



In Celebration of the International day of violence against women:

Iraqi Women Network in conjunction with Balad AlSalam Movement (BAS), held its national conference, concurring with the international day of Violence against Women, on Friday, November 28th, 2008, in Kirkuk province, under the slogan (Citizenship and partnership and rule of law).

More than 200 attended the conference, from Ministers, Members of the House of Representatives and Kurdistan Parliament and advisors, Governor of Kirkuk province, Members of city councils of different provinces, NGOS representatives from both genders and women groups, in addition to media,

Opening speeches:

Mr. Mostafa AbdulRahman, Governor of Kirkuk, and Ms. Galawish Jibari, Representing Kirkuk city council: on the rule of law and security challenges, women exploitation, and the threatening traditional tendency to marginalize women role in reconstruction and peace building in society. While confirming the need for legislative reforms on violence against women and women rights legislations, referring to the interactive and positive role of civil society organizations.

In her speech, **Ms. Narmin Othman, Minister of Environment and chair of Balad AlSalam Movement,** she pointed out that justice can only be achieved through democracy and constitution, she also emphasized that woman should not act as an observer, she should interact with the community to free herself from restrictions marginalizing her in limited roles, referring to the important and active achievements of women members of city councils.

The Conference discussed three thematic issues:

First: Violence against Women:

The session was chaired by **Ms. Shatha Naji, chair of Women for Peace NGO and Ms. Jacklene Zomaya chair of Enana Women Group,** where several papers were presented. **Ms. Taniya Gilly, Member of House of Representatives,** presented the **Iraqi Women Parliamentarian recent statement on International Violence against Women day,** urging House of Representatives to take measures guaranteeing elimination of all kinds of violence through:

- Promoting peace building process within society,
- Advise strongly, the Ministry of Education and Higher education to promote culture of peace and coexistence through their curricula and education programmes,
- Building capacity of women specialized corps in all security, Military, Ministry of Interior and judiciary institutions.
- Support civil society organizations, to facilitate their role in identifying, documenting, and monitoring violence against women incidents,

Amnesty International (AI) acknowledgement to Iraqi women, was presented, followed by **Ms. Suzan Shihab, Member of Kurdistan Region Parliament,** highlighted the recent successful campaign of Women Parliamentarians in Kurdistan Region, where they lobbied and succeeded in passing amendments on few articles from the currently active Personal Status Law Number 188 for the year 1959, especially on:

1. Identifying specific eligible age for marriage,
2. Considering "in limbo or Nashiz" status to be extended on both husband and wife, not just the wife,
3. Restricting polygamy,
4. Enforcing fines on marriage contracts taking place outside the court jurisdiction.

Second: citizenship and elections:

Dr. Fawziya AlAttiya from Iraqi Women Independent Group, and Ms. Nasreen Omar from Ronahi NGO in Erbil, chaired the session, where Ms. Faihaa ZainulAbideen/Former member of the National Assembly and chair of Turkmen Women Union, presentation on citizenship referred to it as a collection of values represented in: Belonging, Rights, Duties and Partnership without discriminations based on religion or norm,

Through her presentation, Dr. Suha AlAzzawi, former member of National Assembly, and Secretary General of All of Us Iraq Group, supported qualified and expert women candidates to city councils, and decision making places, through which she can highlight role of women in making change, also in her paper, she referred to country women suffering under traditional codes, while pointing out that organized terrorists groups, take advantage and exploit desperate women in suicidal attacks.

Member of Babil Province city council, Ms. Aliya Hussein, shared her experience in Babil city council, where her persistence to issue "Babil Voice" magazine, succeeded to last the magazine 18 months only, when it was closed after going through several obstacles, she also pointed out that women leaders can be found among different categories of active women in society, not necessarily among educated/elite women, she concluded that after closing the magazine, she succeeded to form a civil society organizations' Committee in Babil city council,

Ms. Joan Hassan Arif, Member of Kirkuk City Council, referred through her paper to partnership, rule of law, and pluralism, where Democracy should be truly adopted through actions, not verbally, especially towards women, with too many duties and obligations, without considering seriously her earned rights, she emphasized on revision of all criminal laws to achieve justice,

In few intervention from audience, comments pointed out that after long fight of Iraqi women groups to achieve and guarantee women quota in electoral law, women elect should prioritize and dedicate their efforts on women issues, putting trust in women and monitoring violations of women rights in curricula and media, calling for putting strategies for advancement of women in decision making places, another intervention inquiry was on women experience with political blocks, pointing out the gap between them and political blocks leaderships,

Third: Partnership and Rule of Law:

The session was chaired by Ms. Hanaa Edwar, Secretary General of Iraqi AlAmal Association, and Ms. Intisar Allawi, member of Iraqi Women League, few papers were presented during the discussions, among which was Dr. Irada AlJibouri's, a researcher herself, she reflected links and roots of events in the past compared to what's happening today, where families in the seventies were brutally forced to leave their homes (under so called foreign identity) with what's happening today during sectarian displacement incidents, it is the same brutal act... families only mistake... then and now... was that they originally come from this sect, or that minority or another ethnicity, pointing out the trauma and suffering of the victims of

such act, with the strong feeling that they were manipulated by misinterpretations of law,

From Diyala Province, Ms. Layla Thamir, member of the Islamic League for Iraqi Women, presentation was on positive and negative aspects of "Bashair AlKhair" military law enforcement operations to cleanse the province from terrorists, where the operations helped relatively improving security situation, leading to dismantle of large numbers of terrorists gangs, but the operations were not paralleled with any measures for reconstruction, rehabilitation of public services, job placement, and anti corruption. Women role was not even mentioned, in spite of rising numbers of desperate women suicide bombers, still on going, let alone increasing numbers of widows and orphans, with total incompetence of Social Affairs Department to come up with any solutions.

Young women audience contributed in their interventions, calling for women candidates through political blocks to get out of the chains and restrictions of their parties, prioritizing citizenship, and women competence in good governance.

The conference concluded its activities, by confirmation from all participants, the need to hold regularly such conference and meetings, to build networking, sharing visions, and nurture coordinating efforts between different women groups and decision makers from ministers, members of parliament and city councils, for the advancement and support of women, highlighting her essential role in peace building, reconstruction, and development,

Baghdad November 28th, 2008