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RIGHTS & DEMOCRACY'S NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 19
NUMBER 1

Rights & Democracy's
PRIX John Humphrey AWARD
Droits et Démocratie — **2009** —

LA'ONF, THE IRAQI NONVIOLENCE NETWORK

Terry Kay Rockefeller (terry@peacefultomorrow.org), Project Director, September 11th Families for Peaceful Tomorrows

BEFORE THE U.S. INVADED IRAQ IN 2003, Ismaeel Dawood ran a shoe shop in Baghdad; he also studied statistics, and read widely about human rights. After the invasion, he became active in collecting stories of civilian casualties and worked with other activists in Baghdad to compile information about the detention of Iraqis in U.S. military prisons. In 2005, at the World Social Forum in Brazil, Ismaeel met Martina Pignatti Morano from Un Ponte Per (UPP), an Italian NGO formerly known as Bridges to Baghdad, and Jean-Marie Muller, an expert in nonviolence from France. Jean-Marie Muller and UPP organized nonviolence training for people in Baghdad, most of whom were connected with the al-Mesalla Centre, a community-based human rights centre.

In May of 2006, these newly-trained activists planned a week of nonviolence activities that were largely conducted in neighbourhoods of Baghdad. They distributed a poster that featured a map of Iraq with no internal boundaries and the slogan "La'Onf" ("no violence") graphically superimposed on it. And, they talked to people—in police stations, on Iraqi army bases, and U.S. military bases—about ending violence in Iraq. They collected signatures on petitions that endorsed nonviolent approaches to rebuilding Iraqi civil society. They also held public forums in neighbourhood settings—shops, mosques, and schools. These open, very public activities were tremendously empowering, giving the organizers confidence that they could work nonviolently within a war context.

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Rights & Democracy
International Centre for Human Rights
and Democratic Development

Rights & Democracy is a non-partisan, independent Canadian institution created by an Act of Parliament in 1988 to promote democratic development and to advocate for and defend human rights set out in the International Bill of Human Rights. In cooperation with civil society and governments in Canada and abroad, Rights & Democracy initiates and supports programmes to strengthen laws and democratic institutions, principally in developing countries.



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

The principles of peace and nonviolence are central tenets of the defence and promotion of international human rights. The preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family are the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.

This year's recipient of Rights & Democracy's John Humphrey Award exemplifies that the struggle for peace and nonviolence is a struggle for human rights. La'Onf, the Iraqi Nonviolence Network, has demonstrated in the short time since its inception that even in a time of war, the determination of citizens to transform their society through nonviolent means can be more powerful than the bombs and guns that attempt to silence them.

La'Onf has become a leading example of a truly inclusive civil society movement in a region of the world too often marked by division. The members of La'Onf, from women's rights activists to trade unionists, have launched nationwide campaigns in Iraq to convince their fellow citizens that their society should be rebuilt along universal human rights principles. Freedom of expression, free and fair elections, and equality for women are among the themes that guide La'Onf's struggle for a country free of violence, and a citizenry living in peace.

Their example is one that we can and must follow. Human rights are not just words on a document, but must be lived and realized through concrete actions.

Rights & Democracy is proud to recognize La'Onf for their commitment to nonviolence and their work to empower civil society in Iraq. We are united with them in the belief that true peace must be built on a foundation of human rights.


REMY M. BEAUREGARD

RIGHTS & DEMOCRACY'S JOHN HUMPHREY AWARD

RIGHTS & DEMOCRACY presents this award each year to an organization or individual from any country or region of the world for exceptional achievement in the promotion of human rights and democratic development. The award consists of a speaking tour of Canadian cities to help increase awareness of the recipient's human rights work. It is named in honour of the Canadian John Peters Humphrey, a human rights law professor who prepared the first draft of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

For further details, visit:

www.dd-rd.ca or write Louis Moubarak (lmoubarak@dd-rd.ca)



