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INVOLVING WOMEN IN PEACEBUILDING IN IRAQ:

BEST PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED

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1. Executive Summary

In this research paper, we seek to investigate and reveal the "best practices" that feminist organisations have undertaken to build peace. We have used a number of criteria set by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, on the basis of which these best practices were characterised.

Feminist organisations have used a number of strategies and methods, including negotiation, pressure, mobilisation, and networking with various stakeholders, in order to design national action plans and implement the contents of Resolution 1325. These organisations have achieved great successes at the level of the four key points addressed by Resolution 1325. However, this research found shortcomings in their work in terms of involving women in feminist work at the grassroots level, in addition to their inability to provide radical solutions to the challenges facing women's security and peace.

2. Introduction

The "liberation of Iraqi women from oppression" was one of the most important pretexts used to launch the war on Iraq in 2003

(Halls-French 2017). Women have suffered from poverty and the revival of some tribal traditions and practices that perpetuate violence against them (Aljabiri and Payton 2015), such as forcing women to marry the rapist, or killing them on the grounds of honor, depriving them of civil liberties such as traveling without the consent of the guardian and facing economic challenges, such as excluding them from working on a wide scale, especially after 2003. However, nearly two decades after the end of the war, women in Iraq still suffer from multiple forms of discrimination and violence. The conditions of war, economic siege, occupation, internal sectarian conflicts and conflict of identities contributed to the weakening of state institutions and their failure to impose the rule of law (Pratt, 2011), which led to the deterioration of the situation of Iraqi women. Despite its efforts to improve the situation of women and mainstream gender into national strategies, Iraq remains one of the six worst countries in the world in terms of the Women, Peace and Security Index 2019-2020 (Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security 2019). Iraq ranks 162 out of 167 according to the Benchmark Index for Women, Peace and Security issued by the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, which contains eleven indicators that cover three basic dimensions connected to the well-being of women, ensuring their participation in political, social and economic life, as well as the extend of achieving justice for them through the existence of equitable national laws, and indicators that deal with the issue of providing social security, whether in the family or in society in general (ibid.).

There are many forms of discrimination and violence against women in Iraq. According to the Global Gender Gap Index issued by the World Economic Forum 2020, Iraq ranks 152 out of 153 (World Economic Forum 2020). 50 percent of violence cases against women in Iraq are perpetrated by the males in the family - father, brother, or partner/husband. (Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security 2019). In addition, Iraq is one of those countries where the percentage of job opportunities for women is low. It is one of the eight worst countries in employing women, as the percentage of working women is only 20 percent of the total number of Iraqi women. This is considered the lowest percentage in the Middle East region (International Labor Organisation 2020). This comes in addition to the poverty conditions that women suffer from, and their exposure to various forms of marginalisation, discriminatory treatment and violence (Alkhudary 2020). As for the political representation of women, despite the presence of women in parliament, which allocates at least 25 percent of its seats to them, women parliamentarians have not been able to form a lobbying force in favor of women's rights. Some women candidates in the 2018 parliamentary elections were also subjected to vicious attacks on social media with the aim of excluding them from political participation (Chirillo and Roddey 2019). In terms of women assuming judicial positions, women only make up 3.9 percent of judges and 18 percent of public prosecutors (Alkhudary 2020).

After the war and the fall of the previous regime in 2003, many women's NGOs were formed, as the new situation gave the opportunity for civil society to intervene in the formulation of state programs and policies. Women have played a major role in preserving social order, maintaining stability, and activating their role in maintaining laws that preserve women's rights, social harmony and the preservation of citizenship identity (Iraq. National Action Plan 2014-2018). Some of these organisations carried out many activities and campaigns for Iraq to adopt UN Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security which aims at promoting women's political participation, protecting women from violence (Pratt 2011) and their economic and social empowerment.

Although there are studies and research that dealt with the activities and programs of feminist organisations in peacebuilding, the "best practices" in integrating women in peacebuilding have not been diagnosed to see what can be generalised in other places. Therefore, this research paper seeks to know the "best practices" carried out by feminist organisations with regard to working to activate and implement the three key points of UN Resolution 1325. The research examined a number of criteria to evaluate the practices under study by analysing the suitability of the practices to the social, political and economic context in the country, in addition to their suitability to the needs of the women concerned, compatibility with other projects being implemented, the impact and effectiveness of these works, and finally, sustainability and the possibility of generalisation in different regions in Iraq.

This research shows that feminist organisations have played multiple roles in peacebuilding. The organisation has proposed new laws and supported the Iraqi government to develop local plans to implement international resolutions. Moreover, they have protected and empowered women economically. These efforts are classified as peacebuilding efforts. This paper consists of three sections, apart from the research methodology. In the beginning, it will address the theoretical and conceptual framework, followed by a review and analysis of the most important practices as demonstrated by the field research. Then it will address the lessons learned. After this it will demonstrate conclusions and recommendations for relevant stakeholders including the Iraqi government, local organisations and international organisations.

3. Research Methodology

This paper seeks to fill a gap in our knowledge of "best practices" and the most important lessons in engaging women in peacebuilding in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in Iraq. Our aim is to answer the following questions: What are the best practices that have been implemented so far in the field of engaging women in peacebuilding at the local level, whether formal or informal, that can be scaled up and repurposed elsewhere? What are the best lessons learned from these initiatives and interventions? What are the organisations behind these initiatives? Are there any successful practices or initiatives that could be re-adopted elsewhere or developed throughout Iraq? What are the internal reasons for success, including the implementing entity's structures and strategies? What are the external reasons, including the surrounding external factors supporting the executing entity?

The research adopts a qualitative research methodology in collecting information, which relies on the following sources:

1. Reviewing the literature related to peacebuilding, the gender concept of peacebuilding, and the experiences and work of official and unofficial feminist organisations on global and local levels, as well as reviewing international agreements and resolutions such as Resolution 1325. Previous literature was reviewed and international documents, treaties and local laws were considered. Among the documents are the first and second Iraq National Action Plan, in addition to a number of reports published on the Internet and articles on women, peace and security.

2. Semi-structured interviews with officials of eight feminist organisations in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region were conducted (see Annex 1). Besides, two interviews conducted in the context of another research paper were analysed as well. The organisations were selected based on their activities and prominence in many peacebuilding activities. This does not mean that they are the only organisations working in this field, but due to limited time, a prominent group has been selected among these organisations. Although the selected organisations all operate throughout Iraq, their headquarters are based in five Iraqi cities: Baghdad, Erbil, Dohuk, Basra, and Mosul.

Interviews were conducted with two types of civil society organisations in Iraq: official NGOs, which are registered organisations and operate under Law No. 12 of 2010, and feminist organisations active in building peace, which can be classified under the "new civil society organisations". This will be clarified in the second section of this research paper. The roles of these non-governmental organisations in working to implement the four key points of Resolution 1325 were analysed. The two key points "protection from violence" and "its prevention" were combined in one.

The researcher faced many obstacles due to the unstable security conditions in Iraq, and due to some people's fear of conducting interviews. Another challenge was the Corona pandemic and the health crisis that Iraq is facing, as is the rest of the world. For security reasons, it was not possible to meet with one organisation that had a role in building peace

and providing protection from violence for women. The interviews were conducted on the electronic platform (Zoom) instead of face-to-face interviews in line with the policy of social distancing and avoiding meet-ups due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Fundamentalist obligations were followed in the research, in terms of clarifying the researcher's obligations to the interviewees to preserve information and not share it with any parties outside the scope of this research.

The researcher faced limitations related to the scarcity of research that addressed this topic, especially in the context of Iraq. There are only a few researches that dealt with this issue in Iraq. Among the researches are the study conducted by Kaya (2016) which deals with women, peace and security in Iraq and the Iraqi National Plan for the Implementation of Resolution 1325, and the study of O'Driscoll (2017) entitled "Women's Participation in Peacebuilding and Reconciliation in Iraq" (O'Driscoll 2017). However, they did not evaluate what the "best practices" were. They rather classified what those organisations did as "best practices".

In general, there is no written information or research to the researcher's knowledge evaluating the interventions carried out by feminist organisations and their impact on the concerned group in order to enhance their participation in peacebuilding. Since interviews with the concerned group, and consequently insights into the impact of the interventions on their peacebuilding ability, were not possible due to the limited time, the paper benefited from a review of reports and research issued by international organisations that dealt with the impact of the work of these organisations on women in peacebuilding.

This research can be used by feminist activists, feminist organisation, whether officially or informally registered, international donor organisations, international organisations and institutions interested in peace and gender issues, as well as academic institutions. Consequently, the research adds scientific value, as the researcher frames several criteria that can be used in other research and evaluation of other projects that seek to empower Iraqi women according to the key points of Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. At the end of the paper, the researcher formulates several recommendations that can be used in practice by stakeholders concerned with policies and activities related to women, peace and security, such as the Iraqi government and the Kurdistan Regional Government.

4. Involving Women in Peacebuilding: Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

4.1 Peacebuilding

The development of the concept of peacebuilding can be traced back to the middle of the second decade of the last century, when US President Woodrow Wilson delivered his speech before the US Congress in 1918 to announce his fourteen principles, known as the Wilson Principles, stressing the need to resolve conflicts between states by peaceful means and establish international relations based on general peace pacts (Hussain 2017). However, it can be said that the concept of peacebuilding was crystallised institutionally with the report of the former Secretary-General of the United Nations Boutros Ghali in 1992 (Riyad 2019).

