



IRAQI FUTURE
FOUNDATION

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Al Anbar Center for Democracy

During the 35 years preceding Operation Iraqi Freedom, the people of Iraq experienced brutal dictatorship, two major wars that orphaned millions of children, bloody coups, and twelve years of UN sanctions. These factors contributed to the emergence of a culture of violence and fear that was unraveling the social fabric of Iraqi society at an unprecedented rate. The source of authority and information under Baathist totalitarian rule was not the Iraqi people, but rather an oppressive military structure that abused the rights of its citizens while claiming to protect them, and relied on a psychology of fear to silence dissent. Baath party institutions enveloped and stifled a once vibrant civic life, while a new generation was raised in isolation from the outside world, and had no understanding of social discourse and political change other than through violence.

Today, Iraqis are reclaiming the right to participate in public life and are enjoying freedom of expression and access to information at an unprecedented scale. In January 2005, Iraqis voted in their first competitive election in more than five decades for a Transitional National Assembly, which will form an interim government and debate and draft a new constitution and submit it for a national referendum by October 2005. Iraqis will then elect a government on the basis of the new constitution in December 2005. The drafting of the constitution will push to the fore a complex set of questions, including how to ensure equal citizenship among Iraq's diverse ethnic and religious communities, the appropriate role for Islam in Iraq's public institutions and laws, what form federalism should take, and many others. One of the most important challenges in Iraq's democratic transition is to ensure the inclusion of all Iraqi communities in the democratic process – the process for and issues pertinent to constitution drafting, the referendum and national elections. Youth especially are in need of education, employment and most importantly civic guidance, without which, they remain easy recruits for radical movements.

In response, the Iraqi Future Foundation (IFF), a nonprofit organization established in Baghdad in 2004 has established Al Anbar Center for Democracy (ACD) for the people of Al Anbar province. The overall objective of this project is to encourage the residents of western Iraq to participate in the democratic and civic process in Iraq. The specific objectives are to:

- Enhance public awareness of the democratic process in Iraq
- Promote participation in the electoral process
- Encourage the civic participation of women, youth and tribal leaders
- Strengthen institutional and networking capacity of IFF

IFF believes democracy begin with individuals who understand their rights and duties as citizens of a moderate, transparent and well-governed society. Through the ACD, the Iraqi Future Foundation is helping to set the groundwork for a better Iraq.

For more information about the ACD or the IFF,
please send your questions to:

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