

**Women's Rights and Leadership in Iraq
Conference Report
Pomegranate Gallery
October 25, 2009
New York, NY**

The Women's Alliance For a Democratic Iraq (WAFDI) organized a conference on Women's Rights and Leadership in Iraq on October 25, 2009 at the Pomegranate Gallery in New York City. The idea was to bring Iraqi women voice to the international community and build support for their fight for their rights.

The conference was a follow up on a recent training that WAFDI co-sponsored with the Iraq Institute for Strategic Studies in Beirut, Lebanon July 13-17, 2009. The panels and discussions addressed many issues that are crucial to the advancement of women's rights in Iraq.

The conference brought together about 40 people from different background and professions such as lawyers, law students, civil society, government and the private sector. They were a mix of Iraqis, Iraqi Americans and Americans.

The panels' topics and speeches stimulated interesting discussions due to the importance of the subject and the difference in perspective of the audience. There were different points of view but the intention was to support Iraqi women despite their differences.

The conference showed the need for people interested in furthering women's rights in Iraq to meet and discuss the issues. We not only discussed the issues and were updated on the current situation, but we were able to enlarge our networks. In addition, a couple of attendees showed interest in joining WAFDI and committed to helping in future events and wanted to help Iraqi women in any way they can.

The keynote speaker was H.E. Ambassador Hamid Al Bayati, Permanent Representative of Iraq to The United Nations. Other speakers included; Janet Benshoof, President of Global Justice Center and adjunct professor at Harvard Law School; Professor Eden Naby, board member of Iraq Institute of Strategic Studies, and a visiting scholar at Harvard Divinity School; Basma Fakri Co-founder and President Emeritus of WAFDI; Eric H. Blinderman, international litigation counsel at Proskauer Rose LLP/List Project; Ariella Futral, Director of Grantmaking Program for Urgent Action Fund For Women's Human Rights; Tamara Quinn, CEO of AIX Global and Co-founder of WAFDI; Sara Steele, Public Affairs Officer and Confidential Advisor to the director, Task Force for Business and Stability Operations, U.S. Department of Defense; Carole Basri, President of Corporate Lawyering Group, LLC, President of Corporate Lawyering Association, Adjunct Professor at the University of Pennsylvania Law School and Executive V.P. of WAFDI. Speeches from Baghdad included Hanaa Edwar, Lawyer, General Secretary of Iraqi Al-Amal Association, and member of CC of Iraqi Women Network; Maysoon Al-Damluji, member of the Council of Representatives of Republic of Iraq and Editor- In- Chief of Noon, a women's magazine published in Iraq.