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Democracy • Education • Economy • Women

Regional Strategies for Empowering Women



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Cover Photo: Iraqi women attend a demonstration calling for women's rights, Iraq, Baghdad, February 2004.

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Introduction

Haleh Esfandiari, Director, Middle East Program

The December 2005 parliamentary elections were a landmark in the history of modern Iraq. Although the Council of Representatives was to convene by February 25, 2006 within fifteen days of its certification, the two hundred seventy-five men and women elected to parliament did not meet for the first time until March 16. Five months passed before parliament was able to appoint a president, nominate a prime minister, and form a cabinet.¹ Seventy women were elected to parliament and four women were nominated to the cabinet formed by Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki.^{2,3}

During the months of negotiations leading to the formation of Iraq's government, very few women were invited to participate in closed-door discussions. While these negotiations were taking place, the scope of the insurgency widened and the number of Iraqi civilians being killed increased. Despite daily violence, extortion, and kidnappings, women continue to participate actively in political, social, and non-governmental spheres.⁴ They have organized and conducted a number of meetings to discuss their future in the constitution, peacemaking, security, conflict resolution, and leadership positions.

In the upcoming months, parliamentarians and committees will be conducting analysis and compiling suggested revisions to a number of articles in the Iraqi constitution, which was ratified on October 15, 2005. Women need to take advantage of opportunities to encourage examination of and revisions to constitutional articles that determine personal status law and women's rights in Iraq. In particular, women parliamentarians are well-positioned to lobby on behalf of the goals and rights of their female constituencies. By playing an active role in drafting relevant legislation and monitoring the implementation of that legislation, women can achieve greater rights and recognition in the new Iraq.

The Middle East Program of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars ("Wilson Center") supports the efforts of Iraqi women by conducting workshops and public events that address issues of utmost importance to their increased rights. Most recently, the Middle East Program organized a series of three workshops held in Amman, Jordan and funded by the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) of the U.S. Department of State. Each workshop included participants from throughout the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, whose expertise has been integral to discussing regional methods for enhancing the social and political involvement of women. This publication outlines the proceedings of each of the following workshops.

"Strategizing Women's Role in Influencing Legislation" was held from December 2–5, 2005 in Amman, Jordan. This workshop explored how women in the Middle East and North Africa have worked and continue to work for increased rights within existing legal frameworks. Twenty-eight participants, panelists, and trainers from

eleven countries reviewed regional examples of women's empowerment and discussed methods for influencing legislation within the framework of existing constitutions, personal status laws, civil codes based on *shari'a*, and international conventions.⁵ The workshop also aimed to expose Iraqi women activists to lessons learned by women from the region, as they determine joint plans of action for influencing legislation that addresses women's rights in political, economic, legal, and social realms.

“Strategizing Approaches to Reforming Regional Family Law” was held from February 14–17, 2006 in Amman, Jordan. This workshop aimed to review and compare specific aspects of regional family laws and provided tools with which to approach progressive reforms. Because family law throughout the Middle East and North Africa is based on *shari'a*, the majority of the discussions dealt specifically with women's rights as they are mentioned in the *Quran*. Twenty-six participants from throughout the region discussed methods for expanding the political influence of women by looking at the examples of regional countries and analyzing the potential application of international conventions. Participants explored how reforms to family law can be used as a vehicle for encouraging increased female participation in the legislative process, and they worked to build regional networks that cooperate to facilitate greater women's rights.

“Building a New Iraq: Empowering Women to Negotiate for Change” was held from June 11–13, 2006 in Amman, Jordan. This workshop exposed fourteen participants to conflict resolution terminology and techniques, such that they can employ negotiation skills to encourage increased female participation in legislative processes and enhance the ability of women leaders to work together across sectarian and regional boundaries. The agenda was designed to provide participants with a common vocabulary and shared understanding of key conflict resolution and negotiation principles, as well as with the opportunity to engage in simulated negotiations. Specifically, inter-group and inter-coalition political case studies were highly relevant to practical challenges faced by the participants.

NOTES

1. Katzman, Kenneth. “Iraq: Elections, Government, and Constitution.” CRS Report for Congress. May 22, 2006. Page 5. www.house.gov/crs_reports/Iraq.pdf
2. Programme on Governance in the Arab Region (POGAR). United Nations Development Programme. Iraq Elections. www.pogar.org/countries/elections.asp?cid=6
3. Six women were appointed to cabinet positions in the previous government of Prime Minister al-Jaafari. Independent Women's Forum. Women Ministers in the Iraqi Government. www.iwf.org/iraq/iraq_detail.asp?ArticleID=624
4. On July 1, 2006, Tayseir Al Mishhadani, who participated in the Wilson Center's June 2006 workshop, was kidnapped by Iraqi gunmen in a Shi'a area of Baghdad. She was released in late August 2006.
5. *Shari'a* is canonical Islamic law drawn from the *Quran* and the *hadith*.

Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars Iraqi Women's Democracy Initiative

The Middle East Program and the former Conflict Prevention Project of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars established the Iraqi Women's Democracy Initiative in April 2003, to focus on the substantial role women can and should have in building a new Iraq.

The Initiative consists of workshops in the region, which aim to empower Iraqi women to involve themselves in all phases of reconstruction projects, peacebuilding, and election processes. International experts, trainers, and facilitators from Arabic-speaking countries have conducted trainings in leadership, networking, political activism, conflict resolution, and international conventions.

Since the fall of Saddam Hussein, over one hundred seventy Iraqi women have participated actively in workshops arranged by the Wilson Center and its partners. Attendees represent a balanced variety of ethnic, political, geographic, professional, and religious backgrounds. Workshops are designed as "trainings of trainers," with the intention that participants will return to Iraq and share their knowledge with other women activists.

The Middle East Program's workshops in the region have been made possible through funding from the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) and from the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) of the U.S. Department of State. All workshops held in Beirut, Lebanon were cosponsored by the Centre for Women at the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA).

Additionally, as part of the Initiative, the Middle East Program organizes public forums and private briefings to expose policymakers and the development communities to the achievements and priorities of Iraqi women. Events in Washington, DC are often cosponsored by the former Conflict Prevention Project (now the Project on Leadership and Building State Capacity), the Initiative for Inclusive Security, and the U.S. Department of State.

For more information on the Iraqi Women's Democracy Initiative and a full list of workshops conducted by the Middle East Program, please visit www.wilsoncenter.org/middleeast/workshops.



Participants and organizers of the June 2006 workshop "Building a New Iraq: Empowering Women to Negotiate for Change."

“Strategizing Women’s Role in Influencing Legislation” Amman, Jordan December 2–5, 2005

From December 2–5, 2005, the Middle East Program of the Wilson Center held the workshop, “Strategizing Women’s Role in Influencing Legislation” in Amman, Jordan. This workshop was funded by the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) of the U.S. Department of State.

Panelists and trainers were: Farida Bennani, Faculty of Law, Qadi Ayad University, Marrakech, Morocco; Mary Ann Forbes, East Africa Regional Representative, Solidarity Center, Nairobi, Kenya; Afaf Marei, Director of the Egyptian Association for Community Participation Enhancement (EACPE); Valentine Moghadam, Chief of the Gender Equality and Development Section, Social and Human Sciences Sector, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); and Fatima Sbaity Kassem, Former Director, Centre for Women, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), Beirut, Lebanon.

The workshop explored how women in the Middle East and North Africa have worked and continue to work for increased rights within existing legal frameworks. Using regional case studies as examples, participants discussed methods for expanding the political and economic influence of women. The workshop also served to expose Iraqi women activists to the experiences of other women in the region who have been striving to influence legislation within existing constitutions, personal status laws, civil codes based on *shari’a*, and international conventions.

Twenty-eight women with backgrounds ranging from members of parliament, to political activists, to university professors, to private sector managers, to international and non-governmental organization staff, represented eleven countries: Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia, United States, and Yemen.

CASE STUDIES IN POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Fatima Sbaity Kassem identified recent accomplishments for women’s rights in the Middle East and North Africa, such as the implementation of quotas and the higher occurrence of women in political positions. She said that throughout the region, there is a qualitative difference in attitudes between today and ten years ago, when preparation for the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing was just beginning. The participation of women in MENA region governments has shifted from three percent to seven percent, partly due to the case of Iraq, which enforces a twenty-five percent quota for women in parliament. Sbaity Kassem indicated that it is critical to maintain a holistic, comprehensive approach according to the realities of each country.

Iraq

Zainab Al-Suwaij spoke about Iraqi women's efforts to work with the Interim Governing Council (IGC) in securing a twenty-five percent quota for seats in the parliament. She acknowledged that at times, women who did not actually represent the voice of equality were chosen to fill the seats, and that sometimes men advocate for women's empowerment more than women themselves. Some policymakers and activists believe that quotas confine women. Others argue that women have a greater chance to be part of the political decision-making processes in Iraq as a result of the quota being mentioned in the constitution. Al-Suwaij recommended that women lead education campaigns in Iraq regarding the issues of quotas and political participation.



Huda Ahmed and Israa Salim discuss the role of women in the Iraqi Parliament.

Mechanisms for Increasing Political Participation

Participants worked in small groups to discuss the following mechanisms for increasing the political participation of women throughout the Middle East and North Africa.

1. Open discussion between local, national, regional, and international activists, as well as between NGOs and political parties—through coalitions, networking, and training to encourage the exchange of experiences and the formation of mutual treaties.
2. Build the capacity of women to enroll in political parties, and increase the capabilities of women who are currently enrolled in political bodies. Advocate for the role of women supporting and voting for other women. Raise awareness about the necessity of registering for elections.
3. Women should participate in making legislation and in making amendments to legislation. MENA region constitutions that do not champion equality for women should be revised.
4. Train women in negotiation tactics, and ensure their participation in drafting constitutions and monitoring the implementation of legal stipulations.
5. Encourage women's communication with supporters and constituents, to build a critical mass to discuss sensitive subjects about women's issues and put pressure on the government. Form pressure groups and institutions to influence decision-makers.
6. Conduct a comparative study of quota systems and best practices, and train women in the facilitation of the quota systems.
7. Use media to clarify the importance of women's economic, political, and social equality. Integrate women's platforms into the political campaigns of both men and women candidates.

