

Zainab Salbi, President and Founder of Women for Women International, to Testify Before Senate Foreign Relations Committees

Zainab Salbi, President of Women for Women International. Salbi founded the organization in 1993 to provide women survivors of war, civil strife and conflict with tools and resources to move from crisis and poverty into a civil society that promotes and protects peace, stability, and self-sufficiency.

WHAT: Salbi will testify before the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs and the Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights and Property Rights in a hearing titled "Constitutionalism, Human Rights, and the Rule of Law in Iraq," chaired by Senators Cornyn and Chafee. Salbi will speak about her findings after her recent trip to Iraq, including the status of women there, and will make recommendations about how to integrate women into the rebuilding of the country.

WHERE: Senate Dirksen Office Building, Room 226

WHEN: 2 pm, Wednesday, June 25, 2003

WHY: Salbi recently returned from a mission to Baghdad, where she met with local NGOs, international donors, local leaders, and women in need to assess the status of women in post-war Iraq. Salbi found that women are struggling to support their families in a post-war society that lacks access to basic necessities, such as food, electricity, and health care. There is a lack of job opportunities, making it difficult for women to support their families. And, women face a lack of security – including the threat of abduction and rape – that are keeping them almost captive in their homes. "Iraqi women are falling prey to the post-war situation in Iraq," Salbi said. "Women single heads of households are particularly vulnerable as movement outside of the home is becoming a risk for women because of the lack of security in the streets."

"Addressing gender issues in the process of policy making, from the delivery of services to Iraqis to the establishment of a transitional governing body, is critical at this stage. Issues related to food distribution, police retraining, women's membership in political parties, and women's security in the public sphere need to be addressed on an institutional level. Otherwise, women will once again be marginalized and negatively impacted in their immediate needs as well as their long term position in society," Salbi noted.

Women for Women International provides women survivors of war with direct aid, rights awareness and leadership training, vocational skills training, and small business development programs. The organization will begin working with women in Iraq in July 2003.

For more information on Salbi's trip to Iraq and Women for Women International's programs there, please contact Karen Sherman at 202.737.7705 or see our website at www.womenforwomen.org.

