

## **Women in Post-Saddam Iraq: One Step Forward or Two Steps Back?**

Lucy Brown and David Romano

### **Introduction**

The fall of Baghdad on April 10, 2003, brought Iraq and the women living in it into an uncertain transition period. Under Saddam, Iraq was touted as one of the Middle Eastern countries which offered its women the most liberties. The Arab socialism of the Iraqi Ba'ath party included in its ideology provisions for women's liberation and equality. Despite this, however, traditional Iraqi society outside the major urban center of Baghdad still relegated Iraqi women to a very inferior position vis-à-vis men.

Additionally, the repression that all Iraqis suffered under Saddam's regime applied to the female half of the population as well. After the disastrous eight-year Iran-Iraq war, Saddam's regime also moved away from Arab socialist ideals and closer to traditional interpretations of Islam in the region, including less tolerance for female autonomy in the public realm.

The Coalition forces came to Iraq in March 2003 promising, among other things, to improve the lives of Iraqi women. In this vein, Security Council Resolution 1483 sought to establish a "rule of law that affords equal rights and justice to all Iraqi citizens without regard to ethnicity, religion, or gender."<sup>1</sup> This has been, of course, easier said than done, and although one hopes that the new Iraq will be a true regional model of women's rights enshrined in a stable democratic system, the future of Iraqi women faces huge obstacles. Unfortunately, the most significant obstacles in this area appear to reside in the popular mind-set, the traditions and societal outlook of much of the Iraqi

population. The most promising approach to improving the situation of Iraqi women today, therefore, resides in a top-down approach wherein government promotes and empowers the minority of Iraqi societal actors who support a progressive women's agenda. This has, in fact, been the somewhat successful approach adopted in Iraqi Kurdistan to date.

### **A Brief History of Women in Iraq**

Iraq since its founding in the 1920's allowed its women far greater freedom than many other countries in the area. The Personal Status Law, introduced in 1959 just after Iraq became a Republic, granted equal inheritance and divorce rights for men and women and included provisions concerning child support. This was a rare piece of legislation for the Middle East, in which most states rely heavily upon Islamic Sharia Law for such questions. The Personal Status Law was based on Ottoman law, which in turn was heavily influenced by French and German legal principles. In cases not directly addressed by the Iraqi Law of Personal Status (ILPS), the Sharia principles in closest keeping with the ILPS would be consulted. Polygamy remained legal with judicial permission granted after financial ability or lawful benefit had been shown.

The Ba'ath party, which seized power in 1968, admitted women into universities and the government and public employment sectors in large numbers, and in smaller amounts, into the private sector. In 1970, the Provisional Constitution was drafted, which declared men and women equal under the law. The prosperous years of the 1970's and 1980's saw efforts towards eradicating illiteracy amongst women, in an attempt to enlarge the war-time, stretched labour force. At one point during Saddam's 35 year

reign, the percentage of women in the civil service even reached 40%.<sup>2</sup> The attempt to eradicate illiteracy by making education compulsory for all and by running literacy classes for the older generations, caused the literacy gap between men and women to shrink significantly. In 1980, one year after Saddam Hussein's ascendance, women were also given the right to vote and hold office.

However, Saddam's great reputation for positive treatment of women is not quite as positive as it might appear. His dictatorship over the country also extended to women, who like other sectors of society were not permitted to organize themselves. They were instead recruited into the corporate authoritarian structures of the regime. Hence women in the country never learned the organizational and mobilization skills that their sisters in Latin America, Asia and Africa often did. The General Federation of Iraqi Women - the only women's organization allowed - was a branch of the Ba'athist government and was simply a tool of the party; most women did not join it. Women were also a favourite instrument of Saddam's for finding and extracting information from dissidents and suspected dissidents, and for putting pressure on opposition members abroad. A favourite regime tactic involved sending dissidents video tapes of their female relatives being raped by members of the secret police. Hence women were threatened, jailed, murdered and raped in pursuit of control within, to use Kanan Makiya's term, a "Republic of Fear."<sup>3</sup>

Furthermore, women's situation in Iraq degenerated significantly after 1990, when Saddam's war-weary regime sought support from neighboring Islamic states and religiously-minded Muslim men within the country, who were feeling emasculated by their defeats in war and the resulting widespread poverty. Saddam publicly

acknowledged the moral authority of Islam and this acceptance led to an unfortunate reduction in women's rights that so often accompanies a patriarchal interpretation and implementation of the Koran. Men were allowed to marry additional wives and women lost what rights they had accumulated with respect to divorce, child custody, and inheritance. Rates of honour killings – the practice of murdering women who, through “suspicious behaviour,” pre-marital sex or by being the victims of rape have dishonoured the family's name – rose dramatically when Saddam introduced Article 111 into the Iraqi Penal Code in 1990.<sup>4</sup> This article exempted from punishment men who killed females in defense of family honour.

