

REPORT FROM INTERNATIONAL MEDIA SUPPORT

# Media development in Iraq

## An overview of international support 2003-2005

June 2005

International Media Support  
Wilders Plads 8A  
1403 Copenhagen K  
Denmark

tel: +45 32698989  
fax: +45 32698994  
e-mail: [i-m-s@i-m-s.dk](mailto:i-m-s@i-m-s.dk)  
website: [www.i-m-s.dk](http://www.i-m-s.dk)



# Media development in Iraq:

## An overview of international support 2003-2005

### List of abbreviations

ADF	Americas Development Foundation
APFW	Arab Press Freedom Watch
BBC WST	BBC World Service Trust
BMC	Baltic Media Centre
British FCO	Foreign & Commonwealth Office
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CPA	The Coalition Provisional Authority
CPJ	Committee to Protect Journalists
DFID	UK Department for International Development
EU	European Union
IFEX	International Freedom of Expression eXchange
IFJ	International Federation of Journalists
IMN	Iraqi Media Network
IMPACS	Institute for Media, Policy and Civil Society
IMS	International Media Support
INJAP	Iraqi National Journalist Advisory Panel
INSI	International News Safety Institute
IREX	International Research & Exchanges Board
IWPR	Institute for War and Peace Reporting
NED	The National Endowment for Democracy
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NCMC	National Communications and Media Commission
OSI	Open Society Institute
RSF	Reporters sans frontieres (Reporters without Borders)
SCCP	Stanhope Centre for Communications Policy
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

---

# Contents

<b>1 Introduction</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>2 Surveys and assessments</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>3 Main actors</b> .....	<b>7</b>
3.1 The coalition .....	7
3.2 International NGOs .....	7
<b>4 Activities and plans</b> .....	<b>10</b>
4.1 Safety and monitoring .....	10
4.2 Regulation / legislation .....	10
4.3 Training / professional standards .....	12
4.4 Media organisations .....	13
4.5 Financial sustainability .....	14
<b>5 Strengths and weaknesses of international support</b> .....	<b>15</b>

# 1 Introduction

This is a brief overview of international assistance to media development in Iraq from the time of the invasion in 2003 to the formation of the Iraqi government and first weeks of the constitutional process in April-May 2005.

This paper does not claim to give an exhaustive picture. It is meant as an introduction to the main foreign actors and to some of their initiatives and plans. It is written with the clear premise that media development in Iraq has been, is and should of course continue to be led and inspired by the Iraqis themselves.

Some of the institutions mentioned below have responded to our queries with a host of details; others have been less informative. We thank all who have offered their assistance.

## 2 Surveys and assessments

A handful of key documents have added to our understanding of the Iraqi media environment over the last two years.

Reporters without Borders (RSF) in 2003 published a report describing media conditions in Iraq during 25 years with Saddam Hussein.

<http://www.rsf.org/IMG/pdf/doc-1919.pdf>

A meeting in London by international NGOs and government agencies in April 2003 produced a first rough needs guide to the Iraqi media environment.

[http://www.iwpr.net/iraq\\_Media\\_in\\_Iraq\\_Meeting.html](http://www.iwpr.net/iraq_Media_in_Iraq_Meeting.html)

Following the London gathering, a small consortium of NGOs (Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR), Index on Censorship, International Media Support (IMS) and Baltic Media Centre (BMC)) in 2003 produced 'A New Voice in the Middle East: A provisional Needs Assessment for the Iraqi Media'.

[http://www.iwpr.net/pdf/Iraq\\_Media\\_Assessment\\_Report.pdf](http://www.iwpr.net/pdf/Iraq_Media_Assessment_Report.pdf)

Arab Press Freedom Watch (APFW) in 2003 did a fact finding mission to Iraq. The all-Arab delegation was the first of its kind to post-invasion Iraq and its report included observations on working conditions of Iraqi journalists and a detailed breakdown of the existing media landscape in Baghdad at the time.