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PREVIOUS WINNERS

- 2008 – Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (Zimbabwe)
- 2007 – Akbar Ganji (Iran)
- 2006 – Su Su Nway (Burma)
- 2005 – Yan Christian Warinussy (West Papua)
- 2004 – Godeliève Mukasarasi (Rwanda)
- 2003 – Kimy Pernía Domicó (Colombia) and Angélica Mendoza de Ascarza (Peru)
- 2002 – Ayesha Imam (Nigeria)
- 2001 – Sima Samar (Afghanistan)
- 2000 – Reverend Timothy Njoya (Kenya)
- 1999 – Cynthia Maung and Min Ko Naing (Burma)
- 1998 – Palden Gyatso (Tibet)
- 1997 – Father Javier Giraldo (Colombia)
- 1996 – Sultana Kamal (Bangladesh)
- 1995 – Bishop Carlos F. X. Belo (East Timor)
- 1994 – Campaign for Democracy (Nigeria) and Egyptian Organization for Human Rights (Egypt)
- 1993 – La Plate-forme des organismes haïtiens de défense des droits humains (Haïti)
- 1992 – Instituto de Defensa Legal (Peru)

LA'ONF, THE IRAQI NONVIOLENCE NETWORK

(www.laonf.net)

A second Week of Nonviolence in May of 2007 was far more national in scope. It included 42 organizations from 10 different governorates of Iraq (there are 18 governorates in Iraq, which function like states or provinces). The theme of the second week was "Building Peace." Actions included large and small gatherings, often with school children.

In many regions, activists collected local residents' signatures in support of initiatives to ban the importation and sale of war toys. La'Onf undertook this drive after many young boys and their families were shot by occupation forces, who mistook realistic-looking toy machine guns for actual weapons. The petition drive had significant success. In the governorate of Muthanna, a petition initiated in 2007 resulted the following year in an ordinance being passed by the Iraqi Governing Council of Muthanna outlawing the importation and sales of all war-related toys and firecrackers.

Experienced activists also conducted workshops to which local Iraqi NGOs, civil society organizations, student groups, unions and tribal leaders were invited. At the end of each workshop, participating individuals and organizations were invited to become members of La'Onf's network within their governorate. By June 2008, more than 100 Iraqi organizations had committed to the principles of nonviolence and joined La'Onf.

In August 2008, despite the challenges to travel presented by war, violence, economic difficulties, and a badly damaged infrastructure, representatives from 15 of Iraq's governorates met in Erbil for the network's first national meeting with a democratically-elected leadership structure.

The members of La'Onf endorsed the following goals and principles:

- That all Iraqi citizens be able to participate in elections free from any and all pressures concerning how they vote.
- That violence be prevented during campaigning and voting.
- That all citizens have the right to vote regardless of their sectarian or intellectual background, religion or nationality; that this right must be protected for all.
- La'Onf called for laws that guarantee that the nomination and election of candidates will be according to an open list—a system that enables Iraqi voters to select specific candidates when voting (not a closed list in which one votes only for a political party).
- La'Onf called upon all the political parties to present their programs to Iraq's citizens, including information about:
 1. What plans they have to develop infrastructure in the governorate.
 2. What services they are going to provide in the governorate.
 3. What they will do to provide employment opportunities.
 4. Their thoughts about the roles of non-governmental organizations and how they plan to support them.



5. Their thoughts on nonviolence as a means for addressing and solving problems; and what guarantees they would make that local government will not resort to violence when dealing with its citizens.
 6. Their position on basic principles of human rights, especially the issues of non-discrimination against women and respect for freedom of expression.
- La'Onf insisted that the Iraqi police and the Iraqi army should be the only forces responsible for protecting the election process, and they called upon these forces to maintain neutrality so as to provide an opportunity for citizens to express their opinions freely through the ballot box.
 - La'Onf demanded that the occupation forces and other armed groups not interfere with the election process, but respect that only the Iraqi police and the Iraqi army should be responsible for the security of Iraqi citizens nationwide.

More than 50 organizations, which were not members of La'Onf, were so moved by a desire to promote democratic change via the ballot box and by the hope of rebuilding Iraqi civil society institutions that they joined in the activities of the third Week of Nonviolence. Many of these organizations will, it is hoped, officially join the network in the future.

Women's Rights

La'Onf's major activity to date in 2009 was a salute to all Iraqi women on International Women's Day (March 8) and a nationally-coordinated day of activities and events to build support for a campaign promoting discussion and action on stopping violence against women. Calling upon Iraqi citizens, politicians, the government of Iraq, and all its civil society organizations, La'Onf activists proclaimed that violence against women must be challenged and ended in their country.

La'Onf argues that Iraqi women are seeking to play a role in building their country. While the current quota system of Iraqi elections (which promises that women will hold 25% of elected offices) is an important step in

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promoting the empowerment of women, it is not sufficient. La'Onf is seeking to advance full equality for women in all Iraqi legislation and administration, and to assure their rights to education and work. La'Onf members demanded that the Iraqi government and the Regional Government of Kurdistan amend the Iraqi Constitution to fully guarantee an end to discrimination against women.

