



**Women from the roles of society to politics...
a conference carried out by Baghdad Women
Association under the sponsorship of the
General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers
/ Department of Women Empowerment**

Baghdad Women Association held an extended conference to discuss two political studies, the first (Iraqi women and the electoral entitlement of 2021) and the second (the impact of the social environment on women's reluctance to engage in political experience), which were prepared in (10) Iraqi governorates from the centre, north and south.

On September 18 , 2021 - Babylon Hotel, Gilgamesh Hall, within the project (Enhancing the Role of Women in Leadership and Decision-Making) funded by the Norwegian People's Aid Organization. In the conference, the above two studies were discussed in the presence of a distinguished elite group comprising 92 people of decision-makers and influencers in the legislative, executive and judicial authorities and independent bodies such as the Independent High Electoral Commission, and unions such as the Iraqi Bar Association, the Iraqi Jurists Union, civil society organizations, national media and international agencies. Also, influential persons in women's policies participated in the conference, including the Deputy Minister of Labor and Social Affairs, Mr. Alaa Abbod Al-Sakaini, the Prime Minister's Advisor for Elections Affairs, Mr. Abdul-Hussein Al-Hindawi, and the deans of the faculties of law of Baghdad, Al-Mustansiriya and Anbar Universities.



The conference was opened by Dr. Yusra Karem Mohsen, Director General of the Department of Women Empowerment in the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers, and this is a summary of the most prominent of what was mentioned in her speech:

The issue of women represents one of the most important priorities of the Iraqi government at the present time, so we work in cooperation with all official state institutions and with civil society organizations interested and specialized in women's affairs and human rights and with international organizations and agencies as well to confront all political, economic, social and cultural obstacles that limit the participation of women as an actor and a major partner in creating national development at all levels, and it represents enabling women to enjoy their political rights to participate in the management of public affairs, and to start obtaining their right to run for elections and vote freely and under the protection of the law, one of the most important rights stipulated in international conventions. It is also an essential path for achieving equitable and comprehensive development. Therefore, the department took the initiative to form a higher committee to support women's political participation, especially in the elections. In light of this, the Department of Women Empowerment developed a plan to support women's political participation in elections in coordination with all the sectoral bodies responsible for implementation. The committee also received suggestions from civil society organizations and discussed them to accommodate all possibilities. Recommendations that will enhance and support women's participation in elections.



This was followed by the speech of Ms. Khanum Rahim Latif, Advisor to the President of the Republic for Women's Affairs, and this is a summary of the most prominent of what was mentioned in her speech:

This universe, this world, and this earth have been created by God from a pair who complete the other night and day, earth and sky, sun and moon, male and female ... Since the beginning of creation, women have had their societal roles that have developed with the development of time, events and concepts, and their role is no longer limited to building a family with men and the biological role in childbirth, care, nursing the infant and managing the house under the name of a housewife, and this does not mean that we underestimate the importance of the work of the housewife or the giving of motherhood, but today this stereotype has been transcended and women have already become the sisters of men in all forums, and have the constitutional and legal right to practice all professions and in all fields, starting with the right to health, education and employment, passing by the right to practice professions, entering the world of commerce, finance and economy, reaching the world of politics, ministerial, leadership and decision-making positions, but even entering the world of the army, military and security forces and other positions that they managed at a high level no less important than male roles ... So I am taking this opportunity to demand the adoption of the draft law on combating domestic violence in the next parliamentary session as a matter of urgency. It is enough to know that out of the 298 recommendations of the Human Rights Council in 2019, about 20 recommendations were directed to Iraq to criminalize domestic violence and legislate a special law to protect Iraqi women and the family.



This was followed by a speech of Dr. Ahlam Adnan Al-Jabri, Advisor to the Board of Commissioners at the Independent High Electoral Commission and Chair of the Committee to Support Women's Political Participation, and this is a summary of the most prominent of what was mentioned in her speech:

In her speech, Dr. emphasized the need to protect women from electoral violence and societal attacks and detailed the roles of the Independent High Electoral Commission in curbing these attacks. She also pointed out the importance of full and comprehensive participation of women in all social, cultural and economic fields, especially the political field.



This was followed by the speech of Mr. Ashraf Abdel Karim Al-Dahan, Director General of the Non-Governmental Organizations Department in the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers, and this is a summary of the most prominent of what was mentioned in his speech:

The issue of women's participation in decision-making continues to attract the attention of activists in the field of democracy, human rights and citizenship, especially in our country, which witnessed a political movement that was preceded by a sharp bloody conflict, which requires mobilizing all human energies to establish stability, the need for the role of women in establishing peace, security and safety was essential until the entry of women into seminars and conferences gradually began to find them today at the forefront of the scene in their active political participation, although we must admit that this needs to be reviewed in order to work to increase the participation rate and the ability to influence political life and civil society, and preparations for a promising and correct leadership for women must start Through a sober upbringing within the family and in institutions, all forms of discrimination against women must be abolished and international conventions that remove this must be incorporated into national legislation. Women must realize their feminist identity and political citizenship, and this means that they engage in civil, social or political work and form an influential base, and that its participation is not limited to concern for its own issues only, but rather is present in every major and crucial issue at all levels.



