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MEMORANDUM

December 20, 2003

TO: Elizabeth Conrad, USAID
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FROM: Ron St. John, IRI
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RE: Draft Report on Basrah, Najaf, Hillah & Baghdad Focus Groups

This document is IRI's draft contribution to the interim report for the 8 city focus group study being done in conjunction with RTI. IRI has been working under a National Endowment for Democracy grant to increase public opinion research capacity in Iraq since June of this year. IRI has extensive experience in this area around the world, and has been working with several Iraqi organizations that conduct public opinion research. The two organizations began working together on this project at the beginning of December 2003.

As per IRI's agreement with RTI and USAID, this is a preliminary draft, submitted in rough form in the interests of providing the fastest possible turnaround of the results to CPA. Additionally, this draft is intended to give CPA staff a basis to ask IRI to provide clarification on the findings of previous focus groups, and/or direction on future focus groups. The findings of this document have not been agreed to by RTI.

With the exception of some of the findings from the Basrah focus group, which incorporate the work of Jim Mayfield, these findings are the results of analysis of the focus group data by IRI staff and associates.

KEY FINDINGS

- Many participants see the Iraqi police as too poorly trained and too ill-equipped to deal with Iraq's tremendous problems with law and order.
- Sentiment among the participants is that while the presence of the Coalition Forces (CF) is unpleasant and threatening, CF are the only way to deal with many security issues.
- Tribal conflicts, organized crime, Islamic militias and external threats are a few of the areas where Iraqis see their own forces as inadequate.
- That being said, significant numbers of participants tell us that Iraqi police are best equipped to deal with Iraqis on an interpersonal basis.
- The most frequently mentioned remedy is to have CF and Iraqi police cooperate closely.
- The perception that basic services are not being provided is the secondary driver behind Iraqi public opinion, according to our groups.
- The reaction to the content of the agreement is positive throughout, but Iraqis are reluctant to varying degrees to believe that the agreement will be executed.
- The perception that CPA has not delivered on its promises, plus the continuing lack of security, is fueling the disbelief that the elections will occur.
- The Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) has high negatives among our participants.
- The perception of the IGC is that they are self-interested and do not act on behalf of the Iraqi people.
- Our focus group participants are almost unanimously interested in supporting leaders "who have suffered like the Iraqi people have suffered," and have a disdain for returning Iraqi expatriates as leaders.
- Many participants see the IGC as a tool of the CPA.
- The opinions of religious leaders on political issues are very important in Basrah and Najaf, and to a lesser degree in Hillah, and to a much lesser degree in Baghdad, according to our participants.

METHODOLOGY

Overview

Two sets of focus groups (one for males and one for females) are being conducted in each of the following eight cities on the dates specified.

- | | |
|----------------|-------------|
| 1. Basra | December 14 |
| 2. Najaf | December 16 |
| 3. Hillah | December 17 |
| 4. Baghdad | December 19 |
| 5. Baquba | December 20 |
| 6. Mosul | January 4 |
| 7. Sulimaniyah | January 6 |
| 8. Irbil | January 8 |

These focus groups should be viewed as a work in progress. This is the first time RTI and IRI have worked together. Security was a constant concern, as with most activities in Iraq. Logistics for participants and staff were daunting for conducting groups in four cities in six days starting less than two weeks after the decision to do the groups. The capture of Saddam and resulting hail of celebratory gunfire during the Basrah focus groups introduced numerous twists to the research and security environments.

As such, numerous biases were introduced into the research. In the opinion of IRI, the data skews favorably toward the CPA and democracy, and this should be taken into account when using this information for decision making. Specific biases are discussed below.

