

Demands for Electoral Gender Quotas in Afghanistan and Iraq

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**The Research Program
on Gender Quotas**

Quotas
A KEY TO EQUALITY?

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The Research Project : Electoral Quotas – A Key to Equality?

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www.statsvet.se.se/quotas

List of Abbreviations

ACS	Afghans for Civil Society
AWM	Afghan Women's Mission
AWN	Afghan Women's Network
CPA	Coalition Provisional Authority
IGC	Iraqi Governing Council (Iraq)
MOWA	Ministry of Women's Affairs (Afghanistan)
NCWO	National Council of Women's Organisations (the US)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OSCE	The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
RAWA	Revolutionary Association of Women in Afghanistan
SRSR	Special Representative of the Secretary General (here the UN. This acronym is also used by other international organisations such as the OSCE. The SRSR is often mandated with extensive decision-making power)
TAL	Transitional Administrative Law (The interim constitution in Iraq)
UN	The United Nations
UNAMA	The United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan
UNDP	The United Nations Development Programme
UNIFEM	The United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNOCHA	The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
US	The United States
USAID	The United States Agency for International Development
WAO	Women's Aid Organisation (Malaysia)
WAW	Women for Afghan Women

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1. Aim of the report

For several reasons, Afghanistan and Iraq well illustrate the growing demand for quotas in post-war countries. First, Afghanistan and Iraq are extreme cases of international involvement, as both countries have been occupied by external forces and both being in a state of transition, building a whole new set of political institutions. Today, women's organisations throughout the world are demanding political influence. Women's organisations in Afghanistan and Iraq are no exception and since both countries are in the process of building new political systems, it is interesting to see whether quota provisions will provide women with a fast track into politics from the start. Are they getting international support in this quest or are they fighting on their own?

The two countries share some recent experiences. They have both recently been occupied by US forces, they do not have a democratic past, and both countries have been subject to recent dictatorships, Saddam Hussein in Iraq and the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. Furthermore, in both countries, strong tribal groups dominate the political scene. Before occupying Afghanistan and Iraq, the US cited women's rights as one of the reasons for liberating them. Women have been particularly suppressed, although women's position under the fundamentalist Taliban regime was very different from that in Iraq, where women until recently had the highest education rate in the Arab region (Sarah al-Ansary, 2003).

There are, however, also some very interesting differences between the countries, which seem to be important for women's political representation. A transitional Afghan government, with the UN in a counselling role, has been in charge of developments in Afghanistan since the occupation, whereas in Iraq the Coalition Provisional Authorities (CPA) was installed by the US and the UK. In Afghanistan, a new constitution with a gender quota provision was adopted in January 2004. In Iraq, the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL, also referred to as the interim constitution), after much debate, includes the intention that the future electoral law should aim at having women constitute no less than one-quarter of the future National Assembly.

The aim of this fact-finding paper is to gather information on current developments and discussions concerning gender quotas in Afghanistan and Iraq. The paper therefore also

includes information about regulations on women's representation in the two countries. It also looks at the activities of women's organisations. Finally, the paper will look at the view of existing international stakeholders (the UN in Afghanistan and the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) in Iraq) on gender quotas in the two countries. This is not a theoretical paper, but provides basic information for those interested in further studies in this field. For the theoretical debate on whether quotas are the best way to achieve equality in political life, as well as how quotas function in practice, I refer to the research project *Electoral Quotas – A Key to Equality?*, of which this report is a part (www.statsvet.su.se/quotas).

1.2 Data collection

For obvious reasons, gender quotas in Afghanistan and Iraq have not previously been explored, and scientific material is therefore lacking. There is, however, already a great deal of information on the Internet, produced by local women's groups, numerous international NGOs, the UN, the US government, as well as the media. The data collected and used in this report come exclusively from the Internet. In addition to describing current developments, this working paper will also include an overview of these sources. Useful websites, together with a short description of their content, can be found in alphabetical order at the end of the paper. While not all of these websites have been used for this working paper, they have nonetheless been included because they can be used as a source of inspiration for future research.

