iraqi government and civil society as well as encouraging the inclusion of Iraqi women in the political and economic life of Iraq.)

Members of the Iraqi delegation made use of this opportunity to speak with American lawmakers. Participants asked for political and leadership training, reconstruction funds earmarked for women’s organizations, and economic development programs geared toward women. All the congresswomen present encouraged the delegation to take this opportunity to create the Iraq they want to live in, and Senator Clinton asked to be contacted with requests and recommendations. One participant said she already had such a list and would forward it immediately. Copies of the findings and conclusions contained in this report were also forwarded to U.S. lawmakers.

Penny Wakefield, director of the ABA Section on Individual Rights and Responsibilities, and **Hadar Harris**, executive director of the Center for Human Rights and Humanitarian Law at American University’s Washington College of Law, discussed the Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), often described as an international bill of rights for women. Iraq ratified CEDAW in 1986, but delegation members feared discrimination in the political process, lack of education, poverty, domestic violence and honor killings, and the overall patriarchal culture have made implementation difficult in Iraq. In a related session on the role of women’s associations in promoting women’s issues, **Martha Burk**, chair of the National

Council of Women's Organizations, and **Ellen Boneparth**, director of policy planning for the same organization, provided suggestions on the development of women's civil society groups in Iraq. In both meetings, presenters cited the long struggle for women's rights in the United States and cautioned the Iraqi women to push for the explicit inclusion of women's rights in their constitution.

Two sessions allowed participants to examine law and democracy in their own lives. The delegation then met with **Mary Larkin** of Street Law, Inc. and **Jamie McCampbell** of ABA—CEELI to discuss how to educate average citizens about democracy; with no history of popular rule, the nation will have to learn, with its leaders, how to operate in a democratic society. In the course of the subsequent discussion, the group learned methods they can use in training fellow Iraqis to understand, adhere to, and, when necessary, change existing laws. In a session on family law in Muslim countries, **Azizah Al-Hibri**, professor of law at the University of Richmond Law School, executive director of the Muslim Women's Association, and president of Karamah: Muslim Women Lawyers for Human Rights, and **Irfana Anwer**, executive director of Karamah, discussed Islamic law as it relates to women and families—chiefly marriage, divorce, and dowries. As Iraq contemplates whether to make *Sharia*, or Islamic law, part of its new legal code, participants were particularly interested in the interplay between this religious law and women's rights. *For a discussion of Governing Council Resolution 137, which would have instituted Sharia law in Iraq, please see page 8.*

48. Summary of remarks by Nesreen Berwari at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, March 4, 2004. http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=news.item&news_id=62480

49. For the full text of the UN-World Bank Joint Iraq Needs Assessment in English or Arabic, go to: <http://lnweb18.worldbank.org/mna/mena.nsf/Countries/Iraq/B159E92EFE1EBBC485256CF500753888?OpenDocument>

50. Iftar is the ceremonial meal held following Ramadan's daylight fasts.

51. These recommendations built upon on a series of findings and conclusions created during the April 2003 conference in Washington DC found in the "Winning the Peace: Women's Role in Post-Conflict Iraq" Conference Report.

Excerpt from a Speech by Dr. Rajaa Habib Khuzai

*Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars
November 13, 2003*

[When I learned] I was to be nominated as a member of the Interim Governing Council, I said I would have to think about it. I went home and discussed it with my family and husband, who gave me his full encouragement and support. He said that after helping so many women give birth to Iraqi babies, it is time to help give birth to a new Iraqi society.

At the beginning, the voices of the three women were soft and quiet. As our confidence grew, our voices got stronger, though not loud enough to get onto the presidential committee. We had to prove ourselves as women and as members of the Governing Council. As the process for drafting the constitution was announced, I realized that our women's voices were weakening. We needed more women to make our voices heard. My vision of a new democratic Iraq was at risk. The baby's life was in danger.

Security was getting worse. We were personally threatened. I was informed of a plot against me. Our hands were tied behind our backs, while there were increased demands for us to take more control. We were being pressured to agree to decisions we were not happy with. The baby's heartbeat was weakening.

As a member of the Governing Council, I feel we are being put under unnecessary pressure. Democracy and democratic forms of government take time and careful thought. If mistakes are made at the beginning, the final solution will be flawed. I therefore strongly urge the U.S. Government to stop and think. Do not build on your first mistakes.



As you nominated the original Governing Council and failed to represent the full voice of women in Iraq (we are between 55 and 65 percent of the Iraqi nation), it is your responsibility to nominate more women now. Do not leave this to the men of the Council. Use the authority you have invested in yourselves to rectify this mistake. Use your own criteria to appoint competent Iraqi women with strong voices to join us in our efforts. We need a minimum of 10 women.

Do not hand over to us alone the responsibility to insist on the inclusion of women in the Constitutional Assembly. Use your authority. Use UN Security Council Resolution 1325 to insist on the inclusion of our voices at all levels. Let us—the Governing Council and the CPA—enter into a dialogue on securing and stabilizing Iraq to make it safer for troops and Iraqis from criminal and terrorist elements. We all have a stake in making Iraq safe.

Provide a framework of responsibility and accountability of the emerging government to the Governing Council. At present, there is only accountability to the CPA. This makes for ineffective governance. There is no accountability; there are no lines of responsibility.

I repeat: democracy, debate, and a constitution that involves the Iraqi nation takes time to grow. Even a baby takes nine months in its mother's womb.

Be our partners in this historic time. We are your allies, not your enemies.

To read the full text of Khuzai's speech, please visit www.womenwagingpeace.net.

“Translating Experiences From Abroad” Amman, Jordan December 7–14, 2003

The follow-up conference outlined in the World Bank's Gender Action Plan and in discussion throughout the November conference became reality in Amman, Jordan December 7–14, 2003. Women Waging Peace, the World Bank, UNIFEM (the UN Development Fund for Women), and Women for Women International, with funding from the National Endowment for Democracy, convened 25 Iraqi men and women to further explore the role of Iraqi women in Iraq's newly emerging democratic society. The purpose of the meeting was three-fold: share with Iraqi leaders experiences and lessons learned from other post-conflict countries; develop and strengthen their message management skills; and devise strategies to fully integrate women into all aspects of Iraq's reconstruction.

The meetings in Amman provided participants with opportunities to address their concerns regarding the status of women in Iraq's reconstruction and create strategies to move forward. **Monica McWilliams**, founding member of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition, lecturer at the University of Ulster, and former member of Northern Ireland Assembly, discussed the challenges faced by moderates in highly politicized environments and underscored the importance of continuing work in the face of significant setbacks. **Vjosa Dobruna**, former minister for democratization, good governance, and independent media with the United Nations mission in Kosovo, spoke about her experience as one of only three women appointed to the 20-member United Nations Joint Interim Administrative Structure in the region. **Luz Mendez**, president of the advisory council to the National Union of Guatemalan Women, discussed strategies she used to secure commitments for gender equity as the only woman among 30 negotiators in the Guatemalan peace talks.