Furthermore, UN sanctions on Iraq and Saddam's mismanagement of ‘Oil for Food’ money<sup>5</sup> caused poverty in Iraq to soar. As is so often the case, women were the hardest hit in these worsened national circumstances. Female children were the first to be kept back from school when family finances were running short. The effect of this was stark: In 1987, 75% of women were literate; by the end of 2000, this number had fallen to 25%.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, as unemployment grew, women were pushed out of public sector jobs and back into more traditional roles, in order to employ larger portions of the male population.

Throughout Iraq, there are also thousands of women who lost their husbands or who, due to the shortage of men in a war-ravaged country, have not had chance to marry. These women have been left destitute, often the sole family breadwinners in a culture that has difficulty accepting women in the workforce. Thus, particularly in the rural areas where traditions are more conservative, most Iraqi women were simply thrown deeper into poverty by Saddam's military adventurism. This contrasts starkly with Europe and

North America, where war and a shortage of manpower often led to the empowerment of women.

In Muslim societies, women who have not married are also typically marginalized. Both the stress of running a household in economically hard times and the pressure of finding a husband has led many women in Iraq to commit suicide.<sup>7</sup> In addition, women who make up part of the large displaced population in Iraq are finding it difficult to return to their former homes if their husbands, fathers, or sons have been killed and there is nobody to fight for their land.<sup>8</sup>

### **The 2003 Iraq War and its Aftermath**

The war of liberation has no doubt had an immediate effect on women all over the country. A majority of women expected the American removal of Saddam to deliver to them greater freedom from both the tyranny of the Ba'ath regime and the discrimination they faced in the home, society and the workforce. Unfortunately, Iraqi women soon realized that the Americans are not the ultimate harbingers of freedom from fear; they cannot deliver, immediately, all that they promised; and their declaration to offer greater rights and opportunities to women is not at the top of their agenda.

#### *Iraqi Kurdistan (northern Iraq)*

The situation in Iraq differs from the north to the center and to the south of the country, where various political, religious, social and security forces are affecting the development of women's rights groups and their participation in civil society. In the Kurdish north, while the government has promoted women's rights and the last 14 years

of Kurdish self-rule have allowed women's organizations and shelters to spring up in far greater numbers than elsewhere in Iraq, Kurdistan has still not thrown off a popular culture which relegates women to an inferior position in society. Although there has been much work among Kurdish elites and authorities dealing with women's rights, bottom-up civil society pressure for women's rights has not emerged as nearly as significant a force as the Kurdish administration's own initiatives on women's issues.

The Kurdistan Regional Government has shown several significant advances regarding women's issues since its creation in 1991. Women are represented in the government and have become high-ranking judges. Their expertise and experience has become valuable for the interim Iraqi government appointed by UN envoy Brahimi on June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2004. Nasreen Barwari, the Minister of Public Works, was formally the Minister for Reconstruction and Development in the Kurdistan Regional Government. Narmin Othman, the Minister of State for Women, is a former PUK *peshmerga*.<sup>9</sup> Most of the women's organizations and shelters that exist today in Iraq were in fact established in northern Iraq, during the Kurdish autonomous rule there. The KDP and the PUK, contrary to some reports, have typically been very supportive and even encouraging towards women trying to work themselves up in society.<sup>10</sup> The Penal Code introduced by Saddam in 1990, for example, which made honour killings legal, was renounced by the Kurdistan Regional Government in 2000, a giant step forward for women's rights in the area. Unfortunately, both the KDP and PUK have still not done enough to enforce their new laws prohibiting honour killings, by meeting out severe punishments for those guilty of this horrendous crime.<sup>11</sup> The eradication of honour killings thus remains a large part of the agenda for women's organizations in Iraqi Kurdistan. It is important that women

do not accept legislation as a fulfillment of their work, but rather strive to see that nominal equality actually leads to equity and justice in practice.