Information directly referred to in this working paper is often from official websites, e.g. the UN or the US, as well as the websites of the international media. No other sources have been consulted. Data collection for this paper stopped on March 12, 2004.

2. Afghanistan

The new constitution has been criticized by international and Afghan women's organisations for lacking sufficient gender awareness, but a quota system for female political representation has, nevertheless, been included. To my knowledge, it is the women's groups in Afghanistan that have worked the most actively to get direct measurements to increase female political representation included in the constitution. I have found no indications that the United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) or any other UN agencies have actively promoted the use of quotas. The UNAMA has, however, together with the Ministry of Women's affairs (MOWA), sought to empower women through seminars and conferences,

and UN agencies have strongly advocated female representation and thereby indirectly supported the demands of women's organisations (www.unama-afg.org, www.unifem.org).

2.1 The Bonn Agreement

In November 2001, shortly after the invasion of Afghanistan by America, Britain and the Northern Alliance, the United Nations organized a meeting of all Afghan factions in Bonn.¹ The main outcome of the Bonn conference was the endorsement by all Afghan factions, in the presence of the Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) and other representatives of the UN and the international community, of the Bonn Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-establishment of Permanent Government Institutions. The Agreement was subsequently endorsed by the Security Council (resolution 1383), which also declared its willingness to support the interim institutions as well as the implementation of the Agreement. The Bonn Agreement also entailed deployment of a multinational security force to Kabul (www.unama-afg.org).

The Bonn Agreement specified the establishment of an Interim Authority on December 22, 2002, consisting of an Interim Administration with Hamid Karzai as Chairman, a special Independent Commission for the convening of the Emergency Loya Jirga (the traditional Afghan grand council), a Supreme Court of Afghanistan and other such courts established by the Administration. Twenty women were elected to the 502-member Emergency Loya Jirga. The Bonn Agreement further specified the convening of a Constitutional Loya Jirga to adopt a new constitution for Afghanistan.

At the end of the Emergency Loya Jirga, Chairman Karzai was elected by secret ballot as President of the new Transitional Administration. The Cabinet of the Transitional Administration currently consists of four Vice-Presidents, four Special Advisors with cabinet status and twenty-eight Ministers, two of whom are women (www.unama-afg.org). The UNAMA and UNDP, among other institutions, have helped with the funding of and consultative services for legal and democratic institutions.

¹ For more information concerning the invasion, see www.nationmaster.com

2.2 The New Constitution

A nine-member Constitutional Drafting Commission was formed one year after the invasion of Afghanistan. The Commission, which was chaired by Vice-President Ustad Niematullah Sharani, was made up of legal scholars and solicitors, and included two women. The Commission has drafted a new constitution, based on the 1964 constitution (www.unama-afg.org). In addition, a thirty-five-member Constitutional review Commission, including seven women, was also established (www.usembassy.state.gov).

In December 2003, a new grand council, a Loya Jirga, was gathered consisting of 1501 delegates, 160 of which were women. From this gathering the council elected 502 delegates of which eighty-nine were women (18 percent) (www.usembassy.state.gov).² One of the main tasks of this unique and culturally ancient council has been to debate and amend the new constitution.³ According to the UNIFEM, although women made up fifteen percent of the Loya Jirga in 1977, until 2002 none had actually participated in a Loya Jirga (www.unifem.org).⁴

The Loya Jirga agreed on the new constitution on January 4, 2004, after three weeks of debate. The new constitution includes a quota system for the Meshrano Jirga (Upper House, “House of elders”) and the Wolesi Jirga (Lower House, “House of Peoples”). The main area of responsibility for the Wolesi Jirga is to promulgate laws, ratify treaties and approve budgets. The role of the Meshrano Jirga is to approve laws and budgets. (www.usembassy.state.gov). The Wolesi Jirga consists of 220-250 parliamentarians, elected in proportion to the population of each province. There are thirty-two provinces, and at least two women must be elected from each province, which should guarantee at least 25.6 % women in the assembly (64/250).⁵ There are, however, no sanctions in the constitution for failure to meet these requirements.