Near the conclusion of the conference, the Iraqi participants came together with policy-shapers to share their concerns and recommendations for future reconstruction efforts in their country. **Queen Rania Al-Abdullah** of Jordan met with the group and commended them for the strength Iraqi women possess as heads of family, business owners, educators, and leaders throughout communities. A subsequent public meeting was attended by more than 25 representatives from the international community involved with Iraq's policy and development. **Edward W. (Skip) Gnehm**, U.S. Ambassador to Jordan, opened the event and emphasized the significance Iraq's democratization will have on the Middle East.



Shatha Hadi Mohammed Alobiadi and Raheeba Mhomad Lateef listen to simultaneous translation at the “Translating Experiences from Abroad” conference in Amman, Jordan, December 2003.

Senator Leila Sharif, a member of the Jordanian parliament, shared her views on the significance women play in democratic transitions, and on the need to ensure that Iraqi women are included.

Directly following the conference, **Ambassador Swanee Hunt**, founder and chair of Women Waging Peace; **Zainab Salbi** and **Manal Omar**, president and country director of Women for Women International, respectively; and several Iraqi participants held a series of meetings in Baghdad with **Ambassador L. Paul Bremer**, Administrator of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), additional CPA officials, representatives of governing bodies, and other interested groups to discuss the findings of the conference. Also in attendance were: the Iraqi Minister of Human Rights and representatives from the Women's Interest Group, the Iraqi Women's NGO Coordinating Council, the Baghdad Women's NGO Coordinating Council, the U.S. Agency for International Development, and the United Kingdom Department of International Development.

Excerpt from a Speech by Nesreen Berwari

*"Preparing for the Post-Post War
Reconstruction in Iraq: What Has Been
Accomplished and What Lies Ahead"*

February 26, 2004

Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars

What do I see at this point in time? First, Iraq will continue to need—to require—external assistance, guidance, support, and protection, certainly in the near term. The UN needs to play a more influential role in analyses and guidance to demonstrate what's best for the Iraqi people. This seems to have begun.

I believe the Iraqi transition assembly needs to be significantly expanded and that a steady executive body should be put in place.

Women, definitely and without question, should play a more influential role in all representative bodies. There is absolutely no shortage of qualified women in Iraq.

The law of administration—the interim constitution—should support bringing government closer to the people through decentralization, federalism, separation of powers, and enshrining UN conventions pertaining to universal rights.

What about the role of women in the future of Iraq? Let me expand more on this topic than on others. It is nearly one year since the historic moment on April 9th, 2003 that confirmed to Iraqis that we are no longer threatened by the extraordinary oppression of the former regime. Since then, during a short period punctuated by turmoil, concerned citizens have made substantial progress initiating and developing cohesiveness, and in organizing to better defend their rights and protect interests they deem vital to their future. This is particularly true of rights and interests pertaining to women.

As the development of a new, better Iraq moves forward through alarming obstacles, the role of women in our society is being increasingly threatened. For Iraq to move forward faster, it is essential for women to play stronger contributing roles. Women need to have oppor-

tunities to more actively participate in decision-making. In order for this to occur, an enabling environment to promote women participation needs to be enshrined within the fundamental law of administration.

As Iraq moves toward taking its rightful place among the family of nations we should do so on the basis of recognition, affirmation, and adherence to international human rights conventions as they pertain to women.

We are afraid for the future of Iraqi women. The substance of IGC Resolution 137, especially the highly questionable process by which it was passed, demonstrates how the democratic process can be so easily usurped to threaten a majority that democracy is intended to serve. Resolution 137, if enacted, would reverse many of the rights and privileges currently enjoyed by Iraqi women. In order for the fledgling democratic process to mature, women groups have organized that Resolution 137 be summarily retracted.

Unique, threatening circumstances are endemic in the current social-cultural makeup of Iraq. Though women comprise more than 50% of the population, in order to play significantly increased roles in decision-making, I firmly feel that no less than 40% representation at all levels of social, economic, and political decision-making need to be reserved for women.

More than eighty women's nongovernmental organizations have been organized and increasingly coordinated to protect the rights of women and promote their interests. Numerous group activities have been undertaken and more are being planned. Countrywide opposition to [Resolution] 137 and countrywide support for no less than 40% representation have been well and increasingly expressed. Recently, for example, sit-ins focusing on these two issues were successfully conducted all across the country.

There are only three women on the 25-member IGC. I am not completely informed but I have heard that only two members support the minimum 40%. Both are men. We have a very steep mountain to climb!

To read the full text of Berwari's speech, please visit http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=news.item&news_id=62480

"Leaders from Iraq Discuss What Comes Next" Washington DC March 12, 2004

During a March meeting co-sponsored by the Conflict Prevention Project and Middle East Program of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars and Women Waging Peace, a group of Iraqi representatives identified three prerequisites to the country's progress: security; assistance; and good timing.

The delegation, visiting the U.S. to participate in the 48th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) at the United Nations and to consult with senior officials in Washington DC, included: **Rajaa Habib Khuzai**, member of the Iraqi Governing Council; **Wisal Said** and **Eman Alwan**, Counselor and Second Secretary Ministry of Foreign Affairs, respectively; **Amal Ma'malchi**, nominee for Deputy Minister of Higher Education; **Ala Talabani**, co-founder of the Iraqi Women's Higher Council; **Zainab Al-Suwaij**, co-founder and executive director of the American Islamic Congress, and several other leaders from non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

Approximately one year after the initial U.S. presence in Iraq, immense progress had been made toward creating a more peaceful and democratic Iraq. Yet, opposition to the interim constitution, chronic insecurity, and uncertainty about the then upcoming transfer of power July 1, 2004 threatened to impede the process toward democratic governance in Iraq.⁵¹ Agreeing that the following three and half months would be crucial in determining Iraq's future, the delegates voiced the following concerns:

Without security, progress will be impossible in Iraq. The delegates noted that Iraqi women, who are highly educated and skilled professionals, have been less

involved in politics, and need specific training to mobilize and put forth qualified women candidates for the upcoming elections. While most Iraqis are committed to the concept of democracy, few understand the related need for comprising and building consensus. Participants highlighted that free speech, respect for different religions and ethnicities, promotion of tolerance, and support for women's rights must not be considered American or Western impositions. Rather, they could be the basis for a better Iraq. The delegates suggested that additional education to advance understanding of these concepts would help encourage their acceptance.

Advocacy efforts by women's groups are instrumental in achieving political representation, Khuzai said. While they lobbied for a mandatory 40 percent quota for women in the legislature, women's groups convinced the Iraqi Governing Council



Rajaa Habib Khuzai (right) and Zainab Al-Suwaij discuss Iraq's future at the Woodrow Wilson Center during the March 12, 2004 meeting, "Leaders from Iraq Discuss What Comes Next."

to include in the interim constitution the goal that a minimum of 25 percent of all seats go to women. Furthermore, the draft includes an explicit provision stating that all Iraqis are equal in their rights regardless of gender. Nonetheless, Khuzai noted that it remains unclear how the 25 percent target will be achieved or whether the provision will be maintained after power is transferred to an undetermined entity. Ambiguities within the interim document, such as wording suggesting the 25 percent be a “target” rather than a quota, and questions regarding the role of Sharia law were identified as potential impediments.

Al-Suwaij said, “The concern now is how to fill the seats with eligible and capable women... We need training and the upcoming year is critical and will lay the foundation... Women’s participation in politics is new, which is compounded by the fact that most women are not involved in political parties.”