Kuwait

Rola Dashti testified that Kuwaiti women won the right to vote on May 16, 2005, after a continuous struggle of forty years. In order for women to succeed in future elections in Kuwait, religious moderates need to communicate the message that it is acceptable for women to vote and run for office. Women who are involved in religious activities can be a mechanism for change, and religiously enlightened men should cooperate in fighting for women's rights. Dashti noted that women's associations should reinforce their connections to the government, because the marginalization of women is explicitly related to their lack of political participation.

Yemen

Radya Shamsher Wajid Ali commented that a comparative analysis of the status of Yemeni women should consider conditions both before and after the unification of the country's north and south regions, which occurred formally on May 22, 1990. Local government participation was thirteen percent in 1976, and before unification, women held positions as cabinet members and deputy minister. After unification, forty-one women were nominated in the first election. In 1997, the second election after the unification reduced the number of women nominees to eleven. In 2003, only one woman was a candidate. Ali observed that the media played an important role in this decrease, because it constantly broadcasted and focused on men's platforms.

EMERGENCE OF PERSONAL STATUS LAWS

Egypt

Hoda Awad provided a historical context of the women's movement in Egypt, beginning with activist Hoda Sharawi, who first chose not to wear the veil in the 1940s. Sharawi found support within the Egyptian government, and she worked toward legislation to prevent polygamy and divorce and make some schools co-educational. Awad explained that subsequently, President Jamal Abdul Nasser reduced the involvement of society in lawmaking and marginalized religious institutions, making *shari'a* one of multiple sources of legislation. Nasser encouraged women to keep their homes after divorce, maintain custody of their children, and receive subsidies from their husbands. He also gave women the right to be candidates and to vote in elections.

Awad noted that during Anwar Sadat's term of office, the permanent constitution was established and preserved the status of Egyptian women and the rights they had acquired under Nasser's leadership. Awad observed that since the 1970s, there has been a retreat in the numbers of women's participation in the Egyptian political system. First Lady Jehan Sadat interfered in 1978 to create a quota system, such that women would be present in all election councils and committees. This quota system was eliminated in 1986.

Iraq

Zakia Hakki recalled the struggles of the Iraqi women's movement in relation to the personal status law, which was issued in 1958 and remains active today. The aim

of the legislators who created the original law was to protect the independence of family and community. Hakki stated that after the personal status law was issued, seventeen amendments were made to its ninety-four articles—to account for different sects and laws relating to foreigners.

Now, after thirty dark years, Iraqi women are working to keep and create laws in their favor. Women's organizations participate in a network to pressure those in power to achieve democracy, and to work toward increased rights for women and children. Hakki explained that citizens should not consider family law holy and sacred, and therefore unalterable. Instead, they should use pressure to achieve collective goals and secure rights. The women who will be elected to the National Assembly, as well as women outside the parliament, will be integral to these efforts.

Narrowing the Gap between Legislation and Implementation

Farida Bennani provided a framework for activists to overcome discrimination in the law and provide a unified plan for women's full equity and citizenship. Participants aimed to determine how to use the successful experiences of other women in the region to create strategies for their own societies.

1. Collaborate with international organizations to **pressure regional governments** to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and to do so without any reservations.
2. **Resolve the conflict between modern ideology and paternalistic social structures** regarding women, in order to raise the confidence of women and expectations for their achievements.
3. **Benefit from the experiences of women's movements throughout the region** by utilizing media; creating networking alliances; opening dialogue with the clerical community; and establishing awareness campaigns through advocacy and training.
4. **Promote partnership** between women and civil society, as well as between women and governments. Reduce the chasm between the experiences and knowledge of urban and rural women, and promote integration between the two groups.
5. **Unify the multiplicity of legal references** to ensure appropriate amendments in favor of women's rights and to eliminate any pockets of discrimination in existing legislation.
6. **Create panels of legislative experts**, comprised of both women and men, to monitor legislation and amendments pertinent to women.
7. **Appoint female judges** to preside over personal status cases and make decisions in family courts dealing with family issues.
8. **Promote scientific research** to differentiate between conceptualizations of the family as a social unit and the rights of individuals within the family, so that governmental policies that support families remain compatible with the rights of individuals in the family.
9. Ensure the sustainability of women's movements by **educating young people** about existing economic opportunities, civil rights, and issues of poverty, corruption, and unemployment.

Morocco

Farida Bennani explained that the current synergy between Islamic laws and modernity in Morocco can be attributed to the unification of Moroccan women who worked for bold family law reforms that eventually took place within an Islamic framework. In describing the Moroccan struggle for women's rights, she noted that women's associations were sovereign from other political parties. This creation of a perspective separate from the political party platforms mobilized women independently of government structures, and they adopted a unified goal and course of action to reform the 1957 family law.

Despite many dead ends, including a near fatal blow in the form of a *fatwa* advising against amending personal status laws for fear of death, the Moroccan women's movement continued and shifted from a "proposing power" to a "pressuring power."¹ Bennani described the "One Million Signature Campaign," which consisted of soliciting communities to sign a petition for increased women's rights. With the support of the king, who interfered after a multitude of intense demonstrations and activities by women's organizations, the government formed committees to study possible reform and halted suppression of women. As a result, the "sacred aura" of the original family law was broken, and amendments began.

ORIGINS OF INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS

Fatima Sbaity Kassem provided an overview of the international conventions related to women, with a focus on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). She observed that CEDAW has improved the situation of women by promoting institutional development, helping to place women in political positions, and demanding that United Nations Member States establish local bodies and mechanisms to manage women's issues rather than merely prepare reports on various challenges.

Seventeen of twenty-two Arab League member states have signed CEDAW, although not all of those countries have ratified the convention. Many countries that have ratified CEDAW have put reservations on various articles, such as those barring constitutional discrimination against women and those related to nationality. Sbaity Kassem concluded that the main impediments to the ratification of CEDAW and to women's empowerment in the MENA region are lack of political will, poverty, and legislation.

Lilia Labidi addressed the question of whether or not international conventions could be fully implemented in the Middle East and North Africa. She traced concepts about human rights and women's rights to earlier Muslim scholars, citing Muhammad al-Farabi, Ibn Khaldun, and Jamal al-Din al-Afghani as inspirations for enlightenment, modernity, and Western ideals. Additionally, Egyptian activist Hoda Sharawi addressed the question of human rights in the MENA region long before the United Nations formalized its charter. Labidi argued that the issue, therefore, is not introducing such concepts to the region, but restoring them.

Labidi recommended that women in the MENA region formulate and champion norms regarding human rights and women's rights. Moreover, the push for implementation of such standards should not be limited to Muslims and the MENA region. Women must campaign actively on an international scale, and they should widen the scope of their efforts beyond just women's rights—to include, for example, conflict resolution and universal human rights. Labidi said that by becoming active in a broad context and accepting change in stages, women in the Middle East and North Africa can win the rights stipulated by international conventions.

Valentine Moghadam discussed United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, which was passed after an October 2000 special session on women in armed conflicts. Among the key goals of Resolution 1325 are protecting women from gender-based violence; supporting grassroots organizations in informal peace initiatives; integrating gender perspectives in peacekeeping missions, and the demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration of former combatants; and appointing more women as special representatives and envoys of the United Nations Secretary-General. As well, Resolution 1325 stipulates that women be included in peacekeeping negotiations and settlements, and reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflict.

Moghadam reflected that when women have experienced human rights violations on a massive scale, they are often subject to a prevalent culture of hegemonic masculinity, and they are neither represented nor involved adequately in peace initiatives. Focusing on media campaigns run by women to create gender awareness and sensitivity, and promoting women's involvement in cultural and governmental institutions will lead to a "culture of peace" that includes human rights and full empowerment of women.

International, regional, and national organizations are attempting to reduce the gap between the substance of Resolution 1325 and its implementation through networking; consultations; collaborative work with women peace activists and feminist scholars of international relations; dissemination of research findings to policymakers; and institutional capacity building for women. In addition, Moghadam recommended establishing women's units across government sectors and providing for a strong ministry of women's affairs in post-conflict governments.

FOSTERING ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Valentine Moghadam described that international conventions, standards, and norms complement national labor laws, but that national labor laws often do not



Najia Chraibi petitions for her rights during the December 2005 workshop, with signs reading "No to discrimination" and "I want a law that protects my rights as a woman."

reflect international conventions and core labor standards. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) is highly relevant to the MENA region—in particular, to women’s rights to freely choose jobs, and to women’s protection against exploitation. As well, the Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers (1990) pertains to the region, where there is much migration by Arabs and non-Arabs who lack rights and are not entitled to the provisions of national labor laws.

International Labor Organization (ILO) conventions are grouped under four major issues: freedom of association; prohibition of forced labor; action against child labor; and preservation of equality and non-discrimination. In particular, many MENA region states have not signed freedom of association conventions. Additionally, while labor laws generally apply to workers in the formal sector, much of the region’s workforce is engaged in informal or irregular employment, and thus does not have access to social insurance. Finally, Moghadam identified the region’s lack of independent trade unions as a particular challenge to economic empowerment.

Women’s Economic Advancement

Participants worked in small groups to discuss various catalysts for and challenges to economic empowerment for women at national and regional levels.

