



Iraq's Road to Reconciliation

*A Report on 22 In-Depth Interviews
Conducted in October 2015*

A recent set of in-depth interviews (IDIs)¹ with religious, tribal, community, and demonstration leaders in Iraq reveals that reconciliation is seen as an essential element to drive progress on many of the country's challenges. One-on-one interviews with elite leaders across the country concluded that, for the most part, Iraq was on a negative trajectory due to the weak economy, rampant corruption, distrust in democratic institutions, and poor security conditions—and that these problems were exacerbating sectarianism.

Distribution of IDIs					
	Sunni	Shiite	Kurd	Non-specified	TOTALS
Tribal leaders	3	2	2	0	7
Religious leaders	2	3	2	0	7
Community leaders	2	2	2	0	6
Demonstration leaders	0	0	0	2	2
TOTALS	7	7	6	2	22

These leaders mostly agree that it is the political class that feeds Iraq's sectarian divisions and represents the greatest barrier to the development of a unified vision for the country. Nonetheless, those interviewed also identified the political class and its leaders as the one critical component that can actually drive reconciliation—once the political will exists.

While political leaders can play a central role, the interviews revealed that an undercurrent of sectarian tensions in Iraqi society also needs to be addressed. Unified action and pressure from members of society can help bring about the political will to address the deeply rooted tensions among Iraqis themselves.

In order to foster reconciliation, it is important to also understand what reconciliation is, who should participate, and how it should be conducted. In almost every IDI, the first comment or question about reconciliation from these leaders was definitional: "What are you talking about? Reconciliation with whom? Reconciliation of what?" Any reconciliation effort in Iraq needs to address these fundamental questions in a clear and concise manner while setting out specific milestones, producing incremental outcomes, and managing expectations.

Reconciliation efforts also need to address many of the recurring obstacles identified by IDI leaders. Beyond the perception that political leaders are self-interested, institutional issues are also viewed as obstacles, including: a politicized judicial system, rampant corruption at all levels of government, inequitable distribution of resources, armed fighters outside the control of the

¹ Greenberg Quinlan Rosner, along with IIACSS, conducted 22 in-depth interviews with tribal, religious, community, and demonstration leaders across Iraq between October 19 and November 16 (11 in Baghdad, five in Basra, four in Erbil, and two in Sulaymaniyah). Each leadership group equally included Kurds, Shia, and Sunnis, except for demonstration leaders. All findings are qualitative and inherently not statistically representative. GQR developed the initial draft of this report. An upcoming survey will test these insights empirically among the general population, as well as among a larger sample of leaders.

central government, and a government appointment system based on identity that many believe perpetuates—instead of reducing—sectarian tensions.

Although these obstacles are vast and difficult to overcome, the IDIs help to develop a narrative that can bring various groups together in the name of reconciliation. As has been seen in previous opinion research conducted by NDI, Iraqis are tired of seeing their country play the role of puppet to others—whether from the East or West. Additionally, many leaders take issue with the idea of identifying someone by their sect or ethnicity and prefer to be called “Iraqi.”² Any reconciliation effort should be packaged in a way to place the Iraqi identity front and center, above sect, ethnicity, or tribe. As this “Iraqi identity” is driven by a common enemy—the interference of foreign countries in Iraq’s domestic affairs—the reconciliation effort will need to be for Iraqis and by Iraqis in order to create one Iraq.

A national public opinion survey will help to develop more nuance to the findings from the interviews, which could contribute to the development of an initial roadmap to reconciliation to address the issues of who, why, and how.

Reconciliation is Necessary and Important

Iraq’s religious, tribal, community, and demonstration leaders felt strongly that reconciliation within the country is necessary and important. Although not mentioned immediately by most leaders, reconciliation was frequently cited as a high priority for the country. A demonstration leader said, “Reconciliation is very important at all levels, at the level of family, clan, group, party, government, and with other countries.” A Kurdish tribal leader similarly stated, “Reconciliation is a positive point if it is brought to Iraq. Reconciliation is the reason for safety and peace in the entire world.”

These leaders viewed the lack of reconciliation as primarily harming average Iraqis, not the country’s political leaders. They claimed that existing tensions—tensions that would be reduced through successful reconciliation—lead to death, suffering, and “inhumanity” for average Iraqis on a daily basis. A Shiite tribal leader said, “If there is no reconciliation, then it means death, destruction, material and human losses. The citizen is the one who will pay for that.”

