

**Iraq Foundation**

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**ELECTION WATCH: ASSISTING WOMEN CANDIDATES  
TO COUNTER GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND HATE SPEECH  
DURING THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN**

**A Project Supported by  
United Nations Assistance Mission to Iraq (UNAMI)**

**FINAL NARRATIVE REPORT  
PHASE THREE**

**April 1, 2021 - January 31, 2022**

January 2022

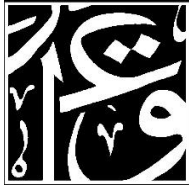


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## ABBREVIATIONS

- CMC: Communications and Media Commission**  
**CoR: Council of Representatives**  
**CSO: Civil Society Organization**  
**GBV: Gender Based Violence**  
**IHEC: Independent High Electoral Commission**  
**MP: Member of Parliament**  
**NGO: Non-Government Organization**  
**WAG: Women Advisory Group**



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## BACKGROUND

In the period leading up to the parliamentary elections of May 2018, the first since ISIS's defeat, women candidates faced such unprecedented levels of harassment and violence, particularly through attacks on social media, that some women were forced to drop out of the race.<sup>1</sup> Such extensive violence against women in elections led the UN Secretary General's Special Representative for Iraq, Jan Kubis, to publicly condemn these acts and encourage women to continue their race:

"Those behind defamation, cyber bullying and harassment are trying to scare you off, afraid of educated, dynamic, qualified, courageous and open-minded women candidates that rightfully claim their space and meaningful role in political life of Iraq."<sup>2</sup>

In 2019, the UN recognized the global spread of hate speech as a "menace to democratic values, social stability and peace" and adopted the UN Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech. The Strategy defines the term as "any kind of communication in speech, writing or behavior, that attacks or uses pejorative and discriminatory language with reference to a person or a group on the basis of who they are, in other words, based on their religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, color, descent, gender or other identity factor."<sup>3</sup>

In order to help women candidates for elected office and civil society groups counter hate speech and gender-based violence (GBV) during the election campaign, IF implemented the **Election Watch: Assisting women candidates to counter gender-based violence and hate speech during the election campaign** project from April 1, 2021, through January 31, 2022. This project focused on GBV and hate speech against women candidates for elected office in Iraq during the campaign period leading up to the October 2021 Parliamentary election in Iraq. By aiming to publicize GBV and hate speech occurrences against women candidates during the election campaign, and analyzing patterns and trends to formulate recommendations on how to prevent and mitigate gender-based harassment against women candidates, the project aligned with two key UN Policy Directives: Promoting Women's Electoral and Political Participation (2013), and Preventing and Mitigating Election-Related Violence (2016).<sup>4</sup>

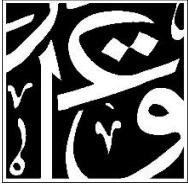
<sup>1</sup> <https://alrased24.com/%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%b3%d9%88%d8%b4%d9%84-%d9%85%d9%8a%d8%af%d9%8a%d8%a7-%d9%85%d9%8a%d8%af%d8%a7%d9%86-%d8%aa%d8%ba%d8%b2%d9%88%d9%87-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%ac%d9%8a%d9%88%d8%b4-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%a7%d9%84/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-43894391>

<sup>3</sup> United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech, May 2019, p. 2.

<sup>4</sup> The UN PD Promoting women's electoral and political participation (2013) encourages national authorities "to identify any legal as well as practical and cultural barriers to women's participation and representation and ways they might be overcome", see: *ibid*, p. 8.

"Promoting legislation or politics that protect against harassment and violence against women" is one of the measures recommended by the UN PD Preventing and mitigating election-related violence (2016) with regard to ensuring women's electoral safety and security, *ibid*, p. 18.



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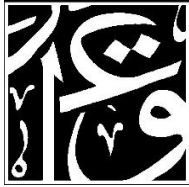
The project built upon the results of IF's two-phase project with UNAMI on Strengthening Women's Political Participation (2019-2020), and especially on the findings of the Needs Assessment Report of Phase One, 'Women Running for Elected Office in Iraq: Needs and Challenges', that was submitted to UNAMI in March 2020.

Results from the October 2021 Parliamentary election indicate that party affiliation shows the clearest path to victory for women candidates. Of the 946 women candidates participating in the election, 155 (16.4%) ran as independents, while 791 (83.6%) were affiliated with a political party. Of the 95 successful women candidates, only 5 ran as independent of a political party. The two parties with the largest ratios of women to men winning candidates were the Sadrist Bloc, with 73 seats, of which 31 (42.5%) were women. The Kurdistan Alliance won 17 seats, of which 9 (52.9%) are women. These statistics indicate to prospective women candidates throughout Iraq that their odds of being elected with a political party are higher than if they were to run independently. Further researching avenues where women can participate more meaningfully in political parties, particularly in leadership positions, will result in actionable recommendations that require political parties to better enhance women's political participation and amendments to the legal and regulatory structures to provide better opportunities and protections.