While pledges for assistance to Iraq total more than \$20 billion, the challenge is channeling that assistance quickly and correctly, delegates said. Four days prior to the March meeting, in conjunction with International Women’s Day, Secretary of State Colin Powell announced two initiatives of the U.S. Department of State to support women’s participation in Iraq, including a \$10 million Iraqi Women’s Democracy Initiative.⁴⁵ Delegates commended this action, but feared that, like in Afghanistan, assistance may only reach the most secure and accessible areas. They wanted to ensure organizations working in both cities and rural areas would be funded. The women noted that rebuilding political and economic systems, as well as enabling conditions for security, well-being, and justice will require expensive and long-lasting commitments.

44. The U.S. returned sovereignty to Iraq June 28, 2004.

45. Office of the Senior Coordinator for International Women’s Issues.

46. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

47. “US-Appointed Council Abolishes Rights of Iraqi Women,” MADRE, January 30, 2004. http://www.madre.org/art_iraq_resolution137.html

48. Interview with Judge Zakia Hakki, Washington DC, February 2004.

49. Berwari, Nesreen, Minister of Municipalities and Public Works of Iraq, Director’s Forum, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington DC, February 26, 2004. <http://wwics.si.edu/events/docs/berwarisp.doc>

50. Interview with unidentified member of Iraqi Governing Council, Amman, Jordan, December 2003.

51. Telephone interview with Lesley Abdela, Director of Shevolution, March 2004.

52. Hamid, Toma. “The Governing Council Abolishes its Own Resolution 137,” February 28, 2004. <http://www.wiraq.org/English/2004/toma010304.htm>

53. “Women in Iraq: New Beginnings briefing” with Charlotte Ponticelli, Senior Coordinator for International Women’s Issues, Bureau of Global Affairs, U.S. Department of State; Iraqi Women from the Governing Council and Other Organizations, Foreign Press Center Briefing, Washington, DC, March 11, 2004. <http://www.state.gov/p/nea/rls/rm/30358.htm>

“Building a New Iraq: Women’s Role in the Political Process” Beirut, Lebanon July 11–13, 2004

To prepare Iraq women and promote their direct involvement in the forthcoming elections in January 2005 and beyond, the workshop “*Building A New Iraq: Women’s Role in the Political Process*” was undertaken at the United Nations Women’s Centre at the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) in Beirut, Lebanon July 11–13, 2004. Organized by the Woodrow Wilson Center, with funding from the U.S. Institute of Peace, the workshop focused on how to increase women’s political participation in Iraq; identify programmatic gaps; discuss strategies for fostering women’s empowerment; develop a plan for coordination and cooperation; and learn conflict resolution skills. The workshop brought together 28 Iraqi women with international experts including **Armen Balian**, Lebanon Conflict

Resolution Network; **Haleh Esfandiari**, Director, Middle East Program, Woodrow Wilson Center; **Afaf Marei**, Alliance for Arab Women (AAW); **Fatima Sbaity-Kassem**, Director, Women’s Centre, ESCWA; **Anita Sharma**, Director, Conflict Prevention Project, Woodrow Wilson Center; and **Sherrill Whittington**, former head of the Gender Affairs Unit, United Nations Peacekeeping Mission in East Timor (UNTAET).

The first part of the workshop focused on political training. The goal of the workshop was to increase the participants’ ability to successfully engage in the electoral process. Participants defined major concepts such as political participation, civil society and communication, drawing on international standards such as the Beijing *Platform for Action*, United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Sessions included discussions on strategies to increase women’s political

participation and the roles and responsibilities of women leaders, and how to improve skills such as team building, message identification and management, communication and presentation, and dialogue facilitation. Participants learned how to develop an effective six-month communication plan. Legal aspects of election campaigns, campaign management, publicity tools, development of an election agenda and women’s rights were also addressed, in conjunction with analyses of how a successful candidate might establish a campaign headquarters.



Sawsan Al-Barrak at the Fatima al Zahra Women’s Association in Hillah, collecting signatures in early 2004 for a petition regarding a quota for women in the elections. The petition was launched nationally at a conference in Basra; Hillah women collected more than 11,000 names toward the national petition.

In her remarks, ESCWA Deputy Executive Secretary **Mariam Al-Awadhi** stressed that information equals strength and the Iraqi women must realize their potential to change the country. She told the Iraqi participants they must first understand their role and “then need to examine the obstacles and identify strategies to overcome them.”

The Iraq Transitional Administrative Law (TAL) states that women should hold 25 percent of the political positions in the Iraqi government. Workshop participants debated mechanisms for ensuring that the 25 percent target is realized and discussed how women could work to ensure that the 25 percent target is included in parties' electoral platforms and reflected in the composition of parties. They remarked that women's associations are relatively new and need to know how to establish a coordination mechanism. “There are some women already involved in the more progressive parties,” said **Massoon Al-Damluji**, deputy minister of culture and chair of the Iraqi Independent Women's Group. “We also need to develop a better media strategy so that women understand their rights and how they can participate.”

Continuing violence and increasing Islamic extremism were identified as key issues during the workshop. The notion of “post-conflict reconstruction” in Iraq perplexed some participants. “We are in a phase of political construction, not reconstruction, and Iraq is very much still in conflict,” said **Hanaa Edwar**, secretary of the Iraqi Al-Amal Association. “What we really need now is to continue to push the issues with the parties, with the government, and with the people,” Edwar said. “What would be good is a conference to empower women and prepare them for the next stage by focusing on 1) women's leadership, 2) security, 3) social awareness, and 4) elections.”

The workshop also focused on the need to examine psychological aspects of conflict and how to achieve resolution where internal and external conflicts co-exist. Many of the participants stated that creating a culture of peace to overcome conflict will be crucial. In Iraq, conflicts exist in and amongst individuals, NGO's and party stakeholders as each possesses tribal, cultural, and religious associations. Participants suggested that the workshop be replicated inside Iraq or hosted in a nearby country to benefit a greater number of Iraqi women. They felt very strongly that there was a dire need for further training and follow-up regarding elections in a challenging security environment.

A breakout session entitled “Women And The Iraqi Elections: Working with the United Nations” provided an opportunity to learn more about international mechanisms that assist women in peace building efforts. Whittington offered experiences from assisting East Timorese women. In East Timor, she explained, the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), in conjunction with the United Nations (UN) Gender Unit, formed a gender equity working group and took concrete actions to ensure that women participated fully in the political process - not only as candidates and voters, but also as electoral administrators. The IEC informed women about voter education and training; helped to develop gender-sensitive materials; created texts to empower

women; and conducted a nation-wide program of civic education. Leading up to the first free election August 31, 2001, significant gains were made as a result of women's activism and affirmative action measures introduced by the UN Peacekeeping Mission in East Timor (UNTAET). The outcome of the elections produced a remarkable 27% return of women to the Constituent Assembly, one of the highest in the Asia-Pacific region and globally.

While the UN has assisted with the creation of the electoral system in Iraq, it is unclear how much oversight it will have. Still, Whittington encouraged support for women's full and equal political participation through the development of partnerships with the UN and other international entities, Iraqi women's civil society organizations, and Iraqi political parties.