The predominant sentiment among these leaders was that tensions within Iraq have become a major issue only in the years since the fall of Saddam Hussein. However, undercurrents in interviews revealed that Iraq’s tensions are many years in the making and that Saddam’s authoritarian policies suppressed sectarian tension, but did not eliminate it. Therefore, reconciliation must also address deeply rooted, longstanding, and extremely complex divides. A Sunni tribal leader explained, “They pretend they are fine with each other, while in fact they laugh with each other while they hate each other, and we all know about that. For example, Sunnis are saying they have already given so much for the reconciliation to be done, while in fact they haven’t. Both Sunnis and Shia have blood on their hands.” Additionally, a Shiite tribal leader noted: “The sectarian spirit started to rise, not by people, but by those who had ambitions for power—I mean the politicians...This feeling was clearly raised during Saddam Hussein’s time when he deported Shia, claiming they were of Iranian origin...There was an exclusion of the Shia from government, and this matter went deeper after 1991.”

² Still, it also should be noted that, in a different breath, IDI leaders would make a statement that could be construed as sectarian in nature.

Reconciliation will be a key criterion against which Iraq's trajectory is measured. For some of these leaders, real progress on a broad range of national issues can only be achieved if Iraqis begin to identify, discuss, and resolve their core grievances. A Shiite community leader explained, "Reconciliation will drive the country in the right direction...so if we don't reconcile and agree with one another, then we won't achieve anything." However, other leaders believed that successful reconciliation would be a sign that other things have also improved, including the economy, corruption, and an equitable allocation of state-controlled resources.

IDI leaders identified the prime minister and parliament as most responsible for driving the reconciliation process, much more so than themselves or the public. Political leaders and national institutions were identified, in part, because they were seen to have the power to actually accomplish things. A Sunni tribal leader noted, "The prime minister has to control everything...because he is at the head of the power pyramid."

Generally, IDI leaders lamented that political will for reconciliation on a national level is lacking. "Iraqis need courageous decisions and laws issued by parliament, as well as [the] political will to [impose] laws on everybody," a Shiite tribal leader stated. Only with public pressure will the government and political leaders act. Although both demonstration leaders interviewed believed the average citizen lacked the influence to bring about real change, the power of ordinary Iraqis was believed to reside in their voice. "Iraqis themselves, why don't they go out to talk? They are waiting for the government to look on their problems, but why don't they rise up and flip the table on the politicians?" asked a demonstration leader.

Defining "Reconciliation"

Before reconciliation can occur, it is essential to determine what reconciliation *means*. Different groups define "reconciliation" differently, including which groups need to be reconciled, why there needs to be reconciliation, and how should reconciliation be achieved.

The questions surrounding who should be reconciling with whom was a common theme among the IDI leaders. A Shiite tribal leader said, "There are two main questions that we have to focus on [regarding reconciliation]; the first one is with whom should we reconcile?!" The answer to this question is, perhaps, where our IDI participants differ the most among each other: many view reconciliation as creating trust between Shia and Sunni, while others felt that trust needs to be created between Arabs and Kurds. Still, others wondered if the most important tensions to eliminate are between Ba'athists and everyone else, between prisoners and free civilians, or even between foreign countries.

Despite differences in opinion, IDI leaders made it clear that the only reconciliation that really matters—that will have an impact on the future of Iraq—is that between the political leaders themselves. A Sunni tribal leader said, "Let the politicians reconcile with one another. Then, the country will be stabilized." Without meaningful efforts to integrate reconciliation within the political landscape of Iraq, most think progress in the country is impossible. A Shiite religious leader commented: "The [political] parties have to leave aside the differences [and their] sectarian and ethnic belongings, and there should be coordination and cooperation among parties."

Reconciliation among political leaders is only part of the effort. In addition to disagreement over which segments of society are in most need of reconciling core grievances, the research pointed to a disconnect between IDI leaders' rhetoric and convictions. While many of these leaders claim not to think in terms of sect and express distaste at being asked to see things

from that angle, most of these leaders *do* view the world through a sectarian lens, even if not consciously. Present throughout the discussions, these subtle nuances are revealing of the daunting challenge Iraqi political leaders face.