He presented his report to the forty-seventh session entitled "The Peace Agenda," in which he explained to the international community his vision of four stages of conflict resolution before, during and after their occurrence. The four stages are: Using diplomacy to stave off conflict, taking the necessary measures to stop war in the event that it breaks out, i.e. making peace, keeping peace after ending conflicts, and finally building peace (United Nations 2010). He defines peacebuilding as "post-conflict activity that includes diagnosing and supporting frameworks that strengthen peace in a manner that avoids a return to war situations" (Tschirgi n.d.).

Peacebuilding requires addressing the causes of conflict in terms of economic, social injustice or political oppression (Security Council 1992), and addressing socio-economic and political challenges.

In addition, it calls for the establishment of effective procedures and policies that respond to the needs of development and security at the same time (Tschirgi n.d.), and not only to provide temporary and short-term solutions. On the other hand, it also requires rebuilding institutions and infrastructure, strengthening national capacities at all levels, developing comprehensive strategies related to the specific needs for the development of peacebuilding in the concerned country, and carefully formulating priorities in order to achieve the purposes for which the peace agenda was set, as explained in the report of Boutros-Ghali (Security Council 1992). Therefore, we can end up defining peacebuilding as "a social change that contributes to creating just peace beyond the narrow definition of the post-conflict phase" (Paffenholz 2014).

John Paul Lederach turned to the importance of local actors in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Accordingly, he defines peace building "as a concept that includes the processes carried out by local actors that are all the forces of society, individually and as a group, as well as the authority and actors from international institutions, non-international institutions and countries that aim to revive civil society, rebuild infrastructure and restore institutions destroyed by war or conflict" (Riad 2019).

Lederach divided internal peace actors into three categories: the highest category, at the highest official levels in government or decision-makers and negotiators, the middle category, which includes leaders of some organisations and institutions, and the local grassroots, which is the third level represented by community leaders (Paffenholz 2014). Lederach compares external and internal efforts to build peace. While he explained that external efforts were sometimes unsuccessful in resolving conflicts in some countries, he emphasises that the internal efforts of local communities, from both men and women, play an important role.

4.2 Gender Concept in Peacebuilding

The concept of including women in peacebuilding emerged and developed with the research of sociologist Elise Boulding, whose writings emphasised the importance of gender mainstreaming in theory, policy and practice of involving women in peacebuilding. In her pioneering work, Boulding was able to mainstream this gender perspective in policies, programs and discourse on peacebuilding (Woodhouse and Santiago 2012), to incorporate this concept into United Nations policies. Gender can be defined as "attitudes, feelings, and behaviors that a given culture associates with a person's biological sex" (Bouvier 2016). The distribution of roles based on gender reflects the disparity in the existing economic, social and political rights related to the gender of persons. Women's rights, activities, access to resources, opportunities, and ability to contribute to decision-making differ based on gender (Munro 2000).

The importance of the issuance of United Nations Resolution 1325 in mainstreaming the gender perspective in policies and programs related to peacebuilding lies in the emergence of an international recognition of discrimination against women on the basis of their gender, especially in areas that witnessed conflict. In addition, the resolution aims to support women as victims of violence in areas of conflict, even after the end of the conflict, and stressed the importance of their role in building security and peace. Thus, it reflects a kind of international commitment to developing a new vision for empowering women to contribute to conflict resolution and to counter the disproportionate impacts on women (ESCWA 2016). Despite the conduction of many studies that demonstrate the positive and sustainable impact of involving women in peacebuilding, the role of women in peacebuilding is still marginal (Domingo et al. 2013).

4.3 UN Resolution 1325 on Women, Security and Peace

The United Nations conferences on women's rights, equality, and the involvement of women in development and political decision-making paved the way for the adoption of Security Council Resolution 1325, which was passed on 31 October 2000 (Bouvier 2016). The Security Council Resolution 1325 is based on four key points: Political participation and political representation, prevention of violence and conflict, protection from violence and relief and economic empowerment of women. The resolution is not limited to reviewing the violence and injustice inflicted on women as a result of armed conflicts compared to the rest of the population, but rather emphasises their role as an agent of

change in peacebuilding efforts (ibid.). The first key point stresses the importance of the equal participation of women, the promotion of gender equality on the path to peace and political decision-making in security issues. This concerns the local, national and global levels, and whatever responsibilities women are entrusted as negotiators, mediators, or even in issues as maintaining peace and order and humanitarian efforts, as well as supporting feminist efforts at the local level and for peace initiatives (United Nations 2010). The second and third key point also emphasises the provision of protection and prevention of various forms of violence against women and girls in conflict or post-conflict situations (Security Council 2000). This includes the enactment of laws criminalising the perpetration of violence and sexual violence in areas of conflict, the identification of institutions that track the perpetrators of violations and sexual violence and addressing all acts and behaviors that discriminate against women on the basis of gender (ibid.). As for the last key point, it focuses on relief and economic empowerment, i.e. providing aid to women and girls affected by violence, such as food, shelters, and housing. Besides, it includes empowering them economically and increasing their capabilities where they are, whether in the cities or the camps to which they have sought refuge for security and peace (Strickland and Duvvury 2003). The same key point emphasises empowering them and increasing their capacities to provide relief and assistance as agents and actors for change.

After the issuance of Resolution 1325, many countries adopted the resolution and developed national plans to adapt it to the local political contexts of their countries, including Iraq. Iraq was the first in the Middle East and North Africa, as it developed its national plan for the period 2014-2018 (Kaya 2016). Feminist non-governmental organisations played the main and essential role in Iraq's development of its plan to implement this resolution, through building alliances and putting pressure on decision-makers. The new civil society organisations also played a role. In the following, the difference between each of the NGOs and the new civil society organisations will be explained.

4.4 New NGOs and CSOs

A non-governmental organisation is defined by the United Nations as an "organisation that is independent of the state, has structures similar to organisational structures, has a system of incorporation and legal form, is established by individuals or organisations, and whose decision-making bodies are independent of the authorities of the government. Its aims are non-lucrative and of public interest, which usually go beyond the interests of its own members." (Mandat International n.d.). These organisations emerged in the Middle East in the end of the 1990s, when governments exercised high control over economic and political life (Bosch 1997). They appeared in Iraq widely after 2003 [1]. NGOs work on issues related to development, security and services. Their activities focus on "advocacy, support and capacity building". The organisational structure of NGOs consist of hierarchical structures managed by administrative committees and implemented by paid personnel and a number of volunteers. Their funding depends on state resources, or international donors. Local organisations that receive funding from international donors are subject to local organised laws, which differ from one country to another.

As far as Iraq is concerned, these organisations have played a major role in defining and working to implement Resolution 1325. Although the new CSOs are not entirely modern (they combine the practices of social movements and develop the structures and practices of CSOs), their role has increased with the events of the Arab Spring and the protests of Southern Europe. They promote new forms in which civil society contributes to and interacts with social, economic and political situations (Gready and Robins 2017). CSOs focus on economic, social and political demands, and their activities are based on protests (Ali 2019). The new civil society organisations arose in response to certain needs that emerged during a changing reality in light of the October demonstrations. Since they are not located within the state bureaucracy, they are able to respond more flexibly and easily than traditional organisations. Therefore, CSOs are doing work that registered NGOs may not be able to do. She sees these organisations as "elitist" and does not involve women in their work for women's rights. Also, the new civil society organisations refuse to provide services and demand the state to fulfil this role (Mitri 2015).

In addition, the work of the new civil society organisations is based on voluntary work (interview with Joan Mirza - Aman Organisation for Women), and its funding depends mainly on its members and supporters, whether inside or outside Iraq [2]. CSOs are not registered at the NGO Department in Iraq. Often their activities stem from the priorities set by its members. The new civil society organisations in Iraq have worked to strengthen the political participation and political representation of women in line with the goals of Resolution 1325.

Finally, it is necessary to highlight the core point of this research, which is the knowledge of "best practices". What is meant by this concept, and what are the criteria that were adopted to evaluate the practices presented in the research? This is what will be reviewed in the following sections.

5. Best Practices

Best practice can be understood as the activity that delivers better results than any other activity (EU-CIVCAP 2018). The activity has to be creative and it should be possible to re-apply it in different places (UNHCR 2008). Best practices can be viewed as "the best solutions to existing problems in light of the sources and work environment within a specific framework" (ibid.). The significance of their study is that it helps strategists formulate their programs based on an assessment of reality, in order to analyse what is "best" among the best practices (USAID Office 2011).

