

Iraqi Non-Violence Group

The final report of Iraqi Non-violence Forum

Iraq, Erbil, Shaqlawa 6-11 Nov, 2009

The First Iraqi Non-Violence Forum,
The General Assembly Meeting of the Non-Violence Group,
and The workshop for Iraqi Non-Violence Activists

6-11 Nov 2009

Shaqlawa, Erbil, Iraq



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The Iraqi Non-Violence (Laonf) group has held the first Iraqi Non-Violence Forum, in addition to its general assembly meeting, and workshop of capacity building for the Non-Violence group's members. By a direct implementing of Al Mesalla Organization for Human Resources Development in Erbil, with cooperation of Nova (Spain NGO), Un Ponte Per (Italian NGO), Peaceful Tomorrow (American NGO), and supported by the Municipality Council of Barcelona, the Spanish Catalonia Agency, and the local Authority of Toscana in Italy.

Also an application form has been designed to invite the Iraqi activists during the period of 15 days. 266 applications have been received from all Iraqi provinces via special email address set for this purpose. Specific criteria has been determined to select the participants resulted to select 40 activists from Non-Violence Group, 85 activists from other civil society activists out of Non-Violence Group, as well as 20 participants of international delegates, the total participants number was around 140, 75% of the them participate in paying their transportation cost, while the other expenses paid by the Forum organizers.

The forum's activities started Friday Nov 6th, and continued for three days, then followed by the General Committee Meeting for two day, and finally a workshop to train 10 members of the Non-Violence Group.



Erbil, Shaqlawa, 9-10 Nov, 2009

1. Forum objectives

Is to boost the non-violence alternative towards the change in Iraq

- To study the non-violence from the Iraqi point of view and the possibility of building long term strategy of non-violence in Iraq.
- To raise the awareness of non-violence culture and to support the role of Iraqi Non-violence Group in the community
- To exchange the experiences among the Iraqi Non-Violence group and the other national and international participants.

Two committees have been formed to invite and select the participants:

- 1- A committee to invite and select the Iraqi participants
- 2- A committee to invite and select the international participants

The invitation process started by sending a special application form includes some questions and criteria for participating in the Forum's activities –copy of the form is attached-, the application are collected by the following email address (almuntada@laonf.net), the dead line for receiving the applications was 15 days, the preparation committee determined many criteria for selecting the participants –copy of the criteria is attached-. The committee received 266 applications from Iraq and 30 from other countries. According the selection criteria and the available budget, 155 have been selected, 125 from Iraq (40 from Iraqi Non-Violence Group's members and 85 from the other Iraqi NGOs and the civil society's activists) and 30 from the international activists. The table below shows the gender distribution:



2.1 The gender distribution

| Gender | Number | Percentage |
|--------|--------|------------|
| Male | 95 | 68% |
| Female | 45 | 32% |
| Total | 140 | |

3. The General content of the Forum

3.1 Day 1:

Friday, 6 Nov, 2009, 6:00 pm, the registration of the participants started along with distributing the Forum's work agenda. The opening started at 8:00 pm by the presence of: George Mansur, the former minister of civil society minister in KRG; the mayor of Shaqlawa; intellectuals, figures, and folks from Shaqlawa; as well as local, national and international media; along with the participants of the forum comprise around 200 persons during the opening.

The opening includes:

- 1- Welcome speeches
- 2- Artistic activities like play, songs, and chants
- 3- Press releases
- 4- Common dinner

The opening started with standing up to the National anthem of Iraq. Then, the speech of the preparation committee has been delivered by Ibarhim Ismaeel to welcome the presents, and to show the objectives of the non-violence group and the forum's goals, hoping the forum's activities to be achieved successfully. After that, George Mansur delivered his speech, he congratulated the non-violence group for holding the forum, he gave a brief about the Iraqi situation and the fact of dominant violence, and he asked the Group and their international partners to work hard towards disseminating the culture of non-violence much more and in sustainable way to the community. Then, a speech has been delivered by Delawar Aziz, the mayor of Shaqlawa, who talked about shared life among the diverse groups in Shaqlawa, and the history of this city as a freedom tracers' hostel before the invasion of Iraq. The next speech was of Jean Marie Muller, the French thinker, who talked about the history of Iraq as first civilization in the human beings



Followed by the artistic activities, a performance of "Payman – which is a name of Kurdish woman", in English Language, has been by, Annet Henneman, the Italian activist. Then, songs in Arabic and Kurdish languages have been performed by the Blinds Team of Erbil, showed the brotherhood between Arab and Kurds. And finally, songs in English language with playing guitar, performed by Karwan, a talented guy from Erbil.