## ACTIVITIES AND SUMMARY OF RESULTS ACHIEVED

**Activity 1.** One of the first objectives of the project was to **commission a legal expert, Dr. Wael Munther**, to compile the legal framework that criminalizes hate speech and other forms of GBV, including laws, the criminal code, IHEC regulations, and to identify avenues for legal remedies available to affected women during October 2021 election campaign. The result was an expertly researched legal framework for criminalizing hate speech and GBV during election campaigns and serves as an invaluable resource for dissemination to the Iraqi public, highlighting the important need for increased participation among women in political life, and the challenges they face running for office. This framework and its most important legal points regarding the criminalization of hate speech and GBV in Iraqi law were presented to UNAMI, IHEC officials, and several Iraqi government officials, Ambassadors and international organizations during the final conference in January 2022.

**Activity 3.** In order to train partner CSOs on methods to identify, monitor, and report on hate speech and GBV, IF held two-day workshops in all 7 provinces (Najaf, Nineveh, Diwaniya, Kirkuk, Basra, Salaheddin and Baghdad) led by legal expert Dr. Munther. Partner CSOs learned about the larger societal challenges facing women in public life and learned helpful information on ways they can reach out to women candidates to encourage wider and more accurate reporting. This resulted in the partner CSOs being more actively engaged and involved in the reporting period, as they fielded requests for support from women candidates who experienced hate speech or GBV and directed them to resources such as Dr. Munther's legal advisement and the project website. Dr. Munther's legal framework was also shared with trainees and key points from the report were



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used in the training. This workshop increased the knowledge of partner CSOs about Iraqi legal protections against hate speech and GBV, but also further helped with the dissemination of the website, thus significantly expanding its reach and assistance offered to women candidates.

**Activities 2, 4-8.** IF also contracted the Iraq-based watchdog organization **Tech4Peace** (<https://www.t4p.co>) to build a publicly accessible database whose purpose is to document and publicize cases of hate speech and GBV against women candidates during the election campaign. Tech4Peace developed a platform (<https://womencandidatesrights.org>) through which women candidates safely lodged complaints about their experiences with hate speech or GBV. The data collected was translated to an **interactive map** (Fig. 1) that provided such details on each attack such as location, description of attack, and constituency district. This map was made available to the public to highlight the frequency of violations committed against women candidates. This website was resource for women candidates during the election campaign because it provided a secure platform to submit violations of hate speech and GBV but also provided information regarding legal redress. Over 360 violations of hate speech and GBV were reported between September 1, 2021, and November 15, 2021, with the following breakdown regarding the types of violations: hate speech was reported in 55.4% cases, campaign billboard and poster vandalism reported at 11%, defamation was 10%, spreading fake news was 9%, harassment was 6%, threats were 5%, and 2% of cases reported blackmail and assassination attempts. This confirms that social behavior during the election campaign is still hostile to women candidates with its discriminatory gender-based discourse, especially on social media, as there is a lack of adequate legal deterrents to prevent these practices. The governorate of Baghdad recorded the highest level of violations pertaining to hate speech, defamation, dissemination of fake news, and harassment compared to the overall number of recorded violations. Baghdad likely saw the most violations because it had the highest number of women candidates running.

