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IRAQ

**F**or the sixth straight year, Iraq has been among the most dangerous countries in the world for journalists. In 2008, 15 journalists and media assistants were killed. Despite improvement in overall security, the indicators of freedom of speech have declined in the face of suppression, prohibition, beatings, arrests, and prosecutions by the state authorities in general and by various ministries in particular.

In a message to Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) and the Journalistic Freedoms Observatory (JFO) said that many journalists have faced harassment and in some cases assault by Iraqi security forces. In other cases, high-ranking government officials have used lawsuits as a political tool to obstruct and silence the media. The CPJ and JFO therefore called on the government to improve the working environment for journalists in Iraq, to publicly condemn violent attacks and acts of intimidation against journalists, and to investigate and bring to justice those responsible for killing, attacking, or harassing journalists.

Government agencies have filed politically motivated lawsuits against journalists and publications pursuant to Law No. 111/1969, the 1969 Penal Code inherited from the former regime. It contains 15 articles that criminalize press-related offenses and set harsh penalties for them, including the death penalty.

At the end of 2008, the conflict in Iraq mutated into something that had profound consequences for the media. In previous years, which saw sectarian violence and political disputes, journalists had been the targets of violent attacks by gunmen, militias, and local and foreign military personnel. That has shifted to political conflict marked by confrontation between journalists and government institutions. Organized violence committed by authorities associated with government ministries and institutions has been accepted, and coverage of news stories has been prevented, especially by local councils that have created extraordinary laws threatening journalists with arrest and fines.

The MSI panel agreed that the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraqi cities would provide greater opportunities for the authorities to increase restrictions on journalists and prevent them from exercising a real supervisory role over the government's performance. The dangers for journalists would be redoubled, in particular because politicians and officials, who fear oversight and the detection of corruption and abuse of public funds, would not foster the culture necessary for recognizing the role of the media in public life.

# IRAQ AT A GLANCE

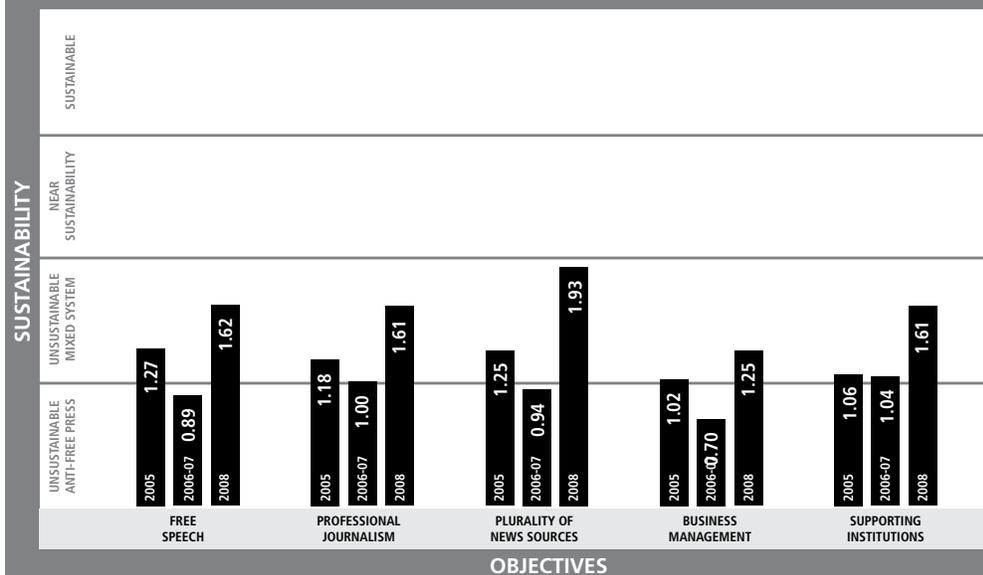
## GENERAL

- > **Population:** 28,945,657 (July 2009 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Capital city:** Baghdad
- > **Ethnic groups (% of population):** Arab 75%-80%, Kurdish 15%-20%, Turkoman, Assyrian, or other 5% (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Religions (% of population):** Muslim 97% (Shia 60%-65%, Sunni 32%-37%), Christian or other 3% (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Languages:** Arabic, Kurdish (official in Kurdish regions), Turkoman (a Turkish dialect), Assyrian (Neo-Aramaic), Armenian (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **GDP (2007):** \$69,709 (*UN World Statistics Pocketbook, 2008*)
- > **GDP per capita (2007):** \$2,404 (*UN World Statistics Pocketbook, 2008*)
- > **Literacy rate:** 74.1% (male 84.1%, female 64.2%) (2000 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **President or top authority:** President Jalal Talabani (since April 6, 2005)