Finally, the day 1 has been ended by open dinner for the presents.



During the opening, documents have been distributed like:



- 1- Introduction and the agenda of the forum
- 2- Brochures about Non-Violence Group
- 3- Booklet about NGOs, translated by our colleagues, Ismaeel Dawood, published by Al Mesalla 2009.
- 4- Special issue of NGOs Magazine about the Forum.
- 5- Signs and T-shirts with the Forum's logo
- 6- Folders about the Forum's committees and their roles

3.2 Day 2:

The second day started with presence of all the participants, Abdulla Khalid assisted in facilitating the session. The morning session included presenting many studies regarding the Iraqi situation and peace building issues, as follows:

- 1- *Comprehending the Non-Violence from the Iraq Point Of View*, Dr. Salim AL Wardi, explained the possibility to use the non-violence means while the violence is dominated in Iraq?
- 2- *The Requirements of Non-Violence Change in Iraq*, Zaid Al Wardi, talked about the essential requirements towards using non-violence as a mean of change.
- 3- Cultural bases of violence in Iraq, Shamkhi Jaber, violence memories in Iraq, and the root of the violence cultural in Iraq and its role in producing violence, also the role of individual, the objective reasons, the occupation forces and the neighboring countries interference in Iraq affairs.
- 4- Non- Violence's Iraqi, Arabic and Islamic symbols, Hussain Sa'adon Al Haidari.
- 5- Commentaries and additional information provided by Wafa'a Wahab Abdulsattar, regarding the violence in Iraq, and by Sabba Al Nadawi, regarding the violence and non-violence in Iraq.

Time for questions and discussion regarding the issues that was delivered during the morning session, included commentary by the philosopher Jan Mary Muller about another Islamic symbol in non-violence thought who is Gawdat Sa'ed.



After the morning session, Jean Marie Muller has opened two exhibitions, one for a photograph art, the photographer Nawzad Mohammed showed in his photos the suffering of the displaced people due to the humanitarian challenges at the Iraqi-Iranian border, especially in Qandil Mountain where the people suffering from bombing by Turkish and Iranian armies attributed to the military activities of PKK's fighters. The other exhibition was for the hundreds of books, booklets, and posters that issued in Arabic, Kurdish, and English languages, issued by the Iraqi -especially the Kurdish- NGOs.



The second session started with Iraqi testimonies about the non-violence activities in Iraq, one of them was in Baghdad, implemented by Non-Violence Group in Baghdad, it was the first field activity at the anniversary of the International Non-Violence Day, the event achieved at Al Mutanabi street, the groups' members explained the important sides of their experience within the critical situation of violence and murders, also they mentioned the challenges of their activities in Baghdad like the difficulties of coordination and getting the official permissions from governmental bodies, they were wonder **Why the activities towards the peace are required a security permission?!**



Then members from the Southern Oil labors syndicate who are members in Non-Violence Group in Basra, they talked about their non-violence experiment in preserving labors' rights and advocating their legal rights. Finally, other participants explained their non-violence experiences in different fields in their provinces.

Then, an open discussion started regarding the challenges of non-violence in Iraq and how to overcome them, the situation of the Iraqi NGOs and its role in disseminating the culture of non-violence. After the discussion among the participants, they have been divided into three groups to discuss three issues:

- The challenges of Non-Violence and how to overcome them, the facilitator was Husham Assaf
- The situation of the Iraqi NGOs in the field of non-violence, the facilitator was Wisam Ja'afer
- The role of the education in the levels of family and the educational sector to disseminate the culture of non-violence, the facilitator was Husam Abdullah.

After a discussion for 90 minutes, the groups presented their results and gave a time for questions and discussion. The presentation of the groups was facilitated by Ibrahim Ismaeel.

During the evening session, a first painting exhibition has been opened for the talented artist Bilal Baher, a Non-Violence member from Baghdad, included 31 painting works about the Iraqi situation and the future vision of Iraq.



Also, a documentary film about the marshes in south of Iraq and the violence events that happened in the past, problems of the life situation, and of drought in the Iraqi marshes as a result of neighboring countries' policies. It's worthy mentioning that a group of students from Salahaden University attended the forum to get experiences in voluntary works in civil society organizations, peace and nonviolence.