The President appoints 1/3 of the members of the House of Elders (Meshrano Jirga), 50 percent of whom must be women, for a period of five years. Another 1/3 of the members are elected by and from the district councils of each province for a period of three years, and 1/3

² According to UNOCHA, women constituted 20 percent (www.unocha.org).

³ Other tasks of the Loya Jirga include settling tribal disputes and discussing social reforms (www.news.bbc.co.uk).

⁴ Except for the Emergency Loya Jirga gathered after the Bonn Agreement. Of the 502 members, 20 were women (www.unama-afg.org).

⁵ Article 83, Chapter 5, art. 3. Constitution of Afghanistan. See <http://www.constitution-afg.com>

are elected by and from the provisional councils for a period of four years.⁶ A minimum of seventeen percent of the seats of the Meshrano Jirga must therefore be reserved for women (www.islamonline.net). This should in practice mean that at least 2/3 of the members are running for election third or fourth year and 1/3 are appointed by the president every fifth year and could in theory guarantee a steady flow of new members to the meshrano jirga.

Voting is based on a plurality-majority electoral system, also called First Past the Post (FPTP). The winner of a seat is the one who gains more votes than any of the other candidates, but not necessarily a majority (www.idea.int.org). The results of the quota provisions will first become clear in the June 2004 elections.

2.3 Afghan Women's groups

One argument in favour of electoral gender quotas in Afghanistan is that proxy-voting, where the male head of the family votes on behalf of the entire family, is a widespread practice in the Central Asian region (Nordlund, 2000) and that Afghan men will probably try to preserve this as their right. Even though this will not be possible under the new constitution, the example of Bosnia and Herzegovina has shown that it is difficult to get rid of this practice in spite of a clear election law (Nordlund, 2003).

In March 2003, women's groups in Afghanistan participated in a conference jointly organised by the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) and the UN agencies to influence the work on the draft constitution. Women's groups called for a 25 percent female representation in the Loya Jirga, women's representation in the drafting of the new constitution and women's access to healthcare and education (www.unifem.org).

A conference entitled "Women and the Constitution: Kandahar 2003", organised by Women for Afghan Women (WAW) in partnership with Afghan Women's Network (AWN) and Afghans for Civil Society (ACS), was held in September 2003. This conference drafted a Bill of Rights consisting of twenty-one demands, including "equal representation of women in the Loya Jirga and Parliament", which was later presented to President Karzai (www.afghanwomensnetwork.org).

⁶ Article 84, Chapter 5, art 4 Constitution of Afghanistan. See <http://www.constitution-afg.com>

2.4 The Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA)

MoWA is a UN initiative and funded by such UN institutions as UNIFEM.⁷ The MoWA Training and Advocacy Department (with the technical support of UNDP) has started a gender-training programme for key government officials within the framework of the "Institutional Capacity-Building Support to the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA)" programme, jointly implemented by UNDP and UNIFEM. The aim of this programme has been to accomplish the overall objective of MoWA on gender mainstreaming at government level (www.undp.org). The ministry and its activities is without a doubt an important signal to Afghan political leaders as well as to the general public .

2.5 UNAMA and UNIFEM

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) was set up by the Security Council on March 28, 2002, in accordance with UN resolution 1401. One of the main aims of UNAMA is to help implement the political objectives of the Bonn Agreement on constitutional issues and the general election scheduled for June 2004. In addition to these peace-building tasks, UNAMA is also charged with securing women's political representation.

UNAMA works closely with the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MOWA) in various capacities, and has organised one national and seven regional workshops in cooperation with the State Minister for Women's Affairs. These workshops were held in October and November 2002 to prepare selected Afghan women for the next elections - some as candidates for political posts and others as electors. The workshops were designed to strengthen the skills of the Afghan Women's Network in communications, negotiation/mediation, interviewing, networking and training . This would then enable the women participating in the workshops to later set up a similar network in their own regions (www.unama-afg.org).

