



Impact of the Conflict and COVID-19

Pandemic on Iraqi Women Political Participation and Engagement in Peace



Shared Prosperity Dignified Life



© 2021 United Nations

All rights reserved worldwide.

Photocopies and reproductions of excerpts are allowed with proper credits UN Women and ESCWA.

The findings, interpretations, and conclusions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of UN Women or ESCWA.

The designations employed and the presentation of material in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of UN Women or ESCWA concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city, or area of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

Links contained in this publication are provided for the convenience of the reader and are correct at the time of issue.

UN Women and ESCWA take no responsibility for the continued accuracy of that information or the content of any external website.

References have, wherever possible, been verified.

Mention of commercial names and products does not imply the endorsement of UN Women or ESCWA.

Publication issued by:

UN Women Iraq (Iraq, Baghdad, International Zone, UN Compound).

website: www.arabstates.unwomen.org/en

ESCWA, United Nations House,

Riad El Solh Square, P.O. Box: 11-8575, Beirut, Lebanon.

Website: www.unescwa.org

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was commissioned by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) in partnership with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). The report was prepared by Dr. Marguerite Helou (international consultant) and Dr. Ibtisam Alameri (national consultant). Khadija T. Moalla, the Senior Policy Advisor for UN Women Iraq Office, and Nada Darwazeh, Chief of Gender Equality Section, ESCWA, provided substantive inputs throughout its development, under the overall guidance of Dina Zorba, UN Women Representative in Iraq and Yemen and Mehrinaz El Awady, Director of the Gender Justice, Population and Inclusive Development Cluster at ESCWA with invaluable administrative support provided by Nameer Zawin.

KEY MESSAGES

- *Iraq ranked 120th on the Human Development Index in 2019;*
- *Iraq ranked second to last in the global gender gap index ranking (152nd out of 153).*

Enabling factors for political participation of women

- Intensified and well-organized women's activism in securing women's rights;
- Historical efforts to improve women's education and the existence of prominent women poets and journalists since the 1920s;
- The adoption of women's rights by progressive parties, which encouraged women of all ages to join these parties;
- The socioeconomic status of women, as the vast majority of women activists in the first half of the 20th century belonged to upper middle class families open to their daughters' education and involvement in public affairs;
- Male support for women's rights.

Obstructing factors

- Weak electoral support by women for female candidates. Women's participation in the 2018 parliamentary elections reached 50% in 14 governorates, but none of the candidates on the eighteen lists which included women got enough votes to reflect women's electoral weight;
- The lack of political will to grant women a greater role in the political and peacebuilding processes, as evident in the exclusion of women from the successive national reconciliation processes and committees formed by the government since 2006, as well as from the various conferences on social reconciliation;
- Unconstitutional discrimination embodied in some laws, in particular the Penal Code;
- Failure of women activists and human rights advocates to use their right to challenge the constitutionality of discriminatory laws before the Federal Supreme Court;
- The narrow interpretation of certain provisions of the Constitution to prioritize sect over the clearly stated and consecrated individual right within the same article.

Some gains of the women's movement in Iraq (2003-2005)

- Constitutional provision for a 25% women quota in Parliament;
- The repeal of Resolution 137 proposed by the Iraqi Governing Council, which would have revoked the 1959 Personal Status Law and placed all family matters in the hands of religious leaders;
- The suspension of article 41 of the Constitution, which is a copy of Resolution 137.

In the Kurdistan region of Iraq (KRI) there is a 30% quota for women in the parliament. This resulted in:

- 32% women's representation in the parliament in 2013;
- 13 candidates winning outside the quota;
- Women leading the largest parliamentary bloc; and
- Women assuming the positions of Speaker, Vice-Speaker and Secretary of Parliament in 2018;
- Women members of parliament heading five parliamentary committees

Reasons for the Kurdish progress

- The KRI's attempt at meeting international standards in preparation for separation;
- Kurdish women's struggle and their joining the Peshmerga in fighting the previous regime;
- Kurdish political parties' nationalistic ideologies and civil approach to women's status and rights, coupled with a belief in the importance of the role of women in both the public and private spheres.

Negative impacts of the conflict and the pandemic: threats and obstacles

- Threats to personal safety;
- Threats to livelihood and survival;
- Weak democratic mechanisms for increasing women's political participation and engagement in peacebuilding;
- Heightened sectarian division;
- Minimal representation of women in successive governments;
- Institutional weakness;
- Insignificant role of progressive political parties;
- Gender norms and traditions.

Positive impact of the conflict and the pandemic and potential opportunities

- Changes in women's self-perception and increased self-confidence;
- Increased role of women in mediation;
- Increased awareness of the need for legal and security protection for women;
- Increased interest by women in joining security forces and other fields;
- Shift to humanitarian aid and awareness raising.

Recommendations

To increase women's engagement in responding to COVID-19 pandemic

- Engage women at the national and governorate levels in drafting COVID-19 related policies;
- Raise public awareness of the role played by women and youth in responding to the pandemic;
- Provide governmental and international support for women's organizations working with internally displaced persons;
- Support the extension of the Women Advisory Boards in Iraq project and/or similar projects to all regions of Iraq.

To increase meaningful participation by women in the national reconciliation and peacebuilding processes

- Ensure women's representation in all reconciliation, peace-making and building processes;
- Require a quota for women in government and top public positions;
- Ensure allocation of funds to implement the Iraqi National Action Plan (INAP) for the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 and the National Women's Strategy;
- Provide national women's agencies with the necessary authorities and financial and decision-making independence to increase their effectiveness;
- Train women politicians on how to demand their rights within their parties;
- Train and support women candidates in the upcoming parliamentary elections, especially independent women candidates;
- Issue a code of conduct for the security forces on dealing with women candidates and human rights activists.

To sustain women's participation in crisis response and engagement in peace-building

- End prevalent corruption, adopt policies that encourage investment and job creation in all regions and rehabilitate infrastructure;
- Remove discrimination against women from the Constitution and laws;
- Make education compulsory as well as free;
- Mainstream the consideration of gender in all government policies and programmes;
- Introduce human and women's rights courses in school curricula and trainings for judges and security forces and make human rights courses compulsory for all university specializations;
- Implement a national poverty alleviation programme and graduation from poverty programmes in all regions;
- Train security forces on how to deal with cases of domestic violence and gender-based violence;
- Implement nationwide literacy and computer literacy programmes and programmes aimed at improving women's legal literacy;
- Increase the number of women in the security forces and make police stations gender sensitive;
- Train potential young female and male leaders;
- Coordinate and cooperate with donors to ensure effective use of available resources.

CONTENTS

Acknowledgement

Key Messages

I. Purpose and Research Questions, Methodology and Context

- A. Purpose of the report and research questions
- B. Methodology

II. Women's political participation in Iraq: enabling and obstructing factors 1921-2013

III. Impact of the Iraq-ISIL war and the COVID-19 pandemic on women's political participation

- A. Negative impacts of the conflict and the pandemic: threats and obstacles
- B. Positive impact of the conflict and the pandemic and potential opportunities

IV. Summary and policy recommendations

- A. Assumptions
- B. Recommendations

Bibliography

Endnotes

I. PURPOSE AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS, METHODOLOGY AND CONTEXT

A. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

UN Women Iraq Yemen Cluster Office (IYCO), in partnership with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA),¹ commissioned two national reports for Iraq and Yemen to support the two countries' governments in increasing the effectiveness of their efforts at achieving gender equality in all sectors including health and political and economic empowerment through evidence-based recommendations. With the pandemic striking Yemen and Iraq amidst a combination of crises, the two reports explore the impact of these crises and COVID-19 on women's participation and engagement in the pandemic response, and on the ongoing attempts at peace-making and peace-building in each of the two countries.

Both reports raise the same research questions and use the same methodology and data collection methods, with the aim of a) identifying the factors at play in determining the nature and level of this participation and engagement; b) identifying any potential opportunities created by the conflict and pandemic to increase women's effective participation in the pandemic response and in the peace-making and peacebuilding processes; and c) providing concrete recommendations for policymakers and other stakeholders to build on these opportunities and maintain an effective and inclusive approach.

Key questions raised in this research are:

- Have the conflict and/or the pandemic led to any significant changes in gender roles and relationships? What is the impact of the current conflict and COVID-19 on women's role in the political sphere? Are there any differences in this impact on various groups of women?
- What are the major obstacles, challenges and threats that have inhibited the political participation of various groups of women in the context of the current conflict and the COVID-19 pandemic?
- What opportunities are there to increase women's participation in decision-making processes and policies pertaining to COVID-19?
- What can be done by various stakeholders to a) decrease the impact of the inhibiting factors; b) build on the available or potential opportunities to increase women's political participation; and c) sustain this participation at all levels in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and other humanitarian crises and in the making and building of a sustainable peace in Iraq?

B. METHODOLOGY

1. Conceptual framework

Guided by an intersectional approach and using the lens of gender, an analysis was conducted of the impact of the current conflict and COVID-19 on women's and girls' political participation and engagement. Use of these two analytical approaches enables consideration of Iraq's historical and current divisions along regional, tribal, sectarian and socioeconomic lines, and the resulting subcultures and multiple interlocking identities, defined in terms of socio-cultural power and privileges², that play a significant role in: a) shaping people's individual and collective positions on women's and girls' rights and their role in the private and public spheres, and b) dictating the choices and means available to various women's groups, organizations and individual activists to tackle various issues of gender equality. Moreover, the intersectional approach helps ensure avoiding one of the reasons identified for the limited success of some developmental efforts aimed at empowering women and girls and achieving gender equality, i.e. the prototypical categorization of women and girls based on an assumed but erroneous homogeneity³ (e.g. Iraqi women, Iraqi women NGOs, etc...). This prototypical categorization has led to the adoption of a top-down approach in planning interventions, rather than a bottom-up approach capable of creating a sense of ownership, a critical element in ensuring the respon-

siveness of the target audience and the effectiveness of the intervention.