<http://www.apfw.org/data/report/english/spe1100.pdf>

In the second half of 2004, on request from DFID, the UK Department for International Development, BMC finished a comprehensive report: 'Identifying Priorities for External support to the Development of Quality, Independent Media in Iraq'. This report build upon, among many other documents, BMC's own 'Iraq Media overview – Basra region', from June 2004.

This document is particularly focussed on the legal and institutional environment for the media, as it developed during the time of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) and on the discussions about the development of the state broadcaster.

In December 2004, Index on Censorship published: 'Options for Media Development in Iraq'. This report was a summary of observations from a two year training, publishing and monitoring project in Iraq and the Middle East funded by the British Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO), the foreign ministry of the Netherlands and UNESCO. It offers comprehensive recommendations for media development in Iraq, including recommendations on how short-, and medium term training of media staff can be organised.

<http://www.indexonline.org/en/pdfs/iraq-media-development-international.pdf>

Index on Censorship regularly posts new reports on Iraqi media development on its website:

<http://www.indexonline.org/en/specialreports/freeing-the-baghdad-media.shtml>

Stanhope Centre for Communications Policy (SCCP) is currently doing 'A Policy Evaluation of Media development Strategies pursued in Iraq'. SCCP runs a web-log featuring a large number of news-items on Iraqi media development. This is regularly updated and is probably the best tool available for current news in English on media environments in Iraq.

<http://www.stanhopecentre.org/blogs/iraqmedia/>

The US State department and Gallup as well as the BBC have conducted surveys in Iraq assessing the outreach of electronic media in Iraq; the number of satellite dishes in private households, the outreach of print media; the penetration of individual TV-stations and other factors relevant for media development.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/trust/docs/iraqmediaaudit.pdf>

International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) recently did a report on its findings on journalists association in Iraq. (see also 4.4) A press release summarized this.

<http://www.ifj.org/default.asp?index=3056&Language=EN>

Internews Network and Internews Europe in June 2003 organised an international conference in Athens focussing on media development in Iraq. The conference was spurred by the Pentagon, the World Bank and included participants from the US State Department, the EU, several European governments, the Russian press ministry, the Cairo Institute for Human Rights studies, a host of scholars and NGOs. It produced a blue-print for media development in Iraq, including detailed recommendations for the development of a state broadcaster, the legal environment in Iraq and other key factors. This document was for some time an important source of inspiration for key coalition officials in Baghdad, but its importance has now waned considerably.

## 3 Main actors

### 3.1 The coalition

The CPA has been by far the most influential actor in post-invasion media developments in Iraq. Planning for the post-war media environment in Iraq was ongoing for at least a year prior to the invasion and contained several elements – from overt media development initiatives, preparations for broadcast ventures and the like – to ‘black psy-ops’, the use of manipulated information for military purposes and so on.

As an important aspect of its media operations, the CPA in its days took upon itself to initiate legal regulation of the mushrooming Iraqi media society and to re-establish the national broadcaster. It established a regulatory body, The National Communications and Media Commission (NMCN), which would handle the licensing and allocation of frequencies for electronic media and tele-communications and it stipulated legal boundaries for freedom of the press. (Critics dubbed this the re-introduction of censorship). The CPA by decree established the Iraqi Media Network (IMN) as the replacement of the Bath-regimes national broadcaster.

Through the CPA, the USA and the UK governments have invested large sums in media development in Iraq, and particular in the TV, radio and print media of the IMN, but also in other strands of media development. Broadly speaking, these investments were designed as integral parts of the military operation to oust the Bath-regime and its subsequent hearts- and minds-campaign. Long-term media development objectives were integrated into these operations as ‘embedded’ development elements in the over-all military strategy and are only later emerging as developmental goals in their own right.

The IMN, through the use of private contractors, is still at the time of writing overseeing the operations of the state broadcaster, but the Iraqi authorities are taking over financial and content responsibilities.

### 3.2 International NGOs

*Americas Development Foundation* has been equipped with a reported 44 US mill. for media development in Iraq. According to the ADF website, projects will focus on training of media staff, including management and marketing staff; media business development, including targeted technical assistance to those individual private media outlets that demonstrate professional and business growth potential; media law advocacy, facilitating establishment of a legal, regulatory, and policy environment that enables the development of an independent media sector; association building to encourage the development of professional associations and industry organizations which can defend the professional interests of Iraqi journalists and of independent Iraqi media enterprises.

