

Roadmap to Building Citizenship and Good Governance in Iraq

Resulting from
The National Dialogue for Citizen-
ship and Coexistence in Iraq – NDCCI
(2018 - 2020)

Executive Summary

1. Dialogue methodology

Driven by the common national concern and desire to search for a comprehensive vision that could pull Iraq out of its accumulated crises and establish a state of citizenship and good governance, thirty-three (33) political, religious, academic and civil society leaders¹ from across Iraq took part in this frank and purposeful form of “Track II” dialogue. This document is a result of that dialogue process.

The dialogue took place over a period of two years, through four conferences, held between October 2018 and December 2020, with an average of two to three days for each round of dialogue, the last of which was held online because of the health conditions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic. Iraqi youth participated in this track, and their representatives shared their views on the dialogue’s topics.

The participants identified the dialogue’s topics and the most prominent problems facing the building of the nation and citizenship in Iraq, and contributed to enriching the discussion through introductory interventions, written papers and extensive discussions, before developing a set of appropriate recommendations and policies to achieve the desired change. In addition, the Rashad Center for Cultural Governance² offered its expertise in managing dialogue and editing reports in an impartial manner, in cooperation with Iraqi partner institutions in the implementation of the project³.

This report, therefore, represents the fruit of a Track II dialogue process between participating Iraqi figures without eliminating any intellectual or political differences between them. This document does not seek to be either exhaustive in identifying the issues that need to be addressed, nor does it claim to provide exclusive answers. In fact, the divergence and intertwinement of the dialogue topics necessitated the adoption of a comprehensive analytical approach, with a focus on specific topics, for which political recommendations have been drawn up in relation with the issues of citizenship, development and social justice. Other issues on the other hand describe the general context for this reform, which needs additional dialogue to be addressed.

2. The Iraqi context and structural reforms

The participants in the dialogue consider that the revolutionary protest movement since October 2019, with its slogan “We want a nation”, constitutes a remarkable change in Iraq. They believe that it can offer a basis for reform and for building the future, and stresses the need for the participation of young men and women in political and social decision-making.

Reaching “a civil, democratic, pluralistic Iraq that respects human dignity and rights, and lives in peace within the framework of an inclusive citizenship state,”⁴ is not a mere requirement, but rather a commitment to a process that requires cooperation between all concerned parties: public and political entities, and civil society, namely youth, women, cultural, academic and media groups, in addition to spiritual leaders and economic forces, in cooperation with international bodies, associations and organizations.

This path requires a renewal of the social contract between Iraqis and their confidence in one another on one hand, and between them and the state on the other hand. It will also require the achievement of a package of structural reforms in the system, including its governance mechanisms, practice and public policies, as well as the

1 See: Annex 1 of the report: The participants in the dialogue

2 The Rashad Center for Cultural Governance is affiliated with the Adyan Foundation for Diversity, Solidarity and Human Dignity registered in Lebanon as a non-governmental, independent and non-profit organization.

3 Among these partner institutions: the UNESCO Chair for the Development of Interreligious Dialogue Studies in the Islamic World at the University of Kufa, the Iraqi Al-Amal Association and the Masarat Foundation for Cultural and Media Development.

4 Conclusions of a dialogue workshop with a group of Iraqi youth from different regions and components, organized by the Institute for Citizenship and Diversity Management at Adyan Foundation, in partnership with the UNESCO Chair for the Development of Interreligious Dialogue Studies in the Islamic World at the University of Kufa.

extension of the state's sovereignty and authority over its entire territory, and regional and international relations, as follows:

- Complete the building of constitutional institutions and implement reforms that address ambiguities or unresolved issues in the constitution, such as combining a federal and a decentralized system of governance, managing pluralism and guaranteeing the rights and effective participation of minorities, as well as resolving the issue of disputed areas.
- Strengthen the state's sovereignty at the internal and external levels, and benefit from the success in confronting terrorism to develop an integrated Iraqi security and defense strategy that strengthens the nation's immunity and unity, in a way that confirms the state's sovereignty, public order under the law, and the Iraqis' explicit commitment to the supreme national interest, outweighing any external or internal factional interests.
- Combat corruption that has seeped into the depths of the state and society alike, which requires developing the concept of civil service, resorting to e-government, enhancing transparency, oversight and accountability, strengthening the independence of the judiciary, and spreading the culture, prestige and respect of law.
- Enact laws, draft laws and electoral systems, develop comprehensive national policies for the main identified issues, and strengthen the role of civil society, in order to consolidate democratic awareness and achieve a flexible rotation of power.
- Develop an economic and social strategy that liberates Iraq from its almost exclusive dependence on oil revenues, moving Iraq from a rentier to a productive economy, one that can face the repercussions of the Covid-19 pandemic, and achieve social justice and sustainable development.