This was followed by the speech of the President of the Baghdad Women Association, Engineer Liza Nissan Hido, and this is a summary of the most prominent of what was mentioned in her speech:

It is our pleasure to meet today with this distinguished elite presence of women and men to participate and jointly contribute to the consolidation of the role of women socially and politically through discussion and productive and fruitful dialogue, leading to outputs that lay down mechanisms and future plans in order to achieve an important qualitative step forward in women's issues, which all of us have taken upon themselves since its establishment. In June 2004, the advancement of women in various fields, starting with raising their awareness of the nature of their rights and their interim and strategic entitlements, and as we meet today in this conference (Women from the Roles of Society to Politics), but we meet at the threshold of a new door that we are knocking on with strength and awareness to enhance the participation of women in all areas of life especially in political life.

We hope that this conference will be a qualitative addition to women's issues by adopting the idea of their participation in political life as a leading, essential and active element, not marginal in building state policies, leadership and decision-making in order to achieve the welfare of society as a whole.



This was followed by the project manager, lawyer Rasha Khaled Hilol, presenting the achievements of the project and the campaign since 2015

She spoke about the campaign team consisting of 25 civil society organizations from the Iraqi Women's Network and the 1325 Resolution Alliance and the campaign's work methodology that is based on three directions:

The first is towards capacity building and raising awareness of gender concepts, which targets (workers in ministries and government institutions, feminist activists and representatives in the Iraqi parliament, as well as young women who are newly involved in civil and political work by empowering them politically, The second is pressure activities to on the decision-makers in the Iraqi government to bring them to a vision that is supportive of women and responsive to gender, The third is activities to influence the public, such as extended conferences, media activities, television episodes, radio advertisements, and publication of banners and publications containing messages about women's rights in public places.



After that, the two studies were discussed by the researcher, the assistant professor, Dr. Mahmoud Azzo Hamdo, a specialist in political science, and his assistant, Dr. Abdel-Karem Al-Jarba.

As they discussed an assessment of the reality of women's participation in the past years (challenges and lessons learned), then an in-depth analysis of the social environment and its impact on women and the extent to which society accepts women in positions of power.



The attendees were divided into two axes to work as focused groups to develop recommendations and suggestions that would develop the two studies. The two groups came up with the following recommendations:

1. Building the cultural foundation of the Iraqi society by including the concepts of democracy within the school curricula.
2. Develop electoral programs with media activities in order to have a wider impact and for a variety of social groups.
3. Economic empowerment and financial independence provide more space for women's participation in elections and political life.
4. The need to create an effective political discourse for women that creates a space for successful communication with the public and is able to influence the electoral environment.

5. Obligating the parties to provide full support for women at the level of political participation in the elections in order to achieve justice in the chances of advancement.
6. Extending bridges of communication with women and girls and empowering them politically to build (the future generation of women voters).
7. Encouraging qualified women to develop the capabilities of other women to increase women's political participation.
8. Develop a gender-responsive policy that obliges parties to build women leaders at higher levels and be decision-makers, and this requires (amending the Parties Law) to guarantee the right of women politicians.
9. Increasing media programs that contribute in creating full awareness of women's roles away from stereotypical roles and changing the societal image of women and their roles.
10. Develop awareness programs prior to the electoral campaign that are sufficient to support women and vote for them.
11. Clearing the electoral law of all the loopholes that hinder the increase in the percentage of women winning the elections.
12. Determining the ceiling of spending on electoral advertising and determining its sources in a manner that guarantees gender justice in electoral campaigns, and thus full participation in electoral campaigns.
13. Providing full protection and prevention for women from electoral violence.



14. Include in the programs of women candidates and electoral lists projects and laws that support women.
15. Establishing supportive measures to prevent the exploitation of public money and political and government influence in electoral campaigns
16. Exempting people with disabilities from electoral fees (quota).
17. Supporting centres that are concerned with women's affairs and increasing their number while uniting efforts in a way that enhances the achievement of goals.
18. Inclusion of materials related to gender, starting from the primary and intermediate levels.
19. Re-establishing the Ministry of Women, since its abolition is a form of discrimination against women.
20. Obliging the commission to count voters on the basis of gender.
21. Taking into account the positive discrimination of women and considering the winner of her votes outside the quota calculation.
22. Determining seats for people with special needs at the rate of one quota seat for each governorate, considering Iraq as one electoral district.
23. Obliging the parties to develop policies for political upbringing of their party cadres on the basis of gender
24. Taking into account the representation of women in the appointment as polling employee by half, with the request from parties, civil society organizations and the media that the number of observers be divided equally between men and women.



25. Enhancing studies and research based on field surveys and data analysis, which needs transparency for the data of the Electoral Commission and the Central Statistical Organization.
26. Work to establish a percentage of women of no less than %25 as polling employees and employees in the Electoral Commission, and to establish a specific percentage as observers for political entities.
27. Criminalizing speeches of discrimination against women and domestic violence.
28. Adopting policies that contribute to empowering women at the level of decision-making and actively participating in it

The conference concluded with a comprehensive recommendation made by the president of Baghdad Women Association, which represents a summary of all the decisions and outcomes of the conference, in which she thanked the attendees and the association's staff and confirmed that she will strive to translate those suggestions and recommendations into practical programs on the ground within the projects of the association..

