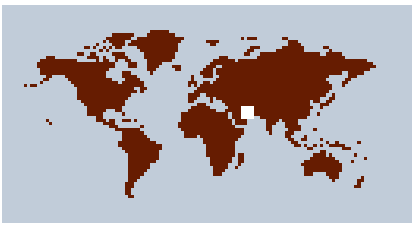




Gender Profile of the Conflict in *Iraq*



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Quick Facts:

Number of Dead: 1,705,293–3,553,419: **Iran-Iraq War (1980–1988):** 100,000–400,000 Iraqis, 400,000–900,000 Iranians; Kurds (1961-2000): 100,000–300,000; includes Anfal campaign (1987–1988): 50,000–200,000. **Gulf War (1990–1991):** 306–528 Coalition troops, 1,000–150,000 Iraqi soldiers, 1,000–3,500 Iraqi civilians, 2,000–10,000 Kuwaitis, 49,000–111,000 Iraqi civilians (postwar, of indirect causes such as disease and malnutrition). **Postwar Revolts (1991):** 5,000 Iraqi soldiers, 30,000–150,000 Shia and Kurds; International Embargo (1990-2003): 1,000,000–1,500,000 Iraqis, including 350,000–750,000 Iraqi children. **Bombing by US and UK (1998–2000):** 600–2,000 Iraqis. **2003 Overthrow of Saddam Hussein:** 805 Coalition troops, 8,875-10,725 Iraqi civilians, 11,000 Iraqi soldiers.

Number of Displaced: 4 million Iraqis live abroad; 900,000 IDPs in Iraq

Head of State: none

Administrator of the Coalition Provisional Authority: Ambassador L. Paul Bremer III

Women Ministers: Iraq: Nisrin Mustafa al-Barwari, Minister for Public Works. Seven of 28 Deputy Ministers (25%) are women: Dr Sawsan Ali Magid Al-Sharifi (Ministry of Agriculture), Maysoon Salem Al-Damluji (Ministry of Culture), Ms. Hamdia Ahmed Najif (Ministry of Displacement and Migration), Baraka Mahdi Salih Al-Jiboori (Ministry of Electricity), Manal Kamil Elyas Aziza (Ministry of Environment), Dr. Beriwan Abdul-Kareem Khailany (Ministry of Higher Education), and Mitha Al-Alami (Ministry of Transportation).

Women in Legislature: No legislature yet, however the interim constitution sets a target of 25% representation by women. On interim Iraqi Governing Council: Sondul Chapouk, Raja Habib al-Kuzaai, Salama al-Khafaji (to replace Aqila al-Hashimi)

Women in Judiciary: 5

Military Budget: No figure for post-Saddam Hussein Iraq. Latest figure available is \$1.3 billion (2000).

Peace Process: Security Council Resolutions 1483 and 1500



Introduction

Women have played important roles throughout Iraq's history. It was in the early years of secular Baathist socialism and early in Saddam Hussein's rule that women's status and rights were formally enshrined in legislation and treaties. In 1970, a new constitution nominally made Iraqi women and men equal under the law (although family law continued to favour men). Under Saddam Hussein, women's literacy and education improved, and restrictions on women outside the home were lifted. Women won the right to vote and to run for political office, and they could drive, work outside the home and hold jobs traditionally held by men. Before 1991, female literacy rates in Iraq were the highest in the region, Iraq had achieved nearly universal primary education for girls as well as boys, and Iraqi women were widely considered to be among the most educated and professional women in the Arab world.

However, the promotion of women's rights was in part due to necessity brought about by war. During the 1980s, Iraq was engaged in a devastating war with Iran, and many of the progressive reforms were instituted at that time because women were needed to maintain civil society while men were at war. Thus while Iraqi women were making gains in civil life, they were also suffering the effects of armed conflict on the wider society—politically, personally and economically. Thousands of men, women and children perished in the chemical bombardments, mass executions, mass expulsions and other indiscriminate methods of ethnic cleansing employed by Baghdad during the 1987-88 Anfal campaign against Iraqi Kurds. After Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990—when the Security Council placed Iraq under economic sanctions (through resolution 661)—and the 1991 Gulf War, the country's economy plummeted. Women were severely affected in all areas of their lives, including physical and psychological health, the burden of their domestic responsibilities, their economic status, and their marital life. At the same time, the government in Baghdad brutally cracked down on any signs of dissent to consolidate its hold on power, and women—whether because they had family members suspected of dissent or because they were oppositionists in their own right—were harassed, imprisoned, “disappeared”, tortured, beaten, raped and executed, or lost their husbands, sons and brothers to similar treatment. Hussein also attempted to maintain legitimacy after the Gulf War by appeasing religious fundamentalists and other conservatives, bringing in anti-woman legislation such as a 1990 presidential decree granting immunity to men who committed honour crimes. More than 4,000 women were victims of this law. In contrast, the semi-autonomy of Kurds in Iraq's three northern governorates (Iraqi Kurdistan) allowed women to take great political strides forward during the 1990s. In 2003, two of the 26 cabinet members in the Kurdistan Regional Government were women, and women occupied numerous posts among ministry staff.¹

With the ouster of Saddam Hussein, the Security Council reaffirmed, in the second paragraph of resolution 1483 (22 May 2003), its commitment to a “rule of law that affords equal rights and justice to all Iraqi citizens without regard to ethnicity, religion, or gender,” recalling its pledge to promote gender equality as outlined in Security Council resolution 1325. However, the 2003 war ushered in a period of instability and insecurity. Looters plundered major cities and unidentified assailants attacked coalition forces, water and oil infrastructure, and official targets. Iraqi women and girls became victims of abduction and rape, and the climate of fear that such crimes created in the society.²

In that environment, hopes that Iraq's recovery and reconstruction would create new opportunities for women and bring women to the peace table were only minimally realized. While US government officials did meet with women's groups to hear their demands for a postwar Iraq, little was practically done to address the needs of Iraqi women or include them in discussions of Iraq's political future. Few women participated in the April 2003 meetings at which delegates discussed the creation of an interim government. Only three women were nominated to the interim Iraqi Governing Council in July 2003: Sondul Chapouk, Raja Habib al-Kuzaai and Aqila al-



Hashimi. Women were not included in either the nine-member rotating presidential council or the committee working on constitutional reform. Aqila al-Hashimi was later murdered by unidentified assailants in front of her home. Many Iraqi women began to fear that the "representational" system of government, in which Shia clerics seemed increasingly likely to be given a large role, would in fact install a more conservative interpretation of women's rights than they had known during much of Saddam Hussein's rule.³ While the 14-sector UN needs assessments did address gender as a crosscutting issue through the use of a gender checklist and literature review, there was no opportunity for Iraqi women to meet separately and safely to discuss their roles and needs in the country's recovery and reconstruction process. A UNIFEM/UNDP-planned symposium that would have brought women together from across the country to consult on the National Strategy for the Advancement of Women was postponed due to the August 2003 truck-bombing of United Nations headquarters in Baghdad, which killed the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Sergio Vieira de Mello, and 21 others.

The Impact of the Conflict on Iraqi Women

I. AFTER MARCH 2003

Political and Security Impact

- From November 2002 through April 2003, the United States dropped hundreds of thousands of leaflets over Iraq, claiming that the information they contained would "protect Iraqi lives and deter Iraqi aggression by providing relevant, factual information to both Iraqi civilians and military troops." The leaflets used the threat of US military superiority to instill a fear of "destruction" in whoever read them, and used images of women and children to supplant any sense of duty to the nation or the government with one of responsibility to the family.⁴

"The attacks may destroy you or any location of Coalition choosing."
<http://www.centcom.mil/galleries/leaflets/images/020-20D.jpg>

"Coalition forces do not wish to harm the noble people of Iraq... avoid areas occupied by military personnel." <http://www.centcom.mil/galleries/leaflets/Images/izd-027.jpg>

"Nobody benefits from the use of weapons of mass destruction."
<http://www.centcom.mil/galleries/leaflets/images/izd-019a.jpg>

"Soldiers are laying down their weapons and leaving their posts to return to their families." <http://www.centcom.mil/galleries/leaflets/images/izd-029.jpg>

"We can see everything." <http://www.centcom.mil/galleries/leaflets/images/izd-038.jpg>

"Dumping oil poisons waterways, as well as your family's future."
<http://www.centcom.mil/galleries/leaflets/images/izd-046.jpg>

"Who needs you more? Your family or the regime? Return to your home and family."
<http://www.centcom.mil/galleries/leaflets/images/izd-050.jpg>

"The noble people of Iraq are not the target of Coalition Military Operations!"
<http://www.centcom.mil/galleries/leaflets/images/izd-060a.jpg>

"Assist downed Coalition pilots. Help them return to their families!"
<http://www.centcom.mil/galleries/leaflets/images/izd-1000.jpg>



"For your safety return to your homes and live in peace."

<http://www.centcom.mil/galleries/leaflets/images/izd-7509.jpg>

- Iraq Body Count found that between 7390 and 9193 civilians deaths and at least 20,000 civilian injuries resulting from US-led military action against Iraq had been reported between 1 January and 29 September 2003.⁵ Other surveys have found mounting evidence that the number of civilian fatalities in Iraq could be as high as 10,000.⁶
- Many Palestinian families were hosted in Iraq after 1948, and under Saddam Hussein's rule they were provided with free housing and other benefits. After the ouster of Saddam Hussein, with no means of support and unable to pay their rent, more than 350 Palestinian families were evicted from their homes. Many were unable to find affordable housing and had no other option than to live in the streets and in makeshift tent camps.⁷
- After the fall of Saddam Hussein's government, Iranian Ahwazi refugees in the camps of Duraila, Al-Kumeit, and Ali Gharbi (located between Basra and Baghdad) have, at the hands of the local population, suffered harassment, threats of eviction, looting of homes and property, theft of farmland, farm produce, and livestock, the destruction of their school, and by 16 May 2003 had had water and electricity suspended for more than two months.⁸
- Security Council resolution 1483 (22 May 2003) reaffirmed, in the second paragraph, its commitment to a "rule of law that affords equal rights and justice to all Iraqi citizens without regard to ethnicity, religion, or gender," recalling its pledge to promote gender equality as outlined in resolution 1325.
- Along with the general insecurity that has taken hold in Iraq since April 2003, at least 400 women and girls as young as eight years old were reported to have been raped during or after the war. Underreporting due to the stigma against victims of sexual violence likely means that the real figure is much higher. Insecurity, and especially the actual and the perceived dangers of sexual violence, have created a climate of fear that prevents women and girls from participating in public life—going to school, going to work, seeking medical treatment, or even leaving their homes. Iraqi women are thus prevented from fully participating in the crucial early phases of the country's postwar and post-dictatorship recovery and reconstruction.⁹
- By July 2003, the nascent Iraqi police force did not yet have the means or expertise to investigate crimes committed in the current insecure environment—the combined result of de-Baathification measures, which have removed all senior police officers from their posts, and of the destruction that occurred both during the war and in postwar looting. As well, the all-male Iraqi police force had not received training on the legal and procedural rights of women. Police officers often reacted with indifference or outright hostility to female victims of rape or sexual assault when they attempted to report the crimes, and often refused or were unable to investigate their cases.¹⁰
- Prior to the 2003 war, Iraqi women and girls were able to move about independently. Due to postwar insecurity, many were unable to leave their homes without a male family member to escort them, through their own or their families' reluctance. The stigmatization of victims of sexual violence was such that if a woman or girl required medical attention for this reason, informing a male family member so as to be escorted to the hospital could put her at risk of retaliatory violence from her family. However, except in the three northern governorates under semi-autonomous Kurdish rule, there were still no centers or shelters where victims of sexual violence could go for help by July 2003.¹¹



- 2003 surveys and available data indicate that Iraq is the most mine-affected country in the world. In the three northern governorates, 24 of 25 regions are mine-affected, and 1 in 5 people live in a mine-affected community. There are 30-40 new mine victims per month in the north, nearly 95 percent of them male. In south and central Iraq, urban and rural populations were placed at increased risk, after the 2003 war, from hundreds of munitions storage containers, Explosive Ordnance (EO), and fresh mines and cluster munitions used during the war. Casualty rates increased dramatically following the end of "major combat operations" because many Iraqis, and especially children, disturbed ammunition stockpiles. The risk of mine-related injury in the south was also highest for men and boys. Women thus take on an extra burden of care for male family members who have been injured by mines, as well as extra responsibility that had been the purview of men prior to their injuries. UN humanitarian operations could be impeded or even prohibited by the presence of EO, unexploded ordnance, and mines.¹²
- On 20 September 2003, Aqila al-Hashimi, one of the three women on Iraq's Governing Council and the only Council member to have served in the former government of Iraq, was fatally wounded by gunfire from unidentified assailants when leaving her home, dying from her injuries five days later.¹³
- In a postwar 2003 survey by Physicians for Human Rights, the most significant problems identified by respondents (over 16,000 people, male and female) were physical safety/security.¹⁴
- CPA officials said in November 2003 that there may be as many as 260 mass graves in Iraq—of which 40 had so far been confirmed—containing the bodies of at least 300,000 people. Some of the mass graves already examined contained the bodies of women and children with bullet holes in their heads. Others contained the bodies of disappeared men. Most of the remains that had been found by November were those of ethnic Kurds and Shia Muslims killed between 1983 and 1991.¹⁵
- According to Iraq's official news agency, two female suicide bombers (one of them pregnant) carried out an attack against coalition soldiers at a checkpoint near Baghdad on 3 April 2003.¹⁶
- In mid-May, an assessment of three Baghdad schools by Save the Children UK found that attendance was less than 50%. The survey attributed non-attendance by girls mainly to insecurity and fear of kidnapping. By the first week of June, attendance had increased to 75% as arrangements were made for girls to travel to school in groups or to have male family members escort them. However, fear of abductions remained widespread and many parents chose not to take chances with their daughters' safety.¹⁷
- According to a report by MedAct assessing the impact of the 2003 war on Iraqis, since the end of the war, a combination of increased unemployment and decreased social welfare has led to a rise in sex work and other dangerous occupations. The report notes that the lack of law and order has led to the creation of organized networks in human trafficking, and that the exploitation of children for sex or slavery is likely because more children live on the streets without the protection of family and community networks.¹⁸
- In January 2004, it was made public that at least 37 American women who served in the military in Iraq and Afghanistan have reported being sexually assaulted by fellow US soldiers.¹⁹
- In February 2004, Yanar Mohamed, a prominent women's rights activist and founder of the Organization for Women's Freedom in Iraq, received a death threat for campaigning to repeal the Governing Council's decision to place family law under religious rather than civil jurisdiction.²⁰ Mohamed received an e-mail threat after appearing on television to defend women's rights. The e-



mail read: "Stop speaking out for women's rights, or we will kill you," and was signed by the Army of Sahaba. As a result of the threat, Mohammed and her colleagues hid for a week, wearing bullet-proof vests and canceling all appearances.²¹

- Women's Rights activist Fern L. Holland, an American civilian working with the CPA to advance women's rights in Iraq, was killed in Iraq on 9 March 2004 when the car in which she was traveling was attacked by four gunmen dressed as Iraqi police officers. Two more civilians were killed in the same attack: an American man who had worked for the CPA and a female Iraqi interpreter. Ms. Holland's work in Iraq included investigating human-rights violations, opening women's centers around Iraq and working to ensure that women's rights were enshrined in the interim constitution.²² It has been suggested that she was targeted specifically because of her work on behalf of women's rights.²³
- Iraqi women working for American forces, for example as laundry women and translators, have been targeted, threatened and killed. In late January 2004, four Iraqi women who worked as cleaners and laundry women for the US Army were killed in a gun attack on the minibus in which they were traveling.²⁴ In late February, two sisters who worked at a US Army base in Baghdad were shot—and one of them killed—when returning home. In early March a translator for Voice of America was killed in Baghdad. And on 11 March, two sisters who did laundry work for US soldiers in Basra were shot to death: their taxi was surrounded by gunmen who ordered the driver out of the car and shot the women at point-blank range. On 10 March, a translator for a US news organization found a handwritten note under her front door that read: "Warning: Those who deal with the atheists and the infidels on the soil of the homeland deserve but death and destruction. Thus, we warn you to stay away from the infidels and the blasphemists, the followers of Satan, otherwise your killing shall be a mercy for Muslims. Those who heed the warning shall be excused." Such events renewed fears that Iraqi support staff, and particularly women, working for Americans were easy targets.²⁵
- Women and children were among the 140 people killed in coordinated bomb attacks in and around Karbala on 2 March 2004. Millions of Shiite pilgrims had traveled to Karbala to mark the Ashoura holy day for the first time in more than two decades. 75 people were killed in simultaneous suicide bombings of a Shiite Mosque near Baghdad.²⁶
- On 16 March 2004, two non-Iraqi women were killed and one was injured when the vehicle in which they were traveling was attacked with automatic weapons in Mosul. The women worked for the Southern Baptist International Mission Board, reportedly on water purification projects. The two male coworkers with whom they were traveling were also killed in the attack.²⁷
- In March 2004, activists noted that threats against women's rights groups in Iraq were increasing.²⁸ As of March 2004, more than 100 Iraqi women had been trained as police officers.²⁹
- More than 40 foreign nationals from 12 countries were reportedly abducted in Iraq, most of them civilians and at least one of them female. Some of the abductors threatened to kill their hostages unless their demands are met, and on 14 April, an Italian hostage was executed. However many of the other hostages were freed by their captors unharmed.³⁰ According to Iraqi Culture Minister Mufid Muhammad Jawad Al-Jaza'iri, several groups of hostage takers compete with one another over which of them can abduct the most foreigners.³¹
- In April 2004, US forces sealed off Falluja and launched a massive offensive against the city after four US contractors were killed and mutilated there on 31 March. The offensive included aerial bombardment by US forces and reported strikes by US aircraft against residential neighbourhoods.³² According to the director of Falluja's general hospital, Rafa al-Issawi, more than 600 people were killed and around 1,200 were injured in the fighting. A group of five



international NGOs placed the number of people killed in Falluja at 470, and said that 243 women and 200 children were among the 1,200 injured, but warned that these estimates might be too low. Tens of thousands of women and children fled the city for safety after a shaky ceasefire was reached on 11 April.³³ US troops reportedly announced over loudspeakers that women, children, and elderly could leave the city, but not “military age men,” although men have been reported among the thousands who have fled. US military officials said the majority of the Iraqis killed were fighters, but contradictory reports—including from al-Issawi—claim that many of the dead were women, children and elderly.³⁴ It has also been reported that many more Iraqis—perhaps tens of thousands—have been inspired by recent US behaviour to join the insurgency, including one woman interviewed by the BBC and her sister.³⁵