"We must work hard to stand up against the customs and traditions that justify violence against women in Iraq," La'Onf stated. It particularly cited the lack of legislation guaranteeing women's equality, incorrect religious interpretations concerning women's roles and rights, the harsh repression of previous authoritarian regimes, and traditional cultures as the underlying factors allowing violence against women to occur.

La'Onf's announcement of their "Stop Violence Against Women" Campaign cited many reports documenting flagrant violations of Iraqi women's rights that have tragically led to dangerous, often deadly levels of violence. La'Onf identifies the root causes of this violence in the harsh conditions of the past years, especially years of forced displacement and an absence of security. In the words of La'Onf:

Iraqi women have suffered under the previous authoritarian regimes, and by war, occupation and sectarian violence, they paid the price in double and the result is the emergence of an army of widows estimated in millions. This is in addition to unemployment and the withdrawal of women from the street and staying at home as a result of fear and hostility.

Recently, however, La'Onf sees a "significant improvement in security." It is now "the responsibility of everyone to face the phenomenon of violence against women" and to ensure that women enjoy "all their rights as equivalent to men." La'Onf is specifically targeting the media, men and women of religious faith, intellectuals, artists and athletes, the universities, and the embassies and consulates of foreign governments to help develop, promote and spread the messages of the campaign.

Before the end of 2009, La'Onf hopes to organize an Iraqi Nonviolence Forum, open to all La'Onf members, as well as other Iraqi activists working nonviolently to promote the rights and civic engagement of Iraqi citizens and members of the international community who are interested in supporting the work of La'Onf. Initial discussions about the fourth annual Week of Nonviolence in Iraq include plans to work on areas where ethnic and sectarian discrimination have produced intolerable levels of violence and fear, and to search for social and legal strategies to reduce violence. ^ℓ

[NOTE: Much of the information about the history and work of La'Onf is written in Arabic and Kurdish, languages I neither speak nor read. Some of this information is translated into English on La'Onf website www.laonf.net. This report was prepared from these English sources and from my notes on conversations with members of La'Onf during their 2008 national assembly in Iraq, and when we met at conferences in Spain, Jordan, and Italy. I am very thankful to everyone who translated those conversations for me, and to the members of La'Onf who were able to and took the time to speak to me in English. — Terry Kay Rockefeller]

La'Onf, the Iraqi Nonviolence Network (www.laonf.net)



Please, spread the message: there is not only violence in Iraq, there is something more; people are building peace and seeking real change... Today La'Onf exists within the polarized and dangerous political environment of Iraq, where if you speak about resistance you are accused of supporting terrorists and advocating violence; but if you speak about nonviolence you are accused of supporting the occupation. La'Onf seeks to create a third way with its message that nonviolence is a tool to resist occupation, terrorism and corruption.

— Ismaeel Dawood,
Founding Member of La'Onf



IRAQ'S CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM PROCESS

John McGarry (john.mcgarry@queensu.ca), Canada Research Chair in Nationalism and Democracy, Department of Political Studies, Queen's University

THE IRAQ CONSTITUTION, adopted in October 2005 after four of five voters endorsed it in a referendum with a turnout of 80 per cent, provided for the establishment of a committee that could consider constitutional reforms. The committee, established under Article 142, was to report within four months of the establishment of the Council of Representatives (Parliament of Iraq), i.e. by the summer of 2006.

The committee has not reported. Technically its constitutional mandate has expired, though there is a possibility that a report will be forthcoming before the federal parliamentary elections in January 2010. The committee hasn't reported because there is no consensus among its members on the issues it faces. While a report does not require a consensus, there would be little prospect of the committee's recommendations being implemented without one. This is because any amendments to Iraq's Constitution under Article 142 require not just an absolute majority of Iraq's voters, but also the support of at least a third of voters in 16 of 18 governorates. This last provision means that there must be widespread support, from both Arabs and Kurds, if any amendments are to pass.

