

Societal Challenges for Iraq's Lived Reality: Policy Perspectives

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Societal challenges are mounting in Iraq due to years of foreign and domestic wars, lack of political and economic stability, and declining oil prices. No significant and effective structural reforms have been carried out over the past two decades, and corruption and cronyism are widespread within the institutions of a state whose administration relies on the principle of political quotas for influential party forces.



This study seeks to shed light on the main societal challenges plaguing Iraq in the current phase and to identify the forms and patterns they take. It examines the resulting or expected consequences and implications arising from these challenges in order to dissect and analyze them. In addition, the study explores ways to confront the challenges through policy proposals and recommendations.

Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

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1

Introduction

Societal challenges are mounting in Iraq due to years of foreign and domestic wars, lack of political and economic stability, and declining oil prices. No significant and effective structural reforms have been carried out over the past two decades. Corruption and cronyism are widespread within the institutions of a state whose administration relies on the principle of political quotas for influential party forces.

As a result of the successive crises and challenges that Iraq has faced, the problems have worsened and deepened in terms of impact and results. These conditions are characterized by pressure on human potential, limited employment, and weak growth, as well as widespread destruction of infrastructure. This means that calls to launch national programs and plans cannot wait. All Iraqis face a set of momentous choices concerning short-term, medium-term, and long-term policies and programs to develop human and material potential.

The variety and pervasiveness of the shocks resulting from extremism, terrorism, violence, insecurity, displacement, epidemics, and diseases in Iraqi society have created overlapping circles of vulnerability and fragility. As a result, risk levels have increased and sustainable livelihoods and security have

been undermined, all of which have an impact on the quality and sustainability of life.

This study seeks to investigate the main societal challenges plaguing Iraq in the current phase and to identify the forms and patterns they take. It examines the resulting or expected consequences and implications arising from these challenges in order to dissect and analyze them. In addition, the study explores ways to confront the challenges through policy proposals and recommendations.

This study relies on observation and monitoring of societal changes (the nature of their formation and interaction), and review of the relevant literature, data, and information. It also conducts interviews with experts in social affairs to gauge their views on diagnosis and treatment.

The study seeks to answer the following questions:

- What are the main societal challenges dominating the Iraqi scene in the current lived reality?
- What are the forms and manifestations of these challenges?
- What are the effects and repercussions resulting from these challenges? What are the ways to confront and treat them?

2

One: The Coronavirus Pandemic, a Struggle to Handle Contradictions

After the collapse of oil prices, decreasing exports, and economic stagnation, the next immediate crisis is the COVID-19 pandemic. The Iraqi health system was already exhausted when the pandemic began and lacked the testing capabilities necessary to measure the scale of the outbreak in the country. The government proceeded to restrict movement in Baghdad and other governorates, closed mosques, mausoleums, and shrines, and banned gatherings. The number of confirmed cases is nearing 30,000, according to the calculations of the Ministry of Health, and is on the rise. However, due to the limited number of daily tests conducted to detect infections, the effectiveness of these measures will not be clear until the final number of infections and deaths are known.

Eric Klinenberg, an American professor of sociology, published an article on his webpage entitled "We Need Social Solidarity, Not Just Social Distancing: To combat the coronavirus, Americans need to do more than secure their own safety." This is a social model intended to support measures to cancel gatherings in schools, offices, and public spaces and to

quarantine neighborhoods and cities. While he acknowledges the importance of social distancing, Klinenberg believes it is necessary to mobilize social solidarity by helping the poor and the incapacitated gain access to food, disinfectants, and medications.¹

Social solidarity represents the most important focus for health and security. The reason for the systematic health collapse in some countries is their delay and failure to achieve solidarity by relying solely on physical distancing via home lockdowns. The key to success in managing the crisis in other countries has been their pursuit of two levels of social solidarity:

- One, the importance of social distancing for solidarity (i.e., solidarity in distancing to prevent new infections).
- Two, solidarity in helping others who cannot help themselves.