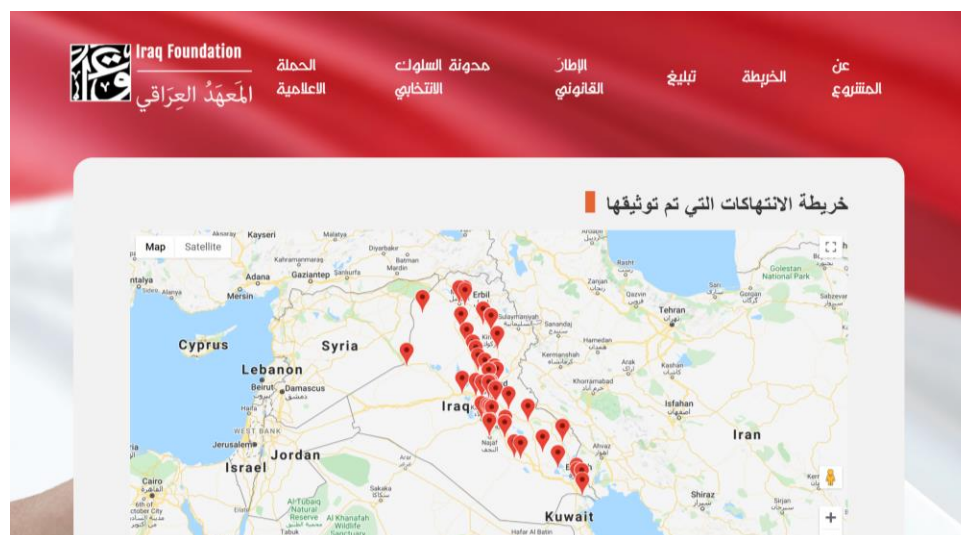


Fig.1 - Interactive Map



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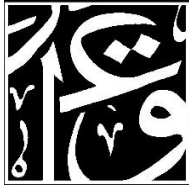
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In order to reach as broad an audience as possible, IF advertised the project website through mainstream media channels using TV spots. By the end of the project, IF had commissioned and disseminated 11 TV spots that focus on the regulations, laws and avenues of redress available to women candidates can resort to in the event of any violation that was displayed on *Dijla* and *Al Furat*, the project website, and the Iraq Foundation website. These TV spots served an important purpose to introduce viewers, especially women candidates, to the project website and the need for reporting instances of hate speech and GBV.

### **De-Briefings:**

After the election, IF and its partner CSOs reached out directly to 59 women candidates in the 7 provinces and conducted individual interviews on their experience with election-related violence, hate speech, and GBV. The debriefings covered such topics as the new electoral law, and the progress of the campaign phase, and the election process. One of the main questions covered during the de-briefings was the quota system and asked whether one of the possible causes that led to the high number of winning female candidates (95) that exceeded the 25% quota by 13 was in fact the quota requirement. Article 14 of the electoral law and IHEC quota regulation in open lists requires a 25% female quota. While some candidates spoke highly of the quota system and believe that it's a helpful regulation that ensures that women are always part of Iraqi political processes, but there were comments about the pitfalls of the quota. Allocating one seat in each electoral district to the quota system increased the number of female candidates in open lists, indeed, but one candidate during attested that this just gave political parties leeway to support just one candidate in a district, which sometimes turned out to be the male candidate. In the January 2022 de-briefing in Baghdad, women candidates largely favored recommendations to amend the electoral law to increase the quotas, but to couple this reform with more meaningful legislation that further criminalizes GBV during election campaigns.

Another topic discussed during the post-election de-briefings was the subject of major obstacles that the candidates faced, and to clarify whether these issues were tied to GBV and hate speech, political climate, social media, political parties, among others. One of the most important points that was raised across all locations among women aligned with political parties is that many women often felt that despite running with a party, they felt sidelined, unsupported, and overall ignored by their parties. In Najaf, one woman candidate attested that she was asked to continue running but to attend events and speak highly of a competitor in her district who is in the same party. She commented that this practice is common in political parties who have multiple candidates in districts, and it demoralized her and made her reconsider whether she would continue running with this party in her political career going forward.



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	Date of de-briefing	Partner NGO	# women candidates in attendance
Baghdad	January 11, 2022	IF	12
Basra	December 25, 2021	Al-Firdous NGO	16
Diwaniya	December 20, 2021	AWAN Organization	10
Kirkuk	December 23, 2021	Al-Haq	11
Nineveh	December 17, 2021	Hammurabi Human Rights Organization (HHRO)	3
Najaf	December 16, 2021	The Observer Human Rights Center (OHRC)	6
Salaheddin	December 28, 2021	Al-Nour Foundation	7

### Schedule of de-briefings

IF's legal expert, Dr. Wael Munther, worked with the data that Tech4Peace collected to write a final assessment report that described patterns and trends of GBV and hate speech against women candidates during the parliamentary election campaign 2021 in Iraq. Dr. Munther also provided analysis on the details of various violations against women candidates such as harassment, threats of violence, hate speech, and vandalism. Dr. Munther's report's main conclusions as the sources of gender-based discrimination and violence against women candidates during elections is rooted in dated societal mores that do not give credit or respect the rights of women of the potential roles they can play in society. The cyclical nature of harassing women candidates, intimidating them from running, thus keeping women out of elected office is further exacerbated by the trauma women experience running, as it leads to their reluctance to participate in electoral processes. The report concluded with recommendations for further action by advocates of women's political rights to mitigate the impact of gender-based harassment and hate speech, key highlights of which will be summarized at the end of the report.

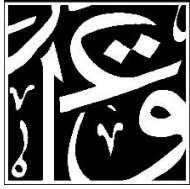
### Violations Against Women Candidates – Month by Month:

In the leadup to the election, IF and partner CSOs in the 7 provinces worked together to serve as resources for women candidates facing harassment and abuse. IF's partner CSOs, using the skills they gained in the training led by Dr. Munther, were able to identify and document cases of harassment experienced by women candidates. Select cases reported are detailed below, and the names of the candidates have been withheld to protect their privacy.