Furthermore, according to one report,<sup>12</sup> female circumcision has increased to shockingly high levels in Iraqi Kurdistan, a region which has no history of this practice. Both honour killings and female circumcision are more rampant in outlying villages than in the more urban areas. In addition, many Iraqi elites remain adamantly misogynistic. For example, the Shiite Turkmen director of the Iraqi Institute for Human Rights in Kirkuk expressed the following fear in a recent interview:

*There are no laws. It is true that the new constitution guarantees the rights of citizens, but this constitution is based on western models. Iraq is an Islamic country. This constitution will plant the seeds of rebellion between the different ethnic groups. Also they are using the example of women's rights to impose western ideas on us. How can the Iraqi man be a prisoner of the women! Islam has guaranteed many rights for women. They are planting the seeds of conflict between men and women.<sup>13</sup>*

On the one hand, this elite's attitude shows the great obstacles which are manifest in the beliefs of some Iraqi men, but on the other, it shows that women must be advancing quickly enough to frighten this "Human Rights" representative.

In Iraqi Kurdistan, the areas most positively affected by the American-led war were those who had been living under the control of radical Islamic Wahabi groups such as Ansar al Islam and the Islamic Group of Ali Bapir, both of which took control of a string of Kurdish mountain hamlets from the PUK around the fall of 2000. When these radical Islamists established control in remote villages such as Biyara, Sargat, and Khormal (all close to the Iranian border), local women were forced to cover themselves completely in black, stop attending school, throw out their televisions and radios and live with the knowledge that they were being watched constantly – even with binoculars – in

their own homes, lest they deviate from the strict set of laws laid down by their new rulers. When American and Kurdish missiles and troops sent the Islamist radicals fleeing for the border, the village women shed a few layers of clothing, while the men shaved the beards they had been forced to grow. Fighting on the front lines of these battles was the Female Peshmerga Force that had been established by the PUK in 1996 and has since reached a membership level of 300.<sup>14</sup> International NGO's have now arrived in the area to set up schools and income generation programs as well as to rebuild the houses that were destroyed in the battles and in the previous Anfal campaigns. For instance, the cousin of the village Imam in Biyara told the authors that she was proud of her literacy and her attendance at additional classes at the new NGO-run schools.<sup>15</sup> She had left Biyara during Ansar's occupation, and she looked back at that time as one of great sorrow that the whole village was happy to leave behind. Such a brief look at what life would be like under strict interpretations of Sharia law may motivate these particular women to fight to make sure that their rights are not again taken away in the future.

While radical groups like Ansar suffered a major defeat in the spring of 2003, moderate Islamic groups are still gaining popularity in Iraqi Kurdistan, however. Although at first glance this appears to be a positive development, the trouble is that many moderate parties advertise their multi-party, democratic, liberal ideologies while privately holding and promoting beliefs and policies extremely inimical to women's advancement in society. The Islamic Union of Kurdistan's representatives in Suliemaniyah, for instance, made much of their moderate nature when interviewed by the authors. Contradictions in their stated position emerged, however, when they 1) Professed great friendship with the radical Islamic Group of Ali Bapir; and, 2) Defended

their position that inheritance law is only fair if the man receives a greater share than his sister, since men more responsibilities and Koranic law stipulates that women receive a fraction of the inheritance allotted to men.<sup>16</sup> Later, two local experts on radical Islamic parties in the area also informed the authors that these friendly and apparently moderate members of the Islamic Union of Kurdistan were offering money to families and women who subjected their daughters to female circumcision (genital mutilation).<sup>17</sup> This party won 17% of the vote in the recent municipal elections as well as in the student elections held this year at the University of Suliemaniya. Finally, the so-called moderate Islamist groups also often act as a stepping stone for young men on their way to membership in more hard-line groups.

Since the March 2003 war, however, women have upped the volume of their activities. In the North, where women's groups began to be established with the creation of the Autonomous Zone in 1991, the organizations are taking advantage of greater international attention and funds to proceed with their work. While aid money coming into Iraqi Kurdistan has increased, relative to the money flooding into the rest of the country from international donors and the United States the amount remains quite small, however. Northern Iraq is seen by many as not in as much need of aid as the rest of the country. Many Kurdish women see this as a sort of punishment for their past achievements and a failure to recognize the many enormous challenges that must still be overcome in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Although disappointed, women in northern Iraq have not been deterred from their work. Many new projects are focused on creating new shelters and branches in areas with large Kurdish populations that, until the recent war, were under Saddam's control.