3.3 Day 3:

The third day of the forum specified to the international partners, the morning session included presentations about their understanding to the Non-Violence and opportunities of cooperation with the Iraqi non-violence activists, the presentation were as follows:

- 1- Vision towards Iraq, by Martina Pignatti from Italy.
- 2- The international cooperation for Iraq, Felip Daza from Spain.
- 3- Commentary by Sebastia Mayol, from the council of Barcelona.
- 4- Commentary by Solidarity from Toscana region, Italy.
- 5- Opportunities for partnership with Peace movements in the United States, presented by Terry K. Rockefeller
- 6- The international Marathon Committee/Baghdad presented their speech about organizing and the marathon's plane
- 7- Brief speech about importance of supporting the peace and reconciliation in Iraq, presented by the second consultant in Spain embassy.



The evening session started with two artistic performances, the first was a monodrama performed by Ali, a talented guy from non-violence Group in Baghdad, the same play was performed during the activities of anniversary of The International Day of Non-Violence in Baghdad. The second was a song "Yes for Peace .. No for Violence", performed by children team from Ahead of Kurdistan's Children.

Then, a discussion about two issues has been conducted:

- 1- The future cooperation possibilities.
- 2- Initiatives, activities, and suggestions for the years 2010-2011

After an open discussion, in order to get concrete results, the participants have been divided into two groups. The results are presented; proposals for different activities to be implemented by Non-Violence Group and their partners; the issue of receive new members to Non-Violence Group has been discussed; enforcing its organizational structure, after receiving a lot of applications from interested applicants to join the Group.

In General, we can list the submitted proposals as follows:

- a- Capacity building for the Non-Violence Group to empower its organizational structure and the capabilities of its members.
- b- Implementing series of advocacy campaigns throughout Iraq.

All the proposals have been submitted in the General Assembly meeting of Non-Violence Group which has been held after the Forum's activities.

4- The Forum's Evaluation

The evaluation process is conducted by the participants themselves, and the assistance of a facilitator, an open question addressed to show the positive and negative remarks, the results were written on a flip chart publicly, the facilitator asked the participants to focus on the negative remarks in order to avoid them next activities, because this forum is the first attempt with a wide participation and condensed agenda.

4.1 The weakness:

- 1- The program of the forum, long time of activities during all the days of the Forum, since 9:00 am till 6:30 pm.
- 2- The simultaneous interpretation was missed in some activities, like the artistic activities.
- 3- A little time was given for discussion, questions and commentaries.
- 4- The levels of the participants are not homogeneous
- 5- The number of participants is too much.

4.2 Strengths



1. The forum was a space for meeting the Iraqi activists with activists from other countries, which assist in exchanges the experiences and cultures.
2. The variety of activities that were implemented during the Forum's activities, like presentations, commentaries, discussion group, books exhibition, drama, photograph, and other artistic activities.
3. Benefits from the commentaries of national and international participants regarding the theoretical aspects of Non-Violence.
4. Opportunities for partnerships, proposals, new entrants for Non-Violence Group.
5. Good preparation, organizing by AL Mesalla to manage the Forum's activities.

Second: The Report of the General Assembly Meeting of Non-Violence Group

Erbil, Shaqlawa 9-10 Nov, 2009

Introduction:

A meeting of the General Assembly of Non-Violence Group has been held by attending of 40 members, through two days 9-10 Nov, 2009. The meeting including: supporting the activities of the Group; the Challenges and how to overcome; self-building and the activities for next two years; writing the Group's charter; electing the a new board of directors;

1. The objectives:

1.1 The General Objectives:

The general objectives are a self-building for the Non-Violence Group and to developing strategic plan for two years 2010-2011.

1.2 The Direct Objectives:

- Self-building for Non-Violence Group
- Evaluating the previous activities of the Group.
- Writing a charter and building the organizational structure.
- The challenges and how to overcome them
- Setting programs, action plan, and strategic plan for next two years
- Electing the board of director



2. Participants

40 attendees attended the meeting, representing the previous board of directors, the provincial coordinators, in addition to a group from the more effective members. The gender, minorities and the geographical distribution have been taken in consideration in selecting the attendees.

