

# WOMEN SAY NO TO WAR

**President Bush says that women's rights and lives have improved since Saddam Hussein was ousted from power.**

**We wish that were true.**

From 1951 to the 1990s, Iraq provided more rights and freedoms for women and girls, including legal equality, the right to vote and hold office, free education, and equal pay for equal work, than most of its neighbors. Though Saddam Hussein's dictatorial government and 12 years of severe sanctions reduced these opportunities, Iraqi women were still active in all aspects of their society. That is no longer the case. Women today face violence, hardship and fear daily, and their futures are more uncertain than ever.

## **INSTEAD OF LIBERATION, WOMEN— AND ALL IRAQI CITIZENS—FACE INSECURITY AND FEAR.**

Although brutish and violent, Hussein's government established rule of law. That rule is gone. Looting, violence and insecurity jeopardize women in particular, as they are more subject to assault and rape. Women walking on the streets face random violence, kidnapping or death at the hands of suicide bombers, occupying forces and contractors, Iraqi police and National Guard or thugs. A study published in November 2004 estimates that the war and occupation have caused 98,000 deaths; of those, "most individuals reportedly killed by coalition forces were women and children."

## **WOMEN AND GIRLS HAVE RESTRICTED ACCESS TO JOBS AND EDUCATION.**

The constant violence has trapped women and their children—particularly their daughters—in their homes. Fewer children brave the streets to attend school. Illiteracy is on the rise. Furthermore, despite initiatives to bring women into the workforce and involve them in reconstruction, of the 260,000 reconstruction contracts in Iraq, less than 1,000 have gone to women. Additionally, while the Constitution calls for free education at all levels, only primary school education is mandatory, leaving many Iraqi girls—among whom illiteracy is on the rise—without guaranteed schooling.

## **THE U.S. IS PART OF THE PROBLEM.**

Instead of protecting women from violence, U.S. forces have committed crimes of sexual abuse, torture, and physical assault. Many women have told stories about rapes and routine sexual humiliation, particularly at detainment centers. This is especially horrific in a country where a woman even suspected of being victimized in this way leaves her vulnerable to what are called "honor" killings, when men murder women who might have "defiled" the family name.

## **WOMEN BEAR THE BRUNT OF THE DESTRUCTION OF INFRASTRUCTURE.**

Since the bombing began, vital infrastructure has collapsed. Iraqis face a lack of medicine, nutrition, shelter, clean water, electricity and other basic services. In January 2006, residents of Baghdad were getting fewer than eight hours of electricity per day, less than they had pre-war. As one resident noted, "During Saddam's time, we always had power, clean water and better food than we have now." Women trying to raise families in the midst of this chaos find themselves beset by skyrocketing poverty and malnutrition, and a dearth of social services like decent schools and health care.

## **THE CONSTITUTION DOES NOT GUARANTEE WOMEN'S RIGHTS.**

Instead of protecting basic human rights for women, the new Iraqi constitution defers to religious law—but Islam is subject to wide interpretation. Some interpretations allow women a wide array of political, personal and societal freedoms. Others severely limit that liberty. The choice will likely fall to whoever controls Parliament, which leaves things like marriage, divorce, and employment opportunities resting in a changing balance of power. This constant flux will almost certainly diminish women's rights in the short term, given the control that conservative clerics currently have in Parliament.

## **FUNDAMENTALIST ISLAMISTS ARE GAINING GROUND.**

Conservative Islamic groups and clerics who have gained tremendous power in post-invasion Iraq have close ties to the Iranian clerics, who have proven "anti-women" credentials. They are likely to interpret religious doctrine to limit women's rights in politics under the ambiguities of the new Constitution. By handing power over to conservative interpreters of Islamic doctrine, the U.S. is selling out women's rights.

Excerpted from *Iraqi Women Under Occupation*, a report produced by

**CODEPINK** WOMEN FOR PEACE

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To improve the status of women, we call for the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Iraq and peace negotiations that fully incorporate women into the peacemaking process.

And we join with Iraqi women calling for a commitment to women's full equality in the post-war Iraq.

Help us work toward security for the lives of Iraqi women.

**Here's what you can do:**

## **1) Educate yourself and your community.**

Read the full text of the Report on Iraqi Women Under Occupation.

See [www.globalexchange.org](http://www.globalexchange.org) for more information.

## **2) Join the peace movement.**

There are many ways to get involved locally and nationally.

Get involved with CODEPINK: CODEPINK is a women-initiated grassroots peace and social justice movement working to end the war in Iraq, stop new wars, and redirect our resources into healthcare, education and other life-affirming activities. **Sign up for our weekly e-alerts** and find out how to get more involved at [www.codepinkalert.org](http://www.codepinkalert.org).

Start or join a local CODEPINK group: We have more than 200 local chapters around the U.S. and overseas. See [www.codepinkalert.org](http://www.codepinkalert.org) and click "Local Groups."

Join other peace and justice groups: United for Peace and Justice has a large list of member groups. Check for those in your area at [www.unitedforpeace.org](http://www.unitedforpeace.org)

## **3) Pressure your representatives to get the U.S. out of Iraq.**

Call your Congressperson and ask him/her to support Cong. Jim McGovern's resolution (H.R. 4232), which prohibits funding for continued military operations, except to bring the troops home and reconstruct Iraq.

Call 888-355-3588 or 202-244-2131 to find and speak with your representative.

Call your Senator and ask him/her to introduce a bill to get the U.S. troops out of Iraq. Right now there is no such bill in the Senate, and we need one!

Call 888-355-3588 or 202-244-2131 to find and speak with your senator.

To get lobbying resources and see a complete list of pending legislation on Iraq, please see [www.unitedforpeace.org](http://www.unitedforpeace.org) or [www.fcni.org/iraq](http://www.fcni.org/iraq)

## **4) Support Iraqi women's organizations.**

Many groups, both inside and outside of Iraq, are working to improve the lives of Iraqi women.

Donate to CODEPINK's Iraqi Women's Fund to support Iraqi women and bring delegations to the United States. Please visit [www.womensaynotowar.org](http://www.womensaynotowar.org), click on "Iraqi Delegation," and then click "Donate to the Iraqi Women's Fund."

[www.womensaynotowar.org](http://www.womensaynotowar.org)

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