Along with our previous research, this conclusion strongly suggests that there also needs to be reconciliation at the societal level and not only among political leaders. “Now, Sulaymaniyah, Erbil, and Dohuk are full of Arabs who are helped by Kurds, and they have the same rights as Kurds. But, can [Kurds] live the same as Arabs if we travel to Baghdad or any other cities in the middle and south of Iraq?” a Kurdish tribal leader asked. “We are even unable to wear our Kurdish clothing there. So, I think reconciliation is not about solving historical conflicts or current problems. It is not related to time. Rather, it is necessary for reducing tribal and national problems between certain groups.” A Shiite religious leader stated: “[Sunni religious leaders] delude the Sunni that Shia have hard feelings toward them and that we want to kill them, and that is just not true... But it is unacceptable for me to sacrifice my children in order to free Anbar, Mosul, and Fallujah and [for Sunnis to] open the doors to ISIL.”

IDI leaders also disagreed about the direction reconciliation efforts should take. For example, should it focus on past wrongs or on the present? Some feel that acknowledging and forgiving past events is an essential step in dealing with current issues. “These issues are built on problems that happened in the past. If we get over these problems, it will be easier for us to get over our present problems,” said a Sunni religious leader. Still, others felt it is a far better approach to forget the past and put all the attention on fixing issues that currently plague the country. “The past is over, and let bygones be bygones,” said a Sunni religious leader; and a Shiite community leader remarked: “Let’s leave what happened in the past. Now, we have to be united and to establish concrete points that will rebuild our country.”

Five Major Obstacles to Reconciliation

Iraq’s path to reconciliation is fraught with challenges that are systemically and deeply engrained within society. There are also widely blamed on outside powers like the U.S., Iran, and Turkey. Although the research suggests several potential steps forward, which we discuss below and will fine tune with the survey results, the identified challenges must be addressed throughout any reconciliation process.

1. Self-interested politicians fuel sectarian tensions. Almost every IDI leader agreed that a major obstacle to achieving reconciliation is the political class. Political leaders were overwhelming seen as acting in their own self-interest—eager to pad their own pockets and increase their own power—and largely unfocused on helping average Iraqis. A Sunni tribal leader explained, “Everything is going in the wrong direction because of the politicians. They all came back to Iraq for their own good and not the country. They didn’t even try to help their races or religions; all they cared about is their own good. Whether they are Sunnis, Shia, or Christians, they are working for themselves.” A Shiite tribal leader remarked: “I don’t see any of them trying to tell parliament to serve the people... they only think about stealing the people’s money.”

Given their presumed self-interest, politicians are perceived as unwilling to change the status quo, which has so far served them well. Indeed, some of the IDI leaders believed politicians intentionally sow sectarianism into the fabric of Iraq in order to win the votes needed to stay in power. A Sunni tribal leader said, “Obviously [politicians] want [sectarianism], but they don’t want it from inside. Because their cut would be decreased.” The sense that politicians actually benefit from sectarianism is widespread.

Most of the Sunni and Shia leaders interviewed identified the prime minister as the individual within Iraq's governing structure with the power to implement the steps necessary for reconciliation. However, most IDI leaders also believed that the political class was undermining his efforts to champion reconciliation. A Sunni community leader said: "There is a hope [for reconciliation] because when [Prime Minister] al-Abadi first came to his position, I saw that he is a person who wants to work... but they didn't allow him to work, and the proof is he has now surrendered to his bloc and the people around him." Similarly, a Shiite religious leader stated: "...the prime minister is unable to sack any official from his position, and he cannot even merge the ministries and decrease the salaries of officials. He didn't make any progress. I heard that he asked them to do it, but they don't listen to him."

A lack of consensus in the higher echelons of power also emerged as a major concern. IDI leaders perceive a distinct lack of agreement among politicians over many things related to reconciliation: the who, why, and how discussed above, as well as the question of whether reconciliation is even *needed*. Without a consensus at the higher levels of politics—where, after all, decisions are made and action is taken—reconciliation will be near impossible. For IDI leaders, political leaders must address this lack of consensus before reconciliation can take hold.

2. Rampant corruption and a partisan judicial system. Corruption remains a widespread and serious concern for Iraqis. Many IDI leaders pointed to corruption as the norm: it is an expected part of life, and no penalties or systems are in place to prevent or punish it. A Shiite tribal leader said, "Of course, there is a big obstacle [to reconciliation]: it is the corruption. It is not just an obstacle but a catastrophe, a cancer, and a virus; and I don't think that somebody will be able to stand against it as corruption is no longer considered as a shameful thing in the society." Corruption was viewed by many leaders as a measure of politicians' representativeness. "The politicians need to fear God," a Sunni tribal leader noted. "They pretend they are fighting for the rights of Sunnis or Shia, while in fact they do not."