3. Suggested political recommendations

a) National identity and the culture of pluralism

The parties to the dialogue stressed the importance of this issue in their discussions and drafted the following five recommendations, in addition to related implementation procedures, with the following aims:

- Promote national identity inclusive of all forms of sub-identities, as part of an integrated national project that preserves Iraq's diverse unity, and guarantees constitutional, legal and cultural respect for sub-identities.
- Respect the right of others to have a different opinion, enjoy freedom of belief and religion, and practice and adhere to the values of dialogue.
- Enable "minorities" to benefit from positive discrimination, to ensure their active participation in public life.
- Gradually eliminate the phenomena of intolerance and violence, and strengthen societal peace.
- Contain and put an end to hate speech

b) Active and inclusive citizenship

The roadmap for building citizenship and good governance in Iraq is based on strengthening citizenship, not only in terms of national awareness, but also in terms of action and interaction, ensuring a constructive participation of everyone in public life. The parties to the dialogue put forward the following six policy recommendations in this regard, which seek to:

- Promote equality among citizens, regardless of their multiple religious, social, political and cultural affiliations, and guarantee freedom of opinion, expression and protest.
- Reach a higher level of transparency in the work of public institutions, to promote accountability and de-

velop public policies, and to achieve them through civil society advocacy and partnership with public institutions.

- Guarantee the active participation of youth in political life, and enhance opportunities for the change they aspire to.
- Improve the cultural, political, economic and social conditions of women, in order to achieve gender-based equality and justice, and increase their participation in decision-making positions, security and peace building, and confront all forms of discrimination.
- Provide justice for minorities that were granted quota seats through the development of the electoral system, so that they can be effectively represented in these seats.
- Promote the rule of law and recourse to its provisions, applying them equally to everyone, and confront the prevalence of tribal tendencies.

c) Reconciliation and transitional justice

The Iraqi society - which has suffered from violence, conflicts and internal strife - needs a comprehensive path that achieves societal reconciliation and transitional justice. This path must also cover the hundreds of dead and wounded who fell during the October revolution, in addition to the thousands who disappeared due to civil strife and sectarian violence after 2003. This roadmap, therefore, defines the following four recommendations, along with relevant implementation policies, which aim to:

- Rebuild trust among all Iraqis by achieving transitional justice for all and rebuilding the social fabric, to achieve civil peace and stability, and political stability.
- Secure the return of displaced families, reintegrate them into their local communities, alleviate their concerns and avoid demographic changes in Iraqi cities to preserve the pluralistic fabric of Iraqi society.
- Reintegrate the so-called ISIS families and their children in the Iraqi societal fabric after rehabilitating them and purifying their memories in a way that enhances the citizenship identity and reconciliation option, within the framework of a fair legal path.
- Stop the ongoing drain of Iraqi potential and competencies, in order to reconnect Iraqi residents and expatriates, and stimulating their investment in and support of Iraq at all levels.

d) Inclusive and sustainable development

Development is a broad and complex topic. The parties to this dialogue focused on five urgent topics and put forth the following five relevant recommendations and implementation policies with the aim to:

- Rehabilitate the infrastructure of all schools and educational institutions and reconstruct the value elements of the educational system to eradicate illiteracy and ensure the success of the educational process.
- Adopt professional, effective standards to develop higher education, improve its quality, and link it to the labor market.
- Upgrade the level of integrated and comprehensive preventive, curative and rehabilitative health services for all citizens and in all regions to create a physically, psychologically and socially healthy society.
- Promote mental health by providing quality services and training cadres capable of rapidly responding to people's needs in all parts of the country.
- Protect and improve the environment by eliminating and remedying the damages caused, and preserve public health, natural resources, and biological and natural diversity to ensure sustainable development.