



Iraq: Navigating Reform, Collapse and the Status Quo

VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

23 – 25 November

***@CH_MENAP
#IraqInitiative***

CONTACT
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Join Iraqi and international policymakers, academics and activists to discuss the critical issues for Iraq at a challenging time for the country and the MENA region.

On the agenda:

- Youth empowerment
- Security sector reform
- Cultural heritage
- Iraq in the region
- Justice and the rule of law
- Iraq's economy

How can I get the most out of the conference?

Tip: For the best experience, please use either Google Chrome, Firefox or Microsoft Edge when accessing the Conference+ platform. Each session will be hosted on Zoom. Make sure you have the latest version of Zoom downloaded on your device. If you do not have Zoom installed, Web Browser access is also available.



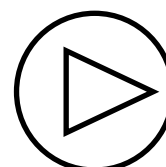
In the lead up to the conference

- Test your connection before signing into the virtual platform
- Complete your profile by adding a headshot
- Browse the agenda and speakers



Your participation on the day

- View the participant list to network with your peers using the 1:1 networking tool
- Listen to the panel discussions in either Arabic or English
- Submit questions via the Q&A function in Zoom and engage with the speakers



Keep the conversation going

- Catch up on-demand with sessions you missed or re-watch your favourites
- Reach out to the connections you already made
- Access materials and recordings via the virtual platform

AGENDA | DAY ONE | 23 NOV

11.30 – 12.30 GMT Session 1: In Conversation with Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister

Speaker: Ali Allawi, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Republic of Iraq

Moderator: Robin Niblett CMG, Director and Chief Executive, Chatham House

13.30 – 15.00 GMT Session 2: Empowering Iraq's Youth in Shaping Iraq's Future

Iraq has one of the youngest populations in the world, with nearly 60 per cent of its citizens under the age of 25. This new generation have no memory of Iraq under Baathist rule and have spent their lifetimes in a country run by an unaccountable political elite that have failed to prevent repeated cycles of violent conflict. Young people's discontent with corruption, inequality and growing unemployment has fuelled popular protests that have shaken the foundations of the post-2003 political order. Given the economic crisis, the Iraqi government is less able to accommodate the needs of Iraq's youth. This session will explore the social, economic and political realities for Iraq's growing youth population, the motivations of those taking part in protests, and the role young people will play in the 2021 elections and beyond.

Speakers

Zahra Ali, Assistant Professor of Sociology, Rutgers University

Sajad Jiyad, Independent Analyst

Christine van den Toorn, Founder and President, Iraq Fund for Higher Education

Moderator: Maya Gebeily, Baghdad Deputy Bureau Chief, Agence-France Presse

16.00 – 17.30 GMT Session 3: Prospects for Security Sector Reform in Iraq

In 2020, the security situation in Baghdad and many parts of Iraq has become more precarious. Iraq's government struggles to hold to account armed groups that are both under and outside its formal command. These groups have targeted activists and researchers with impunity thus far. They are also beginning to police communities across the country, outside of a centralised accountability structure. In this session, policymakers and experts will discuss recent developments in Iraq's security sector under Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi and the prospects for the success or failure of security policies in the face of significant escalations.

Speakers

Qasim Al-Araji, National Security Advisor to the Prime Minister of Iraq

Maria Fantappie, Special Adviser for the Middle East and North Africa, Center for Humanitarian Dialogue

Michael Knights, Jill and Jay Bernstein Fellow, Washington Institute for Near East Policy

Moderator: Renad Mansour, Senior Research Fellow, Middle East and North Africa Programme and Director, Iraq Initiative, Chatham House

2020 has seen the advent of crisis after crisis in Iraq: from the assassinations of Qassem Soleimani and Abu Mehdi al-Muhandis and a series of clashes between US and Iran-aligned militias, to the political crisis over the appointment of a new government, the impact of COVID-19 on Iraq's crumbling healthcare system, the collapse of oil prices and delays in paying public salaries, and rumblings from a resurgent ISIS.

This virtual conference, part of the Iraq Initiative, brings together Iraqi and international policymakers, academics and activists to discuss the critical issues for Iraq as it navigates this challenging period.



AGENDA | DAY TWO | 24 NOV

11.00 – 12.30 GMT Session 4: Cultural Heritage in Iraq's Statebuilding Process

In Iraq's troubled post-2003 politics, cultural heritage has undergone major transformation. International, national and regional actors have all been involved in shaping Iraq's political trajectory. A key component of those processes has been the ways in which the country's cultural heritage has been instrumentalised to serve the interests of organised political groups. Since 2003, Iraq's national cultural heritage has been fragmented into competing parcels, controlled and exploited for the interests of rival political parties. In this context, this panel will discuss the outcomes of Iraq's post-2003 statebuilding process on its cultural heritage and what should be done now to build a cohesive and peace-oriented national cultural infrastructure that serves the needs of the people of Iraq.