Although I have not found any explicit demands from women's organisations for the inclusion of gender quotas in the constitution or an election law, they have demanded equal representation in both the Loya Jirga and parliament , and one of the demands put forward at a UN conference was twenty-five percent representation in the Loya Jirga . Although there was no specific mention of the word "quotas", the women did actually put forward a quota demand (www.afghanwomensnetwork.org, www.afghanwomensmission.org,

⁷ MoWA has so far been given USD 1.4 million by UNIFEM.

www.peacewomen.org, www.rawa.org, www.femaid.org). These demands were fully supported by UN agencies, some of which specialise in gender issues (www.unama-afg.org, www.unifem.org, www.undp.org).

Another important aspect of these developments could be the fact that work on writing the new constitution was not started until a year after the invasion of Afghanistan, by which time women were represented in both the Constitution Commission and in the Constitutional Review Commission, albeit in a minority. This time lapse of one year thus gave women the opportunity to participate in the political process and thereby express their demands and concerns in the right political assemblies.

It is not possible to predict the results of the quota provisions before an election law has been formulated. Much will depend on whether candidates' lists are ranked and open rather than closed. For further details on these instruments, see the first working paper in this series, 2003:1, on the use of quotas in the Balkans (Nordlund, 2003).

3. Iraq

The US and its allies⁸ invaded Iraq in March 2003. Unlike developments in Afghanistan, however, the UN was not put in charge of the state-building process. There have been many speculations about this, some of which may even affect the reasons why women have not been given the political power they seek. In the following, I will give as accurate a picture of the interactions between local and international stakeholders on quotas as possible. It is still too early to draw any conclusions on developments in Iraq, and we can only speculate why the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) has appointed only a few women to the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) and why the demand for quotas has met such resistance from the CPA.

3.1 The CPA and the Iraqi Governing Council

Today, Iraq is governed through the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), with the American Paul Bremer as chief Administrator, and the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC).

⁸ A full list of coalition partners can be found at www.cpa-iraq.org.

The twenty-five member Interim Iraqi Government Council (IGC) was established in July 2003, and its members chosen by the CPA. The council consists of five different ethnic groups, and was composed bearing in mind the ethnic composition of Iraqi society⁹ (www.aljazeera.net). The council includes three women, one of whom, Akila al-hashemi,¹⁰ was murdered in September 2003 and later replaced by Ms. Khufaji. The Council has the power to nominate and dismiss ministers, direct policies and play an important part in the new constitution of Iraq (Sarah al-Ansary, 2003). As the IGC has been unable to pick someone to preside over its sessions, a rotating chairmanship has been applied (www.aljazeera.net - article on August 10, 2003). The US administrator, Paul Bremer, has overall powers of decision in Iraq, and can veto any decision made by the IGC.

Apart from the fact that only three women were chosen for the Iraqi Governing Council, thus constituting only 12 percent of the council in a country where 60 percent are women, the CPA has also failed to appoint any female governors in any of the eighteen provinces. In addition, the Iraqi Governing Council has not appointed any women to the Fundamental Law Committee, and only one woman as minister¹¹ out of a total of twenty-five (Menso 2003). The Fundamental Law Committee has been in charge of drafting the newly amended Transitional Administrative Law (TAL), which will be replaced by a permanent constitution no later than December 31, 2005.

Apart from the newly appointed Ms. Khufaji, all women in the IGC have spoken in favour of quotas, as have women throughout the country, including such high-profile female political leaders as Ms. Barwari, the only female minister in the 25-member cabinet, and Ms. Francke, the newly appointed ambassador to the UN. They have demanded that women make up at least one third of the committee drafting the constitution, and of all political institutions, including parliament and local councils.¹² However, male political leaders in Iraq are clearly opposed to quotas (Ciezadlo, 2003).¹³

⁹ Shia Muslims 13, Sunni Muslims 5, Kurds 5, Turkomans 1, Assyrians 1.

¹⁰ Various explanations have been put forward for her murder, one being that she was a former member of the Baath party and a firm supporter of Saddam Hussein before the invasion. She was also known to advocate women's rights.

¹¹ The Minister of Public Works.

¹² Apart from the article by Ciezadlo (2003 a), see also an article written by two female members of the Governing Council, Ms. Habib Khuzai and Ms. Chapouk.