The lack of a consensus is hardly surprising. On one side of the committee are some Arab centralists who want a much stronger federal government. On the other side are those, predominantly Kurds, who do not. Three issues have dominated proceedings, and all of them reflect this fundamental division. First, one side wants to establish the federal government's control over natural resources, particularly oil. While the existing Constitution restricts the federal authorities managerial rights to currently exploited

fields, and obligates them to co-manage with producing governorates and regions (which they have not done), the centralisers want the federal government to have exclusive control over natural resources. Second, supporters of a strong Baghdad want to roll back the legal supremacy that is enjoyed by Iraq's regions in all matters that are not explicitly under federal jurisdiction. Third, centralists want to amend the constitutional amending formula to make it "easier" to change the Constitution. Once Article 142 expires (and there is a case for saying that it already has) future constitutional change requires a two thirds affirmative resolution in the lower federal chamber and a popular majority in a referendum, but the proposed change can be vetoed by any region if it affects regional powers.

Kurds can therefore stop changes under Article 142 and future changes deemed detrimental to their interests. However, the status quo does not entirely suit them either. If the Constitution remains unamended, the current three-person, and relatively strong presidency, which facilitates power-sharing among Iraq's three major communities, will be converted into a single person and weaker presidency, with more power shifting to the Prime Minister. Kurds are also unhappy with the failure to achieve a referendum on Kirkuk and the other disputed territories, though the Constitution absolutely mandated the federal executive to accomplish such a referendum by December 2007. There has also been a failure to legislate the creation of a federal second chamber and to legislate to put the federal Supreme Court's composition and modes of procedure on a regular footing, two institutions that, in theory, could accommodate all of Iraq's communities. ¹

NURTURING A YOUNG MIDDLE EAST

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Regional Officer, Middle East
and North Africa



LAUNCHED IN 2005, Rights & Democracy's Middle East North Africa (MENA) programme is one of the institution's newest programmes.

The MENA region has proven largely immune to the so-called third wave of democratization. The reforms celebrated as the "Arab Spring" were short lived, and only led to more oppression and disillusionment. The region faces enormous challenges in terms of democracy, human rights and human development.

Ironically, the cradle of civilization—often referred to as the "old world"—is in fact quite youthful. Some 60% of the population is under 25 years of age, making the region one of the youngest regions in the world. Although youth make up the bulk of the population, they suffer discrimination, social and political marginalization due to patriarchal norms that dominate most Arab societies.

Rights & Democracy sees youth as the agents of hope and change in the region. Accordingly, the MENA programming at Rights & Democracy concentrates on providing youth with spaces and opportunities to spearhead changes in their communities. It is based on the belief that youth are citizens "now," not later.

In Morocco our institution works with marginalized youth in shanty towns. Along with our partners we provide youth with the opportunity of living their citizenship. Our work is based on democratic civic practice that recognizes young people as citizens and provides them with spaces in which to engage politicians and work for change. This work will take a national dimension with the future inclusion of Moroccan universities.

In Jordan, Rights & Democracy fostered a partnership with the Princess Basma Youth Resource Center and is working with its staff to develop an alternative democratic model for youth work based on the principles of equity, tolerance, trust and independence.

In the Palestinian Territories, Rights & Democracy supported an educational programme in human rights entitled Social Justice and Human Rights: Thematic Workshops for Palestinian Youth Living within the Context of a Man-Made Emergency Situation, in the town of Nablus. The project implemented by a local partner, Project Hope, encourages Palestinian youth (aged 13 to 25) to explore social justice and human rights issues with the goal of promoting civil society, voluntarism, democracy, good governance, human rights, and women's rights. The project focuses on marginalized areas such as refugee camps, the old city, and nearby villages.

Rights & Democracy's MENA programme will continue to take on new dimensions and to explore new themes as it expands. With youth as a driving force of its programming, the possibilities are unlimited. It is our belief that young people are the burgeoning "Arab Spring".

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Libertas is available free of charge and is accessible electronically at www.dd-rd.ca. Articles may be freely excerpted, provided credit is given and a copy of the publication in which the material appears is sent to Rights & Democracy.

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EDITING: Lise Lortie, Steve Smith, Augie Van Biljouw, Charles Vallerand

PHOTOS: La'Onf, September 11th Families for Peaceful Tomorrows

GRAPHIC PRODUCTION: Cubik communication graphique

LEGAL DEPOSIT: 4th quarter 2009 • ISSN 1027-0884

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Printed in Canada by Club imprimerie Montréal inc.

DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT IN CONFLICT SITUATIONS

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IT IS OFTEN ASSUMED THAT DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT is a "luxury" in situations of violent conflict or immediately after the cessation of such conflict. That is to say, the security situation must be "solved" first, and then people should worry about building a democratic society. However, there is an inexorable link between security—and the stability that it brings—and democracy. This means that democratic development must be an inherent component of conflict resolution, and prevention, even in societies steeped in violence.

