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## JOIN EPIC FOR AN EVENING OF SOLIDARITY WITH IRAQ

Washington, DC – Join Enabling Peace in Iraq Center (EPIC) for an Evening of Solidarity with Iraq: A Fundraising Happy Hour Event to show your support for Iraqi youth, civil society activists, poets, and artists pressing for genuine reforms in Iraq.

Since early October, protesters calling for an end to government corruption have taken to the streets across Iraq. Their non-violent protests have been met with disproportionate and unnecessary government violence including the use of tear gas, hot water, bullets, and snipers. As of today, [Iraq's Independent High Commission for Human Rights](#) cited 460 deaths with at least 17,000 injured, and 3,000 permanently disabled as a result of amputation or loss of vision from the last two months of protests.

“The Iraqi people have paid an unthinkable price to get their voices heard,”, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, [Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert said](#) in her address to the Council of Representatives in Baghdad.

In a show of solidarity with non-violent civil society actors and to celebrate the creativity of Tahrir Square protesters, [EPIC](#) invites you to join for [“An Evening of Solidarity with Iraq”](#), a fundraising event on Thursday, December 12 from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. at Busboys and Poets on 14<sup>th</sup> and V Street.

The event will include a distinguished, all Iraqi panel moderated by [Erik Gustafson](#), EPIC’s Executive Director, featuring Wasna Dabbagh, who spent time in Tahrir Square in November documenting protest art, [Dr. Bilal Wahab](#), prominent Iraqi scholar and political analyst, and [Omar Nidawi](#), Program Manager at EPIC and longtime analyst and commentator on Iraqi affairs.

“The courage, tenacity and humanity of these protesters is awe inspiring. This is not only a political movement, but a remarkable social and cultural renaissance that’s challenging many stereotypes about Iraq” Omar Al-Nidawi, Program Manager and Research Lead at EPIC said.

All donations from the event will go toward the [Iraq Action Fund](#). In close coordination with the [Iraq Health Access Organization](#) (IHAO), a small portion of the fund will be dedicated to assisting volunteer medics treating the immediate needs of injured protesters. The remainder will provide technical assistance, training, advocacy, and other forms of support in close consultation with civil society organizations, human rights defenders, and key youth organizers to support the calls for government reform.

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### **Panel Members**

#### **Erik Gustafson, Moderator**

Erik K. Gustafson is Executive Director of Enabling Peace in Iraq Center (EPIC), an organization he founded in 1998. Gustafson is a U.S. Army veteran of the 1991 Gulf War. Witnessing the consequences of war has fueled a life-long passion for peacebuilding, human rights work and humanitarian advocacy.

#### **Dr. Bilal Wahab, Iraqi Scholar and Political Analyst**

Dr. Bilal Wahab is the Nathan and Esther K. Wagner fellow at The Washington Institute, where he focuses on governance in the Iraqi Kurdish region and in Iraq as a whole. He has taught at the American University of Iraq in Sulaimani, where he established the Center for Development and Natural Resources, a research program on oil and development.

#### **Omar Al-Nidawi, EPIC Program Manager**

Omar Al-Nidawi joined EPIC in May 2019 as Program Manager in charge of developing and overseeing the organization's research and monitoring initiatives. In this role, Omar edits the weekly [Iraq Security and Humanitarian Monitor \(ISHM\)](#), one of EPIC's main initiative for monitoring conditions in Iraq.

#### **Rasha Al Aqeedi, Editor-in-Charge at Irfaa Sawtak**

Rasha Al Aqeedi is Editor in Charge at Irfaa Sawtak (Rasie Your Voice), a branch of Alhurra and a researcher and analyst of contemporary Iraqi politics and political Islam. Previously, Rasha was a researcher at the Al Mesbar Studies and Research Center in Dubai and an analyst at Inside Iraqi Politics. Her work has been published in The New York Times, Washington Post, Associate Press, and BuzzFeed.

#### **Wasna Dabbagh, Tahrir Square Eyewitness**

Iraqi-American, Wasna Dabbagh, emigrated from Baghdad, Iraq to the United States in 2006. Wasna, a practicing orthodontist in Pennsylvania, was so moved by the ongoing protests that she traveled to Baghdad from Nov. 1 to Nov. 9. She spent four days in Tahrir Square witnessing and documenting the blossom of creativity, art, culture, and community of the protest movement.

Read more about the event [here](#).

Register and donate [here](#).