- 68 people were killed in Basra when suicide bombers staged coordinated attacks on three police stations. Among the dead were nine schoolgirls and eight kindergarteners who were incinerated nearly beyond recognition when the minibuses in which they were traveling were caught in the car-bomb blasts.³⁶ The girls, aged 14 and 15, were on their way to the Amjad intermediate school for girls. Only one girl who was about to board the bus survived the blast. Some 240 people were injured in the near-simultaneous attacks.³⁷
- Allegations emerged in April 2004 of sexual and other abuse by US soldiers of Iraqis held in Abu Ghreib prison, notorious for the abuses that were carried out there under Saddam Hussein.³⁸ Photographs of the alleged abuses³⁹ sparked outrage after they were aired around the world. An investigation by US Major General Antonio Taguba in January 2004 described “systematic and illegal abuse” of Iraqi detainees, which included “videotaping and photographing naked male and female detainees,” “a male MP [Military Police] guard having sex with a female detainee” and “forcing naked male detainees to wear women’s underwear”.⁴⁰
- US officials have acknowledged detaining Iraqi women in order to convince male relatives to provide information. It has been reported that many of the women detained by US forces are the wives or relatives of senior Baath Party officials or suspected militants, and that interrogators have threatened to kill detainees. Five former detainees told their lawyers they had been beaten while in custody. One said she had been raped and knifed by a US soldier.⁴¹ According to Professor Huda Shaker, several women detained in Abu Ghraib were sexually abused and one was raped, became pregnant, and later disappeared. In May 2004, the US Colonel in charge of the prison’s detention facilities said that the five women remaining there were kept in solitary confinement for 23 hours a day with only a Koran.⁴² A former detainee of Abu Ghraib also alleged that a 12- or 13-year-old girl was brought into the prison, stripped naked and beaten while her brother and other prisoners heard her screams from their cells.⁴³
- At least four US women have been implicated in the prisoner abuse scandal: Brigadier General Janis Karpinski, the former military police commander at Abu Ghreib, was suspended;⁴⁴ Lynndie England was demoted from the rank of specialist to private first class, detained and faces charges;⁴⁵ and criminal charges were filed against Spec. Megan M. Ambuhl and Spec. Sabrina D. Harman (among others).⁴⁶
- Similar photographs of abuse by British soldiers—and the allegation by some British soldiers that there were hundreds of such photographs and that soldiers routinely swapped them amongst themselves⁴⁷—led to an investigation by the UK Ministry of Defense into allegations of torture of Iraqis by British troops.⁴⁸ Other photographs, whose authenticity is in doubt, circulated on Arabic-language websites depicted two Iraqi women being raped at gunpoint by men described as wearing US Army uniforms.⁴⁹
- Tony Blair’s human rights envoy to Iraq said after the prisoner abuse scandal broke that for months she has been pursuing the case of an elderly Iraqi woman who alleged that she was



mistreated while in a Baghdad detention centre—including being made to kneel on the floor pretending to be a donkey while a man got on her back.⁵⁰

- A May 2004 report by Amnesty International raised questions about the shooting death of an eight-year-old girl by a British soldier in Karmat 'Ali on 21 August 2003. According to one eye witness, the girl was standing in an alley about 60 to 70 meters from an armoured vehicle when a soldier suddenly aimed and fired a shot that hit her in her lower torso.⁵¹

Political Participation

- With the fall of the Baathist government and its repressive one-party totalitarianism in April 2003, numerous political parties began to emerge. These parties, however, were run almost entirely by men—as was the Coalition Provisional Authority.

- Early reconstruction efforts led by the United States and Britain in 2003 failed to adequately include women either in leadership positions or as participants in the postwar reconstruction process. The US Office for Reconstruction and Humanitarian Affairs had only a part-time gender focal point. The 30-member Iraqi reconstruction group organized by the UK government included only five women.⁵²

- The legal team that was appointed by the coalition soon after the fall of Baathist Iraq in 2003 to remove Saddam Hussein's human and civil rights-violating amendments to Iraq's 1969 legal code was made up exclusively of male lawyers and judges.⁵³

- On 15 April 2003, Iraqi opposition groups met in Nasiriyah to discuss postwar self-rule. Of the approx. 120 delegates, only four were women and all of them were exiles. The meeting's delegates outlined 13 principles for forming a new Iraqi government and included among them building the country on respect for diversity, particularly respect for the role of women.⁵⁴

- On 28 April 2003, Jay Garner, the first US-appointed interim administrator of Iraq, met with 250 Iraqis representing various groups to discuss the creation of an interim government. Only six women attended the meeting, mainly as representatives of Iraqi exile working groups set up before the war by the US State Department's "Future of Iraq" programme. One representative, Zainab al-Suwaij, suggested including more women in the new leadership and giving more support to grassroots organizations. According to al-Suwaij, many delegates were receptive to her suggestions. US Deputy Richard Armitage acknowledged to the BBC that the participation of women in postwar reconstruction process had been inadequate.⁵⁵

- On 3 July 2003, hundreds of women demonstrated in Baghdad, demanding to be included in shaping the political future of the country.⁵⁶

- On 9 July 2003, the International Alliance for Justice initiated a conference in Baghdad to discuss the status of women in the constitution, in the legislation, in the democratic process, in education, in the health system, the economy and social and cultural affairs. More than 80 women from all parts of Iraq attended the conference. The main conference also brought together Iraqi women who had remained in Iraq under the dictatorship, women from the diaspora, and women from the three Kurdish governorates who, for over ten years, were able to promote the participation of women in the emerging civil society. Representatives of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) and several United Nations agencies also attended the conference discussions.⁵⁷

- Ms. Zakia Hakki, who was a lawyer and judge in Baghdad until 1996 and in 2003 became an advisor to the Ministry of Justice from the Iraqi Reconstruction Development Council, has written position papers outlining her vision for a new (decentralized) government in Iraq, and will



be involved in plans to organize the convention that will draft a constitution to be put before the Iraqi people in a referendum before elections. As of mid-2003, she was overseeing the selection of new judges in Iraq and the staffing of the Ministry of Justice, and was working to revitalize Iraqi courts and laws.⁵⁸

- Three women were included in the Iraqi Governing Council, chosen in July 2003 by the US administration in Iraq, none of them from the diaspora: Sondul Chapouk, an engineer, teacher, and women's activist; Raja Habib al-Kuzaai, a southern tribal leader who is in charge of a maternity hospital in southern Iraq; and Aqila al-Hashimi, a foreign affairs expert and former diplomat who worked in the foreign ministry under Saddam Hussein. Aqila al-Hashimi was murdered two months later. Although with 3 of 25 seats, women represented only 12 percent of the Governing Council, this was nonetheless an increase in women's political representation over what it had been in recent years under Saddam Hussein.⁵⁹

- As of July 2003, women's organizations in postwar Iraq were still receiving little support from the CPA or from Islamic organizations. Apart from indigenous support, they were only receiving aid from international NGOs.⁶⁰

- When the 25-person interim Iraqi cabinet was selected in August 2003, only one woman was nominated to a post: Nesreen Mustafa al-Barwari (a Kurd) was named Minister of Municipalities and Public Works. As the top Iraqi official in charge of water treatment, waste management, environmental sanitation and municipal facilities, she is one of the most important figures in the Iraqi civil administration. Ms. Al-Barwari, the youngest member of the cabinet, worked as an administrator with UNHCR in the Kurdish autonomous area as of 1991 and later became Minister of Reconstruction and Development in the Kurdistan Regional Government.⁶¹

- The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs was tasked with supporting women's rights.⁶² The Minister for Labour and Social Affairs, Mr. Sami Azara al-Majun, is head of the National Reform Movement and was formerly a member of the Iraqi National Congress (of which he was critical because of its lack of coordination with tribal leaders). He worked in the justice ministry in Saudi Arabia from 1971-1980.⁶³

- A Physicians for Human Rights survey in southern Iraq found that although the vast majority of respondents felt that women's human rights were important to the health and development of the community, men indicated less support than women for certain political freedoms, including free expression and association, and many supported restrictions for women outside the home. According to PHR, this suggests that women's views are not being adequately represented in government, since there all but one of the Shia representatives on the interim Governing Council are men.⁶⁴

- In October, the High Council for Women was launched to increase women's participation across all levels of government and monitor progress on the Iraqi women's agenda. The council will give a crucial voice to Iraqi women, who make up 55% of the population.⁶⁵ It will also seek to improve health care and education for women and girls and provide advice for women entrepreneurs. The idea for the council, which is led by co-founder Ala Talabani, was the result of an Iraqi women's conference held in Hilla earlier in the month, and its actualization was made possible by British funding.

- Raja Habib Khuzai and Songul Chapouk, published an Op-Ed piece in the New York Times on 3 December 2003. They noted that women "are severely underrepresented in the leadership established for the transition [to democracy]" and called for the IGC and the CPA to "ensure women their rightful place at the decision-making table". They asked the United States to help them ensure that the IGC set quotas for women in all levels of government and in the



constitutional drafting process in proportion to their percentage of the population; that the IGC live up to its promise to appoint at least 5 women as deputy ministers; that the IGC increase the number of women among its own members and in the successor provisional government, and ensure that these women have real decision-making power. They also called for the new constitution and all related laws to grant equal rights and opportunities for women, and for the creation of a strong gender advisory council, reporting to the head of state and with real authority and responsibility, to represent women's concerns.⁶⁶

- Seven women were among the 28 new Deputy Ministers appointed by Paul Bremer in April 2004: Dr Sawsan Ali Magid Al-Sharifi (Ministry of Agriculture), Maysoon Salem Al-Damluji (Ministry of Culture), Ms. Hamdia Ahmed Najif (Ministry of Displacement and Migration), Baraka Mahdi Salih Al-Jiboori (Ministry of Electricity), Manal Kamil Elyas Aziza (Ministry of Environment), Dr. Beriwan Abdul-Kareem Khailany (Ministry of Higher Education), and Mitha Al-Alami (Ministry of Transportation).⁶⁷
- As of December 2003, six women were among the 37 members of the Baghdad City Advisory Council.⁶⁸
- In early December 2003, Shiite members of the IGC selected Dr. Salama al-Khafaji to replace the late Aqila al-Hashimi as the 25th member of the Council. Khafaji, a professor of dentistry at Baghdad University and one of four candidates nominated for the position, is reported not to be affiliated with any political party.⁶⁹
- Only a handful of women were appointed by the IGC as Deputy Ministers. Maysoon al-Damluji is Iraq's Deputy Minister of Culture.⁷⁰
- Many Iraqi women's rights activists are arguing for the use of a quota system to ensure that women are represented in the post-war government. The British government proposed a 25% quota, but did not gain the support of the United States. Press reports have quoted CPA officials as saying that while they support women's rights in Iraq, they have no plans to establish a formal quota system.⁷¹
- In April 2004, Lakhdar Brahimi met with a group representing women's NGOs, and separately with a group of human rights advocates, as part of his talks with Iraqis on the UN role in political transition and elections, seeking their ideas about UN assistance with the formation of an Iraqi administration to take over from US-led occupation forces on 1 July, and with preparations for elections early next year.
- The joint UN and World Bank Iraq needs assessment recommended that steps be taken early in the reconstruction process to ensure women's participation in shaping the country's future and to enshrine gender equity in constitutional processes. The assessment said unequivocally that security and access to basic services for Iraqi women were needs that must be addressed. The assessment also recommended that a Women's Forum be convened so that Iraqi women could identify and articulate their particular needs and priorities; that women's networks should be mobilized and linked with regional women's groups and networks to facilitate effective political participation by Iraqi women; and that the media be effectively used to raise awareness and advocate for key transitional issues.⁷²
- In his 27 April 2004 statement to the Security Council, Lakhdar Brahimi outlined his plan for the political transition process in Iraq. He told the Council that "virtually every Iraqi with whom we met urged that there be no delay in bringing an end to the occupation, by 30 June at the latest. They maintain that view, even though they understand that a democratically elected and therefore fully legitimate government will not be in place by that date." Two key documents call



for the dissolution of the Iraqi Governing Council by 30 June 2004. The majority of Iraqis who spoke to the assessment team (these included representatives of women's groups) favour the establishment of a Caretaker Government to tend to day-to-day administration until elections are held in January 2005. Brahimi told the Council that the Iraqi people should select this Government, and that "it should not be difficult to identify extremely qualified candidates—men and women—for every single position, who are representative of Iraq's diversity." Brahimi also suggested that an Iraqi Preparatory Committee be formed to organize a National Conference in July to bring together "1,000 to 1,500 people representing every province in the country, all political parties, tribal chiefs and leaders, trade and professional unions, universities, women's groups, youth organizations, writers, poets and artists, as well as religious leaders, among many others".⁷³ The Security Council strongly supported Brahimi's statement and welcomed the provisional ideas he submitted.⁷⁴

- The UN Electoral Advisors Team, headed by Carla Perelli, made several visits to Iraq in 2004 to assess the possibility of holding elections in Iraq. In the spring, the team undertook work to create the Independent Electoral Commission, with the appointment of Commissioners scheduled for 31 May. Women's groups and other civil organizations expressed strong interest in the nomination process. Five thousand nomination forms and 6,000 leaflets advertising the process had been distributed across Iraq by 11 May 2004 with plans for another 5,000 to be distributed shortly.⁷⁵

Humanitarian Impact⁷⁶

- Tens of thousands of women and children fled the city for safety after a shaky ceasefire was reached during an offensive by us forces against the city of Falluja in April 2004. US troops reportedly announced over loudspeakers that women, children, and elderly could leave the city, but not "military age men," although men were reported among the thousands who fled.⁷⁷

Impact on Food, Water and Sanitation Infrastructure

- Electricity in Baghdad was cut on 3 April 2003, and three weeks passed before it was restored to some areas of the city. Baghdad's water supply was also disrupted during the 2003 war, and had been only partially reconnected by the end of March. Women's ability to provide food and potable water for themselves and their families was thus severely impaired.
- The 2003 war created serious impediments for the delivery of safe drinking water in Iraq. In addition to the destruction of relevant ministries and the attendant disruption of their programmes, lack of personal security proved a major obstacle to water delivery in Baghdad. Women manage many water treatment plants in the Iraqi capital and throughout the country, and water delivery was disrupted as a result of their inability to leave their homes due to increased sexual violence. In addition, a high incidence of car-jackings impedes work and affects both male and female staff in this sector.⁷⁸ In a postwar 2003 survey conducted by Physicians for Human Rights in southern Iraq, respondents identified lack of clean water and lack of medical care as the second and third most important problems, after lack of security. 95 percent of respondents identified infrastructure rebuilding as either "very important" or "extremely important" for the health and development of the community.⁷⁹
- According to a presentation by Nesreen Berwari, Iraq's Minister of Municipalities and Public Works, at Washington's Woodrow Wilson Center for Scholars on 26 February 2004: "For the first time in Iraq's history, it is the education, water and health sectors that are getting the highest allocation in the Iraqi budget." The United States has allocated more than \$4 billion to address the problem of contaminated drinking water since April 2003.⁸⁰



Impact on Health

- According to the *United Nations/World Bank Joint Iraq Needs Assessment*, conducted over the summer of 2003, “in the aftermath of conflict, general insecurity and gender violence have prevented women from seeking health care for themselves and their children”. The Assessment found health outcomes in Iraq to be among the poorest in the region. These include high maternal and infant mortality and malnutrition, the reemergence of certain communicable diseases adding to the burden of non-communicable conditions and the presence of risk factors for increased rates of transmission of HIV/AIDS (which, they noted, was still relatively low).⁸¹
- It was reported that between the fall of the Hussein administration in April 2003 and November of that same year, prostitution had become widespread in Baghdad as a result of increasing poverty among women. As well, sexual violence and consensual extramarital sex were reported to have increased. The result was a rise in unwanted pregnancies and illicit abortions, often conducted using unsafe procedures. Although abortion has long been illegal in Iraq, a number of backstreet abortion clinics were reported to have opened in the laxer post-Hussein climate. Although some clinics claimed to be equipped to provide “medical quality” services, the Baghdad Al Aliya Women’s Hospital alone admitted one or two septic abortions every week. According to one of Al Aliya’s emergency room doctors, illicit abortion had already become a major problem in postwar Iraq, with as many as 500 illicit abortions performed from August to early November 2003.⁸²

Impact on Health Services

- During the 2003 war, there was a lack of emergency reproductive health care as hospitals—which were difficult to reach—struggled to handle casualties of war with diminishing supplies. Before the 2003 invasion of Iraq, pregnant women in Baghdad were reported to have rushed to hospitals demanding cesarean sections before their due dates rather than risk giving birth in the midst of war.⁸³
- After April 2003, widespread looting, the erratic supply of water and electricity, and the lack of security weakened an already struggling health care system and created an extremely inhospitable work environment for all health workers, especially women.⁸⁴ Postwar UN needs assessments of the health sector found that looting had destroyed 30 percent of health facilities that offered family planning services.⁸⁵
- Postwar UN needs assessments found that insecurity and the threat of sexual violence against women and girls prevented many Iraqi women from seeking health care for themselves or their children in the months after the 2003 war.⁸⁶
- In the unstable period following the fall of Saddam Hussein, Iraqi women and girls who were victims of sexual violence were refused both forensic examinations—even when they had a police referral—and medical treatment.⁸⁷
- An August 2003 reproductive health assessment by UNFPA found that during the last decade more Iraqi women were giving birth at home, often without any skilled help, because they lacked access to functioning medical facilities. Security had broken down in many areas and communication and transport networks were poor, while many medical clinics had been damaged or looted. The assessment called for the rehabilitation of health-care infrastructure, the supply of appropriate equipment and drugs, as well as refresher courses for health personnel who have missed international scientific advances over the last decade because of sanctions.⁸⁸



- A study released by Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) on 23 March 2004 (and conducted in July 2003) documented past human rights abuses in southern Iraq and unaddressed health needs, particularly for women. The study found a high rate of domestic violence, and suicide rates of 5,000-7,000 for every 100,000 in the past year. PHR also found that fewer than half of the women interviewed had a health care provider during childbirth or received prenatal care for all of their pregnancies. More than a quarter of women reported that they were delivered by unskilled birth attendants primarily at home. The study found Iraq's maternal mortality rate to be 292 per 100,000.⁸⁹

Impact on Human Rights, including Violence Against Women

- The postwar 2003 rise of conservative Islamist organizations put Iraqi women at risk of losing still more of the rights and freedoms that they had enjoyed during much of Saddam Hussein's rule, such as the right to receive an education, work, drive, vote, and hold political office (women's rights did not have constitutional protection under Saddam Hussein, however, and many were withdrawn during his last years in power—see below).⁹⁰

- Emboldened by the political chaos that followed the fall of Saddam Hussein's government in 2003, conservative students claiming to represent the Hawza, a council of religious Shiite clerics in Najaf, were reported to have posted notices around Mustansirriye University warning women to dress more conservatively and to wear the hijab in a more traditional fashion.⁹¹

- 85 new publications had appeared in Iraq by 1 May 2003, taking advantage of the freedom of expression brought about by the ouster of Saddam Hussein's government. A few women were among the newspaper editors, among them Ashtar Jassim al-Yasari, founder and editor of the satirical weekly *Habez Bouz*, and Ni'ma Abdulrazzaq, senior editor of the *As-Saah* newspaper. As well, a number of new women's magazines and an English-language Internet newsletter by and for women began to be published.⁹²

- The appointment in 2003, by the US military commander of the Shiite city of Najaf, of the city's first-ever female judge was met with protest by some of the city's lawyers—men and women both—and with negative fatwas from senior Shiite clerics. The swearing in of Nidal Nasser Hussein, who became the first female lawyer in Najaf in 1987, was indefinitely postponed due to the resentment against her nomination. A few of Najaf's judges supported the nomination of a woman judge, arguing that nothing in Iraq's legal code barred women from the judiciary. Opponents of the nomination claimed that Islamic law forbids women to be judges.⁹³

- The Iraqi governing council voted to "cancel" Iraqi family laws and to move family issues from civil to religious jurisprudence, where they would be governed by sharia law. The vote, allegedly sponsored by Shia members of the Council, was narrowly won in a closed-door session. The decree could scale back legal protections that Iraqi women enjoyed even under Saddam Hussein, including prohibitions on child marriage, arbitrary divorce and male favouritism in child custody and inheritance disputes.⁹⁴ However, the Coalition Provisional Authority refused to endorse the Council's decision because it would deprive women of their rights.⁹⁵

- In early February 2004, the Iraqi Governing Council agreed to put its controversial changes to the Personal Status Law on hold, after vocal and united opposition from Iraqi women's rights activists.⁹⁶ Later that month, Resolution 137 was repealed altogether.⁹⁷

- In February 2004, many women in Basra said they had been forced to wear a veil or to restrict their movements in fear of harassment from men. According to female students at the University of Basra, after the war ended in April 2003, groups of men began stopping them at the university gates and harassing bare-headed women, telling them they are violating Islamic law.



