

**Report of International Conference on Charter of  
Social and Professional Rights,  
Media Freedom and the Iraqi Constitution**

*Amman, 15-17<sup>th</sup> August 2005*

**Introduction**

The IFJ signed a six-month contract with UNESCO in July 2005 to carry out a programme of work with journalists in Iraq. This programme provided the opportunity to continue activities put in place following the 18-month project with the Solidarity Centre of the AFL-CIO in the United States.

In the first phase of work a solidarity centre was opened in Iraq and a number of practical actions were undertaken including the establishment of an Iraq programme web-site, publication of various IFJ handbooks on safety, collective bargaining, etc in Arabic, creation of an interactive CD-Rom with resource materials, and the holding of a series of seminars on safety of journalists and trade union issues.

The UNESCO programme began with a major conference which was supported also by the British Trades Union Congress and International Media Support in Denmark.

International Conference on Charter of Social and Professional Rights, Media Freedom and the Iraqi Constitution

This conference was held in Amman from August 15<sup>th</sup> -17<sup>th</sup>. A list of participants is attached.

The meeting produced the following results:

1. Adoption of a Charter of Social and Professional Rights for Iraqi Journalists (attached).
2. Adoption of a Statement on the Iraqi Constitution (attached). This statement was significant because it was made exactly at the time that the drafters of the Constitution had reached deadlock in their discussions and requested more time to resolve differences over the issues of regional autonomy and the rights of women.
3. Adoption of a programme of practical work covering the following areas:
  - Media ethics and regulation of media
  - Trade union rights

- Gender equality
- Media Law
- Safety and Security of Journalists
- Relations with the authorities.

4. Agreement on the reconstitution of the Iraqi National Journalists Advisory Panel

The practical working programme agreed by the meeting was developed by six working groups which met during the conference and which came forward with the following proposals that were adopted by the meeting:

**Media Ethics**

1. That urgent work should be carried out to prepare a draft code of ethics for Iraqi journalists. It was noted that previous codes had been agreed outside the country or without full consultation with Iraqi media professionals. The meeting agreed that a draft code – based upon the IFJ’s own code of principles – should be prepared and should be circulated among journalists and then adopted at a representative meeting of Iraqi media professionals.
2. That a special publication on professional and ethical issues of interest to Iraqi journalists and media professionals should be launched
3. That proposals should be drafted for the creation of a National Council for Media which would act as a monitoring body and as an instrument of self-regulation for Iraqi journalism

**Trade Union Rights**

1. That demands setting out the fundamental rights of workers in journalism should be prepared and that the authorities should be pressed to guarantee the right of organisation for trade unions within journalism and the media sector
2. That three work shops should be organised in Iraq to promote awareness of trade union issues as they affect journalists and media staff;
3. That action should be taken to build stronger links with other Arab unions and international groups on workers rights in journalism
4. That a joint meeting should be held with the Palestinian Journalists Syndicate to share experience and to strengthen co-operation between the two groups.

**Gender Equality**

1. That all journalists’ groups in Iraq should adopt a policy of gender equality and that discussion should be organised within media to ensure that there is no

discrimination in a) appointment and recruitment of people to journalism b) payment of salaries c) opportunities for promotion and advancement in journalism.

2. That a national women's committee for Iraqi journalism should be organised to support gender equality and to promote a national women's network of women in Iraqi journalism
3. That this committee should develop policies and proposals to ensure that internal regulations to promote gender equality are put in place in all media throughout the country.

### **Safety and Security of Journalists**

The meeting agreed that safety training as a top priority in the current conditions and that an extensive safety programme for Iraqi journalists co-ordinated by the IFJ and the International News Safety Institute should be put in place as a matter of urgency.

In particular, the meeting agreed that the programme should focus on “training trainers” to ensure that Iraqis could lead the process of providing support for safety training work.

It was also agreed:

- That there should be a safety centre established in Baghdad, but not under the jurisdiction of any international group. It is important that this initiative should be identified with Iraqi journalists and media professionals. This centre should be a focal point of activity on safety and also be open to all groups in order to promote an active dialogue;
- That there should be a joint action involving both Palestinian and Iraqi journalists on safety issues.

### **Media Law**

The workshop discussed the need for an effective and clear legal regime to be established to assist journalists and media organisations and to clearly define the limits of official interference in the work of media.

It was also noted that there was a need to raise awareness among journalists and media professionals on this issue. In particular it was agreed:

- That a seminar should be held on media law to define key demands regarding freedom of information and access to information rules – including protection of sources for journalists; citizens' rights of access to documents; whistleblower rights, etc.