The research used four criteria developed by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to evaluate humanitarian assistance in complex environments (NGO Coordination Resource Centre 2006), which are summarised as: relevance, consistency of practice, impact, and sustainability of those practices. On the one hand, appropriateness in this context means the appropriateness of the intervention and the practice within the political and social context of the society. On the other hand, it means the suitability of the intervention to the needs and priorities of the concerned groups whose needs the intervention ought to respond to. Another point is whether those practices are adequately presented. As for the consistency of the practice, it means the extent to which the practice and intervention are consistent with professional standards, policies, and accepted practices, and whether it underestimates or repeats other practices. Impact is the knowledge of whether the practice has a positive and tangible role in terms of individuals, the community, the wider community, and formal or informal laws and practices. The final criterion is whether the practice and its impact are sustainable. In particular, knowing whether the interventions contributed to addressing the root causes of the problem, or if they only addressed its symptoms. The aim is to show what is new and unique in these practices (United Nations Resources on Gender no date).

After clarifying the theoretical and conceptual framework, and the analytical framework for best practices, the third section presents best practices in the key points addressed by Resolution 1325. This section will begin by firstly addressing political participation and representation, secondly, protection and prevention of violence and thirdly, relief and economic empowerment.

5.1 Political Participation and Representation

Resolution 1325 was issued in 2000 to stress the importance of giving women an equal role in building peace, and achieving security and peace for women. It also emphasised that the participation of women in various formal and informal peacebuilding negotiations, their involvement in official and governmental committees and national reconciliation, and their representation in various elected bodies on an equal basis, are among the essential steps to achieving gender equality. Given the Iraqi context, it is clear that there are a number of social, economic and political factors that have negatively affected the participation of Iraqi women in political life as well as their political representation,

especially in official state bodies (Hassan 2016). Despite the progress made regarding the status of women in the first period of the Baath Party rule in Iraq from 1970 till the end of the Iraq-Iran war (1980-1988), in terms of providing job opportunities, education and eliminating female illiteracy, women remained deprived of The right to express or self-organise outside the scope of the private governmental union affiliated with the Baath Party until 2003. The previous political system, that of Saddam Hussein, did not allow civil society organisations the freedom to operate independently of the state (Seymour 2015). The matter was relatively different in Iraqi Kurdistan, especially after 1991, when the Kurdistan government emerged from the direct control of the central authority over the region, and many feminist organisations were formed. However, Kurdistan's exit from the central government's control did not provide safety for women in Kurdistan. Women in the region have been exposed to spreading honor killings, so that in the 90s, the number of victims nearly reached 4000 (Wadi 2005). In this regard, local and international civil society organisations played a role in uncovering these crimes. Many of the organisations were formed after 1991.

After 2003, women were subject to various forms of violence in the rest of Iraq, including political violence. Party leaders and political blocs that came to power with the help of the United States of America exercised wide domination over women, and sought to politically exclude them and permanently question their abilities and capabilities. In addition, they did not provide the requirements for the development and qualification of women or support them (Al-Zubaidi n.d.). For this reason, feminist organisations have held many debates about women's participation in the new Iraqi leaderships since 2004 (Hassan n.d.). The situation worsened when Iraqi women began to work in the public sphere, especially in the field of political participation and political representation.

This led to defamation campaigns and assassinations at times. Female candidates in the last parliamentary elections of 2018 were subjected to fierce defamation campaigns that drove some of them out of the electoral race, as happened to the candidate Intizar Ahmed Jassem. She belongs to the electoral bloc "The Victory Alliance" led by former Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi. Her name was removed from the list of candidates (Tajali and Farhan 2018). In the demonstrations in Basra in 2018 and the uprising in October 2019, women suffered from attempts to be excluded with defamation and violence. Suad al-Ali was assassinated in Basra in September 2018, Sarah Talib was assassinated on 2 October 2019, and other activists such as Saba al-Mahdawi and Mary Muhammad were kidnapped (Ali 2020). Reham Yaqoub was assassinated in Basra in June 2020 and other women have been murdered in recent years (MacDonald 2020).

Therefore, feminist organisations worked to defend women's political participation and political representation in various forms. Hence, women's NGOs have received international efforts by mainstreaming Security Council Resolution 1325 and calling on governments to adopt it so that it can be "a powerful tool to challenge discriminatory attitudes and cultures regarding the role of women in society" (Halls-French 2017).

The research paper identifies the two best practices carried out by feminist organisations to activate the "political participation and political representation" key point of Security Council Resolution 1325. The first relates to the efforts of feminist organisations for the legislation of the National Plan in Iraq to implement this resolution. The second relates to involving women in political activity at a grassroots level.

5.1.1 First Best Practice: Working on Iraq's Adoption of a National Plan for Resolution 1325

Women's NGOs in Iraq used Resolution 1325 as an umbrella to change policies, laws, and programs related to gender equality. The implementation of this resolution provides an opportunity to make the voices of women heard and strengthens their participation in order to take on various roles in peace and stability building. It also works on ending discrimination against them and treating them on an equal regarding their representation in all official government bodies and committees. Moreover, it focuses on the protection of women from violence, and on empowering them socially and economically.

Feminist organisations in Iraq found that the resolution is consistent with the rest of the feminist demands that they had raised years ago, and that it was not far from what they were looking forward to (Gienger 2020). The Women Empowerment Organisation is one of the organisations active in this field, with a history of feminist work to provide programs to empower women. The organisation has carried out many activities in order for Iraq to adopt this resolution, such as mobilisation, marshalling and building alliances with similar organisations and groups.

It has initiated the formation of a feminist network consisting of ten feminist organisations, such as the Iraqi Women's League, which has been active in feminist activism since the 50s, in addition to the Baghdad Women Association and the Assyrian Women's Union. Among the women participating in this work were activists who returned to Iraq from exile after 2003, seeking to improve the conditions of women and contribute to encouraging them to mobilise their political forces (Al-Ali 2007).

The Women Empowerment Organisation secured the required financial resources, as it was able to obtain international financial support (Rayman et al. n.d.). This helped the organisation and its allies to begin establishing and consolidating links between feminist NGOs and state institutions (ibid.). It has also held many meetings and conferences with various stakeholders, both inside and outside Iraq, and organised training workshops as well as providing trainings to coalition members.

The organisation demonstrated negotiating capabilities by opening dialogues, discussions and negotiations with three bodies in the state (judicial, executive, and legislative). It has succeeded in engaging and persuading representatives of the state and its institutions to sit around one table that brings them together with representatives of civil society organisations. Efforts by the Women Empowerment Organisation to bring together representatives from the federal government in Baghdad and the Kurdistan Regional Government, despite their political differences, also succeeded in having them sit at one negotiating table to discuss the implementation of Resolution 1325 (Kaya 2016).

Suzan Aref, head of the Women Empowerment Organisation took over the formation of the first network of Iraqi feminist organisations to adopt the national plan for Resolution 1325. She explained:

The aim of this feminist initiative was to reflect the content of Resolution 1325 on the ground and how women benefit from it. When we started working, we realised that to implement such a strategy, the activities and work of civil society organisations will not suffice. A comprehensive governmental plan must be formulated to support the implementation of the agenda of this resolution. The urgent question at that time was how to create political will among the decision-makers in the three authorities (legislative, executive, and judicial). To solve this dilemma, we have already formed a national team called the "National Multi-Sectoral Team" and divided the relevant tasks and roles among the members of the formed network. We also gathered representatives from the central government and the regional government, from the legislative, judicial and governmental authorities, to sit at one table with representatives of civil society organisations. The ten organisations that make up the women's network were the main partners with the state in setting a vision and formulating the strategy of the National Action Plan. The team then formed several committees with the aim of developing a vision, strategy and National Action Plan for the Security Council Resolution. In April 2013, this plan was launched, so that Iraq would be the first country in the Arab world to develop a national plan to adopt this resolution, and for both governments in Baghdad and Kurdistan [3].|

The initiative to launch the National Plan for the Implementation of Resolution 1325 had an impact on a general national level. It enhanced the dialogue between all concerned parties and stakeholders, which contributed positively to creating channels of communication between the various stakeholders, and coordinating efforts to improve the conditions of Iraqi women between the governments of Iraq and the Kurdistan Region and organisations of civil society. Civil society representatives have contributed as pioneers and peace builders in mediating between conflicting parties, finding solutions and developing strategies to improve the conditions of women throughout Iraq. The presence of these meetings and discussions is an opportunity to create friendly relations between representatives of the two governments. It also creates the appropriate atmosphere for sustaining relations between representatives of feminist organisations to work on other projects in order to improve the conditions of Iraqi women on the one hand, and between them and representatives of the governments of Iraq and the Kurdistan Region on the other hand.

This is evident in the meeting of representatives of the Iraqi government and the Kurdistan Regional Government with representatives of women's civil society organisations after the legislation of Resolution 1325 through the National Plan in Iraq on February 6, 2014, which for the period from 2014 to 2018 (Kaya 2016). A new coalition was formed, consisting of representatives from the Kurdistan and the Iraqi government, as well as representatives of women's organisations. The coalition was called the "Iraqi Initiative for the Implementation of Resolution 1325".

The negotiations revolved around placing women, security and peace issues on the national agenda. Suzan Aref confirms the impact of the release of the National Plan in an interview with Viola Gienger in October 2020:

During the period between 2012 and 2018, many things changed in a positive way. First of all, women, peace, and security became a topic at high-level discussions in government. Everyone is aware what women, peace, and security means, what 1325 means. Inside each ministry, there is a 1325 team that works on reforms required in the plans (Gienger 2020).