The men also harassed female students who were not dressed in loose-fitting clothes or who wore make-up. As of April 2004, nearly all women at the university were wearing a veil, including Christian Iraqis. Some students complained about the harassment to the CPA, but little was done to end it.⁹⁸

- Clauses protecting gender equality were included in Iraq's interim constitution (the "Temporary Administrative Law"), signed 8 March 2004. Of particular note are the following articles: **Article 1 (B)**: "Gender specific language [in the document] shall apply equally to male and female" (Note: the masculine tense is used throughout). **Article 12**: "All Iraqis are equal in their rights without regard to gender, sect, opinion, belief, nationality, religion, or origin, and they are equal before the law. Discrimination against an Iraqi citizen on the basis of his gender, nationality, religion, or origin is prohibited." **Article 20 (B)**: "No Iraqi may be discriminated against for purposes of voting in elections on the basis of gender, religion, sect, race, belief, ethnic origin, language, wealth, or literacy." And **Article 30 (C)**: "...The electoral law shall aim to achieve the goal of having women constitute no less than one-quarter of the members of the National Assembly..."⁹⁹
- However the interim constitution was criticized by the New-York based Human Rights Watch because it "offers no explicit guarantee that women will have equal rights to marry, within marriage, and at its dissolution. It does not explicitly guarantee women the right to inherit on an equal basis with men. It fails to guarantee Iraqi women married to non-Iraqis the right to confer citizenship to their children."¹⁰⁰
- In April 2004, US officials announced plans to open a shelter for women who are victims of violence in Baghdad. The shelter, which will receive funding from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, will be the first of its kind in the capital. The shelter will be able to assist 15-20 women at a time, and will be open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Both male and female staff members are being trained to work at the shelter, and are already receiving calls every few days about women who have been subjected to abuse.¹⁰¹

Economic Security and Rights

- According to a 2003 needs assessment by UNESCO, general insecurity in postwar Iraq made life difficult for working women. The Department of Antiquities reported that it was not recommended for female personnel working at architectural sites and museums to return home after 4pm without an escort. The short-term solution was to continue hiring UN buses to transport female museum staff to and/or from work so they could complete their work on the inventory of looted items.
- During the 2003 war, technical and vocational education (TVE) schools in south and central Iraq suffered extensive damage, the vast majority of which was due to looting and arson: 80% of laboratory equipment was looted or destroyed. Women made up less than 20% of student enrollment in vocational and technical schools between 1990 and 2001, and the extensive damage to TVE resources in 2003 further reduced women's chances of developing wage-earning skills.¹⁰²
- Under the sanctions regime of the 1990s, Iraq had a complex system of controlled prices. Moreover, 60% of Iraqis had become dependent on the food rations of the Oil-for-Food Programme and did not have sufficient purchasing power in absence of food aid. The phasing out of the Oil-for-Food Programme combined with price liberalization in Iraq's transition to a market economy put at risk the economic security of the population, and specifically vulnerable groups such as women, children and the poor and unemployed, unless an adequate safety net is put in place during the transition.¹⁰³



- According to the *United Nations/World Bank Joint Iraq Needs Assessment*, conducted over the summer of 2003, “women represent around 52% of Iraq’s population, but constitute only 23% of the formal work force, mostly as middle level professionals in the public and service sectors and in rural areas as seasonal agricultural workers.” At the time of the assessment, about 50% of the labour force in Iraq were unemployed or underemployed. Of those who were employed, some 60% worked in the informal sector, “many in marginalized economic activities, in difficult conditions and for minimal pay”. The assessment warned that if this joblessness persisted, the large youth population (75% of Iraqis were under the age of 25 at the time of the assessment) could become “a source of serious instability”.¹⁰⁴
- The *United Nations/World Bank Joint Iraq Needs Assessment* identified the following as areas that need to be addressed in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Iraq: women’s economic empowerment, particularly for poor women, rural women and female heads of households; increasing Iraqi women’s competitiveness in the labour market; decreasing the gender gap in education; raising women’s awareness of effective preservation of natural resource; addressing women’s particular needs and concerns in the shaping of socioeconomic and institutional policy frameworks; recognizing and utilizing women’s capacities and skills so that they can benefit equally from jobs and opportunities for capacity building and education.¹⁰⁵

II. Before March 2003

Political and Security Impact

- Between 3 and 4 million Iraqis fled their country while it was under Baath Party rule. Relatives still in Iraq were arrested and harassed to convince refugees to return. In 2001, an estimated 2 million Iraqis were at risk of persecution if they returned, yet only about 300,000 were formally recognized as refugees or asylum seekers.¹⁰⁶
- There were 128,000 refugees from other countries (mainly Palestinians and Iranian Kurds) and 900,000 internally displaced persons in Iraq in 2003.¹⁰⁷
- Under Saddam Hussein, dissent by women was punished as brutally as dissent by men. Women and girls were harassed, imprisoned, tortured, beaten, raped, and executed as part of collective punishment meted out to relatives of alleged oppositionists of the Government of Iraq, for their own suspected dissidence, or even arbitrarily. Torture during detention was systematic. After release, former prisoners were often harassed and repeatedly re-incarcerated, and faced torture or execution for refusing to become informers for the government.¹⁰⁸
- Many women witnessed the execution of their children or were submitted to degrading treatment by Iraqi security services, believed to be the cause of suicide for some women.
- The Government of Iraq systematically used rape for political purposes. The Mukhabarat Technical Operations Directorate videotaped the rape of female relatives of suspected oppositionists and used the tapes for blackmail or coercion. This method of coercion took advantage of the stigma attached to victims of sexual violence in traditional Iraqi society—in which rape dishonours a whole family and victims of rape can be beaten or killed by their relatives to wipe out the stigma—to inhibit oppositionists from reporting the abuse. To extract confessions from male prisoners, their female relatives were taken into custody, and then tortured, raped, or even killed in front of the prisoners. Women suffered severe psychological trauma, unwanted pregnancies, and miscarriages after being raped by Iraqi security forces or soldiers.¹⁰⁹
- Iraqi women whose husbands or male relatives had been arrested, executed, or had fled persecution reported to the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights that following



the men's absence, they suffered abuse and intimidation from the government including the withdrawal of ration cards (and therefore food and medicine), cuts to electricity, expropriation of property, house searches, questioning, threats, and arrest.¹¹⁰

- Widows of executed prisoners were required by the government to pay the cost of execution and bullets in order to recover the (often mutilated) bodies of their loved ones.¹¹¹
- From 1987 to 1989, the government of Iraq waged a war of eradication against the Kurds of northern Iraq. The centerpiece of what has been called genocide by Human Rights Watch, among others, was the 1987-1988 Anfal campaign, nominally a counterinsurgency operation but in reality a carefully planned and executed programme of ethnic cleansing in which 50,000–200,000 people are estimated to have been killed, most of them men and adolescent boys. Although “battle-age” men were Anfal’s primary target and were disappeared and killed en masse—creating a population with an “unusually high” percentage of women in the Kurdish areas of northern Iraq¹¹²—thousands of Kurdish women and girls also died. In some regions, especially those in which Iraqi troops met armed resistance, large numbers of women and children were among those killed in mass summary executions, and were among the tens of thousands of non-combatants who were “disappeared”. Kurdish women of all ages were among the thousands of people killed as a result of the widespread and indiscriminate use of chemical weapons against Kurdish towns and villages. Tens of thousands of women, children, and elderly people were arbitrarily warehoused for months in conditions of extreme deprivation, in which many were allowed to die. And hundreds of thousands of women and their families were forcibly displaced as a result of the demolition of their homes and villages, some 2,000 of which were completely destroyed. Rape was also among the weapons used against Kurdish women during the Anfal campaign.¹¹³
- Tens of women participated in the Kurdish uprising of 1991.¹¹⁴
- During and after the 1991 Shia uprising, the government of Iraq committed widespread human rights abuses against suspected Shia oppositionists in southern Iraq. A 2003 survey by Physicians for Human Rights of women and men from more than 2,000 households (conducted by women and men) yielded over 1,000 individual reports of abuses, which included disappearances, kidnappings, torture, sexual assault of women, forced amputation of ears, and killings. Few women torture survivors were willing to come forward and tell their story. At least one woman’s family blamed her for the arrest, which they said she could have avoided had followed their advice, and they have since refused to speak with her. Interviews with torture survivors found clear evidence of long-lasting trauma and desperation.¹¹⁵
- In 1996 the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan established the Peshmerga Force for Women, which now has over 300 fighters. Women who join the force are trained in attack, ambush, sabotage, and learning to use weapons. The women’s peshmerga force has participated in front-line combat in battles against Ansar al-Islam, a fringe Kurdish Islamist group alleged to have links to Al Qaeda.¹¹⁶
- The government’s decreased spending in the 1990s reduced municipal services such as garbage collection, degrading living conditions and the availability of potable water, and thus disproportionately affecting women, whose work and responsibilities are home-based much more than men’s and include providing food and water for their families. Frustration at the degradation of living conditions resulted in increased vandalism, creating a less secure climate in domestic neighbourhoods.¹¹⁷
- The Fedayeen Saddam militia publicly beheaded at least 130 (and up to 2000) women from June 2000 to April 2001 on charges of prostitution, which was decreed a crime punishable by



death during the 1990s. While some of the women may have been prostitutes, most were associated, either through family connections or personally, with some sort of opposition to the government. According to one report, among the women beheaded were two television presenters and 80 gynaecologists and midwives. The heads were often left on the doors or doorsteps of the women's families, who were required to display them in public view.¹¹⁸

- Direct and indirect civilian and military casualties from and in the year directly following the 1991 Gulf War have been estimated at 205,500, including more than 39,000 women and 32,000 children. Postwar deaths have been attributed to war-related damage to medical facilities and supplies, the electric power grid, and the water system.¹¹⁹
- In 2001, Amnesty International declared Iraq to have the world's worst record of disappearances. In 2003, the UN Secretary-General reported that, "over the past three decades, at least 290,000 Iraqis from all religious groups, ethnic groups, political affiliations, classes and professions disappeared."¹²⁰ Kidnappings of women, mostly the wives and daughters of dissidents, were reported across Iraq. The women were said to be at the service of their kidnappers and senior government officials.¹²¹

Political Participation

- The 1958 revolution heralded an increase in Iraqi women's political rights. Iraqi women engaged in politics, and for the first time in Iraq's history a woman became a minister.¹²²
- In 1960, a woman became Minister of State (without Portfolio). She was the only member of Abdel Karim Qasim's government, formed after the overthrow of the monarchy in 1958, to belong to the Communist Party.¹²³
- In 1970, the Iraqi Provisional Constitution formally guaranteed equal rights to women. Other laws specifically ensured their right to vote and run for political office.¹²⁴
- A robust civil society that included women's organizations existed prior to the 1968 coup d'état by the Baath Party, which dismantled most of these groups and in their place established the General Federation of Iraqi Women (GFIW). The GFIW played a significant role in implementing state policy, and some of its officers also played a role in implementing legal reforms and lobbying for changes to improve women's status. However, some Iraqi women have argued that the GFIW was not representative of Iraqi women and in fact, as part of the Baath Party, was actually destructive to women's empowerment.¹²⁵
- During the 1990s, the semi-autonomy of Iraqi Kurdistan allowed women to take great political strides forward. In 2003, two of the 20 ministers in the Kurdistan Regional Government were women, and women occupied numerous posts among ministry staff.¹²⁶
- Iraqi women ran in Iraq's first parliamentary elections in 1980 and won 16 of 250 seats on the National Council. In the second parliamentary elections in 1985, women won 33 Council seats (13%). The next eighteen years saw a dramatic decrease in Iraqi women's participation in politics to 8% of seats in pre-war 2003.¹²⁷
- In the 1990s, official decisions on the part of the central Government limited women's access to senior decision-making positions. Restrictions on movement and illiteracy also contributed to women's low participation in political life.¹²⁸



Humanitarian Impact¹²⁹

- Hundreds of thousands of women belonging to Iraq's ethnic and religious minorities (including Kurds, Assyrians, Shia and Maadan or Marsh Arabs) were displaced with their families under various programmes of the government of Iraq. 1.5 million Kurds fled to Turkey after a failed uprising against the government in 1991. When Shia oppositionists fled to the marshes of southern Iraq after the violent suppression of their 1991 uprising, government forces burned and bombed villages and diverted water from the marshes to force a total depopulation of the marshlands. A 2000 estimate by the US Committee for Refugees put the number of internally displaced men, women, and children from and in southern Iraq at 100,000.¹³⁰ And thousands of families, and even entire communities, were displaced by force from their homes and relocated within or expelled from the country in the Baathist government's long-term project of "Arabization".¹³¹ In 1999, the Iraqi Interior Ministry expelled 4,000 families (some 24,000 people) from Baghdad: opposition sources claimed that most of the expelled families were Kurds and Shia, that many had lived in the neighborhood where an anti-government riot had taken place in February 1999.¹³²
- The severe economic decline in Iraq brought about by the combination of debts accumulated during the Iran-Iraq War, destruction wrought by the 1991 Gulf War, and a decade of international sanctions caused Iraq to experience one of the most rapid declines in living conditions ever recorded. Iraq fell from 96/160 in 1991 to 126/174 in 2000 on the UNDP Human Development Index, which includes some gender-desegregated indicators. No other country has ever fallen so far, so fast. The impact of this decline on women included increased mortality rates; increased rates of divorce, polygamy, and domestic violence; decreased marriage rates; a significant increase in malnutrition among women and children; and an added burden of responsibility as women had to care for children traumatized by war, disease, and malnutrition with neither professional support nor sufficient access to knowledge and skills.¹³³

Impact on Food, Water and Sanitation Infrastructure

- Women who fled Iraq to neighboring countries as a result of conflict and repression in an effort to save their own and their families' lives found themselves unable to afford basic necessities such as food and medical care.¹³⁴
- Under the economic sanctions put in place following the 1990 invasion of Kuwait, a Public Food Distribution System was put in place throughout south and central Iraq. This food ration system prevented mass starvation and malnutrition, but was not able to ensure adequate nutrition to most of the population. Even under the Oil-for-Food Programme, more than 50% of the population was vulnerable to food insecurity. Although the Iraqi agricultural sector began to decline in the 1980s, untargeted food rations also had a negative impact on domestic agricultural productivity.¹³⁵

Impact on Health and Health Services

- During the 1991 Gulf War, up to 800 tons of munitions containing depleted uranium were used by US forces, the first field test of such weapons in actual combat. Cancer rates, congenital anomalies and disabilities among children and animals significantly increased in areas where the war was fought. It was thought that depleted uranium had found its way into the water supply. For two years following the 1991 Gulf War, there was an increase in miscarriages and pregnancy complications among women in the Gulf states, thought to be the result of chemicals leaking from weapons into the food chain, smoke-pollution from the oil fields, or conflict-related stress.¹³⁶



- Iraq's dual-use electrical grid, as well as other elements of its civilian infrastructure, was targeted during the 1991 Gulf War. The result was a recurrence of preventable water-borne illnesses, such as typhoid, gastroenteritis and cholera, especially among the most vulnerable members of the population (women, children and the elderly).¹³⁷
- Starting in May 1991, the US and UK flew more than 280,000 sorties over Iraq's no-fly zones. In addition to killing civilians when bombs missed the military installations they were said to be intended for, the threat of daily attacks created psychological problems, including anxiety, depression, insomnia, weight loss, and fears of losing friends and family, among Iraqi women and children.¹³⁸
- A 1991 survey, funded in part by UNICEF and conducted by a team of international doctors, found that the Gulf War combined with trade sanctions caused a threefold increase in mortality among Iraqi children under five, an increase corresponding to an excess of 46,900 child deaths in the seven months after the war.¹³⁹
- During the 1990's, female-headed households, rural areas, and poor households had the highest rates of infant and child mortality.¹⁴⁰
- Before the 1991 Gulf War, Iraq had one of the best health systems in the Middle East region, enjoying health conditions similar to those of other middle or high-middle income countries, and had low rates of malnutrition. The government estimated that between 79% of rural populations and 97% of urban populations had access to health care.¹⁴¹
- Under the effects of the 1991 Gulf War and over a decade of economic sanctions, Iraq's health system declined so much that health outcomes in Iraq became the region's poorest, and health indicators dropped to levels seen in some of the world's least developed countries. By 2003, Iraqis in several regions were at risk of endemic malaria, cholera and leishmaniasis, as well as from vaccine preventable diseases like measles and diphtheria. Iraq's risk of tuberculosis was the region's highest. The physical health infrastructure had deteriorated after years of under-investment compounded by sanctions, and Iraq had a shortage of trained health personnel.¹⁴²
- A United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) reproductive health survey published in August 2003 found that the number of women who die of pregnancy and childbirth nearly tripled between 1989 and 2002, from 117 deaths per 100,000 live births in 1989 to 310 deaths in 2003. Bleeding, ectopic pregnancies and prolonged labour were found to be among the causes of the rise in maternal mortality. A concurrent rise in miscarriages was attributed partly to stress and exposure to chemical contaminants.¹⁴³
- More than half of Iraqi women became anæmic as a result of a health system badly damaged by conflict and sanctions. A rise in the incidence of low birth weights from 25 percent in 2001 to 30 percent in 2002 shows that women's health was still in decline due to poverty and poor nutrition.¹⁴⁴

Impact on Human Rights, including Violence Against Women

- In February 2003, the Special Rapporteur for violence against women reported that the Iraqi government had put laws in place to protect women from workplace exploitation and from sexual harassment; to permit women to join the army and police forces; and, to equalize women's rights in divorce, land ownership, taxation, and suffrage. The Special Rapporteur noted the difficulty of determining the true extent to which these protections are implemented.¹⁴⁵



