

## Fact Sheet

Office of International Women's Issues  
Washington, DC  
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# U.S. Support for Women in Iraq

*"Human rights are defined by a constitution; they're defended by an impartial rule of law; they're secured in a pluralistic society. The advance of women's rights and the advance of liberty are ultimately inseparable."*

~ President George W. Bush

**Efforts to Globally Promote Women's Human Rights, March 12, 2004**

## Background

Since Iraq's liberation, the United States has actively supported the needs and interests of Iraqi women, seeking to provide them with the necessary tools to permit their full participation in their country's political, social, and economic future. With support from Congress, the Administration has worked closely with the representatives of the Interim and Transitional governments of Iraq, as well as local Iraqi civic partners, to establish programs designed to promote the equal participation of women and protection of women's rights.

- Of the 40 Cabinet-level Ministerial positions, six are held by women.
- Of the 275 seats in the Transitional National Assembly (TNA), 87 seats (or 31 percent) are held by women.
- Under Article 31 of the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL), electoral laws aimed to achieve the goal of having women constitute no less than one-quarter of the TNA.
- Of the 71 members of the TNA's Constitutional Drafting Committee, 11 are women.



Iraqi women attending a session on political training.

The United States funds government initiatives and NGOs that support Iraqi women, such as a public education campaign on the constitution, Fulbright scholarships, and assistance in the economic, social and political spheres.

## Iraqi Women's Democracy Initiative

The Department's \$10-million Iraqi Women's

Democracy Initiative (IWDI) was announced in March 2004 and provides skills in key areas, including education for democracy, leadership training, political training, teaching, coalition-building, organizational management, entrepreneurship, and media training.

- The Office of International Women's Issues (G/IWI) and the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) are responsible for the IWDI. Since last September, seven major grantees have been conducting extensive training programs in Iraq, thus far training some 2,000 women.
- With IWDI funds, the new Minister of State for Women's Affairs, Dr. Azhar al-Sheikhly, who has a Ph.D. in constitutional law, received training under a U.S. grant and was recently able to lead a delegation of Iraqi women lawyers to the United States for a week of focused training on legal and constitutional issues and meetings with the Executive Branch and Members of Congress.
- In February and March of 2005, IWDI funds were used to support a delegation of Iraqi women leaders, led by the former Minister for Women's Affairs, Narmeen Othman, to participate in the proceedings of the UN's Commission on the Status of Women and in the events of International Women's Day events with the First Lady and the Secretary of State.
- In June 2005, IWDI funds supported the participation of seven Iraqi women leaders in the Global Summit of Women in Mexico.
- The U.S.-Iraq Women's Network and the Iraqi Women's Gift fund, which are public/private partnerships, have been created to build more support for Iraqi women in the U.S.

### **Economic and Social Support**

- The USAID Private Sector Development Office reaches out to women in the business and agriculture communities by providing both capacity building training and financial resources. A vocational training and employment services project has been started with women as a primary focus. A new business grants program began in February 2005, with the goal of awarding 30 percent of its grants to women.
- USAID's Iraq Civil Society Program (ICSP), which provides technical assistance to Iraqi NGOs, has provided specific support to Iraqi NGOs working in support of women's rights. In March 2005, the ICSP conducted training sessions for Iraqi NGOs to educate them about the UN Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and its applicability in Iraq.
- The American Bar Association (ABA), under the USAID Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening, conducts training programs and foreign study visits to increase the knowledge and capacity of NGOs and government officials regarding gender-related legislation. In March 2005, ABA held a conference in Jordan to facilitate a dialogue between NGOs and the Minister of State for Women's Affairs on the role of gender in the Iraqi constitution and law.
- Thus far, the USAID's Women's Party Advancement Program, supported by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), has provided leadership training for more than 180 women from several political parties. This training has included

sessions on how to promote internal transparency, overcome lack of experience in politics, and how to operate effectively within a political party.

## Educational Support

- The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs has funded 17 Iraqi women on Fulbright Scholarships in the social sciences, public administration, law, business, and public health fields over the past two years and selected six young Iraqi women to participate in the Bureau's "YES" Youth Exchange Program to attend a U.S. high school and live with an American host family in the 2005/6 academic year.
- 60 Iraqi women participated in a number of regional, multi-regional, and single country International Visitor Leadership (IVL) and Voluntary Visitor Programs in English language teaching, civic education, civil society development, democracy and governance, women's leadership, NGO management, education and journalism fields. An additional eight women are scheduled to take part in the IVL program before the end of this fiscal year.



Two Iraqi women presenting during their advanced political party training for young Iraqis.

*"There are those who say that democracy is for men alone. In fact, the opposite is true: Half a democracy is not a democracy. As one Muslim woman leader has said, "Society is like a bird. It has two wings. And a bird cannot fly if one wing is broken."*

**~Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice  
Remarks at the American University in Cairo,  
Cairo, Egypt, June 20, 2005**

For further information on U.S. Government programs for women in Iraq, please visit <http://www.state.gov/g/wi/c8973.htm>.