#### August 2021

##### Basra

A candidate in Basra who belongs to the Black Iraqi community was racially harassed online via the network Telegram, the abuser called her a "slave, not a candidate." There are an estimated 1.5



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to 2 million Black Iraqis today, who trace their roots in Iraq as far back as the ninth century. They are located mostly in southern Iraq, with the largest community residing in Basra.

### **Dhi Qar**

One candidate experienced harassment on the basis of her political party affiliation. A political opponent posted a side-by-side photo of the candidate, one when she ran under the Fatah bloc in the 2018 elections and another as her in the present, running as an independent. The opponent accused her of lying and falsely portraying herself as an independent. Data collected from the 2021 elections show that women candidates running with political parties are far more likely to be elected than those running independently.

### **Babel**

A candidate had a doctored photo of her and a prominent local imam circulated on social media. The photo implies that she was dressed indecently while meeting with the imam, who appears to be looking at the candidate's body. While the photo does appear indecent of the imam, the circulation of this image was done with the intent to show the candidate as being provocative and unfit for public office.

## **September 2021**

### **Kirkuk**

An independent woman candidate running in Kirkuk reported that her campaign page on Facebook was hacked and received several dozen comments, posts, and hate messages attacking such things as her appearance and her social standing. The candidate was forced to report the page, start a new page, and rebuild her social platform on Facebook all over again.

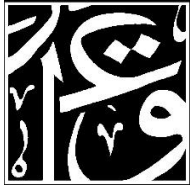
Separately, several women candidates in Kirkuk reported tampering or defacing of their campaign media such as posters and flyers.

### **Najaf**

In September 2021, a woman candidate in Najaf reported about verbal and cyber-attacks on her person, including a death threat. The partner CSO that reported this case commented that the candidate experienced psychological hardship and anxiety resulting from the threat, and initially did not want to report it at all for fear of compromising her identity and possibly escalating the situation further. The candidate said that she did not feel safe leaving the house alone anymore, and hired a bodyguard to accompany her to all public and private events. The partner CSO helped her to file a police report, but during a follow-up call it was reported that security officials were not cooperative or helpful regarding the investigation into the death threats, even reportedly showing hostility toward the CSO staff member. The candidate believes that had she been affiliated with a political party, she would likely not face that type of harassment.

### **Baghdad**





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A woman candidate had an image of a package of lingerie circulating on Facebook with a flyer of her face on the packaging. The indecency of juxtaposing the candidate's face with an image of a woman in lingerie humiliated the candidate and the indecent imagery negatively affected how her campaign ran on social media platforms, notably Facebook.

### **October 2021**

#### **Kirkuk**

A candidate in Kirkuk affiliated with a minority component party reported multiple violations against her during the course of her candidacy. In September 2021, the candidate's campaign billboards and posters throughout Kirkuk were vandalized. She was also the subject of rumors about her seeking an advantageous marriage in order to eventually be elected to office. The candidate shared with IF that the rumor of her marriage impacted her mental health, and that her hard work to be a self-made professional was undercut by this harassment.

#### **Basra**

The same candidate who was racially harassed in Basra in August 2021 was targeted again just days before the election when an audio recording mimicking her voice was circulated via WhatsApp announcing her early victory. Many women candidates faced multiple violations during their campaigns.

#### **KRI**

A candidate affiliated with a large minority component party in the KRI reported abuse from within her own party in October 2021. She reported that during her candidacy, she noted instances of high-level party officials showing favor and more openly supporting her opponent, a male candidate who happens to belong to the same party. The candidate felt unsupported by her party and believes that the party favored the male candidate and purposely diverted attention and support from her campaign in his favor.

### **Challenges:**

#### **Trust in reporting**

One of the biggest challenges shared by women candidates throughout Iraq in implementing this program was the general lack of trust that women candidates have in the effectiveness of reporting violations linked to GBV and hate speech. In each location during every month of the project, IF and partner CSOs recorded interviews with women candidates who attested that they experienced harassment but did not see the utility in reporting it, citing such things as lack of social progress toward women's issues, lack of accountability mechanisms, and also citing a fear of retaliation if they reported attacks to Iraqi authorities.

#### **Ineffective accountability**

In tandem with the lack of trust in reporting violations, this issue is further exacerbated by the lack of action on the part of police, election officials, and even party leadership. During the de-briefing



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sessions after the election, many candidates expressed frustration and stories together of their experiences discussing these violations with Iraqi police.

