


# **Roadmap to Building Citizenship and Good Governance in Iraq**

An abstract graphic featuring several white, three-dimensional rectangular blocks arranged in a staggered, overlapping fashion. Overlaid on these blocks are numerous thin, teal-colored lines that flow and curve across the scene, creating a sense of movement and depth. The background is a light, neutral color.

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



# **Roadmap to Building Citizenship and Good Governance in Iraq**

**2021**

# Table of Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Foreword</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>The general context in Iraq</b> .....	<b>11</b>
The post-October revolutionary movement in Iraq .....	11
The Covid-19 pandemic and its aftermath .....	12
The social contract and national unity .....	12
Democratic representation and political practice .....	13
National sovereignty in light of internal and international tensions .....	14
The Problem of the Oil Rentier Economy .....	15
Development and social justice .....	15
Reforms and fighting corruption .....	16
<b>Section One: National Identity and the Culture of Pluralism</b> .....	<b>17</b>
1. The collective identity and multiple narratives .....	18
2. The culture of dialogue and respect for difference .....	22
3. Legal protection of minorities .....	26
4. Confronting intolerance and education on peaceful coexistence .....	28
5. Countering hate speech .....	30
<b>Section Two: Active and Inclusive Citizenship</b> .....	<b>33</b>
6. Diversity, freedom of expression and equality among citizens .....	34
7. Civil society and the culture of advocacy and accountability .....	37
8. Youth participation in the renewal of political life .....	39
9. Empowering women and enhancing their participation in public life .....	41
10. Minority participation in political life .....	44
11. Tribalism and the state of law .....	46



<b>Section Three: Reconciliation and Transitional Justice</b> .....	<b>49</b>
12. Reconciliation and memory purification .....	50
13. Migration and the brain drain .....	53
14. Ending the suffering of the displaced and securing their return .....	56
15. Return of the displaced perceived to be associated with ISIS .....	60
<b>Section Four: Inclusive and Sustainable Development</b> .....	<b>63</b>
16. Educational challenges and modernizing curricula .....	64
17. Higher education and empowering youth to enter the labor market .....	67
18. Health and medical services .....	70
19. Mental health .....	73
20. Protecting the environment and natural resources .....	75
<b>Annexe 1: Participants in the dialogue</b> .....	<b>78</b>
<b>Annexe 2: Organizing Institutions</b> .....	<b>79</b>

# 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 leaders<sup>1</sup> 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 Governance<sup>2</sup> offered its expertise in managing dialogue and editing reports in an impartial manner, in cooperation with Iraqi partner institutions in the implementation of the project<sup>3</sup>.

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,”<sup>4</sup> is not a mere requirement, but rather a commitment to a process that requires cooperation between all concerned parties: public and political entities,

- 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.

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 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 develop 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**

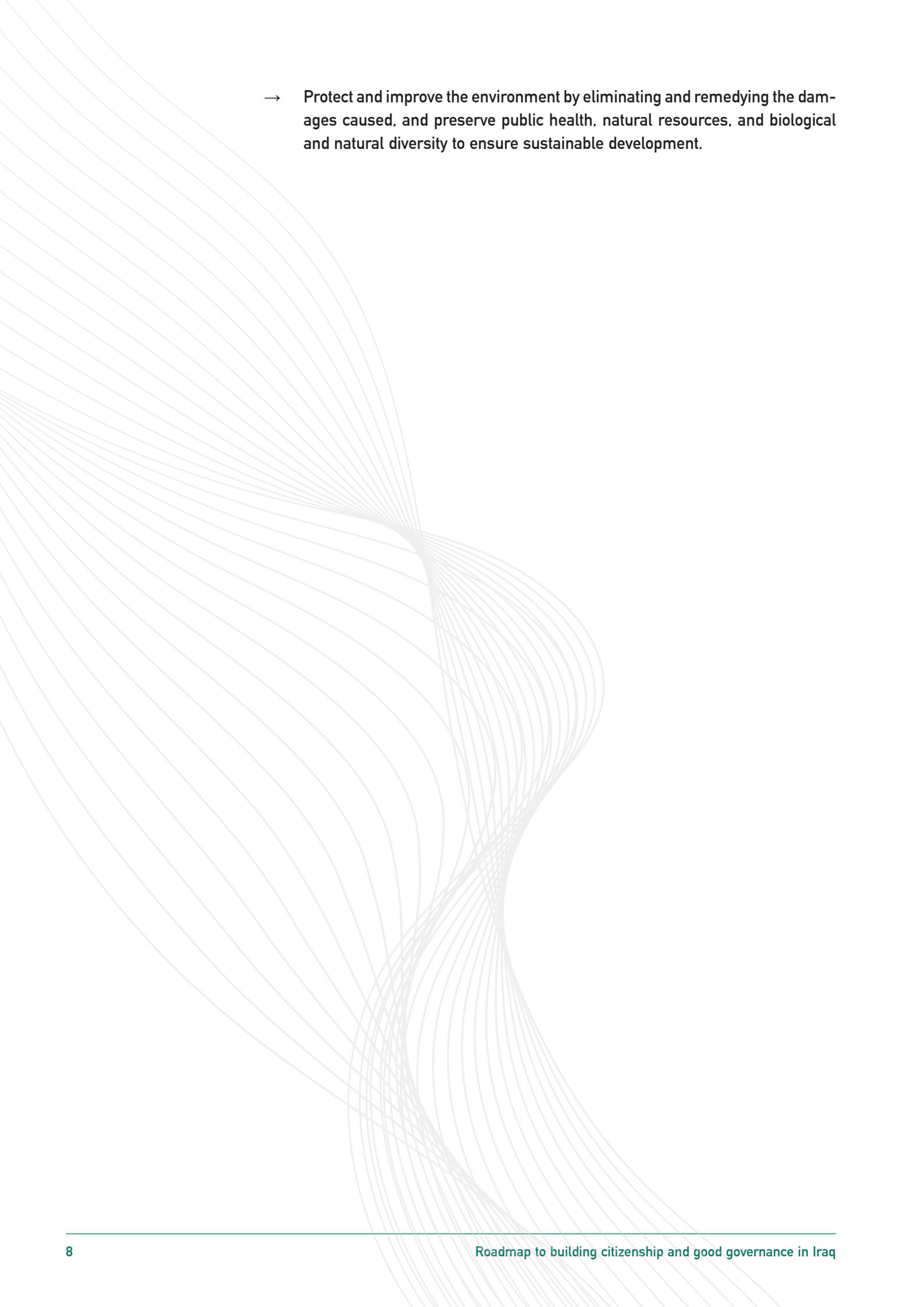
The Iraqi society - which has suffered from violence, conflicts and internal strife - needs a comprehensive path that achieves societal reconciliation and transitional justice. This path must also cover the hundreds of dead and wounded who fell during the October revolution, in addition to the thousands 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.

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- **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.**

# Foreword

## The National Dialogue for Citizenship and Coexistence in Iraq (NDCCI)

This document for developing public policies related to building citizenship and good governance in Iraq, with its positive investment in diversity, management of pluralism, and commitment to comprehensive development and social justice, is the fruit of a two-year dialogue (2018-2020) which took place between a senior group of Iraqi political, religious and academic figures and civil society leaders<sup>5</sup>. The parties to this dialogue participated in their personal capacity in a way that was not restricted by any personal or institutional agendas. The aim was to develop proposals for a realistic roadmap that could strengthen the course of state building, contribute to extricating Iraqi society from its crises, and accelerate the healing of its wounds.

This dialogue was designed around a common national concern, to reach a common reading of the unifying national interest, through listening to the different views and experiences, and without eliminating political and intellectual differences between participants. Despite the complexity of this issue and the effects of the difficult reality on the interlocutors personally, the dialogue process exuded frankness, boldness, tolerance and objectivity, contributing to its success and enriching its content. This initiative, therefore, constitutes a sign and a model of the role that a frank and responsible dialogue plays in building confidence between citizens and leaders in public life, solving problems, crystallizing a comprehensive vision of the common good, and consolidating a common will to live together in peace and happiness.

Inclusive citizenship formed the conceptual framework for this dialogue path. Inclusive citizenship requires, first, to acknowledge diversity, move away from unilateral positions and assimilation policies, and look at the societal fabric with all its components, and their peculiarities, experiences and diverse needs. Diversity in this sense is not limited to ethnic, linguistic, cultural or religious differences, but also includes social, gender, intellectual in addition to other kinds of differences. The aim is for this citizenship state to make sure there is no discrimination and prejudice against any group of people because of its identity and rather view diversity as a source of wealth for society and a factor of development and creativity. Secondly, inclusive citizenship requires the fair participation of all in managing public life and enjoying the nation's resources and goods. Although equality among citizens of various affiliations constitutes the cornerstone of the state of citizenship, it is necessary to verify that the system and democratic mechanisms of governance, public policies, and societal culture do not favor the control of a numerical majority or a powerful minority over the state and its assets. Democratic systems need, in addition to equal opportunities, controls that ensure comprehensive participation and social justice.

<sup>5</sup> See: "Annex 1: The participants in the dialogue"

Against this backdrop, the Rashad Center for Cultural Governance at Adyan Foundation<sup>6</sup> called for this dialogue, and organized its three conferences in Beirut<sup>7</sup>, Baghdad<sup>8</sup> and Erbil<sup>9</sup>, in addition to a fourth conference that was held online<sup>10</sup>. Due to the political instability in Iraq and Lebanon after October 2019, in addition to the challenges imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, meeting in person was impossible during this period. However, online dialogue sessions resumed in order to complete this document, develop a work plan and submit it to the relevant authorities. We were deeply saddened by the loss of one of our colleagues in this dialogue group, Mr. Husham Al-Hashemi, who was the victim of uncontrolled violence and the muzzling of independent voices<sup>11</sup>. Al-Hashemi was an expert on issues of security and extremism, and a bold advocate for fighting against corruption and sectarian quotas at the expense of establishing the state of citizenship and social justice.

The Rashad Center for Cultural Governance provided its expertise in managing dialogue in an impartial manner, and communicated with participants during and after the conference to develop this roadmap (the fruit of this dialogue). The participants identified the topics of the dialogue themselves and enriched its content through introductory interventions, written papers and broad discussions which sought to diagnose the most prominent problems currently facing the building of the nation and citizenship in Iraq. They then formulated appropriate policies to achieve the desired change, with the aim of submitting them to the concerned decision-makers and initiate dialogue with them about ways to adopt these policies and turn them into implementable programs.

The dialogue topics diverged due to the multiple intertwining challenges. In fact, issues of development, social justice and political participation are not separated from the issues of identity, social cohesion, reconciliation and civil peace on the one hand, and from constitutional issues related to the form of the state, the system of government, and sovereignty on the other hand. Participants in the dialogue tackled all these issues, and ended up - especially at the level of public policies and proposed reforms - focusing on the issues of citizenship, development and social justice, while the other topics were a description of the general context of this reform, which needs additional tracks to be addressed.

Therefore, after presenting the general context in Iraq, which constitutes the real and vital framework for any initiative for reform and positive change, this document focuses on four main headlines. The first section deals with national identity and the culture of pluralism. The second section deals with active and inclusive citizenship. The third section focuses on issues of reconciliation and transitional justice while the fourth and last section focuses on issues related to comprehensive and sustainable development.

This document does not therefore aim to be exhaustive in terms of identifying the issues addressed and does not claim exclusivity in addressing them. Rather, the proposed policy recommendations in consolidated tables deal with twenty topics, expressing the insufficiency of theoretical descriptions of these issues, and seeking to contribute in practice to drawing an operational roadmap to address them. Since this document was the fruit of a frank and constructive dialogue, we hope that it will contribute to stimulating more dialogue tracks and cooperation between government authorities, experts, academics and civil society, in order to meet the aspirations of Iraqi youth and promote citizenship and comprehensive development in the country.

6 A Lebanese non-governmental, independent, non-political, and non-profit organization that cooperated in implementing this project with 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; a project funded with the contribution of the Church of Sweden.

7 Conference held in Beirut on October 11-13, 2018.

8 Conference held in Baghdad on December 21-22, 2018.

9 Conference held in Erbil on June 20 – 22, 2019.

10 Three online sessions were held on December 2, 16 and 30, 2020.

11 Husham Al-Hashemi was assassinated on July 6, 2020 in Baghdad in his car outside his home.

# The general context in Iraq

## The post-October revolutionary movement in Iraq

Iraq has witnessed many protest movements in recent years, which culminated with the revolutionary protest movement that began in October 2019. This movement introduced an important change to the Iraqi scene as a whole, representing a new reality that must be dealt with as a basis for reform and building the future, and emphasizing the need for the participation of youth in political and social decision-making. This protest movement, which covered and is still covering most Iraqi regions, enjoyed widespread popular participation, and the support and sympathy of most of society's diverse components. The movement was like a declaration of a comprehensive societal demand, which everyone agrees on, except of course for those benefitting from the status quo.

Young people, who represent the majority of the Iraqi population, are the most affected by the current situation and usually the most ready for change. What is more, the backbone of this movement is a generation that has been born or brought up in a democratic system with a constitution recognizing the right to freedom of expression. Perhaps the most important thing these young people have achieved is the recognition of their protest movement and their capacity to prove their presence in the public scene, for which they paid dearly.

The slogan, "We Want a Nation" which was the essence of this movement, reflected an inclusive Iraqi national position that had been absent for quite some time. This protest movement, in addition to its national dimension, had a socio-economic dimension, since it was considered as a movement of the poor and the disadvantaged in a society in which gaps are widening between classes, and in which some wealthy groups have emerged as a result of their alliances with the ruling political class, in a rentier economy.

The most prominent transformations resulting from this revolutionary protest movement seeking to end partisan and sectarian quota systems prevailing in Iraq were probably reflected through the government's announcement of early elections that were to be held based on a new electoral law. Although not everyone is satisfied with it, this law can contribute to enhancing the opportunity of seeing new faces in the Parliament, who now have more ability to compete with large traditional parties.

It is however sad that this movement for a better Iraq and more opportunities for its younger generations entailed a heavy price with the fall of about seven hundred martyrs in addition to thousands of wounded, detained and disappeared. Some opinion leaders of this protest movement have been targeted and confronted with armed violence by some organizations or public security units. Although the movement was not able to achieve all its goals despite the great sacrifices, it has succeeded in raising the level of awareness among citizens of the need to engage in the struggle, in order to achieve their political and social goals, and to hold officials

- 12 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.
- 13 See: Ministry of Planning, Assessment of the Covid-19 Impact on Poverty and Vulnerability in Iraq, a study prepared in partnership with the World Bank (WB) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), July 2020.
- 14 See: United Nations Development Program in Iraq Report for October 2020, Impact of Covid-19 on the Iraqi Economy.
- 15 The Constitution Drafting Committee went through two phases: in the first phase, Shiites and Kurds participated in its drafting, while 15 Sunni figures participated in the second phase. The committee consisted of 70 people, but only one of them was an expert in constitutional law. As for the time, the Constitution was drafted in 42 days only.
- 16 Article 1 of the constitution: "The Republic of Iraq is a federal state."
- 17 According to Article 116, the federal system in Iraq is made up of a "decentralized" capital, regions and governorates as well as "local administrations".
- 18 Article 140 of the Iraqi constitution drew up a roadmap that was not implemented to resolve the issue of the disputed areas between the Kurdistan Region and the central state's governorates.

accountable for their failure or corruption in the exercise of their national duties. This protest movement also contributed to crystallizing the Iraqi youth's vision for the future of their homeland, which, according to one youth group, can be summed up as follows: "A civil, democratic, pluralistic Iraq that respects human dignity and rights, and lives in peace within the framework of an inclusive citizenship state."<sup>12</sup>

## The Covid-19 pandemic and its aftermath

The Covid-19 pandemic and its severe consequences on the health and lives of citizens and on the socio-economic conditions have cast their shadow on the global scene in 2020. In Iraq, the number of Covid-19 cases has exceeded half a million, with an increasing number of deaths that has exceeded ten thousand.

The pandemic will undoubtedly have painful effects on various aspects of life, causing grief in Iraqi families, overburdening the health system, which has already limited capabilities, and leading to an economic decline. According to the Ministry of Planning, 42% of the Iraqi population has become vulnerable to poverty as a result of the Covid pandemic, and 15% of those suffer from profound vulnerability due to the intensity of deprivations<sup>13</sup>. Iraq's GDP is expected to decrease in 2020 by about 10%, and the budget deficit in the same year is expected to reach an unprecedented level, accounting to around 30% of the GDP. This is accompanied by the loss of many job opportunities and by high unemployment rates. The number of people living below the poverty line will increase, estimated to around one third of the Iraqi population<sup>14</sup>.

The challenges resulting from the pandemic are therefore not limited to health awareness and response programs, but require as well redefining priorities at the economic and social levels, to enhance opportunities for societal resilience and economic advancement, at the lowest cost and as fast as possible.