Enablers

- Access to formal sector employment and decent salaries
- Access to self-employment; women-owned businesses
- Proliferation of NGOs that provide employment and deliver services to women
- Involvement in progressive, women-friendly trade unions
- Economic and social state policies to address development, worker rights, poverty
- Role of the women’s movement in altering organizations’ approaches to socio-economic conditions and rights

Impediments

- Violation of equal opportunity
- Discrimination in recruitment and promotion policies
- Limited access to training and capacity building
- Sexual harassment
- Wage inequality
- Inadequate inheritance rights for land ownership
- Lack of social security benefits
- Failure to calculate local capital
- Lack of services for working women, such as daycare for children
- Lack of safety networks to support unemployed women

Mary Ann Forbes noted that the global problem of women being undervalued could be addressed through improving women's ability to reach their potentials. Legislation needs to protect women's access to money, and microfinance is critical to creating stable sources of income. Forbes observed that laws are the great equalizers in the workplace, and international labor standards should be utilized to harmonize labor laws with core standards of international conventions. Labor standards establish a model for workplace policies, and poor labor standards result in flawed workplace policies. In order to achieve economic empowerment, women must overcome the femininity of poverty. The political will for change exists, and the media can be a useful tool in advocating for these changes.



Workshop participants consider the components required for successful conflict resolution.

NEGOTIATION SKILLS AND MESSAGING

Afaf Marei led a discussion about the pillars of successful negotiation. Participants determined that negotiations cannot yield productive results unless all parties involved are committed to defining problems, objectives, and priorities; identifying weaknesses and strengths of each party; establishing a vision for solution; and determining alternatives to that solution.

Participants worked in groups to consider various topics that affect women in Iraq, such as the quota system, personal status laws, and economic empowerment. Groups explored how they and their counterparts might view the issues, the objectives of opposing parties, and useful strategies for reaching solutions. Marei provided analysis on each group's assessment of tactics, strategies, positions, interests, minimum acceptable solutions, and maximum goals for resolution.

Participants developed practical suggestions for improved performance in reaching solutions during negotiations. Teams should create and sustain a homogenous approach through the use of diplomatic tone and language, and various roles in the team should be established and distributed in advance of the negotiation. Negotiations should take place in a neutral environment to encourage collaboration rather than adversarial discussions. Finally, while each team should have an ideal solution in mind, its members should also be prepared to reach a common resolution.

NOTES

1. *Fatwa* is a legal pronouncement prepared by a specialist in Islamic law, usually regarding a particular issue about which *fiqh* is unclear.

“Strategizing Approaches to Reforming Regional Family Law”

Amman, Jordan

February 14–17, 2006

From February 14–17, 2006, the Middle East Program of the Wilson Center held the workshop, “Strategizing Approaches to Reforming Regional Family Law” in Amman, Jordan. This workshop was funded by the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) of the U.S. Department of State.

Panelists and trainers were: Farida Bennani, Faculty of Law, Qadi Ayad University, Marrakech, Morocco; and Fatima Sbaity Kassem, Former Director, Centre for Women, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), Beirut, Lebanon.

The workshop focused on theoretical and practical diagnoses of the situation of family law for women in the region, and on how to approach progressive reforms to modify and change existing personal status laws within the framework of *shari’a*. Training sessions provided participants with information about comparative family laws and grassroots women’s movements in the region. Participants discussed international conventions that can be used as tools to justify reform campaigns.

Twenty-six women, representing Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen, exchanged information on how to strengthen capacity and confidence in determining the future of women’s political, economic, legal, and social status. As this workshop was held shortly after the election of a new National Assembly in Iraq, and shortly before the announcement of the remaining governmental ministerial posts, Iraqi participants became further prepared to recommend alterations to personal status laws that had been approved in the constitutional referendum of October 2005.



Hamdiya Najaf helps to draft an action plan for reforming personal status law during the February 2006 workshop.

REGIONAL CASE STUDIES IN FAMILY LAW

Bahrain

Wajeeha Sadiq Al-Baharna commented that since 1980, despite counter-demonstrations by clerics, Bahraini women have joined together to present their claims before courts and begin awareness campaigns for women. In 2003, a committee formed and worked for fourteen months with clerics from Sunni and Shi’a sects to draft a new family law. In 2005, a national council of women campaigned for the family law on the platform that “a safe nation equals a safe family.” Women have sought constitutional guarantees and submitted drafts of revised personal status laws to the royal

court and to Sunni and Shi'a leaders. Yet, because Islam is the ultimate source of legislation in Bahrain, the women's movement is characterized as a betrayal of religion, and the activities of women's committees are subject to pressure from the government.

Iran

Haleh Esfandiari noted that the personal status law was previously called the "family protection law" in pre-revolution Iran. The statutes of the family protection law were approved by the religious Shi'a leaders in Najaf in 1967, modified and improved in 1973, and then suspended in 1979 after the Islamic Republic came to power. Before the revolution, divorce could be pursued both by women and men. Child custody was decided in courts, and because women were judges at that time, many decisions were equitable. The marriage age for girls was eighteen.

Subsequent to the Iranian Revolution, the family protection law was discussed in a "special family court," and today, cases are brought before the "family court." Family court exists in Iran alongside the penal court, civil court, cleric court, and revolutionary court. The judges who make rulings in family court cases are men. Over the last three decades, some of the articles of the original family protection law have been adopted with modifications. For instance, twenty-seven years after the Iranian Revolution, the age of marriage has now been raised from nine to thirteen.

Iraq

Zainab Al-Suwajj indicated that Iraq's Personal Status Law of 1959 was progressive for its time. The law included some stipulations that might be considered discriminatory toward women. For example, Article 3 allowed polygamy as long as the husband could provide financially for his wives. Article 17 allowed for a Muslim man to marry a non-Muslim woman, but prohibited a Muslim woman from marrying a non-Muslim man.

Even so, by the regional standards of 1959, Iraq's Personal Status Law provided for women's needs through other measures. For instance, Article 24 required that men who do not spend money on or give money to their wives must reimburse them for maintenance fees within one year. Article 33 indicated that wives must be obedient to their husbands, except regarding matters that are contradictory to the *shari'a*. Article 40 gave women the right to initiate divorce from their husbands in certain circumstances.

In 2003, religious men who claimed that the Personal Status Law of 1959 contradicts Islamic principles decided to annul the statutes in favor of referring personal status law to *shari'a*. Al-Suwajj described Resolution 137, which was presented in December 2003 and sought to overturn the Personal Status Law of 1959. Under Resolution 137, existing inheritance rights would have been annulled. The age of marriage as set at eighteen years for women would have been reduced. Resolution 137 was discussed and protested by women activists and ultimately rejected, but its ghost remains.

Al-Suwajj said that elections open up space for change, and the Constitutional Drafting Committee has established women and men as equal under the new constitution. The constitution also establishes that nationality can now be passed to children through their mother, which is particularly relevant for minorities in Iraq. Any modifications to constitutional articles should recreate personal status law in a way

that is applicable to all women. Farida Bennani suggested that it would be productive for women’s organizations to have a roundtable discussion about the Iraqi constitution, to include parliamentarians and legal experts who can highlight hidden dangers of the text.

Jordan

May Abu Al-Samen highlighted various elements of Jordan’s personal status law, which she identified as the most important statute in her country. Provisions for childcare are exceptional in Jordan. Maternity leave is activated for the period of three months, and daycare centers have been established within the private sector. Debate ensues about the custody of children in the case of divorce.

Regarding marriage age, Al-Samen noted that the law considers an individual a minor until the age of eighteen. Yet judges are allowed to make exceptions because some women reach puberty earlier than others. A man is permitted to marry a woman who has become pregnant through extramarital means. The possibility of a second marriage is still available, provided that both wives are informed and consent in advance.

Jordan’s personal status law stipulates that reasons for divorce need to be clear and measurable, such as insanity, abuse, or absence on the part of the husband. In such cases, a woman must wait three months to determine whether or not she can live peacefully with her husband. In the event of divorce, men are required to provide maintenance fees to their former wives for a minimum of three years. A woman also has the right to become the head of household in the event that her husband dies.

Lebanon

Fatima Sbaity Kassem explained that the personal status law in Lebanon is referred to as confessional law. Each of the eighteen ethnic and religious groups in Lebanon ascribe to their own beliefs and standards, the diversity of which happens to be at the root of Lebanon’s unwillingness to ratify international conventions such as CEDAW. She argued that many women do not understand Islamic jurisprudence and cannot protect their rights accordingly.

Sbaity Kassem emphasized that in Lebanon, citizenship determinations are judged strictly through male family lines. Previously, when a Lebanese woman married a non-Lebanese man, she lost her citizenship. Citizenship has been granted to children through their mothers in Tunisia, Egypt, and to an extent, in Iraq. Yet, there is still discrimination between women who are Lebanese by birth and those who are Lebanese by passport.

Morocco

Farida Bennani said that Moroccan women have worked through many of the same experiences as other women in the region. However, they have not typically been subject to slipping backwards along the way. Ultimately, she attributed the success of Moroccan women to their unified cause and qualified knowledge in the area of religion. These factors increased the capacity of the movement and ensured that women would not find themselves incapable of answering challenging questions about their demands.

Morocco's personal status law was first issued in 1957, based on Islamic jurisprudence. The Democratic Women's Movement began in earnest in Morocco during the 1980s. As the number of working and educated women increased, women asserted that the laws were characterized by unfairness and did not determine the situation of women productively. Demonstrations, petition campaigns, and attempts to rally the government, king, and parliament took place. As well, councils and committees to review the situation of Moroccan women were developed.

In 1993, despite rampant opposition, the sacred aura surrounding Morocco's personal status law was removed. Now, more than ten years later, Morocco has moved from amendment to ratified changes. In 2004, "personal status law" was referred to thereafter as "family law," to reflect the reality that men, women, and children are affected by the statutes therein. The questioning of personal status law in Morocco has also sparked similar movements and liberalism throughout the MENA region.