- That proposals should be prepared for the creation of a central monitoring body which will also play a role in liaison between the authorities and syndicates of journalists.
- That there should be an expensive programme of education in law for journalists and media staff and that journalism training (distance learning, if possible) should be established to help and assist journalists in dealing with their rights and responsibilities.

### **Relations with the Authorities**

It was agreed that

- The state must abide by rules which guarantee fundamental rights of access to information
- There should be independent bodies to monitor quality of transparency and openness
- Structures for dialogues including public authorities and media professional groups should be set up to promote dialogue and discussion on implementation of media policy.

### **Conclusions and Reconstitution of the Iraqi National Journalists Advisory Panel (INJAP)**

The meeting agreed that the success of the creation of INJAP was based upon its capacity to represent all communities of journalists in Iraq.

During its first year, the INJAP had established a web-site in Arabic with information on issues related to ethics, trade union rights, safety, and gender equality. A CD-Rom had also been produced as well as an Iraq-specific safety manual.

A day of action against impunity in the killing of journalists and media staff in Iraq had been organised on April 8<sup>th</sup> 2005 and on that day a solidarity centre for journalists in Iraq had been opened in Baghdad.

The meeting agreed that this work should be built upon and further developed. It was agreed that a new panel should be established involving former members plus new nominations to ensure that all regions were properly represented.

The IFJ was asked to make recommendations and to organise a further meeting in Iraq on this issue. It was agreed, in principle, that as soon as practical, a process for the election of such a panel should be established involving all groups.

Issues for follow up work and action by the IFJ;

- a) to seek support for practical actions in support of the Charter of Social and Professional Rights and for practical issues identified by the working groups (see above)
- b) to take steps to raise awareness among journalists of the issues of the Iraqi Constitution as they affect journalists
- c) to promote social dialogue with employers in media and owners
- d) to investigate a structure for dialogue for journalists and media professionals with state institutions
- e) to encourage dialogue between journalists groups and civil society institutions including trade unions, legal advocacy groups and NGOs in the promotion of a democratic media culture
- f) To support efforts to create an independent national authority to act as a media observatory, and to regulate media as appropriate;
- g) To promote dialogue with the National Communications and Media Commission on the creation of a truly independent national body, with appropriate resources, capable of enforcing decisions.
- h) To establish with assistance of journalists and media professional groups systems for accreditation of journalists that are not subject to official controls either at regional or national level.
- i) To promote the Iraqi/Palestinian journalists dialogue
- j) To look for ways of distributing the IFJ card, produced in Arabic.
- k) To investigate and develop policies for the creation of a truly impartial and politically independent public broadcasting system in line with the highest standards of internal pluralism
- l) To reconstitute the Iraqi National Journalists Advisory Panel.

*August 18<sup>th</sup> 2005*

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**Appendices:**

1. Agenda
2. List of Participants
3. Charter of Social and Professional Rights for Media and Journalism in Iraq
4. Statement on the Iraqi Constitution

International Federation of Journalists

CHARTER OF SOCIAL AND  
PROFESSIONAL RIGHTS  
FOR MEDIA AND  
JOURNALISM IN IRAQ

Policy Document

As adopted by the International Conference on Social and  
Professional Rights, Media Freedom and the Iraqi  
Constitution held in Amman, Jordan, on August 17<sup>th</sup> 2005

*This Charter sets out minimum standards for the exercise of independent journalism and the conditions necessary for the creation of a democratic media culture in Iraq.*

## **1) Fundamental Principles**

1.1 Journalism and media policy in Iraq are developed according to fundamental principles of pluralism and free expression according to Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the principles set out in the UNESCO declarations of Windhoek and Sana'a.

1.2 Journalists and media staff have the right to work in conditions of safety and security.

1.3 Journalists have the right to act according to their conscience in the exercise of journalism.

1.4 Policy concerning media and journalism in Iraq must be guided by the following principles:

- That media, whatever the mode of dissemination, are independent, tolerant and reflect diversity of opinion enabling full democratic exchange within and among all communities, whether based on geography, ethnic origins, religious belief or common language.
- That laws defend and protect the citizens' rights to freedom of information and the right to know;
- That there is respect for decent working and professional conditions, through legally enforceable employment rights and appropriate regulations that guarantee editorial independence and recognition of the profession of journalism;

## **2. Editorial Independence**

2.1 All media, whether public or private, must uphold ethical conduct in journalism, support professional independence, exercise tolerance, and respect the democratic rights of all citizens.

2.2 The treatment of news and information as a commodity or for political ends or in support of cultural or religious objectives must not override or interfere with the duty of journalists and media to inform the public. Media must never be used as instruments of propaganda to support violence and extremism.

2.3 Responsibility for ethical conduct in journalism rests with media professionals who should be responsible for drawing up codes of ethical conduct and who should establish credible and accountable systems of self-regulation.