Social distancing involves relationships between individuals, family and community

¹ Dr. Abdulrahman Al-Shaqir, "Corona...the Social Problem," Adhwa Centre for Research & Studies, published on 4 / 27 / 2020 at <http://adhwa.net/?p=18115>.

systems, social values, and cultural practices. Perhaps the most important phenomena, practices, and forms of social interaction observed as a result of the pandemic are as follows:

- **Separation of families from each other:** Through electronic alternatives for communicating with friends and family, or through direct communication, taking care to socially distance at the allowed distance, for example, using words, gestures, and motions without touching, wearing gloves and masks, and using disinfectants periodically and upon touching objects.
- **Change in relationships within families and among groups:** For example, foregoing the celebration of events such as weddings, funerals and funeral tents, and banquets. Similarly, changes have appeared at the level of family roles, especially families in which both spouses work and have not lost their jobs because of the pandemic. These families are not able to leave their children, as in the past, in the care of the nursery, the school, family members, neighbors, or even the housekeeper. This has forced them to care for the children in shifts, or for one of them to give up their job, usually the one with the lower income. In other words, gender differences no longer govern the spousal relationship and instead the family's interests and meeting its needs is top priority, even if this is a temporary situation.
- **Relative change in values and daily manners, habits, and practices:** For example, time spent in leisure and recreation, travel outside the home, or staying up late with friends; or visits to departments and institutions (all of which adopted preventative measures, such as placing sanitizers in entrances and requiring their use before entry, preventing entry to public and private places without wearing masks and gloves, etc.). These activities are now only done when necessary. Likewise, spending on luxury and non-essential items is curtailed, and shopping is organized through a family member acting on behalf of the group, or by purchasing from home delivery services. People are cautious about offering help to strangers or passersby in public places for fear of infection, even if they have no symptoms. Likewise, people need to stand in line to obtain any service or good, while some explicitly demand, without shyness or hesitation, that others must also stand in line, even if they are elderly or children. Also, the practice of washing and shrouding the dead due to corona infection has been entrusted to specialized entities, and their families are no longer able to carry out their traditional practices on such occasions. The dead are buried in public cemeteries designated for this purpose, and their relatives are not allowed to move them to their own cemeteries until a year has passed.

- **Social relief support for individuals who suffer from multidimensional poverty and fragility (widows, orphans, the elderly, people with mental and physical disabilities, the chronically ill, the displaced, the poor, and those with no income):** The support occurred, initially, at the level of individual responsibility on the part of well-to-do citizens or those with set and continuous incomes (employees of intermediate ranks and higher). They each assumed this responsibility according to their area of residence and geographical surroundings (the closest). Civil service organizations, charitable groups, and support networks provided by clerics, imams of mosques, and other places of worship also contributed efforts. However, the length of the pandemic and the imposition of curfews reduced that flurry of activity, especially with the increasing numbers of the poor and needy.
- **Need to opt for remote learning:** Schools, universities, and even private lesson groups for some of the final stages have relied on e-learning, through internet applications and social media networks, to complete the academic curricula and conduct exams for the current year. Despite the many difficulties surrounding that process, and its shortcomings as

regards the direct interaction needed for teaching and acquisition, e-learning was the best and only option in the interim.

This does not mean at all that the picture is positive and the pandemic has been properly handled. On the contrary, family quarrels have increased, divorce and spousal abandonment are on the rise, and there are more beggars in the markets and public roads. Theft, pickpocketing, and abduction are also increasing. A significant number of individuals disregard quarantine and preventive measures, especially in poor, popular neighborhoods and informal areas.

We should also make quick note of the measures adopted by the government and the crisis cell. They took steps to delay or reduce working hours in public and private establishments, rapidly imposed curfews (full and partial), and continued to pay salaries, pensions, and fixed incomes through the month of June. The government also conducted preventive awareness-raising campaigns through various media outlets and imposed fines on violators. Despite its robust prevention efforts, the government failed to provide alternatives to the poor, private sector workers, the underemployed, and day laborers, leaving them to face their fate with their own fragile capabilities.