Based on the report assessing the implementation of the first National Plan, co-written by Suzan Aref and Qassem Al-Zamili, the added value of the first Iraqi National Plan lies within the fact that it is a "cooperative and consultative process that ensured the expansion of its ownership". 23 ministries and institutions from the Federal Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government participated in formulating plans and working to follow up on their implementation.

This collaboration has resulted in the development and enhancement of the knowledge, capabilities and skills of all stakeholders regarding women's rights and the agenda on women, peace and security (Cross Sector Task Force 2018). However, after all the efforts that were made, there were some challenges and obstacles during the implementation of the National Plan of Resolution 1325 between 2014 and 2018, as the Iraqi government, represented by its Prime Minister, refused to specify a special budget for its implementation. With the occupation of a third of Iraq's lands in the western regions by ISIS, the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, the government did not pay attention to the implementation of this urgent plan (Kaya 2016). As for the second plan, which was supposed to be issued in 2018, for the years 2018-2022, it was issued at the end of 2020 (United Nations – Iraq 2014):

Despite the state's reluctance to implement the first plan, and the delay in the legislation of the second plan, feminist organisations continue to strive for the sustainability of these efforts in order for Iraq to put these plans into practice, especially since it has formed alliances with them and created the ground for building feminist alliances in the future. All this aimed at sustaining the active efforts and pressure on Iraqi governments to implement their commitments. In order for Iraq to adopt this plan, feminist organisations such as the Iraqi Women's Network, a network of 85 feminist organisations, rushed to submit their agendas and reports to the United Nations, in so-called "shadow reports". They used the universal periodic review mechanism to pressure the Iraqi government to comply and implement its pledges, whether for what was stated In Resolution 1325 or even what was mentioned in the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, known as CEDAW [4].

In other words, these organisations put Resolution 1325 on the agenda of the Iraqi government. Therefore, it is necessary to perpetuate and strengthen these efforts and to learn lessons from past experiences.

With all the efforts that have been made, it can be noted that the feminist masses, who have the main interest in peacebuilding, were not mentioned or included at the grassroots level. Basically, these organisations settled for working with the government and international organisations only. This can be considered as causing "influence from above". Therefore, in order for these organisations not to be accused of elitism, it is necessary to engage the feminist masses to lobby for the implementation of the resolution, and to push the government to allocate financial resources to implement these plans. The existence of the political will to achieve the objectives of this plan is an essential factor in its implementation.

5.1.2 Second Best Practice: Involving Women in Political Activism at a Grassroots Level Through the Use of Social Media

While defending women's right of political participation and political representation, Resolution 1325 was not the core starting point of the new civil society organisations. However, all of their political activities are consistent with the mentioned resolution. The new civil society organisations have used social media and benefited from the technological development in the last decade. They found new forms of political participation and created different forms of pressure on public policy makers in order to push them to make or reject certain decisions.

The widespread use of social media in the Middle East, including Iraq, was of great importance (Abdulrazzaq 2013). The exact number of internet users in Iraq is not known, but some sources indicate that the number has reached 30 million, i.e. 75 percent of the country's citizens in 2020 (Ayn Al Iraq News 2020). The number of social media users in the country is 21 million out of a total population of 40 million citizens (ibid.). However, the use of the Internet by women is still much lower than that of men, and there is still a gap in the use of social media platforms (such as Facebook) by women. The percentage of women who use Facebook is approximately 63 percent less than men (GSMA 2018). However, the Internet has been widely used by feminist organisations. The widespread use of the Internet is due to two reasons: "First, the Internet is the largest information resource in the world. Second, it provides people with access to an interactive mechanism to directly communicate with each other" (Al-Hammadany and Heshmati 2011).

Social media has been used by feminist organisations, as they provide a platform for the most marginalised groups, including women, through which they can express their opinions and make their voices heard (Eltahawy 2010). They can communicate with the feminist audience and the wider world, and cooperate and network with each other without waiting for approvals from the authorities (Odine 2013). This medium has been used to reach and influence the authority or the public on issues related to gender equality. It also gave women alternative spaces with fewer restrictions and consequences than male-dominated public spaces, enabled them to talk about their experiences of violence including sexual violence and on how they supported each other by sharing each other's stories. In other words, the Internet has enabled women to spread news about the violations they are subjected to (ibid.).

These spaces were also used to organise virtual events such as writing campaign tags, using photos, raising banners and collecting signatures. New methods of expression, pressure, and methods of organising and mobilising were added in addition to the traditional methods used before the Internet (Abdel-Fattah 2017).

The researcher tried to explore beyond the internet screens, and two interviews were conducted with Inana Tishreen and Aman Organisation for Women, which are classified as new civil society organisations. Social media has been widely used by both organisations with the aim of involving women in political action, but both organisations have taken a different approach. The Inana Tishreen Feminist Group used this medium to invite women to participate in feminist demonstrations and marches, while Aman Organisation carried out continuous awareness and educational work to enhance the awareness on the importance of women's equality, ensure their political participation, mobilise public opinion for a law criminalising domestic violence, and to defend the rights of unemployed women to find job opportunities.

The Inana Group used social media to contact the female audience in order to reach and influence it, mobilise female advocates, supporters, and solidarity activists and make them engage in and expand participation in demonstrations. Inas Karim, one of the founding members of the Inana Tishreen Feminist Group, which was formed in the middle of the October uprising, says:

In the October uprising, we were inviting women and young women to join the protests through social media. We also mobilised to join the Pink March in protest against the call for gender separation in the squares, to emphasise that the uprising brings together male and female demonstrators, that their demands are united and that there is no way to separate them. We planned this demonstration on February 8, 2020, and within five days we were able to mobilise thousands of women, so that on February 13, in most cities of Iraq, a large number of women joined the demonstrations, in response to our call that we launched on social media [5].

As for Aman Organisation for Women, it focused on attracting and encouraging women to talk and debate on various issues. It used social media as an informational and educational tool to increase women's awareness of their rights, in order to unite their voices on political and social issues of common interest. In other words, social media enabled the organisation to communicate, cooperate with women and establish a network. It was used as a platform for holding seminars on various topics related to protecting women from violence and harassment, and ensuring political participation, by inviting feminist activists from different organisations and from different countries, like Lebanon and Tunisia, to exchange knowledge and experiences and share the suffering that unites the women of the Arab world [6].

Aman Organisation also launched a signature campaign to pressure the government to pass a law criminalising domestic violence. In this context, many reports and videos have been published on issues related to empowering women's voices and making them heard by political authorities (ibid.).

The use of the Internet and social media has become very vital and important. It is a sustainable and scalable activity that can strengthen women's participation in activism and political representation. The use of the Internet has become daily and continuous. There are no restrictions to its access or the delivery of voices emanating from it. Participation in raised issues from the most remote places in the world has become possible (Odine 2016). This is used as means of political publicity and mobilisation on women's issues inter alia. Therefore, governments seek to cut it off to weaken communications between male and female activists, and prevent information and image sharing around political issues and certain economic demands and protests (Al-Mousily 2019), which indicates the extent of its power and influence. Joan Mirza, one of the founding members of Aman Organisation says:

We see that the use of social media has become very influential. Some women told us that they were hopeless, as they felt that they were unable to change anything, but by attending seminars and writing thoughts and articles and engaging in discussions, they began to find common grounds with the other participants, and they shared with each other their common suffering, worries and anxieties. This had a positive impact on them, as they were freed from the state of isolation and dispersion that prevailed among women and adolescent girls in the period prior to the October uprising. We, who work in Aman Organisation for Women, find that these spaces and interactions are of special importance, as we notice that the participating women have gained more confidence in themselves. This has positively affected their responses and interactions with others, both men and women. We believe that self-confidence is a prerequisite for women's political participation and representation.

Playing these roles demonstrates the importance of giving hope and opening new horizons to hard-to-reach individuals, especially girls and women who suffer from limited mobility, freedom of movement and few possibilities of meeting others. It is a first and essential step for women to gain confidence in the possibility of change and in their ability to play a role in political participation and representation, in order to achieve change in line with Resolution 1325. However, all these positive effects do not mean that Internet users are not subjected to violations, threats and virtual extortion. This medium has its own challenges as well. With the limited awareness of organisations and their employees about cyber security aspects and procedures, the Internet can be a source of dangers to activists, both male and female.

It can be concluded in this section, that feminist organisations had a role in building peace. What the organisations have done for Iraq to adopt Resolution 1325, through its cooperation with state institutions and international organisations "top down", is pioneering work, and it can be sustained. However, these organisations must include women and adopt a participatory approach by inviting and engaging women and local organisations in discussions about the terms of the National Action Plan, how to implement it, and in monitoring their work and activities. The participation of women in political work through social media was also proven effective as women joined activities announced through these channels. Therefore, it is important to develop and improve the use of social media by organising workshops and conferences (Odine 2013).

There is a need to deal with the danger that cyberspace may pose to the feminist efforts in Iraq, and these working organisations need training workshops on cyber security and on the use of social media in advocacy and awareness-raising campaigns.