Responsibilities

IRI and RTI collaborated on the development of the questionnaire. Focus group participants were recruited by RTI. RTI also selected the sites for the focus groups. IRI was responsible for selecting and training moderators. Additionally, IRI was responsible for the technical aspects of conducting the groups – setting up video and audio recording systems and a closed circuit television system with the intent of allowing expatriate staff from both organizations to view the groups without their presence being revealed to the participants. IRI and RTI researchers both wrote separate memos very specifically outlining focus group methodology for site selection and participant recruitment that was to be distributed to RTI field staff responsible for those efforts.

Additionally, the Independent Institute for Administrative and Civil Society Studies contributed to this project to supplement site selection and participant recruitment efforts.

IRI Research Staff

To fulfill its obligations to the project and to further its long-term project of increasing public opinion research capacity in Iraq, IRI brought in two Romanian public opinion experts with extensive experience in post-authoritarian public opinion research following the fall of Ceaucescu. Additionally, IRI resident staff in Baghdad has experience

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conducting more than 100 focus groups in Russia, Romania, Indonesia and the United States.

Moderators

Finding qualified moderators in a country with no experience in public opinion research prior to June of this year was difficult. As such, IRI recruited a variety of moderators to test which moderator achieved the best result with the groups. Moderators trained for this effort included 3 PhD sociologists, a male medical student, a woman in her sixties and a female translators in her twenties. All were trained by some combination of IRI resident staff, Romanian consultants and Dr. James Mayfield from RTI.

Three sets of two practice focus groups were conducted in Baghdad the week of December 8 to prepare the moderators for their “live” focus groups on the road. Additionally, as many of the moderators as possible were in attendance while their colleagues were conducting their groups.

Analysis & Reporting

At least one IRI expatriate researcher attended each focus group live, and received translation from Iraqi translators. All tapes with the exception of the Basrah groups were transcribed roughly into English, and reviewed by another IRI expatriate researcher prior to the drafting of this report. The report was written in conjunction with most of the Iraqi moderators and translators for clarification on local issues and to double check Arabic translations.

Biases

As these are among the first focus groups conducted in Iraq, numerous problems arose which introduced biases into the study.

Moderator Inexperience

As might be expected, the moderators made errors associated with novice focus group moderators – explaining too much to the participants, giving their own opinion, not probing deeply enough on relevant issues, etc. Some participants may have changed their opinions to match or challenge the moderator’s opinion.

Site Selection Error

The Basrah focus groups were located in a villa surrounded by razor wire and associated with expatriates. The Najaf groups were located across the hall from the governor’s office. Asking sensitive questions about the performance of the government in a government building does not build the environment of trust required for a focus group in a post-authoritarian environment. IRI feels that these groups will be biased pro-CF.

Participant Recruitment Bias

In any focus group in a developing country, the recruiter may invite friends and family to take advantage of the payment for participation. IRI and RTI jointly

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developed extensive methodology to minimize this bias. However, IRI identified numerous biases in the participant recruitment.

In Basrah, the participants were largely students and teachers. In Hillah, the women's group was notified a week ahead of time about the subject of the groups in order to prepare. In Baghdad, most of the participants were associated with a District Advisory Council. In general, these groups skewed educated and pro-CF.

FINDINGS

1. Do you think things are better now, or things were better under the previous regime?

Baghdad

In general, the first women's group in Baghdad was surprisingly optimistic and pleased about the change in regime. This could be real, or could be a result of the bias of selecting participants who are closely associated with a Baghdad District Advisory Council.

"We are practicing freedom now – this is the best thing that has happened to the Iraqi people." – Middle-aged housewife wearing a head scarf

"In the past, if I was late at work, the institute punished me. Now, I am free to come and go without worry." – 23 year old instructor at the Ministry of Communications

Najaf

Participants perceive their life improved but not as they expected. Some complaints focus the poor services, unemployment. Some others are happy they are not forced to join the army anymore.

"The CPA promised a lot and did not keep their promises. No electricity, insecurity. I think the previous regime was better in one aspect, the security." (Male, Najaf)

All are glad they got rid of Saddam. However there is a certain degree of fear that Saddam's followers have resources to restore the regime or at least to continue the resistance.