3

Two: New Government and Difficulties Regaining Community Trust

Political trust is an interactive relationship and a complex organizational structure between two or more parties, arising from an urgent need for interaction between the government and members of society. This relationship requires mutual reliance to achieve certain goals. In order to create this trust, the relationship between the parties must be free from anxiety, fear, and tension. Trust is described as confidence in or reliance on the ability or participation of the masses in public affairs.

Jack Citrin believes that a lack of trust is represented by hostility towards political and social leaders and governmental and systemic institutions, expressed by a feeling of resentment in public opinion towards the system because of the failure of government to respond to the needs or expectations of citizens. This situation leads to the erosion of political legitimacy. Similarly, some literature notes that the absence of political trust between members of the political class is an indicator of the ruling elite's saturation with a

culture of political and factional alignment, to the exclusion and isolation of the other.²

Citizens' trust in government fluctuates based on a set of factors and causes, such as the performance level of government institutions and the diversity and quality of the services they offer, as well as the unemployment rate, the ability to find a job, economic growth, the inflation rate, social well-being, and political and security stability in the country. Likewise, the level (high or low) of political and administrative corruption among government officials is considered a major factor in raising or lowering trust.

In the years 2017 - 2018, Iraq has not successfully fought corruption from the international perspective. According to the Corruption Perceptions Index, published by Transparency International, Iraq scored only 16 / 100 during the years 2013 - 2015, rising

² Muhammad Hassan Al-Dhahiri, "Symposium on human rights in Yemen: A study of presidential discourse between the spoken and the silent," National Committee for Human Rights, 11 - 12 May 2008.

to 17 / 100 in 2016. The country was ranked 166th out of the 167 countries on the index. In other words, Iraq remains at the bottom of the Corruption Perceptions Index.³

The Kadhimi government is currently facing a formidable challenge and a heavy legacy accumulated since 2003, inherited from previous governments. The people are fed up with the claims and promises of politicians that are merely words with no means of achieving them on the ground. Given the short period of time and the thorny and complex issues involved, a successful approach will mean sweeping aside previous taboos. On the other hand, leaving them in place will doom this democratic experiment to failure in the face of public pressure and calls for change. Working hard to achieve reforms, while ignoring the people and not listening to them, will certainly have a heavy toll, resulting in more protests, violence, and confrontation of the authorities. It may also lead to abandonment of the ballot box and undermining the legitimacy of the authorities and peaceful transfer of power. Perhaps the best indicators of lack of trust between Iraqi citizens and government officials are the following:

1. Weak participation and voting in elections. The voting rate in the last parliamentary elections in 2018, was 44.52% of the total number of eligible voters (24 million), while the rate of participation in the

general election was 42.05%. In Baghdad Governorate (population 8 million, equal to about 24% of the population of Iraq), the voter participation rate was 33%. In the central and eastern Euphrates governorates the voting rates were as follows: Wasit 38%, Najaf 40%, Karbala 40%, Basra 40%, Maysan 42%, Dhi Qar 43%, Muthanna 45%, al-Qadisiyyah 45%, and Babil 48%.⁴

2. Violation of laws and evasion of fees, taxes, and charges for services (water, electricity, municipal services, etc.). During the period 2013 - 2016, the contribution to GDP of the electricity and water sectors (to name a few) remained nearly stable in Iraq at 1.1%,⁵ and has remained so in subsequent years.
3. Negative assessment by Iraqi citizens of the government's public policies and decisions and of political figures and officials, via opinions expressed on TV and radio talk shows and through posts, comments, articles, and video clips published on social media platforms.
4. Public opinion polls and surveys, which measure public approval of the government's performance, the decisions

³ Republic of Iraq, Ministry of Planning, National Development Plan, 2018 - 2022, Baghdad, June 2018, p. 42.

