

AUSTRALIAN FEDERATION OF UNIVERSITY WOMEN INC.



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The Hon John Howard MP
Prime Minister of Australia
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Prime Minister

I write as President of the Australian Federation of University Women (AFUW) to implore you to use your powers to ensure that the women of Iraq are given full equal rights under the constitution being developed now.

AFUW is affiliated with the International Federation of University Women (IFUW). IFUW was formed after the end of World War 1 to unite the associations of university women graduates, to promote and encourage the advancement of education and research activities; to encourage university women graduates to apply their knowledge and skills to contribute to solving the problems which arise at all levels of public life, national, regional and international; and to promote understanding, friendship and co-operation among university women graduates of the world irrespective of their race, nationality, religion or political opinions.

We are strongly in support of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 passed in October 2000 and feel that the reports we are receiving from women in Iraq indicate that the new Iraqi transitional government acknowledges the equal rights of men and women in all fields only *'as long as it doesn't contradict with sharia law'*. If this situation is allowed, the new constitution will greatly restrict women's rights, specifically in relation to marriage, divorce and family inheritance. In fact, it will eliminate some basic human rights that women had under the regime led by Saddam Hussein. Surely, we cannot allow women's situation to become worse than in that era.

The Security Council Resolution 1325 was passed to help women to be involved in all forms of decision making by their governments as well as women being drawn into groups to minimize armed conflict. Why has not the Australian Government supported women being included on the panel drafting the constitution? All that the women of Iraq want is to be treated as an equal with the men of Iraq and to be afforded basic human rights for all as well. This is also the principle of international law which the Australian Government should be upholding, especially since the passage of Security Council Resolution 1325.

Now is the time for Australia to act to ensure that the women and men of Iraq are treated equally and that women are involved in the final drafting of the constitution.

Hence, AFUW calls on you to exercise your role as a world leader to ensure that the women of Iraq are able to live, work and raise a family in a society where men and women are afforded equal human rights. We want the people of Iraq to be members of a society where they have the basic rights of freedom of religion, race, culture as a matter of course.

We look forward to hearing of positive results on this topic.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rosemary A. Everett". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'R'.

(Ms) Rosemary A. Everett
President
16 August 2005