Based on the assessment of the current status of women's and girls' political participation and engagement in conflict resolution and peacebuilding, and identification of the factors increasing or obstructing their engagement and political participation, the theory of change (TOC) was used to draw and provide policy and applicable recommendations for the different stakeholders to ensure the achievement of the goals of this report. In applying TOC, the paper started with identifying the long and medium-term goals to be achieved, drew a backward map (through in depth investigation of the factors that have enabled or obstructed women's political participation at various stages of Iraqi history from 1921 to the present), identified the necessary and sufficient conditions for increasing women's participation, drafted our assumptions about the context and recommended the interventions needed to achieve our goals.

Finally, some clarifications are in order regarding the basic terms used in this study. First, the term gender is used to refer to the social constructs regarding the status, position and role of males and females in society. Second, the broad definition of "peacebuilding" is adopted in this study. For the purposes of this study, peacebuilding is defined as a comprehensive political process, carried out by various governmental and non-governmental individual or group actors, aimed at a) addressing the various causes and effects of conflict; b) building and enhancing local capacities to resolve conflicts peacefully through negotiation, mediation, reconciliation, etc.; c) provision of various types of services (e.g. social, economic, educational, medical and psychological) that can eliminate, or at least decrease, the impact of potential drivers of conflict; d) building and enhancing resilience, tolerance and social cohesion; e) providing and maintaining security; and f) treating the various root causes of conflict at all levels and in all fields. As such, women's and girls' involvement in such activities is considered engagement in peacebuilding and is respectively considered a form of political participation regardless of the level it is exercised at.

2. Data collection methods

Two sources of information were used in this report:

A comprehensive desk review which covered

published work on Iraqi women's political participation at the decision-making level and the impact of armed conflicts, humanitarian crises and epidemics on women's political participation and engagement in conflict resolution and peacebuilding in general, and in Iraq in particular, especially during the period 2003–2020. The desk review also covered reports published by United Nations, other international governmental and non-governmental organizations and local agencies, government documents and available statistics. Special emphasis was placed on identifying best practices for increasing women's political participation and engagement in conflict resolution and peacebuilding in other war-torn countries and/or those hit by epidemics (e.g. the Ebola and SARS epidemics).

Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with 74 key informants (KIs) (50 women and 24 men) chosen from 17 Iraqi governorates. The KIs were chosen from political activists, activists working on peacebuilding, civil society leaders, members and leaders of political parties, current and former female members of parliament (MPs), ministers, senior administrative and government officials in charge of women's issues, members of local authorities, heads of tribes and academics.

While the original plan was to hold one focus group discussion in each of the 10 governorates, the plan was changed due to logistical problems and was substituted by personal interviews conducted with informants from 17 governorates.

Positional and reputational approaches, aided by the snowball technique were used to identify interviewees capable of providing the needed information. The drafting of the basic questions used in the semi-structured interviews was guided by the aims of this research and the results of the desk review.

3. Challenges encountered and the limitations of the report

Even though the researcher assured subjects of respect for ethical standards of research and in particular anonymity (unless the subject gave personal permission otherwise), the field researcher nevertheless encountered a lack of responsiveness from a significant number of individuals contacted for interview. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, interviews

were conducted via the internet (Zoom), which caused some logistical problems (ranging from total lack of internet services, poor internet connections, electricity problems, lack of knowledge of how to use such technologies, etc...) that interrupted some interviews, required postponing interviews and prevented holding group discussions. This also provides a partial explanation for the large difference between the number of interviewees from Baghdad and other governorates. As such, the key findings, though highly informative and insightful, should be approached with care if used for drawing generalizations.

4. Context

The rule of Iraq by the Baath party headed by Saddam Hussein (1979–2003) and the repression he exercised against his opponents resulted in over 250,000 people dead⁴. Saddam's invasion of Iran on 22 September 1980 drove Iraq into an eight-year war which ended on 20 August 1988, leaving hundreds of thousands of Iraqis killed or held prisoners of war. The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 followed by the Gulf War of 1990–1991 added to the number of casualties, and coupled with United Nations sanctions, wiped out the economic growth and prosperity achieved during the seventies. These wars, with their human and economic costs, gave rise to long suppressed ethnic, sectarian and nationalistic differences within Iraq. The humanitarian crisis engendered by these successive events had its toll on the Iraqi people, with women and girls being the most vulnerable, especially in light of the sharp increase in female-headed families, deterioration of economic conditions, high levels of unemployment, collapsing infrastructure and extreme shortages of basic goods and services.

This humanitarian crisis was further exacerbated by the war against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). The large-scale war, an extension of the Sunni insurgency, started with ISIL's conquest of Ramadi, Fallujah, Mosul and Tikrit and major northern areas of Iraq and the spread of its authority over an area of about 56,000 square kilometres and a population of over 4.5 million⁵. This war heightened sectarian and ethnic tensions, encouraged separatist demands by the Kurds and increased the number of both State and non-State regional and international actors in the Iraqi war.⁶

Deteriorating economic conditions brought about by

the cost of the war, lack of foreign investment, plummeting oil prices, widespread government corruption and the Iraqi government's ineffectiveness in meeting rising social and economic needs led to widespread public dissatisfaction. Iraqis took to the streets in 2019 in large scale anti-government protests in multiple regions of Iraq with high levels of participation by women.⁷ Their major demands centred around ending corruption, amending the constitution to end the sectarian distribution of top governmental positions and securing employment and provision of basic services. Vast violations of human rights were committed against demonstrators, both by government forces and other armed groups, which, according to the Human Rights Office of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), left 487 people dead, 7,715 injured and over 3,000 arbitrarily detained, mostly young activist.⁸

The COVID-19 pandemic intensified the already deteriorating economic, fiscal and social pressures. The impact on private sector activity of measures adopted to contain the spread of the virus, coupled with the plummeting oil prices and decreasing public sector revenues, over 90% of which are from oil exports, restricted the already weak government's ability to address the many challenges facing it and provide services, as in the limited capacity of Iraq's public health system to meet expected needs. However, closure measures did not deter women from organizing large scale demonstrations in Baghdad, Nasiriyah, Najaf, Basra and other governorates on International Women's Day (March 8). These demonstrations witnessed male participation in support of women's demands. Demonstrators voiced demands for women's rights and national issues. Among them are: adoption of non-discriminatory laws, a civil state guaranteeing equality of all citizens, release of detained and imprisoned protestors, early parliamentary elections and a new electoral law.

With the high economic and human costs of the successive wars, coupled with governmental corruption, lack of security and political stability, deteriorating economic and fiscal conditions and increasing national debt, Iraq ranked 120 on the Human Development Index in 2019 with an index of 0.689 and a Gender Development Index (GDI) of 0.789.⁹ In the Global Gender Gap Report 2020, Iraq ranked second to last in the global gender ranking (152nd out of 153) and the regional ranking (18th out of 19), last in the global ranking for economic participation and oppor-

tunity (153rd), 144th out of 153 in educational attainment and 118th in political empowerment.¹⁰

This status of women raises questions regarding any

potential opportunities for women's participation in politics at the level of decision-making in responding to the pandemic, and in leading their country into a stable peace.

II. WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN IRAQ: ENABLING AND OBSTRUCTING FACTORS 1921-2013

Identification of the various factors that have played a role in determining the nature and level of Iraqi women's engagement in politics before the outbreak of the war against ISIL and the COVID-19 pandemic was a necessary first step in order to track any changes in this engagement brought about by the war and/or the pandemic and the direction of these changes. As such, an in-depth review of the history of Iraqi women's engagement in politics was conducted. This review revealed several factors that have enabled and/or obstructed women's engagement in politics at different stages of Iraqi history, and under different types of political regimes.

An in depth investigation of the history of Iraqi women's political activism since its first public manifestations early in the 20th century reveals the following enabling factors.

First is women's education brought about by the opening of the first girls' school in Iraq in 1890, some graduates of which became the prominent women poets and journalists of the 1920s. Second is the support by political parties as manifested in the emerging progressive parties' adoption of women's rights as one of their priorities. In turn, women of all ages, despite the denial of their political rights in the 1925 Constitution, joined those parties, including the then banned Communist Party, which had a woman member on its Central Committee.¹¹

Iraqi women activists of the 1940s and 1950s participated in political protests alongside men, got involved in the struggle for the release of political prisoners and were subjected to detention, torture and harsh sentences. Third among the enabling factors was

women's socioeconomic status, as the vast majority of women activists in the first half of the 20th century came from upper middle class families who were educated and open to their daughters' education and involvement in public affairs.¹²

A supportive secular ideology and male support for women's rights were two of the significant enabling factors and major determinants of the effectiveness of women's activism in securing women's rights and non-discriminatory legislation.¹³ This was clear in the adoption of Personal Status Law number 188/1959, the banning of gender discrimination and consecration of women's right to education and employment as well as other rights in the 1970 Constitution, the adoption of the Labour Code 151/1970 and the Compulsory Education Law 118/1976, the amendment of the Civil Service Law number 44/1977, the amendment of the Personal Status Law in 1978¹⁴ and the legislation requiring eradication of illiteracy in 1979.¹⁵

However, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the ensuing Gulf War highlighted the major factors that obstruct women's participation in political and public life, especially in times of war and its aftermath. The growing Baathist concern for the loyalty of religious conservatives, who were already alienated by the regime's amendments of the 1959 Personal Status Law in 1978,¹⁶ led to the use of women's rights as a tool to secure the support of religious conservatives, especially after the Shiite uprising in 1991.¹⁷ The regime's declaration of the "Faith Campaign" after its defeat in the Kuwait war¹⁸ added to the religious, tribal and patriarchal influences and their hold on women's rights, both within and outside the family.¹⁹

A review of women's political participation between 2003 and 2013 supports the role of the above factors in obstructing and enabling women's political participation. First among the enabling factors was the intensified and well organized women's activism in securing women's rights. Despite their total exclusion from the drafting process of the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL) and under-representation in the constitution drafting and revision committees,²⁰ focused women's advocacy campaigns with media coverage and well organized demonstrations proved to be effective enabling factors. Between 2003 and 2005, women's organizations and activists launched national awareness raising campaigns and advocacy campaigns on women's rights, held meetings and workshops all over the country and organized demonstrations. Through this, Iraqi women succeeded in (a) securing a constitutional provision for a 25% quota for women in Parliament; (b) repealing Resolution 137 proposed by the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC), which would have revoked the 1959 Personal Status Law and placed all family matters in the hands of religious leaders; and (c) suspending article 41 of the Constitution, which is still suspended today.²¹

While the quota for women was a necessary factor in securing the entry of a relatively large number of women to Parliament, the experience of elected women MPs between 2005 and 2014 was not very promising and did not prove sufficient to secure effective and meaningful participation by women in decision-making processes and in securing women's rights. As stated in the 2014 UNDP Human Development Report for Iraq, women MPs "failed to fulfil voters' expectations, did not stand for women's rights, did not use their platform to tackle key issues and failed to present initiatives to enhance their potentially visionary role"²². Other factors appeared to be important for ensuring that the quota is effective. These are: (a) awareness among the female electorate of the importance of both qualitative and quantitative representation of women; (b) an electoral law that facilitates the election of independent women MPs free from the dictates of political parties and parliamentary blocs; and (c) women's readiness to take the challenge of forming their own electoral lists and/or running as independents.²³

One factor, often considered to be an enabling factor, proved to be insufficient by itself. This factor is the high percentage of women's participation in

elections. Although women's participation in the 2018 parliamentary elections reached 50% in 14 governorates, none of the candidates on the eighteen lists which included women from various intellectual and social backgrounds got enough votes to reflect women's electoral weight.²⁴ This may be an indicator of weak electoral support by women for women candidates either as a matter of personal choice, or due to family pressure, and/or to the dominance of a patriarchal mentality that men make better politicians than women.²⁵ This highlights the importance of public awareness raising, in particular among women themselves, on the importance of effective and meaningful women's participation in decision-making.