⁴ Infographic: "Total number of voters and final participation rate in Iraqi parliamentary elections," Al Sumaria News, 05 / 13 / 2018, <https://www.alsumaria.tv/infograph-details/268409/infographics/alsumaria-news>.

⁵ Republic of Iraq, Ministry of Planning, National Development Plan, 2018 - 2022, op. cit., p. 27.

- and laws it issues, and the style and practices of political and party leaders, usually result in low and negative ratings.
5. Frequent demonstrations and gatherings, and the type and manner of slogans, banners, and phrases expressed by the public in protests to show their discontent with the government and political elites.
 6. Quick retraction, under public pressure, of decisions and draft laws by the government, is proof of the government's bungling and haste and its failure to take well-calculated and planned steps. It also confirms the weakness and incapacity of the government to move forward with its approaches and projects.
 7. Low participation of citizens, civil society organizations, and local governments in setting priorities and identifying projects for implementation. Results of relevant studies carried out by the Iraqi Ministry of Planning show that the rate of participation of citizens in setting priorities has reached a very low level (13%), followed by civil society organizations (10%) and local governments (17%). Effective democratic experiments require boosting opportunities for political participation for all members of society.⁶

⁶ Republic of Iraq, Ministry of Planning, National Development Plan, 2018 - 2022, op. cit., p. 77.

4

Three: The Demographic Window and Labor Absorption

International studies indicate that the actual productivity of workers in the governmental sector does not exceed 18 minutes per eight hours of work, in the best of circumstances. Governmental sector workers number approximately four million, with another three million on government pensions. There are also 1.3 million beneficiaries of the social protection network, all of whom receive fixed salaries, wages, or financial benefits from the government. All in all, including dependents, the government helps fund about half of the Iraqi population of approximately 40 million people.

On the other hand, in the same context, about 12 million Iraqis receive no salary or benefits from the government. Most of them struggle to work in the private sector on fixed wages or through piecemeal or irregular work. As a result of the government's recent decisions to avert the Corona pandemic and its implementation of curfews and a comprehensive lockdown since the beginning of March until now, most of these individuals have suffered from unemployment and interrupted work.

The bloated number of public employees in Iraq is the largest in the world, with about one employee serving every ten citizens, a ratio unmatched anywhere else in the world. Their salaries represent about 25% of GDP. Likewise, the average income of a government employee is twice the average per capita income in GDP: the average annual income of a government employee is about USD 10,000, while the average annual income of a typical citizen is about USD 5,000. This leads to what is known as Baumol's cost disease and has a negative impact on the private sector, whose workers work eight full hours for lower salaries and wages than government sector workers. This causes the active labor force to prefer to seek work in the government sector, and thus the private sector has been abandoned and lags behind, while the government sector represents an undemanding job with a good income.⁷

⁷ Meeting with Dr. Mazhar Muhammad Salih, financial affairs advisor to the Prime Minister, member of the Ministerial Council for Economy, former governor of the Central Bank of Iraq, and current member of the bank's board of directors, in a symposium entitled "The financial crisis in Iraq: Challenges and solutions," Rewaq Baghdad Center for Public Policy, 06 / 05 / 2020, 9:00 p.m.

Approximately 350,000 job seekers join the workforce each year, but they are neither absorbed into the lagging and ineffective private sector, nor into the bloated government sector with its disguised unemployment. This cumulative, exponential number compounds the plight of workers and increases the challenges of the resulting socioeconomic situation. These numbers are boosted by the significant demographic growth in Iraq due to the absence of family planning policies. Iraq, described as a “young nation,” has one of the highest rates of population growth in the world: those aged 17 and under make up about 50% of the population, and the youth workforce aged 35 and under makes up about 60% of society.⁸

Thus, the (unabsorbed and unused) demographic dividend Iraq has been

experiencing for the last two years poses complex societal problems, such as the following: accumulated dependency; unemployment; delaying or foregoing marriage; high divorce rates; family issues, separation, and abandonment; neighborhood and regional conflicts; crimes and misdemeanors; hostilities and agitation; and frustration and grumbling among the youth. Ultimately, this leads to radical attitudes and an urge to protest, demonstrate, and carry out violence against government institutions, authority, and security forces for their failure to plan and implement real, tangible solutions for the problems that have been mounting from 2003 until now.