## The social contract and the nation's unity

After 45 years of provisional constitutions, Iraqis drafted in 2005 the country's first permanent constitution, although the process of drafting the new constitution was conducted hastily and in unfavorable conditions<sup>15</sup>. The constitution reflected the social contract between Iraqis on the one hand, and between Iraqis and the Iraqi state in the post-dictatorship era on the other. A remarkable legislative shift took place recently which, despite its weak influence in the short term, establishes a new way of thinking in dealing with issues of public concern. However, there remains an urgent need to complete the building of the Iraqi constitutional institutions, activate laws and draft laws, and formulate comprehensive national policies for the main issues.

The new Iraqi constitution has left some basic issues ambiguous or unresolved, hindering the achievement of political stability, as the Iraqi constitution mixes a federal system<sup>16</sup> of governance with a decentralized system<sup>17</sup>: whereas part of Iraq is federal, the greater part is unified. The lack of consensus extended to the delineation of the borders of the Kurdistan Region<sup>18</sup>, the budget, the security forces'

tasks, in addition to the hopes, aspirations and requirements of the nation's unity and living together.

After defeating ISIS, there was a new reality on the ground resulting from the liberation of territories, especially in the so-called "disputed" areas. It is known that part of these areas is related to small components; there are for example the Yazidis and the importance of the Sinjar region to them, and the Christians who are present in great numbers in the Nineveh Plain, in addition to others. This issue is therefore still hindering the completion of the return of the displaced, the achievement of safety, development and stability in their regions, and the strengthening of the nation's unity on sound grounds. The recent agreement on the Sinjar district was a first step in this direction.

The constitution combined religious and civil aspects in a way that rendered the approach to religious diversity and freedom of belief ambiguous<sup>19</sup>, which impeded the effective and comprehensive implementation of freedom of religion and belief<sup>20</sup>, and complicated, for example, the development of legislations regulating personal status. Political practice exacerbated state administration on confessional, nationalist and sectarian foundations<sup>21</sup>, and some considered this a major reason for the reinforcement of quotas, the receding of the concept of citizenship and national responsibility, and the strengthening of sectarian and nationalist division between the Iraqi components.

## Democratic representation and political practice

Iraq entered the path of democratic transformation with the fall of the former despotic regime in 2003. Elections, separation of powers and mutual oversight are however not sufficient to achieve democracy which rather requires an active civil society, and for democracy to be transformed into a general culture, with every person adopting democracy in every aspect of his life.

Therefore, some wonder about the possibility of talking about a democratic construct in light of sectarian quotas, not only at the political level, but also at the level of public - civil, military or security - administrations. Some consider that the democratic construct is faltering in light of the existing political practice that transforms cultural, ethnic, confessional and sectarian affiliations into political affiliations and compulsory paths to work in the public sphere. The only solution in this regard is for the political system to embrace a patriotic spirit, leading to a better performance and hence changing reality. To achieve this, it is necessary to promulgate laws that build the state of citizenship, rely on institutions working in this field, such as universities, and adopt compulsory civil or military service, in addition to other means of social integration.

There is apparently a new "prevailing trend" towards the search for a new pattern of political practice and its mechanisms, in light of the modern democratic civil state, which is the primary guarantee for protecting inclusive citizenship. Some see a glimmer of hope in the new cross-regional and cross-sectarian societal dynamics, especially the recent popular protest movements, as well as trade and professional unions, which can be relied on to accelerate the pace of democratic change, provided that they remain immune to undemocratic processes of assimilation and employment. On the other hand, others do not exclude the possibility of

19 Article 2 (First) of the Iraqi constitution mentions that Islam is the official religion of the State, and according to First (a), no law may be enacted that contradicts the established provisions of Islam.

20 Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nation in 1948: Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

21 Although the Iraqi constitution does not refer to the distribution of sovereign positions on ethnic grounds, based on the political custom agreed upon between parties to the political process, the President of the Republic would be a Kurd, the Prime Minister a Shiite, and the Speaker of the Parliament a Sunni, and their deputies are appointed based on the same principle of quotas.

Iraq returning to dictatorship, if political reform processes do not succeed in the coming period. This is why Iraq needs to consolidate democratic understanding so that it becomes a mainstream behavior for its sons and daughters, and leads to a smooth transfer of power and state administration, away from the various twists that undermine this approach.

## National sovereignty in light of internal and international tensions

State sovereignty has both an internal and external dimension. Internal sovereignty means the state imposing its territorial integrity (land, air, sea, and resources...), and monopolizing the use of legitimate force over all its territories. As for external sovereignty, it means the state's management of its external relations in accordance with its people's interest, and the protection of its borders from any breach or violation. It must be noted that in the memory of Iraqis, there is some caution about the concept of national sovereignty, which was previously used as a pretext for repression and genocides.

The success of Iraq in combating terrorism is a catalyst for developing an integrated security and defense strategy that strengthens the nation's immunity and unity, in a way that consolidates the state's sovereignty and public order in conformity with the law, and the complete separation between the regular armed factions and partisan political forces. Maintaining national security also requires a sustained effort to dry up terrorism sources and conducive environments from ideological extremism, social deprivation and negative discrimination, in addition to the weakness of the rule of law and the state.

Iraq's national sovereignty and territorial integrity have been subjected to systematic threats from many global and regional powers. These ongoing violations, in turn, affect the citizenship of both Iraqi individuals and groups due to the divisions and allegiances they left behind, in addition to relying on foreign political support, and opportunities to achieve interests that contradict the unified concept of citizenship. Therefore, the future vision of Iraq should be designed around the goal of fully restoring sovereignty, and the explicit commitment of Iraqis to the supreme national interest that transcends any external interest or internal factionalism. This requires the rejection of any form of alliances that implicate Iraq in international or regional conflicts and disputes in addition to restricting the right to bear arms to the state and issuing laws related to the financial transparency of political parties and blocs, especially electoral financing. Iraq must also respect the sovereignty of all states, and deal with them on the basis of common interests, at the Arab, regional and international levels.

In addition, the breach of Iraqi sovereignty has now also come to include the actions of "non-state" groups or paramilitary organizations, which practice their own policies (on the military, economic and security levels), outside the constitutional framework and the rule of law. They hence represent a basic and fundamental threat to any possibility for Iraq to recover and break the cycle of grinding crises, in addition to being a reason for deepening these crises by weakening and undermining the effectiveness of official institutions, and thus creating deep political gaps, which are automatically filled by extremism, violence and corruption.

## The problem of the oil rentier economy

Despite the rich Iraqi resources, governments have failed to create alternatives to oil revenues, equitably distribute wealth, and design strategies associated with sustainable development, which has compounded the unemployment crisis, especially among youth. The Iraqi economy is still a rentier economy, with the oil extraction and export sector contributing to a very high percentage of the GDP. Iraq remains one of the most oil-dependent countries in the world. In fact, oil accounted for more than 96% of exports, 92% of government budget revenues, and 43% of GDP in 2019<sup>22</sup>. We can say that Iraq today is almost industrially and agricultural idle, hardly manufacturing anything and growing only a little; even dates, rice, and other commodities for which Iraq was known are now being imported.

Iraq is therefore suffering from the low contribution of the commodity sectors to meeting the local market needs, which explains the need for Iraq to increase its imports to cover growing local demand, in addition to the increase in the share of operational expenses in the local budget. All this increases the state's need for a modern economic strategy, which includes: the tax system, the law on financial management and public debt, and means of moving from a rentier to a productive economy. This would alleviate deprivation and address poverty, unemployment, and child labor, among other things.

## Development and social justice

Citizenship cannot be limited to mere affiliation; it is rather linked to a large extent to economic and social rights, and the ability of the state - as an institutional incubator for society - to ensure citizens' equal access to education, health, work, and basic services, in addition to taking care of environmental issues, urban planning and other fundamental issues. Therefore, neglecting to address social and economic marginalization would deepen the crisis of identity, citizenship, and national belonging<sup>23</sup>.

Iraqis hope to create a society that achieves development and social justice. However, social justice cannot be achieved without a true, sustainable, comprehensive human and social development that is based on competence rather than balances between sectarian political components. It must also be based on scientific grounds away from improvisation in political decision-making, which impedes development planning, as development depends on stability, economic growth and shared responsibilities. Human development also requires looking at the Iraqi population pyramid, to see where the opportunities lie. In fact, the majority of the Iraqi population is young<sup>24</sup>, and development plans must take this into account; otherwise, this human wealth with all of its capabilities, will turn into a social disaster if the time for development and reform is too late.

In recent years, political division and insecurity have been accompanied by a loss of clear economic visions or strategic plans capable of solving problems. This has exacerbated the structural problems that the Iraqi economy already suffers from, due to the absence of an administrative entity that can efficiently and professionally manage the economy and its institutions, in light of a rampant administra-

22 See: Iraq Economic Monitor, published by the World Bank Group in the Middle East and North Africa, Fall 2020.

23 Citizenship in its modern concept is based on an interconnected system of rights, such as civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. The sociologist Thomas Marshall asks for example: "What is the benefit of the right to freedom of thought and expression if the citizen doesn't have access to a good education that allows him to form a strong opinion that he can voice and defend?".

24 35.4% of the Iraqi population is between 15 and 34 years old. By 2030, those under 30 will make up 62% of the total population, according to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs' World Population Prospects 2019.

tive and financial corruption. In recent years, Iraq has not succeeded in achieving a sufficient growth rate to reduce unemployment and social disparities. The challenges facing the government forced it to adapt to the volatile and low oil prices, to the military expenditures in the war on ISIS, the low level of work in public sectors, and the deterioration of infrastructure.

This situation was recently exacerbated by the significant decline in global oil prices, and the Covid-19 pandemic with its socio-economic consequences, which requires a new approach to development and social justice from the concerned authorities in Iraq, commensurate with the emerging challenges. The aggravating difficult economic conditions and their negative indicators portend a serious social crisis, linked to increased poverty, destitution and unemployment, and require a change of mindset in dealing with this issue at the level of decision-makers and the general public.

## Reforms and fighting corruption

Everyone agrees that corruption has become a threat to the entire Iraqi state. Corruption has reached unprecedented rates in recent years, infiltrating ministries and political blocs and parties, to a certain extent that ministries have become a source of funding for political parties. Corruption has seeped into the depths of the state and society alike, turning into a “culture”, a system of mutual interests, and a pressing power in politics, economics and administration. This is why many citizens see this as the most serious challenge facing Iraq. Some argue that identity-related policies themselves produce corruption; each component reproduces its identity, not only at the cultural level, but also across a network of clientelist interests. Therefore, they consider that looking for corrupt people would not be sufficient unless the “corrupt structure” is addressed at the level of the state and the centers of political influence.

Confronting corruption-producing sectarian quotas requires reexamining political practice and administration, and developing the concept of civil service, in which public institutions and officers serve the community, rather than foster political employment and factional benefits. This path requires firm measures that ensure the integrity of officers in administrative positions in state institutions, in addition to enhancing their competencies and the quality of services provided to citizens. This also requires promoting e-government, linking and auditing information and data bases for employees, retirees, and beneficiaries of social welfare and loans programs, enhancing the supervisory role of public institutions, strengthening the independence of the judiciary, and spreading the culture, prestige and respect of law.





## Section One

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# National Identity and the Culture of Pluralism

## 1. The collective identity and multiple narratives

Iraq is the cradle of ancient Mesopotamian civilizations and the land of ethnic, cultural and religious diversity. It is from this land in which are rooted ancient religions, such as the Sabeans, Judaism, Yazidis, Kaka'is, and others, that Eastern Christianity set out to reach the borders of China, and it is in this land that the House of Wisdom was established as a house for science and global intellectual expansion of the Islamic civilization. Iraq is also blessed by the presence of shrines of prophets and imams, the "holy doorsteps" (Al-Atabat Al-Muqaddasa) and Al-Najaf Al-Ashraf (the city of knowledge and literature). This land, which is also rich in its history, natural resources, and Arab, Kurd, Assyrian, Chaldean, and Turkmen inhabitants in addition to other ancient components, has also known in recent decades an era of political tyranny, instability, foreign wars, siege, occupation, and sectarian conflicts, the most recent of which being ISIS terrorism, which has scarred the country through acts of murder, displacement, destruction, persecution and genocide.

The issue of identity is closely related to the Iraqi society's religious, sectarian, ethnic, and linguistic pluralism. Identity is also related to many aspects of the Iraqi public life, whether political, social, economic, cultural, or constitutional, and has a great impact on the issues of national unity and societal peace, and hence on stability. The issue of identity has been greatly affected by the tyranny, sectarian violence and terrorism that Iraq has witnessed in the last decades. Raising this issue has become intrinsically linked to processing the memory and concerns of Iraqis, and requires dismantling its critical reality to re-understand it, and present it in a comprehensive and constructive manner.

There are those who believe that during the modern Iraqi state decades, Iraqis were not able to agree on a unified narrative about the Iraqi identity; there were rather collective narratives or draft narratives. There might also be multiple and competing identity-related narratives within the same group. A serious attempt was made to create a collective awareness of the national identity, with the 1920 revolt and the monarchy, which were not destined to be pursued or completed because of the successive military coups, which in turn promoted a concept of identity through fusion and power. However, these attempts failed to deal properly with the multiple dimensions of the Iraqi identity, while the concept of authority and governance overshadowed the concept of the state. Sub-identities were in fact suppressed in favor of "an official identity which was parachuted in" and which in turn was subjected to change and tests from the authority over the decades. This reality was probably best reflected through the different changing versions of the national flag, since the establishment of the state in 1921 until the present day.

However, this is neither the final nor the only opinion. There are those who argue that it is necessary to distinguish between the psychological and sociological dimensions of the Iraqi identity. The Iraqi identity narrative can be found in a fairly uniform way within the psychological framework of the Iraqi Arabs, as their social imagination and historical memory conceal coherent perceptions of this identity at the level of belonging and evaluation, both cognitively and emotionally. However, other Iraqi groups, such as the Kurds and some ethnic minorities, do not share this perception of the Iraqi identity. This psychological dimension differs from the socio-political dimension of the Iraqi identity, in the context of the nation state. Throughout the contemporary history of Iraq, the state has in fact suffered from

persistent failures to bring together Iraqi groups around a coherent political project that achieves fair representation for all and strengthens the common national political identity.

One can hence assume that a unified narrative about nation building has not been achieved, due to the failure of the successive Iraqi political regimes to build a state where the geopolitical aspect coincides with the cultural and ethnic aspects. The state - as an instrument of governance - encroached on society and individuals, rather than stably representing them, and individuals remained in a state of alienation and antagonism vis-à-vis the state, which prevented the establishment of a cohesive nation state. The political process is responsible for the failure to reach a rough consensus on an inclusive Iraqi national identity. In fact, the political process - especially after 2003 - seemed limited to achieving partisan goals, due to the parties' control of the state and the rentier economy. Extremist religious and nationalist ideologies also contributed to increasing the tendency to prize sub- or partial identities. All this led to the decline of the Iraqi national identity and the growth of private collective narratives.

Sunnis, who were not previously interested in searching for a private identity-related narrative, are now looking for such a narrative, because they were marginalized which made them feel as a minority, despite their large number. The Shiites have started restoring the collective identity, ridding it of the effects of tyranny, and linking it to the national sphere. Their situation is similar to the one of the Kurds, as the duality between the Kurdistan Region and Iraq has grown, leading to a kind of competition or difficulty in achieving harmony between the Kurdish identity and the Iraqi identity. These contexts have generated a growing grievance discourse – with all the threats it entails to civil peace and social cohesion – leading to multiple grievances discourses according to each component, which ended up discovering old or new grievances.

Iraq is a country characterized by religious, racial and cultural diversity. Members of minorities in Iraq have played an active and influential role in building and enriching the country's social, cultural and political system over many centuries, and the reputation of many of those pioneers in science, arts and literature has preceded them. Although the Iraqi constitution guaranteed the rights of these minorities, especially in articles two, three, four, forty-two, and forty-three, these remained mere ink on paper. Minorities rather became more vulnerable to religious and racial discrimination, starting from the denial of proper political representation, and ending with the 2014 plight when they were persecuted and killed by ISIS that seized their properties, captured their women, and displaced them from the regions they had been living in for thousands of years.

Although mainly concentrated in southern provinces with a Shiite majority and in the capital, the revolutionary protest movement reflected, through its rhetoric and political language, an overcoming of sectarian and ethnic alignments, and an inclusive political and national identity. This means that stereotypical identity narratives require a new analysis and a proactive vision, in light of this largely cross-sectarian political movement. It should also be noted that there is a new narrative that is starting to occupy an important place in the Iraqis' daily political memory, which is the narrative of "the poor versus the rich." The shift in the political struggle from sectarianism to classism has become evident in Iraqi life, and is being expressed throughout the successive protest movements.