Furthermore, they are working to create links and share ideas with women in the rest of Iraq. For example, Al Amal, an NGO working in Baghdad, is trying to implement Human Rights Awareness programs for women, modeled on previous programs carried out in Kurdistan. Networking meetings between women's organizations across the country have been held sporadically, where the women can discuss their successes, failures and ideas. A similar networking system existed in Iraqi Kurdistan, limited to the Autonomous Zone, between 1991 and 2003. While these intra-country meetings have seen some successes, many Kurdish woman activists claim that Arab women refuse to listen to their Kurdish counterparts, seeing them as inferior, and refuse to accept that they hold more experience in women's independent organizations and activities.<sup>18</sup> Hopefully, with time this communal bickering will decrease and Iraqi women from all areas will learn that working together they will be able to achieve their common goals with more easily.

### *Central and southern Iraq*

While the center of the country has seen much freedom for women in the past, since the American led war, the deteriorating security situation has confined many women to their homes. There has been a great push for greater attention to be paid to women's issues from the International NGOs, the CPA, and some Iraqi elites. However, they are working against fierce resistance, wherein the threat of violence and general lawlessness seriously hampers any possible progress. Women working with NGOs, as well as individual female members of the general population, have been the targets of both random and targeted violence. For example, Yanar Mohammed, the outspoken

leader of the Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq, has received numerous death threats. In April 2004 a leading women's advocate was also killed in a roadside ambush on her way back from a meeting celebrating the March 9<sup>th</sup> signing of the Interim Constitution. Average women in Baghdad and many other areas also fear rape or kidnap if they leave their homes.<sup>19</sup> The increasing influence of Islamic groups in Iraq has also further restricted the movements and participation of women in the new society. Hence, the huge numbers of qualified women who are invaluable tools for societal advancement in general and women's advancement in particular, have been largely sequestered to their homes by lack of security in the south and especially the center of the country. Still, in Baghdad and the center of Iraq, new women's organizations are emerging with the help of international women's groups that have arrived to help establish them. This is occurring despite the lack of security, and thanks to the overthrow of Saddam's regime. Even women who are vehemently against the American presence in Iraq – for example, Yanar Mohammed of the Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq - could not return to Iraq to conduct their work for Iraqi women until the fall of Saddam's regime.

In the South as opposed to the center of Iraq, the security situation has been under more control. However, there has been no top-down approach to advancing women's position there, and certainly none from the bottom up. The main problem facing women in the south since 2003 has been the strong influence of very patriarchal interpretations and practice of Islam. Many Shiite women have also internalized and accepted such interpretations of Islam. In any case, whether due to conviction or practicality, extremely rarely will one see a woman out of the Hijab in these regions, and those who dare uncover their heads are shunned or even have rocks thrown at them. Even Christian

women have begun to cover their heads in southern Iraq.<sup>20</sup> There are plenty of educated women in Shiite areas – lawyers, engineers, teachers – however, it is expected that once a woman marries (which every respectable Shiite woman must do), household work will claim priority and usually, the second job will be dropped.

The new freedom of the Shiite to teach freely and to act politically has, however, led to some upward mobility for women while simultaneously restricting women's rights outside religion. For example, with the removal of Saddam, Shiites are now free to conduct religious classes. Previously, Shiite men risked attending these religious courses under pain of prison. Women were even more fearful of such forbidden activities, however, because the punishment was much harsher for them -- their whole family could be taken into custody.<sup>21</sup> Special theological courses, for women left out of the earlier underground classes, have now begun, allowing them the chance to examine the Koran and question experts face to face. Unfortunately, these women are tending to talk about the technicalities of the rules of Islamic law and about other safe topics, rather than larger questions related to patriarchal interpretations of the religion. Thus, while they might ask questions, they may not challenge the answer given from male conservative imams. Shiite women have tended to stand with their religion before they stand with their sex. Thus, this upward mobility is not likely to lead to equality.