Another obstructing factor revealed by the desk review and supported by the interviews, is the lack of political will to increase women's role in the political and peacebuilding processes. This appears in the continuous exclusion of women from the successive national reconciliation processes and committees formed by the government since 2006, as well as from the various conferences on social reconciliation including the 2010 Erbil conference for political leaderships. The latest manifestation of this exclusion was the total absence of women from the National Reconciliation Committee for Coexistence and Social Peace established on 23/5/2019.

It is worth noting in this context that three of the major factors that continue to obstruct the implementation of gender equality as consecrated in article 14 of the Constitution are: (a) the unconstitutionality of some current legislation, in particular the Penal Code; (b) the failure of women activists and human rights advocates to use their right to challenge the constitutionality of discriminatory laws before the Federal Supreme Court (article 93(3)); and (c) the narrow interpretation of certain provisions of the Constitution to give priority to the sect over the clearly stated and consecrated individual right within the same article (e.g. the suspended article 41 starts "Iraqis are **free** to adhere to...").

The picture was different in the Kurdistan region of Iraq (KRI) where women were able to raise the women's quota from 25% to 30% in 2009. This resulted in: a) an increase in the percentage of women candidates from 27% to 32% of all candidates in 2013; b) 13 candidates winning outside the quota;

c) women leading the largest parliamentary bloc; and d) women assuming the positions of Speaker, Vice-Speaker and Secretary of Parliament respectively in 2018. Women MPs also headed five parliamentary committees.²⁶

The KRI also founded the Supreme Council for Women Affairs which was delegated with the responsibility of improving women's status in the Region, and an Anti-Domestic violence law was promulgated

in 2008. Many interviewees attributed the regime's openness towards women's political participation at the decision-making levels to a) the KRI's attempt at meeting international standards in preparation for separation; b) the Kurdish women's struggle and their joining the Peshmerga in fighting the previous regime; and especially c) the nationalistic ideologies of Kurdish political parties who have a civil approach to women's status and rights coupled with a belief in the important role of women in both the public and

III. IMPACT OF THE IRAQ-ISIL WAR AND THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Analysis of the responses of the 74 KIs from the 17 Iraqi governorates reveals the existence of a belief, shared by the vast majority, that the conflict had a much larger impact on Iraqi women than the COVID-19 pandemic did. The latter has added to and exacerbated the impact of the conflict, rather than creating a new one. This applies to both the negative impact and the positive impact/potential opportunities expressed in the responses. A consensus appeared among interviewees that violence against women and domestic violence, a phenomena that have plagued Iraq for a long time, have been exacerbated by the conflict and furthered by the closure measures imposed to contain the spread of the virus. As such, all expressed the urgent need to enact a long-stalled law on domestic violence and a law to address the Yazidi women survivors of ISIL's atrocities, as well as the need to remove or amend discriminatory provisions from current legislation, in particular the Penal Code. The vast majority, except for those who work for the government in departments or committees established for dealing with women's issues, highlighted the government's laxity in dealing with women's issues and protecting their rights. The division among interviewees over the need for the amendment of article 41 of the Constitution is one of the many manifestations of the ongoing struggle since 2003, between the forces of tradition and those of modernity, with the former having an edge over the latter due to the dominance of political Islam and

religious conservatism in Iraq.

Moreover, the responses also revealed the existence of differences across regions in the impact of the conflict on women's engagement in politics and the public sphere at large. The difference was mainly between war-torn areas and more peaceful areas, as well as between the KRI and other Iraqi regions. The conflict and pandemic experiences have highlighted the relatively more advanced political and social attitudes towards women's engagement in political and public life in the Kurdistan region (KRI) as compared to other areas in Iraq. These experiences also revealed the relative difference in the pace of change in such attitudes between the KRI and other areas. Interviewees from the KRI, as well as some women activists from other parts of Iraq, attributed these differences to the dominance of nationalistic ideologies, a civil approach to citizenship, an acknowledgement of women's contribution in the fight against the Baath regime, as well as a dynamic women's civil society. Despite these differences, it is important to note a comment made by one female former member of parliament about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which was shared by many of the male and female interviewees: "The COVID-19 pandemic revealed the solidarity and tolerance in Iraqi society. There wasn't a region, suburb or street which didn't witness male and female joint efforts,

especially among the youth, to help affected families, or NGOs' work in sanitizing inhabited areas and public institutions and donating ventilators and other medical equipment to help cope with the pandemic. On the other hand, and in such times of need, we didn't see a single woman politician or group of them, especially those in decision-making positions, who have taken any initiative to help hospitalized women and men hit by the virus, or to launch any initiative aimed at building the resilience of women working in the health sector, especially those caring for Corona-virus patients".²⁷

The above-mentioned deteriorating economic conditions have drained the government's financial resources and impacted its ability to fund projects and strategies aimed at improving human and economic development. Projects and strategies targeting women were the first victims of such shortages in resources, explained by one of the clan leaders interviewed, as being the result of "political Islam's lack of interest in empowering women and improving their status. Their plan is to drive women out of the political and public spheres". This shortage in funding had dire repercussions on the implementation of the strategies for improving women's political participation and engagement in peacebuilding, in particular the National Strategy for Women and the Iraqi National Action Plan for the Implementation of UNSCR 1325.

A. NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF THE CONFLICT AND THE PANDEMIC: THREATS AND OBSTACLES

1. Threats to personal safety

Besides the threats posed by the security situation, there was a consensus among the KIs on specific threats to the personal safety of women activists and demonstrators, female media personnel and female candidates in parliamentary and governorate councils' elections. Some women MPs were not immune to such threats, or at least to the fear of them, especially given the absence of any measures to prevent meetings of parliament from stretching into late night hours, which according to one of the interviewed women in a senior administrative position "has been one of the major factors that prevented many women from running in the 2018

elections and led some women candidates to withdraw from the race".

The threats that women are exposed to include verbal and physical harassment, tearing or writing insults and threats on women candidates' posters and smear campaigns and threats to their personal safety and their families. The reality of such threats can be seen in the number of incidents reported by the High Commission for Human Rights in Iraq,²⁸ which shows eight attempted assassinations, five kidnappings, one killing and 19 injured over a four-month period.

Some interviewees believed this to be a planned systematic attempt to deter women from political involvement, especially those outspoken in their criticism of the government and political parties. According to many interviewees, these threats and reported cases of detentions, kidnappings and killings of both male and female activists increased family protectiveness of their women and girls and restrictions on their movement, especially in areas suffering from high levels of insecurity and military confrontations.

In addition to the above forms of violence against women in public spaces, the conflict led to an increase in domestic violence which was further aggravated by the lockdown measures adopted to contain the pandemic.

Despite multiple challenges, women's organizations in Iraq have responded to domestic violence and violence against women, and health and social workers have played a vital role in responding to the pandemic. However, many centres and NGOs providing services for victims of gender-based violence and domestic violence have had to close during periods of strict lockdown measures and have suffered from lack of funding. On top of this, and according to some interviewees, even women and girls volunteering or working in the distribution of humanitarian aid, health and other services to affected families during the pandemic were not safe from various types of harassment, verbal and nonverbal attacks in some conservative areas, as well as exclusion by their close circles for fear of contracting the virus. Save the increase in women's domestic responsibilities during the lockdown, activists working in the field to serve the community and cater to its needs run the chance of contracting the disease and carrying it to their

2. Threats to livelihood and survival

The cost of the successive insurgencies, the war against ISIL and the sharp decrease in oil revenues have been draining the Iraqi economy and impacting the livelihood of its people. “Poverty has grown by more than 10 per cent in recent months, with one in three Iraqis living below the poverty line....and Iraq’s economy is... expected to contract by 9.7 per cent in GDP terms as oil revenues — severely impacted by a global crash in oil prices — have been cut by nearly half”²⁹. Women and youth all over Iraq, including the KRI, mostly working in informal employment, suffer from high unemployment rates and are less likely to have social security or health insurance.³⁰ As put by one KI, and shared by many others, “the conflict added to the already collapsing economy with its grave repercussions on the population, the majority of whom have lost any feeling of physical or food security”. The conflict has led many women to look for alternative sources of income such as sewing and food production, while some have ventured to open small enterprises. This has helped them secure their families’ survival, especially in cases where they are heads of household. Women activists have been no exception as their increased economic and productive responsibilities have impacted the time they usually allocate for engagement in the political sphere.