5.2 Protection from and Prevention of Violence

The second and third key point of Resolution 1325 emphasised the importance of providing protection for women from violence in areas of conflict, where abuse and sexual violence, including rape, against women are widely used as a weapon by the conflicting parties. Women in Iraqi cities suffer from various forms of violence and sexual violence, such as kidnapping and rape. They are even subjected to captivity, perpetrated by the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIS), in addition to forced marriage of minors, as well as human trafficking (Kaya 2016). In particular, girls and women with disabilities, whose number exceeded three million in Iraq, are exposed to various forms of violence, including sexual violence (Iraqi Women and Partners Network 2014). In addition, displaced women and girls suffer from male dominance in camp management. Their freedom of movement is severely restricted and they are maltreated, due to their association with the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIS). Some of them come from families whose members belong to ISIS (ibid.).

Feminist organisations took the initiative to protect women from violence, whether through legal intervention, as they sought to work for a law criminalising domestic violence, or with the help of unofficial local, spiritual and religious in order to save women from the death penalty. This section will examine these two practices, explaining why these two interventions are among the best in protecting women and preventing violence.

5.2.1 First Best Practice: Efforts to Legislate a Law Criminalising Domestic Violence

Since 1986, Iraq has ratified a number of international conventions related to women's rights, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, known as CEDAW (United Nations 2011). It has also adopted the National Plan for the Implementation of Resolution 1325 in 2014. However, the rates of violence and sexual violence are on the rise (Kaya 2016), in the absence of institutions that protect women from violence, in addition to the existence of several laws that provide for the legitimacy of violence against women. Paragraph 1 of Article 41 of Penal Code No. 111 of 1969 recognises that the perpetration of violence by the husband if he "disciplines the wife" is not considered a crime (Iraqi Legislative Base n.d.). Therefore, the involvement of feminist organisations in this practice is necessary and appropriate to the Iraqi context.

Efforts to pass a law criminalising domestic violence may be considered fruitless due to the absence of a law in this regard, but the pursuit of a law is a best practice. It is a new work field in Iraq, and it puts the issue of criminalising "violence against women" on the agenda of state institutions for the first time. The efforts and advocacy for the issuance of this law were pioneering actions, especially since the enactment of the law firstly

requires the abolition of other legal articles that legalise violence against women from the same law, such as Paragraph 1 of Article 41 of the Iraqi Penal Code No. 111 of 1969, and Article 398, which exempts a rapist from the crime of rape if he marries the victim. Several feminist NGOs and new civil society organisations advocated for the issuance of a law criminalising violence against women, and many activities were implemented in order to highlight the seriousness of the issue of violence against women (Al-Quds Al-Arabi 2020). Some of these organisations were able to obtain support from international donor organisations, which supported with expertise, knowledge and training necessary for campaigns claiming the issuance of this law.

A number of feminist organisations such as the Iraqi Women's Network, the Women's Empowerment Organisation, the Organisation of Women's Freedom in Iraq, and the Al-Amal Association among others, carried out many activities and put international pressure through organising demonstrations and gatherings, and using the media to pressure decision-makers. These organisations demanded the enactment of this law in order to provide services to battered women, find safe shelters for women, and punish perpetrators of violent crimes [7].

These organisations set out to establish many links, some of which could be called "vertical" and others "horizontal". Vertical links aimed to influence decision-makers in the parliament and government on the local level, and to obtain political endorsement and financial support from international organisations for the issuance of this law. As for the horizontal links, they focused on establishing broad links, alliances and networks with feminist non-governmental organisations on local or international levels [8]. Feminist organisations took the initiative to work on the first draft of the law since 2011, and sought the support of the official authorities, especially a number of male and female representatives of the parliament. They also held many meetings, workshops and conferences, which were attended by representatives of ministries and parliament in Iraqi Kurdistan and the central government [9]. The organisations also sought to benefit from the experiences of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, which led to enacting a law criminalising domestic violence since 2011. These organisations did not neglect the roles of moderate actors, as John Paul Lederach describes them. He emphasised the ability of these actors to bring about transformations in society, due to their ability to influence those at the top, as well as giving them the ability to influence at a grassroots level (Paffenholz 2014). Therefore, the organisations sought the approval of the Shiite religious leaders, which has political and social influence on decision-making in Iraq [10]. In addition, they aimed to mobilise financial resources in order to cover its activities inside and outside Iraq for this purpose. Lisa Hido, president of the Baghdad Women Association, says:

We have worked a lot on enacting a law against domestic violence and started a campaign for this purpose. The campaign is well-known and many human rights activists, academics and media professionals joined it, while we, the Baghdad Women Association, head it. The purpose of the campaign is to "make family protection a law". We are trying to pressure the parliament to pass the law. We believe that as long as there is violence, women will not have peace, and therefore, society as a whole will not have peace [11].

The submission of this draft of the law led to polarisation within the state and society between those who agreed and those who disagreed (Younes, 2020). The opposition to this law from some political parties with religious and clan backgrounds, is due to their refusal of battered women leaving the house and turning to safe places for women. From their point of view this is a practice that violates social and religious norms and values (Iraqi Civil Society Solidarity Initiative 2020). It is believed that "women's shelters encourage them to disobey their husbands, and daughters to disobey their parents [...], and that the shelter is a place for a group of impolite women present without a male guardian, and is likely to be a place of prostitution" (Organisation for Women's Freedom in Iraq and its associates 2015). Some feminist organisations call on the state to establish such shelters under the protection and control of the state (Iraqi Civil Society Solidarity Initiative 2020). Other organisations, such as the Organisation for Women's Freedom in Iraq, took the initiative to organise women's shelters and considered this legitimate, as it provided safety for hundreds of women.

However, despite the objections of some parties in parliament, feminist organisations continue, in a persistent and sustainable manner, to advocate for the issuance of the law over an entire decade. The draft of the law was submitted more than once for discussion in parliamentary sessions in the past years without being voted on. Nevertheless, the impact of this practice can be seen on raising collective awareness of domestic violence issues and the importance of the state's intervention in enacting a law criminalising violence, punishing the abusers and protecting the abused woman. Talking about the need to pass a law criminalising domestic violence has become an issue of public opinion, and many voices calling for the enactment of this law have risen, especially after the increase in violence against women rates due to the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic (Ramadan 2020). The percentage of violent crimes against women reached 75 percent of all acts of violence committed. 95 percent of them were directed against women. 61 percent of the crimes were committed by spouses, and 39 percent by male members of the family (GBV Cluster – Iraq 2020). The efforts to pass this law also contributed to creating alliances and networks among feminist organisations. This created an appropriate ground for perpetuating feminist work by continuing to pressure the government to enact a law criminalising domestic violence, or through other actions to achieve its goal of gender equality. Moreover, the continuous work and pressure of NGOs has increased confidence in these organisations, so that they have become known and trusted for their work and for their defense of women's issues as representatives of civil society [12]. This practice is considered one of the best practices. However, it is necessary to involve the female mass base in the activities carried out by NGOs, and not be satisfied with coordinating and working with governmental organisations or international institutions, which will result in women's protection and violence prevention. The importance of employing a participatory approach to include the voices of women stems from the fact that they have a direct or indirect role in decision-making. They are the concerned group and those who have a direct interest in approving this law, regardless of their religious and national descent and their economic status.

5.2.2 Second Best Practice: Engaging Local Moderate Actors to Protect Women From Violence

Protecting women and girls who have been kidnapped from murder by their relatives, in conflict or post-conflict areas, is the second best practice. Feminist organisations in conflict areas have worked to provide them with protection. This role comes in the Iraqi context, in which the social tradition of killing women if they were kidnapped prevails to a large extent, because families fear that their women were raped. This means for them bringing shame to the family and that the family's honour was affected (Puttick 2015). With the Iraqi Penal Code leniency towards perpetrators of so-called honor crimes by imposing lenient sentences on them (Human Rights Watch 2011), women and girls from the Yazidi community in western Iraq were subjected to kidnapping, rape, and forced marriage following the occupation by the so- called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) of Sinjar and Mosul in August 2014 (Human Rights Watch 2016). However, some of them managed to escape. Although they wanted to return home, they feared death if they reached out to their families.