## MEDIA SPECIFIC

- > **Number of active print outlets, radio stations, television stations:** Print: 55 newspapers, 32 magazines; Radio: 84 stations; Television stations: 84
- > **Newspaper circulation statistics:** N/A
- > **Broadcast ratings:** N/A
- > **News agencies:** Iraqi News Agency (state-controlled); 10 additional agencies
- > **Annual advertising revenue in media sector:** N/A
- > **Internet usage:** 300,000 (2008 est., *CIA World Factbook*)

### MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: IRAQ



#### Unsustainable, Anti-Free Press (0-1):

Country does not meet or only minimally meets objectives. Government and laws actively hinder free media development, professionalism is low, and media-industry activity is minimal.

#### Unsustainable Mixed System (1-2):

Country minimally meets objectives, with segments of the legal system and government opposed to a free media system. Evident progress in free-press advocacy, increased professionalism, and new media businesses may be too recent to judge sustainability.

#### Near Sustainability (2-3):

Country has progressed in meeting multiple objectives, with legal norms, professionalism, and the business environment supportive of independent media. Advances have survived changes in government and have been codified in law and practice. However, more time may be needed to ensure that change is enduring and that increased professionalism and the media business environment are sustainable.

#### Sustainable (3-4):

Country has media that are considered generally professional, free, and sustainable, or to be approaching these objectives. Systems supporting independent media have survived multiple governments, economic fluctuations, and changes in public opinion or social conventions.

## OBJECTIVE 1: FREEDOM OF SPEECH

### Iraq Objective Score: 1.62

Any optimism regarding the prospects for freedom of the media would be very much an exaggeration, panelists said. There is a need to proceed cautiously and deliberately, working to pass legislation allowing those freedoms, and trying to block demands by authorities for restrictions, especially those that would be implemented through loosely worded legislation that could be subject to interpretation.

Article 38 of the Iraqi constitution, adopted in 2005, provides for freedom of the press. But other rules and regulations dealing with media amount to a confusing mix of recent legislation, orders issued by the US-led civil authority that held power after the 2003 invasion of Iraq, and laws that date back to the rule of Saddam Hussein—and before.

Heder Al-Badri, reporter for El-Hora Iraq Television in Babel province, said he believes that the government is not serious about creating a suitable environment for free media because the majority of Iraqi leaders believe that media represent a threat to their political futures. Recent statements by President Jalal Talabani and Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki on the need to interdict the so-called anti-political process in Iraq gave clear indications for the future of press freedoms.

On the subject of the issuance of licenses for public and private media and the journalism profession, the government is not yet intent on adopting specific legislation. Although it provides licenses without restrictions, it continues to operate under the emergency law ratified by the US-led Coalition Provisional Authority in 2004, which allows the prime minister to close down any media outlet that, according to the government, “might provoke violence.”

Even as persecution of Iraqi journalists decreased during 2008, the government was not able to provide them real protection by revealing those who had persecuted them over the past few years. No Iraqi security institutions released the names of individuals or organizations behind the killing of 247 journalists and media assistants, nor had they trained their officers to deal with journalists on site.

Safaa Hajem, a lawyer specializing in media issues, noted also that there was a degree of weakness in the Iraqi judiciary’s ability to combat persecution of journalists and media institutions. To date, the identities of no person or agency involved in the murder or killing of journalists has been allowed to be disclosed. Although news about persecution of journalists is always heard, there is never any news concerning the arrest by the judicial or security forces of whoever was responsible for “accidents” involving journalists.

Shawkat al-Bayati, a reporter for Aka News Agency in Baghdad, expressed surprise that the security services have not yet managed to apprehend those who had assassinated Iraqi journalists. He concluded that the government was not serious about prosecuting those responsible for violence against journalists.

The government currently is considering a law ostensibly aimed at increasing the safety of journalists. But panelists pointed out that that the so-called Protection of Journalists Act would restrict access to information under the pretext of security. One paragraph stipulated that journalists be permitted to carry out their work without interference by the security forces unless there were “legitimate grounds” for such interference. Another part of the draft defined journalists only as members of the Iraqi Union of Journalists. Journalists objected to the draft act, which was proposed to the parliament by the journalists’ union in 2008, and the parliament referred the draft back to the government for examination.