Pandemic and lockdown measures have added to women’s care and domestic responsibilities, further impacting their economic and productive role. Many small enterprises have had to close, including those owned by women.³¹ As indicated by interviewees from different governorates, the pandemic has aggravated women’s economic suffering and added to the limitations on women’s political activism by raising more urgent personal and community needs, especially in war-torn areas and those with large numbers of internally displaced persons (IDPs), or returning IDPs. According to these interviewees, as women are usually employed in the informal sector or in temporary employment, mostly in the tourism and hospitality sectors, they are more prone than men to be laid off, as many private sector companies working in these fields are downsizing or closing down due to the continuous deterioration of the economic situation brought about by closure policies and the international economic situation. These opinions add support to the findings of other research on the gender impact of

COVID-19 on Iraqi women, that the pandemic has created further barriers to women’s and youth’s ability to access and retain decent jobs.³²

3. Weak democratic mechanisms for increasing women’s political participation and engagement in peacebuilding

A large majority of interviewees expressed a perception of the weakness of all, or at least some, of the following institutions and/or mechanisms: the national women’s machinery, Parliament, government, political parties and the local councils whose cancellation under the pressure of demonstrators in 2019 deprived women of their regional representation.

a) Heightened sectarian division

According to many interviewees, the conflict has heightened sectarian divisions and intensified the ongoing parliamentary struggle between Islamists and liberals. As revealed by the majority of interviews, these factors have strengthened the hold of political parties on women MPs, which has often obstructed their ability to a) form a united front with other female MPs in carrying out their different parliamentary roles; b) push for legislation to protect women and their rights that were widely violated during the conflict (in particular the anti-domestic violence law and amendment of the Penal Code); c) gain representation on parliamentary committees that could improve their role in peace-making and peacebuilding, such as the Security and Defence Committee and the National Reconciliations and Impunity Committee; and d) push for women’s representation in national reconciliation efforts.

The examples cited by some interviewees include the low number of women MPs who joined the Women Parliamentary Bloc upon its creation in 2009 (27 out of 73) and its continued inability to pursue the goals it has set for itself, chiefly to broaden women’s role in national reconciliation, improve women’s representation in decision-making positions and bring parliamentary blocs together over common ground. Women from different ideological backgrounds (Islamists, civil, leftists) agree on the strategic goals of increasing the role of women in peacebuilding, their protection and their contribution to conflict prevention but they deeply disagree on how to achieve these goals.

According to some interviewees, women MPs have become more alienated from the needs, concerns and demands of their constituencies. They blame them for not visiting demonstrations, for not trying to play a mediating role between demonstrators and government forces, for not visiting confinement centres and hospitals to show people empathy and a dedication to working to meet their needs and for not voicing objections to government forces' violations of human rights against demonstrators in 2019 and 2020. Summing up the opinions expressed by many interviewees, one woman activist attributed the lack of such action by women MPs to the political parties' nomination of women lacking a political background on their electoral lists.

This resulted not only in the weak performance of women MPs but also in the poor performance of the parliament as a whole. However, one current women MP explained the reason behind this inaction on the part of women MPs. She noted that "since the outbreak of the pandemic, male MPs have been organizing meetings and visiting those sites without informing us about the meetings or the planned visits. We were totally excluded. We were treated as if we were the Coronavirus. When asked about the reason behind our exclusion, they said: your husbands and kids are at home and that's where you should be".³³

Noteworthy are two significant findings that are a common thread through almost all interviews, especially those with women activists. The first is the tendency to undermine the role of the women's parliamentary committee. In light of the emphasis placed by women's movements' in Iraq and worldwide on the role of women in sustainable development and peace-making and building, one cannot but raise questions regarding women MPs' ability to convince their male counterparts to join or support the "important work" of the women's committee, if they are not convinced themselves that the committee's work is of equal importance as the work of any other committee.

The impact of this, as stated by one of the interviewed woman MPs, "has been felt in the halting of the work of the Committee due to a lack of members. Even women refused to join it". The second finding, raised by only one of the women activists interviewed, is the general tendency to assess the performance of

women in power positions, mainly in parliament, as a standalone without comparing them to men in the same or similar positions. This leads to stressing women's weaknesses and lack of competence, while the reasons behind such low performance may be inherent in the regime and structure of power impacting the work of both men and women.³⁴

After the discovery of COVID-19 cases among members of parliament, the parliament closed. However, this did not significantly impact its work as the closure period coincided with the parliament's annual break. According to many interviewees, COVID-19 closure measures revealed a lack of knowledge among many women MPs on the use of the internet and social media. This impacted their ability to keep in touch with their constituencies and follow up on their needs and demands, as well as losing contact with women NGOs with whom they usually work. Moreover, the Parliamentary Crisis Cell formed to deal with the pandemic had only one woman member. While many of the interviewees were unaware of this woman's representation in this Cell, others criticized the minimal, token-like representation of women and the unsatisfactory performance of the woman member.

Though the impact of COVID-19 was almost the same on the work of the KRI parliament, interviewees' responses regarding women in the KRI parliament show a more positive assessment of women MPs' performance. They highlighted the fact that it is not only numbers that count, but also the absence of deep and intense ideological divisions within parliament, as well as greater respect and acceptance of women's political participation and their important role in politics and society at large. However, a Kurdistan woman MP in the Iraqi parliament highlighted the attitude of top Iraqi officials towards a woman assuming the position of Speaker in Kurdistan. She noted that "it has been the custom that when top political figures from Iraq visit the KRI, such as the Iraqi Prime Minister or Speaker, they visit the President of the Region, the Premier and the Speaker. However, since a woman assumed the Speakership position, none of those who visited the KRI have paid a visit to the Speaker. "What was really disturbing is that no one, including the woman speaker herself and her party, objected to the lack of respect to the Speaker position because it was held by a woman".³⁵

b) Minimal representation of women in successive governments

The rise in sectarian conflicts and military confrontations resulted in a decrease in women's representation in successive governments. While six out of 36 ministers were women in the transitional government of 2004, this figure fell to four in 2006, and to two in each of the governments formed in 2010, 2014, 2018 and 2020. As expressed by many of the interviewees, none of the women ministers in the last two governments have shown interest in women issues. One issue where this lack of interest can be seen is these ministers' insignificant role in pushing the government into drafting the anti-domestic violence law despite the reported increase in domestic violence cases and the threat that this phenomenon poses, not only to its victims but to the stability of the family and society at large. According to some interviewees, this minimal representation of women in government reflects the growing impact of the dominant patriarchal and conflictual political culture, exacerbated by the increased influence of political Islam, on the role of women in politics during times of war and conflict.

Despite the presence of two women ministers in the current government, the National Committee for Health and Safety, established in March 2020 to respond to the pandemic, had no women among its members. Given the fact that many of the interviewees declared having no specific information about the response plan, many of those who answered the question regarding women's representation in its drafting expressed that gender was not mainstreamed in it despite the intensified efforts and lobbying by women's organizations and activists in various parts of the country, and the meetings they held with the regional affiliates of the Directorate for Women's Empowerment to encourage them to push their demand for mainstreaming gender in the response plan. Moreover, many interviewees expressed their concerns with and opposition to the government's intentional overlooking of the fact that more than half of the medical corps and staff are women who are highly knowledgeable and capable of contributing to the virus containment plan. This lack of women's representation on the National Committee for Health and Safety was considered by a few of the male interviewees as being the result of the government's consideration of the fight against the

virus as a male affair that women had nothing to do with.

c) Institutional weakness

A significant majority of KIs stated that the conflict has added to the original weakness of the Directorate for Women's Empowerment, which is the official national women's machinery, established in 2017 to replace the Ministry of State for Women's Affairs. Many interviewees attributed this weakness to the Directorate's (a) lack of human and financial resources;³⁶ (b) lack of independent decision-making power as it is a subdivision of the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers; and (c) the de facto limitations on an official state organ's ability to get involved in the work of NGOs who are highly critical of governmental policies. Citing the experiences of the Supreme Committee for the Promotion of Rural Women, the Supreme Committee for the Advancement of Iraqi Women, the Committee for the Protection of Women and the Ex-Ministry of State for Women's Affairs, a significant majority of the interviewees appear to have lost trust in the ability of the national women's machinery to serve the goals they were founded to serve, especially in light of the rising needs of women for empowerment and protection as a result of the conflict. According to them, the conflict, with its repercussions on the economy and the social fabric, has exacerbated the impact of the above factors on the performance of these machineries, and has significantly limited their ability to implement the National Strategy for Combating Violence against Women (2013–2017), The National Strategy for the Advancement of Iraqi Women (2014–2018) and the Iraqi National Action Plan for the Implementation of UNSCR 1325. The interviews also revealed a lack of a common perception among interviewees with different backgrounds of the type of national machinery needed to secure women's rights and improve their status. While some are satisfied with the current machinery and its performance, others call for the establishment of a Supreme Council for Women, with administrative and financial independence, aimed at broadening women's political participation, increasing their role in sustainable development and ending discrimination against women. Still others demand a full ministry, not a ministry of state for women's affairs.

The interviews also revealed criticism for the govern-

ment's tendency to establish a multitude of committees with overlapping functions and authorities, without proper funding for their work, describing these committees as a means to absorb women's frustration and gain their votes. Some interviewees identified a tendency to start over from scratch instead of building on previous work, a lack of innovative approaches, male control over issues related to women's rights and a "lack of real understanding on part of the political establishment of the concept and process of peacebuilding" as major factors obstructing the work of the above institutions to advance women's political participation and engagement in national reconciliation and peacebuilding.

The work of the Directorate for Women's Empowerment was affected by closure measures just like any other public institution. However, many of the interviewees blame the Directorate for not pushing hard enough for women's representation in the drafting of the COVID-19 response plan, as well as in many of the reconciliation committees such as the National Reconciliation Committee for Coexistence and Social Peace established on 23 May 2019.

d) *Insignificant role of women in political parties*

There was a consensus among interviewees about the role that the past and present marginalization of women in political parties plays in obstructing women's qualitative political participation and engagement in national reconciliation and peacebuilding efforts. Apart from the Wisdom Movement (Hikmeh), which according to one of the interviewees, has lately had a quota for women and youth, women are not represented in parties' leadership positions. With the exception of main parties in the KRI, neither the role of women in the war, nor their role in combating the repercussions of the pandemic, played a role in changing Iraqi political parties' attitudes towards women assuming positions of power within or outside the party.

