**Towards establishing an Iraqi Social Forum**

Iraqis have contributed in the activities of the World Social Forum since it was founded in Brazil in 2001. Now Iraqi social justice groups have a desire to work towards a deep democratic discussion about what is happening in Iraq nowadays. Iraqi civil society groups have agreed to work on establishing the Iraqi Social Forum as an open space for individual, groups, organizations and those who believe in the principles of social justice and human rights by its international concepts which are the (political - civic, social- economical- cultural) concepts. After many meetings, a preparatory committee was formed and has agreed on a charter for the Iraqi Social Forum. The committee has drawn a map towards its first start, and has defined a vision:

**The Iraqi Social Forum definition:**

The forum is an open space for democratic conversations, to discuss ideas, formulate suggestions, exchange experiences and in addition it is a space for the interaction of social movements and networks, NGOs, and other components of civil society.

It’s featured with multiplicity and diversity; it’s also a non-religious, non-partisan and non-governmental activity. It works on facilitating a non-centralized interaction and engagement with organizations, societies and movements locally as well as internationally, taking actions and proposals in order to build another world.

**Our slogan is:**

**“Another Iraq is possible...An Iraq of peace, human rights & social justice”**

The participants are all those who work for Iraq to be a civil country with a clear and unambiguous identity, a country that guarantees pluralism, freedom of religion, thought, belief, and in accordance with the principle of equality and non-discrimination by gender, color, ethnicity or sect. A country where the principles of individual freedom, public benefits and social justice are not just slogans for trade but real actions. This forum will serve as a joint project between:

* Iraqi Social Movements.
* Trade Unions and Professional Associations.
* Civil Society Organizations.
* Social Justice Activists.
* Iraqi Civil Society Solidarity Initiative.

**The reasons behind the forum’s establishment:**

Recent world developments have greatly affected Iraq, its citizens, and all the people of the region: the global economic crisis and its repercussions, the Arab spring witnessed by the Arab countries. In addition, we can identify regional challenges including water problems, protection of border. Moreover, we see these factors as contributing to current challenges in Iraq:

1. The political crisis and the confusion in the identity of the Iraqi state. In the current moment, which is dominated by disputes for power, not enough attention is paid to dialogue, building partnerships, and fostering cooperation in order to find solutions to Iraq’s outstanding problems. There is a clear inability to fold the page of violence and terrorism that Iraqis pay dearly for.

2. The increased poverty and unemployment, unequal access to opportunities, poor infrastructure, and a lack of social services provisions such as electricity, medical care and education.

3. The continuous increase in the budget size, offset by a deficit in achieving concrete achievements for Iraqi citizens, the inability to reach real development, due to the political crisis and the struggle for power, money and influence, as well as sectarianism, financial and administrative corruption, sagging disease of the governmental body and the disguised unemployment.

4. The politicization of the judiciary and doubts on its ability to be independent according to international standards of fair trial and power separation.

5. The weakness in the rule of law and legislations, compared with international conventions and agreements, and the continuing human rights and press freedoms violations.

After all of the above, we strive to have the Iraqi Social Forum as an effective factor that gives a strong impetus to civil society mobility, which aims to reform the political, economic, social and cultural development, and to be an announcement for the option of a civil democratic state. We are here not to declare a network or alliance, as much as to provide an open space for discussion and dialogue for those who share our values ​​and concept .We are here to contribute to work horizontally on the completion of alternative options for the weary scenario in which we live today.

**Proposed topics for discussion at the Iraqi Social Forum 2013:**

We believe that the current problems Iraq is facing that are deemed significant to be discussed in the upcoming Iraqi Social Forum are:

**First:** Building a civic, democratic country.

**Second:** International Solidarity campaigns, including: (Freedom of Expression campaign, Save the Tigris campaign and the Private Military Companies campaign).

**Third:** Iraq's minorities and the nationalism problems.

**Fourth**: Equitable distribution of wealth and social justice.

**Fifth:** Labor unions, trade unions and peasant associations.

**Sixth:** Women, youth, and childhood (challenges, solutions and prospects).

**Seventh:** The economic, social, and cultural issues.

**Eighth:** Nonviolence as a way of social, cultural, and economical change in Iraq.

Therefore, and on behalf of the Preparatory Committee of the Iraqi Social Forum we invite you to participate and effectively contribute for the success of this Iraqi event which serves all Iraqi citizens.

**Iraqi Social Forum Preparatory Committee**

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