Corruption significantly tarnishes perceptions of justice and the country's judicial system. IDI leaders saw society as being "lawless" with no independent judges and no clear understanding of who has the power to arrest and jail citizens. Many were baffled at how prominent individuals connected to corruption fail to be arrested and brought to trial. A Shiite tribal leader explained, "With all due respect to the judges, but a majority of them are bribed and influenced by the government."

Related to these sentiments are complex attitudes toward the concept of amnesty. A large majority of the IDI leaders are accepting, but wary, of amnesty. Many welcomed the idea at first, widely acknowledging that de-baathification, the law on anti-terrorism, and former prime minister Nouri al-Maliki's policies had left many innocent Iraqis languishing in jail cells without formal charges or due process. However, most did not support applying it to those who have "shed Iraqi blood." Critically, there appeared to be little faith that amnesty could be properly implemented—a sentiment that was directly tied to the near unanimous belief that the judiciary is biased and subject to undue political influence. "The government has to [appoint] professional, uncorrupted judges," a Shiite religious leader suggested. "It [the judicial system] became politicized," a demonstration leader in Basra explained. "A judge should not allow the government to intervene in his job...Amnesty is forgiveness among people, sects, and politicians."

3. Kurdish intransigence. The Kurds present a unique challenge for Iraq's progress toward reconciliation. Unlike the Sunni and Shia leaders, the Kurdish IDI leaders expressed a strong desire to separate from the rest of Iraq, rather than work on reconciliation. Indeed, Kurds are so fed up with how things are going in Iraq that they would prefer to work toward independence, or at least more autonomy, rather than better relations with the rest of the country. "Kurdistan lives in an economic crisis that [has] formed because of Baghdad—how can we trust [them]?" a Kurdish religious leader asked. In another interview, a Kurdish tribal leader explained: "It is no more possible to build an intact Iraq having Kurds, Shia, and Sunnis altogether living in peace. Religious and political issues are mixed together. The only possible solution is through dividing Iraq." Still, some Kurdish leaders recognized the importance of reconciliation to Kurdistan—and Iraq more broadly. "Kurds can give up forming an independent country if reconciliation happened...Reconciliation can solve most of the problems which are emergencies, such as killing and fighting."

4. Interference of foreign countries in Iraq. Other countries, particularly the U.S., Russia, Iran, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia, were seen as having a severely negative impact on Iraq's wellbeing with representatives of different sects often blaming different countries. These leaders saw outside powers as benefiting from a chaotic and dysfunctional Iraq—mostly because it allows countries to take advantage of Iraq's oil. America and Russia are seen as attempting to divvy up the Middle East for their own benefit with Iran playing a significant role as well. "I think that there are some countries who bet to make Iraq in constant need of the other countries. They don't want Iraq to flourish and to produce what it needs," said a Basra demonstration leader.

Similarly, IDI leaders viewed politicians as largely controlled by outsiders, which added to the sense that Iraq's political class does not look out for Iraqis. A Shiite tribal leader said, "Unfortunately the politicians are linked with outside agendas. In other words, they are agents and perform the agenda of another country here in Iraq; and there is no united side here in Iraq or a side that cares for the interest of the Iraqis seriously." Ultimately, the role foreign countries play in Iraq will likely need to be used as a motivating force for all sides to work together to define a strong Iraqi identity.

5. Divisions hurting the fight against Da'esh. Some of the IDI leaders believed Iraq cannot truly defeat Da'esh until the various groups of Iraqis come together. They suggest that the war is exacerbating tensions through the reliance on sectarian armed forces, land grabs, and continued sectarian violence. However, for most of these leaders, the fight against Da'esh is overwhelmingly viewed as an opportunity to move reconciliation forward. In their view, Iraqis should be uniting to fight a common enemy. A Sunni tribal leader commented: "All tribes need to unite to get rid of Da'esh. People say that Da'esh is Sunni, but not all Sunnis are Da'esh... [Now] is the best time [to achieve reconciliation]." Echoing the sentiment, a Shiite religious leader said: "Yes, [we can achieve reconciliation while fighting Da'esh], by the will of God, because all sects are fighting Da'esh and we are united on the battlefield. The problem is the politicians [who refuse to unite]."