The distribution of top state positions and ministries among the various religious and ethnic groups, often considered an effective recipe for building and maintaining peaceful coexistence in heterogeneous societies with conflictual political cultures, was considered by a sizeable majority of interviewees a major factor obstructing women's access to decision-making positions. Coupled with a deeply rooted patriarchal culture, which considers women incapable of

defending the group's interests, the chances of women assuming such positions decreases significantly at times of intense political and military conflict, which has recurred repeatedly in Iraq since 2005. In the opinion of many of the interviewees, this explains women's exclusion from all national reconciliation processes and committees since 2006. According to them, women nominated by the dominant political parties for election or appointment to top administrative or representative positions lack the needed political background, are just for show or to meet the required quota and are deprived of means of influence as all decisions lie in the hands of the party or parliamentary bloc leader. One interviewee noted that with the exception of very few women, women have generally not stood in opposition to their parties' stance on a particular issue, even if it is at the expense of their rights as women. The best example is the position of women partisans on the anti-domestic violence law. This view of the ineffectiveness of senior women was not shared by some male activists and women in top public positions themselves, who stated that women in decision-making positions have, and can exert, the influence that comes with the job, and that it depends on the woman's personality.

According to some interviewees, tribal traditions and clan structures may also play an important role in limiting the freedom of action for women in positions of power. A woman may be able to relieve herself of party pressure by resigning, even if it may mean losing her position. However, as stated by one woman MP, if the woman was nominated by her clan, it is not easy to oppose the clan's position, as renouncing bonds of blood may carry with it social and even family exclusion, a chance that not many women, if any, are ready to take.

Other factors that have restricted women's work during the pandemic and lockdowns are their limited computer literacy and inability to use new technologies. The latter was attributed by some interviewees from Diwaniyeh, Salah al-Din and other regions to the discriminatory policies of United Nations agencies and other donors. As put by one legal activist, "They repeatedly provide their support to the same small circle of organizations and ignore the many others that badly need funding. They don't monitor the progress and impact of the projects they fund. This leads to a great deal of wasted resources". Finally, and though not directed at women activists in particular, the government's interruption of internet services and access to social media platforms during demon-

strations is an example of direct or indirect government restrictions on the work of civil society.

4. Gender norms and cultural mores

Socially dictated gender norms and roles still play an important role in restricting and limiting women's involvement in the public sphere. Many interviewees stated that, though this factor is stronger in highly conservative and/or rural areas, such as Al Anbar and Salah al-Din, it is not absent from urban and war-torn areas. One interviewee from Nineveh gave an example of "males' rejection of mediation and compliance with a response plan to the pandemic in some areas just because it was offered by women".

Culture can also pose problems for women activists and limit their ability to advocate for women's rights and address threats to family and social stability. An example cited by many activists is the spotty reporting of domestic violence and other forms of gender-based violence that women are subjected to, due to cultural norms and traditions and/or for fear of reprisal in the absence of protection structures. Without statistics on the scope and severity of these phenomena, despite reports that they have soared during the conflict and pandemic, decision-makers in Iraq, as in many Arab countries, have been able to avoid passing a law criminalizing domestic violence. It is hoped that the increase in women judges, though still below the desired level and with most of them appointed in personal status courts,³⁷ will help facilitate better reporting of domestic violence and violence against women.

Two more related cultural factors were also considered by some interviewees as obstructing women's political participation and engagement in official national reconciliation and peacebuilding efforts. The first is the rising culture of religious extremism, its dominance of state institutions and its implications for women's participation. The opinions of some of the interviewees were best summed up by two male activists who said that "some of those in power that adopt a political Islam framework, (...), consider women inferior to men in intelligence and religious commitments and doubt their political abilities....and consider women's entry into parliament as a 'spoiler'", and "...they lack interest in empowering women and enhancing their status [...] their plans are to drive women out of the political and public spheres". The second obstructing factor is the many years where Iraqi people were not able to be trained

on democracy and its exercise. This made it easy for conservatives and extremists to strengthen their foothold.

B. Positive impact of the conflict and the pandemic and potential opportunities

1. Changes in women's self-perception and increased self-confidence

According to the majority of interviewees, women, driven by too much suffering and a feeling of being neglected, have undergone a radical change in their self-perception and in how they see their status and role in society. As a result, they have left behind old traditions, gendered roles and restrictions, especially in governorates known for their excessive conservatism and total control over women's movement and behaviour, such as the Mosul and Al-Anbar regions and the El-Huwayjah district in Kirkuk. One KI clarified that the woman who returned home after the experience of displacement is not the same woman she was before she left. Her ability to take initiatives and make decisions have changed significantly, especially in Al-Anbar and Mosul. Women have become more outspoken about issues that they never dared or were allowed to discuss in public before, mainly issues that were considered taboos and disgracing to the family's honour, such as experiences of rape and domestic violence. Women, especially Yazidi women, have started demanding their right to political participation, participated in electoral campaigns and worked through NGOs to defend themselves and their rights. This change in women's perception of their status and role and their overcoming of tribal and traditional restrictions on behaviour were best manifested in: (a) the number of women running for parliamentary and regional council elections, and as independents in parliamentary elections, of whom 22 won despite the difficulties they faced; (b) their participation in the 2019 demonstrations alongside men; and (c) the demonstrations they organized on international women's day in 2020 in various parts of the country (e.g. in Baghdad, Basra, Nasiriyah, Najaf). Some interviewees were highly critical of women politicians' perception of their role, and belief in their abilities, especially women MPs and holders of top administrative positions.

The slogans and demands women voiced in the 2020 demonstrations reflected their demand for participa-

tion in building their country on a solid democratic basis to ensure a sustainable peace through eliminating the drivers of conflict, chief among them poverty, discrimination, lack of basic services, unemployment, government corruption, sectarianism, etc. Many women activists who were interviewed, and some male activists, saw the above factors as playing a role in obstructing women's equal opportunity in contributing to their country's development and stability in all fields and at all levels. As such, one of the most significant demands raised during the demonstrations was that of a civil state guaranteeing gender equality in rights and obligations and banning all forms of violence against women, domestic violence and other forms of discrimination. The fact that the 2019 and 2020 demonstrations were joined by a sizeable number of men, youth and heads of tribes and clans reflects a changing attitude towards women's rights that should be built on by all stakeholders. The lockdown measures in effect at the time of the 2020 demonstrations did not stop or weaken women's will to make their voices heard, nor did the various types of attacks against women activists on social media impact their work during the pandemic.

It is important to note the role of projects supported by some international donors in increasing women's self-confidence and giving them the opportunity to put their experience during the conflict to good use in working on improving governance within their communities. One such project was the Women Advisory Boards in Iraq project (WABs). The project was launched in September 2019 in the Anbar, Diyala, Nineveh, Kirkuk and Salah al-Din governorates. Each board is composed of about 17 women from different walks of life. These boards are "independent committees formed to provide policy recommendations, as well as implement local projects, in order to promote gender-sensitive problem solving... They are already actively making a difference, from helping internally displaced persons, to campaigning against gender-based violence, to advocating for the rights of people with disabilities"³⁸. According to a member of the Anbar Board, "this new experience of Women Advisory Boards in Iraq will help elevate women's voices in the governorates"³⁹.

Extending this experience to other governorates can help increase women's participation in decision-making processes on responding to the pandemic and building peace.

2. Increased role of women in mediation

According to interviewees from war-torn areas, both the conflict and the pandemic have played a role in raising women's awareness of the importance of their engagement in maintaining social cohesion and peace-building in their communities. They also became aware of the role that this engagement plays in increasing social acceptance of women's mediating role. A woman's personality and persistence were stressed as important determinants of effective mediation. Examples were provided by interviewees from different regions. A woman in Al-Hamadaniyah district was able to break the stalemate in the attempts at ending the conflict between Christian and Shabak residents of the area after its liberation from ISIL. In Karbala women formed a human chain to separate demonstrators and security forces and encourage them to enter into negotiations instead of resorting to force and bloodshed. Women from Karbala agreed with a United Nations delegation to play a mediating role between demonstrators and the government, but the government did not respond.

Another cited example is the role of the group Women for Peace since 2011 in bringing Kurdish leaders to the negotiating table every time a dispute erupts among them, or to discuss other important issues such as the constitution of Kurdistan and the establishment of coordination committees among political parties. Kurdish leadership has always provided support for this women's role and considered it an important step towards unifying Kurdish demands, managing and building peace and encouraging conflicting factions to negotiate to settle their disputes. According to interviewees from Duhok, this women's activism has led to a materialization of public awareness of the importance of women's political participation that did not exist before. As stated by KIs from Nineveh and Sinjar, COVID measures have not limited women's work in raising awareness aimed at improving social reconciliation and cohesion. In Nineveh, women have participated in peace and social reconciliation processes and negotiations held after the liberation of the region from ISIL fighters. Criticizing the government for the continued exclusion of women from national reconciliation processes and committees, a male MP and former head of a governorate council noted that "while American and European organizations appreciate women's negotiation and mediation skills, and rely heavily on them in dialogue, there is still

resistance from our side to acknowledge women's skills and they continue to be excluded from such processes. This must change". Building on the current and/or developing social acceptance of women's mediation in these and other areas can be a stepping stone towards ensuring a greater share for women in official reconciliation and peacebuilding processes. Spotlighting instances of women who have effectively facilitated mediation can provide role models for potential future female leaders and mediators, and especially for the increasing number of young women joining the Higher Diploma on Peace Studies, launched at Baghdad University in 2019.

3. Increased awareness of the need for legal and security protection for women

The conflict has heightened the need to draft and adopt a revised Iraqi National Action Plan (INAP) for the Implementation of UNSCR 1325. An earlier version was drafted and adopted by the Council of Ministers on 1/4/2014, a few months after the outbreak of the war against ISIL. According to one interviewee, who is part of the 1325 National Team, the cost of the war and the large number of activities entailed in the INAP rendered its full implementation difficult. This led women to work on the inclusion of an emergency plan in the originally adopted INAP.