Iraqi Participants' Biographies

Ansam T. Abayachi, Director, NGO Center, Ministry of Planning and Development ▲

Lina Abood was a candidate for Iraq's Governing Council. She is one of the founders of Awakening Iraqi Women, a post-Saddam civil society organization promoting the role of women in Iraq. She is a member of the Iraqi Women's League and was on the steering committee for "Voices of the Women of Iraq," the first Iraqi women's conference to take place in Baghdad following the fall of the Hussein regime. Dr. Abood is also a member of the Head Committee of the International Peace and Solidarity and Friendship Between People in the World Council. A general practitioner of gynecology and obstetrics, she has collaborated with a number of non-governmental organizations to help women and children and is now working closely with national and coalition forces. ●

Isam Abdullatif, Assistant to Minister, Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour ▲

Besma Esam Ahmed is an adviser to the Coalition Provisional Authority on human rights and transitional justice issues; she seeks to establish a Human Rights Ministry. She is also responsible for registering and coordinating non-governmental organizations within Iraq. As a Program Director with Women for Women International, Ms. Ahmed promotes the active participation of civil society in the reconstruction of Iraq. Prior to this work, she was a manager within the Sheraton Management Corporation. ●

Fawzia Abdul Al-Attia is professor of sociology at the University of Baghdad. She is the deputy head of the department of social and research studies at the Institute of Research and Studies, Arab UNESCO-Baghdad. She has published three textbooks on social issues and holds a doctorate degree from the University of Montpellier, France. ■ ▲

Kareema Muhsin Al-Assadi, Program Assistant, World Food Programme ▲

Sawsan Al-Barrak co-founded the Fatima Al-Zahra Women's Center, one of the first such organizations in post-Ba'ath Iraq. Ms. Al-Barrak is one of seven women elected to the Center's Advisory Board, which already offers Internet access, classes in computers and handicrafts, lectures, and conferences. The Center generates funds for free legal advice, aid to battered women, and classes on political participation, civil affairs, and English. Ms. Al-Barrak also participated in a recent conference in Babylon. She graduated from the University of Technology in Baghdad with a degree in chemical engineering. Her brother, Mr. Ahmed Al-Barrak, is a member of the Iraqi Governing Council. ●

- ▼ **Winning the Peace**
April 2003
Washington, DC
- **Building a New Iraq**
November 2003
Washington, DC
- **Translating Experiences from Abroad**
December 2003
Amman, Jordan
- ▲ **Building a New Iraq**
July 2004
Beirut, Lebanon

Nassreen Haydir Qader Al-Bayatti is a member of the Baghdad City Advisory Council representing the Rashid District. Dr. Qader is the Chief of Laboratories for a local health clinic in Baghdad and holds a master's degree in microbiology from Baghdad University, with a speciality in virology. She joined the Citizen's Advisory Council to serve the community and to help establish democracy in Iraq. She is very active in the Council's committees, serving on the Women and Children, Economy and Development, Public Relations, and Health and Environment committees. One of her priorities is expanding the infant vaccination program she has fostered in conjunction with the Coalition Provisional Authority. ●

Asmaa Yousif Al-Chardechi is a founder of the Association of Christian Families and head of the Committee of Daughters of Mary. In addition, she is a member of the Assyrian Women's Union and an activist in the women's rights movement in Iraq. She is trained as an electrical engineer. ●

Maysoon Al-Damluji, Deputy Minister of Culture; Chair, Iraqi Independent Women's Group ▲

Faezah Abadi Zain Al-Ebadi is a gynecologist at a hospital in Hillah. Also, she is the head of the department and an administrator on the hospital's board. Dr. Al-Ebadi is a board member of the Fatima Al-Zahra Women's Center, which boasts an Internet café, classes in computers and handicrafts, and timely lectures and conferences. Through these, the Center generates funds to support free legal advice, aid battered women, and offer no-charge instruction in English, political participation, and civil affairs. By training women to participate in Iraq's governing structures, Ms. Al-Ebadi promotes women's involvement in all social, medical, and educational spheres of the reconstruction. ■

Ahmed Slaman Taha Al-Gaylani graduated from the University of Baghdad with a degree in Arabic and English. He is currently completing a degree in Spanish and he is active in human rights issues. He is a member of the Justice and Reform Organization, based in Baghdad, funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development. ■

Amal Kastif Al-Ghatta, Foundation Amgwad for Orphans, Islamic Foundation for Woman and Child ▲

Saja Abdul Hussain Abdullah Al-Hariri is a trainer and member of the New Horizons Women's Business Association. She is a veterinarian and also director manager of Al-Shamas Al-Mushriqa, an Iraqi based company that supplies medical equipment to hospitals and veterinary clinics. ■

Amina Al-Jabouri graduated from London University with a law degree and has, since then, actively advocated for women's and children's rights through-

out the Gulf region. As an advisor to the local government in Kirkuk, she conducted outreach programs in rural areas and a needs assessment in Kurdistan. Since May 2003 Ms. Al Jabouri has supported the development of Iraqi civil society through capacity training for women's groups. She is an advisor to Ms. Songul Chapook, member of the Iraqi Governing Council. ●

Haifa Al-Kadi, Manager, Alalawiyah Art Centre ▲

Wafaa Al-Khaldy, Teacher, Organization of Human Rights ▲

Rakiah Al-Kayssi is a research analyst in the Department of Studies and Research at the Iraqi Jurists Association. She is also a member and coordinator of the proposed truth and reconciliation committee in Iraq and specializes in Ba'athist ideology, roots, and methods. Dr. Al-Kayssi holds a BA in English and Arabic literature from Al Mustansirriyah University in Baghdad and a PhD in politics from Glasgow University in the United Kingdom. Dr. Al-Kayssi is originally from Baghdad; she currently resides in London. ▼

Zainab Abdul Raheem Al-Maliky is a translator for the Coalition Provisional Authority. Formerly, she worked with foreign companies that functioned under the Oil for Food program. She holds a degree in English and served as a lecturer at the University of Baghdad. Also, she earned a technical degree from the civil department at the Institute of Technology. As a member of the Iraqi Center for Humanitarian Activities, Iraqi Business Center, and Al-Diya's Charitable Society for New Iraq Children, she is deeply involved in her community. ■

Zanna M. A. Al Rawanduzi, Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works ▲

Azhar Ali Al-Saboonchi is a lecturer of Marine Biology at Basra University. She has a strong interest in environmental issues, especially pollution and sewage management. In addition, she is particularly dedicated to protection and reintegration issues relating to women; one of her major projects includes the repatriation of Marsh Arab families. She is a founding member and project coordinator for the Iraqi Women's Charitable Association in Basra. Also, she is a member of a human rights organization and Engineers without Frontiers. ■

Balsam Al-Shahiri, Reporting Officer, Research Triangle Institute (RTI) /Democracy Dialogue Activity ▲

Zainab Al-Suwajj is the co-founder and executive director of the American Islamic Congress, a post-September 11th social activist organization based in Cambridge, Massachusetts, that works to foster tolerance, promote civil society and civil rights, and mobilize a moderate voice in the American Muslim com-

munity. After fleeing Iraq following the 1991 uprising against Saddam Hussein, she worked as a refugee case manager for Interfaith Refugee Ministry. She is originally from Basra and lives in Massachusetts. ▼ ▲