ARTICLE19 in 2004 produced a guide for media staff on election coverage. This was incorporated into a series of training modules implemented by Index on Censorship with the assistance of UNESCO.

*Arab Press Freedom Watch* (London-based) fielded an all-Arab assessment mission to Baghdad in mid 2003. Contacts were established with several media in the city and APFW remained involved in discussions regarding the establishment of a journalists union and/or the re-moulding of the Iraqi Journalists Syndicate. Some of APFW's contacts in Baghdad feed information on press freedom violations onto APFW's website.

The BBC is currently establishing a TV-station and a FM-radio station in Basra. Due to security constraints the BBC has operated mainly 'by remote' from Jordan. No foreign consultants have been able to work continuously in Basra. Rather, Iraqi staff have been lifted out for training in Jordan and the UK.

IMPACS – (*Institute for Media, Policy and Civil Society*) recently signed a contract with the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) to assess the role of Iraqi media within Iraq and the Middle East and propose projects of collaboration between Iraqi and Canadian media; all with an aim to support the Iraqi media in its Middle Eastern context. The initiative includes a roundtable and training session to be held in Amman in June 2005.

*International Federation of Journalists (IFJ)* has pursued association building among Iraqi journalists for some time and in March 2005 issued a report on the establishment of a common 'media platform' in Iraq, the INJAP (Iraqi National Journalist Advisory Panel), representing several Iraqi journalists associations. IFJ is also the driving force behind an Iraqi Safety Campaign.

*Index on Censorship* was among the small handful of NGOs which set out to survey options for media development in Iraq shortly before the invasion in 2003. Index has since completed a 12 months monitoring, training and publication programme in Baghdad from May 2003 to June 2004, funded by the British FCO and the ministry of foreign affairs in the Netherlands. This was followed by training seminars on election reporting for Iraqi media prior to the January 2005 elections funded by UNESCO with inputs from ARTICLE19. Index's priority for Iraq is to develop projects that enhance monitoring of free expression abuses and support new organisations working to tackle them.

IFEX – (*International Freedom of Expression eXchange*) is circulating reports on violations of media rights in Iraq to the international community. Reports are received from IFEX usual member-sources: RSF, Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), IFJ and others. No Iraqi institutions are yet established as independent members of the IFEX network.

*Internews* conducted the above-mentioned conference in Athens 2003, but has not since involved itself in media development in Iraq.

*International Media Support (IMS)* was among the organisers of the above-mentioned conference in London in 2003 and has assisted early surveys of the media environment in Iraq. IMS is establishing a twinning-support scheme connecting print media in Baghdad with print media in Copenhagen.

*International News Safety Institute (INSI)* recently ran two safety training seminars for Iraqi media personnel. A broader safety campaign for Iraqi media personnel is running under the auspices of IFJ.



*IREX – (International Research & Exchange Board)* has initiated (spring 2005) a program as a subcontractor under a USAID civil society project, which seeks to support independent media, primarily non-state, through improving journalism professionalism, media management of private media outlets, associations supporting independent media and a legal framework supportive of media freedom. The initial work will run through December 2005 with options for another 18 months. IREX plans to use local, regional and international experts.

*IWPR – (Institute for War and Peace Reporting)* was among the small handful of NGOs surveying options for media assistance before the invasion of March 2003. IWPR established a training-through-production project in Baghdad, involving a group of younger Iraqi journalist. For security reasons, IWPR is presently operating out of Sulamanyia in northern Iraq.

*Reuters Foundation* in March 2005 established an electronic news-exchange for Iraqi print media. Some 15 print media in Baghdad are now submitting news-items to a news-exchange based in Cairo from which all contributors can then extract information for publication in their own publications. The hub in Cairo are manned by professional, Arabic-speaking Reuters staff. Funding has been provided by UNDP.

