



IRAQI FUTURE
FOUNDATION

PRESS RELEASE

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Fostering Iraq's Future Leaders

Istanbul, Turkey

June 22-25, 2006

Approximately 50 academics and public leaders gathered in Istanbul for the 8th Global Leadership Forum. This year, the focus was on the "Challenges of Leadership". Participants represented NGOs and academic institutions from Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, China, India, Iraq, Malaysia, Mexico, Pakistan, Russia, South Africa, Sudan, Turkey, UK, and the U.S.

Al Anbar Center for Democracy (ACD) Board Director and IFF President, Dr. Jaber Awad was among the participants and presented a paper titled "Fostering Iraq's Future Leaders."

Dr. Jaber addressed the needs of the nation, the moral duties of its citizens and government, and began to outline an actionable course for fostering youth leadership in Iraq. He emphasized that fostering youth leadership is a communal effort that requires of all Iraqis, from parent to prime minister, full commitment to creating the right conditions and building the right character for its youth. He further stressed that only Iraqis are capable of improving their lives.

When we examine the condition of Iraqi youth today, there is much cause for concern. Over half of the Iraqi population is under the age of seventeen. One out of every four urban children, and one out of three rural children, lives in poverty or below poverty conditions. Approximately 55% percent of Iraqi youth are unable to attend school. Of those who do, their schooling is often interrupted due to lack of security.

There are no recreation facilities for youth. Playgrounds, theme parks, cinemas, shopping malls, were all destroyed in 2003. Even playing in the street is off limits as parents attempt to shelter their children from explosions, shootings and kidnappings. And over 50% of Iraq's young men and women are unemployed.

Given the statistics, it is not surprising that our youth suffer from depression, fatalism, frustration, anger, even rage. Were it not for the strength of the family in the Arab and Muslim society, we would see similar trends as those exhibited by youth in the west - such as drug abuse, alcoholism and suicide. Instead, frustration and lack of opportunities make our youth vulnerable to movements that channel their energies into non-productive, even criminal, activities. They are targets for recruit by militants, be they religious or political.

IFF and ACD are committed to developing the types of programs needed to foster tolerance and unity, and we understand that youth are critical to these efforts.

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

www.iraqifuturefoundation.org



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