2.1 The gender distribution of Participants

| Gender | Number | Percentage |
|--------|--------|------------|
| Male | 29 | 72% |
| Female | 11 | 28% |
| Total | 40 | |

2.2 The geographical distribution of Participants

| Iraqi Provinces / Participants | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|---|------------|---|-------|---|--------|---|---------|---|-------|---|-------|---|-----|---|--------|---|---------|---|-------|---|-------|---|-------|---|---------|---|-------|---|-----------|---|-------|---|---------|---|
| Erbil | 5 | Sulaimanya | 2 | Mosul | 1 | Kirkuk | 3 | Baghdad | 5 | Dyala | - | Anbar | 1 | Kut | 1 | samawa | 1 | Nasirya | - | Basra | 6 | Misan | 3 | Najaf | 2 | Kerbala | 2 | Duhok | 1 | Salhuddin | 3 | Babel | 2 | Diwanya | 2 |

3. Meeting content

3.1 Day 1

The morning session was specified to present the previous activities since founding the Group, and the most important challenges that encountered the Group, and discussing how to overcome them in future. That was through an open discussion among all the attendees.

During the evening session, the charter of the Group was discussed, new items has been added to the previous version of the strategic plan, included some rules should be committed by the members, determining the responsibilities of the board of directors, adding the structure of General Assembly and eliminating the local groups, setting the subscription of the membership's, setting the principles of the Group. Then, a committee has been named to write the new form of the principles and the charter which is discussed. Furthermore, an election for the new board of director has been conducted, the nomination opened for all the attendants. After secrete and direct balloting process 7 person has been elected among 12 nominators, the result was as follows:



1. Ibrahim Ismaeel
2. Khaled AL Jibori
3. Bilal Baheer
4. Saba Al Nidawi
5. Abdullah Al Mshegi
6. Husam Abdullah
7. Iman Hana Zakri

Three persons listed as reserves:

- 1- Haider Chasib
- 2- Salama Sagban
- 3- Hasan Khelif

During the first meeting of the board of directors, a chairman and his deputy have been elected:

- Ibrahim Ismaeel, Chairman
- Khaled Al Jibori, Chairman deputy



3.2 Day 2

The morning session of the second day of the general assembly meeting is specified to discuss the self-building of the Group, action plan draft for next two years, the participants have been divided into two groups, the first is to discuss the self-building, and the second about the action plan (Activities), the suggestions concerns the two topics were as follows:

A. Self-Building

- Electing new provincial representative committees, the current coordinators will be kept until new provincial election to be conducted.
- Opening the membership for individuals, NGOs, and syndicates that are interested to join the Group.
- Start to receive the subscription from the members
- expanding the communication channels and email list
- developing the existing website
- issuing newsletter

B. The activities:

- Organizing workshops for the new members of youth and women
- Opening non-violence rooms in the provinces as possible
- Advocacy campaigns for preserving human rights and rejecting the violence
- Organizing the forth and fifth non-violence weeks at the Non-Violence Day 2010 and 2011.
- Organizing TOT workshop
- Publishing and translating content regards non-violence

The evening session of the second day was an open meeting between the general assembly and the international partners, opportunities for future shared activities were discussed, and a readiness from the international partners to support the suggested activities has been expressed.



Third: The report of building capacity workshop

11 Nov, 2009 Erbil, Shaqlawa

Introduction:

Aiming to build capacities for a group of the Non-Violence activists in Iraq throughout most of Iraqi provinces, the Italian delegate trained a group of Non-Violence Group's members in 11 Nov, 2009, in the Conference room of Safin Hotel during one day.

Participants: the participants were 25, 17 from the Non-Violence Group's members, women comprised 7 of them.

Direct objective

- Presenting the Non-Violence Group activities and the future work of Toscana group and the Italian organizations in Iraq.
- Presenting the mechanism of the Italian organizations' work in Toscana's region regarding Non-Violence and peace building.
- Getting deep details about the theoretical issues of non-violence and peace building.

The training content

A- The morning session

At the beginning of this session, the Italian delegate start in explaining the mechanism of their work in Italy, each Italian organization presented their system one by one, and then a time has been given for questions and discussions regarding the Italian experiments. Finally, the Italian delegate has submitted a copy of their future project in Iraq with Al Mesalla and Non-Violence Group, the copy is delivered officially to the executive director of Al Mesalla and the chairman of Non-Violence Group.

B- The evening session

During the evening session, an open discussion started about the future agenda of the international partners in Iraq and how to support the Iraqi Non-Violence Group through funding the projects which are supposed to be implemented according to the General Committee Meeting plan. The delegate of Toscana Region Authority has explained the steps of implementing the Toscana's project. The other delegates have showed their optimistic regards the Iraqi Non-Violence Group's



future. Also the Iraqi Non-Violence Group has presented the proposals of their activities during next two years.

