



For Immediate Release
Office of the Press Secretary
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Fact Sheet: Democracy in Iraq

 [National Strategy for Victory in Iraq](#)

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Today's Presidential Action:

Today, The President Addressed Iraq's Incredible Political Transformation. Two and a half years ago, Iraq was in the grip of a cruel dictator. Since then, Iraqis have assumed sovereignty of their country, held free elections, drafted a democratic constitution, and approved that constitution in a nationwide referendum. In three days, they will go to the polls for the third time this year and choose a new government under their new constitution. Difficult work remains, but 2005 will be recorded as a turning point in the history of Iraq, the Middle East, and freedom.

- **The United States Is Helping Iraqis Build Inclusive Democratic Institutions That Will Protect The Interests Of All The Iraqi People.** By helping Iraqis build a democracy, America will win over those who doubted they had a place in the new Iraq, and we will undermine the terrorists and Saddamists, gain an ally in the War on Terror, inspire reformers across the Middle East, and make the American people more secure. Democracy takes different forms in different cultures, but successful free societies are built on common foundations of rule of law, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, a free economy, and freedom of worship.

The United States Is Following A Comprehensive Strategy To Achieve Iraqi Constitutional Democracy. One of the Coalition Provisional Authority's (CPA) most important tasks was bringing Iraqis into the decision-making process after decades of tyrannical rule. Three months after liberation, the Coalition worked with the United Nations (UN) and Iraqi leaders to establish an Iraqi Governing Council. The Governing Council gave Iraqis a voice in their own affairs, but it did not satisfy the hunger of Iraqis for self-government. So in the summer of 2003, the Coalition proposed a plan to transfer sovereignty to the Iraqi people after appointed Iraq leaders had drafted a constitution, put that constitution before the people, then held elections to choose a new government. This initial plan met with disapproval, and the approach was adjusted. In November 2003, we negotiated a new plan with the Iraqi Governing Council. Under the plan, the Iraqi Governing Council wrote and adopted a new Transitional Administrative Law, which guaranteed personal freedoms and set four major milestones to guide Iraq's transition to a constitutional democracy.

- **First, The Coalition Transferred Sovereignty.** On June 28, 2004, the Coalition handed sovereignty to Iraqi leaders - two days ahead of schedule.

- **Second, In January 2005, Iraqis Went To The Polls And Elected Leaders For A Transitional Government.** Defying the car bombers and assassins, almost 8.5 million Iraqis cast their ballots, and the world watched in awe as Iraqis danced in the streets, held up ink-stained fingers, and celebrated their freedom. These elections were a watershed event for Iraq and the Middle East, but there were flaws. One problem was the failure of the vast majority of Sunni Arabs to vote. Shia and Kurdish leaders who had won power at the polls saw that for a free and unified Iraq to succeed, they needed Sunni Arabs to be part of the government. When the Transitional Government was seated in the spring of this year, Sunni Arabs filled important posts.
- **Third, Iraqis Adopted The Most Progressive, Democratic Constitution In The Arab World.** Again, Iraq's leaders reached out to Sunni Arabs and included them in the drafting process. Together, representatives of Iraq's diverse communities drafted a bold constitution that guarantees the rule of law, freedom of assembly, property rights, freedom of speech and the press, freedom of religious belief and practice, women's rights, and the right to vote. After last-minute changes, including a new procedure for considering amendments to the constitution next year, a revised constitution was endorsed by Iraq's largest Sunni party and approved in a referendum that drew over a million more voters to the polls than the January elections.
- **Fourth, In Three Days, Iraqis Will Choose A New Government Under Their New Constitution.** Despite terrorist violence, the country is buzzing with the sights and sounds of democracy in action. The streets of Iraq's cities are full of candidates' and parties' signs and posters. The television and radio air waves are thick with political ads and commentary. Hundreds of parties and coalitions have registered and are campaigning vigorously. Candidates are holding rallies, laying out agendas, and asking for the vote.
 - **Many Sunnis Are Actively Engaged In The Democratic Process.** Many Sunni parties have registered to compete, and two major Sunni coalitions have formed. Other Sunni leaders have joined national coalitions that cross religious, ethnic, and sectarian boundaries. More Sunnis are involved because they see Iraqi democracy succeeding and want to have a voice in their nation's affairs. As more Sunnis join the political process, the Saddamists and remaining rejectionists will be marginalized.

