



## Middle East and North Africa

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### Iraq on "Path to Full Democracy," Bremer Says

#### Says Transitional Administrative Law provides framework

U.S. Administrator of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) Paul Bremer, speaking 100 days before the restoration of sovereignty to Iraq on June 30, said the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL) has laid a foundation for Iraq to become a democracy, living at peace with its neighbors.

"[T]he great achievement of Iraq is in the political area. Iraq is now on a path to full democracy in a united state at peace with its neighbors. The Transitional Administrative Law, written and approved by the Iraqi Governing Council, ...lays out the path Iraqis will follow to sovereignty, elections and democracy," Bremer said in Baghdad March 24.

In a speech to the Iraqi Governing Council and ministers, Bremer spoke of the progress achieved in Iraq during the past year, Iraq's challenges after regaining sovereignty, and the continued support of the United States and other coalition partners.

The TAL guarantees rule by the majority and protection of rights of minorities, Bremer said.

He noted that the TAL recognizes the special place of Islam as the religion of the majority of Iraqis but guarantees freedom of religion for all Iraqis. He said the TAL calls for distributing political power among central, regional and local authorities in a federal system and has laid down a timetable for four sets of elections before the end of 2005.

Reviewing the progress since liberation, Bremer said Iraq has a new currency, improved infrastructure and health care, functioning schools and a 200,000-strong security force. He noted that Iraq has rejoined the international community as a member of the Arab League, the United Nations, the World Bank, IMF and the International Olympic Committee.

"[T]his summer in Athens Iraqi athletes will compete under the Iraqi flag at the Olympics," Bremer said.

Bremer said future challenges for the sovereign Iraqi government entail strengthening security, enforcing anti-corruption laws, and informing the Iraqi public. A new Iraqi Ministry of Defense and a cabinet-level National Security Committee will protect Iraqi citizens from foreign aggression, he said. To fight corruption, he said he has established three independent but cooperating agencies -- the Commission on Public Integrity, the Board of Supreme Audit and the Inspectors General.

He said a new Public Service Broadcaster, independent of the government, will regulate the publicly owned media and inform the Iraqi public.

When Iraqi sovereignty is transferred on June 30, the CPA will no longer exist, he noted. However, he said, the nations of the coalition will continue their support of Iraq's reconstruction, and U.S. military forces will provide security to the Iraqi people in a full partnership with Iraq's sovereign government.

Following is the transcript of the remarks by Bremer:

L. Paul Bremer  
Administrator  
Coalition Provisional Authority  
Remarks to Governing Council  
Baghdad City Council  
March 24, 2004

Salaam Aleikum, members of the Governing Council and Ministers. Thank you for joining us today.

In just one hundred days a sovereign Iraqi government will come into being. It will be a happy event for all Iraq and a happy day for my family.

The Coalition Provision Authority will dissolve and the sovereignty that the Coalition once held in trust for the Iraqi people will rest solely in Iraqi hands.

Much remains to be done in the next hundred days, but today, almost a year after liberation, we should take heart from what has already been accomplished.

At liberation, this great country had been reduced to a shell, not by war, not by invasion, but by almost four decades of relentless greed and cruelty by its leaders. Instead of investing in Iraq's infrastructure, Saddam's regime squandered and stole the nation's wealth. Instead of serving his citizens Saddam deprived them of access to essential services. When liberation came, water, electricity, sewage, schools and much more were a shambles. When liberation came, not a single policeman was on duty in Iraq and the Army had disappeared.

What a difference a year can make in the life of the Iraqi people.

-- Today over 200,000 Iraqis are serving in Iraq's security forces protecting Iraq, its people and infrastructure.

-- Today Iraq has more electrical power than before liberation. And more is coming.

-- Already more than 2500 schools have been rehabilitated by the Coalition.

-- Over 3 million Iraqi children under five have been vaccinated against polio and other diseases.

-- The Coalition has increased health care spending by more than 30 times and it is still growing.

-- Since May, the Coalition has completed almost 18,000 individual reconstruction projects across the length and breadth of the country.

-- The economy is picking up steam. And indicators are that unemployment is half what it was at liberation-and possibly below what it was before the war.

-- Iraq's new currency has gained 29 percent since it was introduced just a few months ago.

-- Today over one million Iraqis enjoy telephone service-more than before the war. And that number grows by 15,000 per week.

-- Iraq is once again a member of the international community, routinely joining sister states in the Arab League, the United Nations, the World Bank and IMF.

-- And, in an area where I am particularly happy to report, after over 500 elections at sports clubs all over the country, Iraq is again a member of the International Olympic Committee. And this summer in Athens Iraqi athletes will compete under the Iraqi flag at the Olympics.

But the great achievement of Iraq is in the political area. Iraq is now on a path to full

democracy in a united state at peace with its neighbors.

The Transitional Administrative Law, written and approved by the Iraqi Governing Council, many of whom are with us today, lays out the path Iraqis will follow to sovereignty, elections and democracy. All Iraqis owe the members of the Governing Council thanks for this great contribution to Iraq's future.

The Transitional Administrative Law is the product of the highest levels of statesmanship. The members of the Governing Council come from many different traditions and communities. And these distinct communities have distinct desires and expectations.

But of course all those expectations did not match up perfectly. The great work of the Governing Council was to recognize that the different expectations were not completely opposed to one another, that they could be made to fit together in a harmonious whole if they were adjusted.