- In 1970, the Baath Party passed a new constitution that nominally made Iraqi women and men equal under the law, although family law continued to favour men. In the early years of Saddam Hussein's government, women won the right to receive an education, to vote, and to work outside the home, and the national legal code was revised to prohibit sexual discrimination and harassment in the workplace. After the invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and the subsequent Gulf War, however, women's rights were eroded by Hussein's attempts to win legitimacy in the face of Iraq's economic crisis by appeasing religious fundamentalists and other conservatives. Anti-woman legislation became more common.¹⁴⁶ In 1990, Article 111 of the Iraqi Penal Code exempted from prosecution and punishment men who killed their female relatives in defense of their family's honour. Human rights groups estimate that since the law became effective, 4,000 women have fallen victim to it. Article 41 of the penal code authorized husbands to beat their wives for educational purposes. And as a result of another decree, a woman who asked for too much gold jewelry could be punished by her husband with 80 lashes of the whip.¹⁴⁷
- From the mid 1980's on, women were denied posts as judges or public prosecutors.¹⁴⁸
- Laws in Iraqi Kurdistan, which are based on Islamic Sharia law and tribal custom, for forty years legalized an inferior status for women and sanctioned honour killings, resulting in women's harassment, degradation, imprisonment, physical abuse (including mutilation), and the murder of up to 5,000 women.¹⁴⁹ In 2000, Kurdish authorities suspended Article 111 of the Iraqi Penal Code, but according to women's rights groups honour killings were still prevalent throughout the north despite the suspension.¹⁵⁰
- According to the Sulaymaniyah-based Rewan Women's Information and Cultural Centre (RWICC), suicide rates among Iraqi women were high: RWICC recorded 119 cases in 2002. One of the preferred methods was self-immolation. Media and aid agencies in the Kurdish-controlled northern governorates tried to prevent such suicides by publicizing the problem and by establishing shelters to assist women in need. In contrast, no data exist for the same time period for the South of Iraq, indicating that there was no assistance for women suffering from domestic violence in that region.¹⁵¹
- After its establishment in 2001, Ansar al-Islam, a small but radical Kurdish Islamist group in northern Iraq with alleged ties to the Taliban and Al-Qaeda, razed beauty salons, burned down girls' schools, and murdered women in the street for not wearing burqas.¹⁵²
- Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) militias shut down a women's rights organization and a women's shelter in July 2000, imprisoning the staff and the shelter residents. Honour killings and violence against women rose after the shelter was closed.¹⁵³
- A decree from the central government forbade women under 45 to leave Iraq without a male relative to escort them. The extra financial burden of having an escort made foreign travel impossible for many women. In 1999, all students were banned from foreign travel. The children of Iraqi fathers and foreign-born mothers were prevented from visiting the country of their other nationality. Foreign spouses of Iraqi citizens were forced to apply for naturalization as citizens, thus becoming subject to travel restrictions placed only on women.¹⁵⁴
- Illiteracy among women, which had been drastically reduced in the 1970s, rose steadily after the Iran-Iraq War; it quadrupled between 1985 and 1995, from 8 percent to 45 percent. Girls' education was severely affected during the 90s, with the drop out rate for primary school girls rising to 35 percent. The UNDP rated Iraq 126/174 on the 2002 Gender Development Index, and its Human Development Report 2002 found Iraq "far behind" in the targets to eliminate gender disparity at all levels of education.¹⁵⁵



Economic Security and Rights

- A 1974 government decree stipulated that all university graduates, male and female, would be employed automatically.¹⁵⁶
- The 1991 Gulf War had devastating effects on Iraq's economic and civilian infrastructure. Women bore the brunt of the economic collapse. By 1997, only 10% of women were involved in economic activities.¹⁵⁷ The number of female-headed households increased due to the large number of "Anfal widows" in the northern governorates and women throughout Iraq whose husbands were killed by the government of Iraq; women, especially in rural areas, increased their workload and took on work traditionally done by men to meet their high economic need; the number of working mothers, child labourers, and street children increased; the combination of a drastically devalued currency and fixed salaries reduced purchasing power, resulting, for many women, in poverty; and women became overwhelmed by their daily struggle to meet even the most basic needs (food and water) for their children.¹⁵⁸
- Prior to 1991, Iraqi women had the highest rate of employment in the Arab Region, constituting 23 percent of the country's work force. Women's actual economic contribution in the informal economy, especially in the agriculture sector, was believed to be even higher. Most working women were mid-level professionals, mainly in the public sector. Under economic sanctions, women's share in public sector employment—which provided relative economic security—increased as men left in search of better opportunities in the private or informal sectors. Home based income-generating activities for women also increased as a result of the deteriorating standards of living in general. The general rise in unemployment, however, meant that by 2002, women comprised only 19 percent of the national workforce.¹⁵⁹
- During the Iraq-Iran war the number of working women increased as men were sent to the front and many widows had to support families. Many women moved into high-level jobs in usually male-dominated sectors, such as the military, the oil industry, construction, and government jobs in medicine, education, accounting, and administration.¹⁶⁰
- The slaughter of tens of thousands of Kurdish men during the Anfal campaign created thousands of widows in a society that can stigmatize women without spouses. Kurdish women, many suffering physical and psychological trauma, were left to rebuild their communities with almost no aid, care, or financial compensation following Anfal. The widows, daughters, and mothers of the Anfal Campaign victims were reported in 2000 to be economically dependent on their relatives or villages because they may not inherit the property or assets of their missing family members.¹⁶¹
- In the 1990s, the breakdown of the welfare state had a disproportionate effect on women, who were its main beneficiaries. Women were pushed out of the workforce when the services were withdrawn that had allowed them to work outside the home, including free education, child-care, and transportation. The high unemployment in manufacturing also reduced women's access to work by displacing male workers into fields traditionally occupied by women.¹⁶²
- As a result of the limited autonomy that Kurds in the three northern governorates (Iraqi Kurdistan) enjoyed from the central government, and its the direct distribution of UN and international aid, Kurdish women were able to move into numerous professions, including many traditionally dominated by men including government, ministry, engineering, and law.¹⁶³
- Women made desperately poor by years of conflict and sanctions were increasingly reduced to prostitution as a means of survival. In the 1990s, prostitution was made a crime punishable by death.¹⁶⁴



- In the decade between 1989/1990 and 2000/2001, enrolment in vocational and technical schools fell by nearly 56%. During that time, women represented fewer than 20% of students in vocational and technical schools, and there were "significant gender disparities across subject fields".¹⁶⁵
- Iraq's electrical infrastructure had been severely damaged during the 1991 Gulf War. By 1999, generation capacity may have risen to 65% of its pre-war levels. Power was rationed throughout the country, with Baghdad receiving disproportionately more. In pre-war 2003, some parts of the country had electricity for less than 12 hours per day. Women's electricity use is incurred mostly in domestic work, and in informal home-based work, and thus lack of power in that sector could increase women's burden of care and affect earnable income.¹⁶⁶

Women's Peace Building Activities in Iraq

- Informal grassroots business schemes were set up by Iraqi women to alleviate the poverty brought about by decades of conflict and international sanctions. These include food catering and the recycling of clothes and other materials, as well as trade, contracting and sub-contracting to the state, owning garages, and hired seasonal labour in field work, food processing, and construction. Women also produce goods for sale in their homes and sell some products in the marketplace, which they did not do before 1990.¹⁶⁷
- Dozens of women's organizations emerged in Iraq's three northern governorates (under semi-autonomous Kurdish rule) during the 1990s. Peace-building actions by Kurdish women activists include a two-hundred kilometer march from Suleimanya to Erbil to protest the fratricidal conflict between the PKK and the KDP, and the successful amendment of several discriminatory clauses in the Iraqi Civil Code in the semi-autonomous northern governorates.¹⁶⁸
- From February 20-22, 1992, under the auspices of the Kurdistan Women's Union, 177 women representing the three northern governorates and all parts of Kurdish society participated in the "Martyr Layla Qassim" conference under the slogan "Peace, Freedom, Equality, and Justice". The conference called for more inclusive participation of women at all levels in Iraqi Kurdistan, for the modernization of health services for women, for the lifting of economic sanctions from Iraq, and for the Security Council to change the latitude of the Kurdish self-rule area and northern no-fly zone so that all Iraqi Kurds would receive the same UN protection.¹⁶⁹
- In 1992, women activists created the Independent Women's Organization in response to the high levels of violence against women in the Kurdish self-rule area, which included harassment, physical violence, mutilation, and the murder of more than 5,000 women. They campaigned to repeal anti-woman legislation in the northern governorates, and to end impunity for so-called "honour killings". In 1998, they established a Women's Shelter in Suleimaniya. When the shelter was closed by the PUK and twelve of its residents abducted with their children, the women of the IWO sent out a written appeal for support to "all Women, Human Rights and Progressive Organizations".¹⁷⁰
- Hundreds of women and children demonstrated in front of a United Nations office in Baghdad on 24 March 1997 to appeal for the release of Iraqi prisoners captured by Iran during the 1980-88 Gulf War.¹⁷¹
- With funding from the Oil-for-Food Programme, nearly 400 literacy centres for women, focusing particularly on the needs of adolescent women, were established in Iraqi Kurdistan with help from the Kurdistan Women's Union. The programme's goal was to provide a solid academic foundation that would allow women to later pursue post-secondary education.¹⁷²



- In July 2000, two gender and development training workshops were held in Arbil (3-6 July) and Sulaymania (8-11 July). The workshops included lectures and practical exercises, and covered various aspects of the different relationships that arise between men and women, including reasons why these relationships may become imbalanced and ways to improve them in order to empower women economically, socially, and politically. The workshops were organized by the Iraqi Al-Amal Association in collaboration with the Machreq/Maghreb Gender Linking & Information Project.¹⁷³
- On 11 March 2001, Iraqi women participated in a symposium in Baghdad to analyse the situation of women in Iraq and to highlight their role in different sectors of Iraqi society. The symposium was sponsored by the United Nations Development Programme.¹⁷⁴
- In an unprecedented display of spontaneous public dissent, dozens of anguished women and angry young men, nearly all of them Shia, took to the streets in Baghdad on 22 October 2002 demanding information about relatives jailed for political crimes who did not return home after the amnesty granted by Saddam Hussein to all of Iraq's prisoners, including non-Iraqi Arabs, with the exception of those accused of spying for the United States or Israel..¹⁷⁵
- Groups of Iraqi women in exile, coordinated through the Iraqi Women's League, issued appeals to foreign governments and organized demonstrations, hoping to ensure that women's voices be heard and the needs of the vulnerable populations be met in the crucial early phases of Iraq's reconstruction.¹⁷⁶
- In March 2003, women's rights activists and organizations in London, England, founded the Iraqi Women's Rights Coalition in order to streamline their efforts to influence the policy-making of the new government in Iraq, and to ensure that women's equal rights be secured and enshrined in a secular constitution. These women use the Coalition as a vehicle for media publicity, to facilitate meetings with government officials and human rights and humanitarian organizations, and to network with peer organizations in the European Union. Coalition members established women's advocacy centers in Iraq in order to raise Iraqi women's awareness of the international standards of women's rights. They also established shelters to protect Iraqi women from domestic violence.
- In March 2003, the Kurdish Women Action Against Honour Killing sent an open letter to the UN, the US, and the European Union, expressing their concern that women were not being adequately represented and that their roles and rights were not being addressed by the prewar Iraqi opposition, and demanding women's full participation in the future government of Iraq.¹⁷⁷
- US Secretary of State Colin Powell met in Washington, in April 2003, with representatives of Women for a Free Iraq, a group of Iraqi exiles, to hear their recommendations on the most critical needs of Iraq's women and children. WFI asks that priority be given to restoring the educational sector, improving health care and social services for women and children, fostering political participation by women through training and exchanges, assuring judicial and legal reform, and providing human rights guarantees.¹⁷⁸
- In April 2003, the Iraqi Women League sent a letter to Clare Short, UK Secretary of State for International Development, requesting an urgent meeting to discuss issues of particular concern to Iraqi women regarding the country's reconstruction, and outlining those issues.¹⁷⁹
- In May/June 2003, women's networks in Afghanistan and Kosovo sent open letters to the women of Iraq, outlining their struggles to be heard in the reconstruction processes in their own countries, and urging Iraqi women to raise their voices and ensure that they play a significant role in the rebuilding of postwar Iraq.¹⁸⁰



- On 3 July 2003, hundreds of women demonstrated in Baghdad, demanding to be included in shaping the political future of the country.¹⁸¹
- On 9 July 2003, more than 80 women from all parts of Iraq participated in the “Voice of Iraqi Women” conference in Baghdad—the first national women’s conference since the fall of Saddam Hussein’s government. Conference participants discussed strategies for how to increase women’s role in the recovery and reconstruction of Iraq, including the status of women in the constitution, legislation, the democratic process, education, the health system, the economy, and social and cultural affairs. The main conference also brought together Iraqi women who had remained in Iraq under the dictatorship, women from the diaspora, and women from the three Kurdish governorates who, for over ten years, were able to promote the participation of women in the emerging civil society. Representatives of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) and several United Nations agencies also attended the conference discussions.¹⁸²
- One of the three women on Iraq’s Governing Council, Aqila al-Hashimi, was among the three members of the Iraqi interim administration who participated in the Security Council on 17 July 2003. Part of the discussion within the Security Council focused on the necessity of including women at all levels of leadership of Iraq and in the country’s recovery and reconstruction. Sergio Vieira de Mello, who had met with women’s organizations among others to identify ways in which to make the UN contribution to Iraq’s recovery and reconstruction most effective, noted that, among the three areas of particular concern regarding human rights in Iraq, special emphasis should be placed on ensuring the rights of women.¹⁸³
- From 4-7 October 2003, the Heartland of Iraq Women’s Conference, sponsored by US-AID and the CPA, was held at the University of Babylon in Hilla, 60 miles south of Baghdad.¹⁸⁴ Over 150 women of diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds attended from the five south-central provinces of Babil, Karbala, Najaf, Diwaniya and Wasit. Among the attendees were women who are working to establish women’s centers and organizations in these provinces. The conference also hosted visiting women’s delegations from Basra and Kurdistan. Ala Talabani (from Kirkuk), a long-time dissident against the former government who is now a liaison between women’s groups, the CPA and the Iraqi Governing Council, chaired the conference.¹⁸⁵ The idea to create a Higher Council for Women was generated at the conference, and realized later that month with British support.¹⁸⁶
- On 8 October, two of the speakers at the Heartland of Iraq Women’s Conference, Safia al-Souhail and Rend el-Rahim, were nominated to replace the late Akila Hashemi on the Iraqi Governing Council.¹⁸⁷
- Raja Habib Khuzai and Songul Chapouk, the two women on the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC), publish an Op-Ed piece in the New York Times on 3 December 2003. They note that women “are severely underrepresented in the leadership established for the transition [to democracy] and call for the IGC and the CPA to “ensure women their rightful place at the decision-making table”.¹⁸⁸
- In mid-December 2003, a group of prominent women’s rights activists and organizations in Iraq sent a letter to Ambassadors Bremer, Greenstock and the members of the Iraqi Governing Council to call attention to the gender-based discrimination that Iraqi women have faced under the Coalition Provisional Authority.¹⁸⁹
- Iraqi women mounted a nation-wide campaign to repeal Resolution 137 of the Iraqi Governing Council, which cancelled the 1959 Personal Status Law and placed issues of family law, including marriage, divorce, custody and inheritance, under religious rather than civil jurisdiction



(Resolution 137). Iraqi women held massive street protests and conferences to denounce the resolution.¹⁹⁰

- Since the fall of Saddam Hussein in April 2003, more than 80 women's organizations have been formed in Baghdad alone, offering a new space for dialogue and empowerment for women. According to Nesreen Berwari, Iraqi Minister for Municipalities and Public Works, NGOs have also been holding "discussion groups" with women across the country to generate interest in the democratic process and inform women of the importance of registering to vote.¹⁹¹
- Iraqi women campaigned vigorously to ensure a 40% quota for women's representation in the country's interim constitution. As of February 2004, The Advising Committee for Women Affairs in Iraq (formerly the Women Experts Committee), headed by Nesreen Berwari (Iraq's only female Minister), held weekly meetings to organize a campaign for demands on quota of 40% representation by women in the Transitional Council, constitutional committee, and caucuses.¹⁹² According to Berwari, "For Iraq to move forward faster it is essential for women to play stronger contributing roles. Women need to have opportunities to more actively participate in decision-making. In order for this to occur, an enabling environment to promote women's participation needs to be enshrined within the fundamental law of administration."¹⁹³ However, the CPA and some members of the Iraqi Governing Council were strongly opposed to the establishment of any explicit quota. In the end, a "target" of 25% was included in the interim constitution, signed 8 March 2004.¹⁹⁴
- The Iraqi Women's Higher Council held three women's conferences in the Centre, North and South of Iraq between October 2003 and January 2004. The Basra Southern Women's Conference, held 28-29 January 2004 and sponsored by the CPA, included a petition campaign to collect signatures supporting women's demands for political participation and for this to be stated in the fundamental law to be released on 28 February 2004. The Basra conference was attended by about 220 women from across Iraq.¹⁹⁵
- On 30 April 2004, nine women delegates met with Ambassador L. Paul Bremer to discuss their concern over the success of the political process during the transitional period following the transfer of sovereignty (planned for 30 June 2004). The group was comprised of the Vice-Minister for Culture, a representative of UNIFEM and representatives of women's organizations in Iraq (including Women Without Borders, the Al Amal Association, the IWN, the ACWAI, the Assyrian Women's Union, and the Women's and Children's Union Baghdad). Among the issues they raised were the deterioration of security in Iraq and its effect on democracy, violations of human rights and especially women's human rights, the excessive use of force by the military against civilians and possibilities for women's participation in peace processes and transitional institutions.¹⁹⁶

Timeline *Iraq*

25 April 1920: The modern state of Iraq is created by combining the Ottoman provinces of Basra, Baghdad, and Mosul. The League of Nations awards the mandate for Iraq to Britain.

23 August 1921: A constitutional monarchy is established and Faysal, son of Hussein Bin Ali, the Sharif of Mecca, is crowned Iraq's first king.

16 December 1925: The League of Nations Council fixes the border between Iraq and Turkey, keeping the Mosul region in Iraq against the wishes of the Kurdish population.

3 October 1932: Iraq becomes an independent state.

14 July 1958: King Faysal II is assassinated and the monarchy is overthrown in a military coup. Iraq is declared a republic and Brigadier Abd-al-Karim Qasim becomes prime minister.



1963: The Arab Socialist Baath Party ousts and executes Qasim and installs General Ahmed Hasan al-Bakr as prime minister and Colonel Abd-al-Salam Muhammad Arif as president. Nine months later, Arif overthrows the Baathist government.

17 July 1968: Al-Bakr becomes president and chairman of the newly formed Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) through a Baathist-led coup.

November 1968: Kurdish rebellions against the Iraqi government, ongoing since 1961, intensify. The Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) addresses the United Nations in New York and sends two letters of appeal to the Secretary-General, asking for international intervention.¹⁹⁷

1969: Saddam Hussein becomes vice chairman of the RCC, the second most powerful position in the Iraqi government.

11 March 1970: The Iraqi government and the KDP agree to establish an autonomous Kurdish region in the Kurdish-majority areas of northern Iraq within four years.

1972: Iraq and the Soviet Union sign a 15-year treaty of Friendship and Cooperation. Iraq nationalizes the Iraq Petroleum Company.