*UNESCO* has supported a project to secure fair and professional media coverage of the elections in January 2005. UNESCO, like other UN agencies, has been hampered by the lack of broader UN involvement in Iraq and is still operating only out of Jordan. UNESCO has most recently presented a three-pronged, 2 mill. USD package of prioritized media development options focussing, broadly speaking, on media policy and legal regulation; on training and professional standards and on monitoring of press freedom violations. Relevant operators are waiting to sign contracts with UNESCO to implement these designs, but at the time of writing projects are still on hold since funds from the UN trust fund are not yet released.

## 4 Activities and plans

One key observation from the information gathered is that the Iraqi media – TV, radio, print media – have mushroomed and are developing rapidly without much international assistance, but also that development comes at a price. Journalists, photographers and other media personnel are being killed, kidnapped and harassed at a rate which makes Iraq by far the most dangerous place in the world for media personnel. The security problems in Iraq are still at the time of writing (May 2005) severely hampering all foreign assistance to media development in Iraq. Only a tiny handful of foreign media development consultants operate in Iraq for more than a day or two at a time. Apart from the media operations run by the US or UK through their embassies and military staff in Iraq, most projects are either on hold or handled from abroad through Iraqi intermediaries. Training projects (with IWPR as the main exception) are carried out almost entirely by lifting Iraqi participants out of Iraq.

### 4.1 Safety and monitoring

As mentioned above the physical dangers presently facing all media personnel in Iraq is by far the greatest obstacle to media development and freedom of speech. At the time of writing some 55 Iraqi media staffs have been killed since the invasion in March 2003. (Some 20 international media staffs have been killed in Iraq the same period).

The need for proper monitoring of violations, advocacy and safety training of media personnel has been recognised by all observers. Safety training has been incorporated into training schemes organised by IWPR and Index on Censorship and courses on safety for media staff was organised in Baghdad in January 2004 by INSI, Index and IWPR and in early 2005 in northern Iraq by INSI, IWPR and the Kurdistan Union of Journalists. Security concerns have so far prohibited training in Basra and training in Baghdad are currently out of the question. Training has been conducted by consultants from the British security advisory firm, AKE.

In December 2004, due to the training dates being so close to the election dates as well as the generally insecure travel situation throughout Iraq, there were 11 participants from Baghdad and 18 participants from the Kurdish Territories instead of 25 from each city and or region as planned.

#### Monitoring

Both RSF and CPJ have maintained detailed reporting on violations of media freedoms, attacks, killings and abductions of media staff since the invasion and alerts are communicated to the international community through IFEX.

The CPJ has received funding from the Open Society Institute (OSI) to develop a training programme that will underpin an Iraqi monitoring system for media rights abuses. Likewise, Index on Censorship has suggested such a system based on monitoring, publication on-line and in print in Iraq. The issue is addressed by a UNESCO proposal for 'monitoring and advocacy for freedom

of expression and rights of the media' – like for other UNESCO proposals however, funding from the UN Iraq Trust Fund is still pending.

## 4.2 Regulation / legislation

The UK and US governments, first through the CPA and presently through on-going consultations with the Iraqi authorities, have been actively influencing the regulatory frameworks and the institutional parameters for the private Iraqi media and for the national broadcaster and state-run print media (the successors to the Bath-regimes elaborate system of nationwide TV, radio and newspapers). Through decrees (Orders 65 and 66) the CPA established new legal boundaries for the media and a regulatory body, the National Communications and Media Commission (NCMC), which is still charged with the day-to-day operations of the governments media and communications policy.

International comments on these early attempts to assist the formation of a constructive media environment have often been harsh. Index on Censorship notes, for instance, how

*'the massive growth in the media in Iraq has not been accompanied by the kind of independent investment, resources and capacity building that was initially expected. In fact, heavy investment in media development in Iraq under the US-led occupation was both misdirected and misused. It did almost nothing to support Iraq's booming semi-independent print & broadcast sector, while an ambitious attempt to introduce an advanced media regulation system has run into problems since the declared end of direct Coalition rule in Iraq'.*

The British government, through the CPA and now through the UK Embassy, has actively influenced the media policies now being shaped in Iraq. British consultants have been and still are instrumental in trying to forge a BBC-style public service broadcaster out of the IMN. Also, the BBC World Service Trust is now instrumental in media projects in Iraq. (4.3 Training and professional standards)

The Internews/World Bank Athens conference in 2003 provided a blueprint for media regulation and legislation for Iraq, which reportedly served as an important guideline especially for US input in Iraq for some time. The Athens blue-print, however, have been more or less abandoned by most operators in Iraq as developments proved it somewhat incompatible with realities on the ground and less inspired by Iraqi aspirations than it probably should have been.