Hajem pointed out that any security official could fabricate “legitimate grounds” that would be a sufficient legal justification for preventing a journalist from performing his or her work. Hadi Jallow Murae, a journalist and strategic expert, said that the clause in the act that would bar journalists from information for reasons of national security would prevent them from having any access to the truth.

The constant reliance on certain clauses of the 1969 Penal Code, in which some offenses for defamation of a public official carry the death penalty, is another serious sign that the government

#### LEGAL AND SOCIAL NORMS PROTECT AND PROMOTE FREE SPEECH AND ACCESS TO PUBLIC INFORMATION.

##### FREE-SPEECH INDICATORS:

- > Legal and social protections of free speech exist and are enforced.
- > Licensing of broadcast media is fair, competitive, and apolitical.
- > Market entry and tax structure for media are fair and comparable to other industries.
- > Crimes against journalists or media outlets are prosecuted vigorously, but occurrences of such crimes are rare.
- > State or public media do not receive preferential legal treatment, and law guarantees editorial independence.
- > Libel is a civil law issue; public officials are held to higher standards, and offended parties must prove falsity and malice.
- > Public information is easily accessible; right of access to information is equally enforced for all media and journalists.
- > Media outlets have unrestricted access to information; this is equally enforced for all media and journalists.
- > Entry into the journalism profession is free, and government imposes no licensing, restrictions, or special rights for journalists.

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has no immediate intention of abolishing legislation that is incompatible with the principle of free expression.

Basem al-Shara, a Baghdad reporter for the Institute for War and Peace Reporting, said that the increasing number of prosecutions against newspapers for publishing reports on administrative corruption was an obvious sign of officials' intent to violate the freedom of speech provided for in the constitution. The Ministry of Trade filed suit against a number of Iraqi newspapers, including the dailies *Al-Mashreq* and *Al-Barlman*, for publishing reports on administrative corruption in the ministry. The suits were quickly withdrawn, however, under pressure from organizations advocating freedom of the press and expression.

Prosecutions against journalists by the government for publishing reports about violence and corruption, together with the restriction of freedom of photography by imposing a prior-approval requirement, reflect a new policy that might eventually result in hamstringing the work of Iraq's media. Nahla Ghazi, president of the Foundation for Culture, Information, and Economic Development, argued that many Iraqi officials threaten journalists with lawsuits on charges of defamation for reporting on administrative corruption or poor services. There were signs of a governmental orientation that would be clearly formulated, following the withdrawal of the US troops from Iraqi cities, aiming to prevent the flow of any information on corruption, the level of violence in Iraq, or anything that might harm the government's image.

The Iraqi government tries to withhold any information that shows it in an unacceptable light. Imad Abbadi, director of Al-Diyar Television, said Iraqi politicians differ on everything except obstructing and silencing the media; as a result, Iraqis remain unaware that the media work for their benefit and welfare.

According to al-Shara, restrictions imposed by the security services on photography in the capital were a serious first step toward restricting the freedom of the press in Iraq. Since 2006, Iraqi authorities have prevented journalists from filming

and covering events in the streets without prior approval by military commanders and local officials.

Although al-Maliki has confirmed the freedoms of the media and expression and the right of journalists to access information, in practice prior approval from his office is problematic. Samaa Metty, a community developer with Iraqi Civil Community Institutions, confirmed that it is difficult to contact any official in the Office of the Prime Minister to obtain information, and the government spokesman, Ali al-Dabbagh, does not answer any phone calls unless they are from the European or American media.

Hajem argued that Iraq needs new legislation to allow journalists access to information or to oblige government institutions to provide information requested by journalists. Citizens are denied important information if the media face problems in accessing and disseminating it. Although access to the media and to media information is available to citizens, access to information is not available to the media.

## OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

### Iraq Objective Score: 1.61

The development of fair and objective media in Iraq has been hindered by constant self-censorship among media institutions that fear the reactions of the government, political actors, and various other parties. As a result, work is neither performed effectively nor is news reporting attractive to the consumer, because of its lack of professionalism, a lack of modern technology, and the persistence of some media workers who are not interested in developing or changing

### JOURNALISM MEETS PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS OF QUALITY.

#### PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM INDICATORS:

- > Reporting is fair, objective, and well sourced.
- > Journalists follow recognized and accepted ethical standards.
- > Journalists and editors do not practice self-censorship.
- > Journalists cover key events and issues.
- > Pay levels for journalists and other media professionals are sufficiently high to discourage corruption.
- > Entertainment programming does not eclipse news and information programming.
- > Technical facilities and equipment for gathering, producing, and distributing news are modern and efficient.
- > Quality niche reporting and programming exists (investigative, economics/business, local, political).

professional methods and who reject the democratic initiatives taking place in the country.

Most media outlets in Iraq lack agreed-upon norms to ensure acceptable standards for publishing objective reports that take into account the plurality of views in Iraq. On the contrary, the organizations that own or fund Iraq's various media outlets put pressure on editors to conform to a particular political line, and editors force employees to work in a manner that does not meet the standards of professionalism. Employees, for their part, will back down because they are subordinates who want to secure their livelihoods. Indeed, most media outlets regard journalists as employees who can be easily replaced if they disagree with the view from the top.

Al-Badri said that most local media institutions exercise such self-censorship because they fear getting into trouble with the government parties and authorities. Sabah el-Taie, office director in Iraq of Al-Massar Television, argued that most Iraqi media outlets are more interested in profits than in objectivity and professionalism. Such outlets would prefer not to work according to specific norms or conventions because they are under the control of Iraq's political parties and see things from one particular point of view.

Also, the number of professional journalists is insufficient, which has a negative influence on journalistic professionalism and specialization. Most outlets suffer from the lack of a well-trained press corps able to understand the changes taking place in Iraq. Al-Shara expressed the view that the Iraqi press is still far from achieving adequate professionalism because it does not have workers who believe in democratic change in Iraq.

Ali Al-Khaiat, secretary to the editor of *Al-Da'wa* newspaper, noted that the low salaries received by Iraqi journalists had created a group called "gift and donation journalists." Such journalists were merely hangers-on of politicians and parties. They were, however, one of the reasons why the Iraqi media have not achieved professionalism and why press freedom in Iraq remains limited.

Given their lack of experience, managers cannot be relied on to eliminate all the challenges that have had a negative impact on professional standards of work. In that light, the panel concluded that the government was playing a negative role by driving the media to restrict their role to promulgation only, without regard to professionalism.

The media, including the satellite channels, are occupied almost exclusively with putting out political news and reports and show little creativity in the areas of family, reality, and entertainment programs. Broadcast media are badly in need of entertainment programs because of the predominance

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of news and because of the inability of Iraqi newspapers to produce entertainment sections.

Murae said most Iraqi channels do not include entertainment programs because they are news or religious channels; the only exceptions were the Al-Sharqia and Al-Summaria television channels, which gave equal time to entertainment programs and to news and political reports.

The panelists said Iraqi media outlets' inability to convey their message effectively also can be blamed on their reliance on outdated methods and poor technical and financial resources.

Al-Bayati attributed the outdated equipment to journalists' unwillingness to develop their work and to their managers' interest in obtaining financial support without regard to the development of the long-term potential of their companies. Hajem said that the overwhelming majority of media outlets in Iraq rely on nonprofessional production departments, with the result that their output is substandard in terms of form and content.

### OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS

#### Iraq Objective Score: 1.93

Panelists said that the Iraqi media have achieved progress in providing news from multiple news sources but that plurality was useless so long as media outlets are subjected to an official line that controls their output and effectively imposes self-censorship through influence over journalists. Consequently, plurality does not reflect the reality of society, and the impact of the media remains restricted to putting forward specific views and favoring one or another party, all at the expense of professionalism. However, Ahmed Alaa al-Yassiri, journalist and executive director of an advertising agency, said that the plurality of news sources in Iraq was important because of the lack of objectivity on the part of the state media in reporting key events.

Iraqi media outlets cannot be relied on to be actually independent, because even if the means of production

*Ghazi said that most media owners are wary of disclosing their names or disguise them because they are afraid of exposing their families to kidnapping and blackmail.*

were not state-owned, they would nevertheless be in the possession of a political party or an organization, which would inevitably give rise to questions about neutrality.