The Iraqi People Have Built Momentum For Freedom And Democracy, But Difficult Work Remains. Throughout this process, Iraqis have proved wrong the skeptics and pessimists who declared Iraqis not ready for self-government. By meeting their milestones, Iraqis are defeating a brutal enemy, rejecting a murderous ideology, and choosing freedom over terror. This week's elections will not be the end of the process, and our Coalition and the new Iraqi government will face many challenges, including in four critical areas.

- **Security.** As democracy takes hold in Iraq, the terrorists and Saddamists will continue to use violence. They know that as democracy takes root in Iraq, their hateful ideology will suffer a devastating blow, and the Middle East will have a clear example of freedom, prosperity, and hope. The Coalition will continue to hunt down the terrorists and Saddamists and will continue training Iraqi security forces to take the lead in the fight. As the Iraqi security forces stand up, Coalition forces can stand down, and when victory is achieved, American troops will return

home to a proud Nation.

- **Forming An Inclusive Government That Protects The Interests Of All Iraqis.** Early next year, Iraq's new parliament will come to Baghdad and select a Prime Minister, a Presidency Council, and a cabinet of ministers. This will demand negotiation and compromise, and it will require patience by America and its Coalition allies. This new government will face many tough decisions on issues such as security, reconstruction, and economic reform. Iraqi leaders will also have to review, and possibly amend, the constitution and ensure that this historic document earns broad support in all Iraqi communities. By taking these steps, Iraqi leaders will build a strong and lasting democracy - and help defeat the terrorists and Saddamists.
- **Establishing The Rule Of Law And A Culture Of Reconciliation.** The Coalition will continue helping Iraqis build an impartial judicial system that protects all Iraqis and holds even the highest ranking officials to account. Millions of Iraqis are seeing their independent judiciary in action, as Saddam Hussein is put on trial. The man who once struck fear in the hearts of Iraqis has heard his victims recount the acts of torture and murder he ordered.
 - **Iraqi Nationalism Will Trump Iraqi Sectarianism.** Some fear that Iraq could break apart and fall into civil war. Encouraging reconciliation and human rights in a society scarred by decades of arbitrary violence and sectarian division will not be easy. Yet, the Iraqi government has a process in place to resolve even the most difficult issues through negotiation, debate, and compromise. In the past year, Iraqis have shown the world they can rise above past divisions and work out their differences peacefully.
- **Maintaining Freedom In A Tough Neighborhood.** Iran is actively working to undermine a free Iraq. Syria is permitting terrorists to use its territory to cross into Iraq. The vast majority of Iraqis do not want to live under an Iranian-style theocracy and want Syria to stop allowing the transit of terrorists. The United States will stand with Iraq against these threats. We will continue to encourage greater support for a free Iraq from the Arab world and the broader international community. Recently, many of Iraq's Arab neighbors have taken important steps, but more needs to be done. International support is growing as well, with assistance helping Iraq's rebuilding and political process. All free nations share a common interest in building an Iraq that will fight terror and be a source of stability and freedom in a troubled region.

Democracy In Iraq Will Inspire A Region And Help Defeat An Enemy. When the new government takes office next year, Iraqis will have the only constitutional democracy in the Arab world, and Americans will have a partner for peace and moderation in the Middle East. People across the broader Middle East are drawing inspiration from Iraq's progress, and the terrorists' most powerful myth is being destroyed. In a 1998 fatwa, Osama bin Laden argued that the suffering of the Iraqi people was justification for his declaration of war on America. Now, bin Laden and al-Qaida are the direct cause of the Iraqi people's suffering. As more Muslims see this, they are turning against the terrorists. As liberty spreads across the Middle East, the terrorists will lose their sponsors, recruits, and the sanctuaries they need to plan attacks.

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