In the Southern and Shiite areas, far fewer NGOs are present than in the North and center of the country but the situation is just as, if not more, dire. The few writings on the Southern areas of Iraq show that violence against women is very widespread and accepted. According to a Boston-based Physicians for Human Rights report, of 2000 families surveyed in Basra, 50 percent reported abuse in their household either in the

form of beatings, torture or murder.<sup>22</sup> There have been very few initiatives put in place to provide shelter to these threatened women and to educate these women of their human rights.<sup>23</sup>

It also seems unlikely, for the time being, that very much pressure to rectify the problems faced by women in southern Iraq will come from the bottom-up. A demonstration of the female Shiite solidarity with orthodox Shiism rather than with their gender took place when Kurdish and Baghdadi women protested on the 25<sup>th</sup> of January against “Decision 137,” which was intended to repeal the Personal Status Laws that Saddam introduced. The Kurdish and Baghdadi women protested against the repeal of these laws because they perceived the alternative – leaving each religious group in Iraq responsible for marital and family law – as a serious threat to women’s status and future advancement. Instead of joining their Kurdish and Baghdadi urban sisters in the protest, however, a group of 500 Shiite women in Najaf held a counter demonstration to support the repeal of the personal status laws and a reversion to religious law. Fortunately, after two months of negotiations and according to the wishes of probably most of the country’s women, the personal status laws were not repealed. After the June 30<sup>th</sup> transfer of sovereignty, however, this issue may well arise again, without the counterweight of the CPA to back secular personal status laws.

### **Working Towards the Future**

The protest of Kurdish and Baghdadi women is only one of the examples from the first few months of 2004 of Iraqi women working with international women to lobby the Governing Council and the Coalition Provisional Authority successfully. The Interim

Constitution, signed on the eighth of March (International Women's Day), aimed to give women 25% of seats in the national assembly after next year's vote, although there were no women on the drafting committee. Only five other countries in the Arab world have electoral quotas for women (four of these are in North Africa); in the 22 Arab league states, the average proportion of women in parliament is a mere 3.4%; on average, worldwide, the percentage of women in parliament is only 14%; and the average in countries that do have a quota is still only 17%.<sup>24</sup> On June 1<sup>st</sup> 2004, the interim government was appointed and six of the members (18 percent) were women. Such a quota promoting women's participation in parliament will unfortunately be harder to respect after the transfer of sovereignty to Iraqis, given the apparent attitudes of most of the prominent Iraqi political forces in the country today. Although Iraq has enough women capable and qualified to fill government posts, from the times when Saddam's regime encouraged the education and participation of women in government, it remains unclear if they are currently positioned well enough to challenge the myriad conservative religious and tribal political forces reemerging in the new post-Saddam Iraq. In northern Iraqi literacy classes there is no lack of enthusiasm to participate more actively in public life, however. The classes are packed with women, mostly in their 20s, whose schooling had been interrupted for reasons such as forced migration, but who are very keen to now make up for their losses.

The Interim Constitution also offers another example of the Coalition resolve to support Iraqi women in their struggle to regain and surpass the modicum of rights they were provided under the Ba'ath party. Thirteen Shiite draft writers walked out of the meeting on the day the draft was to be published in anger over others' refusal to make

Islamic Law the basis for marriage and inheritance issues. Thankfully, their tactic failed and for the time being, the old laws regarding women's rights put in place by the Ba'ath remain.<sup>25</sup>

Although the coalition has been criticized for relegating women's issues to the bottom of their agenda, they have made some efforts to aid and sponsor the establishment of women's centers and projects throughout the country. For example, Research Triangle Institute, a non-profit organization based in the United States and one of the main recipients of USAID funds, has held conferences all over Iraq for women who are in, or who want to join, the workforce. These conferences are typically also attended by high government officials and experts available for questions and proposals. Furthermore, Secretary of State Collin Powell announced two new initiatives in February aiming to increase women's participation in society and government: the \$10 million Iraqi Women's Democracy Initiative and the US-Iraq Network.

International NGOs have also taken a strong interest and are working hard with local women's groups. In northern Iraq, for example, a German NGO called WADI has set up a branch in Suliemaniya; a local women's organization called Khanzad works closely with HAUKARIEV, also from Germany; Norwegian People's aid runs many projects aiming to empower women; and Save the Children International has done extensive work with women all over the country. These are just a few examples to illustrate the will of the international movement to lend a hand to the fledgling women's movement in Iraq. Even women's groups that have no base in Iraq itself are organizing solidarity petitions to lobby the American and British government about things such as the aforementioned Decision 137. The large Kurdish diaspora has also worked together

from all over the world to help the situation of their sisters at home. For example, Kurdish Women Against Honour Killing was set up in London in 2000.