The current family law in Morocco intends to recognize women's rights according to local and national realities, preserve the dignity of mankind, and preserve children's rights. Women who have reached maturity can now be married without a sponsor, or they can establish their own sponsor. The obedience principle has been removed from the family law. Women are now able to include a condition against polygamy in their marriage contracts. Divorce is no longer in the hands of the husband, but in the hands of the judge. Women and men can seek a divorce for reasons aside from a conflict in the marriage. In cases of adultery, when privacy is at stake, judges are required to make verdicts within six months. In cases of divorce, fifty percent of available property should be given to each spouse. Finally, inheritance rights are equal for male and female children.

United Arab Emirates

Ebtisam Al-Kitbi reported that in the constitution of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), discrimination between men and women does not exist. Yet, this equality is not always recognized in practice, especially because many judges presiding over cases in the UAE are from Saudi Arabia. Additionally, while the emirates of Abu Dhabi and Dubai are ruled by the Maliki school of religious law, all other emirates are ruled by the Hanbali school of religious law.¹ When individuals are prosecuted, they often move between emirates to be subject to laws as they wish.

Al-Kitbi noted that UAE law accepts the practice of *misyar*² marriage, which began in Saudi Arabia and is non-binding, somewhat like the Shi'a practice of *mut'a*³ marriage. In the case of *misyar* marriage, men and women marry but remain in separate living quarters, usually with their respective parents. The husband does not need to contribute to the wife's or wives' upkeep and household, and when women become preg-



Workshop participants simulate a negotiation between Iraqi parliamentarians who stand against increasing women's rights, and women's network representatives who seek more rights in accordance with democracy as written in the constitution.

nant, the husband does not bear any burden created by the children. Often, *misyar* marriage is preferred by men engaged in polygamy.

In the UAE, a woman has the right to terminate marriage if she is not satisfied. Absence for three or more years on the part of the husband enables the woman to leave without financial loss. Women can also pursue divorce if their husbands are sexually impotent or are partaking in adultery. Abuse is difficult to prove, but women have the right to initiate divorce when they are subjected to violence.

Al-Kitbi suggested that further reforms could be made to the UAE’s citizenship laws. Currently, a woman cannot pass her nationality to her children, unless she is divorced or widowed. When women are married to men from other nationalities, they are not eligible for any financial aid from governmental sources. For example, the woman’s children are denied access to healthcare and education, unless they pay exorbitant fees.

Yemen

Raqiya Abdul-Qader Humeidan indicated that before Yemen was unified in 1990, the ruling system in the south was socialist and the ruling system in the north was capitalist. These ideologies were indicative of the various personal status laws created in Yemen. In the south, enlightened Islamic jurisprudence led to a progressive personal status law. For instance, divorce was not according to the temperament of the man; rather, reasons for divorce needed to be proven. Women were required to provide for the maintenance of the family if they were employed and able.

Subsequent to the unification of north and south Yemen, revised laws were established in 1992. Although the unity agreement indicated that the more progressive laws would be adapted, current law is considered to be a regression in southern Yemen. Now, men can be married to four women as long as they are financially stable. A woman no longer needs to be informed of her husband’s second marriage. The age of marriage has been lowered. Men can marry off their next of kin regardless of the age of the bride. Girls who are less than one year old can have a marriage contract. Finally, maintenance for one year in the case of divorce is no longer required.

MULTIPLE SOURCES OF LEGAL REFERENCES

Farida Bennani described that constitutions in the Middle East and North Africa often include stipulations for equality among genders. Within these constitutions, a number of articles organize the relationship of the genders in the public sphere. Within those articles, a number of laws regulate the relationship of the genders within a family. Bennani identified four sources of law: a) 18th century British and French law; b) *fiqh*;⁴ c) international conventions; and d) *ijtihad*.⁵ The multiplicity of sources often generates tension, as there is no unifying reference for making contemporary decisions.

The implementation of legislation is further complicated by the fact that many societies in the MENA region are composed of dualistic structures of tradition and modernity, and of conservatism and liberalism, which are visible both in laws and in civil society. There is a diversity of foreign legislation to which laws in MENA constitutions refer, because of mingling with and subjugation by other traditions. At the same time, values and acquired customs create pressure on those who make decisions, draft laws,

and implement legal statutes. Laws are also tied to political status, which is often changing in the MENA region. For instance, although Iraq officially ascribes to democracy, the laws being enacted are outdated and not reflective of democratic standards.

Bennani explained that personal status laws are typically drawn from *fiqh*, a human reading and interpretation of the *Quran* based on subjectivity and context. Yet, among women's organizations, there are various prevailing references for personal status law: *fiqh* only; international conventions only; or *ijtihad* that combines *fiqh* and international conventions. For example, Bennani described a passage in the newly adopted Moroccan family law that recommends *ijtihad* in order to harmonize religious constructs with the spirit of international conventions. The passage also calls for a rejection of previous results of *ijtihad* that are justified only according to their context, and for using *ijtihad* to reinvent new standards that make the *fiqh* relevant to today's reality.

IMPLEMENTATION OF FAMILY LAW

Farida Bennani challenged participants to consider that the legal model of women and the reality of women's rights are disconnected in the Middle East and North Africa. She suggested that the legal text that informs family law levitates far above reality in the MENA region. Governments often try to modernize some laws while applying other laws in their original forms, or attempt to modify some articles slightly while not renewing them sufficiently. At times, even though reality has changed, pressure needs to be put upon legislators so that the law can be adjusted accordingly.

Identifying Gaps between Reality and Existing Family Laws

Participants discussed potential causes of the chasm that has developed between the implementation of existing family laws and the reality faced by men and women in the Middle East and North Africa.

- Legal illiteracy, misinterpretation, and incorrect application of legal statutes
- Limited involvement of women in parliament and decision-making positions
- Misconceptions about the seeming sacredness of legal sources, and skepticism about *ijtihad*, or proposed reinterpretation of those sources
- Low male participation in analyzing and developing family laws to reflect the reality of men, women, and children
- Tension between respect for traditional conservative trends and desire for modern trends that result from globalization
- Limited coordination and mobilization among women's organizations and civil society, which prevent the possibility of a unified women's movement that can effect change in governments
- Adoption of *fiqh* without consideration of women's contemporary roles in politics and society
- Low profile of female voices in regional media, which is often controlled by governmental entities
- Lack of qualified and competent leadership to make institutional changes, and lack of support or resources to sustain such leadership

Bennani asked participants to consider whether or not women could enjoy the rights stipulated by international agreements without overstepping the bounds of their own heritage. While participants remained optimistic, they identified the following realities in the MENA region: a woman’s right to spend money is tied to her husband’s identity and financial status; despite the fact that married women have the right to occupy public positions, women do not have the authority to make decisions once they secure such positions; and, under the legal principle of obedience, women can be stopped from pursuing employment.

REFORMING FAMILY LAW AND LEGAL STATUS

Fatima Sbaity Kassem recommended that activists in the MENA region must analyze terminology concerning customs and religion. Debating contradictions between reality and law will help them to establish firm positions and changes to power structures. She suggested that when renewing laws to fit contemporary realities, national legislation should be coupled with the standards established by international conventions. The MENA region must manage its apprehension about misinterpreting *shari’a* and basing laws on *fiqh*. Some participants agreed that women—both the elite and the illiterate—should reinterpret the *surahs* through the lens of modernity and feminism.⁶

Participants discussed provisions for women’s rights that are embedded in the tenets of Islam and the *Quran*. Farida Bennani suggested that Muslims should not simply accept that Islam gives women a social and legal status below that of citizenship and prevents women from enjoying human rights as stipulated by international conventions. Participants pointed out that acknowledging the dignity and equality of human beings and insisting upon the abolishment of unfairness existed in an Islamic context long before the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international conventions formalized such concepts. Therefore, the institutionalization of principles of equality should not be considered a breach of the Islamic faith.

Participants debated whether or not current legislation should disregard the social and cultural contexts in which the applications of *fiqh* were originally produced. Some participants suggested that *fiqh* met the prevailing needs of its time, and therefore, is more than capable of meeting the prevailing needs of today. Other participants recommended that some aspects of *fiqh* respond to a specific time period, while others are applicable to contemporary contexts. In the latter case, Muslims should select from the *fiqh* only that which suits current social and cultural realities.

Bennani observed that Muslims have placed a sacred cover over personal status laws, which are thereby situated at a higher level than reality. She argued that sacredness should be reserved for the *Quranic* text. Because *fiqh* is the personal opinion of human beings, MENA societies should aim to remove the barrier against reinterpretation. Bennani said that while political motivations have given the impression that the door of *ijtihad* is closed, no point in history signifies an official halting of reinterpretation. Once *ijtihad* has been resumed, personal status law can become subject to modification and reflective of reality.

Action Plan for Reforming Personal Status Laws

Participants worked in small groups to identify strategies for women's organizations and human rights organizations to lobby for making changes to existing personal status laws in the region.

1. Reorganize and ally individuals and NGOs as a collective group of civil society activists that will determine the message that needs to be delivered.
2. Establish networks and alliances with an effective distribution of roles and strategies.
3. Garner support and build advocacy among the public by mobilizing the media and communicating messages effectively.
4. Train women's groups about the components and specifications of legal sources, including the *Quran* and *fiqh*.
5. Focus on articles and clauses of legislation, using different readings of *fiqh* and contemporary interpretations of *shari'a*. Refer to the fundamentals, but open the door for a new reading of the sacred texts.
6. Devise a compromise between the ideas of the conservatives and the liberals, and prepare a working paper detailing that compromise.
7. Utilize expertise to highlight negative points of existing laws and appeal to and exercise pressure on courts, judges, parliamentarians, and men of religion.
8. Build alliances and open channels of communication between women's groups, political groups, and men of religion who are influential in decision-making processes.