## 1. Policy recommendation on the collective national identity

**The dilemma:** Growing sub-identities - and hence sub-affiliations - at the expense of the Iraqi national identity.

**Its scope:** All of Iraq.

**The desired change:** Work in a realistic and tangible way to promote a collective Iraqi national identity inclusive of all kinds 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, while ensuring their right to exist and express themselves.

### **Suggested solutions at the political level:**

1. Gradually abolish the quotas' system, and adhere to democracy, the rule of law and accountability.
2. Consecrate the establishment of a modern civil state that guarantees the rights of sub-identities and the collective national identity.
3. Nominate competent people for public administrative positions, regardless of their religious, cultural or ethnic affiliations.
4. Enhance the impartiality of state institutions which should represent all Iraqis and serve them without discrimination or bias.
5. Highlight and enhance awareness about unifying national symbols and events, such as national holidays, the national anthem, the flag, etc.

### **Suggested solutions at the social level:**

1. Rid the official and media discourse of the idea of a conflict between the national identity and cultural, ethnic or religious sub-identities, and consider the national identity as a collective identity inclusive of all sub-identities.
2. Renew religious discourse with regard to issues of collective cross-religious and cross-sectarian citizenship.
3. Mobilize Iraqis, through civil society organizations, towards a collective national identity.
4. Develop an educational and teaching system that promotes the collective national identity, while recognizing the diversity of Iraqi sub-identities and sub-cultures.

### **Implementation procedures and mechanisms:**

1. Intensify scientific work to develop one educational and teaching system that is accepted by all social components, especially with regard to writing the social and political history of Iraq.
2. Spread the values of mutual recognition between different components in the framework of a collective national identity, through educational, teaching, media and civic approaches.
3. Encourage cross-national, cross-religious and cross-sectarian political blocs.
4. Focus on the contributions of past and recent Iraqi national symbols in building the national identity.
5. Build a collective national memory, aware of the past suffering of various groups, and promote empathy and reconciliation.
6. Name public places after Iraqi figures, especially thinkers and poets, and highlight the symbols of every Iraqi town or city.
7. Equitably distribute wealth and resources, in a way that preserves the human dignity of Iraqis, consolidates their belonging to the country, and enhances their pride in their belonging to the national identity that develops the individual's life, regardless of the component he/she belongs to.

**Implementing entities:**

1. The parliament.
2. The government (Ministry of Education and Higher Education, Ministry of Culture, media institutions, and all civil, social and cultural forums and institutions).
3. Civil society organizations and the media.
4. Endowments and religious departments.

**Available resources:** Educational personnel, intellectuals, moderate clerics, Iraqi museums and antiquities, and Iraqi folklore.

**Harms ensuing from these issues if they remain unaddressed:** Political, societal and economic disruption, backwardness, and loss of human capital.

**Results and benefits ensuing from the desired change:** Economic prosperity, social justice, sound political and administrative process, and unifying Iraqis' capabilities to face dangers and threats.

**Action plan:**

1. Distribute tasks according to specializations.
2. Follow up on the implementation of recommendations during the next five years.
3. Develop a plan to communicate with the concerned authorities.

## 2. The culture of dialogue and respect for difference

In terms of restoring confidence among people in a horizontal fashion, some note the current lack of dialogue institutions and forums in Iraq, despite some recent bold initiatives by civil society organizations, or the mutual visits between religious actors of different sects and religions in different regions. There is, therefore, an urgent need to promote communication, dialogue and joint initiatives, that should not be limited to officials or religious authorities, but rather extend to youth and various sectors of civil society.

The process of restoring confidence also appears to be more urgent among the groups that have suffered, with some of them still suffering persecution and displacement. Restoring confidence horizontally is a necessity, especially through the restoration of relationships between groups. At the same time, rebuilding confidence vertically, between the individual and the state, including citizens' relationship with political, constitutional, and security institutions, is also necessary.

The intertwining of religion in politics and the state structure entails the risk of fragmentation of the national identity, and the spread of religious and sectarian intolerance, driving some people to exploit religion for personal or factional interests, which contradicts the comprehensive nature of religious messages. Such practices have left a negative impact on, for example, legislation, the media, school curricula, and the management of endowments<sup>25</sup>. There are those who believe that, after April 2003, Iraq witnessed the incursion of religion - as a political identity - into personal religion - as a cultural identity - especially with regard to the Islamic religion, for both Sunnis and Shiites. The ruling Islamic organizations set out to monopolize the societal religious system and reproduce it as a "sacred cover" to legitimize and strengthen their presence in power. Fanciful historical representations of Islam came to light, which contributed to undermining the state's structure, preventing the establishment of a joint political project. This trend contributed to transforming the individual from a citizen involved in an inclusive social contract, to a human being clinging to identity-related narratives that contradict the project of the nation state and inclusive citizenship. However, there are currently signs of a healthy disconnect between religion and politics, thanks to the approach of the supreme Shiite authority and the initiative of some politicians, as well as the popular protest movement, which has gone beyond the vertical sectarian division in the country.

Dialogue in practice is still often associated with the traditional concept, which promotes the collective self, and is often accompanied by an apprehension to let go of some specific convictions in order to reach a compromise. Whereas the modern concept of dialogue is based on the exchange of positions between the parties to the dialogue in the same country, with each party representing the position of the other, instead of restricting its representation to its traditional position. Therefore, figures and institutions active in the field of dialogue need to develop their capabilities based on the new concepts, methodologies and mechanisms of dialogue.

Religious discourse plays a fundamental role in spreading the culture of accepting difference, and rejecting compulsion, expiatory tendencies and all forms of hatred, based on differences of opinion, belief or religion; as freedoms of opinion, belief and religion form one of the pillars of citizenship and human

<sup>25</sup> See: Harith Hasan, *Religious Authority and the Politics of Islamic Endowments in Iraq*, Malcolm Kerr Carnegie Middle East Center, 2019.

rights. Based on the principle of “no compulsion in religion”, the inviolability of the human conscience and the right of everyone to practice their religious rites and rituals must be respected.

Iraq can set an example of an open and tolerant Islam that respects diversity and human rights. However, this requires developing the religious discourse through a national religious and cultural workshop that extends from the family to the places of education and worship, the highest levels of cultural orientation in the country, and the media. The major Islamic authorities and institutions have a key role in this field, so that Islam can play - in thought and behavior - an active role in spreading the culture of citizenship, justice, brotherhood, freedom, love, openness and peaceful coexistence among all members of society, regardless of their different religions and ideological orientations. Despite some initiatives that seek to promote religious freedom and respect for diversity - in Iraq in general, and the Kurdistan Region in particular -, the general framework is still not sufficiently supportive of this trend.

Acknowledging diversity and respecting difference and freedom of religion and belief offer a solid foundation for a culture of dialogue and mutual understanding between the various components of society. This knowledge is hence based on each component’s definition of itself and its beliefs, away from stereotypes and preconceptions. Therefore, various religious authorities and groups can play a prominent role in spreading the culture of dialogue and openness, through their own discourses and joint initiatives.

## 2. Policy recommendation on the culture of dialogue and respect for difference

**The dilemma:** Seclusion and religious puritanism.

**Its scope:** All of Iraq.

**The desired change:** Citizens 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.

### **Suggested solutions at the political level:**

1. Review educational curricula to ensure that they do not distort the image of different religious or cultural groups, and adopt a curriculum on dialogue and religious culture that presents religions from a cultural point of view as perceived by their adherents.
2. Encourage local religious tourism, so that Iraqis get to know their country's diverse cultural and religious heritage and develop ways to highlight and preserve it.
3. Rationalize the administration of endowments and preserve the rights of each sect according to legal and lawful principles in a way that promotes respect for difference, cooperation and religious freedom, and be aware of unsound approaches and attempts to monopolize and politically exploit this matter, which might ignite discord and sectarian and confessional conflicts.
4. Encourage conferences and scientific research by the competent public authorities, in order to strengthen historical and critical reviews of the various religious and civilizational experiences, and develop modern approaches to these issues and scientific dialogues about them.

### **Suggested solutions at the social level:**

1. Promote religious dialogue initiatives, with the aim of being open to difference, and spread public culture about religions away from preconceptions and stereotypes.
2. Promote civil society initiatives that bring together the people of Iraq from various regions and sects, and foster openness to local and global cultural diversity.

### **Implementation procedures and mechanisms:**

1. Form a supreme committee to review educational curricula and develop a special curriculum on dialogue and religious culture.
2. Develop a website for the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Antiquities, showing the rich diversity of religious heritage in Iraq, introducing it to the world, and encouraging domestic tourism.
3. Encourage joint economic activity between regions of different religious or sectarian affiliation, in order to break the stereotypes that religious groups have towards one another.
4. Highlight the positive measures and experiences of the Kurdistan Region Ministry of Religious Affairs in this field.
5. Encourage cooperation between research and academic institutions to develop research, publications and dialogues on issues of cultural and religious pluralism.
6. Invite concerned religious institutions to organize dialogue meetings for scholars and youth, and organize an annual national conference for interfaith dialogue in Iraq.
7. Invite civil society organizations to intensify their activities in the field of training on dialogue skills, managing diversity, nonviolent communication, and conflict resolution, and secure the necessary funding for that.

**Implementing entities:**

1. The Ministry of Education.
2. The Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Antiquities.
3. The Ministry of Higher Education.
4. Religious institutions and authorities.
5. Civil society organizations.

**Available resources:**

1. Research, documents and curricula issued in this field by scientific and religious authorities in Iraq and abroad.
2. Experts and trainers on issues of freedom of religion and belief, diversity and dialogue.
3. Research centers and academic institutions, such as: the UNESCO Chair for the Development of Interreligious Dialogue Studies in the Islamic World at the University of Kufa, the Masarat Foundation, and others.
4. Civil and religious institutions, with their specialized human and material resources.
5. International institutions and organizations expert in this field, as well as donors for such activities.

**Harms ensuing from these issues if they remain unaddressed:**

1. Growing intolerance and ignorance in society.
2. Weak trust among citizens, and the risk of increased religious or sectarian violence and conflicts.
3. The decline in Iraq's image and role in the world in the field of dialogue among religions and civilizations.

**Results and benefits ensuing from the desired change:**

1. Spreading a culture of respecting difference, and strengthening civil peace and social cohesion.
2. Enhancing the immunity of new generations to extremism and violence.

**Action plan:**

1. Submit recommendations and suggestions to the concerned authorities.
2. Seek to secure the required resources and partnerships to implement the suggestions.

### 3. Legal protection of minorities

The 2005 constitution introduced the concept of “component” to the Iraqi political sociology, linking it to the specificity of the Iraqi people’s various ethnic or religious affiliations. This concept enabled the recognition of the diversity of Iraq’s social fabric, without limiting it to a concept of minorities alone. Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds are in fact among these components, exactly the same as numerically small groups, such as Christians, Yazidis, Sabeans, Shabaks, Turkmen, and others. This concept allowed as well to go beyond the numerical system in approaching the Iraqi demography with its ethnic, religious and cultural diversity, and gave some small components a certain specificity in terms of rights and political participation, such as the electoral quota.

Some consider that this system, which introduced the concept of “component” as an element defining the relationship between the citizen and the state, constitutes a challenge to the realization of citizenship and the civil state, and reinforces political sectarianism. The concept of “component” also bears some ambiguities, such as its reliance on intersecting criteria in defining the term “component”, combining sometimes religious and ethnic criteria. Therefore, a distinction is made between Sunnis and Shiites on a sectarian basis, and between Sunnis and Kurds on an ethnic basis, although these have a religious criterion in common. Ambiguity between the religious and the ethnic criterion was also part of the discussion within the small components, about defining their identity and their relationship to the other components.

The literature on some components is limited to its own religious heritage, and lacks studies and literature in the social, cultural and demographic fields, knowing that this literature was often written by writers who did not belong to these components. The main reason behind that is perhaps the political and academic ban on these writings under the previous political regime, which was pursued, albeit not in an explicit way. The need today is to develop research and literature related to each component and to the different dimensions of their presence in the Iraqi fabric.

The absence of a clear standard to distinguish between the concepts of component and minority in the constitution and in legal texts has made small components prone to tensions between major components, without ensuring them an effective participation in public life. Therefore, there are those who prefer to retain the term “minorities” because it is linked to an international legal system that emphasizes the protection of minorities from marginalization or negative discrimination through a set of legal controls on which local laws must be based.

### 3. Policy recommendation on legal protection for minorities

**The dilemma:** The adoption of the term “components” in the constitution in force, instead of the term “minorities”.

**Its scope:** All of Iraq.

**The desired change:** Refer to numerically small components with the term “minority”, to enable them to benefit from the rights and privileges that are granted for the smallest numerical or politically marginalized entities or groups. This means granting them some special rights as a positive discrimination, to ensure their participation in public life, like members of the majority. The principle of equality will hence prevail despite multiple identities.

**Suggested solutions at the political level:** Form a committee to amend the current Iraqi constitution to include the term minority, where appropriate, when referring to these groups.

**Suggested solutions at the social level:**

1. Raise awareness of the public that the word “minority” is not an insult, nor is it intended to marginalize or offend anyone. It is rather intended to identify these groups in order to grant them additional rights, to ensure their presence and participation in public life.
2. Promote the role of civil society organizations in advocacy campaigns aimed at presenting draft laws or amendments to ensure the rights of minorities in accordance with the principle of citizenship.

**Implementation procedures and mechanisms:** Amend the Iraqi constitution and laws in a way to achieve consistency with international conventions aimed at protecting minorities, since consistency between the constitutional and the international laws is a reflection of the civilized and civil aspects of the state, and then amend the relevant laws accordingly.

**Implementing entities:**

1. The Iraqi Parliament.
2. The Kurdistan Region of Iraq’s Parliament.

**Available resources:**

1. Human cadres specialized in public and constitutional international law.
2. The relevant parliamentary committees.

**Harms ensuing from these issues if they remain unaddressed:** Numerically small components would not be able to benefit from the privileges granted to them at the international level to preserve the rights of minorities in their homelands, which would lead to a decline in their role at the national level, an increase in grievances, and emigration.

**Results and benefits ensuing from the desired change:** Greater integration of religious and ethnic minorities into the Iraqi society, based on trust, liberation from fear and grievance, and greater social justice.

**Action plan:**

1. Form a committee to amend the constitution during the current parliamentary cycle.
2. Revision of laws by the relevant parliamentary committees.

## 4. Confronting intolerance and education on peaceful coexistence

Intolerance represents a preferential psychological attitude that is not based on objective grounds, which entails the unjustified negative treatment of others. Therefore, it constitutes a serious societal scourge that transcends the mere individual value dimension, causes the disintegration of social cohesion, generates hate speech and violence, and justifies attacks and genocide against entire groups. After all the pain that the Iraqi society has gone through because of ISIS terrorism, it seems that the prospects for eradicating this evil from its roots appear promising. In fact, some consider that ISIS is nothing but the tip of the iceberg, and defeating it requires true social and cultural reforms.

As long as the authoritarian discourse succeeds in imposing discriminatory and exclusionary behavioral patterns, it provides an opportunity for the fanatics to feel that they are superior and that their approach has won. This breeds false submission and hypocrisy, undermines the values of trust and honesty (the foundations of citizenship, peace and human solidarity), and produces racism.

It is not only about religious intolerance: intolerance is in fact a behavior that may be religious, sectarian, partisan, nationalistic, tribal, ideological, or even gender-related. Stereotypes may stigmatize entire societies by dehumanizing them. The time has come to push forward forcefully with a humanist culture that respects human rights, looks positively at diversity and differences, and seeks peaceful coexistence. Individuals would therefore dare to be different, while at the same time remaining open to others, respectful of their differences, and committed to jointly build healthy environments for all, based on fighting injustice and striving to achieve justice and peace.

This path requires empowering Iraqis, especially youth, to deal positively with difference, and to practice peaceful conflict resolution skills, so that difference does not turn into a dispute that is nourished by intolerant positions, or degenerate into violent conflict. Iraqis need to realize that social conflict is part of the human experience and societal dynamism. When equipped with the ability to deal with it positively, social conflict becomes an opportunity to promote frank dialogue, cooperate in solving problems, and consolidate peaceful coexistence. In this context, it is necessary to pay attention to the (at times) cultural background of social conflicts, which requires dealing with it to close the door on those who wish to exploit conflicts to nourish factionalism and sow discord among people.

## 4. Policy recommendation on confronting intolerance and education on peaceful coexistence

**The dilemma:** The spread of intolerance and violence.

**Its scope:** All of Iraq.

**The desired change:** The gradual elimination of intolerance and violence, and the strengthening of societal peace.

### **Suggested solutions at the political level:**

Reform the educational curricula to prevent the growth of intolerance and hatred.

The Ministry of Higher Education adopting a compulsory course for students on conflict resolution and peacebuilding skills.