On the subject of access to sources on the Internet and satellite television, Murae expressed anxiety that a call by Communications Minister Farouk Abdul Kader for controls on certain Internet sites might be a serious step toward withholding information from the Iraqi people. Abdul Kader's proposal comes at a time when some political organizations are calling for restrictions on satellite broadcasting to block channels that "had an impact on stirring up violence against the Iraqi people." Abbadi argued that this was an indication of the government's intent to restrict satellite channels that do not conform to the views of the government and influential parties. However, such controls would be impossible to impose.

The government media are not neutral, despite changes in their management. This is true not only of the government media flagship, Al-Iraqia television, which intended to operate along the lines of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), but also for the state newspaper,

*Al-Sabah*, and the many affiliated stations broadcasting in national and other Iraqi languages.

Abbadi said that Al-Iraqia television reflects only the view of the prime minister and the parties that support him. Even though changes were made in its management and direction during 2008, it still does not express the views of the whole political spectrum or of the Iraqi people and is not committed to professional standards. Panelists said, however, that true neutrality was not an available option, given the diversity of Iraq.

In addition to controlling the content of their own media outlets, politicians have influence over other channels through their ability to affect the directors of institutions. In that, personal relations play a key role.

The emergence of specialized news agencies in Iraq that call themselves "independent" and "good sources of information" was a matter of interest to panelists. However, these agencies practice self-censorship when providing their subscribers with information. Al-Shara went further, saying that even though the agencies give the appearance of being important sources of news, they are merely carriers and put out news only from the government and parliamentary deputies. Such agencies avoid raising sensitive issues that might cause problems with the government and thus are more like government agencies that carry only government news-service stories.

Ownership of media outlets in Iraq is not transparent, nor is management of those outlets, which always keep quiet about themselves and about the bodies funding them. Ghazi said that most media owners are wary of disclosing their names or disguise them because they are afraid of exposing their families to kidnapping and blackmail. There was also another reason: most media outlets in Iraq are in league with certain partisan viewpoints or religious forces.

The technical and financial problems experienced by Iraqi broadcasters have not prevented them from achieving some progress in the production of their own programs, despite their lack of professionalism, experience, and proper technical production capabilities. Haidar al-Husseini, a journalist with *Al-Madaa* newspaper, said that although Iraqi satellite channels and radio stations have improved their programs, they still need strong, sustainable support from international institutions to develop their capacities. Broadcasters must overcome the administrative and technical obstacles to achieving production acceptable to the whole spectrum of Iraq's people before they can enjoy overwhelming approval.

The government media, and some private media, still marginalize minority issues because of their adherence to specific government instructions not to address them.

#### MULTIPLE NEWS SOURCES PROVIDE CITIZENS WITH RELIABLE AND OBJECTIVE NEWS.

##### PLURALITY OF NEWS SOURCES INDICATORS:

- > A plurality of affordable public and private news sources (e.g., print, broadcast, Internet) exists.
- > Citizens' access to domestic or international media is not restricted.
- > State or public media reflect the views of the entire political spectrum, are nonpartisan, and serve the public interest.
- > Independent news agencies gather and distribute news for print and broadcast media.
- > Independent broadcast media produce their own news programs.
- > Transparency of media ownership allows consumers to judge objectivity of news; media ownership is not concentrated in a few conglomerates.
- > A broad spectrum of social interests are reflected and represented in the media, including minority-language information sources.

## OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

### Iraq Objective Score: 1.25

Despite the passage of several years since their entry into the media market, most Iraqi media institutions do not operate as for-profit commercial companies. They rely on both external and internal financing to sustain their work.

The commercial concept of the Iraqi media remains unformed, Hajem argued. After decades in which the economy was controlled by the ruling Baath Party, the concept of operating media institutions as commercial institutions with income streams and planned expenditures was not readily understood and has yet to take shape. Thus, all media organizations, including state media, ultimately depend on government subsidies.

Before the 2003 invasion, the media were state-owned. Since then, the number of media outlets has increased, but they are not independent, instead representing influential political parties and forces. Therefore, it is not possible to rely on self-management and self-sufficiency and still achieve the financial resources necessary for independence.