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS AS TOOLS FOR REFORM

Fatima Sbaity Kassem recounted the history of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979, following a series of meetings on women's issues that began with an international conference held in 1975 in Mexico. The Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995 was a follow-up to the Mexico summit and identified twelve domains as common denominators that impede the empowerment of women. Some of the domains include: poverty; unequal opportunity; violence against women; lack of political participation; lack of media visibility; and the consequences of war and armed conflict.

By September 2005, one hundred eighty countries, or more than ninety percent of United Nations Member States had ratified CEDAW. Although seventeen of twenty-two Arab League member states have ratified CEDAW, they have done so with reservations. Participants discussed that reservations are often based on gaps between CEDAW and standards established by *shari'a*, customs, and national laws. For example, Yemeni and Kuwaiti laws do not approve of nationality being transferred according to the mother. In Iraq, the question of nationality is a political issue, and divisiveness prevails among parliamentarians. In Bahrain, civil society is gaining support for the notion that international conventions supersede national laws, but international conventions can be contradictory to national interest and sovereignty or economic prosperity.

Participants discussed how—without undermining *shari’a* and alienating women’s movements—it would be possible to lift the reservations a government has placed on its ratification of CEDAW. They concluded that eliminating reservations could be achieved gradually by creating a popular base that is aware of women’s rights. Doing so would require that women in leading activist positions be educated about *shari’a* and about the rights given to women by international agreements. A balanced approach to reform would also be dependent upon open channels of communication and debate among women in leadership positions, men of religion, and members of parliament.

Participants identified references and sources that could be used by women’s organizations to persuade parliamentarians and men of religion to lift reservations on CEDAW. They concluded that referencing a combination of national legislation, *shari’a*, and international conventions would be most successful. For instance, Article 2 of the Iraqi constitution does not permit amendments that will contradict *shari’a*. Striving for reform within the confines of Article 2 could result in compromises that might be acceptable to both women’s organizations and men of religion. Sbaity Kassem recommended that participants continue to discern real change from cosmetic change, and to use the media to monitor implementation of those real changes.

NOTES

1. The Maliki *madhhab* is one of the four schools of *fiqh*, or religious law, within Sunni Islam. It is the second largest of the four schools. It differs from the three other schools of law most notably in the sources it uses for derivation of rulings. All four schools use the *Quran* as primary source, followed by the *sunnah* of the Prophet Muhammad transmitted as *hadith* (sayings), *ijma* (consensus of the scholars or Muslims) and *Qiyas* (analogy). The Maliki school uses the practice of the people of Medina (*amal ahl al-medina*) as an additional source.
2. *Misyar* marriage in the Sunni tradition is an official relationship between a man and a woman, in which the couple does not live together and the husband is not financially responsible for his wife. There is an implication that a divorce is intended in the future.
3. *Mut’a* marriage is based on a contract or agreement between a man and a woman that establishes marriage for a specified period time. The contract can be very informal, even oral, and the contract period can span one or many years or even one day or one hour. The *mut’a* marriage lapses at the end of the contract period. In Shi’a law, *mut’a* constitutes a legal marriage and children born within *mut’a* marriages have fully legitimate status.
4. *Fiqh* is Islamic jurisprudence, or the field of scholarship or learning concerned with Islamic law.
5. *Ijtihad* refers to the exercise of reasoning conducted by Islamic jurists to arrive at an interpretation of Islamic law.
6. *Surah* is a verse of the *Quran*.

“Building a New Iraq: Empowering Women to Negotiate for Change” Amman, Jordan June 11–13, 2006

From June 11–13, 2006, the Middle East Program of the Wilson Center held the workshop, “Building a New Iraq: Empowering Women to Negotiate for Change” in Amman, Jordan. This workshop was funded by the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) of the U.S. Department of State.

Training sessions were led by Armen Balian of the Lebanon Conflict Resolution Network (LCRN), a non-profit organization established to develop and disseminate the principles and skills of conflict resolution, through non-adjudicatory means such as negotiation, mediation, facilitation, and other collaborative problem-solving methods that best suit the nature and needs of the concerned communities. The LCRN is currently the leading specialized conflict management and organizational dynamics training and consultancy organization in the MENA region, with projects in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Morocco, Bahrain, Qatar, Tunisia, Yemen, Mauritania, and Algeria.

The workshop exposed participants to conflict resolution terminology and techniques, such that they might employ negotiation skills to encourage increased female participation in legislative processes. Training sessions were designed to provide participants with a common vocabulary and shared understanding of key conflict resolution and negotiation principles. Additionally, the workshop incorporated many inter-group and inter-coalition political case studies in the form of simulated negotiations.

Fourteen women from Bahrain, Iraq, and Lebanon participated in this workshop. Their extensive political and organizational experiences enabled realistic assessments of negotiation scenarios, as well as the application of negotiation themes and techniques to their professional and social contexts. In particular, the culture of dialogue has been slow to take root among Iraqi women, and training in conflict resolution is critical to increasing the ability of women leaders to work together across sectarian and regional boundaries.



Armen Balian observes a role-play between two negotiation teams during the June 2006 workshop.

Mechanisms for Resolving Conflict

While no single mechanism of conflict resolution can guarantee success, Balian commented that negotiation results in the highest percentage of lasting solutions. Some participants suggested that a shift toward more collective mechanisms such as negotiation would be positive for the building of a democratic Iraq.

- Negotiation—all parties have an interest in coming together to pursue dialogue
- Mediation—parties engage in identifying common ground and building bridges
- Arbitration—all parties resort to arbitration and participate in choosing the arbitrator
- Jurisdiction—one party brings a lawsuit against another party; courts, lawyers, and judges are used to settle the lawsuit
- Coercion—moral and/or physical and/or structural violence or threat

STRUCTURE AND PRINCIPLES OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Armen Balian noted that in the context of three patterns to characterize conflict—fight syndrome (winner-loser), flight syndrome (loser-winner), and winner-winner syndrome—the winner-winner syndrome forms the basis of conflict resolution. It is also the single syndrome that is not instinctive and needs to be learned and cultivated. Conflict resolution operates upon the principles that: differences between individuals and groups are natural; conflicts cannot solve themselves, and resolution requires attention; resolving a conflict successfully requires getting to the roots of the problems; and solutions need to be comprehensive and inclusive of all parties.

Participants discussed that while conflict is a confrontational behavior, disagreement and dispute can occur without necessarily developing into conflict. Conflict is characterized by escalation and resolution—the nature of which can be either illusionary or based on actual facts. Participants cited the following causes of conflict: economic disparity; materialism; social ignorance; hypocrisy; security; misunderstanding; sectarian allegiance; violation of rights; history; and selfishness.

Balian explained that individual and collateral conflicts are composed of problems, parties, and procedures. Each party views the problem at hand in a different way, and each party has different needs and goals associated with that problem. Procedures for handling the problem are developed by each party, according to the impact of the problem on each party. Based on those actions and procedures, the problem either escalates or resolves.

Conflict analysis requires a series of questions that occur in a cyclical format around the triangular structure of problems, parties, and procedures. Balian emphasized that rather than identifying the causes of the problem, productive analysis requires a clear and objective definition of the problem itself.

When a person or party is identified as the problem, the problem can only be resolved by the removal of that person or party. In contrast, when a problem is characterized as a matter of communication, possible solutions can include all parties. If escalation causes secondary and tertiary parties to develop as a result of

internal divisions in each primary party, it is critical to separate the primary parties from secondary and tertiary parties.

CONFLICT RESPONSE STYLES

Armen Balian emphasized that in order to choose a particular style of combating conflict, parties should consider: the identity of the stakeholders; the significance of the relationship between the parties; the relative importance of the cause; and the quotient of common ground achievable. Participants spoke about the need to calculate and be aware of the most advantageous styles of combating conflict, and Balian observed that successful negotiators must be able to adopt each of the five styles of strategy when necessary.

Participants reflected on their personal and national experiences, and they suggested that extremist approaches are often overused if common ground is not utilized, and that competition can produce enemies that do not enable permanent solutions. They also noted that parties can waste time by being too accommodating—giving concessions to competitive parties can make them more aggressive, whereas avoidance might be a better tactic. At the same time, silence and sacrifice should not be perceived as weakness. Concession can be as useful a strategy as the others, especially in the situations faced by parliaments.

Participants considered advantages and drawbacks of the following styles of responding to conflict:

- Competitive—“my way or no way”; “with me or against me”
- Collaborative—exploration of other views to determine common ground
- Quick Fix—sacrifices from both sides produce a fast and shallow approach
- Non-confrontational—confrontation is painful, and thus avoided, or surpassed
- Accommodation—make concessions to protect sacred relationships

IDENTIFYING AND ACCOMMODATING INTERESTS

Parties engaged in conflict are often concerned about various components of conducting negotiations: material or substantial interests; personal or psychological interests; and procedural interests such as location, attendees, seating arrangement, topics discussed, and role of third parties.

Participants discussed that productive negotiations require prior mutual agreement on procedural interests. If procedural interests are not shared, material and personal interests might be endangered. Balian provided a number of examples of interpersonal, inter-group, and international negotiations, and participants discussed the role of procedural interests in the success and failure of each outcome.

Balian explained that successful negotiation requires all parties to be honest with themselves and with each other about their interests. Participants agreed that recognizing the competing interests and distractions of each opponent is prudent for cultivating a winner-winner relationship between parties. When parties are able to identify common and complementary interests, they can begin to brainstorm a number of creative procedures for dealing with the problem at hand.