"I saw Saddam captured and I remember my mother in prison." (Old Shia woman in Najaf)

"I don't think anything changes. I was unemployed before I am unemployed now" (young faculty graduate, female, Najaf)

"Former regime was oppressive with for no reason. I think now is better." (Male, Najaf)

In fact the security is the most serious problem all respondents face. All the information on the current life that was collected during the discussions includes security issues. All

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opinions towards authorities, coalition forces, recent events that happened in Iraq should be understood with respect of the anxiety they have.

Hillah

Not surprisingly, in a focus group conducted just a few days after the capture of the former dictator, the capture of Saddam Hussein was one of the frequently mentioned happy events of the year.

"The capture of Mr. President" (man, Hillah)

Other events mentioned include the increasing of pensions, the new freedom and promise of democracy, increasing of salaries for some state employees and the fall of the Baath Party.

While the fall of Saddam was welcomed, people were disillusioned by the way that Iraq fell.

"The fall of Iraq in this way. It was supposed to be done by Iraqi people, not by Americans" (man, Hillah)

People were also disappointed by the rise in unemployment, the growing sectarian divide between Shiia and Sunnis and the increasing dissolution of Iraqi society.

2. Do you believe the Governing Council in Baghdad has done a good job or a bad job, representing the people of Iraq?

Baghdad

The Baghdad women's group reflects the trend noted by IRI in focus groups in other cities – widespread disdain for the Governing Council. All but one of the women had an unfavorable opinion of the IGC.

The primary characteristic of the governing council noted by participants is that Council members did not spend years in Iraq suffering under the previous regime. The second characteristic is that the group has produced no results for Iraq's people. The third is inordinate self-interest among Council members.

Contrary to conventional wisdom, the concept of the Governing Council being a tool of the CPA did not come up.

¹ After a dictatorship there is a quite strong feeling of public humiliation referring to the impression that the society supported so long such a figure. The public believes that others are thinking that they are partially guilty for supporting the dictator. That was the case in Romania, East Germany and Serbia. That humiliation is known as producing various erratic manifestations in the aftermath of a revolution. One of this is the rapid creation of hundreds of political parties. In the case of Iraq it seems that a second humiliation factor is added: the fact that the removal of Saddam has been done by the American led coalition. What the Hilla participant says is that not Saddam has fallen, but Iraq. Because Saddam has been not removed by Iraqis, the participant believes the whole Iraq state and society is at risk.

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The disdain for the Council is so deep-rooted that when one participant noted to other participants that their salaries had increased from some 16,000 ID to more than 100,000 ID, not one participant was moved even slightly from their anti-GC opinion.

“All the members of the governing council have not suffered like the Iraqi people have suffered. They have lived away from Iraq for many years. They never faced war or lived under war. They know nothing about Iraqi suffering. We have many doctors and well-educated people who have good experience. You can depend on them and trust them more than members of the council.” – 23 year old teacher at a university

“The Governing Council is just a name. They do nothing.” – 45 year old director of a secondary school wearing a head scarf

“Nobody on the governing council tries to make a solution for the people who need houses, or the people who have just gotten married and want to get their own house.” – 45 year old director of a school wearing a head scarf

“This is the same situation as when Saddam used his Tikritis to get the benefits of power without looking after the Iraqi people. This is the same for the Governing Council. They only look after their followers.” – 50 year old unemployed housekeeper

Najaf

The majority of participants were not aware of any of the actions of G.C. The members of the council were almost unknown by focus group participants. Only one highly educated woman commented the activity of the GC members, based probably on some direct contact with the institution.

“They do not represent the public interest. They have no power. They did nothing for the Iraqi people.” (Female, complete superior education, Najaf)

“The GC did not explain their strategies to people. We have no clue, we don't understand anything of their theories. We don't know them and we don't know who represents us. So all we say is the Shiia part represents us.” (Female, Najaf)

3. What do you think about the CPA? In your opinion, would you say that they been liberators or occupiers? (Get a count on how they feel.)