### Final Conference:

IF held a final conference in Baghdad on January 26, 2022. The purpose of the final conference was to present the legal framework report, the data on gender-based violations monitored and documented by the project, and recommendations for reforms that provide greater protection for women candidates. IF organized the conference to showcase the important legal framework regarding hate speech and GBV during election cycles and the data that IF collected through its website on violations linked to gender. This final conference convened the various stakeholders involved in the project, including newly elected women MPs, candidates, partner CSOs, campaign staff, and government officials interested in advancing women's issues. In addition to showcasing his research, **Dr. Munther** shared recommendations that aim to advance women's political participation and women's issues. Speakers included **Ms. Yusra Karim**, Director General of the Directorate of Women's Empowerment, **Ms. Ingibjorg Solrun Gisladdottir**, Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance of UNAMI, Swedish Ambassador to Iraq **Mr. Jonas Loven**, **Dr. Ahlam al-Jabri**, member of the Board of Commissioners, **Ms. Dina Zorba**, Country Director of the United Nations Women's Assistance Mission in Iraq (her statement was delivered by a colleague from UN Women), and representatives from partner CSOs throughout Iraq. Also, **MP Mayson Al-Saedi** had a statement during the discussion period. *See Agenda and Pictures in the Annex.*

### Summaries and highlights from speakers' statements and discussions:

**Ms. Ingibjorg Solrun Gisladdottir** congratulated Iraqi women for winning 95 seats in the CoR. From her engagement with Iraqi women leaders, members of the WAG and civil society representatives, she realized that female candidates were facing numerous hurdles during elections, cultural-related challenges, and security-related challenges. She urged: **1)** Political actors and relevant entities to translate the exemplary performance of women in the elections into more opportunities for women's participation in other areas of governance for example at the executive level, **2)** New women MPs to fully bring women's interests to the extent possible alongside male MPs that support women's rights. She acknowledged the efforts of the former leadership of the Women's committee, **3)** Government of Iraq, political parties, and other relevant entities to consider the recommendations in the report on GBV and hate speech against female candidates in Oct. 21 elections, and to take concrete steps to create a safe environment for women to enable them to participate in future electoral processes.

Ms. Gisladdottir concluded "Only once politically and socially active women are protected and safe, Iraq can claim to be making real progress towards women's rights, equality, and empowerment."

**Ms. Yusra Karim** commended the project's work and highlighted the need to continue to combat harassment against women candidates for political office. Ms. Karim shared information about the formation of a High Committee tasked with women's participation in elections, the first of its kind,



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whose most important objective is to ensure the participation and empowerment of women candidates in elections and to ensure that they are protected from all forms of violence and harassment.

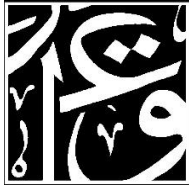
**Ambassador Jonas Loven** addressed the gender equality in Sweden and mentioned that the gov'ts slogan is **the three “Rs”**: **Representation**: The first female PM was elected in Sweden last year. “Political equal representation is well established in all political parties, left and right. Also, generally in the public sector. Still much to do in the private sector and industry political.” **Rights**: There must be zero tolerance for domestic violence and honor killing especially for girls and young women in certain immigrant communities. **Resources**: The income gap between the sexes has been closing, girls are doing better in school especially higher education programs.

**Dr. Ahlam al-Jabri**, member of the Board of Commissioners, presented an upcoming initiative to develop an electoral awareness and training program for approximately 950 women candidates by teaching them about electoral processes and procedures, complaint mechanisms, and to build their capacity and develop their skills to enable them to run their campaigns in future elections.

**Ms. Zorba’s statement** highlighted that despite the high participation rates of women in different electoral fields than in previous years, there remains a significant disparity between candidates and constituencies. Women candidates and voters alike experienced various forms of violence both while running their campaigns and while casting their ballots. She also commented that UN Women is developing a multifaceted strategy aimed at supporting an environment conducive to increasing Iraqi women’s political participation by reducing discriminatory attitudes, capacity differences, and structural barriers to women's integration.

**Ms. Faryal Al Kaabi**, spoke on behalf of seven partner NGOs who participated in this project. Partner NGOs supported the legal expert with the study on challenges and obstacles faced women candidates. Then, they helped to implement a series of training workshops in the field of advocacy and leadership, then monitoring violence and gender-based hate speech towards women candidates in social media and all media. Afterward, they carried out face-to-face interviews with female candidates (first-time winners and non-winners) as means of reassurance, attention and urging them to face the violations they are subjected to during the election through legal frameworks provided by the Election Committee.

**MP Mayson Al-Saedi** said: “Many thanks to Iraq Foundation who has been with us since we entered the House of Representatives until the completion of our term. The work was legislative oversight. The House of Representatives did not provide us with development and preparation courses while that was provided to us by Iraq Foundation. We did not know what the meaning was of the first or second reading of the draft law, how we can propose or formulate a draft articles sensitive to gender. I therefore ask Iraq Foundation to adopt the program with the fifth parliamentary session, especially since most of the women deputies are new.”