Types of Negotiation

Participants discussed the benefits and challenges presented by various types of negotiations:

- Vertical Negotiation—members of one party negotiate with each other
- Horizontal Negotiation—two or more parties negotiate with each other
- Private or Under-the-table Negotiation—involves confidential information
- Tête-à-Tête Negotiation—leaders negotiate among themselves
- Side Negotiation—individual meeting between leaders or other team members
- Subcommittee Negotiations—heads of organizations pursue bilateral agreements
- Multilateral Negotiations—multiple negotiations between multiple players
- Multiparty Negotiations—each party has its own negotiations

Parties are able to have empathy toward enemies or competing parties, even if they are not sympathetic toward the opposition. Balian clarified that empathy is a process of calculation, while sympathy is a process based in emotion. Participants discussed various examples of empathy, such as negotiating with male leaders regarding women’s rights, and carrying out political discussions about common interests with world powers that are not necessarily allies.

NEGOTIATION STRATEGIES

Armen Balian emphasized that preparation enables increased productivity at the negotiation table and a higher likelihood of reaching a collectively agreeable solution. Planning requires empathy and historical analysis of the problem, positions, and interests at hand. First, each party should identify the problem—as perceived by all parties. Second, parties should characterize each other’s interests. Finally, still in advance of the negotiation, parties should brainstorm solutions that might be acceptable to all parties.

Methods for learning about an opposing party’s interests might include: direct conversation between each party or between the mediator and opposing

party; fostering confidentiality by disclosing one’s own interests; empathizing with the opposing party to broaden contexts for considering interests; and conducting research or surveys about the opposing party’s origin, behavior, or political orientation to better inform speculation about its potential interests.

Balian emphasized that all parties involved in negotiation must settle upon a best alternative to reaching agreement. In case a negotiation is not entirely successful, the parties can then accept this second tier solution. Participants discussed the utility of various types of listening for gathering and analyzing information. Acknowledgement of another party’s positions can be conveyed simply by body language. Paraphrasing, or using different words while maintaining the same meaning, can create problems during an especially heated negotiation. Yet, paraphrasing also presents an opportunity for clarification, and for ensuring that the message has been understood without distortion. Confirming that the position of an opposing party has been fully comprehended will help to dissipate tension.

Posing questions enables a party to understand the interests linked to the positions of the other parties. Closed questions have limited kinds of answers, while open-ended questions help to build dialogue. The appropriate type of question relates to the strategy chosen by the negotiating team. Threatening questions provide ultimatums, but questions can also serve to gather information, seek clarification, and solicit opinions.

MANAGING AUDIENCES, AGENTS, AND CONSTITUENCIES

Negotiations occur within the framework of various audiences and under the direction of various leaders. Decision-makers and coaches directly influence the negotiating parties. The general public comprises the next level of insulation. External factors such as international relations or social conditions are on the outside of the negotiation, but they still affect the outcome. Conducting a field analysis of the context is helpful in preparing for negotiations.

Negotiation teams should be small enough to reach consensus but large enough to have multiple opinions, as different views and procedures within the same team are beneficial. Balian suggested that the ideal group should be between three and five members. Teams should be led by pragmatic figures with skills in conflict resolution. Roles and tactics should be distributed prudently, and a record-keeper is imperative. The composition of team members should relate to their connections to the issue at hand and their personal abilities to negotiate with the other parties.

In addition to the negotiating table, where one party confronts another party, members of each negotiating team constitute a second table. The second table is utilized as an operation room, in which members must work together to ensure the success of their leader, and hence, their entire team. Balian suggested that members of the second table who are not in the negotiating role should define the negotiator's limits, demand a system of reporting, and never give complete decision-making authority to the negotiator.

Balian emphasized that it is critical to establish ground rules, limits, authority, means, and frequency for gathering and conveying information to and from the second table. Accusations made by the second table can lead negotiators to illogical actions. A negotiator can also use the second table as leverage when speaking to the opposition party. For example, the negotiator might admit to the other party that she agrees with its position, but that her second table does not agree.

CONTEXTUAL APPLICATION OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Role-Play: Building Coalitions in Basra, Iraq

Participants engaged in a negotiation role-play, in which three groups were each presented with the goal of forming a coalition with either of the other two groups. Without mediators to manage the series of negotiations, the groups held rotating meetings with each other regarding the proposed management of resources. During the first round, each of the teams tried to explore the positions and interests of the other teams, and one team maintained a strategy of suggesting that it was the strongest of the three teams. In the second round, another team emerged as strongest due to the procedures it undertook. In the third round, the procedurally strong team formed a coalition based on sharing resources with the third team, which grew to view the first team as arrogant and unwilling to unite over common interests.

Several participants observed that the role-play in building coalitions was reflective of the formation of Basra's local caucus. In Basra, the Iraqi United Coalition



Azam Ali prepares small group work for feedback during the June 2006 workshop.

(IUC) had been composed of twenty members, while the Fadheela Party was composed of twelve members. Several other small parties were composed of four, three, and two members. While the IUC held the majority and hoped to receive the most votes in the local council, its ultimate loss was linked to lack of success in allying with the small parties. Meanwhile, because the Fadheela Party perceived that the smaller parties viewed the IUC as arrogant, it proceeded to ally itself with the smaller splinter groups. The coalition formed by the Fadheela Party and the splinter parties was able to win most of the seats in the local council, whereas only two seats remained for members of the IUC.

Conflict Analysis: Formation of Iraq's Government

Participants observed that while mediation and negotiation were involved in the formation of Iraq's new government, embedded in election results were thirty-five years of suppressed identity and the absence of a culture of coalition building. Haifaa Jaafar observed that the legacy of

Saddam Hussein's dictatorship continues to create a lack of confidence among various blocs. Thus, Iraqis ignored their own interests while voting for the leaders of various blocs rather than for the positions and programs of those blocs.

Nada Mohammed Ibrahim noted that elections were conducted without agreement among various blocs about strategies to determine the new government. Researching and aligning the interests of all involved parties would have consumed too much time. Huda Ahmed explained that in each bloc, there were five to seven parties. Each party in the bloc situated its own platform above the necessity of reaching consensus on the platforms of the bloc.

Jinan Yasin added that the formation of the government was managed by the leaders of the blocs rather than by the members of parliament. Only men of religion participated in mediation and counsel. Dalia Awchi emphasized that women were marginalized during the formation of the government and did not participate in negotiations behind closed doors. Because women were not leaders of parties, they were not involved in negotiations regarding each bloc's platforms.

Participants' Biographies

This list includes women who participated in at least one of the three workshops outlined in this publication. Some of these women may have changed titles or affiliations since their participation. For an additional list of women who have participated in programming since April 2003, please consult the biographical sections of the publications at www.wilsoncenter.org/middleeast/publications.

Shatha Abdul Razak (Iraq) is a biologist and researcher of Islamic studies. She currently works in the Women's Affairs Office of the Iraqi Islamic Party. Abdul Razak is a member of the Women's Cultural Association and was a candidate in the December 2005 parliamentary elections.

Jinan Abdul Yasin (Iraq) is a member of the Iraqi Parliament, and she is responsible for media outreach for the Islamic Dawa Party. Previously, she was a member of the Basra City Council, as well as the director of sewage in Basra. She earned her Bachelor of Science in civil engineering from Basra University.

Ameerah Hassan Abdullah (Iraq) has been an activist on women's issues in Kurdistan since 1991, when the Iraqi Women's Association was the only organization addressing these issues. She has advocated for the modification of personal status laws in Kurdistan, on behalf of women prisoner's issues, and in support of stopping violence against women. Currently, Abdullah is working to raise awareness of international institutions about a new law regarding prison employees. She holds a diploma in accounting.

Israa Farhan Ali Ahmad (Iraq) has been practicing law in Tikrit since 2005, specializing in personal status law. She is currently a consultant for the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) in Iraq, where she conducts workshops to train political party members in conflict resolution and negotiation. In 2005, she was a Salahaddin program officer in the Election Violence Education Revolution (EVER) program/IFES to monitor election violence in Iraq. Ahmad is the director of the Salahaddin province branch of the Ministry of Human Rights. She obtained a law degree from the University of Baghdad.

Huda Ahmed (Iraq) is a journalist and translator for *Knight-Ridder* in Baghdad. She has also worked for the *Washington Post* in Baghdad, and as a freelance journalist in Libya and other MENA region countries. She focuses her reporting on Iraqi women and children, particularly their struggle for equal rights in Iraq. Ahmed graduated from the College of Languages at the University of Baghdad.

Wajeeha Sadiq Al-Baharna (Bahrain) is president of the Bahrain Women's Society. She serves as the senior marine biologist for the Public Commission for the Protection of Marine Resources, Environment, and Wildlife. Al-Baharna holds advanced degrees in business administration and environmental management.

Kawther Al-Jawaan (Kuwait) is currently the director of the Women's Institute for Development. She worked with the Foreign Service ministry in Kuwait for over two decades, heading the Diplomatic Relations and Human Rights departments. She has served as a lecturer at the Economics College and as a lawyer in several civil courts. Al-Jawaan also founded and headed several organizations regarding women and social issues. She holds a law degree from the University of Cairo and a master's degree in *shari'a* law from the University of Kuwait.

Ebtisam Al-Kitbi (UAE) is professor of political science at the United Arab Emirates University and director of the Women in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) program at the Gulf Research Center. Additionally, she heads the civic education curriculum committee at the UAE Ministry of Education, and she is a member of the editorial board of the *Journal of Social Affairs—UAE*. Al-Kitbi is a core team member of the 2006 *Arab Human Development Report*, published by the United Nations Development Programme, and the author of numerous books and articles on politics and the role of women in the GCC states.

Feyral Al-Sairafi (Bahrain) is a professor of biology and a member of an administrative council for social and education renewal. She is a member of a women's association in Bahrain, and a member of a personal status committee and a quota society. Al-Sairafi is a founding member of the Bahraini Teachers' Society, and a member of the National Committee for Family Laws. Additionally, she serves on the board of the al-Tajdeed Cultural and Social Society and serves on the Preparatory Committee of the Bahraini Women's Union. She holds a bachelor's degree and master's degree in education.