⁸ “Iraqi Ministry of Planning, “Economically active people make up the largest percentage of the population in Iraq,” official website of the Ministry, 12 / 03 / 2018, <https://mop.gov.iq/news/view/details?id=69>.

5

Four: Prolonged Displacement and Obstacles to Return to Place of Origin

The 2014 displacement caused by the entry of terrorist groups (ISIS into Mosul Governorate on 10 June 2014), and the extension of their control over a number of Iraqi governorates, represented a large and unprecedented displacement. This differed from the repeated waves of displacement that occurred from the founding of the Iraqi state until the time of ISIS's entry. During the first four weeks of the invasion, about 500,000 families were displaced, and the number increased to about 1,035,413 families, totaling about 5.6 million IDPs through the end of 2018.⁹

As a result, IDPs experienced a sharp decrease in their income linked to the loss of their property, savings, and job opportunities. It was natural for the poverty rate among displaced families to increase from 23% to 38%, and then to 42%,¹⁰ i.e. one out of every three current IDPs is poor. This estimate represents those displaced outside the borders of their

governorates, and as such, it represents a minimum estimate of poverty among the displaced.

Furthermore, a report published by Iraq's Ministry of Migration in May 2020, showed a peak number of 174 camps distributed across 13 governorates, with a population of approximately 150,992 families, representing 15% of the total number of IDPs. Meanwhile, current research data show that the number of camps has decreased to 77, with a population of about 61,980 families, representing 9% of the total number of current IDPs. In other words, 97 camps have closed, and about 89,012 families have left the camps.¹¹ Although the Iraqi government announced official victory over the terrorist groups and the liberation of all Iraqi territory at the end of 2017, almost three years later the proportion of households displaced remains high: 50% of the total number of IDPs remain displaced (in camps and host communities.)

⁹ Iraqi Ministry of Migration and Displaced, Department of Information and Research, Information Technology Division, "Statistics of Displaced Persons from Emergency Displacement in Iraq," Baghdad, 2018, p. 5.

¹⁰ Republic of Iraq, Ministry of Planning, National Development Plan, 2018 - 2022, op. cit., p. 15.

¹¹ Iraqi Ministry of Migration and Displaced, Department of Information and Research, Geographic Information Systems Division, Report on IDP Camps in Iraq, May 2020, p. 7.

Prolonged displacement refers to cases that have gone beyond the initial emergency stage but do not have solutions in the near future. They are not always in a static state. Rather, the so-called displacement is often due to periods of increase and decrease in the number of displaced persons or changes within the displaced community through repeated relocation and change of place of residence.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees defines prolonged displacement as a situation in which more than 25,000 refugees or IDPs have been forced to live in exile for a period of more than five years.¹² According to this definition, we find that approximately half of the IDPs in Iraq today-i.e. more than 2.5 million people-are cases of prolonged displacement, having spent six years in host communities.

IDPs usually find themselves in unsettled situations, exposed to harassment and exploitation, and in a continual state of fear. The levels of sexual and physical violence in IDP camps remain a source of major concern. Women, children, the elderly, and the disabled are considered the most vulnerable groups. Likewise, IDPs, especially those living in camps, are forced to depend on assistance that does not go beyond subsistence levels. Thus, they lead lives of poverty, frustration, and lost hope. The extended duration of the IDP crisis may

lead to indirect consequences. Over the course of time, the government's participation in solving the problems of those living in the camps has decreased, especially given the conditions of the country's current financial crisis. Accordingly, IDPs have begun to compete with the inhabitants of host communities for scarce resources, which is an increasing source of insecurity. In the same way, decreased assistance for the camps may lead some IDPs to adopt coping strategies such as banditry, prostitution, pickpocketing, and crimes and misdemeanors.