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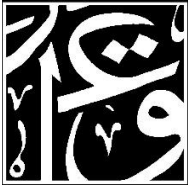
**Ms. Rend Al-Rahim**, highlighted main recommendations from IF report:

- The new parliament has a responsibility to develop legislation that safeguards the integrity of political work by developing the election law and the law on political parties. The election law makes explicit reference to defamation and honor attacks against women candidates.
- Election campaign financing must be dealt with by legislation, both to preserve equity of access and transparency.
- The judiciary and the IHEC consider resolving the confusion in the procedures for filing complaints and seeking legal redress, with a commitment to impose punishments in a timely manner during the campaign period.
- The CMC to provide in real time lists of complaints received and measures taken. Exposing violations reported and measures taken will act as a deterrent to further abuses, increase trust, and enhance transparency.
- All state institutions expand media and public understanding of the vocabulary and concepts related to hate speech, electoral violence, and gender-based violence.

#### Number of attendees of UNAMI final conference

	Entity	# of people
1	Academia	5
2	Ambassies in Iraq: US and Sweden	5
3	Board of Commissioners	6
4	Civil society activists	7
5	Council of Representatives (CoR)	17
6	CoR Offices	1
7	Government ministries	15
8	Government offices	10
9	International Organizations	7
10	Local NGOs	26
11	Media	25
12	Partner NGOs	6
13	Prime Minister's office	3
14	President's office	1
15	Women candidates	9
	<b>Total number of attendees</b>	<b>143</b>

## ASSESSMENT OF OBJECTIVES



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*Objective 1: Conduct research on legislative provisions and procedures in Iraq – including IHEC regulations – that criminalize hate speech and electoral violence as legal offenses; train selected civil society organizations and WAG on how to identify and report on hate speech and gender-based violence; design a database with a public interactive map; set up a dedicated email for direct reporting of incidents.*

IF successfully met Objective 1 during the Election Watch project. IF commissioned Dr. Munther’s legal framework that details Iraqi and IHEC regulations that protect against hate speech and GBV and used this report in the training for partner CSOs and the WAG on identifying and reporting cases of violations against women candidates. Monthly reports on project activities by partner CSOs show a concerted effort and comprehensive approach to conducting outreach to women candidates and recording of their reports of violations, which was done in tandem to the website that Tech4Peace used in its monitoring. Using Dr. Munther’s report, IF built the capacities of CSOs to research and identify instances of GBV and hate speech and also encouraged people in their community to remain vigilant of these violations and report them when witnessed, thus significantly expanding the project’s reach. IF has also achieved the stated objective of commissioning a website from Tech4Peace that contained an anonymous form for submitting violations, a publicly accessible interactive map, and a secure back-end database that tracked and maintained a single record of all violations reported to IF through partner CSOs and the website.

***Objective 2:** The database and map document incidents of hate speech and politically motivated GBV reported by CSOs, members of WAG, and women candidates; the website provides information on the legal framework against hate speech and legal recourse available to women; mainstream media collaborate in publicizing the documentation initiative and the dedicated email address, and raise public awareness of the data base.*

IF successfully achieved its stated objective to build a website and interactive map (<https://womencandidatesrights.org/map>) to document incidents of hate speech and GBV and provides information for women candidates about resources available to them. The website, secure database, and interactive map were all build by Tech4Peace, who monitored violations, verified them, then mapped them on the project site. With the support of TV spots, outreach work by partner CSOs, networking, and viral outreach, IF was able to publicize its website and services beyond the reach of its partner organizations in 7 locations. The website achieved its objective and was used in the final legal narrative written by Dr. Munther and was presented at the final conference in Baghdad on January 26, 2022.



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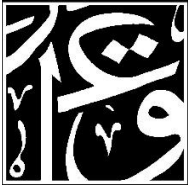
## RECOMMENDATIONS

### **Recommendations from: Gender-based violence and hate speech during electoral campaigns (fact analysis) - Iraqi parliamentary elections 2021**

Report by Dr. Wael Munther

#### **1. Recommendations to parliament**

- Work on passing family protection legislations (child protection law and domestic violence law) and amend laws that bar women from playing their role in society.
- **Reformulate chapter 5 on electoral campaigns by including express articles including:**
  - Require candidates to refrain from tarnishing, defamation, incitement against their opponents or violating their personal lives.
  - Prevent the use of hate speech or incitement to violence on the basis of gender, ethnicity, confession, affiliation, and others.
  - Determine a ceiling for campaign spending to reduce economic disparity among male and female candidates and promote women's chance of competing; develop a legal framework to define the number and size of campaigns and ensure equal opportunity.
  - Include text to penalize candidates purposefully spreading news or perpetrating acts harmful to competitors, spreading lies or defamation, or allegations of withdrawal; penalties may include stripping candidates of electoral votes, imposing more stringent penalties and doubling the financial penalty if voters are unable to establish the truth.
  - Apply to the candidate the same penalty imposed on a member of his electoral campaign if such acts are perpetrated with his knowledge or approval by depriving him from the right to run for elected office for a period of 5 years minimum starting from the acquisition of jus cogens.
- **Reformulate articles in section on elections crimes to include:**
  - Consider acts committed by public servants or government employees to influence voters a cause for removal from office.
  - Specify cases that require imposition of financial penalty and amount or stripping of votes in an electoral center or station in cases of use of force, carrying weapons, tampering with ballots or ballot boxes, to avoid discretionary authority exceeding the cause-and-effect limits.
  - Adopt preventive measures of criminalization in the chapter on electoral campaigns and hold perpetrators accountable for endangering protected interests.