The road to investment in the media was too long, and that fact should be understood by those working in media institutions so that they were not taken in by unrealizable ambitions. The motivations of organizations backing the various media outlets were speculative, rather than professional, and they did not operate for the sake of media development. In addition, the changes that followed the ouster of Saddam Hussein have not been sufficient to ensure that investment, production, and profitable and effective

*In addition, the changes that followed the ouster of Saddam Hussein have not been sufficient to ensure that investment, production, and profitable and effective advertising could be counted on for the development of the local media.*

advertising could be counted on for the development of the local media. The advertising market has been slow to develop, yet the media are still waiting for advertising revenue and sacrificing their professionalism in the meantime as a result. There are many media outlets whose thirst for cash prevents them from reporting the outrageous behavior and mistakes of people in power, influential institutions, and important companies.

Al-Husseini said some media institutions backed by political parties or foreign actors would close if the subsidies stopped. Because most media institutions are affiliated with political or religious organizations, it is difficult for them to be efficiently managed institutions able to develop their management practices with an eye toward financial independence.

Most Iraqi media institutions depend on direct financial support because they earn so little from commercial sources of revenue. Advertising does not play an important part in their funding. Iraq lacks an advertising industry, al-Yassiri said, because during six years of violent conflict, the advertising sector has largely been limited to parties involved in security, including the US military and the Iraqi government.

The panelists noted that the absence of the advertising sector has spurred the independent media and press institutions in Iraq to strike deals with the government over many issues to obtain advertising from government ministries or the multinational forces. Al-Shara argued that this alone turns many media outlets into simple carriers of government news and media offices for government ministers. The government provides most media channels affiliated with its parties or official figures with advertising, and provides independent outlets with advertising only if they toe the official line.

Most Iraqi media institutions lack effective research bodies to develop strategic plans for their work because there is no real seriousness about doing so—or ability among the directors of those institutions. Metty attributed this lack of capable research centers and the absence of interest in conducting scientific studies to develop media outlets' activities to an administrative mentality at media outlets that has other priorities, discussed above.

### INDEPENDENT MEDIA ARE WELL-MANAGED BUSINESSES, ALLOWING EDITORIAL INDEPENDENCE.

#### BUSINESS MANAGEMENT INDICATORS:

- > Media outlets and supporting firms operate as efficient, professional, and profit-generating businesses.
- > Media receive revenue from a multitude of sources.
- > Advertising agencies and related industries support an advertising market.
- > Advertising revenue as a percentage of total revenue is in line with accepted standards at commercial outlets.
- > Independent media do not receive government subsidies.
- > Market research is used to formulate strategic plans, enhance advertising revenue, and tailor products to the needs and interests of audiences.
- > Broadcast ratings and circulation figures are reliably and independently produced.

*If Iraqis are not going to form lobbies to pressure the media to change in the direction of a stable democratic system, the media need commercial or social institutions capable of supporting them. Ghazi said, however, that Iraq is one of the least likely countries in which to find investors, businesses, or unions able to support the media's efforts to cover issues of greater public interest.*

Although a number of Iraqi media institutions and some government information centers had made plans for opinion polls on various issues, they remained of questionable validity, according to some panelists. Al-Badri said that such surveys had a mainly political basis and aimed to show popular support behind certain political forces, despite their lack of credibility. Surveys carried out for one or another political party or figure have been bought and paid for and do not jibe with apparent reality.

The prime minister's National Information Center has produced many questionnaires about important issues in Iraq, but they have not been comprehensive enough, and large segments of Iraqi society had not been covered. Muraa argued that many questionnaires aimed to improve the image of the government or other political forces. There are no specialized survey centers in Iraq whose results can be trusted, and Iraqi satellite channels and radio stations conduct surveys that lack any scientific basis.

## OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

### Iraq Objective Score: 1.61

Despite the government's increasingly belligerent language against journalists and its occasional efforts to restrict their movements, pressure from NGOs has deterred it from taking action more frequently against media figures. However, the number of NGOs that are working effectively to defend media freedoms does not exceed the number of fingers on one hand.

The presence of domestic organizations sustained by young and enthusiastic defenders of press freedoms has had a major impact in Iraq. Such organizations warned the government of the serious risks faced by journalists and asked that if the state could not protect them that it at least stop harming and harassing them. At the same time, by drawing worldwide

attention to the government's practices, they achieved a kind of mutual confidence in and confirmation of their work. They not only helped Iraqi journalists develop their skills and capabilities and build on their ongoing training, but they provided ways to protect them, to train them at special courses, to issue publications developing their awareness of the risks they ran, and to communicate to the security apparatus an awareness of the journalist's role, so that they did not regard journalists as enemies but as partners in protecting and ensuring the public interest.