The Emergency Plan of 2015 provided for: (a) women's participation in the peace negotiating committees formed in liberated areas; and (b) the establishment of peaceful coexistence committees. Contrary to the belief of some interviewees, the Emergency Plan was drafted with a high level of cooperation between various ministries, the Supreme Council of Women in the KRI and the Iraq Initiative which represents women's networks and organizations from all parts of Iraq and Kurdistan. Due to its overcoming the problem of funding through engaging various ministries, "the Emergency Plan proved handy and effective in dealing with, and adapting to, the changing conditions and needs, including those brought about by the pandemic".⁴⁰ In line with the provisions of the Emergency Plan, the Women's Parliamentary Committee demanded the representation of women in the government by one third of the total number of ministers, a request that was not heeded. As declared by one of its members, "the Women's Parliamentary Committee cooperated with, and helped the High Committee for the Implementation of the Emergency plan every time they wanted to visit hardly hit areas, through coordinating with women

from these areas to ensure the safety of the visiting team".⁴¹ However, according to one female activist, despite the many coalitions women activists have formed to further their demands, they were not always successful. This is mainly a result of the fact that the organizations joining such coalitions come from different backgrounds and/or have different party support and affiliation. As such, the broad coalition around 1325 can act as a model and set the stage for more cooperation and unity among women's organizations.

The reported increase in domestic violence since the start of the conflict, which has been highly aggravated by lockdown measures, has highlighted the need for legislation to protect women from domestic violence, especially in light of the limited protection and services provided to survivors. The worsening situation has brought greater support for women's organizations' demands and advocacy for the passage of this law. It has also led to intensive public awareness campaigns on women's rights and domestic violence. According to interviews with informants in key positions at the Directorate for Women's Empowerment, the Directorate has "maintained a high level of cooperation with women's organizations and concerned ministries in drafting new bills to protect women and their rights, especially the domestic violence law, and in drafting national policies aimed at increasing women's political participation, mainstreaming gender in all governmental plans and programmes, securing training opportunities for women's NGOs and amending discriminatory laws, in particular the Penal Code". Drafting the anti-domestic violence law and getting it through to Parliament is considered by almost all interviewees a major achievement of the Directorate for Women's Empowerment, if it is passed. All these projects and activities are carried out through cooperation and strategic partnership with United Nations agencies in Iraq, especially UN Women, and other international donors, whose role in providing various forms of support to women's issues was highly appreciated by many respondents.

In response to the pandemic, the "Women for a Green and Peaceful Iraq" initiative was launched by the Umelyateem for Development Foundation under the auspices of the Ministry of Health (MOH), and in cooperation with the Directorate for Women's Empowerment and UNDP. This initiative involved the gender focal points in ministries and NGOs active in raising awareness about protection from the virus and prevention of its spread. It submitted recommendations to the Crisis Management Group at the

Ministry of Health (MOH).

The high level of cooperation apparent in the above work contradicts the negative opinion held by a large number of interviewees on the work of both the Directorate of Women Empowerment and the Women's Parliamentary Committee. This highlights the need for more dissemination of information on their work, which may prove effective in mobilizing support for their work on women's issues.

4. Increased women's interest in joining security forces and other fields

As expressed by interviewees from war-torn areas, the government's failure to provide protection for women, both in law and in practice, has raised women's awareness of the importance of joining the security forces. They state that women have started demanding enrolment in security forces to help combat violence against women and domestic violence and help survivors, especially given the reported increase in domestic violence cases since the start of the pandemic.

This demand was discussed by women during successive meetings held with top officials at the Ministry of Interior in Kirkuk. Women in Salah al-Din followed suit. In Sinjar and some liberated areas, women carried arms to defend themselves, and a group of 500 women joined the Peshmerga against ISIL. An example of women joining militias and carrying arms to defend themselves is the story of a 40 year old woman, Wahida Mouhamed al-Jumaily, known as Um Hanadi, who commands an 80-man force. Described in mass media as "one of the most reputedly vengeful" among militias in Iraq, Um Hanadi's militia, which operates in the Shirqat district (between Tikrit and Mosul), has helped drive ISIL out of the area. It has been working since 2017 to pursue, capture and kill ISIL fighters still in the area. Another cited example is that of women constituting 75% of the workers in a landmine clearance organization. These examples reflect an important change in social attitudes towards women's entry into work of this nature.

Commenting on women's entering security forces, some interviewees expressed pride in women's excelling in the military police with some reaching high ranks, and saw that this trend must be encour-

aged. On the other hand, one comment by a tribal sheikh on women carrying arms to defend themselves and entering fields long reserved for men reflects the continuation of gendered social roles. The Sheikh said that "Iraqi women generally did not carry arms because it is against how they were raised and results in them giving up their femininity".

Building on women's self confidence in their ability to overcome traditions and social restrictions regarding their role in society, and benefiting from their experiences in security and military work, can prove highly valuable in the reform of security forces, a cornerstone in peacebuilding processes. It is important to mention in this regard the projects carried out by some international non-governmental organizations with some women's and other local organizations aimed at "incorporating local security perspectives into Security Sector Reform (SSR) with a gender-sensitive approach, increasing the influence of women's organizations and networks in SSR discussions and increasing the capacities of local civil society actors to undertake gender-sensitive conflict analysis".⁴²

On another front, another field in which women from war-torn areas have shown an interest in joining, to maintain national and international memories of the atrocities they are exposed to, is the field of professional photography. One interviewee reported that, while visiting an organization offering a workshop on photography attended by over 100 women and girls, he was approached by a young girl who told him "I want to learn photography to document the war and its tragedies".⁴³

5. Shift to humanitarian aid and awareness raising

The majority of interviewees stated that the horrors and atrocities of the war, followed by the repercussions of the pandemic, have been suffered disproportionately by women and girls and have led to greater emphasis by women activists on field work. This entails provision of humanitarian aid and other forms of support including psychological support for women survivors of these events. The need for psychological services was clear. It was considered a priority in the COVID-19 Strategic Response Plan for Iraq. As the health system's capacity to provide mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) was extremely limited, women and other NGOs have

worked to provide these services with whatever limited resources and means at their disposal.⁴⁵ This is an important service for maintaining social cohesion and peacebuilding, and requires human, technical and financial support.⁴⁶

Women's organizations have also carried out intensive awareness raising activities about the Coronavirus and how to avoid contracting it. Some organizations provided door-to-door awareness raising and training on preventive measures despite the potential danger of contracting the virus and "of being avoided and/or treated differently by their close surroundings".

According to one KI, "the pandemic period witnessed high levels of volunteering among women, girls and youth, as well as young women's entry into fields and jobs previously denied to them such as social work. Those volunteers, with the help of NGOs, have been able to solve problems that the government was unable to deal with. Moreover, women and women's organizations have sewn and distributed masks for free. These activities covered different regions and populations across the country, including IDP camps and families of martyrs killed by ISIL. Social acceptance of women's engagement in humanitarian and social work to help families in need was "highly appreciated in Kirkuk", and as declared by many interviewees, "women proved more capable of dealing with the pandemic than men... They proved to have important leadership qualities".

According to interviews with activists and members of NGOs in Salah al-Din, Diwaniyeh, Karbala and elsewhere, many organizations and individual activists have continued their humanitarian and volunteer work despite all the challenges and closure measures. One example is the White Hands Association of youth from Najaf, which has extended its work to all governorates. This Association is still run from Najaf and carries out public awareness and empowerment campaigns. They created an administrative

board with young and old women constituting 75 per cent of their advisory group. The latter came up with many proposals which were implemented successfully and effectively. As declared by many interviewees, the war and pandemic periods, especially the second stage of the pandemic, have witnessed high levels of youth engagement in humanitarian work carried out by women's organizations and the High Committee for the Implementation of the Emergency Plan of the INAP, in various regions.

Interviewees also agreed that this shift to humanitarian work in the field has not led to a significant decrease in women's work in advocating and raising awareness about women's rights. However, the closure measures have led to increased reliance on the internet and social media for most activities. Among the cited examples was "the virtual conference held by the women movement in Sinjar on 3 August 2020, to disseminate information about the genocide committed in Sinjar by ISIL".

The internet helped women's organizations hold video conferences to carry out their activities without having to worry about the required pre-authorization that used to restrict women activities. However, the use of such technologies has highlighted the prevalence of computer illiteracy, and the lack of knowledge of how to use modern communications technology among a large segment of women in various regions and from different socioeconomic classes, "including some women MPs". As such, broadening the scope of women's organizations' current work on providing computer literacy programmes and training on the use of modern communication technology, supported by United Nations agencies and other donors, appears to be a pressing need to increase the effectiveness of women's activities. It is important to note that this experience with the use of the internet highlighted the need for the rehabilitation of related infrastructures.

IV. SUMMARY AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The above presentation of the research findings highlighted the major factors that have been at play in obstructing or enabling Iraqi women's participation in politics at different stages of Iraq's history since the early 1920s and under different types of political regimes. This has helped us determine the prerequisite conditions needed to achieve (a) the long term goal set by this research, i.e. ensuring sustainable qualitative and quantitative women's political participation at all levels and in all fields, and securing their engagement in peacebuilding and crisis management processes (such as those addressing the pandemic); and (b) the intermediate goals of ensuring women's political participation in national and local plans for responding to the pandemic and in the currently ongoing national reconciliation and peacebuilding processes.

One major research finding stands out and should be taken into consideration when implementing the recommended interventions: none of the factors discussed below is by itself a necessary and sufficient condition to achieve the desired change. As such, the process for achieving the set goals is a multi-faceted process which requires working in parallel to achieve the enabling conditions on one hand, and working to remove, or at least mitigate, the obstructing factors, as dictated by TOC, on the other. This multi-faceted process requires cooperation and concerted efforts by all stakeholders. If well implemented, this process will help us meet the requirement of providing the "necessary and sufficient" conditions needed to achieve the set goals.

The findings of the field and desk research on the conditions for increasing women's political participation and rendering it sustainable in the future are presented below in the assumptions. They are the basis for the following recommendations for action by the various stakeholders.