### **Suggested solutions at the social level:**

1. Raise awareness on countering intolerance, through the media and social media platforms.
2. Promote informal popular education, through civil society organizations and civil and religious institutions, on conflict resolution and the culture of openness and peaceful coexistence.
3. Promote psychological counseling led by public and private health institutions.
4. Develop platforms for direct communication and frameworks for cooperation between different groups.

### **Implementation procedures and mechanisms:**

1. Involve political and social influential parties and figures in developing and promoting plans and programs.
2. Hold workshops to educate society in general and youth in particular about the dangers of intolerance and ways to counter it, as well as trainings for trainers on conflict resolution and peaceful coexistence.
3. Form a committee to evaluate existing programs at the higher education level in the fields of dialogue, human rights, conflict resolution and peace building, and formulate a plan to adopt a course in this regard in universities.

**Implementing entities:** All public and private entities that are expected to interact with the aforementioned goals, such as: the three authorities, educational institutions, religious bodies, and civil society organizations.

### **Available resources:**

1. Local and international resources, scholarship and experts in this field.
2. Trainers on issues of human rights, dialogue and peaceful coexistence.
3. The Iraqi Al-Amal Association academic program for training on conflict resolution and peacebuilding.
4. Master of Arts program in Peace and Conflict Transformation Studies, at the College of Arts - University of Baghdad.

**Harms ensuing from these issues if they remain unaddressed:** The disintegration of society and its failure to achieve stability and sustainable peace, and hindering its development and progress.

**Results and benefits ensuing from the desired change:** Reinforcing social cohesion and national identity, while respecting diversity.

**Action plan:** Follow up with the concerned authorities to work on implementing the proposed solutions.

## 5. Countering hate speech

Intolerance produces hate speech, discrimination and racism. The United Nations defined hate speech in 2019 as: “Any kind of communication in speech, writing or behavior, that attacks or uses pejorative or discriminatory language with reference to a person or a group on the basis of who they are, in other words, based on their religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, color, descent, gender or other identity factor”<sup>26</sup>.

These discourses may be intentional and deliberate at times, but they are often the result of ignorance of the different other, which generates stereotypical, destructive mutual perceptions. Perhaps the most prominent example of this is the hate, discrimination and contempt speech to which religious minorities in Iraq have been subjected, and which extremists have used to justify crimes against them. Hate speech was not limited to minorities, but extended to the rest of the Iraqi components, and contributed to fueling sectarian strife. These discourses are sometimes linked to identity-related concerns, where the process of producing a distorting discourse of the other is coupled with popular imagination and discourse, backed by preconceptions and sweeping assertions that justify all crimes against everyone. Therefore, when hate speech turns into incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence, it constitutes a crime that is prohibited by international law.<sup>27</sup>

Some important initiatives have been launched to counter hate speech. In 2016, Masarat Foundation launched the Declaration of Baghdad to Counter Hatred in Iraq and the Middle East, and established the National Center for Countering Hate Speech. These efforts should be intensified and spread to reach all the country and its public and community institutions, and should involve media and educational institutions. Some note that Iraq lacks adequate laws to combat discrimination and hate speech, which requires working on quick and effective legislative and social measures, while paying particular attention to preserving freedom of thought, criticism and expression, since countering hate speech cannot become a pretext for restricting individual freedoms and freedom of the press and expression in all their forms. Hate speech is that which is directed against individuals and groups on the basis of who they are, while criticizing ideas freely must remain guaranteed, while preserving public order.

<sup>26</sup> See: United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech, 2019.

<sup>27</sup> See: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966.

## 5. Policy recommendation on countering hate speech

**The dilemma:** The spread of hate speech on political, media, and religious platforms and on social media.

**Its scope:** All of Iraq.

**The desired change:** Containing and putting an end to hate speech.

### **Suggested solutions at the political level:**

Legalize the criminalization of political, religious, cultural, or media, etc. hate speech.

### **Suggested solutions at the social level:**

1. Empower journalists and media figures to deal with and counter hate speech.
2. Develop media institutions' policies and codes of conduct, for a clear commitment to rejecting hate speech.
3. Spread awareness at the societal level, enhance youth capabilities for dialogue and proper discussion of ideas, while refusing any attack on people and their identity peculiarities, and launch campaigns in this direction on social media.
4. Launch initiatives to counter hate speech which contribute to building bridges between local communities (such as Muslims celebrating Christmas or non-Muslims preparing iftar in Ramadan for Muslims).
5. Hold several meetings between people of diverse cultures, in the framework of academic, media, or social initiatives.

### **Implementation procedures and mechanisms:**

1. Launch a legal path to legalize countering hate speech and criminalize hate speech, while fully preserving responsible freedom of expression, and work on a draft that can be submitted to the Parliament through one of the specialized committees (such as the Human Rights Committee).
2. Promote cooperation between civil society entities and religious organizations to jointly organize Christmas celebrations and prepare Ramadan Iftars.
3. Organize workshops with concerned sectors, such as security and the media, to develop policies and codes of conduct, and train security forces and journalists on countering hate speech.
4. Launch awareness campaigns on social media.

### **Implementing entities:**

1. The Parliament.
2. Civil society organizations and voluntary youth groups.
3. Traditional religious institutions.

### **Available resources:**

1. Voluntary groups in all governorates of Iraq and the Kurdistan Region.
2. Good relations with members of Parliament.
3. Strong relations with religious institutions and authorities.
4. Social media, the media, and journalists interested in this field.
5. Concerned authorities' desire to work on the target topic.

**Harms ensuing from these issues if they remain unaddressed:** Political, social and psychological instability, disruption of social fabric, and promotion of violence in some cases and in some places.

**Results and benefits ensuing from the desired change:** Greater stability at all levels, and easing of tensions between local groups, so as to make the process of rebuilding trust at the social level more effective and faster, in order to promote inclusive citizenship.

**Action plan:**

1. Launch a campaign to adopt a law on countering hate in its earliest stage.
2. Hold a series of workshops to highlight the various challenges in different regions and involve local actors, before starting to draft a law, then agree with a Parliamentary committee to present the draft law by collecting the required signatures from the Parliament.
3. Communicate with concerned media institutions and civil society organizations and religious authorities to work together on the defined goals.



## Section Two

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# Active and Inclusive Citizenship

## 6. Diversity, freedom of expression and equality among citizens

The principle of citizenship stems from equality among all members of society, without any racial, religious, sectarian, ethnic, gender, cultural, social or political discrimination. The nation is a space that allows people of different ideologies, genders, beliefs, languages, or color to become partners in building the common good, which brings good and safety to them all. Therefore, the idea of nation is based on the social contract between citizens, which defines the mechanisms of managing life together through the state, its public institutions, and the system of human rights governed by the law. It promotes socialization, social cohesion and national solidarity on a civic basis, and realizes citizenship through the citizen's direct relationship with the state and other citizens. Political and legislative practices and literature that establish discrimination between citizens are inconsistent with inclusive citizenship. This is why Article 26 of the Iraq National Card Law raises the ire of religious minorities, who consider it a violation of their religious rights that are guaranteed by the Iraqi constitution and international standards, and demand that it be amended in order to preserve diversity and real equality in the country. According to Article 26, paragraph 2 of the Iraq National Card Law of 2016, "children who are minors shall follow the religion of the parent who converts to Islam", meaning that they have to convert to Islam before they reach adulthood. This constitutes a coercion for children to change their religion, which contradicts the principles of citizenship and human rights.

The multi-ethnic, cultural and religious composition of Iraq, and the resulting collective ties and cultural symbols of each component, presuppose that citizenship be inclusive of societal diversity. UNESCO considers cultural diversity in societies as a source of exchange, innovation and creativity<sup>28</sup>. This requires a rational political management of multiculturalism, in order to avoid the nation's fragmentation through factional and sectarian quotas. Totalitarian regimes that rely on political despotism following the slogan of a "strong state", in which political power asserts hegemony over society, seek the forced assimilation of citizens through educational and media mobilization. Likewise, sectarian regimes undermine civil, political and even social rights of individuals in the name of their own identity, making them dependent on sectarian leaders who claim to protect their identity and specificity by monopolizing the representation of their interests and mechanisms to access their rights. As a result, individuals abandon their role of participating in public life, including engaging in public debate, protest movements, and accountability, pledging instead loyalty and subservience to the sectarian leader. This leads to the collapse of the democratic system, and the mechanisms which ensure its success and sustainability.

Freedom of opinion, expression and protest represent one of the main pillars of the state of citizenship and the means to face the growing tyranny under its various forms. These foundations, however, are threatened because of recent attempts to adopt laws that curtail freedom of expression and protest (draft laws on demonstrations, cybercrimes, and restricting personal freedoms) and undermine women's rights (draft personal status laws that enshrine sectarianism), in addition to the delay and procrastination in adopting a law criminalizing domestic violence.

<sup>28</sup> See: Article 1 of the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, 2001.

In addition, after October's revolutionary movement, assassinations, kidnappings and intimidation of activists, protesters, intellectuals, and opinion-makers has intensified. They have been pursued and intimidated daily in an organized manner, with their names appearing on threat lists that were publicly broadcast by electronic armies, with the aim of muzzling the opposition and aborting any movement that could undermine the political system's corrupt sectarian structure. Paramilitary armed political groups (militias) play a fundamental role in these crimes, with a clear negligence in certain cases from government security agencies.

Therefore, building active and inclusive citizenship in Iraq requires renewing the social contract between citizens on the one hand, and between them and the state and its institutions on the other hand, to preserve the right to be different and express this difference, in a safe environment free from bullying and threats and use of violence by outlawed groups.

## 6. Policy recommendation on diversity, freedom of expression and equality among citizens

**The dilemma:** Inequality among Iraqis and widespread violence.

**Its scope:** All of Iraq.

**The desired change:** Equality among citizens, regardless of their multiple religious, social, political and cultural affiliations, and guaranteeing freedom of opinion, expression and protest.

### **Suggested solutions at the political level:**

1. Amend relevant constitutional and legal texts to guarantee equality, non-discrimination and equally opportunities for all Iraqis in accordance with Articles 14, 16, 20, 37, 38, and 125 of the constitution.
2. Enact laws to effectively implement constitutional texts that guarantee all Iraqis their rights, especially Articles 3, 4, 42, and 125 of the constitution.
3. Dismantle armed militias that are outside the authority of the state and ensure the security of citizens.

**Suggested solutions at the social level:** Develop specialized social programs that promote Iraqis' knowledge each other, highlight the common ground between them, and foster the right to express difference.

### **Implementation procedures and mechanisms:**

1. Politicians take a practical decision to direct their political parties and blocs in the Iraqi parliament towards amending some of the relevant constitutional articles.
2. Enact laws that would achieve equality among Iraqis and guarantee their rights at all levels without any discrimination, while securing the support of religious authorities for this national project.
3. Establish a community security policy that guarantees the right to freedom of expression and protest, and counters violence and bullying from weapon-carrying groups.

**Implementing entities:** The Iraqi Parliament.

**Available resources:** Experts in law and public policy, representing all Iraqi components.

**Harms ensuing from these issues if they remain unaddressed:** More inequality, marginalization, exclusion, violence, assassinations, and injustice.

**Results and benefits ensuing from the desired change:** The increase of national belonging, the growth of democracy, sound intellectual and political competition, and the spread of the values of justice, equity and love, in a way that leads to security, and economic, political, social and religious stability.

### **Action plan:**

1. Draft laws to bring into force the aforementioned constitutional texts.
2. Form a committee to amend the constitution in this regard.
3. Develop a comprehensive security policy that guarantees freedoms.

## 7. Civil society and the culture of advocacy and accountability

Realizing and ensuring the sustainability of the state of citizenship requires the development of Iraqi civil society and a shift in the culture of its citizens: from receiving expectations from rulers to voicing demands of them by peaceful means of pressure and holding them accountable for their performance. However, Iraqi civil society, which is represented by free media, trade unions and syndicates, cultural institutions, development institutions, and associations, is still weak due to the heavy heritage of the culture of tyranny that the country has suffered throughout its various eras. It goes without saying that overcoming this culture cannot happen overnight, but is rather a cumulative process which has specific conditions. Among others, it requires that civil society has secure access to financial resources that are independent of state authorities, and that they promote awareness and commitment to public affairs issues in ways that cut across traditional lines.

By nature, civil society transcends the duality of ruler and the ruled, and constitutes a dynamic force on the ground that controls, on the one hand, the ruler's behavior when he becomes tyrannical and, on the other hand, the movement of the ruled when they tend to surrender to reality or dependency. Civil society can thus constitute a third party in the equation of citizenship and democratic governance. It prevents the ruler from monopolizing the spread of awareness, money and dignity, and directs the political process towards peace, stability, security and social well-being.

Iraqi civil society suffers from the same corruption, favoritism, and financial and human mismanagement that the social and political environments suffer from. However, it has succeeded in fostering reasonable administrative environment compared to other institutions. In some cases, there was a system in place for conflicts of interest, and a system for human and financial management. Successful work experiences in civil society institutions constitute in themselves a model of participation in public life, and a test of democracy and accountability mechanisms.

The picture of the positive and independent interaction between the government and civil society might be imperfect, even though civil society has been able to contribute to civic education, minority issues, and citizen rights, reaching an unprecedented level in working with some ministries, such as the Ministry of Education. However, the role of civil society should not be limited to partnering with the public sector on specific issues, but also to playing a bigger role at two levels: advocacy - to influence and rationalize public policies - and accountability - to ensure quality and transparency in the public sector.

## 7. Policy recommendation on civil society and the culture of advocacy and accountability

**The dilemma:** Weak government transparency and rational public policies.

**Its scope:** All of Iraq.

**The desired change:** Reach a higher level of transparency in the work of government institutions to promote accountability and develop public policies, and to achieve them through civil society advocacy and partnership with public institutions.

### **Suggested solutions at the political level:**

1. Involve civil society organizations in discussing public and local laws and policies.
2. Promulgate the law on the right to access information, and enhance transparency within public institutions.
3. Promulgate the law on the conflict of financial interests in Iraq.

### **Suggested solutions at the social level:**

1. Build the capacities of civil society on inclusive citizenship, advocacy, communication and good governance.
2. Encourage partnerships and alliances between civil society organizations on public issues of common interest, to enhance productivity and effectiveness.

### **Implementation procedures and mechanisms:**

1. Communicate with stakeholders in the government and the Parliament to adopt the required legislations.
2. Communicate with local councils and administrations for cooperation and monitoring.
3. Provide training programs on advocacy, policy development and assessment for civil society activists.
4. Shed light on successful model experiences, to learn and benefit from them.

### **Implementing entities:**

1. The Iraqi Parliament and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq's Parliament.
2. The central government, the Kurdistan Regional Government, and local councils and administrations.
3. Iraqi civil society organizations.
4. International institutions supporting with expertise and funding.

### **Available resources:**

1. Experts in monitoring, advocacy and accountability.
2. The relevant parliamentary committees.
3. Model experiences available, and successful organizations ready to develop their capabilities.
4. International interest in Iraq, and the availability of financial support for civil society.

**Harms ensuing from these issues if they remain unaddressed:** Persistent weakness in governance, public services and development.

**Results and benefits ensuing from the desired change:** Improving governance, achieving better rates of development and public services, with greater commitment from citizens to their public issues, and growing confidence in government institutions.

### **Action plan:**

1. Follow up the enactment of the required laws with the competent authorities.
2. Organize training programs for civil society activists.
3. Build a model coalition around a specific issue, to present a success story that encourages the pursuit of efforts in this field.

## 8. Youth participation in the renewal of political life

The role of youth in Iraq after the October 2019 revolutionary movement has clearly evolved. Prior to this symbolic date which constituted a turning point, the Iraqi youth had been victims of accumulated crises from dictatorship, to wars, sectarianism, terrorism, corruption, failed policies and unemployment. However, the October revolutionary movement, which was a symbol of the liberation of youth from the role of victims of past misfortunes, recast them as revolutionaries eager to take their destiny into their own hands. Some considered this movement, which brought together young men and women of different social classes and religious sects in the streets, as the deepest social movement the country has witnessed in recent decades. It is remarkable to see the number of volunteer initiatives and the involvement of many young men and women, whether in the fields of art, culture or charitable work, or by providing humanitarian, food and health support, in the protest movement's squares or facing the Covid-19 pandemic.

During this new phase, the reality of young people who suffer from multi-faceted deprivation has not changed, but they themselves changed when they took to the streets demanding accountability and change, raising their voices against sectarianism, foreign influence, corruption and unemployment. Young people have reflected, through their protests, their citizenship awareness of their wasted rights, because of the failure of those responsible for managing the country and its resources, and their exclusion from active participation in managing their public affairs and from the decision-making process. They did not back down in the face of violence, which caused hundreds of martyrs and thousands of wounded.

These young protesters and their peers, between the ages of 15 and 34, constitute the largest segment of society, accounting for 35.4% of the total population of Iraq<sup>29</sup>. This generation of globalization that is blown by the winds of freedom and change through their mobile phones and social media, is no longer captivated by narrow sectarian and tribal rhetoric.

