



VOICES FROM THE SOUTH



E-Newsletter -June/July 2014

A Call for Positive and Constructive Social Action in Iraq

The Iraqi Social Forum releases unity statement amidst growing violence in Iraq, and invites to Oslo conference Nov 2-4, 2014

Since January 2014, the UN estimates that around 1.2 million people have been uprooted in Iraq due to fighting between insurgents from Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), local Sunni tribes, Shia militias and the Iraqi Security Forces. The current crisis threatens the future of peaceful co-existence of all Iraqi citizens, and the need for basic human rights, a just peace, and a united civil society is more crucial now than ever.

On July 7th, the Iraqi Social Forum (ISF), a joint process between Iraqi social movements, trade unions, civil society organizations and individual Iraqi social justice activists, released a statement and call for peace and justice amidst growing sectarian violence in their country. The ISF also extends an urgent invitation to activists from around the world to come and hear their voice at the 2014 conference of the Iraqi Civil Society Solidarity Initiative (ICSSI) to be held in Oslo, Norway in November. Their call is found below.

By: The National Committee of the Iraqi Social Forum
Baghdad, Iraq

Our country, Iraq, is suffering under the weight of a merciless attack which threatens our territorial integrity, seeds discord between the various sects of the Iraqi people, which cares not a bit for the safety of the people, and which shows a complete and utter disregard for the lives of Iraqis. The brutal and ongoing attack is forcing Iraqis to leave their jobs, their homes and their cities. It threatens to undermine and destroy the civil peace Iraq once had.

The preoccupations of Iraq's ruling class; their petty political disputes, their tireless grasping for authority, and their

narrow concern to satisfy their own private interests, has blinded them to the horrors civilians are enduring, and allowed them effectively to ignore the cruelty of the ruthless attack that is crushing our civilian brothers and sisters in many areas throughout the country.

Despite the eerie silence of much of the international community on the suffering of displaced Iraqis, despite the unprofessional, biased and partial reporting on the crisis by local and international media, we, the Iraqi people, are standing up to confront and overcome this devastating crisis.

To this end, we call upon friends and colleagues of the Iraqi civil society

The Karibu Foundation is an independent foundation that supports voices from the Global South that provide alternatives to the dominant paradigms of power, distribution, and development.

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"Another Iraq is Possible with Peace, Human Rights, and Social Justice" is the slogan of the Iraqi Social Forum, which aims to unite and integrate the citizens and civil society organizations of Iraq.

For more information, visit:
<http://www.iraqsforum.org>



“We, the Iraqi people, are standing up to confront and overcome this devastating crisis.”

movement, on Iraqi NGOs, on civil activists from all over the world, to rise up together and take on our responsibilities as advocates for humanity.

We must act on our deep faith in the principle that: “life, food, security, housing and healthcare should be fundamental rights for all human beings”. This basic idea must be our starting point, as well as the conviction that military operations are not the only solution but should, whenever possible, be replaced with constructive political, social and economic solutions that respect the rights of all Iraqis.

Only given this foundation will we achieve a lasting and unshakable peace.

We call up on you, wherever you are and with whatever capabilities you have, to organize demonstrations and other kinds of civil activities that advocate peaceful coexistence and the acceptance of ‘the other’.

We must celebrate the idea that being different doesn’t mean being an enemy. This has always been the way with Iraqis: different, but living peacefully together in all their rich diversity. This

historical truth must be recognized and remembered, especially now when there are those who aim to seed discord and hatred among groups who can and have lived together peacefully.

To all those who want to join us, we suggest the following activities:

--- **Stand for solidarity:** express solidarity with the Iraqi people and correct the distorted image that those in affected areas welcome the divisive and obstructive forces which are doing so much damage. The actions of a few loud individuals should not be generalized to all who now live in those areas.

--- **Hold meetings, seminars, or lectures:** gather officials and influential community leaders to discuss ways to preserve the unity of the Iraqi people, and counteract the destructive calls to divide the country; develop an organized set of procedures which demonstrate ways to provide the essential aid needed by those who have been displaced.

--- **Launch a social media campaign which supports the flourishing cultural diversity in Iraq,** which portrays the

beautiful Iraqi capacity for peaceful coexistence; tell stories which celebrate the unity of the Iraqi people.

--- **Communicate with our displaced brothers and sisters,** wherever they might be, recognize them as the legitimate subject for news; in short, confront and contradict the dishonest mainstream media.

--- Finally, we ask international organization to **circulate this call**, and to organize synchronized activities in their own countries that correspond with those that will happen inside Iraq.

We ask you all to document your activities, and to publish them under #Iraqieen (“Iraqis”) and send them to us for further dissemination. ■

For more information:



Visit the ISF website: <http://iraqsf.org/>

Visit their Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/iraqisocialforum>

For media or journalist inquiries on the situation, contact Nadia al-Baghdady (ISF Secretariat, Baghdad)

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Call for International Participants to the ICSSI Conference, Oslo, 2-4 November 2014



IRAQI CIVIL SOCIETY SOLIDARITY INITIATIVE

Oslo, Norway – 2-4 November 2014

The **Iraqi Civil Society Solidarity Initiative (ICSSI)** and the **Iraqi Social Forum (ISF)** are issuing an urgent call for activists from around the world to come and discuss a just resolution of the current crisis in Iraq at the upcoming conference of the ICSSI, **2-4 November 2014**, to be held in Oslo, Norway.

Activists from around the world are expected to gather in Oslo, including a delegation of 15 Iraqi civil society activists who will take part in the meetings and workshops related to solidarity with Iraqi Civil Society. In response to the situation now devastating Iraq, the primary themes of this year's conference will be **promoting dialogue and reconciliation, working for peaceful coexistence, and opportunities for international solidarity with Iraqi civil society.**

The ISF will also be holding a special session at the 2014 *Globalization Conference* (which is organized by the Norwegian Social Forum) on October 31st, entitled **“Hope for Peace and Development in Iraq: Meet the Iraqi Social Forum”**. Here they will share perspectives on how, more than 11 years after the U.S. invasion, Iraqis are still struggling to overcome the effects of war and to subdue the sectarian conflicts that emerged during the occupation and have been exacerbated by the current Iraqi government (see <http://www.globalisering.no/>).

Activities during the ICSSI conference will consist of a number of open and wide-ranging discus-

sions about the current situation in Iraq. Participants will discuss options for promoting dialogue among all members of Iraqi society and pressuring the Iraqi government to support reconciliation and reject war as a solution to the current crisis. International delegates will focus on how to support Iraqi civil society's efforts to rebuild a stable political system in which all citizens can participate without discrimination or bias. Participants will also discuss the campaigns currently led by Iraqi CSOs and supported by ICSSI.

Registration has now opened at <http://www.iraqi-civilsociety.org/archives/3329>.

The Iraq Civil Society Solidarity Initiative (ICSSI) is an advocacy initiative meant to facilitate the process of building concrete links of solidarity between international civil society organizations and the growing Iraqi civil society, through practical projects that promote human rights and support the efforts against sectarian divisions, corruption and violence.



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