

ICSSI

Statement

7<sup>th</sup> April -2011

## Iraqi Civil Society Solidarity Initiative

مبادرة التضامن مع المجتمع المدني  
العراقي

### **Days of Rage: A Crucial Time for Iraqi Civil Society**

Across Iraq, a nation devastated by war and long-term political oppression, a "Day of Rage" on February 25 and continuing public demonstrations over the following weeks have seen thousands of citizens take to the streets. As political protests multiply across the Arab world, offering models of nonviolent transformation in Tunisia and Egypt, as well as a tragic war in Lybia, the international community and the media should look more closely at events in Iraq.

The great majority of Iraqi men and women who are marching do not aim to overthrow the government. Their goal is sweeping political reform – exposure of the widespread corruption that has paralyzed local and national government; demands for electricity, water, education, and jobs; and protection of human, women's and workers' rights.

Despite efforts by Iraq's prime minister and some religious leaders to discourage the demonstrations, Iraqis asserted their right to public protest in city after city. In Mosul, Erbil, Kirkuk, Sulaymaniyah, Babylon, Salahuddin, Kut, Ramadi, Fallujah, Basra, Baghdad, and elsewhere, people's actions revealed the growing strength of a civil society demanding reform of a political system that has failed to meet citizens' needs.

Iraqi NGOs like the Civil Initiative to Preserve the Constitution, Future Network for Democracy, Youth on Facebook and many political parties called for demonstrations to be peaceful and nonviolent. La'Onf Network proclaimed, "Nonviolence is the solution for reform in Iraq and to make Iraq a civil democracy. . . . In nonviolence people are not our enemies, it is injustice that we oppose. . . . [Practice nonviolence] in order to promote change and prevent the return of dictatorship."

Tragically, demonstrations did include violence. Government security forces fired on crowds; protesters in turn threw stones and set fire to public buildings in several locations. Twenty protesters were killed and dozens more were beaten and wounded. Civil society activists also face grave risks, as Iraqi security forces increase detention of protestors. Currently many

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activists' whereabouts are unknown and they are presumed to be at high risk of torture.

There are also signs that the Iraqi government is trying to prevent future demonstrations. The Iraqi Nation Party and the Iraqi Communist Party offices were visited by dozens of armed security forces controlled by Prime Minister al-Maliki after the two parties helped lead demonstrations in Baghdad. The parties were ordered to close their offices in what they consider illegal efforts to stifle dissent and weaken them politically.

Still, the demonstrators can claim concrete victories. In Basra the provincial governor will step down amidst hopes that new leadership can provide better services for the citizens of that devastated region. The mayor and town council of a small city in far western Iraq have also submitted their resignations. But perhaps the greatest victory for Iraqi civil society lies in the courage and determination of the demonstrators. Despite arrests, despite threats to Iraqi journalists who are covering the demonstrations, despite government curfews, the Iraqi people are still marching.

The member organizations of the Iraqi Civil Society Solidarity Initiative [ICSSI] insist that the Iraqi people's right to demonstrate for an end to corruption and improved government services is inviolable. We urge all people and NGOs watching from the outside to join the ICSSI in support of the Iraqis' struggle.

Name	الاسم باللغة الانكليزية in english	الصفة	الاسم باللغة العربية	تسلسل
General Union of Students in the Republic of Iraq		اتحاد طلاب - العراق	اتحاد الطلبة العام في جمهورية العراق	1
ARCI - Italia		منظمة غير حكومية ايطالية	ارجي - ايطاليا	16
ARCS Arci Cultura e Sviluppo (Italy)		منظمة غير حكومية ايطالية	ارجي كلجر اند زفليبو	17
Human Association for Human Rights - Iraq		منظمة غير حكومية - العراق	الجمعية الانسانية لحقوق الانسان	2
Iraqi Network for Transitional Justice		شبكة منظمات غير حكومية عراقية	الشبكة العراقية للعدالة الانتقالية	3
ICS - Italian Consortium of Solidarity		منظمة غير حكومية ايطالية منظمة غير حكومية - المملكة المتحدة	ايتالين كونسورتيوم اوف سوليدارتي	18
Index on Censorship (UK)		شبكة منظمات وافراد - العراق	أندكس اون سنسر شب	4
Iraqi Nonviolence Group (Laonf)		منظمة غير حكومية - العراق	جماعة لاعنف العراقية	5
İraqi Turkmen Women's Society		منظمة غير حكومية - العراق	جمعية نساء العراق التركمان	6
September 11 Families for Peaceful Tomorrows (USA)		منظمة غير حكومية - الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية	سبتمبر الفن ، فاميليز فور بيسفل توموروز	7
Iraqi Civil Society Solidarity Initiative ICSSI		تحالف منظمات دولي -عراقي	مبادرة التضامن مع المجتمع المدني العراقي	8

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Kids & Woman Organization - Iraq	منظمة غير حكومية - العراق	منظمة الاطفال والنساء	9
Model Iraqi Youth Organization	منظمة غير حكومية - العراق	منظمة الشباب العراقي النموذجي	10
Model Iraqi Society Organization	منظمة غير حكومية - العراق	منظمة المجتمع العراقي النموذجي/برنامج العدالة للجميع	11
Un ponte per... (Italy), PAM - Initiatives pour un autre monde (France)	منظمة غير حكومية - ايطاليا	منظمة اون بوننته بير	12
NOVA - Centre per a la Innovaciò Social (Spain),	منظمة غير حكومية - فرنسا	منظمة ايبام	13
War on Want (UK)	منظمة غير حكومية - اسبانيا منظمة غير حكومية - المملكة المتحدة	نوبا وور اون وونت	14 15

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