## **Conclusion**

From the analysis above, it should be clear that both the policies of Saddam's regime and the Iraq war of 2003 had a mixed impact on the situation of women in Iraq. While Saddam's Ba'athist government policies introduced some progressive policies and legislation for Iraqi women, these were offset by the societal impact of ceaseless wars, domestic authoritarian control and repression, and a shift to more conservative patriarchal government policies after 1990. Under Saddam, Shiite and Kurdish women also faced a double repression, stemming from discrimination against their sectarian group in addition to the problems they faced as women. Shiite and Kurdish men suffering from feelings of rage against the regime and political impotence were also more likely to take out their anger on the one nearby group they did have power over – Shiite and Kurdish women.

Although the removal of Saddam's dictatorship in 2003 has now ended his regime's oppression and allowed for the entry of a myriad of progressive NGOs, new pro-female emancipation government policies, and independent women's organizations, the current lack of security in Iraq as well as resurgent Islamic, tribal, and generally conservative forces in the country bodes ill for women there. In fairly stark contrast to the center and south of Iraq, however, the northern Kurdish autonomous region continues to make progress towards increasing women's empowerment, autonomy and integration into public life. Nonetheless, many challenges still need to be overcome in this region as well -- women's status in Kurdistan may be described as quite positive in relative Iraqi

terms, but still lags far behind countries in the West as well as most of Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Asia. Furthermore, the gains of Iraqi Kurdistan risk being lost if Iraq falls into civil war or theocratic dictatorship.

Indeed, if Iraqis hope to establish a healthy degree of democracy in the country, they must do so in a manner that promotes women's advancement and liberation as well. Leaving the liberation of Iraqi women to a later date, after democracy and the liberation of Iraqis in general has been achieved, in fact decreases the chances of achieving either. Furthermore, Iraqi democracy must avoid the creation of a 'dictatorship of the majority,' a situation in which Shiite religious leaders could force their Sharia-based laws upon the rest of the country, restricting the gains that Iraqi women have made in other parts of Iraq such as Kurdistan. A federal political structure may go a long way towards protecting the center or north of Iraq from such a dictatorship of the Shiite majority, but would not of course do much for women in the south. Constitutional guarantees of anti-discrimination on ethnic, religious and gender grounds, as well as civil, political, and religious freedoms, constitute another important strategy for addressing the problems of Iraqi women. Although the Interim Constitution of Iraq makes many important provisions for such guarantees, it remains unclear whether or not these guarantees will make it to the drafting of a permanent Iraqi constitution once the Western occupying forces have relinquished control of the country. Particularly due to the relative weakness of organized, effective pressure for women's interests from the population at large (the bottom-up approach), the best hope for Iraqi women remains those Iraqi governing elites, international NGOs, foreign governments, United Nations personnel, and current occupying authorities willing to support progressive gender initiatives.

---

<sup>1</sup> United Nations Security Council Resolution 1483, 22 May 2003.

<sup>2</sup> Annia Ciezadlo, "Iraqi Women Raise Voices – For Quotas." *Christian Science Monitor*, 17 Dec, 2003, <http://www.csmonitor.com/2003/1217/p01s02-woiq.html>

<sup>3</sup> Kanan Makiya, *Republic of Fear: The Politics of Modern Iraq*, (Berkeley: University of California Press), 1989.

<sup>4</sup> For more on this issue, see "Iraqi Women Under Saddam's Regime: A Population Silenced," **Fact Sheet**, Office of International Women's Issues, Washington, DC, March 20, 2003 (<http://www.state.gov/g/wi/rls/18877.htm>).

<sup>5</sup> In 1996, the United Nations began implementing UN Resolution 986, which allowed Iraq to sell oil and use the proceeds to import food, medicine, and other goods that did not have any likely military applications.

<sup>6</sup> UNOCHR, "Occasional Paper: Situation of Women in Iraq," p. 1. in Human Rights Briefing Paper, "Background on Women's Status in Iraq Prior to the Fall of the Saddam Hussein Government", November, 2003.

<sup>7</sup> A survey conducted by Lynn L. Amowitz, MSc, Glen Kim, Chen Reis, Jana L. Asher & Vincent Iacopino, showed that 5 –7% of women interviewed in Southern Iraq had attempted suicide ((Reprinted) JAMA, March 24/31, 2004—Vol 291, No. 12. In 2001 in Kurdistan 245 committed suicide by self-immolation -- Runak Faraj Rahim & Hana Shwan, "Statistics on Violence Used against Women with an Article," Women Information and Culture Center, Publication #4, 2003.