However, this young generation lacks the appropriate political culture that enables it to swiftly shift from protests to political positions, with visions, plans and leadership that can lead to decision-making positions. After the youth succeeded in pushing for early parliamentary elections<sup>30</sup>, the challenge has now become to raise their level of awareness, to enable them to make electoral choices commensurate with their political aspirations. The capacities of young elites should also be built, in order to continue to pressure and influence electoral programs, and to give them the opportunity to run and compete in elections, after the age for candidacy was lowered to 28 years. Young people also need to restore their confidence in political work, whose image has become linked to corruption due to the practices of some within the ruling class.

29 See: Report of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs for the year 2019.

30 The government announced that parliamentary elections will be held in June 2021.

## 8. Policy recommendation on youth and the renewal of political life

**The dilemma:** The absence of the role of youth in decision-making and political participation.

**Its scope:** All of Iraq.

**The desired change:** Active participation of youth in political life, and enhancing opportunities for the change they aspire to.

### **Suggested solutions at the political level:**

1. Involve youth – at least in consultations - in political decision-making at both the regional and national levels.
2. Form youth advisory councils in the governorates' councils to consult youth and involve them in the decision-making process.

### **Suggested solutions at the social level:**

1. Promote awareness and democratic political culture among youth.
2. Enhance the capabilities of youth elites at the level of political thought and communication.
3. Encourage dialogue between young people to narrow divergencies and help them build common visions for the future of Iraq and alliances that foster their political success.

### **Implementation procedures and mechanisms:**

1. Communicate with the concerned parties in the Kurdistan Regional Government and central government, to set up mechanisms for communication with youth and convey their voice to concerned parties.
2. Communicate with officials in the governorates to establish youth advisory councils and assist in setting up their bylaws and working mechanisms.
3. Provide awareness and training programs for activists in the protest movement, and help them access the media and express their opinions and aspirations.

### **Implementing entities:**

1. The central government and the Kurdistan Regional Government.
2. Activists in the protest movement.
3. Iraqi civil society organizations.

### **Available resources:**

Similar experiences in other countries, and experts to train youth on responsible political action.  
Young people themselves.

**Harms ensuing from these issues if they remain unaddressed:** Persistent anger and disillusionment among youth, which can lead to an increase in violence.

**Results and benefits ensuing from the desired change:** Contribute to the renewal of political life, and increase youth commitment to volunteering and fighting for national causes.

### **Action plan:**

1. Open communication channels between government agencies and youth and develop model youth councils in the governorates.
2. Organize awareness and training programs for civil society activists.
3. Monitor the development of the youth movements before and after the upcoming elections to analyze them and draw relevant conclusions.

## 9. Empowering women and enhancing their participation in public life

The political participation of women has undoubtedly increased after 2003 thanks to the quota system, which was an entry point to creating a societal awareness of the need for women's participation. Women were in fact elected heads of political blocs and occupied leading positions in the Kurdistan Region Parliament. In 2020, women occupied 25.5% of the seats in the Federal Parliament, compared to 16.6% in the Arab region and 24.9% in the world. However, women's participation at the executive level remained much weaker, with only 13.6% representation in the Council of Ministers, or 3 female ministers out of 22 ministers<sup>31</sup>. The experience as a whole is new, and it needs to be further assessed and developed to enhance the effective participation of women in public life<sup>32</sup>.

However, the general picture is still shrouded in difficulties and obstacles. Women in Iraqi society are still suffering from all kinds of marginalization and exclusion, and an increase in violence against them. Moreover, women's participation in economic and political life remained below the required level despite the electoral gender quota. Women, for example, do not play an active role in conflict resolution negotiations, and their role is still weak in the organizational structure of political forces, and whenever they are represented, their representation remains purely formal. Hence, the urgent need to empower women and enhance their level of participation in public life.

One can also note the absence of a general national mechanism to improve the status of women, and of a political will to change the reality of women from mere subordinates to active stakeholders. Although some plans have been put in place, these have not been implemented and women are excluded from development programs, as the economic activity rate for men is 72% compared to 13% for women with 90% of women gainfully employed in government sectors.

Although Article 14 of the Constitution provides for equality between men and women, and Article 20 provides for the right to political participation for men and women, equality in Iraq has not actually been achieved. From 2005 until now, no law was issued to combat gender discrimination. There has been a tendency to place women in an inferior position, through attempts to amend personal status or present women on a sectarian basis. There are as well many trends that are still prevalent and may have increased nowadays, such as: child marriage, family discrimination, and the use of women as a commodity to resolve tribal disputes. Furthermore, women are still victims of harsh punishments that were enacted by decisions made under the previous regime - including Decision 234 of 2001 - and remain in force. Women were not treated fairly either under the legislations in force, such as the Penal Code<sup>33</sup>, the Labor law<sup>34</sup>, the Political Parties Law, the Electoral Law, and the Personal Status Law. The government was reluctant to implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (known as "CEDAW"), which Iraq signed, and became a national law after its publication in the Official Gazette Al-Waqa'i Al-Iraqiya.

31 See: Report on Strengthening women's political participation. Women Running for Elected Office in Iraq: Needs and Challenges, published in 2020 by the Iraq Foundation, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI), and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), p. 4.

32 Ibid, Chapter Three: The obstacles facing female candidates and mechanisms to overcome them according to experience and perception, lack of preparation and training.

33 The Iraqi Penal Code No. 111 of 1969.

34 The Labor Law No. 37 of 2015 marked some progress, albeit insufficient, in terms of women's rights, in addition to criminalizing harassment in the workplace and imposing deterrent penalties.

## 9. Policy recommendation on empowering women and enhancing their participation in public life

**The dilemma:** The poor quality of women's roles in the public and private spheres, and the persistent violence and discriminatory practices against them.

**Its scope:** All of Iraq.

**The desired change:** Improve the cultural, political, economic and social conditions of women, in order to achieve equality and gender-based justice, and increase their participation in decision-making positions, security and peace building, and confront all forms of discrimination.

### **Suggested solutions at the political level:**

1. Activate the National Council for Women's Affairs, work according to a comprehensive and inclusive national strategy for the advancement of women in Iraq and provide the necessary human and financial resources for its implementation.
2. Follow effective policies aimed at advancing the status of women, enhancing their participation in decision-making positions at all levels and in all fields, and providing them with the necessary (human and financial) resources.
3. Work to involve women in all general national policies and plans, to enhance their participation in development and peacebuilding.
4. Expedite the adoption of the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence, to ensure the protection of women within the family and preserve their dignity.
5. Review laws and legislations that enshrine inequality, discrimination, and violence against women, with the aim of amending or canceling them, especially Penal Code No. 111 (1969), Criminal Procedure Code 23 (1971), and other decisions that impose harsh sanctions against women, in addition to preventing the influence of customs and traditions and their prevalence over the force of law.
6. Lift reservations over Articles 2 (f -g) and Article 16 of CEDAW, and sign the Optional Protocol to the Convention.

### **Suggested solutions at the social level:**

1. Involve community leaders, including clerics, local community elders and leaders, in campaigns aimed at changing social patterns of behavior that perpetuate discrimination and violence against women.
2. Enhance the role of the media and educational institutions, and change curricula in a way that promotes citizenship, equality and non-discrimination.

### **Implementation procedures and mechanisms:**

Follow up on the proposed solutions and the action plan by this group with the concerned authorities.

**Implementing entities:** The federal government, the Kurdistan Regional Government, the Parliament, local and international civil society organizations, educational institutions, and religious authorities.

**Available resources:**

The existence of a number of national policies and plans specific to women, including:

1. The strategy to combat violence against women.
2. The strategy for the advancement of women.
3. The national plan for implementing Resolution 1325.
4. The national plan for implementing the joint communiqué on prevention and response to conflict-related sexual violence, signed by the Iraqi government with the United Nations.
5. The national development plan.
6. The Poverty Reduction Strategy.

**Harms ensuing from these issues if they remain unaddressed:**

1. Family instability leads to societal instability.
2. Loss of human capital represented by women.
3. Failure to achieve justice.

**Results and benefits ensuing from the desired change:**

Achieve equality and social justice stipulated in the constitution, with the resulting social, economic and psychological benefits.

**Action plan:**

1. Form a committee from the Judicial Council, the concerned government agencies and the Parliament to review and amend discriminatory legislations.
2. Organize advocacy campaigns to pass the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence, and form the National Council for the Empowerment of Women.
3. Form a ministerial committee, with the aim of studying how to lift the reservations on CEDAW.

## 10. Minority participation in political life

The failure to achieve the state of just and inclusive citizenship, and the feeling of the communities representing numerical minorities that they are not being involved in the decision-making process with the other Iraqi major components, even in matters that directly concern them, make some of them feel there is a guardianship exercised by large components of society over minorities. This is why some suggest looking for appropriate solutions to this feeling of marginalization among minorities, while acknowledging that this approach focused on protecting rights should not come at the expense of common points and interaction between citizens, because this may have adverse effects and lead to more divergence and sensitivity between the various components of society.

Some believe that the system of quotas and distribution of “spoils” leaves no room for minorities to effectively participate in governance and decision-making. Some even consider that the quota system in parliamentary elections is ineffective, unless it is accompanied by an electoral law that allows minorities to choose their representatives. This may require an electoral law with districts corresponding to the size of minorities, which give them the opportunity to select their representatives without depriving them of their universal national representation.

Therefore, some see the need to reconsider some constitutional articles, in a way that leads to strengthening national unity among all Iraqis, regardless of their affiliations and diverse backgrounds, especially with regard to minorities’ rights, to preserve the Iraqi fabric that is distinguished by its ethnic, cultural and religious diversity. Although the new constitution (2005) has guaranteed minorities’ rights in Articles 2, 3, 4, and 43, etc., most of these rights have not been translated into reality in a way that enhances the effective participation of minorities in national political life.

## 10. Policy recommendation on minority participation in political life

**The dilemma:** The absence of real representation of minorities with regard to electoral quota seats.

**Its scope:** All of Iraq.

**The desired change:** 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.

**Suggested solutions at the political level:** Form a committee to amend the electoral laws for both the regional and the federal parliamentary elections, allowing members of minorities to choose their representatives.

**Implementation procedures and mechanisms:**

1. Amend electoral laws.
2. Issue independent lists that include the names of the members of the component to which the quota seats are allocated.
3. Allocate separate ballot boxes for each component, so that this component's members can cast their votes accordingly.

**Implementing entities:**

1. The Iraqi Parliament.
2. The Kurdistan Region of Iraq's Parliament.

**Available resources:** Specialized human cadres.

**Harms ensuing from these issues if they remain unaddressed:**

1. The feeling of injustice and grievance among minorities which will drive them to consider other options, the most dangerous of which is immigration which constitutes a national loss in every sense of the word.
2. Parliament's loss of real competencies from members of minorities.

**Results and benefits ensuing from the desired change:** A sense of fairness and true representation, and hence the improvement of the minorities' conditions at the general national level with the success of the experience of inclusive citizenship.

**Action plan:** Submit draft laws to amend both laws.

## 11. Tribalism and the state of law

Tribes are still an influential factor in Iraqi society, and represent one of the traditional and ancient societal structures in Iraq. Tribes' influence in society has recently grown by virtue of their roles in either supporting or providing an alternative to state institutions, even on security issues. Tribes, which reflect traditional bonds of solidarity, provide individuals with a minimal level of social security in contexts in which state authority, institutions, and services are weak.

The problem lies in the extended tribal trend and its expansion even to cities in a way that places tribes in a position of competition with the state and the law, which hinders the development of citizenship and undermines the authority of public authorities and the judiciary. Tribalism, due to its subordinate nature, also impedes the prosperity of citizenship and citizens' individual responsibility, the formation of mature public decisions, and the free and responsible exercise of citizens' rights and duties. In fact, when tribes protect citizens in light of the decline in the prestige of the law, the belonging of citizens to the state will weaken in favor of the tribe, and the power of tribal leaders will increase, with some of them even possessing armed tribal forces, in addition to the expansion of tribal authority at the expense of the legal, administrative and sovereign system. It also contributes to the spread of corruption at the political and administrative levels.

Tackling the issue of tribalism in Iraqi society needs calm, participatory and resolute treatments, ensuring the strengthening of state authority on the one hand, and the involvement of tribal members in this societal, cultural and citizenship path of change on the other hand. This should be done in a way that preserves the dignity of groups and their ties of solidarity, and promotes horizontal links between individuals and vertical links with the state and its institutions, under the rule of law, and the culture of citizenship and human rights.

## 11. Policy recommendation on tribalism and the state of law

**The dilemma:** The prevalence of tribalism at the expense of the legal, administrative, civil and sovereign system.

**Its scope:** All of Iraq.

**The desired change:** The rule of law and recourse to its provisions, applying them equally to everyone, and confronting the prevalence of tribal tendencies.

**Suggested solutions at the political level:**

1. Enact laws that limit the independent authority of tribes imposed by weapons outside the legitimacy of the state.
2. Finalize the disarming of tribes and prohibit the possession of weapons unless a license is granted and in specific cases.
3. Strictly apply legal provisions in this regard and mobilize the support of political forces to implement them, and criminalize the tribal revenge assaults (known as *deka*) according to Article 2 and 4 of the Anti-Terrorism Law of 2005.

**Suggested solutions at the social level:** Promote cultural, legal and civic awareness of tribes' members and leaders to develop a level of common national awareness.

**Implementation procedures and mechanisms:** The state implements a plan to promote respect of the legal, administrative, and civil order which would limit tribal authority in the interest of the state.

**Implementing entities:**

1. The Ministry of Interior.
2. The Supreme Judicial Council.

**Available resources:**

1. Staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Judiciary.
2. Civil society organizations.
3. Religious and educational institutions.

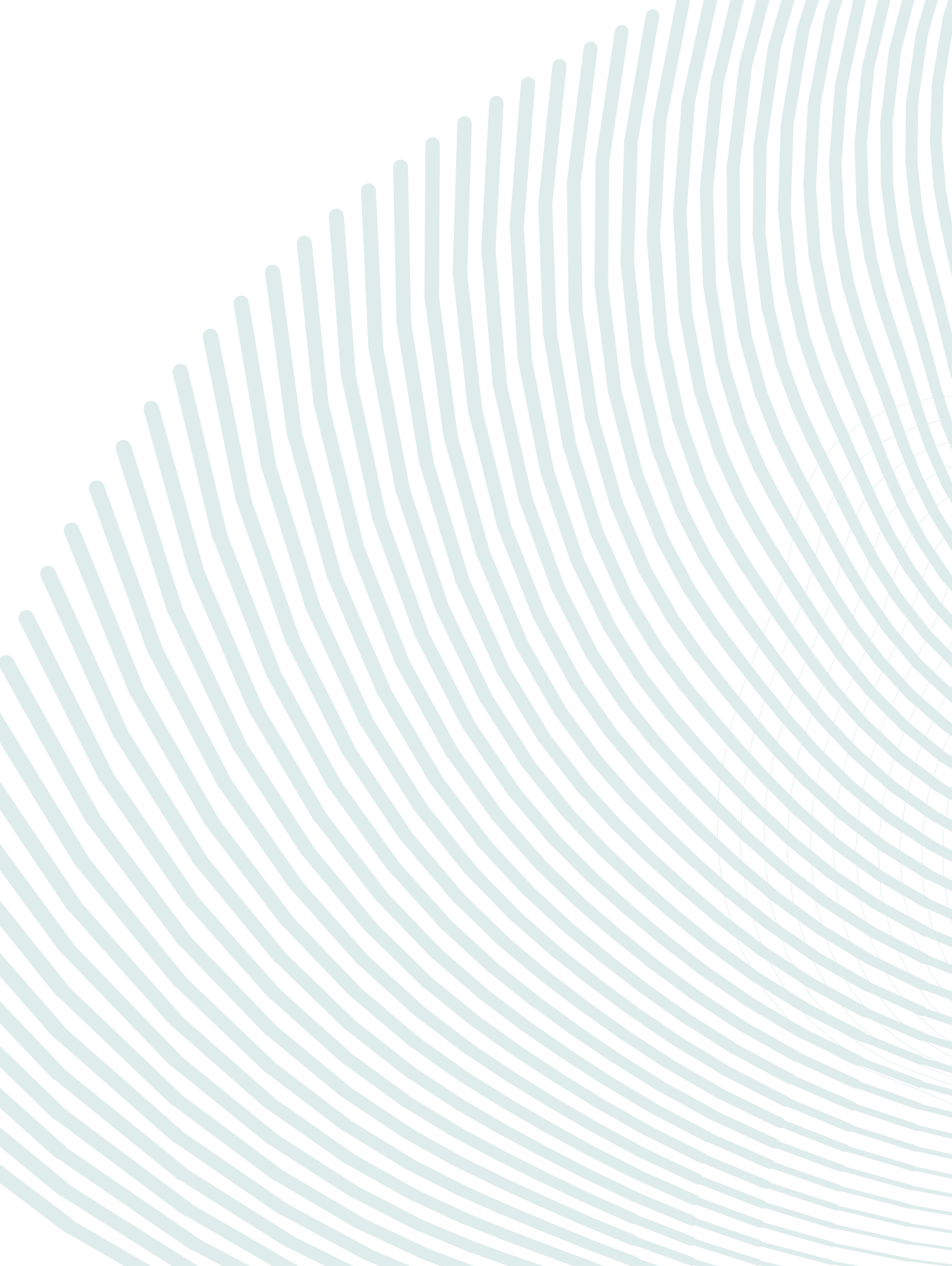
**Harms ensuing from these issues if they remain unaddressed:**

1. More chaos, instability, and local confrontations.
2. Violation of the rule of law and increasing violence.
3. Prevalence of tribal power and increasing hate speech.