Presently, the legal framework for the media and the future of the national broadcaster is being decided by the Iraqi parliament and the Iraqi government.

Index on Censorship and ARTICLE19 are involved in consultations with the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Human Rights in Baghdad on some of these issues; IREX says it has plans to support development of proper media legislation under its contract with USAID's civil society project.

As part of its contribution, UNESCO is proposing a project 'Development of a Media and Communication Policy for Iraq', which – when funds are eventually released by the UN – would entail direct advisory support through consultative processes to the government and relevant ministries in line with

internationally recognised standards. Activities under this project would aim to assist the legislative process now underway and prepare for implementation of media legislation passed by the Iraqi parliament through awareness raising among civil servants etc.

The Americas Development Foundation says it aims to support 'media law advocacy, facilitate establishment of a legal, regulatory and policy environment that enables the development of an independent media sector.' It is not clear how this project will be coordinated with efforts by other actors.

### 4.3 Training / professional standards

The following is an attempt to list international media development schemes which have large training components, or which are likely to have a substantial impact on the professional standards of Iraqi media staff.

IWPR started operating in Iraq in June 2003 with funding from DFID. Funding ended in March 2005, but additional funds from the US Department of State, OSI and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) will sustain operations till August 2005. At the time of writing, IWPR employed four international staff in Sulimaniyah, which for security reason has been the main IWPR base since October 2004, when the office in Baghdad was temporarily down-scaled. Counting all, IWPR has involved around 400 Iraqi reporters in different training schemes so far. With final editorial control in London, the IWPR web-site publishes the cream of their reporting in English and Arabic.

*The BBC World Service Trust* is currently establishing a new public service broadcaster, Al Mirbad, in southern Iraq. This involves several training schemes. Training started in February 2005 in Jordan and the UK. The project will establish a production and transmission centre in Basra, with capacity to produce one radio and one TV channel. Local Iraqi project managers and engineers are carrying out this work following training in the UK. The project has recruited around 200 local staff for training and possible subsequent hiring. At the time of writing, the project employs around 40 people, in addition to 86 candidates who have been through 8 weeks of training in Amman. The project will develop programming on current affairs and public debate, entertainment, children's and local cultural programmes, which are piloted in Amman during training courses. The station is managed by a local team, under an Iraqi-registered company. The BBC plans to launch radio in May, Television in July 2005. It will reach audiences in Southern Iraq via terrestrial transmitters.

Other BBC World Service Trust projects have included:

- Election coverage training in London for Iraqi Media Network journalists: Funded by the FCO and carried out in December 2004.
- Election coverage monitoring for Iraqi Media regulatory body: Funded by the FCO and carried out in late December 2004. The course, held in London supported a team of election coverage monitors to work out a check list and develop practical tools to assess whether broadcasters are working within the regulatory guidelines of election coverage.