Baghdad

A slight majority of participants feel that the CPA is an occupying rather than a liberating power. While the participants readily admit that without Coalition Forces in Iraq the country would disintegrate into civil unrest and sectarian strife, the mere presence of Coalition Forces causes many of the group members concern. They are not concerned primarily about violent interactions with the CF, but more about being near the CF when the soldiers are attacked by insurgents.

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This opinion was not unanimous. Some participants saw the CF as a welcome contributor to the stability and order in Iraq. One exchange was illustrative of the dual concerns facing Iraqis about their security:

"I used to go to the market every day, but now I only go every three or four days. I see the Americans patrolling the streets, and I am afraid somebody will attack them and I will get hurt." – 50 year old housewife in a head scarf

<in response>

"I am afraid of the Iraqi police. I trust the Americans more than the Iraqi police. When I see the American forces at a gas station, I feel safer. I know that they have established order." (the implication is the Iraqi police are corrupt and ineffective) – 25 year old unemployed woman in a head scarf

"Without the Americans, there would be bloodshed. We would kill each other." - late twenties Masters student in a head scarf

Najaf

Certain consensuses were noticed regarding perceptions of the CPA in the Najaf focus groups. Although the dominant attitude is that of rejection (they are perceived as occupiers), we may say that people are inclined to accept their presence as long as it proves to be necessary for security reasons.

"The came as liberators, now they behave like occupiers." (Male, Najaf)
"After bringing those airplanes, tanks and stuff they may bring some generators to give us electricity." (Female, Najaf)

One of the most discussed issues during in the focus groups was the relation between the Iraq Police and the CPA. The majority agrees that the two organizations should work together on solving the problems. A woman in Najaf thinks that there are Baath policemen in Najaf. Nevertheless the general view is that CPA is in control in Najaf at this moment.

"We want Iraqi Police and CPA to protect us. And I want our sons to be in the police not the ex-Baathists who are now in the police." (Uneducated woman in Najaf)

1. What is something that has happened to you in the past year that was a good thing
2. What is something that has happened to you in the past year that was a bad thing

3. Did any of you lose family members to Saddam? Get a count.

Hillah

Almost all participants had an executed family member (cousin, brother, father) during the Saddam regime or a death soldier during the Iran-Iraq war or the Gulf war. However, they state their loss in quite a matter-of-fact way – quite a fatalist attitude.

The group seemed to be mostly Dawa members, according to the moderator.

On 15 November 2003, the CPA announced that political authority would be transferred to the Iraqi government, on June 30th, 2004.

4. Were you aware of this decision? How many were, how many were not aware?

Baghdad

One person heard it on Al-Jazeera, another on Al-Aribiya. Most had heard about it. Only a couple had not.

Najaf

Very few of the female respondents had any idea of the agreement. Men were aware of it. Some heard of it on TV (Arbia, Al Jazra) or from newspapers, the other were told about the announcement during the holly service. All those who knew about the agreement had no idea of the announcement's content.

Hillah

9 out of 10 people heard about it. No one knew in details what it is inside.

As a main source of information regarding the Agreement and, generally speaking, the political news, Arabia (UAE), Al-Jazeera (Qatar) El-Alam (Iran) has been nominated. No local or national TV channel seems to be the main source of information, due to the lack of credibility.

(For those of the participants who already were aware of the announcement, ask:)

5. How did you find out? (Have each participant give his answer personally.)

****Now let us read through this announcement. (hand the agreement out)**

6. What were your feelings upon reading this?

Basrah

The howzah is quite powerful in Basrah. All ten participants in the men's groups liked the agreement. When asked who might change your mind, and prompted "religious leaders" nine out of ten said that religious leaders would not cause them to change their minds. The lone dissenter was a fellow dressed in sheikh attire. Coincidentally, our moderator left the room to confer with us for five minutes. During that time, the sheikh convinced the rest of the group that they should listen to religious leaders about the agreement. This dramatic shift in opinion was a clear indication that they did not want to be seen as against their religious leaders.