¹³ Gender quotas were suggested by Ms. Safia al-Souhil, a member of Iraq's co-called 'Government in Exile', chosen in London in January 2003, but rejected by the majority of the 'Government in Exile'-leaders. The 'Government in Exile' consists of sixty-five members, three of whom are women.

The CPA declined to support the idea of gender quotas. Instead, CPA officials said that they intended to empower women through women's organisations, democracy training, and involving them in the political process (Cie zadlo, 2003a). Radio Free Europe reported that: "...the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) officials want the new cabinet (the cabinet of ministers, ed.) to reflect Iraq's diverse ethnic, religious and social mix, without a quota system that could become entrenched" (Danilochkin, 2003). It is thus interesting to note that the CPA used unofficial ethnic quotas when forming the Governing Council, but finds quotas entrenching when the Iraqi Governing Council chooses its ministers!

The handpicking of the IGC by the CPA has undermined the legitimacy of the former. This in turn means that the Fundamental Law Committee also faces legitimacy problems, because it was handpicked by the IGC. Because the legitimacy problem has dribbled down from the governing council to the law committee, the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL) is also likely to lack legitimacy. Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, a religious leader with much power, has already stated that the TAL will only gain legitimacy if a National Assembly signs it.¹⁴

The November 15 Agreement, Timeline to a Sovereign, Democratic and Secure Iraq, presents the overall timeframe for developments in Iraq. Elections are to be held in June 2004 to select candidates from the eighteen provinces to a Transitional National Assembly, which will replace the CPA and the Iraqi Governing Council.¹⁵ Iraqi women had hoped that the plan for the eighteen regional caucuses to select a Transitional National Assembly would contain quota regulations. However, the plan, negotiated by Paul Bremer and the IGC, did not include any such provisions (Cie zadlo, 2003a).

3.2 The Transitional Administrative Law (interim constitution)

The Fundamental Law Committee (a constitution commission) was appointed by the IGC in August 2003. According to CPA officials, the IGC, and especially its efforts to form a Fundamental Law Committee, has not performed very well. These problems were compounded by the fact that the Fundamental Law Committee has also experienced difficulties in its work (Cullinan, 2003).

¹⁴ A statement by Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani www.cnn.com/2004/WORLD/meast/03/08/sprj.nirg.main/.

¹⁵ The November 15 Agreement can be found on the CPA's homepage (www.cpa-iraq.org).

The Transitional Administrative Law was signed by the IGC on March 8, 2004, after much internal conflict within the committee, mainly concerning federalism and Kurdish autonomy , but the issue of guaranteed female representation in a future National Assembly also made agreement difficult.¹⁶

Contrary to reports in some of the media, there is no electoral gender quota provision in the Transitional Administrative Law. It does, however, state that:

“ The National Assembly shall be elected in accordance with an electoral law and political parties law. The electoral law shall aim to achieve the goal of having women constitute no less than one-quarter of the members of the National Assembly and of having fair representation for all communities in Iraq, including Turcomans, ChaldoAssyrians, and others. ”¹⁷

One of the means to achieve such a goal could well be a gender quota system, although no promises have been made so far. Another important aspect is the fact that the Transitional Administrative Law is only an interim constitution, which will expire as soon as amendments have been made to make it permanent (by December 31, 2005, at the latest).¹⁸ Criticism from political leaders after the signing of the interim constitution, as well as the difficulties arriving at a settlement, might lead one to believe that the interim constitution will be subject to much rewriting before being amended as a permanent one.

Last, but not least, the IGC adopted Resolution 137 (IGC), which means that the civilly administered personal status law will be abolished by the IGC in favour of a clerically administered Sharia law as soon as Iraq is self-governing. According to Nesreen Berwari (the Iraqi Minister of Municipalities and Public Works), women’s rights groups maintain that this would leave women vulnerable to arbitrary legal decisions due to varying interpretations of religious law, and deprive them of rights concerning marriage, divorce, child custody and

¹⁶ See, among others articles, on the CNN homepage www.cnn.com, as well as www.turkishpress.com.

¹⁷ The Transitional Administrative Law, Chapter four, article 30 C.