At the very heart of the concept of democracy is the notion of *peacefully* dealing with disagreements, competing interests, ideological clashes, political tensions, etc. A democratic system is about negotiating differences based on the equal rights of all. Of course, this is easier said than done, particularly where there is a long tradition of violence. The key question then is how to transform disagreements that lead to violence into disagreements that could be dealt with through peaceful negotiation and political processes. In short, how to plant the kernel of democracy amidst violent conflict?

At the very heart of the concept of democracy is the notion of peacefully dealing with disagreements, competing interests, ideological clashes, political tensions ...

The first task is to develop an approach that does not see conflict as a "zero sum" game, that the winner "takes all" and the loser must be vanquished. This is a very difficult thing to do conceptually during conflict, and yet it is an essential step. It suggests that the objective must not be conflict resolution but conflict *management*. It is easier to negotiate on the management of difference rather than its resolution (which implies the elimination of one or more sides). Elections, for example, which are inherently about competition and difference (when free and fair) should be the means to *include* opposition forces in the political process, not to eliminate them or completely shut them out of power (or economic) structures. The design of an appropriate electoral system is therefore of paramount importance.

Four elements flow from this approach. These elements are necessary for the practical management of conflict, and its redirection from violence to peaceful negotiation. The first is the strengthening of nascent state institutions—or their creation where they do not exist—that could mitigate conflict. These include an array of institutions such as a parliament, an independent judiciary, a human rights commission, an electoral commission, a competent civil service and police force, an educational system, and so forth. However, we should be mindful of the fact that such institutions in and themselves could be both part of the problem and part of the solution. They are part of the problem if one sector of society controls the state for its own benefit excluding other sectors—i.e. institutions that do not serve the *public* good; they are part of the solution if they are managed in an inclusive manner. The challenge is to understand this dilemma and engage in institution-building in a manner that is coherent with democratic principles (e.g. institutions that include within them all sectors of society, from minorities in the bureaucracy to women in the police force). Good institutions are needed for a functioning democracy, but the democratic vision is necessary to ensure that the institutions created do not become part of the problem.

The second element is a vibrant civil society. Much like institutions, civil society has both positive and negative dimensions. It could be a source of intolerance and exclusion, for example, in the case of religious or ethnic mobilization against specific groups. Or it could be a space for inclusion and dialogue. Fostering a multifaceted civil society—NGOs, trade unions, civic associations, tolerant religious establishments—enables debate and negotiation to take place, and it becomes a source of ideas, not to mention an example of dialogue. Here, too, democratic principles must be articulated so that alternatives to violence are present within society. As civil society holds the state accountable for its activities, it reinforces the idea of non-violent dissent, however modest the activities of civil society initially are.

The third element is political parties (or political groups on their way to becoming parties). This is a particularly difficult aspect to deal with since often in violent situations the line between political party and armed groups is blurred or even non-existent. How does one turn a guerrilla group into a political party? Part of the complication relates to issues of impunity. When crimes are committed and massive human rights abuses have taken place, the combatants cannot just become "politicians" and expect to get away with it. This would not contribute to the long-term stability of a society. Based on a case-by-case analysis, political parties and movements must be engaged with in a manner that strikes the right balance between engagement *and* justice that speaks to the needs of that particular society, and yet is in line with international human rights standards.

The fourth element flows from above, and that is the importance of ensuring some degree of justice and healing. Transitional justice mechanisms are one way of dealing with the deep cleavages within post-war societies. These include truth and reconciliation commissions and traditional tribunals. But such mechanisms are only part of the overall picture. It is also important to seek justice for the most serious violations of human rights, be it within the national judicial system (if it functions properly), or within regional or international judicial systems. For victims of violence, obtaining justice is of crucial importance, symbolically and materially. Without such a sense of justice—and the recognition it brings—victims will not consider the social system being rebuilt as legitimate; and without such legitimacy there will not be long term stability.

There is an important gender component in all this, particularly pertaining to violence against women and sexual crimes. Issues of reparation and remedy are part of the dialogue within society and must be addressed to attain long-term stability. Discrimination of all types and structural inequalities lead to violence, but there is a distinct impact on women. It is not only essential to have the voices of women and gendered approaches incorporated in the rebuilding of society from the very beginning, including in peace negotiations, but to also address the needs of women institutionally, as well as access to justice for gender crimes committed during violent conflict.