Nobody was completely satisfied with every article of the law. But by working hard to find common ground, the members of the Governing Council members taught all Iraqis that democracy works through peaceful compromise. Moments before signing the law, Governing Council President Sayyid Bahr al-Uloum congratulated the members of the Governing Council for putting Iraq's interests ahead of their own personal interests. This is the true essence of democracy.

The Transitional Administrative Law is the product of democracy at work. For democracy entails not just majority rule, but protection of minority rights.

For Iraq to regain its prosperity and strength it must remain united. And that unity requires that the interests of all Iraqis be accommodated. In a country as broad and diverse as Iraq it is not possible for every interest to have all it wants.

The Transitional Administrative Law recognizes this and protects the vital interests of all Iraqis:

-- The Law recognizes that Islam enjoys a special place as the religion of most Iraqis-but the law guarantees the religious beliefs and practices of all citizens.

-- The law protects the rights of every Iraqi-man, woman and child. They have the right to speak their mind on any subject, to assemble peacefully, to travel freely and the right to privacy-the right to be let alone. What a contrast to the experience Iraqis had under Saddam's tyranny.

-- The Transitional Administrative Law creates a nation of laws. Every citizen, no matter how humble, is entitled to the protection of the law. No citizen, not even the president, is above the law. Again, what a contrast to Saddam's rule.

The Transitional Administrative Law also protects local rights and interests by providing for federalism. The idea of federalism is that local leaders elected locally handle some issues best while national leaders, elected from all around the country handle other issues. A federal system allows power to be distributed to all governates while retaining a unified central authority. Federalism works well in countries as different as the United Arab Emirates, Canada and India.

And the Transitional Administrative Law lights the path to free, national elections. Under this Law there will be four national elections before the end of 2005:

-- The first election, to elect a 275-member National Assembly, must take place no later than January 31, 2005-and earlier if possible.

-- At the same time, all Iraqi voters will elect governate councils-again not later than January 31, 2005.

-- Thirdly, a constitution written by the National Assembly must be presented to the people

in a general referendum no later than October 15, 2005.

-- The fourth election, for a government elected under the terms of the new constitution, must be held no later than December 15, 2005. This fourth election will bring a directly elected government to power in Iraq.

None of this could happen without a Transitional Administrative Law. Without this framework, without a legal structure to define the rules, elections could not be held.

Without this framework, individual rights could not be guaranteed.

Without this framework, the rule of law could not be guaranteed.

All Iraqis owe the Governing Council thanks for its courageous statesmanship in writing the Transitional Administrative Law and setting Iraq on the path to sovereignty, elections and democracy.

Much remains to be accomplished in the next 100 days, ladies and gentlemen.

New institutions will be created.

One of the primary duties of any state is to protect its individual citizens from foreign aggression. Iraq's security is the first concern of Iraqi citizens--we hear it every day-- and the top priority of the Coalition. To assure that Iraq has the structures necessary to do so I will formally create the new Iraqi Ministry of Defense and a cabinet-level National Security Committee later this week. These institutions will start working right away with the Coalition Provisional Authority on security matters.

Secondly, many Iraqis are concerned about corruption. So am I. While the vast majority of Iraq's citizens are honest, we cannot forget the past. During Saddam Hussein's regime school yards filled with sewage while Saddam built palaces and Uday bought Ferraris. To protect the Iraqi people from this kind of corruption in the years ahead I am creating three independent, but cooperating agencies to protect the public interest.

The Commission on Public Integrity is the chief enforcement element of Iraq's anti-corruption laws. It will work alongside a revitalized Board of Supreme Audit and the newly established Inspectors General, who will be assigned to every ministry.

The three entities, the Auditors, the Inspectors General and the Commission, form an integrated approach intended to combat corruption at every level of government across the country. I have already appointed inspectors general in 19 ministries. The rest will follow shortly.

Thirdly, under Saddam the government owned and ran all media outlets. The so-called Ministry of Information should properly have been called the "Ministry of Propaganda." But a free and democratic country, such as Iraq now is, has no place for government-sponsored propaganda. Rather, in a country such as Iraq is today, government-owned media exist to inform the public, not to promote the political interests of the president or prime minister of the moment. For that reason, I intend to establish a new Iraq Public Service Broadcaster, which will regulate these publicly owned media. This Commission will be completely independent of the government will soon be established.

Finally, like the oil beneath the ground, Iraq's airwaves belong to all Iraq's people. To ensure that those airwaves are administered in the public interest, the Iraqi Communications and Media Commission will administer their use independently of the government.

Ladies and gentlemen, one hundred days from now Iraqis will be sovereign in their own land and responsible for their own future.

The Coalition Provisional Authority will cease to exist on June 30. But after June 30 the countries of the Coalition will continue their commitment to the Iraqi people's security and success. Our programs to assist Iraqi construction for their future of hope will continue. The

American taxpayers have committed almost \$19 billion to Iraq's reconstruction. And that commitment will continue well after June 30. To maintain security, our military forces will become full partners with Iraq's sovereign government in providing security to the Iraqi people.

The Coalition and its member states will stand with the Iraq people as they build a future of hope for their children and for their children's children.

And they shall have that future of hope.

Mabruk al Iraq al Jadeed.

Aash al-Iraq!

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