Kholod Al-Ubaydi, Executive Director, Ministry of Planning ▲

Ahmed Hashim Mkhif Ali Al-Whili works with Al-Salam, a newly established grassroots youth rehabilitation organization. Based in Sadr City, considered one of the most dangerous and impoverished areas in Baghdad, Mr. Al-Whili is dedicated to training and empowering the next generation of Iraqi leaders. Through vocational training and counseling, he seeks to build awareness among youth about the importance of diversity, liberal civil society, and democracy. ■

Nidal Jawad Alwan Al-Yousif is an entrepreneur with her own general trading and contracts company based in Baghdad. She maintains many links to international business companies, including Request International Company, Cookler Company in Australia, and Khalid Abueed Company in Jordan. As a member and trainer for New Horizons Women's Association, she supervises the Iraqi Private Handicap Society and teaches Iraqi youth about business principles. ■

Avian Rahim Ali, Secretary, Tamouz Union for Social Development ▲

Shatha Hadi Mohammed Alobiadi is a member of the Baghdad City Council. She sits on the Women and Children, Economy and Development, and Public Relations committees. She is especially concerned about security and public sanitation issues. She previously worked at the Ishtarqi Bank and holds an associates degree from the Baghdad Administration Institute. Originally from Karkh Hayy Salhiya, she has participated in many conferences including the meeting held in Sulumaniyah. ■

Hannah Alasam is on the board of trustees of the Iraqi Women Foundation. She is founder and business development director of Doctorinternet Ltd, an international healthcare consultancy. Dr. Alasam is co-founder of two prominent medical schools in Baghdad: Al Mustansiryah and Bayn Alnahrain Medical Colleges. She is co-founder and chairman of Creative Women's Group whose aim is to provide Arabic women access to the latest technology and essential information to their lives and their family. Presently, she is compiling a needs assessment on women's health for Iraqi Women Foundation, which is linked to an overall health strategy for Iraq and part of a conference for women, by women, to promote health care awareness. ■

Amanj Amjad is a lawyer from northern Iraq. He has been instrumental in the development of Asuda, an organization in Sulumaniyah that runs a women's shel-

ter. He seeks to use the lessons learned in the North and develop a women's shelter in Baghdad. In addition, he is a lecturer for a new non-governmental organization that builds capacity in organizational management and proposal writing. ■

Nesreen Mustafa Sideek Berwari is the current Minister of Public Works for the Iraq Interim Government, one of 36 ministers. Previously, she was the Minister of Reconstruction and Development for the Kurdistan Regional Government in northern Iraq and a member of the economy and infrastructure working group, part of the U.S. Department of State's Future of Iraq Project. Following the 1991 war in Kuwait, she worked with the International Organization for Migration to assist in the repatriation of refugees; she also worked with the UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs to coordinate relief services with UN agencies and non-governmental organizations. She holds a BA in architectural engineering from the University of Baghdad and an MA in public policy and management from Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government. Ms. Sideek currently resides in northern Iraq. ▼

Songul Chapook was a member of the Iraqi Governing Council. She represented the Turkman population on the Council. By training, she is an engineer. Ms. Chapook is the founder of the Iraqi Women's Organization based in Kirkuk, which provides computer training, agricultural instruction, and literacy instruction to women. ● ■ ▲

Vanessa Denha has experience as both a print and broadcast journalist; she is currently a communications specialist and speechwriter for an elected official in Michigan. Ms. Denha also writes a monthly column in a Detroit-based magazine, *Women's HealthStyle*, and also writes for the newsletter of the Chaldean Iraqi Association of Michigan. She sits on the board of the Chaldean Chamber of Commerce and is a member of the Chaldean American Ladies of Charity and Chaldean Americans Reaching and Encouraging. Ms. Denha has been interviewed by such publications as the *Washington Post*, the *New Republic Magazine*, and the *Baltimore Sun Times*. With over ten years experience, she has won several awards for her work. Ms. Denha lives in Detroit, and her parents are originally from Iraq. ▼

Hanaa Edwar is Secretary for Al-Amal Association, a non-governmental organization dedicated to medical, social, cultural, education, and reconstruction projects that improve the social-economic conditions of Iraqi people. Ms. Edwar is co-founder of Arab Women's Court, which was formed in Beirut in 1996 with the aim of combating violence against women, and the Arab Non-Governmental Network for Development. She sits on the presidency council of Asuda, a non-governmental organization based in Sulumaniyah working to combat violence against women, and is a founder of Beit Khanzad, a shelter for women and children, based in Erbil. Recently, she was elected president of the Iraqi Council for Peace and Solidarity. ■ ▲

Basma Fakri is the co-director for Women's Alliance for a Free Iraq. She is an engineer group leader at Tetra Tech MPS in Missouri. She holds a BS in civil engineering from the University of Baghdad and an MS in engineering from Tennessee State University in Nashville. Ms. Fakri resides in Missouri and is originally from Iraq. ▼

Shirin Fattah, Chairperson, Kurdistan Women Union ▲

Tanya Gilly, a board member of the Kurdish Foundation and a member of the advocacy group Women for a Free Iraq, has been active in the Iraqi opposition movement for 12 years. She has organized and supervised various conferences and seminars on Kurdish and Iraqi issues and on the role of women in the Iraqi opposition. She recently traveled to northern Iraq to renew her ties with leaders in the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan; she previously served as special assistant to the organization's Washington representative for three years. Ms. Gilly holds a BA in political science from the University of Carleton in Ottawa, Canada. She is from Kirkuk; she now lives in Washington. ▼

Zakia Hakki is an attorney in northern Virginia and Vice President of the Iraqi-American Council. She currently serves as senior advisor to Iraq's Department of Justice. The first woman judge in Iraq, she served as an expert legal adviser in the government's Ministry of Agriculture. She is the founder of the Kurdish Women's Federation and was president of the group from 1958 until 1975. She was the only woman elected to the leadership of the Kurdistan Democratic Party during the general assembly meeting in 1970. As a result of her outspokenness on behalf of the Kurdish people, she was placed under probationary arrest for 20 years until her emigration to the United States in 1996. She has since participated in various working group sessions on Iraq at the U.S. Department of State. Hakki holds a Bachelor of Science degree in business administration from the International Labor Union in Switzerland and a doctor of law degree from the University of Baghdad. She now resides in northern Virginia. ▼

Paiman Halmat is currently President of the Kurdish Foundation in Washington, DC. She is trained as a teacher and has worked with elementary school children both in Iraq and in Washington. Ms. Halmat is originally from Sulumaniyah, Iraqi Kurdistan, and has lived in the Washington area for the past 24 years. ▼

Siham Hattab Hamdan is a member of the Baghdad City Advisory Council and former Vice Chairperson representing the Sadr City district. In her current position, Ms. Hamdan serves on the Legal Affairs and Human Rights, Public Relations, and Women and Children committees. Through public service, Ms. Hamdan seeks to promote justice and peaceful resolution of conflict between Iraqis. She obtained her master's degree at Mustansiriya University, where she

is currently a lecturer in English Literature. Among other projects, she is working to establish women's centers in Sadr City. ● ■