According to field observations, research, and investigation into the conditions and circumstances of the environments of origin of the displaced, four issues have come to light that represent real obstacles to the return of the remaining displaced persons, namely:

- Sectarian and political tensions: Babil, Diyala, and parts of Saladin governorates.
- Tribal tensions: Saladin and al-Anbar governorates.
- Ethnic and political tensions: Nineveh and parts of Diyala and Kirkuk governorates.
- Lack of or weak infrastructure and services in areas of origin, along with destruction or theft of homes, real estate, and private property.

These issues need thorough study, analysis, and classification to propose appropriate solutions. They also need official government interventions, international aid, and community mobilization to remove, dismantle, and address them.

¹² Gil Loescher and James Milner, "Understanding the challenge," *Forced Migration Review*, No. 33, September 2009, Refugee Studies Centre at Oxford, p. 10.

6

Five: Course and Outcome of Protests

Protests expressing economic and social grievances and complaints about deteriorating public services have become a semi-permanent feature of Iraqi life, although they have decreased for the most part since 2019. Security abuses in demonstration areas in late September and October caused a new wave of demonstrations in the country. The protests, which began peacefully before they stopped due to the pandemic, led to road blockages, infrastructure damage, and the death of nearly 400 victims, including civilians and security forces, and forced Prime Minister Adil Abdul Mahdi to submit his resignation in late November.¹³

One of the main issues causing the protests in Iraq is the state's abandonment of its former role as an institution responsible for developing and modernizing society. Instead, the state became a breeding ground for identity politics and ethnic and sectarian representation. The state is no longer charged with the responsibility of fostering the progress of society because there is no longer any meaning for progress in the

first place (or the consumerist understanding of progress has become prevalent). The Iraqi state has become a space represented by ethnic and sectarian identities and conflicts among influential political forces. It fluctuates between the Hugo Chavez model (a state of aid and benefits mired in poverty) and the model of some Central American countries, where fragile states are contested by mafias and gangs, and violence represents a major rent-seeking activity. This is exacerbated by the failure of the state and its inability to administer social needs.¹⁴

Corruption and incompetence in managing resources, and the absence of separation of the official and unofficial, have led to a tremendous waste of resources that could have prevented the crisis from getting worse. Were it not for this waste, Iraq could have alleviated issues of long-term consequence, such as water shortages and climate change, as well as simpler issues such as electricity, improving the transportation sector, developing electronic

¹³ Kirk Sowell, "Looming Challenges for Iraq's New Government," Sada: Middle East Analysis, April 2, 2020, <https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/81444>.

¹⁴ Harith Hasan, "Beyond security: Challenges facing Iraq," Rafik Hariri Center for the Middle East, 7 / 20 / 2018, <http://www.acharicenter.org/stabilization-governance-and-socioeconomic-challenges-in-iraq-ar/>.

management, and planning green space. It must also be said that the social culture has contributed to the deepening of some of these crises: for example, the destruction of remaining green areas and encroachment on public lands to establish unplanned housing complexes that bypass the water, electricity, and sewage networks.

In recent weeks, Iraq has seen a renewed wave of popular demonstrations against the country's deteriorating economic, social, and health conditions, such as rising unemployment, the degradation of government services, and the quota system by which Kadhimi was appointed prime minister. The eruption of demonstrations at this time highlights the depth of the crises that Iraq has witnessed for years. A shift has been observed in the course and nature of these protests, the most notable of which are the following:

1. The waning influence and role of political leaders, religious leaders, and their supporters on the course of the protests (in real time) as a result of the pandemic and their preoccupation with the financial crisis and the divvying up of positions and filling of ministries in the Kadhimi government.
2. The protests have become dominated by a youthful and popular character, as the participation of elite and professional groups decreased, such as intellectuals, media professionals, holders of advanced

degrees, engineers, medical professionals, lawyers, political science graduates, etc.