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- Add a provision stipulating the imprisonment for a period of 1 month or a financial penalty no less than one million and no more than 5 million dinars or both for violation of the provisions of the law unless a relevant criminal text is present.
  - Add a provision in the law stipulating that incrimination provision in the electoral law shall not impede the imposition of more severe penalties stipulated in any other punitive law.
- **Reformulate the procedural mechanisms for crimes committed during electoral campaigns.**
    - Address the issue of procedural overlap in electoral campaigns complaints to separate the violations of the female candidate's personal right complaints from those that shall constitute a violation of state institutions or commission; ordinary jurisdiction shall intervene and shall apply the principles of swift investigation and prosecution given that the elections and the natures of such contraventions might affect candidates' chances and require swift legal attention; require informing IHEC of such complaints to amend its decision pursuant to legal verdicts.
    - In the event the current procedures are maintained in adjudicating complaints and crimes, collaboration should be enhanced and IHEC should be allowed to look into violations committed by candidates or their campaigns; IHEC should also be granted additional legal authority by giving the IHEC board, electoral district manager and electoral offices managers in provinces and governorates, as well as electoral center directors (for the purpose of implementing the electoral law), the authority of judicial oversight pursuant to the provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure 23/1971 amended.
  - **Increase the quota for women**  
(Available options)
    1. Amend the law to ensure candidacy quota on a 50-50 basis while maintaining the constitutionally approved quota of 25% minimum of parliamentary seats. Increased candidacy quota allows swifter access to elected bodies and ensures alignment with the provisions of article 14 of the constitution maintaining equality of all Iraqis without discrimination based on gender. It will also allow women broader visibility and lead political parties to build the capacities of their women candidates and mobilize their skills to assume elect office.
    2. Increase representation quota to no less than 30% in the electoral law, without contradiction to the constitutionally guaranteed quota since a legislated quota will be more effective in securing women representation in elected office.



3. Encourage political parties to adopt parity in electoral lists by giving them annual financial grants.

• **Amend political parties' law**

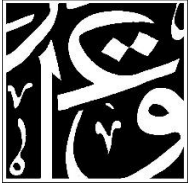
- Work on amending political parties' law to ensure no less than 25% women quota in leadership and key party positions
- Adopt positive or negative reinforcement for political parties adopting parity in electoral lists by encouraging or depriving them from financial aid stipulated in the law.

**2. Recommendations to decisionmakers**

- Develop strategies to be adopted by all state institutions to challenge negative social traditions and customs towards women and their social role.
- Work on developing initiatives to challenge gendered, technology-facilitated violence. This approach may require a faster adoption of the anti-cybercrime law provided that IT, information, legal, social and political experts assist in rewriting the version of the draft law currently with parliament, given its incompatibility with human rights and technological advancement. The objective should be to ensure legal texts are effective in addressing violations of freedom of speech and violations of women's dignity in the digital realm without discrimination.
- The economic empowerment of women plays a prominent and effective role in her political empowerment and requires the adoption of a strategy to promote women's economic conditions and develop her capability in making economic decisions within her household.
- Build female candidates' skills in managing their campaigns, recruiting and forming the campaign team, as well as their knowledge of electoral laws and specifically procedures for complaints arising from legal violations.
- Enhance women's capabilities and knowledge of their rights and role to ensure their support for changing stereotypical perceptions dictated by social traditions, and to effectively demand their rights.
- Special committees should develop school curricula to eliminate any images or texts that denigrate the role of women or undermine their due participation in society.
- Devise gendered professional training and capacity-building policies, and revise recruiting and promotion standards to ensure non-discrimination against women. process.