1974: The Iraqi government unilaterally creates a Kurdish autonomous region excluding the oil-rich area of Kirkuk. Kurds are evicted and replaced with poor Arabs from the south. With support from the Shah of Iran, Kurds rise in revolt. A government decree stipulates that all university graduates, male and female, will be employed automatically.¹⁹⁸

1975: Iraq and Iran sign the Algiers agreement and the Shah of Iran withdraws his support from the Iraqi Kurds. The Iraqi government violently crushes the Kurdish rebellion. Kurdish villages along the Iranian border are evacuated and 130,000 Kurds flee to Iran.

1978: The Shiite Da'wah party organizes street demonstrations and carries out attacks against the government to protest its repression of Shiites (between 1974 and 1980, 500 Shiite activists are executed).

1979: Al-Bakr resigns and Saddam Hussein officially becomes president of Iraq. Hussein purges the Baath party, executing about 400 members.

April 1980: The Da'wah party claims responsibility for an assassination attempt on Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz. The Iraqi government makes belonging to Da'wah a capital offense, executes the party's spiritual leader and his sister, and expels 30,000 Shiites to Iran.

September 1980: The Iran-Iraq War begins.

7 June 1981: Israel pre-emptively destroys the Osirak nuclear reactor at Tuwaitha, near Baghdad, claiming to have intelligence that Iraq is secretly developing nuclear weapons there.

1982: Iraq begins using chemical weapons against Iranian troops, and continues to use them every year of the war until at least 1987.

1984: European-based doctors examine Iranian troops' and confirm exposure to mustard gas. The UN sends seven expert missions to the battle region from 1984 to 1988 to detail and document Iraq's use of chemical weapons. The UN issues a statement in March condemning the use of chemical weapons in the Iran-Iraq War. The United States re-establishes full diplomatic ties with Iraq in November.¹⁹⁹

1986: Iraq is one of the first countries to ratify the Convention of Eradicating all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) with reservations to articles 2(f), 2(g), 9(1), 9(2), 16 and 29(1)).²⁰⁰

April 1987: A day after chemically bombarding the KDP and PUK headquarters, in Zewa Shkan and the twin villages of Sergalou and Bergalou respectively, the Iraqi government drops poison gas on the two undefended civilian villages of Sheikh Wasan and Basilan, killing over a hundred



people, mostly women and children. Many victims of the attack who had been taken to Erbil for treatment were abducted from their hospital beds and “disappeared”. The first of forty documented chemical bombardments of Kurdish targets, these attacks also signal that the government of Iraq under Saddam Hussein was not averse to the indiscriminate, large-scale massacre of Kurdish women and children.²⁰¹

1987: A two-year genocidal campaign against the Kurds begins under the command of Ali Hassan al-Majid. Its centerpiece is the Anfal campaign of 23 February to 6 September 1988, which includes mass summary executions, mass disappearances of tens of thousands of non-combatants, the widespread use of chemical weapons, the destruction of some 2,000 villages, the arbitrary jailing and warehousing for months of women, children and elderly people, and the forced displacement of hundreds of thousands of villagers. Security Council Resolution 598 deplores the use of chemical weapons in violation of the 1925 Geneva Protocol.

16 March 1988: The Iraqi government bombards the Kurdish city of Halabja for three days with conventional and chemical weapons, killing 5,000 people as an immediate result of chemical attack and an estimated 12,000 people overall.²⁰²

1988: The Iran-Iraq war ends. Casualties are estimated at 400,000 killed and 750,000 injured. The UN confirms that Iraq used mustard gas against Iranian civilians and issues Security Council Resolution 620, deploring the use of chemical weapons. The Iraqi government launches a major offensive against its Kurdish population. 50,000 Kurds flee to Turkey before Iraq seals the border.²⁰³

1990: A presidential decree grants immunity to men who commit honour crimes.

2 August 1990: Iraq invades Kuwait and is condemned by Security Council Resolution 660, which calls for full withdrawal.

6 August 1990: Security Council resolution 661 imposes economic sanctions on Iraq.

29 November 1990: Security Council resolution 678 authorizes the states cooperating with Kuwait to use “all necessary means” to uphold Security Council Resolution 660.

1991: In the six-week Gulf War coalition forces liberate Kuwait. Iraq’s Kurds and Shiites begin synchronous rebellions to oust Saddam Hussein’s government, but with no material international support the uprisings are ruthlessly crushed. 1.5 million Kurds flee into northeastern Iraq, Turkey, and Iran.

3 April 1991: A UN Special Commission (UNSCOM) is established through Security Council Resolution 687 to supervise, alongside the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Iraq’s elimination of its weapons of mass destruction as laid out by the terms of the cease-fire.

9 April 1991: The Security Council establishes the UN Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission (UNIKOM) to monitor the demilitarized zone between Iraq and Kuwait.

10 April 1991: A safe-haven and no-fly zone is established to protect the Kurds in northern Iraq.

1992: Women activists create the Independent Women’s Organization in response to the high levels of violence against women in Iraqi Kurdistan, which included harassment, physical violence, mutilation, and the murder of more than 5,000 women. They campaigned to repeal anti-woman legislation in the northern governorates, and to end impunity for so-called “honour killings”.²⁰⁴

20-22 February 1992: Under the auspices of KWU, 177 women representing all the governorates of Kurdistan and all parts of Kurdish society participated in the “Martyr Layla Qassim” conference under the slogan “Peace, Freedom, Equality, and Justice”. The conference called for more inclusive participation of women at all levels in Iraqi Kurdistan, for the modernization of health services for women, for the lifting of economic sanctions from Iraq, and for the Security Council to change the latitude of the Kurdish self-rule area and northern no-fly zone so that all Iraqi Kurds would receive the same UN protection.²⁰⁵



26 August 1992: Another no-fly zone is established over Shiite areas in southern Iraq.

1994: UNICEF and the General Federation of Iraqi Women help Iraq's Ministry of Education to establish a programme of Non-Formal Education for 12,000 dropout girls, aged 10-14.

May 1994: Rivalry between Kurdish coalition partners, KDP and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), erupts into a months-long conflict in which 3000 are killed and the PUK emerges the stronger.

September 1995: The Government of Iraq commits to implementing the Beijing Platform for Action at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing.

14 April 1995: Security Council resolution 986 allows Iraq to partially resume its oil exports to buy food and medicine. The "Oil-for-food programme" is implemented in December 1996.

1996: Iraq's Ministry of Education abandons the Non-Formal Education programme.

24 March 1997: Hundreds of women and children demonstrate in front of a United Nations office in Baghdad to appeal for the release of Iraqi prisoners captured by Iran during the 1980-88 Gulf War.²⁰⁶

June 1997: The Iraqi government adopts a National Strategy for the Advancement of Women as part of its implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. The high-level National Committee for the Advancement of Iraqi Women is created, and comprises representatives of ministries involved in activities considered relevant to women. The General Federation of Iraqi Women is established to implement the Convention.²⁰⁷

1998: In 1998, the Independent Women's Organization in Iraqi Kurdistan establishes a Women's Shelter in Suleimaniya.²⁰⁸

February 1998: UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan meets with Saddam Hussein in Baghdad and negotiates the return of weapons inspectors to Iraq, as well as access to all suspected weapons sites, including presidential palaces. On 23 February, the Secretary-General signs a Memorandum of Understanding with Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz.²⁰⁹

30 September 1998: Oil-for-Food Programme Director Denis Halliday resigns in protest over the programme's inadequacy and the effect of sanctions on Iraqi civilians.

October 1998: UNSCOM reports that despite their denials, Iraq has weaponized VX agents.

1998: Iraq ends all forms of cooperation with UNSCOM. In December, the UN evacuates its weapons inspectors and the United States and Britain launch a four-day intensive bombardment against Iraq ("Operation Desert Fox").

4 January 1999: Iraq asks UN to replace all of its US and UK staff in Iraq.

8 January 1999: Clinton Administration officials admit to monitoring coded radio communications of Saddam Hussein's security forces, using equipment secretly installed by UN arms inspectors.

1999: All students are banned from foreign travel.

19 February 1999: Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr, spiritual leader of the Iraqi Shia community, is assassinated in Najaf.

17 December 1999: Security Council resolution 1284 establishes the UN Monitoring, Inspection, and Verification Committee (UNMOVIC) to replace UNSCOM.

2000: Saddam Hussein passes a law barring women from working outside the home.

13 February 2000: Hans von Sponeck, the second director of the Oil-for-Food Programme, resigns in protest at the impact of sanctions on Iraqi civilians.



April 2000: The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) declares that men who commit honour crimes will no longer be granted immunity in the area under its control.²¹⁰

June 2000: The Fedayeen Saddam militia begins a campaign of publicly beheading women on (largely trumped-up) charges of prostitution.

3-6 July 2000: A gender and development training workshop is held in Erbil, organized by the Iraqi Al-Amal Association in collaboration with the Machreq/Maghreb Gender Linking & Information Project, to further women's empowerment. The workshop includes lectures and practical exercises, and covers various aspects of the different relationships that arise between men and women, including reasons why these relationships may become imbalanced and ways to improve them.²¹¹

8-11 July 2000: A second gender and development training workshop is held in Sulaymania.²¹²

14 July 2000: PUK militias shut down a women's rights organization and a women's shelter, imprisoning the staff and the shelter residents.²¹³

20 September 2000: UNDP opens Learning Resources Center in Baghdad (first in the region).

February 2001: The US and Britain carry out bombing raids, attempting to disable Iraq's air defense network.

11 March 2001: UNDP holds a symposium on the role of Iraqi women in society at the LDC in Baghdad to analyze the situation of women in Iraq and to highlight their role in different sectors of Iraqi society.²¹⁴

September 2001: The Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) begins admitting women into the police academy as a step toward the integration of women into the police force.

14 May 2002: The Security Council unanimously adopts resolution 1409, instating "smart sanctions" that will specifically target military and dual-use equipment while effectively ending the embargo on international civilian trade with Iraq.²¹⁵

12 September 2002: Addressing the General Assembly, US President George W. Bush presents the case for war against Iraq.²¹⁶

20 October 2002: Saddam Hussein grants a general amnesty to all of Iraq's prisoners, including non-Iraqi Arabs, with the exception of those accused of spying for the United States or Israel.

22 October 2002: In an unprecedented display of public dissent, dozens of anguished women and angry young men, nearly all of them Shia, take to the streets in Baghdad demanding information about relatives jailed for political crimes who did not return home after the amnesty.

8 November 2002: Security Council resolution 1441 offers Iraq a final chance to disarm under UN monitoring or suffer "serious consequences" if it is found to be in further material breach of its obligations under previous resolutions.

18 November 2002: UN weapons inspectors return to Iraq.

December 2002: The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) appeals to donors for emergency aid that will allow UN agencies to effectively plan and implement humanitarian action in the event of war. OCHA repeats its emergency preparedness appeal one month later.

1 February 2003: The Secretary-General sets up a Pre-planning Group on post-conflict Iraq.

5 February 2003: Colin Powell addresses the Security Council in an effort to make the case for war against Iraq. The Council and the world remain divided.

13 February 2003: The UN sets up a task force on Iraqi reconstruction to prepare contingency plans for dealing with the consequences of a possible US-led attack on Iraq.



15 February 2003: Ten million people in six hundred cities around the world march to protest the invasion of Iraq in what may be the largest one-day protest in history.

March 2003: Women's rights activists and organizations in London, England, found the Iraqi Women's Rights Coalition in order to streamline their efforts to influence the policy-making of the new government in Iraq, and to ensure that women's equal rights are secured and enshrined in a secular constitution. The Kurdish Women Action Against Honour Killing sends an open letter to the UN, the US, and the European Union, expressing its concern that women were not being adequately represented and that their roles and rights were not being addressed by the prewar Iraqi opposition, and demanding women's full participation in the future government of Iraq.²¹⁷

17 March 2003: The Secretary-General orders the evacuation of all international UN staff from Iraq, including weapons inspectors, humanitarian personnel, and UNIKOM personnel in the demilitarized zone. President Bush gives Saddam Hussein and his sons 48 hours to leave the country or face war.

20 March 2003: War begins. America launches air strikes against Baghdad. US and British troops invade from the south some hours later.

22 March 2003: Millions march in worldwide anti-war protests.

28 March 2003: The Security Council unanimously passes resolution 1472, calling on the international community to provide immediate humanitarian assistance to the Iraqi people and resuming the Oil-for-Food Programme while the conflict lasts, allowing the Secretary-General to accelerate delivery of humanitarian aid. The UN appeals for emergency aid from donors.

4 April 2003: Representatives from WFP, the UNICEF, UNOCHA and UN security experts enter Iraq to assess the humanitarian conditions on the ground. The first UN trucks carrying food enter northern Iraq and UNICEF announces that water and medical supplies are on the way from Kuwait to southern Iraq.

7 April 2003: The Secretary-General appoints Rafeuddin Ahmed as his Special Adviser on Iraq.

8 April 2003: The US-led Office for Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA) starts working in Umm Qasr to assess the humanitarian needs in Iraq. President Bush and UK Prime Minister Tony Blair endorse a vital postwar role in Iraq for the UN.

9 April 2003: US forces advance into central Baghdad. Footage of US marines helping Iraqis topple a statue of Saddam Hussein is shown repeatedly around the world and interpreted by the media as symbolic of the end of his rule. Widespread looting breaks out across the city. Over the next few days, Kirkuk and Mosul fall. Looting and lawlessness continue unabated in Iraq's major cities, emptying the National Archeological Museum of priceless ancient artifacts, and not sparing hospitals, nuclear facilities, power plants, or other elements of the country's civilian infrastructure.

11 April 2003: The International Committee of the Red Cross announces that Baghdad's medical system has collapsed as a result of combat damages, looting, and security concerns.

15 April 2003: US forces take Tikrit. Iraqi opposition groups meet in Nasiriyah to discuss postwar self-rule. Iraq's main Shia group, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), boycotts the US-sponsored meeting. Of the approx. 120 delegates, only four are women and all of them are exiles. The meeting's delegates outline 13 principles for forming a new Iraqi government and include among them building the country on respect for diversity, particularly respect for the role of women. Some UN foreign staff returns to Iraq for the first time since the outbreak of war to assess the country's humanitarian needs.²¹⁸

16 April 2003: President Bush calls on the UN to lift sanctions against Iraq, now that Saddam Hussein's government has been ousted. The Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) dissolves the Baath party.

18 April 2003: Tens of thousands of Iraqis demonstrate in Baghdad to protest US occupation.



21 April 2003: Jay Garner, a retired former US general, arrives in Baghdad to begin his post as civilian administrator of Iraq.

22 April 2003: In a briefing before the Security Council, UN Chief Weapons Inspector Hans Blix recommends the resumption of UNMOVIC and IAEA weapons inspections in Iraq.²¹⁹

23 April 2003: In Washington, US Secretary of State Colin Powell meets with representatives of Women for a Free Iraq, a group of Iraqi exiles, to hear their recommendations on the most critical needs of Iraq's women and children. WFI asks that priority be given to restoring the educational sector, improving health care and social services for women and children, fostering political participation by women through training and exchanges, assuring judicial and legal reform, and providing human rights guarantees.²²⁰

24 April 2003: Security Council resolution 1476 extends the provisions allowing the Secretary-General to accelerate delivery of priority items under the Oil-for-Food Programme. The Secretary-General calls on the US-led coalition to respect international law as the "occupying power" in Iraq. The Council remains divided over the lifting of sanctions.

28 April 2003: Jay Garner meets with 250 Iraqis representing various groups to discuss the creation of an interim government. Kofi Annan declines an invitation for a UN representative to attend. Only six women attend the meeting, mainly as representatives of Iraqi exile working groups set up before the war by the US State Department's "Future of Iraq" programme. One representative, Zainab al-Suwaij, suggests including more women in the new leadership and giving more support to grassroots organizations. According to al-Suwaij, many delegates are receptive to her suggestions. US Deputy Richard Armitage acknowledges to the BBC that the participation of women in postwar reconstruction process has been inadequate.²²¹

5 May 2003: Mohamed ElBaradei, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency, requests the United States to allow an IAEA mission to investigate reports of looting at the Tuwaitha nuclear research facility. Jay Garner names five Iraqi candidates to form a provisional government in Iraq: Ahmed Chalabi (Iraqi National Congress), Massoud Barzani (KDP), Jalal Talabani (PUK), Abdul Haziz Hakim (SCIRI), and Ayad Alawi (Iraqi National Accord). None of Garner's candidates is a woman.

6 May 2003: President Bush appoints L. Paul Bremer as new top civilian administrator of Iraq.

7 May 2003: The US lifts some economic sanctions against Iraq to facilitate the rebuilding of the country.

8 May 2003: In a letter to the Security Council, the UK and US outline their perceived role in disarmament in particular, but more generally in Iraq.

9 May 2003: The US, UK and Spain present a draft resolution to the Security Council calling for an end to the sanctions against Iraq and for joint US-UK control of Iraq's oil revenue. The proposal suggests that the Oil-for-Food programme be phased out over four months and that the UN maintain an advisory and coordinating role in Iraq.

11 May 2003: Barbara Bodine, the US civil administrator for central Iraq in charge of Baghdad, is removed from office after just three weeks.²²²

16 May 2003: About 50 women, including members of the Iraqi Women's League, demonstrate in Baghdad urging US authorities to include women in Iraq's interim government.

22 May 2003: Security Council resolution 1483 lifts sanctions on Iraq (while maintaining an arms embargo), recognizes the US and Britain as occupying powers under unified command (the "Authority"), in control of Iraq until an internationally recognized government is formed, and outlines the UN's role in the reconstruction of Iraq. The Security Council reaffirms, in the second paragraph, its commitment to a "rule of law that affords equal rights and justice to all Iraqi



citizens without regard to ethnicity, religion, or gender," recalling its pledge to promote gender equality as outlined in resolution 1325.

23 May 2003: The Secretary-General names UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Sergio Vieira de Mello as his special representative for Iraq. The IAEA announces that, with the permission of the US government, it will soon send an inspection team back to Iraq to verify that radioactive material at the Tuwaitha nuclear facility, which was looted after the war, remains safe and accounted for. The CPA places strict restriction on small arms and light weapons: only coalition forces, Iraqi police and military forces on duty and groups assisting the coalition forces, both under the latter's supervision, are now permitted to possess a small arm in a public place. Arms markets and bazaars are prohibited.²²³

25 May 2003: The Kosova Women's Network sends an open letter to the women of Iraq, urging them to raise their voices and ensure that they play a significant role in the rebuilding of postwar Iraq.²²⁴

28 May 2003: The US Agency for International Development announces grants for five humanitarian organizations under its Community Action Programme, designed to promote citizen involvement in local decisions and work to prevent conflicts across gender, ethnic and religious lines in 250 communities. CAP initiatives will promote the rights of women and other groups underrepresented in political processes, and will focus on community mobilization, social programmes, and employment and income generation initiatives, and environmental protection and management.

5 June 2003: Dr. Hans Blix presents his final report to the Security Council before his contract expires at the end of the month. He reiterates that his team did not at any time during the inspections in Iraq find evidence of the continuation or resumption of weapons of mass destruction or significant quantities of banned items, whether from before or after 1991.