The Journalistic Freedoms Observatory carried out a joint program with the Interior Ministry to promote the security of journalists. The program had four stages: agreement with the security services to provide a safe environment for journalists and their movements; to train journalists in physical protection; to provide journalists with protective equipment such as helmets and body armor; and to establish a joint-operations room to gather information on places where journalists could safely go. In July 2008, the Observatory signed a memorandum on joint cooperation with Interior Minister Jawad al-Bolani.

Nevertheless, the traditional organizations continue simply to follow the government and look to it for support in matters affecting what journalists could do, and for the possibility of having an appropriate environment in which to move and work without fear. Depending on subsidies has hurt the effectiveness of these organizations because of the nature of the relationship in the past and the close relations they imposed, such as following the official line.

Abbadi said that although NGOs had played a key role in restraining the government, the Iraqi Union of Journalists had become an instrument of the government, which it defended

## SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS FUNCTION IN THE PROFESSIONAL INTERESTS OF INDEPENDENT MEDIA.

### SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS INDICATORS:

- > Trade associations represent the interests of private media owners and provide member services.
- > Professional associations work to protect journalists' rights.
- > NGOs support free speech and independent media.
- > Quality journalism degree programs that provide substantial practical experience exist.
- > Short-term training and in-service training programs allow journalists to upgrade skills or acquire new skills.
- > Sources of newsprint and printing facilities are in private hands, apolitical, and unrestricted.
- > Channels of media distribution (kiosks, transmitters, Internet) are private, apolitical, and unrestricted.

more frequently than it defended journalists. The panelists attributed this to the union's inability to respond to the democratic developments in Iraq since 2003 and the greater plurality they have brought to the media.

Al-Badri argued that most press associations, including the Iraqi Union of Journalists, consist of senior figures who do not support democratic change in Iraq and tend to favor dictatorship. They have never argued with or criticized the government but instead followed silently behind it as they did during the era of Saddam Hussein. If Iraqis are not going to form lobbies to pressure the media to change in the direction of a stable democratic system, the media need commercial or social institutions capable of supporting them. Ghazi said, however, that Iraq is one of the least likely countries in which to find investors, businesses, or unions able to support the media's efforts to cover issues of greater public interest.

Iraqi media institutions still lack training programs and specialized institutions to educate a new generation of journalists in a satisfactory manner. Metty said the problem stemmed from the fact that courses organized by international media organizations in Iraq were attended by journalists chosen on the basis of kinship and friendship rather than qualifications, and that attendees showed little interest in the courses and were unable to pass along instruction to their colleagues.

Nevertheless, non-Iraqi organizations could offer important programs to develop journalists capable of working under difficult circumstances in Iraq. Al-Yassiri, speaking as a journalist, agreed and said there is now a significant number of young journalists who have been trained by such organizations and have quickly shown themselves capable of working for major Iraqi news organizations, and who have had a clear impact.

Some of Iraq's print media outlets and private printing institutions have succeeded in steering clear of political influence. Private printing presses and publishing houses so far have not been a target for the government or political parties. Distribution of newspapers and other publications has shown progress despite security conditions in Iraq. Internet cafés have operated freely but could be threatened by restrictions proposed by certain political and government figures.

## List of Panel Participants

**Imad Abbadi**, director, Al Diyar Television, Baghdad

**Basem al-Shara**, reporter, British Institute for Peace and War Reporting, Baghdad

**Hadi Jallow Murae**, journalist and strategic expert, Baghdad

**Safaa Hajem**, lawyer specializing in media issues, Baghdad

**Shawkat al-Bayati**, reporter, Aka News Agency, Baghdad

**Heder Al-Badri**, reporter, El-Hora Iraq Television, Baghdad

**Nahla Ghazi**, president, Foundation for Culture, Information and Economic Development, Baghdad

**Samaa Metty**, community developer, Iraqi Civil Community Institutions, Baghdad

**Sabah el-Taie**, office director, Al-Massar Television, Kut

**Al-Khaiat**, secretary to the editor, *Al-Da'wa*, Baghdad

**Ahmed Alaa al-Yassiri**, journalist and advertising agency executive director, Baghdad

**Haidar Al-Husseini**, journalist, *Al Madaa*, Mesan

## Moderator and Author

**Ziad Al Egaly**, head, Journalistic Freedoms Observatory, Baghdad

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