<sup>8</sup> At the same time, the authors visited a refugee camp in Khanaquin on March 16, 2004, where some women complained that NGOs and other humanitarian groups were concentrating most of their projects and aid work on these widows. Many joked that they wished their husbands were dead so that they could get the same benefits.

<sup>9</sup> Council on Foreign Relations, "IRAQ: the interim government leaders," June 2, 2004, ([http://www.cfr.org/background/background\\_iraq\\_ministers.php](http://www.cfr.org/background/background_iraq_ministers.php)).

<sup>10</sup> Houzan Mahmoud ("An Empty Sort of Freedom" 8 March 2004, The Guardian Newspaper (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/comment/story/0,3604,1164268,00.html>)), cited the closure of a Kurdish women's organization in 2000 as proof of the PUKs opposition to the women's movement. However, the PUK was actually acting against the Iraqi Workers' Communist Party, with whom the women's group was aligned.

<sup>11</sup> The murderers have become adept at covering their crimes and the government has not put enough effort into uncovering their stories and enacting punishment – David Morgan, "Honour Killings in Iraqi Kurdistan: Seminar Report", KurdishMedia.com (<http://www.kurdmedia.com/reports.asp?id=9>), 12 August, 2000.

<sup>12</sup> Nazaneen Rashid, "DFID's Roundtable conference on Violence Against Women in Iraqi Kurdistan," Kurdish Women Action Against Honour Killing (KWAHK), 18/10/2000. <http://www.kwahk.org/index.asp?id=33>

<sup>13</sup> Iraqi Institute for Human Rights, Kirkuk, March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2004 -- Interview with Mr. Moayeed, Director. Interview conducted in Arabic by Karim Khallaayoun, ICAMES Iraq Research Team – recording of the interview also translated to English and transcribed by Karim Khallaayoun.

---

<sup>14</sup> Women have always been peshmerga, usually holding typically female jobs within the ranks such as cooks. This was the first formal female fighting unit.

<sup>15</sup> Authors' interview, March 20, Biyar, Iraq.

<sup>16</sup> Authors' interview with Islamic Union of Kurdistan central committee members: Hameed Sayid and Dalar, March 7, 2004, Suleimaniyah, Iraq.

<sup>17</sup> Authors' interview with Fuad Majid Misri and Hawji Mullah Amin, March 13, Suleimaniyah, Iraq.

<sup>18</sup> Authors' interview with Peyman Izzadine, Media Representative of the Women's Union of Kurdistan, November 2, 2004, Suleimaniyah, Iraq.

<sup>19</sup> "Climate of Fear: Sexual Violence and Abduction of Women and Girls in Baghdad", Human Rights Watch, Vol. 15, No. 7(E) – July 2003.

<sup>20</sup> "Iraq: Female Harassment From Religious Conservatives," April 14, 2004 – IRIN.  
([http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=40560&SelectRegion=Iraq\\_Crisis&SelectCountry=IRAQ](http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=40560&SelectRegion=Iraq_Crisis&SelectCountry=IRAQ)).

<sup>21</sup> Usama Hashem Rida, "Iraq: Women Join Shia Revival," Iraqi Crisis Report (ICR, No. 38, 3 December 2003) Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR).

<sup>22</sup> "Iraq: Women Afraid to Seek Healthcare in south", IRIN, 5 April, 2004  
(<http://www.occupationwatch.org/article.php?id=3991>).

<sup>23</sup> "Iraq: Focus on Increasing Violence", IRIN News Report, 14 October 2003  
([http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=37204&SelectRegion=Iraq\\_Crisis&SelectCountry=IRAQ](http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=37204&SelectRegion=Iraq_Crisis&SelectCountry=IRAQ))

<sup>24</sup> "Iraqi Women Raise Voices – For Quotas", Annia Ciezadlo, Christian Science Monitor, 17 December, 2003 (<http://www.csmonitor.com/2003/1217/p01s02-woiq.html>).

<sup>25</sup> "Iraqi Council to Miss Interim Law Deadline", Al Jazeera, 28 February, 2004  
(<http://english.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/4F8F881B-AE97-459F-BF71-FA4144D7F709.htm>).