Feminist organisations in the western regions used the influence of local actors to provide protection for women from violence and murder, as these people have great influence within the community. Jinda Organisation, one of the organisations operating in Dohuk governorate, took the initiative to use the strategy of using religious figures to influence the local community. This is due to the organisation's awareness of the local and religious culture of the Yazidi community. It reached out to the spiritual leader known as Baba Sheikh to ensure his intervention to protect these victims and prevent their killing. Jinda Organisation sought to persuade the religious leader to issue a statement to protect the survivors from murder by their families. The organisation held a meeting with him in this regard to gain his support. Cheman Rashid, president of Jinda, says:

One of the young Yazidi women, who volunteers with the organisation, stated the necessity of obtaining a statement from Baba Sheikh urging others not to harm the surviving girls who wish to return to their homes. Obtaining the statement of the spiritual leader would be considered an "official order", and no one would harm the returning girls. We met Baba Sheikh and spoke to him, and then he issued a statement saying that if anyone harms any returning girl, he will stand up to him. The intervention of the Yazidi religious leader not only contributed to the protection of the returning young women, but also encouraged others to return to their families. 40-100 girls and women per month returned to their homes in 2018 [13].|

Jinda may not be the only organisation that called for the spiritual leader's intervention, but those demands were successful, as the spiritual leader issued a "historic decree calling on the community to take in sexual assault survivors" (Azzaman 2019). He initiated changes in beliefs and modified the religious rituals practiced by the Yazidis, in order to reintegrate the returning women into the Yazidi community (Wainscott 2019). This provided protection for many of them and encouraged others to return to their families. This practice demonstrates the ability of feminist organisations and their employees to adapt existing methods and invent new ones to suit the local context in order to achieve

the goals stipulated in Resolution 1325. Understanding and dealing with local contexts has proven successful in this practice. When Jinda Organisation reached out to influential religious leaders, perseverance in work and practice proved itself useful and led to achieving a tangible impact in protecting women from violence in that region. Cheman Rashid, head of the organisation, says that the intervention of religious leaders on behalf of women makes it easier for them as feminist activists, so they can do their work to provide protection for young women. Some of these survivors of ISIS captivity became known stars on a global and regional level [14], such as Nadia Murad, the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize laureate [15]. From this perspective, Jinda's practice can be described as a best practice consistent with Resolution 1325 in providing protection for women in conflict areas. This can be adopted in other conflict settings such as central and southern Iraq, where kidnapped women are still subjected to killings by some families. The murders happen on the pretext of getting rid of the stigma, especially in areas where clan customs prevail to a large extent.

It can be concluded from the above analysis of best practices in protecting women from violence that peace building for women is a long path. The way to implement the roadmap for peace may differ from one place to another, even within Iraq itself. The women have started a diligent and ongoing work on many levels and have sought to develop their own advocacy methods to consider contexts and power dynamics within local communities. They also worked to pass a law criminalising domestic violence and tried to seek the assistance of all influential parties in order to save women from acts of violence.

There is an urgent need to pass a law criminalising domestic violence and to specify sources, institutions and financial possibilities to protect women, as stated in the draft of the law. The adoption of this law guarantees the provision of legal protection for women, enabling feminist organisations and women to track violent crimes and hold the perpetrators accountable. Cooperation between responsible government authorities and civil society organisations is extremely important, as the latter cannot function without adequate support from the state and its institutions. The enactment of a law criminalising domestic violence will contribute to providing the space and opportunity for organisations in the field of protection and prevention of violence to work on changing some of the religious and clan traditions that entrench the idea of beating a woman and killing her if she is raped. These norms are a heavy weight on the Iraqi collective consciousness. Changing them is not an easy task. Therefore, the adoption of the law and the strengthening of efforts to achieve this requirement will certainly represent a positive step in the way of promoting the rights of Iraqi women in accordance with Resolution 1325. By enacting this law, women of all confessions and from various religious and national backgrounds will be protected from violence and its consequences, including honour killings.

After addressing the key points of political participation, political representation, and the protection of women from violence, as two of the main key points of Resolution 1325, the role of feminist organisations in empowering women economically and socially will be addressed in the next section. This is also one of the main key points of the resolution.

5.3 Aid and Women's Economic Empowerment

One of the provisions of Resolution 1325 focused on providing aid and economic empowerment for female victims in conflict or post-conflict areas. Economic empowerment can be defined as "the process by which women's access to economic resources increases, and their economic conditions and representation improve [...]. It leads to primarily improving their situation [...], so that they develop knowledge, skills, self-confidence and the ability to control their personal lives [...]. In addition, they develop the ability to influence and participate in economic decision-making, whether within the family, the local community, or the state as a whole" (Abdul-Majid 2017).

With the support of international organisations such as the United Nations Development Programme inter alia, non-governmental organisations carried out actions aiming to empower women economically in accordance with Resolution 1325. The actions specifically targeted women who have been directly affected by the conflict situations in the western regions of Iraq. With the spread of religious violence and the occupation of the western regions by ISIS, the number of displaced women and female-headed families increased. This group is considered the most affected by violence and the deteriorating economic conditions (UNDP 2013). The percentage of women who head families in Iraq is 10 percent. They suffer from many economic and social hardships as a result of the displacement from their former places of residence and of living in camps or in host cities. In the past, displaced women depended financially on empowered family members such as the father, brother or husband (Hassin and Al-Juboori 2016). They face particular difficulty in entering and competing in the already limited labor market (Iraqi Women Network and its partners, 2014). The difficulty in obtaining job opportunities stems from "the distance of workplaces from their camps of residency, the high cost of transportation, the presence of security risks that threatens their personal safety, and family pressure that restricts women to domestic work" (Kaya 2016). As for displaced women with disabilities, they face more complex difficulties in the places they moved to (ibid.).

Many feminist organisations have worked to provide various forms of economic empowerment such as providing relief and direct humanitarian aid. For instance, they distributed food and items (UNDP 2013), and provided financial support through financing small income-generating projects (National Democratic Institute 2018). Furthermore, they organised courses to develop women's awareness and capabilities and to increase their chances to find jobs (UNDP 2013). In addition, they provided trainings to practice some crafts such as hairdressing and sewing (UNDP Iraq 2012). They also helped displaced women to gain legal statuses that allow them to move in the places they moved to [16]. Besides, they supported women to find work in places where there are job opportunities [17].

However, the new civil society organisations have planned for themselves another way to empower women economically and socially, by educating women about the importance of claiming their economic and social rights, primarily from the state, as a way to achieve economic security [18]. Aman Organisation for Women has held several seminars

about unemployed female graduates. It urged them to organise protests to demand job opportunities, gain social security, or stress the importance of the care work that women do in their homes. The protests aimed also at women's economic independence as a way to live with dignity and independently from men in the family (ibid.). This section will cover two of the best practices carried out by feminist organisations, which are: Helping displaced women and survivors of violence to obtain a civil identification card, and organising income-generating projects for needy women.

5.3.1 First Best Practice: Working Towards Obtaining a Civil Identification Card for Refugee Women

Obtaining personal documents and a civil identification card is one of the best practices carried out by feminist organisations, as the loss of these documents deprives women and their children of many rights. The Women's Freedom Organisation in Iraq indicated in its fifth report on violations of women's rights in the Republic of Iraq submitted to the United Nations in 2015, that without the availability of a civil identification card or other supporting documents, women are not able to find work, nor are they able to exercise their rights to freedom of movement and registration. They cannot access public services and food aid, such as obtaining food rations, health care, education, housing, or even engaging in trainings and educational programs aimed at empowering women, e.g. computer lessons (Women's Freedom Organisation in Iraq and its associates 2015). The difficulty in obtaining official documents for women lies in considering them related to the man in the family. With the loss of a father or a man in the family, it becomes difficult for women to obtain replacements for these documents and thus verify their personal identity. Approximately 44 percent of displaced Iraqi families suffer from the loss of identification documents of at least one of their members, including females (ibid.). The magnitude of these numbers can be estimated by stating the number of refugees and displaced persons, including women. It reached approximately 5.9 million after ISIS occupied the western regions (Sydney 2018). Sydney stresses in her 2018 report that obtaining personal identification cards is perhaps the most pressuring challenge for refugees, as access to services such as education, health, and food rations are linked to the availability of these personal documents (ibid.). Ahmed Hassin and Mays Al-Juboori explained in their study entitled "Humanitarian Challenges in Iraq's Displacement Crisis" and issued in April 2018, that the bureaucratic procedures for requesting the re-issuance of identity documents are very complex and fraught with corruption, which makes access to centers for issuing these documents a difficult task, especially for displaced women. Therefore, women find the problem of obtaining this card an "insurmountable" problem (Hassin and Al-Juboori 2017).

Some feminist organisations, including Jinda, took the initiative to meet some of the needs of displaced women, especially those related to proving their personal identity. The organisation has worked since 2015 to provide its services to displaced women from the city of Mosul by obtaining civil identification cards and sometimes passports. It followed the official procedures by contacting the relevant local authorities, taking advantage of

the good relations it has with governmental institutions in the Kurdistan Region in order to issue these documents. Cheman Rashid, president of Jinda, says:

Our main concern has been to provide protection and relief to survivors of ISIS captivity. Survivors were the priority, as they are the most affected by the war. Our priority was to protect them. Therefore, we had to obtain identification documents for them (civil identification card). Sometimes we also had to issue passports for those in need of medical treatment, knowing that it was expensive [19].

This intervention plays a major role in enabling displaced women to be identified by governmental and non-governmental authorities and in shelter camps, and enables them to obtain a series of benefits and services provided to holders of civil identification cards. On the other hand, sustainability is embodied in this intervention, as obtaining an identification card will provide women with the opportunity to be self-reliant and independent from the support of foreign and local NGOs, provided by financial or in-kind subsidies. This practice can be re-applied and developed in other places in Iraq, as the displaced women are not only present in the western regions. A number of them have moved to many other cities in Iraq. For example, they moved to Najaf, Basra and Baghdad, where international organisations can play a role in this regard. International organisations, such as the United Nations Refugee Organisation, have supported government institutions in order for the displaced to obtain the benefits and services they need. However, it is also necessary to support non-governmental organisations, especially feminist organisations. This can happen by providing this type of assistance to women in order to strengthen and empower the displaced economically, especially since the organisations that work in this field, such as the Jinda Organisation, have expressed their willingness to transfer their expertise to organisations in other places in the country, as the possibility to do so has become available.