The Building Blocks of a Reconciliation Roadmap

Despite the challenges in defining reconciliation and addressing the major barriers, the IDIs identified a number of legislative reforms and policy priorities that would build trust in Iraq's political institutions and push forward reconciliation measures. Regardless of their background, many of these leaders identified similar reforms and priorities although further research in the upcoming public opinion survey will illuminate the strength of these commonalities.

Undoubtedly, the issue of who would need to make difficult political concessions will be highly contentious, evidenced by the fact that many of these leaders felt it was not their sect, tribe, or community that needed “to give up” something for reconciliation; but, it is a positive sign that these interviews revealed more commonalities than differences with regard to some of the broad steps needed.

It is important to bear in mind that a list of possible steps does not in itself constitute a plan for reconciliation. Such a plan needs to take into account sequencing, feasibility, political will, cross-sectarian agreement, competing priorities, non-elite opinions, and the deep-seeded prejudices built up over decades of division and violence. However, here is an initial list of potential solutions that many of these leaders felt were both necessary and feasible.

1. Comprehensive judicial reform. Two out of three of the IDI leaders identified judicial reform as one of the most necessary requirements for reconciliation—more than any other step we proposed during the interviews. The specifics of proposed judicial reform varied, but a few ideas clearly stood out.

To most, judicial reform means that those falsely imprisoned or imprisoned for political beliefs should be released. Leaders from each group say such a measure needs to be a priority. Almost all make the distinction between those who were put in prison for their beliefs and affiliations—who should be offered amnesty—and those who were directly involved in murder or terrorism “with blood on their hands”—who should remain jailed. This distinction points to the need to put more emphasis on establishing a trusted and independent body tasked with reviewing prisoners’ legal cases or, at least, determining a set of criteria and urgent timeline for how to review these cases.

For others, judicial reform means clarifying who has the authority to make arrests and how long people can be detained without charges or court appearances. A broad cross-section of IDI leaders felt that, in the past few years, arrests have been driven by sectarianism and false testimonies, alienating key segments of Iraqi society and further dividing the country. A Shiite community leader said, “[Judicial reforms are necessary to achieve reconciliation] because it is their [Sunni] first demand...they call for integrity of the judicial system and release of innocent detainees.” Similarly, a Sunni community leader argued, “If the judicial system were reformed, then it would compensate for previously committed mistakes.”

Still, others felt part of the reforms must include a reorganization of the judicial system to ensure that judges are independent and not influenced by powerful sectarian sentiments. A Shiite community leader said, “I would reinstate many of the judges who have a clean history. We have many independent judges, but we are suffering from sectarianism.” These demands suggest a need to limit the terms of judges or to establish independent commissions to appoint judges or conduct reviews of controversial judges.

As with any of these ideas, none of them will be easy, but there was broad agreement that judicial reforms need to be at the top of any reconciliation plan.

2. A more equitable distribution of resources. After judicial reform, a slim majority of the IDI leaders said a fairer distribution of resources was critical to reconciliation. IDI leaders from all sects were resentful and expressed a perception that only the politically connected are benefitting from the country’s wealth and considerable resources. There is also a sense that

people from “other” sects and other governorates are doing better or are getting more than their “fair share”—a sentiment that, true or not, is undoubtedly divisive and corrosive.

The demand for equitable distribution of resources is particularly strong in Kurdistan where the prolonged disagreement over releasing government funds to the region means salaries are not being paid. A community leader in Kurdistan said, “Iraq is a very rich country. However, Iraqis keep waiting from one month to another to receive a salary for their job. Does this make sense? Everybody should have a portion of money from Iraq.”

Beyond finding a solution to the budget dispute with Kurdistan, part of the solution may include making information about the public budget more accessible and pushing political leaders to clarify how governorate budget decisions are made. How exactly is the amount determined? When are payments made? How are decisions about projects made at the governorate level? Again, none of these ideas will be easy, but political leaders need to accept that there is currently a feeling of inequity and that clear information could at least mitigate some of the feelings of bitterness that exist.

While these leaders do feel like resource distribution needs to be fair, most feel that decentralization, or putting more decision-making power into the hands of governorates, is not the most essential step to reconciliation. These interviews and our past research in Iraq suggest that, outside of Kurdistan, most worry that putting additional decision-making power in the hands of local authorities could actually aggravate divisions in the country. In addition, many leaders were concerned that broad decentralization would give too much power to local leaders, who are viewed by many as more corrupt than national leaders.