June 2003: The Afghan Women's Network sends an open letter to the women of Iraq, again emphasizing the need for them to insist on participation in the reconstruction process.²²⁵

1 July 2003: UNIFEM establishes programme coordinator in Iraq.

3 July 2003: Hundreds of women demonstrate in Baghdad, demanding to be included in shaping the political future of the country.²²⁶

9 July 2003: The International Alliance for Justice initiated a conference in Baghdad to discuss the status of women in the constitution, in the legislation, in the democratic process, in education, in the health system, the economy, and social and cultural affairs. More than 80 women from all parts of Iraq attended the conference. The main conference also brings together Iraqi women who had remained in Iraq under the dictatorship, women from the diaspora, and women from the three Kurdish governorates who, for over ten years, were able to promote the participation of women in the emerging civil society. Representatives of the CPA and several United Nations agencies also attended the conference discussions.²²⁷ Part of the conference focuses on the creation of five main committees to focus on Iraqi women's affairs in general: a constitution committee to define women's rights within the constitution of the future Iraq, a legal committee, a committee of social affairs-particularly health, education and teaching-and development and economic committees.²²⁸

17 July 2003: One of the three women on Iraq's Governing Council, Aqila al-Hashimi, is among the three members of the Iraqi interim administration who attended the Security Council on 17 July 2003.²²⁹

22 July 2003: The UN Population Fund (UNFPA) delivers emergency reproductive health supplies to Iraq meet the urgent needs of Iraqi women. The supplies include emergency obstetric care supplies, clean delivery equipment, contraceptives, syringes, essential drugs and other medical supplies UNFPA estimates that 2,000 women give birth in Iraq every day.



August 2003: Violence escalates with a series of truck bombings against significant targets: On 7 August, a truck bomb explodes in front of the Jordanian Embassy in Baghdad, killing at least 11 and wounding more than 50. A massive explosion in front of UN headquarters in Baghdad on 19 August kills Sergio Vieira de Mello and at least 21 other international and Iraqi UN staff, and wounds dozens more. A car bomb on August 29 explodes outside the Imam Ali Mosque, Najaf's holiest shrine, during Friday prayers, killing moderate Shia cleric Ayatollah Muhammad Baqr al-Hakim and 120 others. And while hundreds of thousands of Shia Muslims gather for the final day of mourning for al-Hakim, yet another bomb explodes near the police headquarters in Baghdad, killing one police officer and injuring 14 other officers and civilians.

14 August 2003: The United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq is established through Security Council resolution 1500.

September 2003: The United States introduces a draft Security Council resolution on the future of Iraq.²³⁰ In an interview with the BBC, Hans Blix accuses the United States and Britain of over-interpreting the evidence that Iraq possessed "weapons of mass destruction", likening their search for such weapons to a medieval witch-hunt.²³¹ Aqila al-Hashimi is fatally injured when she is shot outside her home by unidentified gunmen. A suicide car bomber attempting to attack UN headquarters in Baghdad kills himself and an Iraqi police officer, and wounds 17 others (two Iraqi UN staff and the rest Iraqi security guards), some 250 meters from the compound.

October 2003: A women's conference is held in Hilla,²³² out of which comes the idea to create a Higher Council for Women. The Council is launched later in the month, with British support, to increase women's participation across all levels of government, monitor progress on the Iraqi women's agenda and allow women's voices to be heard.²³³ The Security Council approves resolution 1511 on 16 October, underscoring the temporary nature of the CPA, recognizing the Iraqi Governing Council as embodying the sovereignty of the State of Iraq during the transitional period, and calling on the CPA to return governing responsibilities to the people of Iraq "as soon as practicable". Resolution 1511 also authorizes the establishment of a multinational force under unified command to take all necessary measures needed to maintain security and stability in Iraq. On 27 October, the Baghdad office of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is attacked with a car bomb that kills 10 Iraqis. The ICRC decides not to withdraw from Iraq completely, but does reduce its international staff. The UN temporarily relocates international staff based in Baghdad for consultations with UN headquarters on security issues.²³⁴

November 2003: An August 2003 reproductive health assessment by UNFPA is released. Findings indicate that the number of Iraqi women who die in pregnancy or in childbirth has almost trebled since 1990.²³⁵ A series of well-orchestrated attacks target CPA forces and the diplomatic community. Those killed include: 19 Italians, among them 12 Carabinieri military, in a suicide bombing in Nasariya (12 Nov); 7 Spanish intelligence officers (19 Nov); 2 Japanese diplomats and 1 Colombian contractor (29 Nov); 2 contractors from the Republic of Korea (30 Nov).²³⁶

21 November 2003: The UN Oil-for-Food Programme is effectively terminated and handed over to the Coalition Provisional Authority.²³⁷

December 2003: Raja Habib Khuzai and Songul Chapouk, of the IGC, publish an Op-Ed piece in the New York Times on 3 December 2003. They note that women "are severely underrepresented in the leadership established for the transition [to democracy] and call for the IGC and the CPA to "ensure women their rightful place at the decision-making table".²³⁸ The Secretary-General names Mr. Ross Mountain as his Acting Special Representative in Iraq.²³⁹

9 December 2003: Dr. Salama al-Khafaji is named to replace the late Aquila al-Hashimi on the IGC.²⁴⁰

13 December 2003: Saddam Hussein is captured by US troops.²⁴¹



29 December 2003: The IGC votes, in Resolution 137, to move family issues from civil to religious jurisdiction, where they would be governed by sharia law—a move that threatens many of the legal protections that Iraqi women enjoyed even under Saddam Hussein.

January 2004: The CPA refuses to endorse Resolution 137 because it would deprive Iraqi women of their rights. Kofi Annan meets with CPA and IGC officials in New York to discuss sending a technical mission to Iraq to advise on the feasibility of holding general elections in June 2004.²⁴² Iraqi women organize conferences and street marches to protest—and at least one march to support—Resolution 137. Four Iraqi women who worked as cleaners and laundry women for the US Army are killed in a gun attack on the minibus in which they were traveling.

28-29 January 2004: The Basra Southern Women's Conference brings together 220 women from across Iraq for discussions on women's political participation.²⁴³

February 2004: Two women who worked at a US Army base are shot, and one of them is killed, as they are on their way home.²⁴⁴ Lakhdar Brahimi, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General, leads a UN team to Iraq to assess the feasibility of elections before the return of sovereignty on 30 June 2004. The team consults with at least one representative of a woman's group as part of the assessment. On 19 February the Secretary-General says that there is an "emerging consensus" that elections cannot be organized before the 30 June deadline for a transfer of sovereignty, but that this date should be "respected".

18 February 2004: As one action in a months-long, nationwide campaign, Iraqi women hold a sit-in to demand that the Constitution enshrine representation in legislature of 40% for women, and to protest IGC Resolution 137. Women's rights activist Yanar Mohamed receives a death threat for campaigning to reverse IGC Resolution 137. The Committee on the Elimination of Violence against Women expressed its concern regarding women's human rights in Iraq.²⁴⁵ Resolution 137 is repealed by the IGC later in February.²⁴⁶

March 2004: Two sisters who worked as laundry women for US forces are shot to death at point-blank range as they return home in a taxi.²⁴⁷

1-12 March 2004: Iraqi women delegates representing both local governing councils and civil society attend the 2004 Commission on the Status of Women in New York. They present their concerns and needs both in public fora and directly to UN agencies.

2 March 2004: Women and children are among the 140 Shiite pilgrims killed during simultaneous attacks in Karbala.²⁴⁸

8 March 2004: The Iraqi Governing Council signs an interim constitution suggesting a 25% target for women in parliament and including specific clauses to protect gender equality.²⁴⁹

16 March 2004: Two non-Iraqi women are killed and one is injured when the vehicle in which they are traveling is attacked with automatic weapons in Mosul. The two male coworkers with whom they were traveling were also killed in the attack.²⁵⁰

19 March 2004: US officials estimate that between 1997 and 2002, the Iraqi government made US\$10 billion in illicit gains (billions more than the US\$6 billion previously thought) from the Oil-for-Food Programme. Moreover, UN staff are alleged to have benefited financially from the programme and to have accepted bribes in return for support for Saddam Hussein. The Secretary-General calls for a full inquiry.²⁵¹



28 March 2004: The Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) issues an order to close the newspaper of anti-U.S. Shi'ite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr. The *Al-Hawzah* newspaper will be closed for two months for inciting violence, a move denounced by Al-Sadr supporters who protested by staging a sit-in outside the newspaper's offices following the announcement. Shi'ite leaders said the decision will likely provoke al-Sadr's followers.²⁵²

31 March 2004: Four US civilian contractors are killed and mutilated by Iraqi insurgents in Falluja. The brutality of their deaths sparks outrage among Americans.²⁵³

April 2004: More than 40 foreign nationals from 12 countries are reportedly abducted in Iraq, most of them civilians and at least one of them female. Some of the abductors threaten to kill their hostages unless their demands are met, and on 14 April, an Italian hostage is executed. However many of the other hostages were freed by their captors unharmed.²⁵⁴ Lakhdar Brahimi meets with a group representing women's NGOs, and separately with a group of human rights advocates, as part of his talks with Iraqis on the UN role in political transition and elections, seeking their ideas about UN assistance with the formation of an Iraqi administration to take over from US-led occupation forces on 1 July, and with preparations for elections early next year.

2 April 2004: Nasreen Barwari, Minister for Public Works and Iraq's only female interim minister, survives an assassination attempt in which three of her body guards are killed.²⁵⁵ Lakhdar Brahimi leads a second UN team to Iraq to assess the potential UN role in political transition and elections. Again, he meets with representatives of women's NGOs to obtain their ideas on what UN assistance is needed on the formation of the transitional government.²⁵⁶

5 April 2004: Ambassador Paul Bremer announces the appointment of 28 new Deputy Ministers, of whom seven are women.²⁵⁷ In response to the murder and mutilation of four US contractors days earlier, US forces seal Falluja and launch a massive offensive to root out insurgents.²⁵⁸ 600 Iraqis are reported killed, among them many women, children and elderly. 1,200 are reported injured, among them 243 women and 200 children. Tens of thousands of women and children flee to Baghdad.²⁵⁹

9 April 2004: US troops suspend operations in Falluja.

14 April 2004: Lakhdar Brahimi tells reporters in Baghdad that national elections could be held in Iraq by January 2005. His plan for an interim government includes the formation in May of a caretaker Government, "led by a Prime Minister and comprising Iraqi men and women known for their honesty, integrity and competence". He also said a Consultative Assembly should be elected in July to serve alongside the caretaker Government.²⁶⁰

21 April 2004: Nine schoolgirls were among the 68 people killed (17 of them children) in Basra when suicide bombers staged coordinated attacks on three police stations.²⁶¹

21 April 2004: The director-general of administration for the tribunal set up to try Saddam Hussein says that seven investigative judges and five prosecutors have been named to the tribunal. Their identities, however, are being kept secret to ensure their safety.²⁶² The Secretary-General names the independent (all-male) panel that will conduct an inquiry into allegations of impropriety in the administration and management of the Iraq Oil-for-Food Programme. The panel's report will be made public.²⁶³

27 April 2004: Lakhdar Brahimi makes a statement to the Security Council laying out his vision for the political transition process in Iraq (an elaboration of the statement made to the press in Baghdad two weeks earlier).²⁶⁴ In a Presidential statement, the Council expresses its strong support for Brahimi's efforts.²⁶⁵



29 April 2004: Allegations emerge of sexual and other abuse by US soldiers of Iraqis held in Abu Ghreib prison, notorious for the abuses that were carried out there under Saddam Hussein.²⁶⁶ Female detainees are alleged to be among the abused,^{267: 268} and female soldiers among the abusers.

30 April 2004: Nine delegates from women's organizations meet with L. Paul Bremer to discuss their concern over the success of the political process during the transitional period following the transfer of sovereignty (planned for 30 June 2004).²⁶⁹

11 May 2004: Nicholas Berg, an independent businessman American, is beheaded in Iraq. A videotape showing the murder is posted online; the website identifies the man who carried out the beheading as Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, a Jordanian militant linked to Al Qaeda. One of the masked men in the videotape, addressing "the mothers and wives of American soldiers", says Berg's murder is retaliation for the abuses against "the Muslim men and women in Abu Ghraib" prison.²⁷⁰

The Players

Unidentified Assailants: After Saddam Hussein's government was ousted and President George W. Bush declared major combat operations over in May 2003, attacks continued against coalition forces (killing at least one nearly every day), water and oil infrastructure, and other targets. In August, Shia cleric Mohamed Bakr al-Hakim was assassinated in an attack on one of Najaf's holiest shrines. In the same month, the Jordanian Embassy and UN headquarters in Baghdad were targeted, killing Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Sergio Vieira de Mello, among others. In September, Aqila al-Hashimi—one of the three women nominated to Iraq's interim Governing Council—was assassinated, beginning an intensification of seemingly politically motivated attacks.²⁷¹ As of October 2003, however, the attackers remain unidentified. Elements loyal to Saddam Hussein are among those suspected, as are unknown militants who entered Iraq after his ouster.²⁷² Ahmed Chalabi of the Iraqi National Congress says the attackers may be Iraqi Baathists, fedayeen, or members of the extremist group Ansar al-Islam. President Bush has not specifically named any groups he might believe to be behind the attacks.²⁷³ Regardless of identity, the assailants have had an important impact on postwar Iraq, prompting the UN to withdraw most international staff from the country and disrupting the work of numerous other international aid agencies working toward Iraq's recovery and reconstruction.

The Arab Socialist Baath Party: The ruling party of Iraq under Saddam Hussein, The Baath party's main ideological objectives were secularism, socialism and pan-Arab Unionism. The Iraqi branch of the Baath party was established in 1954 and came to power in 1968 coup. Under the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein, who had acquired de-facto control of the country years before he assumed the presidency in 1979, the Baathist government was transformed into a one-party government whose power structure consisted largely of Saddam Hussein's relatives from Tikrit and the surrounding area. The (nominally) Sunni government ruled by terror and brutal force through its wide-reaching intelligence and security forces: Al-Amn al-Askariyya (Military Security Service), Al Amn al-Khass (Special Security Services, responsible for protecting Baath party leadership), Amn al-Amma (General Security Services, or secret police), the Fedayeen Saddam (Saddam's Men of Sacrifice, a paramilitary group used to brutally quell dissent or political agitation, created by Saddam Hussein's oldest son, Uday), Al-Istikhbarat al-Askariyya (Military Intelligence, used to ensure the loyalty of the armed forces), Jihaz al-Mukhabarat al-Amma (Iraqi Intelligence Service, responsible for overseeing all other intelligence and security services), the Republican Guard, the Special Republican Guard (responsible for protecting Saddam Hussein himself), and Unit 999 (an ultra-secret "deep penetration" unit used in domestic and foreign operations). The Baath party under Saddam Hussein infiltrated every aspect of Iraqi life through the use of informers, by monitoring all telecommunications, by forcing boys to join the Ashbal



Saddam (Saddam's Lion Cubs, a unit to prepare volunteers to join the Fedayeen Saddam), and by forcing Iraqis to join the party in order to study or work. An estimated 2.4 million Iraqis (of a population of 24 million) belonged to the Baath party before it was dissolved by L. Paul Bremer, the US administrator in Iraq, in 2003.²⁷⁴

Shia: Religiously, the Shia are defined by their loyalty to the Household of the Prophet and their school of Islam. In Iraq, historically the heartland of Shiism, the Shia are those who belong to the Jaafari sect of Islam by birth or by choice, representing about 60 percent of the Iraqi population and as much as 98 percent of the population in the south. They have been politically marginalized since the creation of modern Iraq under a sectarian government set up under the British mandate. This state policy (not a communal sectarianism) arose from the misconception that a Shia government in Iraq would ally itself with Shia-dominated Iran, a fallacy that has survived to this day despite Iraqi Shia fighting for their country and forming a large part of its army in the Iran-Iraq War. Following the 1991 Gulf War, the southern Shia took part, with the Kurds in the north, in a failed uprising against the government of Iraq. Known and suspected participants in the uprising were executed and 30,000-40,000 Iraqi Shia were expelled to Iran. In response to the UN Human Rights Special Rapporteur's report of increased Iraqi military pressure on the population of the southern marshes, members of the Gulf War coalition imposed a "no-fly zone" over southern Iraq. This did not increase civilian safety, and in fact the next decade witnessed a ruthless policy of state suppression of the Shia. Iraqi security forces' operations included armed attacks on rebels and civilians, executions, the assassination of Shia leaders, mass expulsions, and the destruction of crops, houses, villages, and marshland. Disappointed expectations, during the 2003 Gulf War, that the Shia would aid coalition forces in their efforts to oust Saddam Hussein can be traced to this group's long-held opposition to foreign occupation of Iraq and its commitment to a unified Iraqi state.²⁷⁵

Kurds: Kurds have been the world's largest ethnic group without a state since Kurdistan was split, over Kurdish objections, between Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria in the 1920 redrawing of the Middle East. They form Iraq's largest ethnic minority, representing 20 percent of the Iraqi population, and have wavered between violent conflict and negotiation with successive Arab governments in Iraq in their efforts to gain some degree of autonomy. They revolted—and were defeated and scattered—in the 1970s, when autonomy negotiations broke down over claims to the oil-rich region of Kirkuk. Some Kurdish groups, including the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), cooperated with Iran during the Iran-Iraq War and took advantage of the disruption caused by that conflict to press their own agenda. The government of Iraq used this to justify its 1987-88 Anfal campaign, which Human Rights Watch and others have called a genocide. After the government's brutal repression of the 1991 uprising of the Kurds and the Shia, members of the Gulf War coalition imposed a no-fly zone and a safe haven in northern Iraq and the Kurds were able to establish autonomous rule. Following elections in 1992, the Kurdistan National Assembly and the Kurdish Regional Government were created, and the KDP and PUK entered into an equal power-sharing agreement. The Kurdish safe haven enjoyed relative freedom and prosperity compared to the rest of Iraq, however in-fighting between the PUK and KDP was at times bloody, the contested region of Kirkuk remained under the Iraqi government's control, and many Kurds in areas outside the safe haven were forcefully expelled under the Baghdad's "Arabization" policy. In the 2003 Gulf War, Kurdish peshmergas fought with coalition forces to liberate northern cities, including, to Turkey's consternation, Kirkuk, and hope to establish autonomy within an Iraqi federation.²⁷⁶