A. Assumptions

Achieving sustainable qualitative and quantitative women's political participation at all levels and all fields, and women's engagement in peacebuilding and crisis management processes (such as responding to the COVID-19 pandemic) require:

- Decision makers' acknowledgement of the importance of women's contributions in the response plan to the COVID-19 pandemic, based on their experience in being at the frontlines in facing the pandemic (as members of the medical profession, as home caretakers and as members of NGOs that have been extensively involved in responding to the pandemic);
- A political will based on a belief in the importance of women's role in national human, economic and political development, especially within political parties;
- Women's solidarity and unity in their goals and demands, in particular inclusion in government and top executive positions;
- Broad support for women's unified demands by classifying women's rights as national issues that transcend regional, political and sectarian borders;
- Women's political empowerment including for women MPs and women members of political parties;
- Support for the election of independent women candidates to parliament;
- Legal and security structures empowered to secure protection for women, especially women activists, against all forms of gender-based violence;
- Securing constitutional consistency with regard to respect of gender equality and banning of discrimination (Art. 14) through the repeal of article 41;
- Development of a national identity that transcends atomistic identities and loyalties;
- Absence of discriminatory laws that assign women a social status lower than that of men;
- Culture based on respect for human rights and tolerance;

- High literacy rates in general including among adults;
- Women's knowledge of their legal rights;
- Women's economic empowerment;
- Civil society empowered to monitor the work of government.

B. Recommendations

Based on the above assumptions, the following recommendations were prepared for the different stakeholders. The recommendations are presented below under three titles representing the goals of this research, i.e. securing and increasing women's effective participation in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and the peace-making and peacebuilding processes, followed by the recommendations for sustaining women's political participation and engagement in peacebuilding and crisis management.

1. Increasing women's engagement in responding to COVID-19 pandemic:

- The Iraqi government is advised to ensure women's representation in the drafting and/or revision of COVID-19 response plans, both at the national and governorate levels;
- The Directorate for Women's Empowerment, Women's Parliamentary Committee and networks of women's organizations are advised to join forces, cooperate and coordinate in pushing for women's inclusion in the drafting and/or revision of COVID-19 response plans, both at the national and governorate levels;
- The Directorate for Women's Empowerment, Women's Parliamentary Committee and networks of women's organizations are advised to network with youth groups in various regions and engage them in responding to the pandemic;
- The Directorate for Women's Empowerment, Women's Parliamentary Committee and networks of women's organizations are advised to network with the private sector in various regions and motivate

them to contribute to the response plan out of corporate social responsibility;

- The Directorate for Women's Empowerment, Women's Parliamentary Committee and networks of women's organizations are advised to cooperate and coordinate with the Ministry of Information and mass media to intensify public awareness campaigns on the Coronavirus and the measures for its containment;
- The Directorate for Women's Empowerment, Women's Parliamentary Committee and networks of women's organizations, in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior, are advised to design and implement training for security forces in all governorates on how to deal with infected cases to be quarantined, especially women, in a way that furthers cooperation rather than creating conflict;
- Women's networks and organizations are advised to launch campaigns aimed at raising public awareness of the role of women and youth in responding to the pandemic to increase support for their inclusion in official national and local decision-making processes for pandemic response;
- The Directorate for Women's Empowerment, Women's Parliamentary Committee and networks of women's organizations are advised to join forces to exert the needed pressure on the government to allocate the funds needed to provide psychological support services to individuals and families affected by the virus;
- UN Women, other United Nations agencies and international donors are advised to provide support for women's organizations working in IDP areas, which have had to close or downsize due to lack of funds;
- UN Women is advised to cooperate with international donors in supporting the extension of the Women Advisory Boards in Iraq project and/or similar projects to all regions of Iraq as they can help increase women's participation in decision-making processes on responding to the pandemic and building peace;
- UN Women, other United Nations agencies and international donors are advised to provide support

for the Directorate for Women's Empowerment, Women's Parliamentary Committee and networks of women's organizations in carrying out the above activities.

2. Increasing women's meaningful participation in national reconciliation and peacebuilding processes.

- The Iraqi government is advised to ensure women's representation in national reconciliation and peace-building processes;

- The Directorate for Women's Empowerment, the Women's Parliamentary Committee and women's organizations and networks are advised to intensify their advocacy campaigns for women's representation in all reconciliation and peace-making and building processes both at the national and local levels, as well as for greater representation of women in government;

- UN Women, other United Nations agencies working in Iraq and international donors are advised to use all the leverage they have to persuade the government to ensure women's representation in positions of power and in reconciliation and peace-building processes;

- The Directorate for Women's Empowerment, the Women's Parliamentary Committee and women's organizations and networks are advised to intensify their pressures on the government to allocate funds needed for the drafting and implementation of the second INAP for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and the National Women Strategy and secure broad women's representation in these processes;

- As the technical, human and financial resources needed for the revision and implementation of UNSCR 1325 Action Plan are locally lacking, United Nations agencies, chiefly UN Women, and international donors are advised to provide the needed support. Same support is also needed for drafting a strategy to deal with the issue of IDPs;

- The Directorate for Women's Empowerment, the Women's Parliamentary Committee and women's organizations and networks are advised to intensify

their advocacy campaigns for providing the national women's machinery with the authorities and financial and decision-making independence needed to carry out its functions, and for the creation of a ministry for women;

- Women's organizations and networks, in cooperation with UN women and other international donors, are advised to design and implement training for women in political parties on how to ensure their effective participation within their parties and demand leadership positions and the right to represent the party in various government institutions and in reconciliation processes;

- Women's organizations and networks, in cooperation with UN women and other international donors, are advised to design and implement training for women candidates in the upcoming parliamentary elections (set for June 2021) and encourage, train and support independent women candidates;

- The Directorate for Women's Empowerment, the Women's Parliamentary Committee and women's organizations and networks are advised to intensify their pressures on the government to count women who win in the upcoming parliamentary elections as independents separately and not within the quota for women;

- Women's organizations and networks are advised to network with youth and human rights groups from various regions and engage them in advocating and campaigning for women's representation in all national and local reconciliation, peace-making and peace-building processes;

- The Directorate for Women's Empowerment, the Women's Parliamentary Committee and women's organizations and networks are advised to cooperate with the Ministry of Interior to issue a code of conduct for the security forces on dealing with women's rights and human rights activists;

- The Directorate for Women's Empowerment and the Women's Parliamentary Committee are advised to cooperate with women's networks in ensuring regular dissemination of information on their work, which may prove effective in mobilizing support for their work on women's issues.

3. Sustaining women's participation in responding to crisis and engagement in peace-building

- The Iraqi government is advised to (a) take serious measures to end prevalent corruption; (b) rehabilitate infrastructure; and (c) adopt policies to encourage investment and job creation in all regions;

- The Directorate for Women's Empowerment, the Women's Parliamentary Committee and women's organizations and networks are advised to intensify campaigning and advocacy for a) the amendment of the Constitution to remove any provisions that implicitly or explicitly contradict the principles of article 14 (e.g. Art. 41); b) the amendment of laws that include implicit or explicit discrimination against women (e.g. Penal Code, Code of Criminal Procedure, Electoral Law) to ensure the constitutionality, consistency and harmony of all laws; c) the amendment of Law 102 of 7/2/1974 to make education compulsory (besides being free) up to a certain age and ensure its full implementation; and d) the adoption of laws protecting women and girls from all forms of gender-based violence (e.g. domestic violence law, the Yazidi women's law, etc);

- The Directorate for Women's Empowerment, the Women's Parliamentary Committee and women's organizations and networks are advised to intensify campaigning and advocacy for the adoption of quota for women in government and all top public and governmental positions and ensure the mainstreaming of gender in all government policies and programmes;

- The Directorate for Women's Empowerment, the Women's Parliamentary Committee and women's organizations and networks are advised to a) campaign and advocate for an increase in the number of women in the security forces and ensure that police stations are gender sensitive; b) design and implement training for security forces on dealing with victims of domestic violence and violence against women; c) encourage the adoption of a security forces' code of conduct for dealing with women survivors of violence against women, domestic violence and gender-based violence generally; and d) provide hot lines and shelters for victims of domestic violence and violence against women in all regions

and allow NGOs to open such shelters;

- The Directorate for Women's Empowerment, the Women's Parliamentary Committee and women's organizations and networks, in cooperation with human rights agencies, are advised to advocate with concerned ministries to a) introduce human and women's rights courses in the training curricula for new judges and security forces, provide training for those who are already in service⁴⁷ and help in designing it; b) include courses and/or material on human rights in school curriculum and make human rights courses compulsory for all university specializations;

- The Directorate for Women's Empowerment, the Women's Parliamentary Committee and women's organizations and networks, in cooperation and coordination with UN Women and the Gender Country Team, are advised to work on setting priorities to advance women's status and rights and provide international donors with a guide to help broaden the geographical scope of international aid, identify priorities for programmes and projects and avoid duplicity and waste of time, money and effort;

- United Nations agencies and international donors are advised to support (a) work with ESCWA to measure multi-dimensional poverty (b) implementation of a national poverty alleviation programme; (c) implementation of graduation from poverty programmes in different regions of the country, especially among IDPs; and (d) diversification of women's organizations that are recipients of aid in all regions to quell accusations of discriminatory funding;

- International donors are advised to ensure the mainstreaming of gender and transparency in all funded projects, the adoption of a bottom-up approach that involves targeted communities in the design process and accounting for regional differences. This will build a sense of community ownership of projects and improve their implementation and effectiveness;

- The Directorate for Women's Empowerment, the Women's Parliamentary Committee and women's organizations and networks are advised to (a) intensify and broaden the scope of the current campaigns aimed at raising women's awareness of their political,

economic and social rights and the importance of women's participation in politics at all levels and in all regions of Iraq including rural areas; (b) design and implement campaigns and trainings aimed at eradicating women's legal illiteracy; (c) design and implement adult literacy programmes and computer literacy and/or modern communication technology programmes (for women and men) in all regions including rural areas; (d) design and implement awareness raising campaigns on the importance of women national machineries and the Women's Parliamentary Committee in the country's development to help decrease the negative view of their work among decision makers and the public; and e) design and implement trainings for potential young female and male leaders (highlighting role models);

- The Directorate for Women's Empowerment, the Women's Parliamentary Committee and women's organizations and networks are advised to network and cooperate with the private and public sectors in conducting research aimed at assessing market needs for jobs that can be carried out by women in each

region and designing and implementing (a) training programmes for women that meet market demand for jobs in each region; (b) general women economic empowerment programmes; and (c) running businesses and enterprises using the internet and modern communications technology;