Whether this shift in opinion was due to peer pressure, or the fear of being video-taped as being anti religious leader, or the persuasive arguments of the tribal leader is not clear. It does document the volatile nature of opinion in Iraq at the present time. Similarly, the women when posed the same question asked if the group was indeed secret, then said that they would defy their religious leader to support the agreement. This illustrates the desire for democracy vs. the concern about offending religious leaders.

A. Is this announcement believable: Do you believe it will happen as scheduled?

B. Are you happy with the timetable or unhappy?
(Have each participant indicate why they are happy or unhappy?)

7. What is your opinion, should the Americans leave before June, not until June, or should they stay longer?

Baghdad

The opinion of the Baghdad women's group followed that of other groups tested in Iraq in their view of the IGC/CPA agreement. With a few caveats, the agreement is greeted with cautious but enthusiastic approval.

However, the Baghdad women's group is more skeptical that the agreement will be implemented than the groups further south.

"Let's wait and see if the agreement will be true. How can we be sure if the agreement will be fulfilled?" – female, Baghdad

"We want to feel that the IGC is doing something in real life, not just making agreements on paper." -- female, Baghdad

"There is no indication by the Americans over the last eight months that they will do these last 4 topics (the agreement) that we are talking about." – middle aged woman in head scarf

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“What did we do for the last five months? The Governing Council did nothing. Now we are going to have another Governing Council, and another year with them doing nothing.”

Some conspiracy theories involving American intent also emerged in this group:

“Are the Americans going to desert us? Are the CF going to leave Iraq as soon as they get rid of Saddam and that is it? We want them to stay in Iraq until the reconstruction is completed.” – female, Baghdad

Najaf

Mostly positive reactions towards the announcement occurred after respondents read the agreement. While male is more critical on the agreement points, females' comments were very positive.

Some believed it, others did not. One man in Najaf said that “they did not believe Saddam will be overthrown but it happened. With the help of Americans, I believe it will work.”

“It will come true because people want this to happen, we have no alternative.” (Male, Najaf)

Majority of the participants had doubts regarding the way these declarations will be put in practice. Their doubts have nuances as follows:

- Who will supervise the elections?
- Progress on security related issues is not apparent;
- Timeline is too short to decide who will represent our interests;
- The agreement must hide some CPA plans; Would they leave as it is stated in the agreement?
- CPA should stay longer to protect us from the followers of Saddam and Al-Quaida;
- We need to know first what the clerics say on it;

“All will follow Sistani because he is an expert in religion (a shaaria). He watch and understand what happens in Iraq and we have to follow him” (female, Najaf)

“Sistani knows better than us what to do and he actually agreed on this. I saw him on TV.” (Male, Najaf)

Participants completely agreed on the following points of the document:

- sovereignty
- end to occupation;
- security.

Hillah

The following agreements were reached by the group following the reading of the agreement:

- The major problem is the security
- We wonder if it is going to be implemented

8. As you read through this announcement, please write down any part of the document that is not clear. (Have each person indicate which section they have concerns and have each one explain why)

(Take back the agreement.)

9. Do you expect security to be better or worse after authority is returned to the Iraqi government on 30 June 2004. Why do you believe this? What role should the Coalition Forces play? What role should the Iraqi police play? (We want comments from as many people as possible.)

Baghdad

The first reaction of the group is that security will improve following the implementation of the agreement on June 30. This exchange illustrates the dueling tensions Iraqis face in dealing with the country's insecurity. On the one hand, Iraqis believe that Iraqi police will deal with Iraqis better on an inter-personal level. On the other hand, CF are seen as tremendously more effective at curbing security threats.