Mahmoud Hatem Hassan is the chairman of the Prisoner of War Affairs Committee within the Iraqi Prisoners of War Association in Diala. Through many rehabilitation projects, including honey production, carpentry education, Internet instruction, and sewing production, he works with 5000 former hostages. As a hostage for nine years during the Iraq-Iran war, he uses his personal experience to motivate and assist others individuals captured during wartime. ■

Shatha Naji Hussain, Vice President, Iraqi Organization for Supporting Families of Martyrs and Missing ▲

Pauline Jasim is executive secretary of the Assyrian-American National Federation and a research project specialist in the Department of Medicine at the University of Chicago. She is also a member of the Iraqi Forum for Democracy and has received various awards for her work; she was named Assyrian Woman of the Year. Ms. Jasim holds a BS in computer information systems from DeVry Institute of Technology in Chicago, where she currently resides. Ms. Jasim is originally from Baghdad. ▼

Nidhal Jerew Nas the first woman lawyer from the province of Najat. She seeks to become a judge, but has faced great resistance from several male and female lawyers in the province. She seeks to promote equal access of women to high-level legal positions. Over the past sixteen years, Ms. Jerew has advocated for the legal protection of women and children on issues related to divorce and inheritance. ●

Abeer Jumaa, Section Leader, Research Triangle Institute (RTI)/Democracy Dialogue Activity, Mosul ▲

Eman Khammas, Member, INTEL Occupation Watch Centre ▲

Riva Khoshaba is currently an associate with the law firm Foley and Lardner in Washington, DC. In that capacity, Ms. Khoshaba reviews international oil corporations' security, labor, and land provisions with an eye for potential conflicts with international human rights law. Ms. Khoshaba has worked with the Human Rights Chamber for Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo and with Physicians for Human rights in Bosnia. Ms. Khoshaba holds a BA in history and anthropology from the University of Chicago and a JD from Yale Law School. She is originally from Iraq and currently resides in northern Virginia. ▼

Rajaa Habib Dhaher Khuzai was a member of the Iraqi Governing Council and is a member of the Iraq National Assembly. She is also president of The National Council for Women. She holds degrees in obstetrics and gynecological health from

the University of London. For the past several years, she directed a hospital in the southern city of Diwaniah and taught at the local medical college. Dr. Khuzai is president of the Women's Organization in Diwaniah and founder of the Women's Health Center in Baghdad. She is the founder of Widow's Care Organization. She seeks to develop a women's health strategy for post-war Iraq, with particular attention to screening and early detection of cancer in women. ● ■ ▲

Raheeba Mhomad Lateef has worked on women's issues for over forty years as a representative of the Iraqi Women's League. After the war, she continued her career in women's rights and advocacy, promoting equality and advocating for women's political participation in governance structures in Iraq. Ms. Lateef has participated in numerous international and national conferences, and she has arranged many workshops and sessions to raise awareness about women's rights. ■

Layla Abdul Latif, Minister of Labor and Social Affairs ▲

Khanum Rahim Latif is program manager of Asuda, an organization in Sulumaniyah that combats violence against women. In addition to running a shelter for women, she is responsible for the awareness and research program at Asuda. She has created a network of women in the Kurdistan region and was an organizer for a conference in Sulumaniyah on women's political participation. ■ ▲

Hind Makiya is co-founder and director of both the Baghdad Women's Foundation and the Iraqi Women's Foundation, a United Kingdom-based non-governmental organization supporting the empowerment and participation of women in a new democratic Iraq. She has held a distinguished career in the field of education and is one of only five women appointed to the Iraqi Reconstruction and Development Council, which is composed of more than 200 advisers. From March to August 2003, Ms. Makiya worked with the Ministry of Education in Iraq, Baghdad's Interim City Advisory Council, Women's Committee, and a team of senior U.S. advisers to plan a national strategy for Iraq's post-conflict education system. In addition, she worked with the late Dr. Aqilah Al Hashimi to draft "National Strategy for Reconstruction: Women of Iraq." ● ■

Jawhara Mansour is a researcher and consultant for JNP Enterprises in Toronto and is writing two books on agricultural economics and financial management. Dr. Mansour conducted research at the Moscow Agricultural Academy and at Aden University in Yemen, as well as participated in various workshops and committees on women's and children's rights. She holds a BS in Administration of Farms from Baghdad University and an MS and PhD in Agricultural Economics from the Moscow Agricultural Academy. Dr. Mansour currently resides in Toronto and is originally from Iraq. ▼

Katrin Michael is currently employed at the Washington Kurdish Institute, a nonprofit research and educational organization working for Kurdish people worldwide. A member of the Iraqi opposition in the U.S., Dr. Michael has worked to increase women's presence in domestic and international resistance movements. She has also helped to develop relevant international human rights and humanitarian standards and advocated for support of civil society. More recently, Dr. Michael has met with President George W. Bush and his staff to discuss the chemical and biological attacks on northern Iraq and request that the U.S. assist in democracy building in Iraq. Her publications include *From Violence to Non-Violence*, an autobiographical account of twenty years in exile. Dr. Michael currently resides in Washington and is originally from northern Iraq. ▼

Nadia Mirza, who has long worked in the Assyrian community in the United States, is the co-founder of the Assyrian Community for Civic Responsibility in Illinois. Her work has focused on youth, but she has also been active in community organizing around civic rights and responsibilities. Ms. Mirza holds a degree in history from Loyola University; she currently resides in Chicago and is originally from Iraq. ▼●

Faten Mohammad is sponsorship coordinator for Women for Women International. Through a tiered program that begins with direct financial and emotional support, Women for Women International fosters awareness and understanding of women's rights, offers vocational and business skills training, and provides access to income-generation support and micro credit loans. ■

Fatima Abdulla Jasim Mohammad is a lecturer of Economics and Administration at Basra University. She is a founding member and advocate of the Iraqi Women's Charitable Association. Recently, she has begun working with the Iraqi Refugee Aid Council, a humanitarian organization in Basra. Currently, she is compiling data on the needs of women in Hayaniya, Basra and holds a PhD in accounting. ■

Yanar Mohammed, President, Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq ▲

Mohammed Nadeem was a counselor for Iraqi Governing Council Member Songul Chapook. He is President of the Justice and Reform Organization and innovator of the legal aid system. For the past 13 years, he has practiced law and he is qualified to represent in Iraqi courts. As a city administrator specialist, he is the former Legal Advisor to the Governor of Kirkuk but is originally from Baghdad. ■

Esra Naama is a communications manager at CH2M Hill/Parsons, a corporate partnership that provides public works and water sector program management assistance in Iraq, where she works with Women's Initiatives. In early 2004,

she served as assistant to Minister Nesreen Bewari, Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works, in Baghdad. Ms. Naama previously lived in California where she worked with the Bank of America and received a bachelor of science in Business Administration and Marketing from National University in San Diego. She is a member of Women for a Free Iraq. ▼

Sabria Mahidi Naama is a member of Women for a Free Iraq. ▼

Kulood Ali Naser is secretary of the Women's Association in Al Kut, where she promotes education and computer training. She graduated from the University of Al Kut with a degree in English. With a strong focus on education, Ms. Naser advocates for women's empowerment and equality. Recently, she attended the four-day women's conference in Hillah. In a conference exercise, she was elected by the participants as the Minister of Women for the South Central Region. ●