3. The prevalence of protests has decreased in a limited number of governorates in southern Iraq (Dhi Qar, Wasit, Maysan, Basra) and, to a limited extent, in Baghdad, Karbala, and Najaf. Similarly, the number of participants has decreased. The pavilions and tents are empty, and the sit-in is no longer dominant, replaced instead by massive and intermittent gatherings on certain days under specific mechanisms and practices.
4. The protestors have abandoned the practice of blocking roads and entrances of public institutions in favor of forcing heads of institutions and departments in the governorate to submit their resignations under threat. They have also attacked oil companies and kidnapped their foreign workers, in addition to attacking the headquarters of political parties and the homes of officials and members of parliament.
5. The main slogan of the demonstrations has changed from "We want a nation," to "Deadline for a nation." This slogan, originally launched from the city of Nasiriyah in the governorate of Dhi Qar in southern Iraq, gained the support of demonstrators in Baghdad, Karbala, and Najaf.

6. Some protest coordinators are feeling the euphoria of victory due to measures adopted by the Kadhimi government, among them the formation of a high-level fact-finding committee of experts that will hold accountable the perpetrators of attacks and killings of demonstrators. The new Prime Minister has also recruited protest figures as candidates to occupy positions or to work in his office and in some governmental institutions and agencies.
7. Most protest coordinators have decided not to escalate the current situation and are tending towards calm and giving the Kadhimi government time despite their objection to some of its members and

the way it was formed. This came about initially due to fears of the Coronavirus, and it gives ample opportunity to achieve promised reforms.

Moreover, the government will have to organize early elections in response to the demonstrators' demands. However, new elections will likely be the easiest challenge for the government, given that elections can be avoided for a good reason, i.e. COVID-19, and postponed to a later time. During that period (from the day the new government takes office until the elections are held), the government will be put to the test in its management of the concurrent financial, political, security, and health crises.

7

Recommendations and Proposals

1. In order to expand the institutions that provide health and social services to vulnerable population groups (the elderly, the chronically ill, people with special needs, etc.) and improve their performance, expand the support provided to families caring for members of these vulnerable groups, increase the percentage of those covered by social protection systems, and control the Corona pandemic by reducing the number of infections, treating the ill, and decreasing the number of deaths, we propose the following:
 - A. The Council of Ministers should direct donation funds to be opened, through bank accounts promoted in the media, and authorize Iraqi banks to collect remittances or direct cash donations made by politicians, businessmen, and the affluent. This is provided that these sums are collected for the use of the crisis cell and the Ministry of Health, and taking into account transparency in the process of disbursing donations to provide medical and treatment supplies.
 - B. The Ministry of Health should recruit medical personnel (who wish to help) from among retirees, private sector workers, and unemployed graduates, to join its personnel working on the front line to treat hospitalized patients.
 - C. The Council of Ministers should instruct the Ministries of Health and Industry & Minerals to conduct a comprehensive study of the medical equipment needs, manufacture them locally in their laboratories and facilities, and provide the Ministry of Health with these products. It should distribute some of them free of charge to citizens from impoverished areas that are seeing increasing infections.
2. Restoring confidence comes gradually and not all at once (the one-and-a-half-year period ahead of the Kadhimi government and parliament is not sufficient), but this does not prevent serious work to restore public confidence. In this regard, we propose the following:

- A. Quickly adopt the addenda to the election law in order to satisfy public aspirations.
 - B. Hold the corrupt accountable (at least second and third line corruption), return stolen funds to the state treasury, refer perpetrators for prosecution, and subsequently announce this in a transparent manner.
 - C. Review recruitment and appointment procedures and criteria to ensure the nomination and selection of honest, competent, and independent persons to fill vacant public offices in ministries.
 - D. Establish control over all border crossing points and subject them to the central government to prevent corruption and impose the prestige of the state. Organize their administration in order to maximize non-oil state resources.
3. In order to deal with the issue of the return of the displaced to their areas of origin and resolve the obstacles preventing this, the Prime Minister should direct the formation of a supreme committee headed by the Ministry of Migration and Displaced, with membership from the relevant authorities: National Security Advisor; Ministry of Interior; Ministry of Defense; governors of Nineveh, Saladin, al-Anbar, Baghdad, Kirkuk, Diyala, and Babil; representatives of the concerned areas in the governorates of origin of the IDPs; tribal dignitaries from the concerned areas; clerics from the concerned areas; Sunni and Shia representatives; a representative of the supreme religious authority in Najaf; a representative of the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers; and any other relevant body as proposed by the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers. The purpose of forming the committee is to resolve tribal and regional problems in governorates and regions that have witnessed tribal division and involvement with terrorist groups and crimes committed against the people of these areas (murder, displacement, kidnapping, car bombings, house demolitions, rape, etc.). This will help ensure that accountability and justice are achieved, problems are resolved in the environments of the displaced persons, and that there is neither impunity on one hand, nor revenge operations on the other. To reach a political solution regarding the disputed areas among powerful political forces that are reluctant to return the displaced, the Supreme Committee should designate sub-committees by region to work on identifying and classifying problems, collect the necessary information and data, and make proposals and recommendations to the Supreme Committee for its role in providing the supplies and conditions necessary for their implementation.

4. The government should take advantage of the demographic window spatially (at the governorate level) by adopting a scale for ranking investment priorities so that the governorates that have reached the demographic window stage are ranked first. This will be done by coordinating and integrating spatial development policies at the national and local level for each governorate in order to promote investment in human resources. Ministries (of Planning, Finance, Labor and Social Affairs) should pursue economic policies for the banking and lending sector that include a development funds model to introduce sovereign bonds sold to citizens with remunerative profits that encourage the purchase of such bonds. Such bonds also put to use people's savings, take advantage of the hard money supply, and direct lending to small and medium enterprises that will employ new workers and help decrease unemployment.
5. Relevant agencies should implement social distancing measures for a long time, perhaps up to another year or more, without affecting services or the economy (regional and global experiences may be consulted). During the pandemic, the Ministries of Communications, Higher Education, and Education must develop infrastructure and internet networks in order to operate virtually, as well develop and build the educational and teaching capabilities of staff and students by involving them in free, required distance courses. The ministries must also develop skills by using internet technology that enables teachers to work online effectively and efficiently.

About the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung - Jordan & Iraq

The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung is a non-profit organization committed to the values of social democracy. It is the oldest political foundation in Germany, founded in 1925 as the political legacy of Friedrich Ebert, the first democratically elected German president.

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Due to years of foreign and domestic wars and a lack of political and economic stability, societal challenges are deepening in Iraq. No significant and effective structural reforms have been carried out over the past two decades, and corruption and cronyism are widespread within the institutions of a state whose administration relies on the principle of political quotas for influential party powers.



As a result of Iraq's exposure to a succession of crises and challenges, the problems have worsened and deepened in terms of impact and results. These conditions are characterized by pressure on human potential, limited employment, and weak growth, as well as widespread destruction of infrastructure. This urgently calls for building national programs and plans that put everyone at a crossroads in terms of short-term, medium-term, and long-term policies and programs to develop human and physical potentials.



The variety and pervasiveness of shocks resulting from extremism, terrorism, violence, insecurity, displacement, epidemics, and diseases in Iraqi society have created overlapping circles of vulnerability and fragility, thus increasing risk levels and undermining sustainable livelihoods and security, all of which reflect on the quality and sustainability of life. This necessitates the formulation of political proposals and recommendations to counter these problems.

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