"I think that when Iraqis rule Iraqis, security will be better. Iraqis know the Iraqi habits, concerns and customs."—Baghdad female

"The Americans are capable of doing so many things to restore order because they have the authority. The Iraqi police have no authority. We see the Americans doing so many things to restore order, but the Iraqis can't do these things because they are afraid of the other Iraqis. They don't command the respect of other Iraqis, can't influence their behavior, and don't want to be humiliated in front of other Iraqis." – Baghdad Female

Some Iraqis both in Baghdad and Basrah lay at least partial blame for the ineffective IPF with the selection of the police force.

"Now anyone can get a police job. In the past, they had to be screened, and the leaders and the people in their district had to vouch for them. Now anyone can get a police job – even some looters have jobs as police!"

Some see the general ineffectiveness of Iraqi police as symptomatic of the larger state of uncertainty in the country.

“There is no law, there is no government, there is no president. Nobody is responsible. If anyone breaks the law, what are the Iraqi police going to do to them?”

“Iraqis need law, and a firm law. Without these laws, Iraqis will not respect anything.”

“Iraqis need to sense fear. Without fear nobody obeys the law.”

Finally, while the argument was not terribly persuasive to the group, the dissenting voice of the optimist was refreshing.

“The security situation is in our hands. Look at us during Ramadan. We went out, we went to the market, we visited our friends until 1 or 2 o'clock in the morning. It is up to the Iraqi people not to be afraid, and take charge of our own security situation.” – 23 year old teacher at a university

Basrah

The focus group participants both male and female saw the Coalition Forces (CF) as an essential component to restoring security. Joint Iraqi Police Forces (IPF) and CF patrols were much more highly thought of than either force acting alone to increase security. We heard numerous anecdotes of Iraqi police being unable to perform their duties because of threats by gangs and tribal militias.

One person relayed the story of being at a checkpoint watching the car in front of him being searched, and seeing the IPF officer finding a weapon. The participant heard the car owner say to the police officer, in a very threatening way: “I know where your family lives.” The IPF officer quickly put the gun back where he found it and let him go. . One young man complained that the Iraqi police are only issued ten bullets, “what can they do to protect the ordinary citizen, with such little ammunition.”

The women also went into depth about the role of the police. They felt the Iraqi police dealt better with Iraqis, but required training and backup from Coalition Forces. One middle aged teacher wearing a head scarf said “In Basrah, we have no system for justice. We can throw nobody in jail. Nobody is afraid of punishment, nobody respects the law.”

Another woman in her thirties without the veil noted “The British Forces don’t care. They saw the looting, they saw the killing without doing anything.”

The women transferred this lawlessness to their perception of democracy. “We care about democracy, but there is nothing real. I don’t know the meaning of democracy. There is nothing real.” This is in reference to security – they see the lack of security as evidence that democracy is not real in Iraq.

Najaf

The timeline was almost unanimously agreed to in the Najaf focus groups. Some even believe that the CPA should stay longer, so that they guarantee the security in Iraq. Others believe that they should leave after transferring authority to Iraqi people.

"One ship with two captains will sink So they should leave right after establishing an Iraqi government." (Female, Najaf)

"They should stay longer because we still are afraid of Saddam followers. They have weapons and they will join other forces to destroy us." (Female, Najaf)

Hillah

There is a strong expressed feeling of lack of security². The Americans should leave only after the security is guaranteed. The problem is not chronological – June, or after June – but after a number of conditions are met.

"Once the security is guaranteed the Americans could leave the power" (man, Hillah).

The Americans are responsible for building up security forces. They should take care of it". (man, Hillah)

Although in the session the attitude which transfers the responsibility for security to the American led coalition seem to be dominant, there are different opinions:

We, Iraqis, have to clean up our country. The Americans cannot give us back our country as a white paper. We have to get it. We actually need an iron hand to calm down Iraq³ (man, Hillah)

"Actually, if the Americans transfer the power on 30th of June, the security will improve. It is a hope it is not a certainty. That is because the Iraqis might be able to produce more security for themselves." (man, Hilla)

10. Some people say that Iraqis should be able to vote for their leaders as soon as possible. Other people say that these first elections will be the most important in Iraq's history and should not be rushed. What is your opinion?