May Abu Al-Samen (Jordan) has been a member of the Jordanian Senate for two consecutive terms, from 2002 to the present. She is also a women's rights activist with extensive experience working with women in urban and rural areas. In 1993, Al-Samen co-founded the Jordanian National Forum for Women, a non-governmental organization that assists women to lobby in their local communities, with the aim of realizing their rights as guaranteed in the Jordanian constitution. Al-Samen is a board member of the trustee council of the National Center for Human Rights, of the Higher Council for Media, and of Al Hussein University. She holds a master's degree in educational management.

Asmaa Ibrahim Al-Shaboot (Iraq) is professor of mathematics at al-Nahrayn University, and she was a member of the Iraqi Interim National Assembly. She currently serves as vice president of the financial committee of the National Assembly. She is a member of the Islam and Democracy Organization and is associated with a number of civil society organizations related to women's rights.

Sawsan Al-Sharifi (Iraq) was chair of the agriculture committee in the Iraqi Interim National Assembly. Under the previous Interim Governing Council, she was minister of agriculture. Al-Sharifi was the editor of the *Iraqi Journal of Agriculture* and the author of more than forty scientific research papers published in

Iraqi and international journals. She has worked in the agriculture sector of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Iraq's Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), and the World Bank. Al-Sharifi holds a doctorate degree in animal breeding from Iowa State University.

Zainab Al-Suwaij (Iraq) is the cofounder and executive director of the American Islamic Congress, a post-September 11th social activist organization based in Cambridge, Massachusetts, that works to foster tolerance, promote civil society and civil rights, and mobilize a moderate voice in the American Muslim community. After fleeing Basra, Iraq following the 1991 uprising against Saddam Hussein, Al-Suwaij worked as a refugee case manager for Interfaith Refugee Ministry.

Bedoor Al-Yassiry (Iraq) is a city council member and the head and founder of the Free Women Institute. The institute has conducted governorate-wide surveys of orphans and has been advocating for their housing and aid distribution. Three hundred local trainees graduated from one of the institute's programs on computer and internet training. In cooperation with Japanese forces, the institute has trained police women and demonstrated for an increase in the number of female police officers.

Azam Ali (Bahrain) is a specialist in revenue at the Ministry of Municipalities and Agriculture in Bahrain. She is also director of human resources and finance and a member of the Board of Directors of the Bahrain Women Society. Ali is a board member and head of public relations for al-Tajdeed Cultural and Social Society, and she is a member of Amnesty International. She holds a degree in accounting from the University of Bahrain.



Workshop participants practice rallying for their rights during a simulated negotiation as part of the December 2005 workshop.

Radya Shamsher Wajid Ali (Yemen) is an activist on behalf of women's rights. In addition to seeking a seat in parliament on multiple occasions and supervising elections in Yemen, Ali was the national coordinator for the symbolic women's court established by the Women Forum for Research and Training (WEFRT), and a founding member of the Yemeni Human Rights Organization. She is also a member of the international advisory committee for a project to enhance the Women's Center for Training and Research at Aden University. Ali received her Bachelor of Arts in press and information studies from Algeria University and earned a Higher Diploma in media in Budapest, Hungary.

Ban Alimarah (Iraq) is an active member of the Women's Alliance for a Democratic Iraq and the Iraqi Women Empowerment Institute. Alimarah has considerable leadership training and was involved in a survey of Iraqi widows. She is a member of the Iraqi Society for Solidarity and Peace. She holds a degree in biology from the University of Baghdad.

Nawal Mohamd Amin (Iraq) is a judge in the juvenile and personal status courts of Basra. She is deputy director of the Rural Women's Association, and conducts regular visits for women prisoners. She received her degree from the University of Baghdad.

Fawzia Attia (Iraq) is professor of sociology at the University of Baghdad and deputy head of the Department of Social and Research Studies at the Arab Institute of Research and Studies in Baghdad. She chairs the Union of Iraqi Sociologists, and is a member of numerous committees, including the administrative committee of the Independent Iraqi Women's Group, the coordination committee of the League of Iraqi Women, and the experts committee of Iraq for Women. She was a member of the Supreme Committee for the Preparation of the Iraqi National Congress in 2004. Attia earned her doctorate degree in sociology from the University of Montpellier, France.

Hoda Awad (Egypt) is professor of political science at the American University in Cairo and at Misr International University. She specializes in comparative governments and political systems; Middle Eastern studies; political Islam; sustainable development; public administration and management; and marketing. Awad was a Fulbright Senior Scholar in the Departments of Political Science and International Studies at Goucher College in 1993. She is the coauthor of the book *The Political Role of the Muslim Brotherhood Movement in Light of Controlled Political Pluralism in Egypt: A Study in Political Discourse, 1984–1990* with Tawfik Hasanen. Awad received her doctorate degree in political science from the University of Cairo.

Dalia Awchi (Iraq) is the director and founder of Friends of Democracy, an initiative of Spirit of America, which supported a range of projects and activities designed to increase voter participation in the January 2005 parliamentary elections. She has conducted workshops about the drafting of the Iraqi constitution, and she is now involved in a campaign to ensure the justice of laws enacted under parliament. Awchi has worked as a loan officer and program manager for ACDI/VOCA

Microfinance Project. She has also worked as an executive secretary and interior designer, and as an English language and drawing teacher and assistant director at Asma'a Secondary School. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in interior design from the University of Baghdad.

Farida Bennani (Morocco) is professor of *shari'a* in the Faculty of Law at Qadi Ayad University in Marrakech, where she specializes in personal status law. She has written and coauthored five books and numerous articles on women's rights in Morocco and the region. She is a frequent participant in conferences, colloquia, and roundtables on the subject of women's rights under Islamic law. She is a member of the UNESCO Scientific Committee on Women and their Rights at Mohammed V University in Morocco. She is also a member of the team that compiled the 2003 *Arab Human Development Report*, published by the United Nations Development Programme.

Taghrid Braizat (Jordan) is an activist for public issues, especially those related to women and children. Her professional experience includes work as a researcher in the Jordan Center for Studies and Information and later in the Royal Scientific Society. From 1997 to 2002, Braizat served as assistant editor of the *Jordanian Journal of Energy Abstracts*. She received a Bachelor of Arts in law from the University of Jordan.

Najia Chraibi (Morocco) is an education specialist and professor of English at Hassan II University in Casablanca. She is active in several Moroccan women's rights associations and is committed to the peaceful promotion of gender equality and women's rights. She holds a Bachelor of Arts from Mohammed V University and a Master of Arts in education from the University of Manchester, England.

Reem Abu Dalbooh (Jordan) is a member of the Jordanian National Forum for Women and the Consulting Council of Mafraq. She has lectured at Al Hashemieh University and Zarqa Private University. Dalbooh received her Bachelor of Arts in law from the University of Jordan and has been licensed to practice law since 1994. She also holds a Master of Arts in civic law from the Faculty of Judicial and Legal Studies at al-Bayt University. She is currently pursuing her doctorate degree.

Rola Dashti (Kuwait) is the director of an international consulting firm in Kuwait and serves as the elected chairwoman of the Kuwait Economic Society. She testified in the Kuwaiti Constitutional Court to lead the push for women's suffrage in Kuwait, which was earned in May 2005. Dashti ran for a seat in Kuwait's parliament in 2006 but was not elected. After the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait, she campaigned internationally for the release of Kuwaiti Prisoners of War. Dashti holds a doctorate degree in population economics from Johns Hopkins University and has worked on demography and human development in Kuwait.

Mary Ann Forbes (Kenya) is the East Africa regional representative for the Solidarity Center in Nairobi, Kenya. She has led successful organizing campaigns for women workers in Nairobi's export processing zones for over three years. She also began a

program on trafficking in persons in Kenya and East Africa. Previously, Forbes was the deputy field representative for trade union development for the Solidarity Center in Jakarta, Indonesia. She has won numerous awards for labor journalism, including for the book *Giving Birth to Freedom*. She received a master's degree from Georgetown University, where she studied African politics, human rights, and international women's issues.

Nawal Hameed (Iraq) is a member of the Iraqi Parliament. Additionally, she is a member of the Horizon Center of Human Development, and she provides lectures to Iraqi youth at student unions. She is also a member of the Muslim Family Association. Hameed practices gynecology, and she holds a bachelor's degree in general medicine and surgery from the University of Mosul.

Zakia Hakki (Iraq) is a member of the Iraqi Parliament, and she also served in the Iraqi Interim National Assembly. The first woman judge in Iraq, she served as an expert legal adviser in the Ministry of Agriculture. She is the founder of the Kurdish Women's Federation and was president of the group from 1952 until 1975. She was the only woman elected to the leadership of the Kurdistan Democratic Party during the general assembly meeting in 1970. As a result of her outspokenness on behalf of the Kurdish people, she was placed under probationary arrest for twenty years until her emigration to the United States in 1996. She has since participated in various working group sessions on Iraq at the U.S. Department of State. Hakki was an attorney in northern Virginia and Vice President of the Iraqi-American Council. Hakki holds a Bachelor of Science in business administration from the International Labor Union in Switzerland and a Juris Doctorate from the University of Baghdad.

Azhar Kathim Hamza (Iraq) is a founding member of the Women's Rights Center in Babel. Her most recent work focuses on women's rights, civil society, and personal status law. She has participated in several workshops on women's leadership, and has worked in support of women's political rights in coordination with the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). She

started an Arab-Kurdish networking project with USIP, and carried out a project to prepare election monitors. Hamza holds a degree in teaching the English language.

Kian Kamel Hassan (Iraq) is a member of the Iraqi Parliament, representing the Kurdistan Union. Prior to being elected, Hassan was a professor at Irbil University.