Turkey: From 1984 to 1999, Turkey was engaged in a struggle with the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK; its remnants now called KADEK), a Kurdish insurgent group waging a separatist guerrilla war in Turkey from bases in northern Iraq. In its fight with the PKK, labeled a terrorist organization by Turkey, the United States,²⁷⁷ the United Kingdom,²⁷⁸ the European Union,²⁷⁹ and others, Turkey made numerous air and ground incursions into the Kurdish self-rule area in Iraq's



three northern governorates, with the tacit consent of the US and Britain, who permitted its forces to violate Iraq's territorial integrity and the northern no-fly zones in search of PKK rebels. Major invasions took place in 1992, 1995, 1996, 1997, and 2000. The movement of PKK fighters—and the Turkish troops who followed them—into Iraqi Kurdistan resulted in nearly 30,000 deaths (mostly Kurdish), mass displacements of Iraqi Kurds, and tensions between the two main Iraqi Kurdish opposition groups, which during the 1990s supported opposite sides in the Turkish conflict. The KDP fought intermittently with the PKK and was allied with the Turkish government, whereas the PUK for some time supported the PKK, though it later dissolved the alliance. Turkey, along with Syria, Iran, and the Iraqi government, has opposed the creation of a unified Kurdistan and worries that Iraqi Kurdish autonomy will strengthen its own Kurds' separatist aspirations. Moreover, the repeated flight of Iraqi Kurdish refugees to Turkey from Baghdad's repression and the closing of the Iraq-Turkey oil pipeline following the imposition of UN sanctions already proved destabilizing. In the 2003 Gulf War, Turkey said it would not let an independent Kurdish state arise from post-Saddam Hussein Iraq and stationed tens of thousands of troops along the border. When Iraqi Kurds gained control of Kirkuk, a city claimed by Arabs, Kurds, and Turkomen, many feared that Turkey would cite this as an excuse to invade. Kurdish forces withdrew from the city, but began to expel Arabs in neighboring areas from property and lands that had belonged to Kurds before Saddam Hussein's "Arabization" programme. To allay Turkomen fears, a Turkish convoy attempted to smuggle military equipment into Kirkuk for their use. The attempt was thwarted at a US checkpoint north of the city.²⁸⁰

Iran: The long-standing border dispute between Iraq and Iran in 1980 erupted into an eight-year war that would claim hundreds of thousands of lives, most of them Iranian. The roots of the conflict were Saddam Hussein's determination to consolidate power in the region and prevent an Islamic revolution in Iraq (in the latter effort he was supported by the US and others), as well as personal animosity between Saddam Hussein and the Ayatollah Khomeini. Both sides exploited ethnic and religious differences (Arab versus Persian, Sunni versus Shia) to rouse nationalist sentiments, and employed brutal means in their efforts to break the stalemate that had arisen by the mid-1980s: Iraq repeatedly used chemical weapons against Iranian soldiers, and Iran relied on costly human-wave tactics. Since the end of the war in 1988, the question of POWs has created tension between the two countries. Tens of thousands of POWs were repatriated and remains of soldiers returned, but thousands still remain unaccounted for. Iraq denied that it held any Iranian POWs. Moreover, each country accused the other of harboring rebels opposed to its government. The Mujahideen-e Khalq Organization (MKO), an armed Iranian opposition group seeking to oust Iran's clerical rulers, operated from bases in southern Iraq for more than a decade. Although the US, EU, and Iran considered the MKO to be a terrorist group, and US forces targeted its bases in the 2003 war, the US initially signed a cease-fire with the group, allowing it to maintain its military camps in Iraq on condition that it cease hostilities against the US. However, following Iranian criticism of the cease-fire, the US sought and won the group's surrender. Iran, for its part, gave refuge and backing to the Supreme Council of Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) and its estimated 15,000 troops. Following the 2003 war, the US named a member of SCIRI as one of five candidates to form a provisional Iraqi government, and the organization's leader returned to Iraq after two decades of exile in Iran.²⁸¹

Gulf War Coalition: In 1991, following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, Security Council Resolution 678 authorized Member States cooperating with the Kuwaiti government to use "all necessary means" to compel Iraq to withdraw its forces. A 34-member allied coalition was formed that included Afghanistan, Argentina, Australia, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Egypt, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Honduras, Italy, Kuwait, Morocco, The Netherlands, Niger, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, South Korea, Spain, Syria, Turkey, The United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom and the United States. Non-US forces represented roughly 24 percent of coalition troops. The ground war was terminated and its mission deemed accomplished when the US-led coalition had successfully expelled Iraqi forces



from Kuwait. In the 6-week war, coalition forces dropped 80,000 tons of explosives on Iraq, including many with depleted-uranium shells. Estimates of Iraqi soldiers killed range from 1,500 (according to a former US Defense Intelligence Agency analyst) to 100,000. 2,500 to 3,500 civilians were killed and 9,000 homes were destroyed in the coalition's air campaign. In 1991, the civilian death toll rose to 110,000 due to "delayed mortality" resulting from the destruction of civilian infrastructure (destroyed electricity-generating power-plants and the resulting breakdown of water purification and sanitation systems, damaged health facilities). Members of the Gulf War coalition imposed controversial no-fly zones over northern and southern Iraq, ostensibly to protect the Kurds and Shia from the central government. The United States and Britain continued patrolling the no-fly zones and bombarding Iraqi air defenses until 2003.²⁸²

The Coalition of the Willing: In March 2003, a second US-led coalition began military action against Iraq to oust Saddam Hussein and disarm Iraq of its weapons of mass destruction. Controversy surrounded the war even before it began, with some states arguing that a Security Council resolution was required to give it legitimacy, while the United States and Britain claimed that Resolution 1441 itself sanctioned military action. Despite the controversy, a number of states agreed to "support" the joint US/British military effort, their support ranging from material (military) assistance to financial aid for postwar reconstruction. The "coalition of the willing", as this group became known, included Afghanistan, Albania, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Colombia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Georgia, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, the Netherlands, Nicaragua, the Philippines, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Turkey, United Kingdom and Uzbekistan. Additionally, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Honduras, Kuwait, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Mongolia, Palau, Portugal, Rwanda, Singapore, Solomon Islands, and Uganda expressed "political support" for the US-led effort, and 10 countries (including Qatar and Bahrain, where coalition troops were stationed) did not want to be publicly identified but were willing to help US efforts. Coalition forces fought with Kurdish opposition groups in northern Iraq to oust Iraqi forces from those areas. Baghdad fell to coalition forces on 9 April, but the coalition was widely criticized for its failure to prevent widespread looting and lawlessness, and to secure stability, in the following days. US President George W. Bush declared on 1 May that the combat operations in Iraq were over. The United States, Britain and Spain petitioned the UN to lift the economic sanctions on Iraq and to endorse US and British control of Iraq's political development and financial resources for at least a year. Security Council resolution 1483 recognizes the US and the Britain as occupying powers under unified command (the "Coalition Provisional Authority"), to remain in control of Iraq until "an internationally recognized, representative government is established by the people of Iraq", and granted the UN a supporting role in Iraq's recovery and reconstruction.²⁸³

What UNIFEM is doing in Iraq

UNIFEM Programme Coordinator in Iraq: Ms. Basma al-Khateeb (from 1 July 2003)

UNIFEM has been a close partner of the National Committee for the Advancement of Iraqi Women to assess progress and to develop a national strategy to accelerate the implementation of their mandate consistent with the Beijing Platform for Action. UNIFEM also worked towards strengthening the capacity of relevant national entities responsible for the generation of gender desegregated data and information. In addition, it has also provided support to the General Federation of Iraqi Women to build their resource center providing them with relevant materials and resources.

UNIFEM has been working in Iraq since 2001. UNIFEM took part in the UNICEF-organized workshop, "Monitoring and Implementation of CEDAW", held in Iraq from 29 April to 2 May 2001. The workshop's objective was to strengthen the capacity of the National Committee for the



Advancement of Iraqi Women and NGOs in their monitoring of Iraq's implementation of CEDAW. To put the workshop's objectives into effect, UNIFEM, with UNDP and Iraq's Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, in June 2001 initiated the project "Support to the National Committee for the Advancement of Iraqi Women". In August, Dr. Haifa Abu Ghazaleh (Regional Programme Director of the Arab States Regional Office) headed a mission to launch the project's activities in Baghdad, in collaboration with the General Federation of Iraqi Women and the National Committee and its member organizations. The project's goals are: to build the capacity of the National Committee as it implements the strategic objectives outlined in Beijing Platform for Action and as it assesses progress, formulates gender policies, and recommends priorities for accelerating the implementation of the National Strategy for the Advancement of Iraqi Women; to introduce a gender perspective in the data collection, analysis, and dissemination processes; and to strengthen the national entities responsible for the generation of gender-desegregated data and information so that the gender perspective is institutionalized.

Under the Hussein government, UNIFEM was involved in assisting Iraqi women through the General Federation of Iraqi Women by providing the resources and materials needed by the Federation to build a gender resource base.

UNIFEM also actively supported an inter-agency task force on gender to integrate gender within the UN system in Iraq, helping to draft the task force terms of reference and participating in a number of inter-agency meetings in Iraq. Within this context, UNIFEM provides technical support for a comprehensive study, led by UNDP, on the socio-economic situation of Iraqi women.

On 21 March 2003, UNIFEM Executive Director Noeleen Heyzer urged the international community to take into account, in its efforts to provide humanitarian assistance to the people of Iraq during and after the conflict, the disparate impact of armed conflict on women. On behalf of UNIFEM, she called on all parties to adhere to international legal standards, especially those that outlaw the use of indiscriminate weapons, deliberate targeting of civilians, and sexual or gender violence. She also called on the international community to recognize the rights of Iraqi women to participate in all decision-making about the future of their society.

In the period of postwar reconstruction, UNIFEM has worked with women's organizations around the world to urge the occupying power to include women in the reconstruction process and in the new transitional government. UNIFEM, with UNDP, planned a symposium that would bring together women from across Iraq to discuss postwar recovery and reconstruction and to consult on the National Strategy on the Advancement of Women, however the meeting was postponed after the August 2003 attack on UN headquarters in Baghdad. UNIFEM and UNDP altered their plan in light of the security situation to conduct a series of smaller regional meetings rather than one large symposium.

UNIFEM Arab States along with the World Bank, Women for Women International, and Women Waging Peace, organized a conference for Iraqi Women in Amman, Jordan from 7-14 December 2003. UNIFEM organized a one-day session on 10 December, entitled "Application and Advocacy of International Treaties to Iraq" to discuss international vehicles that support women's empowerment, with an emphasis on the UN Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security and how women can use those tools to advance their agenda in Iraq. Almost 30 Iraqis (men and women) from different backgrounds, religions and ideologies attended the session. The World Bank event, entitled "Women's Economic Rights and Design of Social Fund Projects" focused on their recent report on the status of women in the Middle East and program planning and development. The Women for Women International and Women Waging Peace event, entitled "Guaranteeing Women a Role in Iraq: Translating Experiences from Abroad" focused on message management and the adaptation of governance system from other countries.²⁸⁴



Through visits to Iraq and in collaboration with the growing number of emerging women's organizations in Iraq, UNIFEM helped to identify Iraqi women who have begun to organize for the reconstruction and rebuilding process, consulted with the Coalition Provisional Authority, coordinated with UN and other agencies working in the field and finally, worked with a receptive Office of the United Nations Special Representative in Iraq succeeded in putting gender issues on the reconstruction agenda.²⁸⁵

UNIFEM participated in the Needs Assessment process conducted in the summer of 2003 by the United Nations on 14 key sectors in Iraq, circulating a briefing paper and a checklist²⁸⁶ and on the gender components of each sector that the 14 teams would address. Gender was one of three cross-cutting issues in each sector.²⁸⁷

Starting in April 2003, the UNIFEM Arab States Regional Office moderated an electronic discussion on the impact of armed conflict on Iraqi women through its Arab Women Connect website.²⁸⁸

UNIFEM has been active in Iraq throughout the post-conflict period, and has had a programme coordinator in Iraq since 1 July 2003: Ms. Basma al-Khatteeb. UNIFEM has worked closely with women working at the grassroots and decision-making levels. UNIFEM has met with national consultants working on the studies and amendments to the National Strategy, and has been in touch with various emerging women's groups in Iraq as well as CPA gender focal points following up the issues of the women's agenda in Iraq.²⁸⁹ UNIFEM has also acted as a broker between local women's groups and the UN system, including Special Adviser to the Secretary-General Lakhdar Brahimi during his assessment missions to Iraq in early 2004.

UNIFEM acted as a broker between other UN entities and representatives of Iraqi women's organizations when the latter visited New York in March 2004 for the Commission on the Status of Women.

UNIFEM attended the Basra Women's Conference from 28-29 January 2004, and used the conference as an opportunity to make contacts with women's groups in all of the southern governorates, including women of the Bedouin community in Samawah. UNIFEM also engaged in side-talks with Islamist women attending the conference regarding UN support and awareness programmes for the women in their organizations.²⁹⁰

UNIFEM's goals for immediate action in post-conflict Iraq include building the capacity of interim governing bodies to mainstream gender throughout the peace and reconstruction processes, supporting the mobilization of Iraqi women in advocating for the promotion of women's rights and participation in the peace and reconstruction processes, building a practical and comprehensive knowledge base on Iraqi women to provide an in-depth assessment and understanding of the status of women, and raising awareness in society of women's human rights and the role that Iraqi women can play in the peace and reconstruction processes.²⁹¹

UN Country Team Gender Programming

Members of the UN Country Team in Iraq: ESCWA, FAO, ILO, IOM, ITU, OHCHR, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UN-HABITAT, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNIFEM, UNMAS, UNODC, UNOPS, WFP, WHO

Gender Focal Point in Mission: Mona Rishmawi

- **UNAMI:** Created through Security Council Resolution 1500 (2003), UNAMI is a one-year follow-through mission in the wake of the Oil-for-Food Programme on 21 November 2003. Gender



is one of the cross-cutting issues of the UN integrated approach in Iraq, intended to be taken into consideration in each of the operations Clusters: Education and Culture, Health, Water and Sanitation, Infrastructure and Housing, Agriculture, Water Resources and Environment, Food Security, Mine Action, IDPs and Refugees, Governance and Civil Society, and Poverty Reduction and Human Development. UNIFEM is a partner in the Education & Culture, Governance, Poverty Reduction and gives additional support to the Health cluster. The Education & Culture cluster will advocate for women's and children's rights, particularly their right to quality education. The main objective of the Health Cluster is to support the Ministry of Health's national health strategy in order to substantially reduce morbidity and mortality among the whole population, in particular among women and children as soon as possible. The Agriculture, Water Resources and Environment Cluster counts women's associations among its key partners in increasing agricultural production and national food security, enhancing product quality and safety and reducing reliance on agricultural imports. The national longer term challenge of the Poverty Reduction & Human Development Cluster is to provide employment and income-generation opportunities for all sectors of society, especially the more vulnerable groups (women are typically in this category).

- **The Office of the Iraq Programme (OIP):** Under Executive Director Mr. Benon V. Sevan, OIP managed and coordinated all UN humanitarian activities in Iraq including the Oil-for-Food Programme until 21 November 2003, when responsibility for these programmes was transferred to the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA). In 1995-1996, the international community and the government of Iraq recognized the devastating impact of economic sanctions on Iraq's civilian population. The Oil-for-Food Programme (UN Security Council Resolution 986) was established to address these needs by allowing oil sales to finance imports of food and other humanitarian goods. Under the Oil-for-Food Programme, Iraq's oil sales also pay for Gulf War reparations and all UN operations in Iraq. OIP's mandate included improving food distribution, transport and food handling, agriculture, health care delivery services and nutrition, availability of education and teacher training (a sector traditionally dominated by women), water supply and water and sewage treatment facilities, housing, telecommunications infrastructure, and power generating capacity, and thus had a major impact on the health and welfare of Iraqi women. OIP also undertook relief activities for internally displaced persons and mine clearance programmes in the three northern governorates of Iraq under Kurdish self-rule. OIP activities were of immense importance to Iraqi women and children, who were disproportionately affected by the combined effects of conflict and sanctions. UN agencies and programmes estimated that 60 percent of the Iraqi population relied exclusively on the monthly food baskets received through the Oil-for-Food Programme, which grew into the largest programme in the history of the United Nations to address basic human needs in a single country. UN agencies and programmes involved in the OIP were FAO, UNESCO, WHO, ITU, UNICEF, UNDP, WPF, UNOPS, and UN-Habitat.²⁹² After the Oil-for-Food Programme was transferred to the CPA, allegations surfaced of corruption in the administration and management of the programme. The Secretary-General named an independent panel to probe these allegations in April 2004.²⁹³

- **The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP):** UNDP Iraq, whose resident representative was Mr. Francis Dubois, ran a number of programmes. UNDP Iraq worked with UNIFEM to support the NCAIW in its gender mainstreaming efforts by funding training in gender analysis and gender-sensitive policies and helping to incorporate gender indicators in data collection. UNDP Iraq's efforts to reduce cancer-related deaths in Iraq focus particularly on breast and cervical cancer. It provides vocational training for disadvantaged women and offers micro-credit loans for women to start small businesses, and works with the GFIW to facilitate this group's support of disadvantaged women. UNDP Iraq provides vocational training and interest-free micro-credit loans, and renovates work, health, and childcare areas for inmates at the Iraqi Women's Prison in Baghdad. And in September 2000, UNDP Iraq opened the first Learning Resources Center (LRC) in the region in Baghdad, open to women and men. The LRC provides



training in language and communications and in computer skills, and hosts lectures, seminars and workshops on UNDP-related subjects such as gender, human development, and the environment. In September 2001, UNDP organized a Symposium on the Role of Iraqi Women in Baghdad to analyse the situation of women in Iraq and to highlight their roles in the various sectors of Iraqi society. UNDP worked with the Iraqi Planning Commission on the second national Human Development Report, which was based on some gender disaggregated indicators including women's participation in political and economic activities.²⁹⁴

- **The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF):** UNICEF has been working in Iraq since 1952, and has had a fulltime presence there since 1983. In 1953, UNICEF began work on a network to provide maternal health services. During the 1990s, UNICEF worked with local partners to establish and maintain safe water supplies for communities, helping to reduce the heavy burden that water collection placed on girls. In 1994, UNICEF and GFIW helped the Ministry of Education establish a programme of Non-Formal Education for 12,000 dropout girls, aged 10-14. The programme encouraged girls to go back to school after completing their Non-Formal Education. (The Ministry of Education abandoned the programme in 1996).²⁹⁵ UNICEF promotes elementary and secondary education through its school-rehabilitation programme, repairing crumbling schools to revitalize attendance. As well, to ensure that girls get an education, UNICEF encourages teachers to do what they can to persuade parents to keep their daughters in school and funds informal education projects for adolescents, particularly girls, who have dropped out of school. In the northern Kurdish governorates, two decades of conflict have increased the number of orphans and reduced the ability of their extended families to care for them. UNICEF improves living conditions and trains staff as part of their programme to support orphanages in Iraqi Kurdistan, including the girls' home in Erbil, which houses 95 girls, and those in Suleimaniya and Dohuk, which house another 170 girls. UNICEF also participated in a postwar needs assessment of the health sector which addressed cross-cutting gender concerns.²⁹⁶

- **The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA):** UNFPA has been active in Iraq since 1972, ensuring that pregnant women receive adequate nutrition and access to vitamins, medicines, and antenatal care. Its recent efforts, which include funding Iraq's Ministry of Health in its promotion of reproductive health and family planning services, resulted in the increase of facilities providing such services from 37 in 1995 to 146 in 2001. In 2003, under Executive Director Thoraya Ahmed Obaid, UNFPA prepared for the humanitarian impact of the impending war by recruiting and training personnel and health officials and by pre-positioning essential medical supplies and equipment, both inside Iraq and in neighbouring countries that might see an influx of Iraqi refugees, to ensure that pregnant women be able to give birth safely and receive emergency obstetric care if necessary. It was the first reproductive health training for many health officials, and they acknowledged this aspect of emergency response to have been neglected in the region. As well, participants in the trainings together decided on an Arabic word that would best describe the concept of "gender" to help health officials understand its importance to emergency planning. Two shipments of emergency medical supplies were delivered, in June and July 2003, to key maternity hospitals and primary health care centers in Baghdad.²⁹⁷