- UN Women and other United Nations agencies and international donors are advised to encourage and support girls and women, as well as women's organizations, working to document the atrocities of war, especially those committed against women and girls. Keeping these atrocities alive in the world's and decision makers' memory can be an effective tool to prevent such actions and/or stop them in their tracks before they take their full toll on human societies in general, and women and girls in particular;
- UN Women in cooperation with other United Nations agencies are advised to build the capacity of women's organizations in various regions and provide them with the needed human, technical and financial support to carry out the above recommendations

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ahmed, Huda. (2010). Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa 2010 — Iraq. Freedom House. Available at <https://www.refworld.org/docid/4b990123c.html>.
- Al Jazeera (2018). ISIL: An Eye for an Eye in Iraq. Available at <https://www.aljazeera.com/program/episode/2018/6/14/isil-an-eye-for-an-eye-in-iraq/>.
- Behind the Scenes with Controversial Female Militia Commander Hunting ISIS Fighters. June 14 2018, Available at <https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/counterterrorism/behind-the-scenes-with-controversial-female-militia-commander-hunting-isis-fighters/>.
- Bloomberg School of Public Health, Johns Hopkins University (2006). The human cost of the war in Iraq. Available at <http://web.mit.edu/humancostiraq/reports/human-cost-war-101106.pdf>.
- Cherland, K. (2014). The development of Personal Status Law in Jordan and Iraq. Available at https://scholarship.claremont.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1926&context=cmc_theses.
- Chirillo, Gina, & Roddey, Caroline (October 2019). Gender analysis of Iraq's electoral and political processes. Available at https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/gender_analysis_of_iraqs_electoral_and_political_process.pdf.
- Civil Society Dialogue Network Discussion Paper No. 12 (2017). Civil society peacebuilding actors in Iraq. Available at http://eplo.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/EPLO_CSDN_Discussion-Paper_Civil-society-peacebuilding-actors-in-Iraq.pdf. CJTF-OIR Official Twitter. Archived 2019-03-25. Available at <https://twitter.com/cjtfair/status/1106896717138546688>.
- Congressional Research Service (17 July 2020). Iraq: issues in the 116th Congress. Available at <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/R45633.pdf>.
- CORDAID, (21 April 2020). COVID-19 Response in Iraq: Our domestic violence hot lines keep ringing. Available at <https://www.cordaaid.org/en/news/covid-19-response-iraq-domestic-violence-hotlines-keep-ringing/>.
- CORDAID, (29 May 2019). "My kids saw a lot of things": Psychological support and mental health care in Iraq Available at <https://www.cordaaid.org/en/news/kids-saw-lot-things-psychosocial-support-mental-health-care-iraq/>.
- CTV News. Meet the Iraqi grandmother leading a militia fighting Islamic State. Available at <https://www.ctvnews.ca/world/meet-the-iraqi-grandmother-leading-a-militia-fighting-islamic-state-1.3269777>.
- El-Helou, M. (May 2013). "An Assessment of the Experience of Women Members of Lebanese Municipal Councils", Friedrich Ebert Stiftung and the Lebanese Family Planning Association, (Arabic).
El-Helou, M. (1995). Islam in Turkish politics: Past, present and future. Center of Armenian Studies, Beirut. (Arabic).
- ESCWA (2019). Operationalizing intersectionality in the Arab region: Challenges and ways forward. Available at https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/publications/files/operationalizing-intersectionality-arab-region-challenges-ways-forward-english_0.pdf.

Hennis-Plasschaeret, Jeanine, Briefing the Security Council, 26 August 2020. Available at <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/08/1071102>.

- Human Rights Watch (August 2020). Submission by Human Rights Watch to the United Nations Human Rights Committee in advance of its review of Iraq. Available at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/08/07/submission-human-rights-watch-un-human-rights-committee-advance-its-review-iraq>.
- Human Rights Watch (25 January 2004) War in Iraq: Not a Humanitarian Intervention. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2004/01/25/war-iraq-not-humanitarian-intervention>.
- Human Rights Watch Briefing Paper (November, 2003). Background on women's status in Iraq prior to the fall of the Saddam Hussein government. Available at https://www.hrw.org/legacy/backgrounder/wrd/iraq-women.htm#P25_6883.
- International Foundation for Electoral Systems (2009). Status of women in the Middle East and North Africa. Available at www.swmena.org.
- International Labor Organization (July 2020). Impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable populations and small-scale enterprises in Iraq. Available at https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arab-states/---ro-beirut/documents/briefingnote/wcms_751238.pdf.
- Katzman, K. (15 August 2008). Al Qaeda in Iraq: Assessment and Outside Links. Available at <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/terror/RL32217.pdf>.
- Kessler, G. (2019). The Iraq war and WMDs: an intelligence failure or White House spin? Available at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2019/03/22/iraq-war-wmds-an-intelligence-failure-or-white-house-spin/>.
- Kuoti, Yasir (2016). Could Saddam's Faith Campaign Have Given Us ISIS? An Iraqi Perspective. Available at <https://georgetownsecuritystudiesreview.org/2016/04/28/could-saddams-faith-campaign-have-given-us-isis/>.
- NDI (2019). Iraqi women unite to help local governments respond to priorities. Available at <https://www.ndi.org/our-stories/iraqi-women-unite-help-local-governments-respond-priorities>.
- OHCHR (2017). United Nations report on liberation of Mosul: ISIL members should face "international crimes" charges. Available at <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22343&LangID=E>.
- Oxfam (June 2020). Gender analysis of COVID-19 pandemic in Iraq. Available at <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/rr-gender-analysis-covid-19-iraq-220620-en.pdf>.
- Oxfam & NCCI (2007). Rising to the humanitarian challenge in Iraq. Available at http://web.mit.edu/humancosti-raq/reports/oxfam_iraq.pdf.
- Parent, M. C., DeBlaere, C. & Moradi, B. (2013). Approaches to research on intersectionality: Perspectives on gender, LGBT, and racial/ethnic identities. Available at https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Mike_Parent/publication/257663747_Approaches_to_Research_on_Intersectionality_Perspectives_on_Gender_LGBT_and_RacialEthnic_Identities.

- Pina, Aaron, D. (March 2006). Women in Iraq: Background and Issues for U.S. Policy. CRS Report for Congress. Available at <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL32376.pdf>.
Rangwala, Glen (16 September 2002). Who armed Saddam? Available at <https://web.archive.org/web/20081014033331/http://middleeastreference.org.uk/.html>.
- Report of the Secretary-General on Women's Participation in Peacebuilding (A/65/354–Ib020916a S/2010/466). Tracking Progress: 7 Point Action Plan. Available at https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/documents/seven_point_action_plan.pdf.
- Robinson, H., Connable, B., Thaler, D., E., & Scotten, A. (2018). Sectarianism in the Middle East: Implications for the United States. Available at https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR1600/RR1681/RAND_RR1681.pdf.
- The human cost of the war in Iraq. Available at <http://web.mit.edu/humancostiraq/reports/human-cost-war-101106.pdf>.
- Tirman, J. (2006). Iraq: The human cost. Available at <http://web.mit.edu/humancostiraq/>.
United Nations Agencies in Iraq, (5 November 2019). Human rights violations ongoing: United Nations Second
- Special Report on protests in Iraq. Available at http://www.uniraq.com/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=11480:human-rights-violations-ongoing-un-second-special-report-on-protests-in-iraq&lang=en.
- UNDP (2019). Inequalities in Human Development in the 21st Century Briefing note for countries on the 2019 Human Development Report: Iraq. Available at <http://www.hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/IRQ>.
UNDP (2014). "Iraq Human Development Report 2014: Iraqi Youth Challenges and Opportunities". http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/undp-iq_iraqnhdr2014-english.pdf.
- UNHCR (2019). International protection considerations with regard to people fleeing the Republic of Iraq. Available at <https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2007789/5cc9b20c4.pdf>.
- United Nations. Report of the Secretary General on women's participation in peacebuilding. Tracking progress & Point Action Plan. Available at https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/documents/seven_point_action_plan.pdf.
- United Nations Agencies in Iraq, (5 November 2019). Human rights violations ongoing: United Nations Second Special Report on protests in Iraq. Available at http://www.uniraq.com/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=11480:human-rights-violations-ongoing-un-second-special-report-on-protests-in-iraq&lang=en.
- UN News (27 August 2020). Deliberate silencing of peaceful voices in Iraq 'unacceptable', says United Nations human rights chief. Available at <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/08/1071172>.
- Vilardo, V. Gender (December, 2018). Profile: Iraq. A situation analysis on gender equality and women's empowerment in Iraq <https://oxfamlibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/620602/rr-gender-profile-iraq-131218-en.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.
- World Economic Forum (2020). Global Gender Gap Report 2020. Available at http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf.

- World Economic Forum (2020). The Global Gender Gap Index 2020. Available at http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf.

المراجع بالعربية

- العلاف، ابراهيم خليل. (2011). المرأة العراقية ودورها في بناء العراق الحديث، متاح على <https://middle-east-online.com/>.
- بعثة الأمم المتحدة لمساعدة العراق مفوضية الامم المتحدة السامية لحقوق الإنسان (آب 2020) انتهاكات وتجاوزات- حقوق الإنسان في سياق التظاهرات في العراق من تشرين الأول 2019 إلى نيسان 2020 http://www.uniraq.com/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&task=download&id=3860_f2aaf951dbb971728e4cc73ce164275c&Itemid=644&lang=ar.
- ذكرى علوش وبخشان عبدالله زنكنة وآخرون، العراق (2019): الاستعراض الوطني المتعلق بتنفيذ اعلان ومناهج عمل بيجين بعد خمسة وعشرين عاما لجمهورية العراق، هيئة الامم المتحدة للمرأة وهيئة الامم المتحدة للمساواة بين الجنسين وتمكين المرأة
- عبد، ابتسام محمد (2015) دور المرأة في بناء المجتمع العراقي بعد العام 2003، مجلة دراسات دولية، مركز الدراسات الاستراتيجية والدولية، جامعة بغداد، عدد 61، نيسان/أبريل 2015
- عبدالله بدرية صالح (2015). الدور السياسي للمرأة في العراق بعد عام 2003. مجلة العلوم القانونية والسياسية، المجلد الرابع العدد الثاني <https://lawjur.uodiyala.edu.iq/uploads/pdf/V.%204%20-%20Issue%202%20-%202015/7.pdf>.



Shared Prosperity Dignified Life