² From other sources (interviews with political leaders, ordinary people it seems that the lack of security feeling is composed by various strata. There are at least 5 sources of insecurity: the fear that if the Americans leave the former Baath paramilitary structures would come back, vengeance; the SCIRI and Kurd militias (in the North and in central Iraq); the fear of a civilian war; organized crime, based on various paramilitary groups which could be formed with the existing guns; the fear of criminals liberated by Saddam Hussein on 15th of October 2002. On top of these sources one might add the fear of ethnic and religious clashes, which might not develop into a civilian war. All these potential sources of anxiety should be clearly checked in the coming quantitative and qualitative surveys.

³ In all post-dictatorship societies the need for a strong political direction has been emulated by the expression "iron hand". In Spain after Franco the king Juan Carlos has been identified as such. In Portugal after Salazar the General Secretary of the Communist Party Alvaro Cunhal. In Romania, Ion Iliescu. In Russia Vladimir Putin. The expression doesn't imply a nostalgia after a dictator but the need for order, stability, public discipline.

Baghdad

Opinion is diverse and not very solid on this issue, with the group slightly leaning toward Iraq taking its time and getting the process right. In many ways, these comments express a link between the lack of progress on security and the lack of belief in the likelihood of elections.

"We have suffered for 35 years, what is another five months going to do to us? It is only a short time." – female, Baghdad

"Six months and we have a government? That seems OK... but if you look at it since the fall of Saddam, it is a long time. Is it possible for any country to be without a government for a year and a half?"

"Things are getting worse and worse. We need a government as soon as possible to get someone in charge." – female, Baghdad

However, the discussion highlighted fears that arise in the group from rushing the process too much.

"We don't need to rush things. We don't need each new minister to bring their relatives as ministers. This government is too important." – female, Baghdad

<in response>

In our ministry (Ministry of Communications), the minister is from Dawa Party. The Dawa Party is putting up banners on the wall to order women to wear the head scarf. My male colleagues are filing a grievance with the dean because the women's clothes are agitating them sexually. The Dawa Party tells us that if our family members join the party, they can get jobs at the Ministry. – 23 year old teacher at the Communications Ministry not wearing a head scarf

Hillah

"CPA should follow and arrest the real criminals. It was a mistake for the Coalition to let people take all those guns and weapons. There are too many guns on streets. Now, to have a weapon to protect yourself and yours, became a necessity" (man, Hillah)

"Maybe it is a good idea to organize a secret police to work against criminals" (man, Hillah)

"The Iraqi police cannot perform its role properly. They are afraid. The police should be backed up by the government and just do its job: catching criminals, protecting people. The police should be better organized, and the policemen should be better selected. There is no real change in the police. The same people known as being corrupt and ineffective." (man, Hillah)

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"For example, in Hilla if you show up on streets with a gun, the CPA forces do not care. You can walk on streets with that." (man, Hillah)

"The Americans did not destroy only Saddam but also Iraq. Before, there were 8-9 departments in charge with security. Now, there is only the police, which is not of a good quality" (man, Hillah)

"The police are powerless. They are very weak." (man, Hillah)

Please write this down.

What do you fear if the vote is rushed? What do you fear if the vote is postponed? Please write this down. When do you think Iraq will be ready for elections – 2004, 2005, 2006?

Baghdad

The group was unanimous in their belief that 2005 is a good year for Iraqi elections.

When asked who should play the largest role in selecting the members of the National Assembly, there were no dissenting opinions to "The Iraqi people."

Najaf

Participants in the male group agreed on the date of elections. Almost all admitted that vote shouldn't be rushed. A majority of them would like voting to happen in 2005.