The construction of a democratic society that is respectful of human rights takes a very long time, particularly in societies where violence is prevalent. But this can be done, with patience, and with sound policies that base the building of institutions, civil society and political parties on a sense of justice. The starting point for such an endeavour cannot wait until security is attained. Democratic development—as dangerous as it could be—is part of the solution to violent conflict, not a "luxury" that could come later. *ℓ*


CANADA AND IRAQ: A QUESTION OF CONSISTENCY

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On June 30, 2009, the 138,000 U.S. soldiers deployed in Iraq withdrew to their bases as part of a security agreement signed with the Iraqi authorities, the first step towards a U.S. troop withdrawal scheduled for August 2010. While the transfer of responsibilities for security took place at a time when violence had reached its lowest ebb since 2004, the increase in the number of attacks since August 2009 highlights the fragility of the situation. Aside from security, a number of pending issues could either consolidate or undermine the progress of the past couple of years: the reintegration of Sunnis in Iraq's security institutions, the fate of Kirkuk and the Petroleum Law. There is also the new problem of Parliament's inability to agree on a new electoral law; something that threatens the upcoming parliamentary elections, scheduled for January 16, 2010.

Despite US President Barack Obama's comments during a meeting at the White House with Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, the commitment of Iraqis to democracy is far from secure. Although there are fervent supporters of democracy in Iraq today, various communities, particularly Arabs and Kurds, are seriously at odds over the shape of Iraq's future. Arabs want a strong central state, without which they fear for the country's unity and territorial integrity; Kurds—who have historically associated strong centralization with persecution—seek far-reaching autonomy. The fears of both groups are rooted in a tumultuous history; they must be treated as such.

How can rights and democracy be ensured while maintaining Iraq's territorial integrity? What role can Canada play to this end? Iraq's federal structure provides a good starting point. In order for federations to ensure both unity and diversity, they must succeed at a double balancing act: guarantee the representation of all parts in the federal centre and ensure the presence of the centre in all regions. Though the current Iraqi government better represents the various segments of the country, it must still come to grips with the issue of Sunni representation. Meanwhile, the federal government's presence is far from equally felt in all regions, which raises concerns about the shrivelling of national ties, a scenario that we are currently witnessing in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Until quite recently, Canada chaired the International Reconstruction Trust Fund Facility for Iraq in acknowledgement of its role in the democratic development process in that country. Today, Iraq has fallen off the list of priorities of Canada's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and of the Canadian International Development Agency. Particularly regrettable was the cancellation of a program conceived and implemented by the Forum of Federations that, between 2006 and 2008, contributed to training dozens of Iraqi academics from all communities and regions in the proper functioning of federal institutions. Although this is not the kind of program that yields resounding results in the short term, it is the only kind of program that provides the laborious educational (and civic) training needed to ensure better understanding and performance of federal institutions. Only a well-functioning federal system can reconcile rights, democracy and national unity. This is not simply about Iraq's future; it is also about the coherence of our policies and commitment to help fragile states get back on their feet. This is the price we have to pay if we want our foreign commitments, be they in Iraq, Afghanistan or elsewhere, to contribute not only to rebuild these societies but also to ensure international peace and security. 

IRAQ AT A GLANCE

Capital:	Baghdad
Population (million):	30.413
Total Area:	437,072 km ²
Type of State:	Parliamentary Democracy
Independence:	October 3, 1932
Head of State:	Jalal Talabani (since April 6, 2005)
Prime Minister:	Nouri al-Maliki (since April 22, 2006)
Languages:	Arabic, Kurdish (official languages), Assyrian, Turkomen, Armenian
Principal Religion:	Islam 97 % (Shia 60–65 %, Sunni 32–37 %), Christianity and others 3 %
Legal Voting Age:	18 years old
GDP per capita (\$):	3,206

Type of Government:

The Council of Representatives is the main elected body of representatives and functions as the legislative branch of government with authority to select government according to party strength in elections. The Council consists of 275 members elected by a proportional representation system. Once government is chosen, a Presidency Council (president and two vice-presidents) is elected by a two-thirds majority in the Council of Representatives. The Presidency Council has various powers including the ability to veto legislation. It also appoints the Prime Minister and cabinet ministers. The President of Iraq's powers are limited with most executive authority vested in the Prime Minister. (Source: DFAIT)



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