Lina Omar was Special Assistant for Public Diplomacy and Congressional Affairs for the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), but currently works in the Iraqi Interest Section in Washington, DC. She is an active member of Women for a Free Iraq. Ms. Omar graduated from the University of Salahaddin's College of Education in Erbil with a degree in biology and taught at the University of Sulaimany, College of Science. Ms. Omar received a Teaching License in biology from the Commonwealth of Virginia's Department of Education and she is currently pursuing her Master of Science in Management Information Systems at Strayer University. ●

Salwa Ali Oumashi was an assistant program development officer with the Office of Transition Initiatives of the United States Agency for International Development in Iraq. Working in five provinces in south central Iraq, she sought to revive and strengthen civil society by promoting human rights and establishing women's centers. She participated in numerous conferences on the reconstruction of Iraq, including one on constitutional law (held in Bahrain), women's rights in Hillah, and women in politics (held in Sulumaniyah). Ms. Oumashi earned a degree in English Literature and formerly worked in the business sector. (Deceased March 9, 2004) ●

Bushra Perto, the former general secretary of the Iraqi Community Association in the United Kingdom, has long been part of the Iraqi opposition movement. She was a member of the Iraqi Opposition Congress held in London in December 2002. She was the administrative secretary of the Iraqi Peace Council in the 1970s and was an active member of the Iraqi Women's League in the 1950s and 1960s. Ms. Perto holds a degree in chemical science from Geneva University. Originally from Basra, she currently resides in London. ▼

Tamara Sarafa Quinn is a fuel buyer and administrator for the Tennessee Valley Authority, where she negotiates, administers and arranges logistics for large coal contracts; she is the current co-director of Women's Alliance for a Democratic Iraq, formerly known as Women for a Free Iraq. She holds degrees in accounting and mathematics from Murray State University and the University of Evansville and is currently working toward an MBA. Ms. Quinn is originally from Iraq and now lives in Chattanooga, Tennessee. ▼

Hameedah A. Raheem is an agricultural engineer and director manager of Al-Manahil, a farming and veterinary equipment supply company, which specializes in designing and building farms and irrigation systems, in addition to implementing agriculture projects. She is a member and trainer for New Horizons Women's Business Association. ■

Nazaneen Rashid is a founding member of Kurdish Women Action Against Honour Killing and has been active on humanitarian issues and women's rights for years. Most recently, she served as the Volunteer Programme Director of the Kurdish Disaster Fund in London. In that capacity, she set up women's projects in Iraqi Kurdistan on such issues as shelter, literacy, health and computer training. Previously, she was the volunteer chair of Action for Refugee Women in London where she worked to raise the awareness of policy-makers and service providers on issues relating to refugee women and advocated for gender-sensitive policies and programs. She holds a BA in History from the University of Baghdad and was nominated in 1996 for the Robert F. Kennedy Prize in Human Rights; she is a frequent participant in international women's conferences. Ms. Rashid currently resides in London and is originally from the city of Kirkuk. ▼

Raz Rasool is a senior electrical inspector at Cable Communications and Consumer Protection in Centerville, Virginia. Ms. Rasool holds a degree in electrical engineering from Salahadin University in Iraq and has worked with the Mines Advisory Group and Kurdistan Reconstruction and Development Society, both non-governmental organizations in northern Iraq. She is a member of the Iraqi National Congress. She currently lives in northern Virginia and is originally from northern Iraq. ▼ ●

Amal Rassam is currently a professor of anthropology at the City University of New York and conducts field research on the status of women in Arab society and on ethnic groups and minorities in the Middle East. Her most recent publication is *Peoples and Cultures of the Middle East*. Dr. Rassam holds a BA from the American University of Beirut and a PhD from the University of Michigan. She currently resides in New York City and is originally from Iraq. ▼

Jinan Abdul Rida is a member of the Human Rights Association and Women's Association in Karbala in south central Iraq. She has attended numerous conferences, including one in Hillah, pertaining to women's rights, democracy, and civil society. She advocates that women should be fully included in constitution drafting and other activities in the transition to democracy in Iraq. Ms. Rida graduated from the College of Arts in Baghdad with a bachelor's degree in education and geography. ●

Jennifer Ridha is currently an attorney with Gibson Dunn & Crutcher LLP in New York. She has long been active on human rights and women's issues in the region, working for Amnesty International in Washington and for Amideast in Morocco. Ms. Ridha holds a BA in Political Science from Ohio University and a JD from Columbia University School of Law. Through the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee in New York, she continues to be a leader in the Iraqi-American community and has served as a commentator on the current conflict in a variety of local and national media outlets. Born to Iraqi parents, Ms. Ridha currently resides in New York, while her extended family remains in Baghdad. ▼

Dhuha Sabah Rouhi, President, Association of Women Entrepreneurs ▲

Zainab Salbi is founder and President of Women for Women International, a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting women survivors of armed conflict and social and political upheaval. She has written and spoken extensively on the role of women in war and post-conflict situations; she has been nominated for several human rights awards and was recognized for her work by former President Bill Clinton in a ceremony at the White House. Ms. Salbi's publications include "Strategic Planning and Institutional Development" in a civil society empowerment article series and "The Role of Microcredit in Poverty Alleviation in a Post-Conflict/Transitional Society: Bosnian Villages as a Case Study." Ms. Salbi holds a bachelor's degree in women's studies from George Mason University and a master's degree from the London School of Economics and Political Science. Originally from Iraq, she now lives in Washington, DC. ▼

Neeran Saraf is currently President and CEO of SARAF Software Solutions in Falls Church, Virginia, and has more than 20 years of technical and business experience in the information technology industry. She holds a BS in computer science from the Imperial College at the University of London and an MS in computer science from George Mason University in Virginia. Originally from Baghdad, Ms. Saraf now lives in the Washington area. ▼

Kanar Sarraj is an engineer with the Fairfax County Department of Public Works and Environmental Services in northern Virginia. Previously, Ms. Sarraj worked with humanitarian organizations to assist and resettle Iraqi refugees and victims of violence of the regime. She holds a BS in electrical engineering from

Salahadin University in northern Iraq. Now living in Centerville, Virginia, she is originally from northern Iraq. ▼

Thekra Adel Tawfig Sarsam is the Vice-President of Contemporary Visual Arts Society. Her organization uses art as part of awareness campaigns, specifically poster campaigns on women's rights, and also trains women in arts and crafts. Within a coalition of women artists, Ms. Sarsam has created art workshops for children and currently developing an art skills training program. ■

Amal Shlash, Chairperson, Beit El Hekmah, Bab al Moadham ▲

Issam Shukri, Organization for the Defense of Secularism in Iraq Society ▲

Ala Talabani is the former vice president of the Kurdistan Women's Union and an advocate for Kurdish and women's rights. Under Hussein's government, Ms. Talabani was fired from engineering and teaching positions as a result of being Kurdish and for not being a member of the ruling Ba'ath Party. She has met with Prime Minister Tony Blair and President George W. Bush. She has contributed to a number of British and Arab newspaper and magazine articles on the state of Iraq and its Kurdish population. Ms. Talabani has organized and chaired a number of conferences on women's political participation in post-war Iraq. She co-founded Women for a Free Iraq in February 2003 and the Iraqi Women's High Council in October 2003. Ms. Talabani was nominated but not appointed as the Deputy to the Minister of Social Affairs. ● ■ ▲