**Results and benefits ensuing from the desired change:** More social, security and economic stability, and the legal and sovereign strengthening of the state system.

**Action plan:**

1. Difuse legal and societal awareness, through relevant state institutions and civil society organizations, by organizing workshops in this regard and having recourse to different kinds of media outlets.
2. Law enforcement.
3. Religious authorities contribute to reducing this phenomenon and rejecting hate speech, through sermons in mosques, hussainiyas, churches, fora, shrines and others.





## Section Three

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# Reconciliation and Transitional Justice

## 12. Reconciliation and memory healing

Iraqi society, which has suffered violence, conflicts and internal strife, needs to apply “transitional justice” that guarantees both accountability and reconciliation to properly close this chapter on its painful past, and pave the way to a true, comprehensive and sustainable peace. This has, however, become more complicated due to the abuse of the culture of compensation and rewards to the persecuted in a way that was marred by deficiencies reminiscent of previous persecutors’ deficiencies. In fact, several laws were issued, but their implementation was politicized, leading them to deviate from their goal, such as: The Property Disputes Act, the de-Baathification Law (later called the Accountability and Justice Act), the Political Prisoners Foundation Act, and the Martyrs Foundation Act.

The “victimhood (or grievance) discourse” also occupies an important part of societal dialogue among religious and ethnic minorities, and even among major components of society, which place the responsibility for injustice either on the shoulders of the pre-occupation era (Shiites - Kurds), the post-occupation era (Sunnis), or both (religious and ethnic minorities). That said, there are wise voices denouncing this discourse of victimhood have prevailed, in general, because going too far with such a discourse poses a danger to the society and traps it in the vicious circle of transforming the oppressed/victim into an executioner.

This requires efforts to uncover the fate of thousands of disappeared people after 2003, due to civil strife and sectarian violence, especially after the battles to liberate western provinces from ISIS. International human rights organizations talk about thousands of Iraqis who have disappeared without any evidence of their arrest, imprisonment, death, or life. Achieving transitional justice and reconciliation also requires revealing all of ISIS’ crimes and mass graves, liberating kidnapped women and children, and holding the perpetrators accountable.

Unfortunately, the transitional justice process should also look into the hundreds of dead and wounded who fell victims in the October 2019 revolutionary movement at the hands of the security forces or of armed outlaw groups. According to official statistics, 560 martyrs fell during protest movements, while civil organizations’ statistics show that the number of martyrs exceeded 700, in addition to 25,000 wounded, handicapped and kidnapped. This means that transitional justice must also include these victims, which has not been achieved so far, despite repeated government promises to bring the killers to justice.

Achieving transitional justice and societal reconciliation is an imperative to restore stability and build trust between the components of Iraq society. More than 95% of the displaced stress the need for reconciliation in Iraq, so that they can “live in peace with others,” underlining the importance of accountability, uncovering the truth and holding the perpetrators accountable<sup>35</sup>, with an emphasis on not punishing innocent people and groups as a whole for the wrongdoing of the perpetrators. Achieving sustainable reconciliation is also linked to political reforms and fighting poverty<sup>36</sup>. Reconciliation is therefore a priority and an entry point to rebuilding the nation and inclusive citizenship, on the basis of the purification of memory and coping, a culture of peace and community harmony, and the participation of all in national life.

35 See: *Never Forget: Views on Peace and Justice Within Conflict-Affected Communities in Northern Iraq* conducted by Harvard Humanitarian Initiative in partnership with the Public Policy Institute, Brigham and Women’s Hospital, and Mosul University, 2020, p.52.

36 Ibid p.52.

## 12. Policy recommendation on reconciliation and memory healing

**The dilemma:** The persistent discourse of grievance and the faltering project of national reconciliation.

**Its scope:** All of Iraq.

**The desired change:** Rebuilding trust among all Iraqis in order to rebuild the social fabric of Iraq, to achieve civil peace and political stability.

### **Suggested solutions at the political level:**

1. Accomplish an inclusive settlement away from unilateral concessions and the predominance of any party over others.
2. Adopt the equation of inclusive security with inclusive participation.
3. All parties accept concessions, even if they are painful.
4. Foster peaceful expression of disagreements away from violence as a means to achieve political settlements.
5. Complete files related to the achievement of justice and clarify the fate of missing persons.

### **Suggested solutions at the social level:**

1. Expand reconciliation dialogues from the elite level to involve all popular and cultural levels.
2. Develop educational curricula that benefit from similar international experiences.
3. Train educational cadres on these curricula.

### **Implementing entities:**

1. The Ministries of Interior, Justice, Migration and Displaced, and the Judicial Council.
2. The Higher Committee for Coexistence and Social Peace at the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers.
3. Sub-committees related to the main committee.
4. The Ministry of Education and Higher Education.
5. All relevant political, legal, administrative, civil, religious, etc., institutions.

### **Available resources:**

1. Allocate sufficient funds.
2. Provide specialized human resources so that reconciliation does not remain controlled by unskilled people.
3. Mobilize civic organizations and academic institutions.

### **Harms ensuing from these issues if they remain unaddressed:**

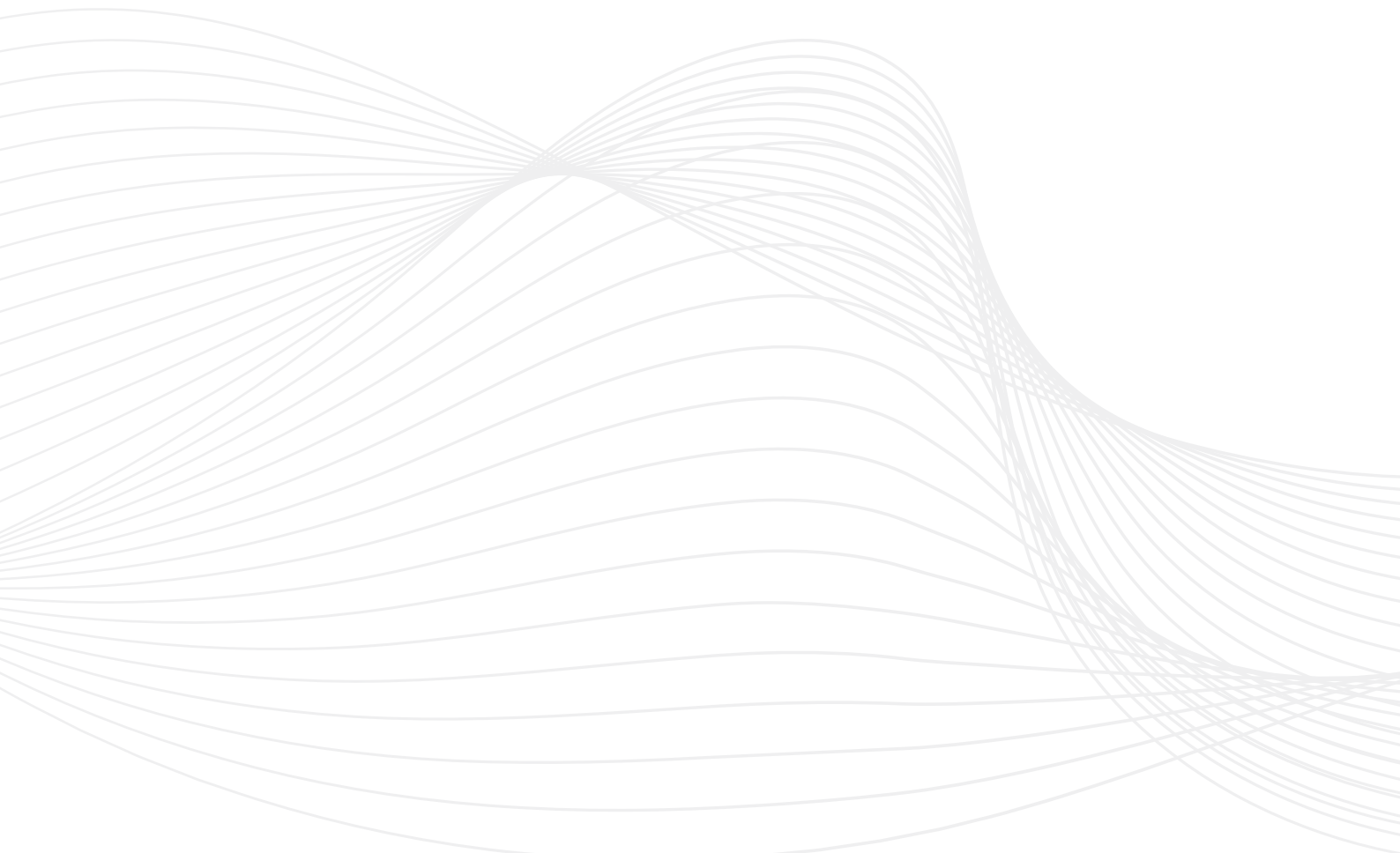
1. Security, economic and social deterioration.
2. Exposure of the state's entity and unity to danger.
3. Injustice to large sectors of the Iraqi people.

**Results and benefits ensuing from the desired change:**

1. Political, economic and social stability.
2. Protection of the Iraqi state from internal and external dangers.
3. Preservation of the diversity of the social fabric.
4. Prevention of the persecution and annihilation of different components.
5. Creative investment in the potential of Iraqis.
6. Economic prosperity as a result of trust among citizens of different affiliations and regions.

**Action plan:**

1. Submit recommendations and suggestions to the concerned authorities.
2. Monitor the implementation by specialized committees, the media, and society itself.
3. Set a timetable for implementing this track.



## 13. Migration and the brain drain

Hundreds of thousands of Iraqis were forced to leave their country under the authoritarian regime before 2003. After 2003, smaller components started experiencing a rapid migration similar to a drain threatening their existence, as the number of Christians in Iraq, for example, decreased from 1.5 million to about 350 000. A study conducted by the International Organization for Migration in Iraq in 2019 showed that this migration trend is persistent especially among minorities. 39% of Christians and 25% of Yazidis who returned home after suffering the hardships of displacement answered that they intend to move and settle abroad<sup>37</sup>. Lack of confidence in the state, poor economic conditions, and insecurity are the main drivers that continue to encourage Iraqis to emigrate.

Expatriates constitute an intellectual and scientific elite, and a human potential of which their homeland has been deprived. There is no doubt that the absence of infrastructure, security and educational guarantees, and material incentives does not help to encourage Iraqis living abroad to return, invest in the country, and contribute to its reconstruction.

The weak relationship and follow-up between members of the diplomatic missions and migrants, and the routine and security measures contributed as well to the weak desire of some Iraqis to return, in addition to the image reflected by some Iraqi diplomatic missions which constitutes an additional deterrent for these migrants. In fact, some of these missions are hardly able to provide even the slightest diplomatic services to Iraqis abroad.

There is, therefore, no clear policy for the expatriates to restore confidence between migrants and their motherland, and to benefit from the competencies of Iraqis present worldwide, which would constitute a leverage for the Iraqi economy. Instead of capitalizing on the experiences of millions of Iraqis abroad to rebuild the country, these were ignored altogether, which doubled their apprehension of returning, or even trying to invest in their home country.

<sup>37</sup> See: The International Organization for Migration in Iraq, Understanding Ethno-Religious Groups in Iraq: Displacement and Return, 2019, p.6.

## 13. Policy recommendation on migration and brain drain

**The dilemma:** The exacerbation of migration, especially among qualified people and members of minorities.

**Its scope:** All of Iraq.

**The desired change:**

1. Stop the ongoing drain of Iraqi potential and competencies to benefit from this enormous human capital.
2. Develop an expatriates' policy that contributes to reconnecting Iraqi residents and expatriates and stimulating the latter to invest in Iraq and support the country at all levels.

**Suggested solutions at the political level:**

1. Benefit from the experiences of urban residents within their regions and protect them from competition in the work sector.
2. Optimize the role of diplomatic missions in their interaction with the diaspora.
3. Facilitate the return of scientific competencies to Iraq.

**Suggested solutions at the social level:**

Spread the principle of equality, partnership and mutual recognition among members of Iraqi society, through dialogue and communication between people of different religious and cultural affiliations.

**Implementation procedures and mechanisms:**

1. Ensure civil peace and security throughout Iraq.
2. Protect the actual and symbolic existence of Iraqi minorities and criminalize hate speech whatever its origin.
3. Facilitate the return of scientific competencies to Iraq or promote communication with them to benefit from their experiences.
4. Encourage investment and create job opportunities.
5. Involve people from liberated areas in the reconstruction processes, providing them with job opportunities and promoting their eagerness to stay in Iraq and preserve their cities.
6. Implement more programs and activities that encourage peaceful living together.

**Implementing entities:** The three presidencies, all government institutions concerned with societal and economic security, and foreign and expatriate policy, civil society organizations, and religious endowments.

**Available resources:**

1. Committees in the relevant ministries.
2. Local stakeholders and groups.
3. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in coordination with its diplomatic missions.

**Harms ensuing from these issues if they remain unaddressed:**

1. The continuous loss of human capital with its demographic, cultural, economic and financial implications.
2. An increase in violence, as terrorism mostly attracts those who feel disgruntled because of the deterioration of their living conditions as a result of continuous displacement.

**Results and benefits ensuing from the desired change:**

1. Cultural and economic prosperity and the growth of human capital.
2. Protect Iraqi lives, material and symbolic properties.
3. Protect Iraqi cultural diversity which has infused Iraqi identity throughout history.

**Action plan:**

1. Communicate the report file to the proposed stakeholders.
2. Communicate with expatriates through cultural, academic and economic programs.
3. Follow up the work of the committees formed to reconstruct the liberated cities.
4. Develop government programs and activities and scientific academic curricula that nurture and encourage a culture of tolerance and mutual recognition.
5. Shed light on historical Iraqi symbols belonging to different subcultures, and name public places after them, within the framework of national and creative criteria.

## 14. Ending the suffering of the displaced and securing their return

Large numbers of Iraqis were subjected to internal displacement, while some resorted to migration after ISIS occupation, as more than 6 million Iraqis were displaced, most of whom returned to their homes after the liberation of their regions. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates the number of displaced people in Iraq at the end of 2019 at about 1.4 million, and expects this number to decrease to 1.1 million by the end of 2020<sup>38</sup>. This issue remains a major challenge on the political and social level. Therefore, Iraq needs a special plan to confront displacement and address its consequences, and to secure the voluntary and safe return of all the displaced to their regions, which will require the provision of security, safety, and infrastructure, reconstruction, and an achievement of justice and reconciliation. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in Iraq established- at the request of the Iraqi government – the Stabilization Project in June 2015 to protect against renewed violence and extremism, facilitate the return of the displaced, and lay the foundations for reconstruction and recovery.

Many IDPs are still unable to return to their regions which are still not ready for their return and are going through a dire and difficult economic situation, in addition to the poor performance of government entities in providing security, legal, economic and social guarantees for their return, and the collapse of public services. In a study conducted by the International Organization for Migration on groups that have suffered displacement because of ISIS, namely Turkmen Shia, Shabak Shia, Yazidis and Christians, the displaced said that security comes on top of the conditions for their return (91%), followed by the access to public services (73%), and feeling welcomed by other groups (37%)<sup>39</sup>. Another study confirmed these priorities, as the improvement of the security situation came to the fore, followed by the provision of job opportunities, and the fulfillment of basic services<sup>40</sup>.

Efforts to end the suffering of IDPs and secure their safe return cannot be dissociated from closing open wounds as a result of the events that led to their displacement, such as: investigating mass graves and ensuring a decent burial for the victims, working on the return of the kidnapped, especially Yazidi women, girls and children, and providing support for the survivors. In its report *Legacy of Terror: The Plight of Yazidi Child Survivors of ISIS*<sup>41</sup>, Amnesty International estimated the number of these children at about 2,000. These children, in fact, need special care, due to the many health and psychological problems they suffer from, in addition to language barriers, which makes the process of integrating them into their families and society, as well as their return to school difficult. It is worth noting as well that these children also face difficulties in obtaining new civil documents and identity cards.