- **The World Food Programme (WFP):** WFP, under Executive Director James T. Morris and in cooperation with other UN agencies, local authorities, and local NGOs, used Oil-for-Food Programme funds to provide aid to more than 600,000 vulnerable people, paying direct attention to the needs of women. Its Supplementary Feeding programme benefitted 41,000 pregnant and lactating mothers, as well as malnourished children, hospital patients, and residents in social institutions such as orphanages. And its Family Food Security / Income Generation Activities helped 12,000 female-headed families through small ruminants rearing, beekeeping, and women's skills enhancement—including educating mothers in how to cope with the poor water supply and to promote healthy feeding practices.²⁹⁸



- **The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR):** UNHCR assists 37,000 refugees in Iraq. In light of the volatile situation brought about by the 2003 war, UNHCR pledged to continue its assistance and to focus especially on the needs of refugee women and children. UNHCR also provides basic assistance to thousands of Iraqi refugees in neighboring countries—working with host governments to find durable solutions—and has pledged to pay particular attention to the needs of refugee women and children.²⁹⁹
- **The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS):** UNMAS has long been conducting mine and unexploded ordnance awareness and clearance operations in Iraq's three northern governorates. Mine-risk education instruction sessions conducted through international organisations throughout the country were estimated to have reached over 7,000 men, women and children by 1 August 2003. The Mine Action postwar emergency survey was conducted using victim data disaggregated by gender, age, and activity undertaken at the time of accident. A planned Knowledge, Attitude and Practice Survey will have a gender focus. Also, women are on the staffs of the National Mine Action Authority and the Mine Action Coordination Team.³⁰⁰
- **The International Labour Organization (ILO):** During its Multidisciplinary Mission to Iraq in the spring of 2000, the International Labour Organization (ILO) assessed women's roles in the Iraqi workforce, identified the main problems women faced, and developed a strategy to address those problems. The ILO strategy included strengthening the institutional framework at a national level so that it could address gender issues in national policies and programmes. ILO also sought to initiate gender-specific interventions that would target specific groups of women for economic empowerment through employment. These target groups were intended as models or pilot schemes, so that the lessons learned could be applied to other groups of women in the longer term. The ILO interventions included promoting self-employment for women heads of households.³⁰¹
- **The World Health Organization (WHO):** WHO's activity in Iraq includes routinely compiling gender disaggregated data for a number of health indicators, and working to provide health services to vulnerable populations, including women in general and pregnant women in particular.³⁰²
- **The World Bank Group** has sponsored a number of gender-specific assessments or assessments based on gender-disaggregated data. These include assessments of reproductive health and of such indicators as life expectancy, literacy and labour-force gender parity, and participation in decision-making.³⁰³
- **The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA):** ESCWA collects gender disaggregated data for research on selected indicators. In 2001, ESCWA addressed gender roles in a pilot study on partnership in the Arab family based on field surveys taken in part from Iraq. The study included analysis of the shift from women and development to gender and development, addressed the concept of gender, and studied gender roles in the family. In 2003, ESCWA conducted an assessment of the impact of the war on Iraqi women.³⁰⁴

Latest UN Documents

Security Council Resolutions

1538 (21 April 2004): Affirming that any illicit activities by UN staff and contractors is unacceptable, the Security Council welcomes the appointment of the independent high-level inquiry into allegations of corruption in administration and management of the Oil-for-Food



Programme. The Council calls upon the CPA, Iraq, and all other Member States to cooperate fully in the inquiry.

1511 (16 October 2003): The Security Council underscores the temporary nature of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), welcomes the positive response of the international community to the establishment of the Governing Council and determines that the Iraqi Governing Council embodies the sovereignty of the State of Iraq during the transitional period. The Security Council further calls on the CPA to return governing responsibilities and authorities to the people of Iraq as soon as practicable. The Security Council invites the Iraqi Governing Council to submit a timetable for the drafting of a new Iraqi constitution, and offers the resources of the United Nations in that regard. The Security Council authorizes the establishment of a multinational force under unified command to take all necessary measures to the maintenance of security and stability in Iraq, and condemns recent terrorist attacks, including the assassination of Dr. Aqila al-Hashimi.

1500 (14 August 2003): The Security Council welcomes the establishment of the Iraqi Governing Council as a step toward the formation of an internationally recognized, representative government chosen by the people of Iraq. The Security Council also establishes the United Nations Assistance Mission to Iraq (UNAMI) to assist the Secretary-General in fulfilling his mandate under resolution 1483.

1483 (22 May 2003): Following the ouster of Saddam Hussein's government by the US-led coalition, the Security Council recognizes the US and the Britain as occupying powers under unified command (the "Authority"), to remain in control of Iraq until "an internationally recognized, representative government is established by the people of Iraq". The Council reaffirms, in the second paragraph, its commitment to a "rule of law that affords equal rights and justice to all Iraqi citizens without regard to ethnicity, religion, or gender," recalling its pledge to promote gender equality as outlined in resolution 1325. The Council lifts its sanctions against Iraq, with the exception of an arms embargo, and outlines plans for a Development Fund for Iraq to be established, which will be audited by an internationally approved board, but disbursed at the discretion of the Authority. The Council authorizes the appointment of a Special Representative to the Secretary-General who will coordinate the UN's part in Iraq's reconstruction, which it is to undertake in cooperation with the Authority and the people of Iraq. And the Council extends the Secretary-General's emergency authority over the Oil-for-Food Programme for a final six months, at the end of which the responsibility for administering the delivery of essential civilian goods will pass to the Authority and to an Iraqi interim administration.

1476 (24 April 2003): Provisions for the Secretary-General to accelerate the delivery, under the Oil-for-Food Programme, of priority items are extended to 3 June. This extension gives the Office of the Iraq Programme and UN agencies time to identify and ship additional goods and supplies.

1472 (28 March 2003): In response to the invasion of Iraq, the Security Council unanimously urges all parties to the conflict to abide by their obligations under international law, and calls on the international community to provide immediate humanitarian assistance to the people of Iraq. The Council also adjusts the Oil-for-Food Programme for the duration of the conflict and authorizes the Secretary-General to facilitate the delivery and receipt of goods contracted by the Government of Iraq for the urgent humanitarian needs of its people.

1441 (8 November 2002): The Security Council declares Iraq to be in material breach of its obligations under previous resolutions, including 687, and gives Iraq a final opportunity to disarm under the unrestricted scrutiny of an enhanced inspection programme or risk "serious consequences". The Council gives Iraq 30 days to fully disclose all aspects of its WMD and delivery system programmes, and warns that any omission or falsification will be considered further material breach of its obligations.



1352 (1 June 2001): The Security Council amends the Oil-for-Food Programme so that Iraq can more easily import strictly humanitarian goods to meet the needs of its people, but at the same time fail in its efforts to import prohibited goods or to earn income outside the UN escrow account through unauthorized oil sales. This amendment is more widely known as “smart sanctions”.

1284 (17 December 1999): The Security Council creates the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) to succeed UNSCOM and continue its mandate to disarm Iraq of its WMD, and to monitor Iraq’s compliance with the prohibition against it reacquiring such weapons.³⁰⁵ The Secretary-General appoints Dr. Hans Blix of Sweden as Executive Chairman to UNMOVIC and appointed Commissioners from Argentina, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Japan, Mexico, Nigeria, the Russian Federation, Senegal, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, the United Nations (Department for Disarmament Affairs), and the United States.

986 (14 April 1995): While keeping economic sanctions in place, the Security Council allows Iraq to sell limited amounts of oil so that it can meet the humanitarian needs of its people. The resolution is implemented in December 1996 and became known as the Oil-for-Food Programme.³⁰⁶ The Council reserves the majority of Iraq’s oil-sales revenues for the humanitarian programme, but also calls for Iraq’s oil revenues to pay for war reparations and to cover the administrative and operational costs of the Oil-for-Food and weapons inspections programmes. All of Iraq’s contract requests are to be vetted by the UN to control dual-use goods.

689 (9 April 1991): The Security Council establishes the United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission (UNIKOM),³⁰⁷ as set out in 687 and as outlined in the Secretary-General’s report of 5 April 1991, to monitor the demilitarized zone (DMZ) between Iraq and Kuwait. UNIKOM begins as an unarmed observer mission, but is later strengthened and permitted to take physical action to prevent violations of the DMZ. The Force Commander was Major General Miguel Angel Moreno, who was succeeded by Major General Franciszek Gagor of Poland. States contributing military personnel (in 2003) were Argentina, Austria, Bangladesh, China, Denmark, Fiji, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Kenya, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Poland, Romania, the Russian Federation, Senegal, Singapore, Sweden, Thailand, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States, Uruguay, and Venezuela. UNIKOM was withdrawn 17 March 2003 in advance of the invasion of Iraq by a United States-led coalition (see below).

687 (3 April 1991): The Security Council establishes the terms and conditions for a cease-fire between Iraq and the coalition of Member States co-operating with Kuwait. It requires that Iraq, under international supervision, eliminate all weapons of mass destruction (WMD), long-range ballistic missiles, and related production facilities, and it prohibited Iraq from reacquiring or reproducing such items. The Security Council calls for the establishment of the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) to monitor Iraq’s disarmament under the terms of the cease-fire. It also establishes a DMZ between Iraq and Kuwait, to be monitored by a UN observer unit.

686 (2 March 1991): The Security Council demands that Iraq return seized Kuwaiti property, release all prisoners of war, and accept responsibility for the costs to Kuwait and other Member States that its invasion had incurred.

678 (29 November 1990): The Security Council demands that Iraq comply with resolution 660 and all subsequent relevant resolutions. If it does not comply by 15 January 1991, the Council authorizes Member States cooperating with the legitimate government of Kuwait to use all necessary means to compel Iraq to do so and to restore international peace and security in the area.



661 (6 August 1990): The Security Council imposes mandatory arms and economic sanctions against Iraq, and on Kuwait while under Iraqi occupation. The Council establishes Committee 661 (comprised of all SC members) to monitor the sanctions.

660 (2 August 1990): The Security Council condemns Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and demands that Iraq immediately withdraw its forces.

Reports of the Secretary-General to the Security Council

5 December 2003: The Secretary-General reported on UN activities and key developments in Iraq from 17 July 2003 to 19 August 2003, described the events of 19 August 2003, detailed UN relief, recovery and reconstruction activities that continued through the reporting period, summarized key political developments in Iraq since 19 August 2003, and outlined a plan of action regarding security, the deployment of the UN Assistance Mission to Iraq (UNAMI) and the continuation of UN relief, recovery and reconstruction activities. Brief references to women or gender were made in paras. 36, 38, 41, 56, 58, 71 and 100. The Secretary-General noted that UN Agencies and programmes have held regular meetings with the CPA and Iraqi officials in the region, which included round-table discussions with Iraqi officials, academics and other members of civil society on gender and the environment. He called attention to FAO programming in Basra that has paid particular attention to female-headed households in its agricultural assistance and efforts to rehabilitate irrigation systems in war-affected areas. The Secretary-General also noted that UNICEF has "helped the Ministry of Health improve the delivery of services for children and women through the rehabilitation of primary health centres, reconstruction of delivery rooms and continuous training of health workers." Regarding the appointment of interim ministers and the work of the preparatory constitutional committee, the Secretary-General noted that: "Only one woman was appointed interim minister (compared with three in the Governing Council)." He called attention to the assassination of Aqila al-Hashimi, one of the three women on the Governing Council, which he said illustrated "the severe risks facing Iraqis cooperating with the Coalition Provisional Authority". The Secretary-General noted that "civil society, especially national human rights and women's organizations and national media, have an essential role to play in the political dialogue on the future of their country" and reminded the Security Council that support for such civil society organizations were to be one of the core areas of activity for UNAMI, as laid out in his report of 17 July 2003. Finally, the Secretary-General noted that among the assistance activities planned by UN Agencies and programmes for 2004 is the establishment of the National Open University of Iraq, supported by UNESCO, which will utilize "distance-education methods to provide quality education and skills training that will be specifically targeted at disadvantaged groups, including women and the disabled."

17 July 2003: The Secretary-General reported on the work of his Special Representative, providing an initial assessment to the challenges the UN will face in implementing Security Council resolution 1483, and identifying areas where he thought the UN could play a useful role. The Secretary-General noted that the UN is "exploring ways to play a meaningful role, in coordination with the Coalition Provisional Authority, in assisting the people of Iraq." The Secretary-General noted that his Special Representative had met with "members of civil society, including nascent Iraqi human rights and non-governmental organizations, women's associations, journalists, and independent professionals and business leaders," as well as other representatives of Iraqi society, in the first few weeks of his mandate. The Secretary-General noted that several common themes ran through the discussions of the Special Representative with various Iraqi representatives, among them: an overwhelming demand for the early restoration of sovereignty, serious concern about the process of de-Baathification and the dissolution of the Iraqi army, immediate practical concerns including security and the provision of basic services, criticism of the United Nations' past role in Iraq balanced with an appreciation for ongoing UN humanitarian efforts and the belief that UN involvement is essential to the legitimacy of the political process. The Secretary-General



also noted: "In his meetings, my Special Representative has also emphasized the important role to be played by women in the rebuilding of the country. He has stressed that Iraqi women represent a powerful force for peace, reconciliation and stability, who should be empowered and afforded the opportunity of playing their rightful political, economic and social role. Occasionally the groups with which my Special Representative has met have included a small representation of women. Clearly this is an area that will take time to develop." In discussing the lack of security in Iraq, the Secretary-General noted that for most Iraqis, the principal threat to personal security comes from violent crime. He further reported: "Iraqis—especially women—have expressed their fear of being on the streets after dark, together with concern about abductions and attacks." The Secretary-General noted that "the development of civil society, in particular effective, professional and independent human rights and women's rights groups, and free and independent media" are vital to "the promotion of human rights and respect for the rule of law". The Secretary-General reported that: "Iraqi women have been particularly affected by the state of insecurity. Immediately after the conflict, many women were confined to their homes in the cities amidst reports of increased harassment and violence directed towards them. This confinement has impaired access to health care, both for women and their children. In general, women are under-represented in efforts to structure and manage both the political and the rehabilitation and recovery processes. My Special Representative has emphasized to all political parties and movements the need to promote the full participation of Iraqi women in the transitional political and constitutional processes. Equally, their economic and other needs must be addressed, in particular those of women heads of household, who have long assumed a great deal of responsibility for managing families and communities without much support." The Secretary-General noted that he looked forward to the findings of the recent UNIFEM assessment mission "to provide a meaningful basis for action in this regard."

31 March 2003: The Secretary-General reported that conditions in the United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission (UNIKOM) area of operations had deteriorated so much that he had been obliged, for security reasons, to suspend its operations on 17 March 2003. The situation along the Iraq-Kuwait border had become tense as a result of the military build-up on the Kuwaiti side of the Demilitarized Zone. The Secretary-General reported that UNIKOM had on most occasions received full cooperation from both Iraqi and Kuwaiti authorities. With the outbreak of conflict on 20 March, most UNIKOM personnel had to be evacuated. By 21 March, only a small UNIKOM headquarters remained in Kuwait City to provide any necessary support to other UN activities. The Secretary-General reported that the withdrawal of UNIKOM personnel would be temporary, and that decisions about the timing of its return and about its mandate would rest with the Security Council.

12 November 2002: The Secretary-General reported that the Oil-for-Food Programme had improved overall socio-economic conditions of the Iraqi people countrywide and had prevented further degradation of public services and infrastructure, but noted that most sectors were still unable to function at pre-war or sufficient levels. The Secretary-General also criticized Iraq's underproduction of oil, reporting that it resulted in a revenue shortfall that adversely impacted the humanitarian programme. The Secretary-General praised the success of two strategies targeting women in the northern governorates: "Agencies provided input for skills training that aimed at improving women's access to income and other assets and providing training in literacy other technical skills." And between 1996 and 2002, "there has been a 20 percent reduction in acute malnutrition, a 56 percent reduction in chronic malnutrition and a 44 percent reduction in the incidence of underweight children in the under-five age group, in part because of a specifically targeted nutrition programme and supplementary feeding for pregnant and lactating mothers and other vulnerable groups. The nutrition programme, which started in 1998, continues to provide supplementary rations to 75,000 people in the three northern governorates, including malnourished children and their families, pregnant women and nursing mothers." The Secretary-General reported that \$1 billion of holds (including medicines, chemicals, and water-



treatment equipment) had been released and approved, and that the goods review list for the programme had been revised, placing numerous humanitarian items on an approved fast-track list.

10 March 2000: The Secretary-General reported that since sanctions were imposed in 1990, Iraq's oil industry had produced some 5,000 million barrels of oil with virtually no investment in infrastructure repairs or maintenance. The result was "a massive decline in the condition, effectiveness and efficiency of that infrastructure, coupled with appalling safety conditions and significant environmental damage." The Secretary-General reported that so far, the damage could be repaired with the necessary spare parts and equipment, but that it was in increasing danger of deteriorating to the point of causing "irreparable damage to oil fields and the permanent loss of production and export capacity". The Secretary-General urged the Security Council to approve the expedited delivery of spare parts and equipment to Iraq to support the oil exports necessary to the functioning of the humanitarian programme. The Secretary-General also reported on various UN monitoring and observation mechanisms in Iraq.

18 April 1991: After Iraq accepted the terms of the cease-fire set out in Security Council Resolution 687, the Secretary-General submitted to the Council his report regarding the creation of the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM)³⁰⁸ to monitor Iraq's elimination of non-nuclear WMD and to assist the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in the nuclear areas. Following the Council's acceptance of the report, the Secretary-General appointed Ambassador Rolf Ekéus of Sweden as Executive Chairman of UNSCOM and appointed 20 other members of the commission from Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, China, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Poland, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Venezuela. On 1 July 1997, Mr. Richard Butler of Australia became Executive Chairman, but no successor was appointed when he finished his two-year term. On 17 December 1999, UNMOVIC was created to replace UNSCOM through the adoption of Security Council Resolution 1284.

General Assembly Resolutions and Reports

23 January 2003: A/RES/57/232, Situation of Human Rights in Iraq.

20 August 2002: A/57/325, Interim Report of the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on the Situation of Human Rights in Iraq.

27 February 2002: A/RES/56/174, Situation of Human Rights in Iraq.

20 December 2000: A/RES/55/115, Human Rights Situation in Iraq.

ECOSOC Resolutions and Reports

23 January 2003: E/CN.4/2003/40, Situation of Human Rights in Iraq, Report Submitted by the Special Rapporteur.

11 April 2003: E/CN.4/2003/L.6, Situation of Human Rights in Iraq.

25 April 2003: E/CN.4/2003/84 Situation of Human Rights in Iraq, Commission on Human Rights Resolution 2003/84.

15 March 2002: E/CN.4/2002/44, Situation of Human Rights in Iraq, Report Submitted by the Special Rapporteur.



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