5.3.2 Second Best Practice: Establishing Economic Empowerment Projects for Women

Feminist organisations have attached importance to providing sources of income for women and their families. The representatives of the organisations who were interviewed for this research paper, such as the Women Empowerment Organisation, the Iraqi Women Network, the Baghdad Women Association, and Al-Taqwa Association for Women and Child Rights, have done a number of practices to support women in need of economic empowerment. These organisations have sought three goals through their economic interventions. The first is to provide means and sources of income for needy women. The second is empowering women to have the opportunity to interact with the outside world and not withdraw into their homes. The third is that they turn into capable women who are able to make decisions for themselves in various issues that concern the family and society, which is what Resolution 1325 seeks. Suzan Aref, president of the Women Empowerment Organisation, states:

We do trainings for women who want to have small businesses. We teach them how to do a feasibility study for small businesses, and we seek to connect them to the sources through which they can obtain small loans. Sometimes we give small grants to anyone

who wants to start a business. We also encourage them to study their projects themselves, and to study the environment in which they work. That is how they can determine the best profession for them, in a way that brings them income [20].

Feminist organisations were also keen to choose the type and nature of economic projects that provide women with the opportunity to go out and socialise. The importance of economic empowerment is most evident in facing social, cultural and family barriers that hinder women from economic participation, regardless whether these barriers were imposed on them by the family or community. Amal Kabashi, head of the Iraqi Women Network, says about the work the network has done:

With regard to relief and empowerment, our programs were based on providing real opportunities for women through diversifying sources of income or providing income-generating projects, especially in conflict areas. But the organisation was keen to provide job opportunities that help women to go out, interact with the society, communicate and build social relationships. Therefore, we were moving away from the traditional projects, such as providing women with a sewing machine, or opening a shop to sell Kibbeh (local Iraqi food). This type of work may increase the isolation of women in their homes, and deprive them of the ability to go out and interact with society [21].

Economic empowerment aims, in one of its main focuses, to empower women to engage in peacebuilding efforts at the local and national levels. Women who lack income and the financial means to cover their simplest expenses "will not be able to participate seriously in building peace, including attendance at meetings and covering transportation costs, not to mention their lack of self-confidence if they feel unable to cover their personal or family expenses" (ibid.). So, feminist organisations track the woman who is considered as a victim until she "turns into an actor and agent of change, and changes her life for the better, to be a success story." [22]. Suzan Aref, president of the Women Empowerment Organisation, states:

I see that women's economic empowerment has a major impact on their participation and role in building peace. This is because a woman moves from a situation where she is abused to a woman who is independent, and has her own voice. She can change the family and change her community. Many women said their lives changed 180 degrees when we came here. One of them told us: "Even my children didn't show me respect before, but now that I'm working, it's different. I have a personality and a voice" [...]. This is what the women in the camps told us, too. In order for a woman to be a leader, she must first start from her home. She has to be a decision-maker in her home, so that she will be able to go out and face society [23].

It can be concluded that the economic empowerment projects carried out by feminist NGOs with women and their families have a multi-level impact. They enhance the role and position of women in decision-making within their homes, and enables them to increase their participation in decision-making outside their homes as well. (National Democratic Institute 2018). It contributes to changing their view of themselves, as self-esteem and a sense of personal worth come with economic independence (UNDP 2013).

In addition, economic empowerment will increase women's psychological comfort, so that they will have the possibility to form new social relationships, in addition to the opportunities to develop their talents, abilities and qualifications for future work (ibid.). Besides, these projects contribute to giving hope to women, as women have looked forward to having job opportunities, economic projects, or even training opportunities in the hope of getting a job. They also aim to change the stereotypical and traditional mindset of the families benefiting from the projects (ibid.). In other words, the impact of these projects is not only on women, but on their families as well. Not to mention that the economic empowerment of women and the participation of women in public work contribute to their ability to play an active role and be an agent of change so that they can participate in peacebuilding (Chughtai 2015).

Regardless of these multi-level effects, it is necessary to secure sources of funding for these organisations and their economic interventions in order to sustain them. Without the funding they would not be able to help and empower women economically. From here, it is necessary to work on two main challenges. The dependence of these organisations in financing economic empowerment projects on grants provided by international organisations. The question that arises is, to what extent can the implementation of these projects be sustained, in situations where international donors may change their priorities or have their field of work shifted to countries with new conflicts that require intervention? Moreover, what is the extent of the contribution of the private sector in Iraq, which is still in a primitive and limited stage to be able to finance economic empowerment projects? In order to sustain these projects and practices, a detailed study must be carried out and the impact of the programs offered by feminist organisations on the concerned groups on the short, medium or long term must be analysed. Therefore, it is necessary to establish mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the projects. However, such work requires the presence of the financial means allocated for this purpose, as poor funding and lack of experience in this field may prevent feminist organisations from conducting a permanent evaluation of economic interventions and their impact on the target groups (UNDP 2013).

6. Conclusion

This research paper aimed at finding out the best practices in integrating women in peacebuilding in Iraq. To answer this question, the practices of civil society NGOs were analysed according to several criteria to see what were "best" practices for peacebuilding. This research showed that feminist activists in Iraq used the work mechanisms of civil society organisations, whether these organisations were officially registered or informal feminist gatherings, which are called new civil society organisations. The aim was to bring about social change towards achieving gender equality. These regulatory frameworks are the most common, appropriate and adapted in the Iraqi political and social context, as after 2003 there were available opportunities for formal and public action by civil society. In the following, the criteria for best practices that have been used to work towards implementing the key points of Resolution 1325 will be outlined.

6.1 First Key Point: Political Participation and Representation

Feminist organisations focused on ways to empower women in their political participation and representation. They adopted the most appropriate method, which is to work with relevant parties to legislate new laws. Non-governmental organisations have sought appropriate methods for the requirements of political work in terms of negotiating, organising various forms of meetings, coordinating and campaigning to pressure the government and decision-makers to bring about changes. They also mobilised international efforts to help them advance their agenda. The organisations have realised the importance and status of local players, and worked to create networks and alliances in order to gather the largest possible forces and advocates to achieve their goals. This included supportive bodies such as religious authorities in building peace. These methods have proven their impact in terms of the government's adoption of decisions and new policies. These organisations succeeded in creating new policies and laws in the country, in line with the key points of UN Resolution 1325. Regardless of the reluctance to implement the plan of Resolution 1325, the efforts remain sustainable, and are still on the agenda of the state and civil society organisations concerned. Feminist organisations are still negotiating with government institutions to implement the terms of this plan. They are taking advantage of the influence of international organisations, and mobilising partner organisations in this regard.

Also, the new civil society organisations have established new practices in terms of reaching and influencing women in their homes. These practices are consistent with the social conditions that women live under. In this context, the organisations have involved women in their work at a grassroots level. They emphasised the importance of talking to women and increasing their self-confidence, as a prerequisite for political participation and political and social empowerment of women. These methods have an impact in terms of strengthening women and increasing their self-confidence. They are methods that can be sustained, adopted and re-practiced due to the presence of means of communication through the Internet.

6.2 Second Key Point: Preventing Violence and Protecting Women from It

The interventions carried out by feminist organisations were evident on two levels. On the one hand, they were evident in enacting laws on a national level aimed at protecting women from violence and criminalising domestic violence. On the other hand, they were evident in the approach of mobilising local actors to provide protection for women. The actions were appropriate to women's needs for protection from violence. These demands are in line with what international conventions aspire to, especially Resolution 1325, to provide protection for women. The push for issuing a law criminalising domestic violence in Iraq is a new initiative with impact. For the first time in the history of Iraq, it has put the state's responsibility to provide protection means on the agenda of government authorities. The initiative contributed to creating alliances and networks among women, which helped establishing a suitable ground for perpetuating feminist work. The efforts built confidence in the organisations and their abilities to lead actions to formulate new social policies, such as the attempt to legislate a law criminalising domestic violence. Furthermore, the impact of this practice can be seen on raising collective awareness of domestic violence.

This practice is sustainable. The law criminalising domestic violence has not seen the light of day yet, but the fact that it has not been enacted until this moment does not mean losing hope in its legislation. Even if it is approved, its implementation will require follow-up and monitoring, so that it does not remain words without action. In addition, it is necessary to maintain the efforts to repeal laws whose articles are inconsistent with protecting women from violence. Besides, mobilising the local efforts of religious leaders and clan elders to commit to providing protection for women has a real impact. Mobilising local actors in conflict and post-conflict areas and protecting women from killing, violence or stigma is a valuable and important experience for the protection of women, especially in areas where clan norms are prevailing. This effort can be sustainable, re-adopted and replicated in conflict areas across the country.

6.3 Third Key Point: Women's Economic and Social Empowerment

The interventions carried out by feminist organisations for economic empowerment were characterised by their adaptation to the needs of women due to the increase in poverty and lack of job opportunities. This especially concerned women affected by violence in conflict situations. The most evident practices carried out by the organisations range from providing personal identification documents for displaced women to working to help women in conflict or post-conflict areas by organising economic projects or preparing training courses. They suit the administrative arrangements of NGOs, their connection and coordination with government institutions. Providing women with personal papers is extremely important in terms of impact and sustainability, as it facilitates protection, mobility, means of income and, thus, autonomy. These practices can be re-applied in other places in the country where there are displaced women who have lost their identification papers and suffer from the inability to move and work due to the loss of these documents.