2.4 There should be no legislation beyond the general law that interferes in matters that are the responsibility of working journalists: namely, the gathering, preparation, selection and transmission of information.

- 2.5 Framework legislation should be introduced in consultation with journalists groups and media, to prohibit censorship whether on the part of government, public authorities or private interests.
- 2.6 In addition, media policy should encourage the adoption of internal editorial statutes and other provisions safeguarding the independence of journalists in all Iraqi media.
- 2.7 The IFJ Code of Principles for the Conduct of Journalism (attached) provides a code of ethics supported by all national representative journalists' organisations and the basis for a common Iraqi understanding on ethical issues through voluntary adoption of journalists and publishers.

### **3. Media Pluralism, Public Service and Open Government:**

- 3.1 There should be no legal, regulatory or policy developments in media without full consultation with Iraqi media and journalists and their representative organisations.
- 3.2 Iraq must promote transparency, open government and freedom of information and ensure the participation of all citizens in developing a democratic culture to strengthen the cohesion of all communities.
- 3.3 Political parties and authorities should respect the role of media to report, in an independent and critical manner, on all aspects of government at all levels. .
- 3.4 The law must guarantee citizen's access to information and freedom of information at all levels of government.
- 3.5 There must be no undue pressure on media, exercised directly or indirectly, or interference in the work of journalists. Where such pressure is identified it should be properly investigated and appropriate remedies taken.
- 3.6 There should be coexistence of public and private media to protect independence and pluralism to the enrichment of all sections of Iraqi society.
- 3.7 Public service values in media should be respected through the creation of editorially-independent public broadcasting and, where appropriate, publishing media.

### **4. Social Dialogue, Rights of Journalists and Media Development:**

- 4.1 An independent, inclusive and accountable media commission to monitor, regulate and support media and journalism should be established.
- 4.2 Structures for dialogue should be set up bringing together representatives of media

managements and the workforce to establish a basis for professional dialogue and industrial relations within Iraqi media.

4.3 There should be openness and transparency in the business and social affairs of all media enterprises including full public disclosure of political affiliations and ownership information.

4.4 Representatives of media and the workforce should agree an action plan to promote the economic and social development of Iraqi media and improvements in working conditions through collective agreements according to the following priorities:

- **To ensure that all employees have an employment contract setting out their wages and conditions and labour rights**
- **To improve the safety and security of journalists and media staff**
- **To limit the use of freelance and casual labour**
- **To guarantee non-discrimination and gender equality at all levels in media**
- **To recognise the rights of trades unions to organise in media and to represent media workers including journalists**
- **To ensure unimpeded access to journalism and to provide trainee journalists with access to proper professional training.**

4.5 Media organisations journalists should, in co-operation with the authorities, promote the establishment of a national and regional infrastructure for professional training to include the needs of all media professionals and journalists including all aspects of ethical conduct, editorial reporting, editing, as well as media management and marketing.

*Amman, 18<sup>th</sup> 2005.*

## Statement on the Iraqi Constitution

We, the undersigned, Iraqi media professionals, meeting in Amman to discuss a charter of labour rights and press freedoms, and the Iraqi constitution, have followed with great interest the process of drafting the constitution, which is now in its final stages.

We believe press freedom will be a cornerstone in building democracy in a country which only recently has emerged from one party rule, by one individual, speaking with one voice. Therefore, we Iraqi media professionals, under the auspices of UNESCO and the International Federation of Journalists, meeting with the additional assistance of the Trades Union Congress of Great Britain and International Media Support, wish to draw the attention of the drafting committee of the Iraqi Constitution and the Iraqi National assembly to the need for a clear and frank reference to the important role of the media and the need to guarantee freedom of expression and the rights of journalists to work without interference.

The state should protect free expression, guarantee the freedom of journalists and journalism within the media, and pursue all violators of these rights through special institutions, which should make decisions in this regard.

This work should be based upon the codes of honour adopted by media professionals themselves – codes which stipulate the ethical basis of their professional activities.

We believe it is necessary to separate media from government and to guarantee independence of all media including non-governmental, public service media, financed by public money.

All sectors of media, whether print, audio and visual, should be independent and reflect pluralism of thought, politics, ethnicity, religion and culture. The free flow and exchange of information must be guaranteed in a democratic manner because we believe that the right to freedom of expression is inseparable from the rights and freedom of all citizens.

Reference to the issue of free expression, for media professionals and citizens alike, is worthless if the state does not provide the means to protect and enforce this right, particularly at a time when Iraq is the most dangerous country in the world for journalists and media staff and where dozens have been killed or kidnapped for doing their noble job of reporting the truth and facts in the service of the public interest.

*Amman, August 16<sup>th</sup> 2005*