¹⁸ The November 15 Agreement.

heritage.¹⁹ Only the future will show whether Sharia-law and electoral gender quotas can co-exist.

3.3 Women's organisations in and outside Iraq

Collecting data on Iraqi women's groups on the Internet is difficult. There is no doubt that many Iraqi women have organised inside Iraq, but not all have websites. There is a much better chance of finding international women's organisations working to secure the rights of Iraqi women, as well as exile Iraqi women, on the Web. I have listed some of these organisations at the end of the paper. Articles, as well as reports from activities on gender issues in Iraq, suggest, however, that women are a strong political force. As with demands for political representation by Afghan women, the quota demands in Iraq have been given little media attention in the well-established international media.

An all-Iraqi women's conference in Hilla in Iraq, organised with financial support from the USAID, drew 150 women from all parts of Iraq. Opinions on the level of female participation differed widely, some groups arguing for Sharia laws in Iraq, while others objected that a quota system is an instrument based on an unequal selection process. Notwithstanding, the conference did agree that women should have equal rights in society, and a 30 percent quota for women in all government institutions was suggested, including the establishment of a special department in each ministry dedicated to women's issues. Many also agreed that women should be involved in constitutional writing. Furthermore, the conference criticised the US for failing to include women at all levels of Iraq's political and constitutional reformation (Lieber, 2003).

International women's organisations, especially in the US, have been active in drawing attention to the importance of political representation for women in Iraq. For instance, in a letter to Paul Bremer, the National Council of Women's Organisations (NCWO)²⁰, the largest US women's group, expressed their solidarity with Iraqi women and the need for parity in the writing of fundamental laws and the drafting of the new constitution.

¹⁹ www.cpa-iraq.org/pressreleases/20040301_nesreen.html.

²⁰ The NCWO represents 180 women's groups, approximately 10 million US women.

4. Final remarks

It is impossible to tell how many women will be elected in the coming elections in the two countries. We don't know whether the modest gender quotas in the new Afghan constitution will actually be implemented or if the vague intention of electing more women in Iraq will be fulfilled. Only time will tell. The results could well be fewer women in parliament than the quotas imply in both these very traditional societies. Nonetheless, gender quotas were actually written into the constitution in Afghanistan but not in Iraq. Why the difference?

First of all, it seems that female political representation was a lost cause in Iraq before the institutional and political rebuilding process even started, in part because the CPA neglected to include women in the decisional bodies. Instead, the CPA appears to want to involve women after all political systems have been transformed. In Afghanistan, I have found no evidence that the inclusion of a quota system in the constitution was due to UN pressure. However, the UN has stressed the importance of female representation in government institutions and decisional bodies, and has contributed to this development by supporting the institutional capacity building of organisations working with gender issues. In addition, in Afghanistan, women also participated in the drafting of the constitution.

Secondly, the political scene in both Iraq and Afghanistan is dominated by conflicts between different ethnic groups, though this does not seem to have hampered work on political gender equality as much in Afghanistan as it has in Iraq. One possible explanation is that the CPA in Iraq has given ethnic groups a very important role in the transition process, and perhaps seen the question of equal representation between the sexes as less important.

Thirdly, the Iraqi Governmental Council has lacked legitimacy from the start, which has strained the constitutional writing process. In Afghanistan, on the other hand, political leaders and not external powers elected the Afghan Transition Administration, thereby giving the political process more legitimacy. The fact that, unlike in Afghanistan, electoral gender quotas have not been written into the constitution (TAL) in Iraq it seems mainly to be due to the actions of the CPA.

5. Literature

5.1 Reports and news articles

al-Ansary, Sarah (2003) news article: "*Women of Iraq victims of sanctions*", Sunday 10 August 2003 www.Aljazeera.net

www.english.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/007C5AA0-16B0-497D-85A5-20F4474B538B.htm

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Constitution of Afghanistan, especially Article 83, chapter 5 art. 3, and Article 84, chapter 5 art. 4.

