



**Statement at Security Council Arria Formula on Women's Participation in Peace Processes**

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on behalf of Hanaa Edwar, Secretary General  
Iraqi Al-Amal Association for a Democratic Iraq  
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Distinguished Members of the Security Council, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honored to be here speaking, on behalf of Ms. Hanaa Edwar, Secretary General of the Iraqi Al-Amal Association who would be here had she received a visa. I represent my organization the Women's Alliance for a Democratic Iraq and the Iraqi Women's Network of over 100 women's organizations throughout Iraq from all ethnic and religious backgrounds.

I would like to thank you honorable ambassadors and the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security for giving Iraqi women's voice the opportunity to be heard today.

Iraqi women show a rare courage, challenging all aspects of terrorism and violence. They continue to work to ensure a lasting and just peace and security in Iraq. We are proud to say that Iraqi women won 31 percent of the seats in the National Assembly. This achievement speaks to the aspiration of Iraqi women to participate in political leadership, to the importance of international law and international pressure, as well as to the adherence to the rule of law—particularly CEDAW and resolution 1325.

The Iraqi people are embracing democracy and not surrendering to blackmail and civil war. The elections and referendum were great victories achieved despite the threats and car bombs and rocket explosions and deteriorating economic and security conditions, and corruption that prevail in all sectors of the government.

After the fall of the dictatorial regime, Iraqi women were on the front lines working for peace, often at great personal sacrifice, and many who are paying with their lives. [2] Iraqi women proved their capability in different ministries and in proposing and implementing government policies.

For the past months, Iraqi women have been campaigning intensely for a civil constitution that will follow international law and guarantee women's rights, endorsing all international and UN conventions and resolutions in favor of human rights and women's rights in particular. We continue to hold meetings, dialogue with many political leaders in government and political parties and meet with ambassadors of coalition countries and the UN mission in Iraq.

We, as Iraqi women, representing more than 55 percent of the Iraqi population, want to make it clear that our demand of more guarantees for women in the constitution does not concern only women's rights, it concerns the adherence to the rule of law and the creation of a true democracy in which all people's voices are represented, it concerns the preservation of Iraqi unity. We therefore record our reservation to the constitution because the bulk of the document is aimed at weakening state power and laws and will instead benefit religious, sectarian, tribal and regional establishments. Hence it will consolidate stereotypical images of women and will subordinate universal human and woman's rights. The new constitution is deceptive in asserting that its human rights provisions are "guarantees"—since the actual

status of basic rights is left to future decisions by Sharia judges, who may decide that it conflicts with their version of Islam and so, are null and void.

For example, the personal status law 188, created in 1959 to increase women's rights in areas such as marriage, divorce, child custody and inheritance, must be preserved and strengthened—not abolished. The women of Iraq rightfully expected that after the removal of the dictatorship, a struggle in which women were instrumental, their rights under law would increase—not be stripped away. The imposition of religious-based laws would bring about a great injustice, due to the many skewed interpretations within the different sectors of Islam. [3]

We will continue our efforts to activate the role of civil society organizations (especially women) to accomplish the process of building a democratic system and gaining our national independence, and to make the coming elections a success on the 15th of December. We'll seize the opportunity to amend the constitution and to vote in the first half of next year, to assert our demands to prohibit all forms of discrimination against women, and support women's' rights in laws and practice, and uphold the Personal Status Law.

The Security Council has a crucial role to play in helping us (Iraqi women's movement) in promoting the rule of law by enforcing and upholding Iraq's obligations under international law and specifically Resolutions 1325 and 1546.

The UN in particular can extend its technical advice to ensure the compliance of the constitution with international norms. It should use its considerable leverage to require civil-law education for all the judges who serve on the Supreme Court and for the promotion of women as judges throughout the country. As you are aware, judges are the key actors who interpret the Constitution. Our organization, the Women's Alliance for a Democratic Iraq, is currently planning a training for the judges of the War Crimes Tribunal as to Iraq's obligations toward women under international law, as called for in article 7 of resolution 1325. The tribunal will be one of the first judicial bodies to interpret Iraqi law.

**Ladies and Gentlemen**, security and gross violations of human rights are a grave concern for the women and all people in Iraq. This combined with a lack of basic services and economic improvements, increases disappointment and distrust among Iraqis towards the political process, which has so far failed to realize its promise of a secure and decent life.

There is a total absence of protection for civilians, aid and media workers. No remedies were found for the various cases (Arbitrary detentions, abductions shooting on convoys, killing of civilians by all parties in the conflict, etc.); in fact, civilian victims among them many women have no courts in which to address their cases.

We urge you to oblige all concerned parties to protect the lives of Iraqis, to respect civilian rights and properties and to specifically address the protection and essential needs of displaced women and children as called for in article 9 of 1325. Furthermore, the UN mission in Iraq should take the responsibility to directly investigate gross human rights violations and in close cooperation with local NGOs.

Finally, we, as a women's movement, have refused to identify ourselves with religious or sectarian or tribal identity. In all our programs, we emphasize that dialogue on national reconciliation among all constituencies should be based on principles of citizenship, unity within diversity, non-violence, respect of human rights, territorial integrity and national independence of Iraq. These are the goals and aspirations of Resolutions 1546, 1618 and 1325.

In summation, we urge that the Security Council:

- First, promote the rule of law by enforcing Iraq's obligations to women's equality under international law in the interpretation of the new constitution, such as the judges in Supreme Court should get training in civil law and the promotion of women judges, as called for in articles 7 and 8 (c) of Resolution 1325.
- Second, be diligent in monitoring that Personal Status Law # 188/1959 be preserved so that women's rights in areas such as marriage, divorce, child custody and inheritance are not restricted, as called for in article 8 (c) of Resolution 1325.
- Third, the international community must do everything it can to stop the growing violence in Iraq, such as using its leverage to influence all concerned parties to respect civilian lives, rights and properties and specifically address the protection and essential needs of displaced women and children.
- Fourth, urge the UN to directly investigate gross human rights violations through its mission in Iraq.
- And finally, the international community must use its leverage to influence governments of countries in the Middle East to push for their religious leaders to condemn and forbid acts of violence against Iraqi people, particularly women and girls, as called for in article 10 of Resolution 1325.

The women of Iraq are determined to see peace and justice in our country. Resolution 1325 has been instrumental in giving women a voice in the process, and we thank you and hope we can count on your continued support.

Thank you for your time and attention.

For more info, please contact Hanaa Edward at [hanaa.e@iraqi-alamal.org](mailto:hanaa.e@iraqi-alamal.org) and Basma Fakri at [Basma\\_Fakri@yahoo.com](mailto:Basma_Fakri@yahoo.com)

[1] The following comments are a collaboration efforts between Ms. Hanaa Edwar and Ms. Basma Fakri

[2] Among them Dr. Akeela Al-Hashimi member of the Governing Council and Dr. Amal Maamalachi; a woman activist leader.

[3] For example, under some Islamic sectors, a wife has to leave her house once divorced with possibly no place to go. Certain Islamic sectors allow for the marriage of girls as young as the age of nine.