Siham Hamdan Hattab (Iraq) was a member of the Baghdad City Advisory Council and vice chairperson representing the Sadr City district. Among other projects, she is working to establish women's centers in Sadr City. Currently, she serves on committees dealing



Nawal Amin and Tayseir Al Mishhadani present their viewpoints and discuss empathy skills during the June 2006 workshop.

with legal affairs and human rights, public relations, and women and children. Through public service, Hamdan seeks to promote justice and peaceful resolution of conflict between Iraqis. She obtained her master's degree from Mustansiriya University, where she is currently a lecturer in English literature.

Raqiya Abdul-Qader Humeidan (Yemen) has been a lawyer in private practice since 1980, and as a human rights activist, she has a particular interest in human rights law. She was the first woman in Yemen to become a lawyer, and the first female member of the Supreme Elections Committee. Humeidan was also nominated for the Women for Nobel Peace Prize in 2005. She was recently named the honorary president of the local Arab association for supporting women and juvenile issues in Aden.

Nada Muhammed Ibrahim (Iraq) is a member of the Iraqi Parliament. She is a medical specialist and has been head of an anesthesiology department for the last ten years. She has also been head of the emergency team serving Iraq's civil society during wartime. Ibrahim holds a bachelor's degree in medicine and surgery from Mustansiriya University, as well as a high diploma in anesthesiology.

Sanaa Muhammed Ibrahim (Iraq) is a member of the Iraqi Women of the Future Association. She is also a poet and a painter, focusing on images of the realities facing Iraqi communities. She has participated in many art exhibitions in Baghdad, and she organized an exhibition and poetry reading about Iraq at the Royal Jordanian Cultural Club in 2005. Ibrahim holds a Bachelor of Arts in fine arts from the University of Baghdad.

Mehdea Musa Issa (Iraq) is an employee of the Ministry of Oil. She is a member of the Peace and Solidarity Council, which advocates against violence and for justice regardless of religion. Through the council, which includes a women's committee, she conducts lectures on democracy, constitutional issues, and elections.

Haifaa Majly Jafaar (Iraq) is a member of the Iraqi Parliament and a member of its Human Rights Committee. Previously, she was a member of the Basra City Council. She has managed NGOs in and around Basra that focus on women's empowerment. Jafaar received her Bachelor of Arts in business administration from Basra University.

Hassana Jamaledine (Lebanon) is a board member and member of several NGOs including the Committee for the Kidnapped and the Disappeared in Lebanon, the Social Communication Center/AJIAL, and the Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE). Currently, she is working in local development on a program supported by the European Community. During the early 1990s, Jamaledine was a core member of the global education team within the framework of a UNICEF/Ministry of Education project. During the Lebanese Civil War, she was active in peace movements and involved with several NGOs focused on handicapped children and youth. Jamaledine holds a Bachelor of Arts in social work

from the Lebanese American University and a Master of Arts in education from the American University of Beirut.

Ghada Jamsheer (Bahrain) has been fighting for the codification of personal status laws in Bahrain for more than ten years. She is the president of the Bahrain Social Partnership for Combating Violence Against Women and the head of the Women's Petition Committee, which monitors family court cases for women's rights violations. Jamsheer is the author of the book *The Executioner and the Victim in Shari'a Courts*.

Amal Kashef al Ghatta (Iraq) was a member of the Iraqi Interim National Assembly and the Center for Strategic Islamic Studies. She works with the Islamic Institute for the Woman and Child and the Umm al-Jawad Institution for Orphans, which she established in 2003. She has worked as head of the Division of Drug Issues at the Ministry of Health. She served two terms as a member of the Pharmacist Union Assembly. She is also the author of sixteen books and articles, including five novels. Kashef al-Ghatta holds a degree in pharmacy.

Lilia Labidi (Tunisia) is an anthropologist, psychoanalyst, and professor at the University of Tunis. She was a member of the social and preventive pediatrics unit at the School of Medicine of Tunis from 1979 to 1995. She has organized a number of national and international conferences on women and history, women's health, and women's rights, and is the author of several books and numerous articles. She was a fellow at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars from 2001 to 2002.

Afaf Marei (Egypt) is founding member and director of the Egyptian Association for Community Participation Enhancement (EACPE). She has worked with UNICEF to implement recommendations of the Beijing Platform of Action, and she is a founding member of the New Women Foundation, the Egyptian Socio-Democratic Center, and NGO coalitions that promote international agreements on the rights of women and children. She is a freelance trainer and has participated in numerous conferences and workshops on women's and children's rights in Egypt and the broader MENA region. Marei holds a Diploma in Pediatrics (DCH) from Ain Shams University.

Ruba Matarneh (Jordan) is a training coordinator and project officer in the field of women's empowerment. She has been employed at the Jordanian National Forum for Women since 1996, where she has contributed to planning, designing, and supervising in the secretariat office. She has participated in organizing several international and regional workshops, conferences, and seminars in the field of women and development.

Tayseir Al Mishhadani (Iraq) is a member of the Iraqi Parliament, representing the Iraqi Coalition Front. She is also a member of the Woman's Affairs Bureau for the Iraqi Islamic Party. Mishhadani is a member of the Iraqi Engineers Association and she holds

a Bachelor of Science in mechanical engineering from Mustansiriya University. *On July 1, 2006, Mishhadani was kidnapped by Iraqi gunmen in a Shi'a area of Baghdad. She was released in late August 2006.*

Valentine Moghadam (U.S.) is the chief of the Gender Equality and Development Section in the Social and Human Sciences Sector at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Her research focuses on globalization, transnational feminist networks, civil society in the Middle East, and women in Afghanistan. She has consulted with numerous organizations and taught sociology at New York University and Illinois State University. She was a fellow at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars from 2001 to 2002. Moghadam was a member of the United Nations delegation to the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. She collaborated on the 2004 *Arab Human Development Report*, published by the United Nations Development Programme. Moghadam holds a doctorate degree in sociology from American University.

Suzan Musharbash (Jordan) is a member of several unions and served as national instructor at the Planning to Achieve Union Goals workshop in April 2003. She received a General Secondary Education Certificate from Deir El-Lateen and a Secretary Certificate from the Y.W.C.A. Vocational Training Center in 1985.

Jihan Mustafa (Iraq) practices law in Irbil. She is director and founder of the Nineveh Culture Center for Rehabilitation of Iraqi Women, and she works in the Ministry of Human Rights. She holds a bachelor's degree in law from Salahaddin University and a diploma of pharmacy from Adisa University.

Majda Mustafa (Iraq) is a member of the Free Woman Institute, which aims to educate the community about women's issues in Iraq. In particular, the institute has helped to produce programs that urge and, if necessary, assist Iraqi women to read, understand, and critically assess the Iraqi constitution and women's rights therein.

Hamdiya Najaf (Iraq) served as undersecretary of the Ministry of Immigration for the Iraqi Interim National Assembly, where she worked with international organizations and the United Nations to improve the rights of immigrants, especially immigrant women. She was also a member of the National Assembly. Najaf holds a bachelor's degree in management and economics from the University of Baghdad.

Shatha Maidne Naji (Iraq) is a founding member of the Iraqi Women's Network. She is vice president of an organization for Supporting Families of Martyrs and Missing and vice president of the Women for Peace organization. She held a conference on the importance of the constitution, and organized a number of seminars on the elections.

Hiba Najim (Iraq) is the director of the Women's Hope and Children's Future organization, a women's society in Diwaniya. The organization has held workshops with the American Peace Institute of Iraq on conflict resolution, CEDAW, and the importance of

women's contributions as voters and candidates. Najim has earned many certificates, including a certificate of appreciation from the Allied Forces for outstanding service in extending humanitarian aid to the poorest people in Diwaniya province. She holds a bachelor's degree in accounting.

Suad Nasir (Iraq) is a judge from Basra and a member of the Rural Women's Association. She practiced law in Basra until she became a judge in 1992. Nasir has attended a number of conferences on women's rights, democracy, and human rights. She holds a law degree from the University of Baghdad.

Lamis Nasser (Jordan) is a freelance consultant and researcher in the fields of women's rights, human rights, and gender for a number of United Nations affiliations, especially UNICEF. Her recent work includes serving as temporary national program officer for the World Food Programme's Jordan Country Office and as information officer for the UNIFEM-Western Asia Regional Office. Nasser is cofounder and current president of the Human Forum for Women's Rights, as well as a board member of a human rights group in Jordan. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in psychology and education and a Master of Arts in psychological counseling and guidance from the American University of Beirut.

Israa M. Salim (Iraq) is an agricultural engineer and a member of the Iraqi Union of Agricultural Engineers. She is a member of the human rights association, the Iraqi Islamic Party, and the orphanage society.

Fatima Sbaity Kassem (Lebanon) is the former director of the Centre for Women at the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). She served as regional coordinator for preparation and follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, as well as for the five and ten year reviews. Sbaity Kassem joined the United Nations in 1970 and served at the Economic and Social Office of Beirut (UNESOB), which was transformed into a Commission in 1974 (ESCWA) and based in Baghdad and Amman, as well as Beirut. She holds degrees in business and development administration from the American University of Beirut, and a M.Phil in international political economy from Columbia University, where she is completing her doctoral dissertation.

Ala Nouri Talabani (Iraq) was a member of the Iraqi Interim National Assembly. In October 2004, she was appointed women's affairs advisor for the Kurdish Prime Minister. She is also the secretary of the Kurdistan Women's Association. In June 2004, she was appointed Assistant to the Iraqi National Conference Chairman. Talabani has worked as a diplomat in the foreign affairs office of the Kurdistan Regional Government, and as a liaison officer between United Nations agencies and the Kurdish government. She received a master's degree in English literature from Sulemaniyah University, and she also holds a diploma in political science and a certificate in peace and conflict resolution from Uppsala University in Sweden.

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