The Yazidi Women Survivors bill, which defines crimes against Yazidis as genocide, introduces a number of important compensation measures for Yazidi women who have been captured by ISIS militants, including compensation, rehabilitation, medical treatment, and economic opportunities. Discussions are currently underway to expand the scope of the law, to cover all those affected by ISIS crimes.

It is imperative in this regard to warn of the continuing general discontent

38 Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Planning Summary 2020*, issued on November 28, 2019

39 See: The International Organization for Migration in Iraq, *Understanding Ethno-Religious Groups in Iraq: Displacement and Return*, 2019, p.6.

40 See: *Never Forget: Views on Peace and Justice Within Conflict-Affected Communities in Northern Iraq* conducted by Harvard Humanitarian Initiative in partnership with the Public Policy Institute, Brigham and Women's Hospital, and Mosul University, 2020, p.23.

41 See: Amnesty International, *Legacy of Terror: The Plight of Yazidi Child Survivors of ISIS*, 2020.

and frustration among IDP returnees and the deterioration of their conditions in some cases. 25% of the surveyed IDPs claimed that their income worsened after returning from displacement camps to their homes<sup>42</sup>. This reality increases people's outrage against the federal and local governments. Residents of the liberated cities have in fact resorted to demonstrations, as soon as the protests resumed in Baghdad, the Central Euphrates and the South. Almost all of their demands are overlapping and identical. The protests may aim to express people's positions, exposing the rampant corruption in local administrations and the current structure that favors the interests of parties and armed forces, and the waste of public money to serve partisan interests.

<sup>42</sup> See: The International Organization for Migration in Iraq, Understanding Ethno-Religious Groups in Iraq: Displacement and Return, 2019, p.6.

## 14. Policy recommendation on ending the suffering of the displaced and securing their return

**The dilemma:** The persistent suffering of the displaced and the security, economic, political and societal obstacles hindering their return to their regions which makes stability fragile.

**Its scope:** All of Iraq, namely the governorates of Anbar, Salah al-Din, Mosul, Baghdad, Diyala, Babylon and Kirkuk.

**The desired change:** Secure the return of the displaced families, reintegrate them into their local communities, alleviate their concerns and avoid demographic changes in our Iraqi cities that would undermine the pluralistic fabric of Iraqi society, in addition to completing the reconstruction, social rehabilitation and sustainable development projects in their regions.

### **Suggested solutions at the political level:**

1. Conclude a political agreement to return families to their regions and close IDPs centers.
2. Close the file of the regions that have been transformed into military zones, in order to secure the return of their citizens.
3. Conclude a political agreement to launch a sustainable development and social rehabilitation workshop in these areas.
4. Promote the role of local authorities, secure them resources from the central authority, and strengthen their relationship with local communities and provide them with services.

### **Suggested solutions at the social level:**

1. Establish rehabilitation centers for children and youth to promote their involvement in society and ease their tension.
2. Enroll dropouts in schools.
3. Spread social awareness in local communities that have been exposed to this phenomenon through the formation of a civil peace council that includes various societal and gender segments which focuses on citizenship and reconciliation.
4. Involve returnees in the reconstruction, social rehabilitation and sustainable development process.
5. Provide mental health services to the people of these affected areas.

### **Implementation procedures and mechanisms:**

1. Provide legal, security, economic and social guarantees for the return of people to their regions.
2. Provide resources for the restoration of security, reconstruction, and economic, social and psychological rehabilitation.
3. Achieve regional national reconciliations, and form regional committees to promote reconciliation between IDPs and people of their regions.

### **Implementing entities:**

1. The central government.
2. Local authorities.
3. The Iraqi judiciary.
4. The private sector.
5. Local, tribal and religious authorities.
6. Civil society organizations.
7. Concerned UN bodies and programs

**Available resources:**

1. Local and national leaders wishing to complete this file.
2. Local and international institutions, and United Nations programs related to IDPs.
3. Allocations from the central government.
4. Aid from the international community.

**Harms ensuing from these issues if they remain unaddressed:**

1. Demographic emptying of Iraqi regions and destroying the plurality of the societal fabric.
2. Neglecting the development of regions capable of providing a productive model in the Iraqi society.
3. Cultivating "hatred against society" in the hearts of new generations who have been denied of their rights.
4. Confirming ISIS success in demographic screening.

**Results and benefits ensuing from the desired change:**

1. End the pernicious impact of the ISIS occupation phase.
2. Effectively achieve the Iraqi-Iraqi reconciliation.
3. Re-create the pluralistic societal fabric.
4. Anchor people in their land.
5. Create a society in which citizens do not feel social or political exclusion in order to reduce violence and extremism and ensure social and political stability.

**Action plan:**

1. Form a national committee to follow up on this recommendation.
2. Accomplish a master plan for the return of people to their regions in consultation with the concerned parties, and provide resources for that return.
3. Entrust local authorities with the task of implementing the plan of return, reconstruction and development.

## 15. Return of the displaced perceived to be associated with ISIS

The displaced who are stigmatized as associated with ISIS (known as ISIS families) constitute a particular social and national problem that also needs urgent and fair treatment. These families, which are subject to isolation, stigmatization and even to abuse in some cases, live in harsh conditions, while children are deprived of education and decent living conditions, and have lost their official documents. Some local groups apply to them tribal social norms and traditions, which are considered equivalent to the state's judiciary, imposing collective judgments and punishments on any person, including women and children, whose family member is proven or suspected to be affiliated with ISIS.

These practices and conditions threaten to undermine the rule of law, opportunities to restore security and stability, and the path of transitional justice, and provide a fertile ground for the growth of extremism, with the formation of groups that do not have identification papers and feel marginalized by law and society. People of the regions from which these families were displaced, especially isolated regions close to the desert, are also afraid that their return will provide ISIS with a new opportunity to cooperate with them and attack the villages again. Others fear possible reprisals against the returnees, from the families of victims killed by ISIS. An unsuccessful return due to persistent stigma and social marginalization may lead to another displacement of these families, multiplying their fragility and isolation.

This issue, therefore, requires a special long-term treatment, based on the principle of rights and the rule of law on the one hand, and on cooperation between local groups and the interference of their traditional tribal and religious leaders on the other hand, to achieve reconciliations, turn the page on the past, and reintegrate these families into their environments with the help of local peace committees. The International Organization for Migration's report on this topic draws a roadmap for a successful return, consisting of seven points: obtaining a security clearance to make sure returnees are not involved in terrorism and violence; publicly disavowing ISIS; delivering compensation and reparation for families of ISIS victims in the concerned area; mediation between returnees and residents from local authorities; return and integration with the work of peace committees; raising awareness among returnees and the local community to reject the ideology of extremism; adopting a religious culture free from the ideas of takfir and terrorism; and, finally, continuous monitoring and resolution of conflicts that may arise in order to maintain community peace<sup>43</sup>.

<sup>43</sup> See: IOM Iraq, *Managing Return in Anbar: Community Responses to the Return of IDPs with Perceived Affiliation*, 2020, p.19.

## 15. Policy recommendation on the return of the displaced perceived to be associated with ISIS

**The dilemma:** The persistent marginalization and isolation of these families and their children, due to the absence of a general policy for their return and integration into the societal fabric.

**Its scope:** Areas liberated from ISIS.

**The desired change:** The return of the so-called ISIS families and their children to the Iraqi societal fabric after rehabilitating them and purifying their memories in a way that enhances the citizenship identity and reconciliation option, in the framework of a fair legal path.

### **Suggested solutions at the political level:**

1. A political agreement to end the isolation and marginalization of ISIS' families and children.
2. A legal path to prosecute perpetrators and bring justice to those who have been victims of deception, by submitting their files to the judiciary and clarifying their positions, so that innocent people regain their rights and restore their honor, and perpetrators are judged fairly.
3. Establish appropriate frameworks to deal with the legal status of these families' children.

### **Suggested solutions at the social level:**

1. Form a specialized committee to study the files of ISIS families on the social and legal levels.
2. Assign a religious committee to follow up on the issue of rectifying their misleading religious affiliation.
3. Form a regional committee of notables, politicians and clerics to achieve the integration of these families into society after their files are settled before the courts.
4. Develop rehabilitation programs to integrate these families and their children into society.

### **Implementation procedures and mechanisms:**

1. Prepare ISIS families' files that include all relevant information.
2. Achieve a transparent and fair investigation.
3. Launch a rehabilitation path and return to society.
4. Provide identification papers for the families' children.

### **Implementing entities:**

1. The central government.
2. The Kurdistan Regional Government.
3. Local authorities.
4. Religious authorities.
5. Civil society organizations.
6. United Nations program bodies.

### **Available resources:**

1. Educational and social capacities of religious authorities.
2. Civil society organizations' capacities.
3. United Nations bodies' capacities.

### **Harms ensuing from these issues if they remain unaddressed:**

1. The emergence of a marginalized group that is vulnerable to exploitation.
2. Disrupting the path of comprehensive societal reconciliation and transitional justice.

**Results and benefits ensuing from the desired change:**

1. Cutting off the road to widespread discrimination against religiously and socially misguided groups.
2. Draining the sources of terrorism and extremism and involving different components of the Iraqi society.
3. Securing an exemplary expression of a sound transitional justice.

**Action plan:**

Develop an integrated educational, legal, and religious public policy to rehabilitate ISIS families on the social level, and push for their reintegration into society and the proper performance of their citizenship.



## **Section Four**

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# **Inclusive and Sustainable Development**

## 16. Educational challenges and modernizing curricula

The education sector serves as a lever for societies, especially those that have suffered political, security, and development crises, such as the Iraqi society. Iraq, which had an educational system before the second Gulf War in 1991 that was considered to be one of the best in the region with an almost 0% illiteracy rate during the 1980s, is facing today a complete collapse of its educational institution. Illiteracy has begun rearing its head again, with a rate close to 20%. In fact, millions of children have been forced to leave school due to wars and conflicts and the education sector is suffering from chaos, and a serious shortage of resources and budget. There is in fact an increase in private schools for the primary and secondary education levels, while the performance of public schools is declining for structural and organizational reasons. Some public-school buildings are substandard and unsafe for students, in addition to the existence of mud primary schools in rural areas. In addition, there are triple-shifts in many schools, with more than fifty students per class in some places. On the other hand, most private schools are substandard in terms of their buildings with some of them situated in regular homes, surrounded by shops or residential neighborhoods.

In early 2013, the Iraqi government launched the National Strategy for Education and Higher Education (2012-2022), but no noticeable progress was perceived in this sector except for a few timid steps, which do not match the efforts and funds of institutions that participated in developing it, namely UNESCO, UNICEF, the World Bank, and the Ministries of Finance and Planning.

School curricula undoubtedly need to be modernized in light of the current needs, including dealing with the psychological, social and religious impacts of ISIS on children, and drawing the features of the new inclusive society of Iraq. The educational policy still suffers from arbitrariness, randomness, and a weak scientific will to correct the course of education in Iraq. It is imperative to continue looking at the issue of education in society as a whole.

## 16. Policy recommendation on educational challenges and modernizing curricula

**The dilemma:** Increasing illiteracy and breaking up of educational structures, with their educational, methodological, value and material elements and the absence of a future vision.

**Its scope:** All of Iraq.

### **The desired change:**

1. Eradicate illiteracy.
2. Reconstruct the value elements of the educational system.
3. Rehabilitate the infrastructure of all schools and educational institutions.

### **Suggested solutions at the political level:**

1. Keep the Ministry of Education out of the sectarian quota system, and choose the minister and the ministerial staff on the basis of competence and merit.
2. Apply again the compulsory and free education system.
3. Re-enhance the value of public education.
4. Rehabilitate the teaching staff.
5. Focus on vocational education to produce skilled technical cadres.
6. Enact laws prohibiting child labor.

### **Suggested solutions at the social level:**

1. Expand the scope of school activities to cover social spaces, link the family to school, and educate parents about this foundational link in the educational process.
2. Launch social initiatives to eradicate illiteracy.

### **Implementation procedures and mechanisms:**

1. The Ministry of Education develops an integrated recovery plan, in cooperation with experts and support sectors.
2. Secure the necessary resources to implement this plan and follow up on it.

### **Implementing entities:**

1. Presidency of the Republic, Presidency of the Council of Ministers and Presidency of the Parliament, for information and support.
2. The Ministry of Education, and other concerned ministries.
3. Civil society organizations.
4. United Nations bodies and programs.

### **Available resources:**

1. Laws and legislation issued by the relevant ministries.
2. Iraqi competencies and experts - which are abundant – to examine carefully the reasons behind the weakness and deterioration of the educational system.
3. A financial budget commensurate with the importance of education.

### **Harms ensuing from these issues if they remain unaddressed:**

1. Human, economic, value-related and cultural loss.
2. Additional burdens placed on the state and society, which may extend to wider ranges.
3. Backwardness and lost opportunities which makes it more difficult to bridge gaps in the future.
4. Exacerbated social problems for future generations.

**Results and benefits ensuing from the desired change:**

1. Form an enlightened society as education is the foundation of peace, prosperity and stability.
2. Provide human potential for the national labor market.
3. Promote education that helps with social mobility and improves individuals' economic position which enhances individuals' confidence in themselves and their country.
4. Encourage scientific planning which solves this dilemma and limits arbitrary waste of money.

**Action plan:**

1. Communicate with the aforementioned concerned authorities.
2. Follow up with the Ministry of Education and help it implement the proposal.
3. Promote social awareness of the importance of education, based on restoring confidence in education, as it is a way to build a better society.

## 17. Higher education and empowering youth to enter the labor market

Every year, new universities open in Iraq, most of which are private. In fact, Iraq today hosts today more than 66 private universities, in addition to more than 40 public universities. The goal behind establishing private universities is usually to enrich their owners in a country where the unemployment rate has reached very high levels, including masked unemployment with a large part of the unemployed being university and institute graduates.

Iraq lacks a guidance system for higher education that is based on accurate data related to future labor market needs. The need also arises to regulate the relationship between private colleges and the ministry on the scientific and administrative levels, in order to contribute to the achievement of a comprehensive national strategy, and to ensure the quality and outputs of education. Paradoxically for example, despite the large number of schools of medicine and pharmacy, Iraqi patients – whether affluent or less affluent – travel to other countries, such as India, Iran, Lebanon, Turkey, and Syria to receive healthcare services.

Preserving the quality of higher education is the primary guarantor for university graduates to enter the labor market and for Iraqi people to obtain professional and quality services. This is why we fear the adoption of new legislations that would undermine the controls that guarantee the quality of education, such as allowing holders of special degrees to enter postgraduate studies, with the doctoral degree lacking scientific control, and the progression in scientific ranks lacking academic limitations.

On the other hand, Iraq needs to revitalize local industries and agriculture, which requires competencies and skills that can be provided by specialized technical schools and institutes to which students are directed, rather than orienting all students towards academic or university studies. This cannot happen only through partial reforms similar to mending torn clothes. The problem needs in fact a scientific, realistic and responsible approach from the political system and all state institutions, based on field studies and accurate data, on evaluating and updating the current curricula, and on linking the higher education sector and its priorities to the market and private sector needs, without marginalizing human and social sciences that are the foundation of citizen building. Iraq also needs higher education to become a source and a catalyst for innovation, entrepreneurship, and liberation from the predominance of the logic of public employment as a way for young people to earn a living. This is about the country's economy and the fate of young generations.

## 17. Policy recommendation on higher education and empowering youth to enter the labor market

**The dilemma:** The deterioration of the level of higher education's quality, as opposed to the inefficient quantitative expansion in private colleges, at the expense of academic seriousness and educational level, without even meeting the requirements of the labor market.

**Its scope:** All of Iraq.

**The desired change:** Adopt professional effective standards to develop higher education, improve its quality, and link it to the labor market.

### **Suggested solutions at the political level:**

1. Protect the Ministry of Education from political interference and implement the planned reforms to ensure the quality of education.
2. Apply the legal, administrative and scientific system of higher education, in accordance with the government program 2018-2022, which recommended "enforcing and amending the ministries' laws or enacting new laws", in line with scientific and administrative developments and labor market requirements.
3. Private universities refer to the legal, administrative and scientific system of the Iraqi Ministry of Higher Education.
4. Apply the same admission criteria to private universities and faculties and to public universities.
5. Ensure the right to education for all Iraqis and provide resources to achieve this in practice.
6. Preserve the status of postgraduate programs (Masters and PhD)
7. Reinforce and promote scholarship programs.

### **Suggested solutions at the social level:**

Keep pace with reforms at the institutional level related to awareness-raising campaigns and orientation of students in choosing the appropriate specializations that prepare them to enter the labor market.

### **Implementation procedures and mechanisms:**

1. Set new standards related to the quality of outputs (students passing), the quality of the teaching staff, scholarships, and accreditation of foreign universities.
2. Set new instructions related to promotions and diplomas' equivalency.
3. Encourage and allocate financial support for research.