3. Disbanding armed groups. Despite the critical role that armed groups, like the Popular Mobilization Units, are playing in the fight against Da’esh, 43 percent of the IDI leaders think they need to be disarmed in order to facilitate reconciliation and reduce violence. This sentiment underscores the challenges of pushing reconciliation forward in the midst of fighting Da’esh. However, it also shows that political leaders need to be planning now for what to do with armed groups after Da’esh is defeated.

The IDI leaders believe that the armed groups consider themselves to be above the law. A Shiite tribal leader said, “[Armed groups] are a government inside a government... they access wherever they want, kill and take off. They can get inside the courtroom [and] take the accused out with nobody to stop them. Also, they kill people and take over properties and lands.”

Others say members of armed groups consist of the most extreme citizens from each sect and are the true perpetrators of the sectarian violence and tensions. A Sunni tribal leader said, “People now know that [average] Sunnis didn’t try to kill Shia and Shia didn’t want to kill Sunnis, but that was just a reaction by unorganized militias whether they were Sunnis or Shia.”

These IDI leaders sensed that only political parties and foreign countries have the power to disarm the armed groups and expressed the belief that neither has an incentive to do so. A Shiite tribal leader lamented, “Militias belong to the parties and the neighboring countries like Iran.” A religious leader in Erbil suggested, “I think all political parties should agree to [disarm the militias], then they should pass the issue to parliament to make a law for it. That way, militias would [be made to] obey the law.”

4. Deemphasize or remove quotas for leadership appointments. The system built into the Constitution of reserving top level positions for certain sects was a persistent source of

frustration for these leaders. Some recall a time before 2003 where sects were not explicitly considered when deciding leadership positions. In particular, Sunni leaders expressed a desire to remove a quota system that they perceived as solidifying sectarian differences rather than resolving them. A Sunni tribal leader said, "The quota system in the country is a new matter to Iraqis, and it is the reason behind the deterioration of the country." Still, many Shia leaders interviewed also disputed the benefits of a quota system. "We have to stay away from the quota system because it increases disorder in the country," a demonstration leader in Basra noted. "Everybody follows his sect, but a responsible person should not give priority to the sect. If I am a Shiite prime minister...I have to take care of my Sunni brothers." Similarly, a Shiite tribal leader remarked, "the parliamentary system means quotas, and quotas mean splitting, and splitting means conflict."

Although these leaders do not like the system of appointing leaders based on their ethnic or sectarian background, many do not recognize that these quotas are meant to protect their status and keep them from being dominated by the opinions of the majority. We anticipate that average citizens may understand even less about the purpose behind such quotas. Together with the strong desire for merit-based leadership appointments, the idea of doing away with quotas demonstrates a need to produce simple, clear materials or sections in textbooks to teach citizens about Iraq's constitutional democracy. These materials should address: how decisions are made in government, how civil servants are selected, how bureaucracies operate, how political leaders represent the interests of all citizens, and how the Constitution is designed to protect the opinions of those not in the majority.

5. Outcome-driven reconciliation conferences. The IDI leaders felt that representatives from various groups will need to come together to discuss tangible solutions to divisions in the country, but it will depend on the will of the political parties to either sincerely work to create a unified vision for reconciliation or derail the discussion. While many conferences and forums have been held in Iraq, most leaders felt they have not produced any results and, instead, have resulted only in bickering among the representatives of different political parties that were coerced and influenced by outside parties. A different type of forum is needed: one that has the explicit goal of coming up with a roadmap that includes short-, medium-, and long-term objectives that are clearly defined.

Furthermore, the IDI leaders, who largely viewed political parties as the primary barrier to reconciliation, suggested that such a roadmap needed to be non-sectarian and include strategies for how to pressure political parties to continue to prioritize and implement the agreed-upon roadmap. As one demonstration leader noted, political parties "have to get to the streets, meet people, know their concerns, and respond to what we called for in demonstrations. They have to care about the displaced people and other religions, like Christians and Yezidis. They have to be in the field in order [for Iraqis] to believe they are really working for national reconciliation."

6. Counter foreign influence with cross-sectarian education and nationalism. Many of these leaders decried the divisive influence of foreign countries in Iraq, and some felt like much of this influence comes through satellite TV channels. While satellite stations will continue to play a role in the Iraqi political landscape, government leaders can develop communications strategies to build trust between communities through awareness campaigns.

We anticipate our quantitative survey will reveal that messaging focusing on Iraqi control of Iraqi resources and decisions—"Iraq for Iraqis"—will be particularly strong as Shia and Sunni are united in their feeling that outsiders have mostly had a negative impact in Iraq.