**3. Recommendations to IHEC**





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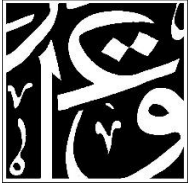
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- When drafting regulations for electoral crimes and complaints, specify the acts leading to the repeal of party or candidate's ratification and their exclusion from elections, since knowledge of sanctions may serve as a legal deterrent.
- Determine the cases that require the imposition of a financial penalty and its ceiling as well the cases that require depriving the perpetrator of the acquired votes in an electoral center or station to avoid discretionary authority exceeding the cause and effect limits.
- In the area of leadership, expand women's participation in the highest administrative decision-making levels in IHEC and ensure women representation.
- Establish an administrative unit in the IHEC administrative structure to support women, under the information and communication department tasked with:
  - Opening official channels of communication with civil society organizations concerning women's empowerment in order to establish a continuous communication channel and exchange information to promote women participation in elections quantitatively and qualitatively.
  - Present proposals and solutions to issues preventing women's effective participation by relying on studies and research conducted by IHEC specialists in light of elections data.

#### 4. Recommendations to the CMC

- Widen knowledge of affected persons of mechanisms to deal with violations committed by media institutions.
- Periodically publish monitoring reports of violations and remedies to enhance transparency.
- Develop a directory of terminology that falls under hate speech and require media institutions to develop employees' skills to avoid using and spreading such language in their dialogues.
- Build the skills of stakeholders and media institutions on elections coverage that averts hate speech and incitement to violence in statements.
- Develop a media strategy to affect prevalent media rhetoric and to create behavioral change towards gender. Use social media to give real examples of successful experiences of women in politics and their impact on changing attitudes.
- Guide media outlets to develop targeted modes of speech appropriate for children and rural and tribal areas, in order to change gender traditions and customs to promote women's social standing.



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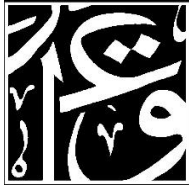
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ANNEX

### I. List of partner CSOs/NGOs

#	Name of CSO/NGO	Province
1.	Al-Firdous CSO	Basra
2.	AWAN Organization	Diwaniya
3.	Al-Haq	Kirkuk
4.	Hammurabi Human Rights Organization (HHRO)	Nineveh
5.	The Observer Human Rights Center (OHRC)	Najaf
6.	Al-Nour Foundation	Salaheddin



## II. Selected De-briefing pictures



*Najaf, December 16, 2021*

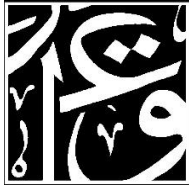


*Nenawah, December 17, 2021*

*Diwaniya, December 20, 2021*



*Basra, December 25, 2021*



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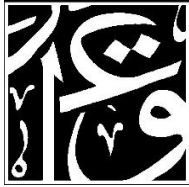


*Kirkuk, December 23, 2021*

*Salaheddine, December 28, 2021*



*Baghdad, January 11, 2022*



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### III. Agenda of the final conference Babylon Hotel in Baghdad, January 26, 2022

Time	Details	Speaker
9:30 - 10:00	Registration	
10:00 - 10:05	Welcome	<b>Ms. Rend Al Rahim</b> Iraq Foundation President
10:05 - 10:15	UN Assistance Mission in Iraq speech, UNAMI	<b>Ms. Ingibjorg Solrun Gisladdottir</b> Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance in Iraq
10:15 - 10:30	Iraq Government speech	<b>Dr. Yusra Karim</b> Director-General of the Department of Women's Empowerment - General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers
10:30 - 10:45	Swedish Government speech	<b>Mr. Jonas Loven</b> Ambassador of the Kingdom of Sweden to Iraq
10:45 - 11:00	The Independent High Electoral Commission speech	<b>Dr. Ahlam Al-Jabri</b> Member of the Board of Commissioners
11:00- 11:15	UN Women's Mission Speech	<b>Ms. Dina Zorba</b> Country Director of UN Women in Iraq and Yemen
11:15 – 11:30	Partner NGOs speech	<b>Ms. Faryal Al Kaabi</b> Awan Organization President
11:30 – 12:00	Presentation of the final report	<b>Dr. Wael Munther</b> Legal Expert – Iraq Foundation
12:00 – 12:15	Recommendations	<b>Ms. Rend Al Rahim</b> Iraq Foundation President
12:15 – 01:00	Discussion	
01:00	Lunch	



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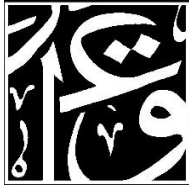
#### IV. Pictures of the final conference Babylon Hotel in Baghdad, January 26, 2022



*IF President Ms. Rend al-Rahim and IF Country Director Dhefah Al-Jarahi*



*Attendees of the final conference at the Babylon Hotel in Baghdad, January 26, 2022*



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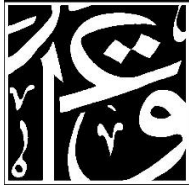
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***Ms. Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir***  
***Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance of UNAMI***



***Mr. Jonas Löfven***  
***Ambassador of the Kingdom of Sweden to Iraq***



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***Dr. Wael Munther***  
***IF Legal Expert***



***Attendees of the final conference at the Babylon Hotel in Baghdad, January 26, 2022***