Most of the women would like the elections to happen as fast as possible. Only one of them (superior education) disagreed.

"It is not good to rush the timetable because we must avoid confusion. People don't know anything about elections. We must wait for census data to know how many are sunni, how many are shia. The elections should not rely on ratio cards. The census itself needs a lot of time." (Male, Najaf)

"We prefer the elected members of the National Assembly to be people like us, who suffered with us all these 35 years. The elections should be as fast as possible." (Female, Najaf)

"We would like the Iraqi people (individuals) to have the largest say in selecting the ITNA." (Male, Najaf)

Hillah

4 out of 10 participants are of the opinion that the elections should be quickly organized. 3 participants were for 2004, 3 for 2005, and 4 for 2006.

"There is no any reason for waiting too much. We are going anyway to elect people we trust and we know. Currently all kind of thinks happens. For example, in Hilla, the religious leaders fired the former governor. They want to install their own man. A lot of people don't like that".

The moderator insisted on those indicating 2006 as a preferable moment for elections.

Why is that?

"Because there is enough time to prepare everything. People will learn what is that democracy and they will become more open minded. All those now under 40 years old only know the Baath party. Mass/media doesn't help too much. They don't cover the real events. The local IMN is not independent, and it is promoting just one man".

11. Who should be responsible to ensure that these elections would be fair and democratic -- the CPA, the US Government, UN, European Union, or other. Please write this down.

Baghdad

The United Nations had the support of four of the ten participants, but perhaps the remark that sparked the most response among group members was that Iraqis should supervise their own elections.

"The election operation should be supervised by Iraqis, because it is humiliating for any decent Iraqi to be supervised by a non-Iraqi." – Baghdad female

Najaf

"The elections should be supervised" almost all said. The most trusted in supervising the elections are UN, USA and European Union. Very few (those who want elections as fast as possible) presume that Iraq should do elections by itself.

Hillah

No participant indicated the CPA, or the US Army. The majority indicated a combination between Iraqis (preferably independent, sometimes religious) and the UN.

12. Who do you believe should have the largest say in selecting the Iraqi Transitional National Assembly in June 2004? (wait for a response)

probe: Political Parties

probe: Religious leaders
probe: Tribal Leaders
probe: Governorate Councils
probe: University Faculties
probe: CPA officials
probe: leaders from Private Associations

(When a participant mentions one of the above, ask them for specifics, which part, which religious leader, tribal leaders, if possible, if not, then get a count for each answer.)

Baghdad

Perhaps most telling in this subject is that none of the probes elicited much of a response from the women. The sentiment of the group was that all groups should be included in selecting the Transitional Assembly. Among this group, tribal chiefs and religious leaders did not fare well.

“We don’t want the tribal chiefs or the religious leaders”. – middle aged woman wearing head scarf

Among the surprises of the group – even for IRI’s Iraqi translator – was this comment by a woman in a head scarf.

“If we are going to have a national assembly, we should separate politics from religion.” – 30 something woman wearing a head scarf

Najaf

Among the most trusted people who would have a say in the election of the Transitional Assembly was Dr. Abdul Hakim (dean of Kufa University).

Hillah

The participants had a low understanding of the question. However, Mr. Ali Sistani was indicated by 4, Muklada Sadr by 2, Dawa Party, Ablazz Al Hakim (SCIRI).

Some people say that religious leaders are the most qualified to write Iraq’s new constitution, while others say that constitutional experts, academics, lawyers and elected officials are most qualified to write the constitution. What do you think? Why?

Najaf

Constitution must be written by religious persons or scientists, male group believes. The females responses are not relevant. Some didn’t know what constitution is...

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“Sistani should write it or supervise the process.” (Males, Najaf)

Hillah

Almost all participants agreed that religious men were not the best choice, because that course of action would divide the country. Technocrats, lawyers, judges, academics, and people of law were preferred.