Pascale Isho Warda is the current Minister of Displacement and Migration for the interim Iraqi government. She is president of the Assyrian Women's Union in Baghdad. Ms. Warda co-founded the Iraqi Society for Human Rights in Baghdad and served as the representative of the Assyrian Democratic Movement Foundation (ADM) in Paris—the highest position of any woman in the ADM, which is the primary Assyrian political party in Iraq. Additionally, she is the external affairs manager for the Assyrian Aid Society. Ms. Warda holds a DEA degree from the Human Rights Institute at the University of Lyon in France. ▼ ■

List of Resources

**American Bar Association—
Central European and
Eurasian Law Initiative
(ABA—CEELI)**

www.abanet.org/iraq/

Coalition Provisional Authority
www.cpa-iraq.org/

**Congressional Research
Service**

[http://www.wilsoncenter.org/
news/docs/crsrpt.pdf](http://www.wilsoncenter.org/news/docs/crsrpt.pdf)

**Creative Associates
International, Inc.**
www.caii.net/

Feminist Majority

[www.feminist.org/news/news-
byte/news_results.asp?us=1&glob-
al=1&Title=iraq&Body=&day=&
month=&year=&Submit2=Find+t
he+Article%21](http://www.feminist.org/news/news-byte/news_results.asp?us=1&global=1&Title=iraq&Body=&day=&month=&year=&Submit2=Find+the+Article%21)

**Foundation for Defense
for Democracies**

[www.defenddemocracy.org/
research_topics/research_topics_
list.htm?topic=7511](http://www.defenddemocracy.org/research_topics/research_topics_list.htm?topic=7511)

**International Foundation
for Election Systems**

[www.ifes.org/reg_activities/
iraq-reg-act.htm](http://www.ifes.org/reg_activities/iraq-reg-act.htm)

**International Republican
Institute (IRI)**

[www.iri.org/countries.asp?id=
7539148391](http://www.iri.org/countries.asp?id=7539148391)

Iraqi Forum for Democracy
www.iraqifd.org/

Iraq Foundation

www.iraqfoundation.org/

**Kurdish Human Rights Watch
(KHRW)**

www.khrw.com/

Liberation Act

[http://www.wilsoncenter.org/
news/docs/iraqwomact04.pdf](http://www.wilsoncenter.org/news/docs/iraqwomact04.pdf)

**National Council of Women's
Organizations (NCWO)**

[www.womensorganizations.org/
pages.cfm?ID=155](http://www.womensorganizations.org/pages.cfm?ID=155)

**National Democratic Institute
(NDI)**

www.ndi.org/

**National Endowment for
Democracy (NED)**

www.ned.org/

National Islamic Congress

www.aicongress.org/

PeaceWomen

[www.peacewomen.org/news/Iraq/
news.html](http://www.peacewomen.org/news/Iraq/news.html)

Shevolution

www.shevolution.com/

UNIFEM

Portal on Women, Peace and
Security
[www.womenwarpeace.org/
iraq/iraq.htm](http://www.womenwarpeace.org/iraq/iraq.htm)

United Nations

[www.un.org/apps/news/infocusRe
l.asp?infocusID=50&Body=Iraq&B
ody1=inspect](http://www.un.org/apps/news/infocusRel.asp?infocusID=50&Body=Iraq&Body1=inspect)

**United States Agency for
International Development**

www.usaid.gov/iraq/

United States

Department of State

Under Secretary for Global
Affairs; Office of International
Women's Issues
www.state.gov/g/wi/c8973.htm

**United States Institute of
Peace (USIP)**

www.usip.org/iraq/index.html

Vital Voices

www.vitalvoices.org/

**Women's Alliance for
Democratic Iraq (WAFDI)**

www.wafdi.org/home

Women for a Free Iraq

www.womenforiraq.org/

**Women for Women
International**

[www.womenforwomen.org/
owiraq.html](http://www.womenforwomen.org/owiraq.html)

Women Waging Peace

[www.womenwagingpeace.net/cont
ent/conflict_areas/iraq.asp](http://www.womenwagingpeace.net/content/conflict_areas/iraq.asp)

**Woodrow Wilson International
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Conflict Prevention Project
www.wilsoncenter.org

Middle East Program

www.wilsoncenter.org/middleeast

World Bank

Relief and Development in Iraq
[www.topics.developmentgateway.
org/iraq](http://www.topics.developmentgateway.org/iraq)

About the Sponsors

Conflict Prevention Project

The Conflict Prevention Project focuses high-level political attention on the need to practice prevention as policy. Using meetings, roundtables, studies, book launches, films, and regular discussions on a wide range of conflicts and causes of instability, the Project broadens understanding of how to use policy analysis and dialogue to promote conflict prevention. In building on the work of the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, the Project develops strategies for conflict prevention and demonstrates how high-level political attention can shift governments' impulses from reaction to prevention.

Among the ongoing efforts of the Project are series that explore: the role of women in promoting peace and stability; the ways in which foreign assistance can promote conflict prevention, mitigation and reconstruction; and how non-traditional threats such as economic and social disparities, demographics trends, vacuums in governance, environmental degradation and natural resources, and health crises can be destabilizing and have implications for international security.

Middle East Program

The Middle East Program was launched in February 1998 in light of the importance of the region to the United States and the profound changes the states in the region are experiencing. The Middle East Program focuses on long-term rather than day-to-day developments in the region.

The Middle East Program's meetings, conferences and reports assess the policy implications of regional developments (political, economic, and social), the Middle East's role in the international arena, American interests in the region, strategic threats to and from the regional states, and the role and future prospects of the region's energy resources.

The program's pays special attention to gender issues and democratization and civil society in the region.

Women Waging Peace

Women Waging Peace, a program of Hunt Alternatives Fund, is a multi-year initiative to shift the public policy paradigm so that women are fully included throughout formal and informal peace processes. More than 400 women comprise the "Waging" network of peacemakers from conflict areas around the world, ranging from Northern Ireland to Burundi, Colombia to the Philippines. Waging was launched in 1999 to connect these women to one another and to policy shapers worldwide.

Members of the Waging network, all demonstrated leaders, are elected and appointed government officials; directors of non-governmental organizations and movements in civil society; lawyers, scholars, and educators; business, military, and religious experts; representatives of multilateral organizations; and journalists. With varied backgrounds, perspectives, and skills, they bring a vast array of expertise to the peacemaking process.

Through case studies conducted by its Policy Commission, and strategic work with domestic and international policy shapers, Waging is successfully broadening the base of support for women's participation by raising awareness of the roles they play in promoting security.

Recent policy statements from the UN Security Council, the Group of Eight Leading Industrialized Nations, and other institutions call for the inclusion of women in all efforts to prevent, manage, and resolve conflict. Waging advocates for the implementation of these international commitments by brokering relationships among women peace builders and policy shapers, resulting in new solutions to long-standing conflicts at local, regional, and international levels. More than 3,000 senior public officials, media professionals, and academics have collaborated with Waging members to develop specific recommendations for building sustainable, inclusive peace.

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