Speakers

Saad Eskander, Cultural Heritage Advisor, Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Antiquities, Republic of Iraq
Maja Kominko, Scientific and Programs Director, Aliph Foundation
Hassan Nadhem, Minister of Culture and Antiquities, Republic of Iraq

Session 4:

Moderator: Eleanor Robson, Director, Nahrein Network and Head, History Department, University College London

13.30 – 15.00 GMT Session 5: Securing Justice and the Rule of Law in Iraq

The process of detaining and prosecuting those suspected of involvement in ISIS has put a spotlight on Iraq's fractured justice system. However, over the last year, Iraqis across the country have been affected by a weak judiciary unable to offer independent ruling on key constitutional issues, from guaranteeing freedom of speech and assembly to adjudicating against assassinations of activists and researchers. The justice system has not been able to maintain the rule of law, and most parties act with impunity. This session will discuss the state of Iraq's judiciary, the process of justice for the victims of violence, and the role of legal bodies in enforcing accountability.

Speakers

Zaid Al-Ali, Senior Programme Officer in Constitution-Building in the Africa and West Asia Region, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
Ahlam Al-Lami, Lawyer; Former Head, Iraqi Bar Association
Belkis Wille, Senior Researcher, Crisis and Conflict Division, Human Rights Watch

Moderator: Jane Arraf, International Correspondent, National Public Radio

16.00 – 17.30 GMT Session 6: The Future of Iraq in the Region

Over the past year, Iraq has been caught in the middle of an escalation between the US and Iran, challenging Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi's attempts to steer a neutral and independent foreign policy. While Washington threatens to pull out its embassy from Baghdad for the first time since 2003, the prime minister continues to engage with regional and international actors, including a recent trip to Germany, France, and the UK. This session will explore the future of Iraq's relations with Iran and the US in the context of the outcome of the US presidential election, as well as Iraq's place within other evolving regional and international dynamics.

Speakers

Mina Al-Oraibi, Editor in Chief, The National
Fanar Haddad, Senior Advisor to the Prime Minister of Iraq; Visiting Fellow, Middle East Center, London School of Economics
Further speakers TBC

Moderator: Sanam Vakil, Deputy Director and Senior Research Fellow, Middle East and North Africa Programme, Chatham House

AGENDA | DAY THREE | 25 NOV

10.30 – 12.00 GMT Session 7: Pulling Iraq's Economy Back from the Brink

The fall in the price of oil this year has significantly impacted the Iraqi state, which is spending double its revenue each month. Finance Minister Ali Allawi has published a White Paper which puts forward an ambitious project to reform Iraq's economic system, while, in the meantime, dipping into its remaining reserves to sustain a bloated bureaucracy. However, in an election year, can the Iraqi government pursue the austerity recommendations required to cope with falling government revenues? This session will explore the current economic situation in Iraq and will look at the short-term challenges but also the longer-term reform of the rentier state.

Speakers

Suha Al-Najjar, Head, National Investment Authority

David Copley, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Iraq Affairs, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, US Department of State

Toby Dodge, Kuwait Professor and Director, Kuwait Programme, Middle East Centre, London School of Economics; Associate Fellow, Middle East and North Africa Programme, Chatham House

Ahmed Tabaqchali, Chief Investment Officer, AFC Iraq Fund, Adjunct Assistant Professor, American University of Iraq Sulaimani

Moderator: Renad Mansour, Senior Research Fellow, Middle East and North Africa Programme & Director, Iraq Initiative, Chatham House

13.00 – 14.00 GMT Session 8: In Conversation

IRAQ INITIATIVE

The Chatham House Iraq Initiative is a fieldwork-based policy project that rethinks the nature of state-building and governance in Iraq. The project tackles the root causes of state failure to challenge assumptions held in Western capitals about stabilization and peace-building and reach a more nuanced approach to navigating Iraq's complex and interlinked political, security, and economic environment. The initiative is based on original analysis and close engagement with a network of researchers and institutions inside Iraq. At the local level, it maps key political, business, military, tribal, clerical, and civil society figures across Iraq. At the national level, it explores the struggle over the state. The project uses these field-based insights to inform international policy towards Iraq. Chatham House convenes Iraq Initiative activities in various cities in the Middle East, the UK, the US and Europe.