



**Speaker of the Council
of Representatives**

Mohamed al-Halbousi

delivered a public speech at USIP on March 29, 2019 after meeting with U.S. government officials. The speaker discussed the newly formed parliament's priorities, the ongoing battle against violent extremism, and his vision for peace and stability in Iraq.

THE CURRENT SITUATION IN IRAQ

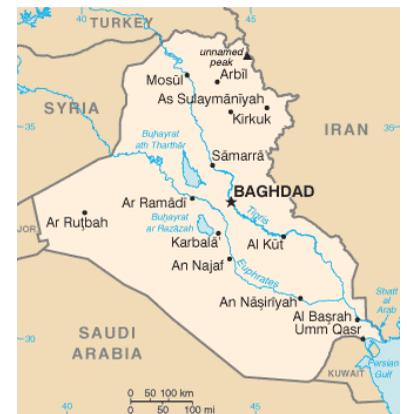
Iraq's social and political landscape has changed drastically after an escalation of regional and global power competition, the COVID-19-induced health and economic crises, and the unprecedented uprising by peaceful demonstrators in October 2019 that led to formation of a new government. These developments have exacerbated long-standing tensions, feeding public distrust in the state and tribal violence in the south. They have also detrimentally affected minority communities, especially in ISIS-affected areas, creating openings for ISIS remnants to step up attacks and contributing to continued internal displacement of over one million persons.

The formation of a new government in May 2020 ended months of political deadlock, but fiscal pressures, political rivalries, and limited institutional capacity present serious hurdles to reforms—such as strengthening governance and tackling corruption—that remain critical to long-term stability in Iraq and regionally.

USIP'S WORK

The U.S. Institute of Peace has worked without interruption in Iraq since 2003 and maintains offices in Baghdad and Erbil. USIP's initiatives strengthen institutions' and communities' capacity to prevent, mitigate, and resolve conflicts without violence. Our key partners, Sanad for Peacebuilding and the Network of Iraqi Facilitators (NIF), have halted violent feuds, saving lives and re-stabilizing communities.

In 2015, USIP and its Iraqi partners conducted dialogues that prevented violence among tribes



following the Speicher massacre in which ISIS brutally killed 1,700 Iraqi cadets. In 2017, a similar initiative prevented resurgence of communal violence in the city of Hawija, following its liberation from ISIS.

USIP informs U.S. and Iraqi policy through research and analysis on conflict issues in Iraq, and by convening government officials and nongovernment experts.

USIP's work in Iraq includes:

Developing Iraqi capacity for peacebuilding and reconciliation. USIP provides technical and financial support to Sanad, an Iraqi civic organization with expertise mediating communal disputes. USIP, Sanad, and NIF have helped mend sectarian and inter-tribal cleavages in communities torn by extremist violence, including Tikrit, Hawija, Bartella, Yathrib, and Tal Afar. Through strategic and technical assistance, USIP supports the Kurdistan Regional Government Department of Foreign Relations and the Women Empowerment Organization in the implementation of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security. USIP has also provided technical and strategic support to Government of Iraq institutions.

Support for Iraqi minorities. USIP's work led to the creation of the Alliance of Iraqi Minorities (AIM), which advocates peacefully for the rights and interests of Christians, Ezidis (Yazidis), Sabean-Mandaeans, Shabak, and other minorities. Their activism led Iraq's Education Ministry to recognize religious minorities for the first time in national textbooks. AIM advocates for reparations to minority communities harmed by ISIS and works with government agencies to help displaced minority communities return to their homes in Nineveh Plain, Sinjar, and elsewhere in northern Iraq. They have also advised Iraq's legislature and the international community on minority needs, and worked with the Kurdistan region's parliament, contributing to a law on minorities' rights and the formation of participatory budget committees to advocate for their communities in Iraq's annual budget process.

USIP, Sanad, and NIF are conducting an initiative in Nineveh to facilitate IDP returns by mediating tensions between Christians and Shabaks in Hamdaniya, Sunni and Shia Turkmen in Tal Afar, and Ezidis and Sunni Arabs in Sinjar.

Through a specialized tool called the [Conflict and Stabilization Monitoring Framework](#), USIP collects data directly from conflict-affected communities in minority-rich areas to understand barriers to peace and stabilization needs.

Reconciliation and rule of law in Anbar and Basra. USIP supports a locally driven research and training initiative in Anbar and Basra—two provinces where tribal dynamics dominate—to address the drivers of community-based conflicts, mitigate violence, and strengthen stabilization efforts through facilitated dialogues. This initiative also explores how broadening tribal practices might promote peace and help strengthen state institutions.



Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Nadia Murad delivered public remarks at USIP on June 28, 2019 on the plight of the Ezidi people, and stabilization and resilience for Iraq's minority communities.