- Support for Technical Media Staff in Iraq: The BBC World Service Trust has worked alongside the British Council to implement a series of training opportunities that will allow media technical staff in Iraq to develop the quality of electronic media. A total of 190 people were trained during March/April 2004.
- Media Audit Iraq: Produced a comprehensive technical and journalistic audit of the media in eight cities in Iraq. Over the summer of 2004 the Iraq Media Audit Report was distributed to Iraq media specialists and posted on media development websites.
- Journalist Training in South Central Iraq, September 2003; the BBC World Service Trust carried out a month long training programme for local newspaper and electronic media in Hilla in Central Southern Iraq. During September 2003, through this project 170 journalists received training in the region.
- Training Children in TV and Radio Production: A five-day training course in basic journalism skills for children and teenagers, and one TV production skills course in Baghdad. This was held with 16 children in September 2003 in Baghdad.
- *Reuters Foundation* – with funding from UNDP – has recently established a web-based news exchange for Iraqi media, perhaps also aiding the creation of an independent news-agency. Some 20 media primarily in Baghdad submit news-items to a news-exchange based in Cairo. This hub is manned by Arabic-speaking Reuter's staff. Newspapers, magazines, and radio and TV stations can submit news items to the site, at [www.aswataliraq.info](http://www.aswataliraq.info) and re-publish or broadcast news items submitted by other contributors. The site also carries reports from a network of individual Iraqi journalists and from the Reuters Arabic Service. News is provided in Arabic with Kurdish and English-language options to be added in coming months. In direct relation to this project, Reuters Foundation has so far offered training to 50 Iraqi journalists and editors.
- *Index on Censorship* included training programmes in its activities in Iraq during 2003 and 2004; led by a team of Arab journalists. Courses focused on media regulation, in Iraq and internationally; self-regulation, professionalism, safety and industry lobbying. Some 125 reporters had attended the seminars by June 2004.

Other ad hoc training schemes have involved among others the American University in Cairo.

## 4.4 Media organisations

There are several journalists unions and associations in Baghdad and in Kurdistan, some funded under the Bath-regime and now striving to find their proper position in the new media community.

In early 2005 IFJ assisted the establishment of INJAP – the Iraqi National Journalist Advisory Panel. This new grouping brings together elements of the old Iraqi Journalists' Syndicate as well as leaders of the new Iraqi Press Union and the Kurdistan Journalists Syndicate. It also gathers Iraqi experts on issues of interest to the Iraqi media community and key figures from some of the newly established independent publications.

The panel is now the focal point for IFJ in Iraq and will act as conduit for IFJ guided projects in Iraq. According to the INJAP's own first statements, it intends to play a role in discussions with the new authorities in defining regulations for the media; it intends to foster discussion on self-regulation in media; ethical standards and a national professional training infrastructure for media staff. INJAP also foresees two national conferences which will outline a programme of action, which 'should form the core of any media development activity in the country'. IFJ and INJAP also launched an Iraq Safety Campaign to combat the wave of violence against media staff.

The Americas Development Foundation says it will support association building 'to encourage the development of professional associations and industry organizations which can defend the professional interests of Iraqi journalists and the professional interests of independent Iraqi media enterprises.'

## **4.5 Financial sustainability**

Research for this paper has identified only loose plans for support for activities in Iraq which could foster a more conducive economic environment for private media or improved business management among Iraqi media.

Both IREX and the Americas Development Foundation say they will support establishment of institutions to support the media industry, but it is not clear to what extent this has led to activity inside Iraq. IREX also has plans to support training in media management.

## 5 Strengths and weaknesses of efforts so far

The absence of stronger, independent international input for the development of media policies in Iraq is presently depriving Iraq of much of the experience gathered by the international community in other conflict zones. There is risk that this will force the emerging Iraqi authorities to adopt media policies which do not correspond with international standards or western notions of how media may foster sound, democratic practices and institutions. There are many plans and suggestions on how to support media development in Iraq, but only little concrete international involvement on the ground.

The security situation in Iraq hampers development significantly, but it offers them ample time for sharing of information, so that they may avoid duplication and other misallocations. This opportunity has not been used, however. There is only very limited, if any, coordination of international efforts. The approach of, for instance, the Americas Development Foundation and IREX, both operating on US funds, seems to prioritize the same elements of media development as does UNESCO, the IFJ and other international actors, but there seem to have been no common discussion of strategy, priorities, concrete plans, avoidance of overlaps etc. after the first initial attempts to coordinate efforts in 2003.

The media development approach of the CPA and the coalition partners has often been criticised. Whether fair or not, it is fair to assume that western actors may find it harder to build partnerships with the media community in Iraq than in many other post-conflict / conflict environments. The strong US-influence on the IMN in particular will have illustrated at least to some Iraqis that not all media development is as unbiased as its international backers would want them to believe.

International Media Support  
Martin Breum, Copenhagen, June 2005.