



# The White House

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH

HOME



EMAIL UPDATES

[Printer-Friendly Version](#)

## In Focus

- Medicare
- Iraq
- National Security
- Economic Security
- Homeland Security
- More Issues
- En Español

## News

- Current News
- Video
- Press Briefings
- Proclamations
- Executive Orders
- Radio Addresses

## News by Date

- November 2003
- October 2003
- September 2003
- August 2003
- July 2003
- June 2003
- May 2003
- April 2003
- March 2003
- February 2003
- January 2003
- December 2002
- November 2002
- October 2002
- September 2002
- August 2002
- July 2002
- June 2002
- May 2002
- April 2002
- March 2002
- February 2002
- January 2002
- December 2001
- November 2001
- October 2001
- September 2001
- August 2001
- July 2001
- June 2001
- May 2001
- April 2001
- March 2001
- February 2001
- January 2001

## Appointments

- Nominations

[Home](#) > [News & Policies](#) > [November 2003](#)

## President Bush Meets with Iraqi Women Leaders

Remarks of the President in Photo Opportunity with Members of the Governing Council of Iraq and Members of the Baghdad City Advisory Council  
The Oval Office

1:57 P.M. EST

**THE PRESIDENT:** It's been my honor to host one of the most extraordinary meetings I've had as the President of the United States. I'm seated here with five courageous, brave Iraqi women who believe in the people of Iraq, believe in the future of Iraq, who love their freedoms, who look forward to working to see that their nation is a free and peaceful country.

The stories of these five courageous leaders is a story of human tragedy, on the one hand, and human hope, on the other. And I am so honored that they're here. Two members of the Governing Council are with us. I'll ask each member to say a couple of words, and then I'll be glad to answer a couple of questions.

Would you like to start? The leader of the delegation. And by the way, there is an extensive group of Iraqi women in the room next door that I will go talk to here in a minute with these -- along with these other five leaders here.

**RAJA HABIB KHUZAI:** I lead the delegation of the 17 women, Iraqi women, and we represent Iraq. And all of us are different ethnic and religious groups, but we are from Iraq. And we are all Iraqis. And Iraq is just one nation. And we are looking forward to see the new, democratic Iraq, and everyone will live in peace. We don't like wars anymore, and we suffered a lot.

**SONGUL CHAPOUK:** I'm also from the Governing Council. I'm also leading these women. And I am from the Turkoman community. And it's a pleasure for me to be in America. I work for my people. I'd like to see Iraq have a new government and I like to see my people -- more security. And I like to say that my people in Iraq, all of them-- Kurdish, Turkoman, Arab -- they're all working together. And the Sunni Triangle, there is no Sunni Triangle, they all Iraqi.

We all like Iraq. We all like America. And we don't want them let -- we don't want them to leave us. We need them, because we have open borders, and we don't have army and we don't have trained policemen, so we need them at this time. And we ask them to not leave us, please, at this time, because this is a very, very difficult condition for us. Our children like you, our children want you to stay, and all Iraqi people like your forces. Thank you very much.

**THE PRESIDENT:** I assured these five women that America wasn't leaving. When they hear me say, we're staying, that means we're staying. And that's precisely what the terrorists want to do, is to try to drive us out of Iraq before these leaders and other leaders are able to put their government together and live in peace. And we will succeed, we will succeed.


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[Photo Essays](#)

## Federal Facts

[Federal Statistics](#)

## West Wing

[History](#)

Let me answer a couple of questions. Hunt.

Q Sir, I'd like to pick up there on what you just said about America isn't leaving and what this woman said about they want us to stay. Is it fair to think of this provisional government that's going to be established as any part of an exit strategy? Or --

THE PRESIDENT: The politics will go forward. The political process is moving on. The Iraqi people are plenty capable of governing themselves. We're in the process now of working with the Governing Council to put in place the necessary laws so that people feel comfortable about the evolution of the government. The Governing Council itself is going to be making these decisions, and it's full of capable people.

On the other hand, we will continue to work with the Iraqi people to secure its country. We fully recognize that Iraq has become a new front on the war on terror, and that there are disgruntled Baathists, as well as Fedayeen fighters and Mujahidin types and al Qaeda types that want to test the will of the civilized world there. And we will work with Iraqis to bring people to justice. We talked about the high price the Iraqi citizens are paying. There's a lot of brave and courageous Iraqi soldiers and police who are chasing down these terrorists, and they're paying a price for it.

And the reason I bring that up is the Iraqi people want to be free. And we will continue to work with them to develop a free society. And a free Iraq is not only in the interests of these five courageous women; a free Iraq is in our interests. A free Iraq in a part of the world is troublesome and dangerous will set such a good example. We're talking about an historic opportunity to change parts of the world, and Iraq will be the leader of that change.

It's important for American citizens to know that what is taking place in Iraq will be in the long-term security interests for their children and their grandchildren. And I want to thank these five pioneers for freedom who are sitting here with me today.

Last question, Steve.

Q Al Qaeda appears to be taking responsibility for bombings in Istanbul, Riyadh, Baghdad. Are we seeing a reconstitution of al Qaeda?

THE PRESIDENT: We're seeing the nature of al Qaeda. They'll kill innocent people anywhere, any time. That's just the way they are. They have no regard for human life. They claim they're religious people, but they're not. Religious people do not murder innocent citizens. Religious people don't just indiscriminately bomb.

The bombing in Istanbul, I was told today, may have taken more Muslim lives than any other religion. They just kill. And they're trying to create fear and chaos.

I had a good talk with Prime Minister Erdogan, who assured me that, one, he understood his responsibilities to protect people from all religions within his country; and two, that he would chase these killers down and bring them to justice. There's only one way to deal with al Qaeda -- find them, and bring them to justice. And that's exactly what the United States and a lot of other nations, including a free Iraq, will do. We do this in the name of humanity; we do this in the name of freedom; and we do it in the name of peace.

Thank you all very much.

END 2:05 P.M. EST

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[President](#) | [Vice President](#) | [First Lady](#) | [Mrs. Cheney](#) | [News & Policies](#) |  
[History & Tours](#) | [Kids](#) | [Your Government](#) | [Appointments](#) | [Jobs](#) | [Contact](#) | [Text only](#)

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