Session 1: The Media in Iraq

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"Policy Recommendations Concerning Broadcasting in Iraq"
Draft Report

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"Policy Recommendations Concerning Broadcasting in Iraq": Media Pluralism

- Our research revealed that, at the present, the Iraqi media is coalescing into five broad categories according to ownership:
1. media financed by the Iraqi state
2. media financed by religious organizations
3. media financed by ethnic organizations
4. media financed by ideological organizations
5. independent media

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- **Part One:**
- The Iraqi Broadcasting Sector and the Regulatory Environment in which it Exists
- Forward
- I. Introduction
- II. Brief Introduction to Iraqi Broadcast Media
- III. Regulatory Framework for Media in Iraq
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- **Part Two:**
- Policy Recommendations
- I. Introduction
- II. Legal Framework
- III. CMC
- IV. Public Service Broadcaster
- V. Other Efforts to Enhance the Media Landscape

Overview of the Media Landscape

- Transformation of the Iraqi Media
1. Public Advocacy
2. Globalization
3. Freedom of Expression
4. "Fragmentation/Pluralism" of the Iraqi Media

Introduction

- Independent media in Iraq meant that the Iraqi public has the freedom to communicate their desires, concerns, and creativity.

- Media have emerged independent of Iraq's political mosaic, and seek to provide a public space for education & entertainment

1 Public Advocacy

- Advocacy: the media advancing the plight of the nation's citizens
- Influencing policy makers to address deficiencies and shortcomings in providing security and infrastructure needs
- Highlighting these problems
- Giving Iraqi citizens a platform to express their views
- Programs serve as an alternative means of political participation in Iraq

1 Public Advocacy

- Citizens can now use various media, such as talk shows, call-in programs, and "man-on-street interviews" to express their desires, complaints and frustrations
- News makers & civil society can use televised panel discussions to give their opinions about the nation's development
- In Iraq various media challenge the incumbent government for its shortcomings
- Issues such as corruption, poverty and unemployment can be addressed directly

2 Globalization

- Media in Iraq will be affected by global trends in international media

- Iraqis can watch media produced outside of the region

- Influx of foreign media, combined with a desire for Iraqis to produce media that reflects their aspirations results in several foreign program formats, such as reality TV, that have been adapted to a local Iraqi context

- Western media have described "Iraqi versions of 'American Idol' and 'Saturday Night Live.'"

3 Freedom of Expression

- Independent media that can allow views expressed by all of Iraq's communities is an important step towards establishing a viable democracy

- Freedom of expression also means learning media responsibility and ethics

- A question observers have asked: "Can the Iraqi media reinforce or bring together the country's divisions?"

- Violence represented in the tele-visual and thus socio-cultural sphere

4 Fragmentation of the Iraqi Media?

- "Iraq's TV menu is growing increasingly sectarian, with channels-linked directly or loosely with political parties-which regularly report sect-specific news."

- Political groups have consolidated powerful media empires, including print, radio and TV, broadcast in Iraq & internationally

Some Recommendations

- Therefore, it is important that legislation and regulation preserves freedom of expression and the independence of media.
- Educating journalists on social responsibility and reporting during times of conflict
- Professional standards and practical training for journalists is relatively new
- Developing the institutional capacity of Iraqi media
- Baghdad University's College of Mass Communications, as well as other regional universities with Communications departments
- An independent media and telecommunication institute to offer professional and mid-level training to Iraqi media practitioners

The Future

- In the case of the Balkans, one study highlighted, "the dangers of poorly planned assistance to the development of the Fourth Estate in post-conflict areas, which may cause an outburst of **ethnic conflict** rather than fostering peaceful cohabitation"
- An "outburst of ethnic conflict," or in the Iraqi case, "ethno-sectarian conflict" has become a reality
- Protection of Iraqi journalists, the "engines" of a free press
- Ideally, the media should emerge as a "safety valve" for the nation, by ensuring that these differences are debated on the airwaves, rather than in the streets
- Ideally the media can address the grievances of all of Iraq's communities, transforming this debate into a constructive one