### **Implementing entities:**

1. The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in all its departments, especially the Department of Private Education.
2. The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in the Kurdistan Region.

### **Available resources:**

1. The budget of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in Baghdad and the Kurdistan Region.
2. Programs of international institutions related to higher education in Baghdad and the Kurdistan Region. Investments.

**Harms ensuing from these issues if they remain unaddressed:**

1. Increased deterioration of higher education.
2. Decline of Iraqi universities in world rankings.
3. Increased weakness in higher education outcomes.
4. Poor scientific research.
5. High unemployment rates and social tensions.

**Results and benefits ensuing from the desired change:**

1. The development of higher education outcomes through graduating competent students in all disciplines.
2. The progress of Iraqi universities in world rankings.
3. The development of teaching staff.
4. The development of scientific research in Iraq.
5. Securing a productive and active horizon for Iraqi youth.

**Action plan:**

Form an elected committee of advisors of the Iraqi Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, experts in various specializations from the ministry's departments, presidents of private universities, deans of private colleges, and founders of private universities and colleges in order to work on enacting new laws, developing new instructions based on the diagnosed problems, and implementing solutions.

## 18. Health and medical services

It is no secret that three decades ago the health system in Iraq was among the best in the Middle East thanks to the concentrated capital, free healthcare and hospitalization system, and reliance on the import of modern medical equipment and medicines. The health situation in Iraq under the economic blockade and after the fall of the previous regime declined sharply due to the great number of problems and obstacles that this sector faced.

It must be noted that the health system in Iraq is one of the sectors that Iraqi society desperately needs, in light of the difficult circumstances and waves of violence that Iraq has witnessed and is still witnessing. This need has multiplied in light of the Covid pandemic and its consequences on the nursing and medical staff that is responding to this pandemic in harsh conditions while many of them have lost their lives on the frontlines.

The deterioration in the level of medical equipment, the migration of expert medical personnel, and the decline in Iraqis' confidence in their health system have driven large number of citizens to travel abroad to obtain necessary medical treatments, while the most marginalized classes, which are unable to travel, remain unable to obtain their right to health and treatment. In addition to the right to direct healthcare, Iraqi society needs institutions capable of providing the necessary care to the large number of wounded and disabled people as a result of wars.

## 18. Policy recommendation on health and medical services

**The dilemma:** The deterioration of the health sector, the destruction of its institutions' infrastructures, and its inability to provide basic services to citizens.

**Its scope:** All of Iraq, especially in central and southern regions and in conflict areas.

**The desired change:** 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.

### **Suggested solutions at the political level:**

1. Increase the financial allocation for the health sector, in the federal health budget.
2. Update the legislations related to the development and provision of healthcare services, and address the gaps facing the provision of services.
3. Secure the return of and provide protection to specialized medical personnel and staff.
4. Establish a policy and action plan to develop the health system, increase the number of medical staff, and ensure the optimal use of resources (financial, human, infrastructure, IT, medications, and medical supplies).
5. Support the private health sector to ensure its integration with the public health sector in providing health services.
6. Look after the public health sector, and equip public hospitals with all supplies.
7. Increase, rehabilitate and equip health centers or mobile clinics in poor and conflict areas.
8. Reconsider the reality of colleges and institutes of public and private medical groups, especially those that lack specialized teaching staff.
9. Monitor the non-Iraqi medical personnel working in Iraq, in terms of checking their scientific competence and protecting their rights.

### **Suggested solutions at the social level:**

1. Conduct an awareness campaign on health practices and support mobile clinics in remote and rural areas.
2. Enhance effective community partnership and voluntary work with civil society organizations in implementing health and reproductive health awareness campaigns.

### **Implementation procedures and mechanisms:**

1. Support the public health sector, immediately improve the status of government hospitals, and increase their number and distribution in Iraqi cities and towns, in proportion to population density.
2. Monitor and check the safety of imported medications, and enact laws for holding negligent people and transgressors accountable.

**Implementing entities:** The federal government, the Ministry of Health, local governments, provincial health departments, and civil society organizations.

### **Available resources:**

1. Resources of the Ministry of Health from federal allocations.
2. Support health and reproductive health organizations.

**Harms ensuing from these issues if they remain unaddressed:**

The decline in sustainable development in all its aspects, and failure to achieve sustainable development goals due to the low level of individuals' general health.

**Results and benefits ensuing from the desired change:**

A physically, psychologically and socially healthy society, by improving quality primary health care packages and health services, in accordance with recognized standards.

**Action plan:**

1. The Ministry of Health and Environment studies the health service needs of the poor and conflict-affected areas.
2. Build, rehabilitate, and equip health centers or mobile clinics in poor and conflict areas.
3. Rationalize the salaries of physicians in the private sector.
4. Provide medicines and medical supplies.
5. Open training centers for midwives and medical personnel in governorates and remote villages.

## 19. Mental health

Mental health is an essential and integral part of health. According to the World Health Organization: “Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”. An important implication of this definition is that mental health is more than just the absence of mental disorders or disabilities, since mental health is a state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to his or her community<sup>44</sup>.

Some of the Iraqi people, who in recent decades have all witnessed multiple waves of wars and political and social crises, in addition to terrorism and displacement, undoubtedly suffer from traumas and various symptoms that affect their mental health. In this regard, it is of the utmost importance and urgency to pay special attention to children and women who have suffered wars and persecution, especially those who were kidnapped by ISIS. What exacerbates this situation are the stress and psychological disorders caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, due to restrictions imposed on movement and gatherings, loss of jobs, the death of relatives and loved ones, and anxiety about life’s difficulties. In fact, an increase in spousal and intimate partner violence and a rise in suicide rates have been reported.

Iraq, however, is suffering from a tragic shortage of psychiatrists and psychologists. While there are 9 mental health care workers for every 100,000 people at the global level, in Iraq this percentage drops to less than 2 per 100,000 people, a third of whom are non-professionals. This means that the country suffers from a severe shortage of psychiatrists and psychotherapists. Iraq’s spending on mental health does not exceed 2% of its health budget, knowing that for every dollar invested in promoting treatment for common disorders (such as depression and anxiety), there is a return of 5 dollars in improving health and productivity.

WHO is collaborating with the Iraqi government to provide mental and psychological health support services for the most vulnerable groups in society, consistent with Iraqi culture and based on evidence and societal values. In this task-sharing strategy, mental health care workers are trained and then coached as they deal with common mental disorders. Despite all these efforts, the majority of people still cannot easily access mental health services in Iraq. Therefore, developing a stable system of psychological support in a country where needs abound, where the number of cadres specialized in mental health is limited, and where patients suffer from stigma, will take time and effort, but it will be of vital importance to the mental health of Iraqis, and to the stability and prosperity of the entire Iraqi society.

<sup>44</sup> See: WHO Website, Mental health: strengthening our response.

<sup>45</sup> The Ministry of Environment was established according to Law No. 37/2008.

<sup>46</sup> Law for protection and improvement of Environment No (27) of 2009, Article (1).

<sup>47</sup> Refer to Law No (27) of 2009, Articles (3) and (4).

<sup>48</sup> Refer to Law No (27) of 2009, Article (7).

<sup>49</sup> See: Report of the Ministry of Environment on the state of the environment in Iraq, 2017.

## 19. Policy recommendation on mental health

**The dilemma:** The urgent and great need to take care of citizens' mental health, in light of the lack of resources and capacities.

**Its scope:** All of Iraq, especially areas liberated from ISIS.

**The desired change:** The presence of high-quality cadres and services capable of rapidly responding to people's needs in all parts of the country, with the aim of promoting mental health.

### **Suggested solutions at the political level:**

1. Establish partnerships with international organizations which provide mental health services, in cooperation with local specialists.
2. Develop academic specializations related to mental health in Iraqi universities.
3. Establish a comprehensive national program to promote mental health.

### **Suggested solutions at the social level:**

Raise awareness of the need to take care of mental health and get rid of the stigma associated with it.

### **Implementation procedures and mechanisms:**

1. Develop a Mental Health Commission in the Ministry of Health in order to design a comprehensive national program.
2. Launch the process of developing the degrees required in this field within Iraqi universities and encourage students to enroll in these programs.
3. Cooperate with international organizations, especially WHO, to intensify psychological response and support programs for citizens.

**Implementing entities:** The federal government, the Kurdistan Regional Government, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, the Order of Physicians, local governments, provincial health departments, international organizations, and civil society organizations.

### **Available resources:**

1. WHO mental health program in Iraq.
2. Iraqi cadres.

### **Harms ensuing from these issues if they remain unaddressed:**

The exacerbation of mental crises and the deterioration of many citizens' health, with the resulting imbalance in production and stability.

### **Results and benefits ensuing from the desired change:**

A physically, psychologically and socially healthy society, capable of overcoming crises and building a sound individual and collective future.

### **Action plan:**

1. A comprehensive study of the current needs and locally available resources, in addition to the possible international partnerships.
2. Establish a national response plan in all regions.
3. Establish the required academic programs to increase the number of workers in the sector in the medium term.

## 20. Protecting the environment and natural resources

Iraq is blessed with a rich and diverse nature from its northern mountains, to its view of the Gulf, to the desert, the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, which gave the ancient name of “Mesopotamia” to this region, in addition to its subsoil wealth, flora and other resources. However, Iraq has suffered great destruction of its natural environment, due to successive wars, and the pollution of the land and air resulting from the use of conventional and non-conventional weapons. Moreover, the absence of environmental protection policies, the weak management of waste of all kinds, and the culture associated with it exacerbate the crisis even more and make the required treatments more urgent, and the approaches more comprehensive.

In 2008, the Ministry of Environment was established<sup>45</sup>, and on 13/12/2009, the Law for the Protection and Improvement of the Environment was approved with the aim of “protecting and improving the environment through the elimination and treatment of existing damages or damages likely to be caused. It also aims at preserving public health, natural resources, biodiversity as well as natural and cultural heritage, in coordination with the relevant authorities in a manner that ensures sustainable development through international and regional cooperation in this regard”<sup>46</sup>. The law calls for the establishment of a Board for the protection and improvement of the Environment attached to the Ministry of Environment, consisting of representatives of 20 ministries concerned with this file, in addition to representatives of the Mayoralty of Baghdad and the Iraqi Radioactive Source Regulatory Authority<sup>47</sup>. The law also provides for the establishment of a local board for the protection and improvement of the environment in each governorate<sup>48</sup>.

Studies and reports in this area agree that treatments are becoming more urgent every day<sup>49</sup>. Acknowledging the tragic reality of the environment leads us to demand the rapid development of a comprehensive national plan, based on studies and a reliable scientific assessment of the environmental reality, and regional programs to preserve the integrity and sustainability of natural resources, in view of their impact on the economy, health, tourism and development in general.

## 20. Policy recommendation on protecting the environment and natural resources

**The dilemma:** The cumulative destruction of the natural environment, and the absence of rational and scientific policies to protect and improve it which had and still has catastrophic repercussions on Iraqis.

**Its scope:** All of Iraq.

**The desired change:** Protect and improve the environment by eliminating and remedying the damages caused, preserve public health, natural resources, and biological and natural diversity in cooperation with the competent authorities to ensure sustainable development, and promote national, regional and international cooperation in this field.

### **Suggested solutions at the political level:**

1. Implement Law No. 27 of 2009 issued by the Presidency Council, related to the protection and improvement of the environment.
2. Enact laws to reduce the use of chemicals and plastics.
3. Enact immediate laws prohibiting the conversion of agricultural areas into residential areas.
4. Ban the use of green spaces within cities for construction or commercial purposes.
5. Solve the problem of the contamination of drinking water.
6. Reform agricultural lands and rationalize the use of water for agricultural purposes using modern scientific methods, such as river-based irrigation channels and cleaning rivers.
7. Allocate time from the national curriculum for environmental awareness.
8. Benefit from foreign expertise in waste recycling.

### **Suggested solutions at the social level:**

1. Difuse social awareness of the importance of preserving environmental safety, and provide practical instructions to achieve this.
2. Reduce the use of plastic materials.
3. Involve the community - especially civil, public and educational institutions - in cleaning campaigns.

### **Implementation procedures and mechanisms:**

1. Educational media guidance and counseling.
2. Cooperation with the relevant ministries and institutions.
3. Promotion of the role of civil society organizations to protect the environment.

### **Implementing entities:**

1. The Ministry of Environment, the Ministry of Oil, the Ministry of Construction and Housing, and other relevant ministries.
2. The councils for environmental protection and improvement in the governorates.
3. Entities concerned with preserving natural and cultural heritage sites.

### **Available resources:**

1. Committees specialized in protecting and improving the environment.
2. Universities and educational and media institutions.
3. Financial allocations from the general budget.
4. Iraqi cadres trained and qualified for this task.
5. Civil society organizations.

**Harms ensuing from these issues if they remain unaddressed:**

1. The increase in diseases, especially deadly diseases resulting from the deliberate destruction of the Iraqi environment through the use of internationally prohibited materials during previous wars.
2. Internal displacement due to environmental factors.
3. Soil deformation due to the loss of its natural properties which negatively affects their productive efficiency.
4. An acute water crisis.
5. Global warming and climate imbalance.
6. Defacement of the natural landscape.

**Results and benefits ensuing from the desired change:**

1. Develop a healthy environment that helps create a healthy person.
2. Create a healthy relationship between human beings and the environment.
3. A green and sound environment with an economic yield.
4. Protect water from pollution.
5. Develop agriculture, reduce desertification, and intensively care for urban planning.

**Action plan:**

1. Achieve an integrated national environmental policy with a participatory methodology.
2. Submit periodic reports that cover the damage caused to the environment, and provide scientific instructions for restoring it, under the supervision of specialized scientific cadres.
3. Organize a comprehensive national campaign aimed at increasing environmental awareness, and diagnose the dangers resulting from a decline in awareness.
4. Follow up on the actual implementation of environmental programs.

# Annex 1

## Participants in the dialogue

Mr. Hoshiyar Abdullah (MP)	Dr. Qusay Al-Suhail (Minister)
Ms. Hanaa Adwar	Mr. Zaid Al-Talqani
Mr. Farhad Alaeddin (Advisor)	Sayed Zaid Bahr Al-Ulum
Ms. Haifa Al-Amin (MP)	Mr. Hadi Aziz Ali (Judge)
Dr. Diao Al-Asadi	Ms. Nadia Fadel
Sheikh Jihad Al-Asadi	Ms. Amal Faraj
Mr. Aref Kamel Al-Bahash	Dr. Abbas Kazem
(Late) Mr. Hisham Al-Hashimi	Mr. Saeb Khedr (MP)
Dr. Ali Hatem Al-Hassan	Mr. Mariwan Naqshbandi
Sheikh Anas Mahmoud Al-Issawi	Dr. Hassan Nazim (Minister)
Dr. Jaber Al-Jaberi (Advisor)	Dr. Faris Kamal Nazmy
Mr. Jamal Al-Jawaheri	Dr. Ali Hakim Saleh
Dr. Akeel Al-Khaqani	Dr. Saad Salloum
Dr. Luay Al-Khatib (Minister)	Ms. Ihan Talaat
Sheikh Abdul Wahab Al-Samarrai	Bishop Dr. Youssef Touma
Mr. Omar Al-Shahir	Dr. Mona Youkhanna Yako
Dr. Ali Al-Shukry (MP)	

# Annex 2

## Organizing institutions

### The Rashad Center for Cultural Governance

#### Adyan: Foundation for Diversity, Solidarity and Human dignity

Adyan is an independent non-political, non-profit organization based in Lebanon.

The Rashad Center is Adyan's department for policy-making, for consultancies given to private/public sectors and civil society organizations, and for managing dialogues that lead to good governance, diversity management and countering extremism.



#### This project was implemented in partnership with UNESCO chair for the Development of Inter-religious Dialogue Studies in the Islamic World at the University of Kufa

Aims to produce multi-disciplinary academic knowledge in humanitarian studies, especially those related to religions and inter-religious relations, and to encourage the culture of dialogue, peaceful coexistence and the respect for others' rights.



#### Iraqi Al-Amal Association

Aims for the rehabilitation of the Iraqi people, and for influencing the social consciousness towards achieving peace, human rights and sustainable development in Iraq.



#### Masarat for cultural and media development

Focuses on studying minorities, collective memory and inter-religious dialogues in the aim of enhancing cultural development in Iraq and in the Arab world.



#### This project was funded by

##### Act- Church of Sweden

Works for the dignity of all human beings and their rights without discrimination based on religion or ethnicity. The organization also aims to achieve sustainable development in collaboration with its partners.



This report is the result of a Track II dialogue that was conducted between Iraqi participants. Its content does not necessarily reflect the organizations that they belong to, and having their consent on this report does not mean that they adopt all its details and aspects. Additionally, this report does not necessarily reflect opinions of the Rashad Center nor the partnering/funding organizations.

**Project Director and report editor**

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