The provision of financial support or training courses is also a consistent and responsive practice to women's needs. Starting local projects to directly empower and support women has multiple impacts, as presented in this paper. It enables them to be self-reliant in finding resources and opportunities to secure a living or even go out and interact with the outside world. These are basic and preliminary conditions for women to participate in peacebuilding. Women who don't have the most basic necessities of life will not be able to participate in politics, which requires movement and perhaps travel. Sustainable economic empowerment projects that can be undertaken by the state, the private sector, international or local governmental organisations, provide various forms of support to empower women. They are applicable in other cities in Iraq, where there are needy and displaced women, such as Najaf, Basra and Baghdad.

The question remains: To what extent have the best practices provided radical solutions to the issues that have been addressed? Have these practices developed temporary solutions to the challenges faced in providing security and peace for women? The path of peacebuilding is long and difficult in the presence of numerous social, economic and ideological conflicts. It must be noted that despite the organisations' success in carrying out their work and projects on many levels, in accordance with the content of Resolution 1325 as summarised in the previous sections, the interventions of civil society did not step up to create a systematic reform or tackle the roots of the problems. This can be attributed to the fragility of the state and the spread of corruption (Abdulwahab et al. 2019). In addition, there is a lack of cooperation with community organisations regarding women's issues, as cooperation is considered non-obligatory.

7. Recommendations

7.1 Recommendations to Government Authorities in the Centralised State

- Strengthen the political will in order to adhere to the implementation of the terms and provisions of the National Plan for Resolution 1325 as stated in the periodic plans. In addition, strive to develop plans on time and find financial and human resources for their implementation.

- Exert efforts to expedite the adoption of a law criminalising domestic violence and identifying sources, institutions and financial capabilities to protect women.

- Find appropriate mechanisms to involve civil society organisations on a large scale in drawing up, developing and implementing the National Plan for the Implementation of Resolution 1325, with the aim of strengthening the top-down approach of government institutions that ensures the participation of civil voices in the formulation and implementation of plans related to peacebuilding.

- Encourage the contribution of the private sector in financing projects that enhance building security and peace for women by legislating tax deductions or exemptions.

- Facilitate procedures of local authorities and coordinating with non-governmental feminist organisations to benefit from their good connections to refugee women, in order to reissue civil identity documents, especially for displaced women.

7.2 Recommendations to International Organisations

- Follow-up and evaluate projects funded by donor organisations, and support research and studies to analyse the effects of these interventions and learn lessons. This will insure the development, effectivity and sustainability of the projects.

- Support and coordinate with women's NGOs, and cooperate with governmental organisations, in order for the displaced people to obtain the benefits and services they need, and to receive financial or in-kind aid.

7.3 Recommendations to Feminist NGOs

- Emphasise the use of a participatory approach to ensure the participation of women in decision-making, and that women's participation are not limited to feminist organisations or feminist elites. Thus, real communication with female masses can take place to bring about change and implement Resolution 1325.

- Strengthen the cooperation and coordination with local actors in conflict areas and benefit from successful experiences to re-apply them in other conflict settings. This will enhance the protection of women from violence.

- Find new sources in order to ensure the financing of economic empowerment projects for displaced women, and avoid relying only on grants provided by international organisations. There is a possibility that the funding stops or shifts to other contexts.

- Seek the contribution of the private sector in Iraq in financing economic empowerment programs for women in order to sustain local support for the projects.

- Increase the organisations' capabilities to know the effects of their programs on the concerned women in the short, medium or long term. This concerns implementing the key points of Resolution 1325, and finding financial and knowledge resources to achieve this goal.

7.4 Recommendations to CSOs

- Build alliances with civil society organisations and find forms of joint action in order to take advantage of the resources, opportunities, capabilities and connections that these organisations possess. The connections help strengthen a broad feminist movement that is capable of defending women's economic rights and achieving security and safety for them.

- Develop the capacities of organisations by employing the tools of media and social media in mobilising and advocating for women, peace and security issues. It is necessary to seek the expertise and capabilities of local and international organisations to increase the capacity to mobilise the community. In this context, the latent capabilities of cyberspace can be used by obtaining training courses.

- Organise tailored trainings to suit the needs of feminist activists, guarantee electronic security and protect women from the patriarchal discourse circulating on the cyberspace. This can be reached by seeking the experiences of others from local and international organisations.

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Annexes

Annex 1: List of with the Names of Interviewed People and Their Organisations

Interview	Representative	Name of the Organisation	Type of the Organisation
No. 1	Cheman Rashid	Jinda Organisation	A non-governmental civil society organisation - registered
No. 2	Suzan Aref	Women Empowerment Organisation	A non-governmental civil society organisation - registered
No. 3	Liza Nissan Hido	Baghdad Women Association	A non-governmental civil society organisation - registered
No. 4	Amal Kabashi	Iraqi Women Network	A network of 85 feminist organisations in Iraq
No. 5	Soha Odeh	Women's Voice for Peace	A non-governmental civil society organisation - registered
No. 6	Inas Karim	Inana Tishreen	A non-governmental civil society organisation - registered
No. 7	Juan Mirza	Aman Organisation for Women	A non-governmental civil society organisation - registered
No. 8	Dr. Awatef Mustafa	Al-Taqwa Organisation for Women and Child Rights	A non-governmental civil society organisation - registered
No. 9	Hanaa Edwar	The Iraqi Al-Amal Association – Previous interview	A non-governmental civil society organisation - registered
No. 10	Dr. Bushra Al-Obaidi	Legal expert	University of Baghdad. Faculty of Law

What actions have you taken to achieve the goals of building security and peace for women in accordance with Resolution 1325? (Representation and political participation, protection, prevention, relief, economic empowerment) or others?

What methods did you follow to achieve your goals? Have you made alliances? Did you take the initiative personally? Did you organise demonstrations?

- Did you participate or organise demonstrations to emphasise your demands?

- Have you formed networks or joined women's networks? Have you made alliances with feminist organisations for these efforts? Yes, or no? How did you find the alliances?

- Have you been involved in organisational frameworks formed by other parties to advance the goals of your work to build peace?

- Have you followed other work patterns that are not on this list?

Were these actions on a local level or at the level of the country as a whole?

What is the best work you have done in your opinion? Why is it considered "best"? Why is it successful?

If you have had unsuccessful actions in involving women in the peacebuilding process, why do you think they were not successful? What should be avoided in any other coming efforts?

In your opinion, what are the most important lessons that you have learned in building peace that we can apply elsewhere in Iraq?

Do you see that there are:

- Distinguished organisations in this field?

- Distinguished initiatives in this field?

- Feminist figures who have emerged in the field of peace building, who can be referred to as a role models?

What do organisations working on peacebuilding in Iraq need for support from other organisations and entities, such as the parliament?

[1] Few international organisations were able to work in Iraq before 2003. As for Iraqi Kurdistan, the work of NGOs began after 1991, with the withdrawal of the Iraqi army from Kurdistan in 1992-1993.

[2] Interview No. 7 with Joanne Mirza, a founding member of Aman Organisation for Women.

[3] Interview No. 2 with Suzan Aref, President of the Women Empowerment Organisation.

[4] Interview No. 4 with Amal Kabashi, president of the Iraqi Women Network.

[5] Interview No. 6 with Inas Karim, founder of Inana Tishreen Group.

[6] Interview No. 7 with Joanne Mirza, a founding member of Aman Organisation for Women.

[7] Interview No. 4 with Amal Kabashi, president of the Iraqi Women Network.

[8] Interview No. 4 with Amal Kabashi, president of the Iraqi Women Network. Interview No. 1 with Suzan Aref, president of the Women Empowerment Organisation.

[9] Interview with Liza Hido, president of the Baghdad Women Association.

[10] Previous interview with Hanaa Edwar, president of the Iraqi Al-Amal Association.

[11] Interview No. 3 with Liza Hido, president of the Baghdad Women Association.

[12] Interview with Suzan Aref, president of the Women Empowerment Organisation.

[13] Interview with Cheman Rashid, president of Jinda Organisation.

[14] Nadia Murad is one of the female survivors of ISIS, who later contributed to exposing its atrocities on a global level, and she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2018.

[15] Interview with Cheman Rashid, president of Jinda Organisation.

[16] Interview No. 1 with Cheman Rashid, president of Jinda Organization.

[17] Interview No. 4 with Amal Kabashi, president of the Iraqi Women Network.

[18] Interview No. 7 with Joan Mirza. Founding member of Aman Organisation for Women.

[19] Interview No. 1 with Cheman Rashid, president of Jinda Organisation.

[20] Interview No. 2 with Suzan Aref, president of the Women Empowerment Organisation.

[21] Interview with Amal Kabashi.

[22] Interview with Liza Hido.

[23] Interview with Suzan Aref.

[JA1] Some of the interviews were conducted on WhatsApp, and others on Skype.

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