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<http://www.nationalreview.com/comment/cullinan200311100956.asp>

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www.english.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/C774EA4B-F859-41A9-B5F9-C9DC44D82F3B.htm -

Danilochkin, Sergei (2003) news article: " *Iraq: New Cabinet to be sworn in tomorrow*", Radio free Europe, Radio Liberty.
<http://www.rferl.org/nca/features/2003/09/02092003162413.asp>)

5.2 Websites

Information on women's political empowerment in Afghanistan and Iraq:

<http://www.afghanwomensnetwork.org> - The Afghan Women's Network is a non-partisan network of women and women's NGOs working to empower Afghan women and ensure their equal participation in Afghan society. Working with UNAMA and other UN agencies.

<http://www.aims.org.af> - Afghanistan Information Management Service, The AIMS project is part of UNAMA, administered by UNDP and reporting directly to the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Relief, Reconstruction and Rehabilitation.

www.aljazeera.net - a news site with an Arab perspective.

<http://www.aopnews.com> - News website on Afghanistan.

<http://www.afghanwomensmission.org> - Afghan Women's Mission (AWM). AWM works closely with the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan. AWM is situated in the US.

<http://www.constitution-afg.com> - Official Afghan information site on the constitution.

<http://www.cpa-iraq.org> - Official website of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA).

<http://www.csmonitor.com> - The Christian Science Monitor website. News site.

<http://www.femaid.org> - French NGO especially working with Afghanistan.

<http://www.foreignpolicyforum.com> - Has, among other things, archives on debate articles on Iraq.

<http://www.globalsecurity.org> - a large archive on developments in Afghanistan and Iraq, including issues concerning women's security and the work of women's groups.

http://www.iraqfoundation.org/ngo/2003/aoct/15_women.html - Including Iraq Women Foundation.

<http://www.iraq-democracy.org/> - Iraq Institute for Democracy.

<http://www.isiswomen.org> - A feminist NGO working with women's information and communication needs. Focus on advancing women's rights, leadership and empowerment in Asia and the Pacific.

<http://www.islamabad.usembassy.gov> - US embassy in Pakistan. Comments on the constitutional process in Afghanistan.

<http://www.islamonline.net> - a news site.

<http://www.myafghan.com> - news website on Afghanistan.

<http://www.news.bbc.co.uk> - BBC's official website, with a large international archive.

<http://www.oneworld.net> - large archive of articles on developments in Afghanistan and Iraq.

<http://www.osce.org> - The official website of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Among other issues: information on mission activities, election reports, archive on security-related developments in the region, conferences and decisions. Afghanistan is not yet a full member of the organisation, but has gained status as a cooperating state. I believe that the OSCE will shortly be playing an important part in the democratisation of Afghanistan.

<http://www.peacewomen.org> - Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Links to NGOs working with women's issues.

<http://www.rawa.org> - Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan. Afghan NGO, working closely with UNIFEM and international NGOs.

<http://www.reliefweb.int> - ReliefWeb is a website project of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

<http://www.sak.a.se> - The Swedish Committee for Afghanistan, a Swedish NGO. Links to homepages on Afghanistan. News on developments in Afghanistan

<http://www.unama-afg.org> - United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan. Contains all details of the mission, including mandate and structure, the Bonn agreement, the draft constitution, debates of the political developments and of women's situation.

<http://www.una-uk.org> - The United Nations Association. Includes, among other things , the Women's Advisory Board, a decision-making body working to bring focus on women's contribution to post-war reconstruction.

<http://www.undp.org> - the United Nations Development Programme funds a variety of activities in Afghanistan.

<http://www.unifem.org> - the official website of UNIFEM

<http://www.usinfo.state.gov/usinfo> - Information from the US government on most topics.

<http://www.womenforiraq.com> - Women's organisation in Iraq, supporting the invasion of US.

<http://www.womenwagingpeace.net> - a network for women peacemakers, brings attention to women's capacities in conflict prevention, peace negotiations, and post-conflict reconstruction, shaping public policy.

<http://www.wao.org.my> - The Women's Aid Organisation (WAO) is an independent, non-religious, non-governmental organisation based in Malaysia, committed to confronting violence against women.

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