



UNITED NATIONS
NATIONS UNIES

21st Century

Saving Noor: women's rights in Iraq

Duration : 8'20"

Producer: Susan Farkas

Iraq's elections have helped move it towards democracy, but the on-going violence, extremism and chaos still threaten the nation's most vulnerable citizens: women and children. Amid this turmoil, many courageous Iraqis are striving to protect their human rights.

VIDEO

MARKET SCENES

COVERED WOMAN
WALKING

SET UP NOOR

NOOR ON CAMERA

NOOR LOOKING OUT OF

AUDIO

NARRATION:

Many women in Iraq cover their faces in public for cultural and religious reasons. But Noor has a different motive: she doesn't want to be seen in public because, as far as most people know, she is dead. (16')

NOOR : (In Iraqi)

"Everyone thinks I am dead, except for my Uncle. I haven't seen my Mom in 8 months. They also told her I am dead." (10')

NARRATION:

19-year-old Noor says there were times when she would have welcomed death. She has tried to kill herself several times. (9')

THE WINDOW

Noor (In Iraqi):

"I used to bring a knife to cut my arteries or I would soak myself with gasoline. All I needed was the lighter to set myself on fire."(8.5')

NOOR ON CAMERA

NARRATION:

Noor is a young woman with virtually no legal rights in a country still struggling after the fall of Saddam Hussein. But she found a champion among the activists who are working to transform Iraq into a nation of empowered citizens. Now she has the courage to tell her story. (21')

NOOR ON HER BED

SADDAM'S STATUE FALLING

Noor's troubled life began in this impoverished section of Basra, Iraq's southernmost city. Her parents separated when she was a baby but when Noor was 16, her estranged father came back into her life. (15')

GVS OF WOMEN ACTIVISTS OUTSIDE THE OFFICE

GVS BASRA STREETS

Noor (In Iraqi):

"One of my father's friends had loaned him 3 million dinars. He didn't have the money to pay him so he gave me to him."(10')

NARRATION:

This amount of 2500 US dollars made Noor his fourth wife. She says even after she gave birth to a baby girl, her husband was violent and abusive. (9')

NOOR ON CAMERA

Noor (In Iraqi)

MARKET SCENES

“I was sleeping in my bed and he pointed a gun to my head. He was so drunk and didn’t know what he was doing. He did it twice.” (8’)

NARRATION:

NOOR ON CAMERA

In 2009, the United Nations reported that the vast majority of Iraqi women regularly face domestic violence and many attempt suicide because of it. (11’)

MORE MARKET SCENES

And as bad as things were for Noor, they were about to get much worse. When her husband spotted an unfamiliar number on a mobile phone, he accused her of calling a male stranger. (13’)

NOOR LOOKING OUT OF
THE WINDOW

Noor (In Iraqi):

“I kept swearing that nothing happened but he didn’t believe me.”(3.5)

CLOSE UP NOORS HANDS

NARRATION:

Noor’s husband returned her to her father’s house and vented his anger on her.(5’)

NOOR ON CAMERA

Noor (In Iraqi)

“... He beat me so hard that my skin split open and my blood splattered all over.” (5’)

MAN WALKING IN STREET

NARRATION:

Noor’s father was prepared to execute her for dishonouring the family but an uncle stepped in and pleaded for her life. Still her father told everyone he’d killed her to preserve the family

NOOR ON CAMERA

honour. (14')

NOOR LOOKING OUT OF
THE WINDOW

So Noor was forced into hiding and her baby was taken from her. At this, the darkest moment of her life, Noor had a stroke of luck. Her uncle found someone to take her in: Fatima Al Bahadli, a women's rights activist who opened her home, and her heart, to Noor. (21')

NOOR DOING KITCHEN
WORK

Fatima (In Iraqi):
"She's my daughter and she will stay mine."(3')

SET UP NOOR WITH FATIMA

Fatima (In Iraqi):
Why are you crying? I want you to be strong."
(2.5)

FATIMA ON CAMERA
HUGGING NOOR

NARRATION:
After so much pain, Noor finally feels loved and protected. (5')

NOOR CRYING WHILE
FATIMAS HUGS HER

Noor (In Iraqi):
"I feel a mother's love. I haven't felt that for a very long time." (4')

NARRATION

Fatima advocates for Iraqi women to have a greater say in their lives, especially those who, like Noor, grew up in a conservative region of the country. (10')

Fatima (In Iraqi):
"There are practices of great oppression

against women in those areas, so the women and children don't get educated.

FATIMA AND NOOR IN THE KITCHEN

What's more, they have outdated traditions such as tribal killings and revenge killings. As a result women become victims.”(16’)

BASRA STREET SCENE

NARRATION

Fatima's mission is to help those women through her center, Al-Firdaws , which is supported by the United Nations Democracy Fund.” (8’)

MARKEKT SCENE

WOMAN CARRYING GOODS ON HER HEAD

Fatima (In Iraqi):

“We help women by providing educational and awareness programs that tell her that she has rights.”(7’)

GVS AL FIRDAWS CENTRE

NARRATION:

Al-Firdaws fights for laws to protect the civil and religious rights of all Iraqi women and children. (8)

FATIMA ON CAMERA

Fatima (In Iraqi):

“I have ten cases of women who got married only according to Islamic rules but not legally. They have children but because the marriage is not registered, these children can't get legal documents so they can't go to school.” (14)

CHILDREN IN THE STREETS

NARRATION:

Fatima's center is part of the “Iraq Civil Action Network” or ICAN, a coalition that promotes democracy.(7’)

FATIMA ON CAMERA

FATIMA IN HER OFFICE	<p><u>Waii (In Iraqi)</u> <i>“Democracy in Iraq will take a long time and will require everyone’s efforts.”(5’)</i></p>
PEOPLE VOTING	<p><u>NARRATION:</u> Waii Al-Jibouli, an attorney, heads ICAN. Also funded by the United Nations Democracy Fund, it trains men and women to add their voices to Iraq’s fledgling democracy. (13’)</p>
WAI ON CAMERA	<p><u>Waii (In Iraqi):</u> <i>“In any transition, there will be some gains and losses but in Iraq, there are more gains because now we can express our opinions, establish institutions, organizations and parties that used to be taboo.” (15’)</i></p>
WAI IN HIS OFFICE	<p><u>NARRATION</u></p>
WAI TRAINING MEN AND WOMEN	<p>Fatima too sees progress in her country. She says to make progress for Noor, they asked a local sheikh to grant her a religious divorce because her marriage was never recorded by civil authorities.(14’)</p>
WAI ON CAMERA	<p><u>Fatima (In Iraqi):</u> <i>“If I get her a divorce, then she will be free and not connected to a husband.” (5.5’)</i></p>
FATIMA AND NOOR SITTING ON THE FLOOR EATING	<p><u>NARRATION</u> Meanwhile, Fatima is so concerned about Noor’s safety that she locks her in the house</p>

whenever she leaves. (8')

FATIMA LOCKING THE
OUTER GATE OF THE
HOUSE

Fatima (In Iraqi):

I always worry that someone might come and know she's in the house and kill her. (5')

(phone rings)

FATIMA IN THE BACK OF
CAR

NARRATION

After several weeks of waiting, Fatima and Noor finally got the message they'd been hoping for. (6')

NOOR AND FATIMA
TALKING

Fatima (In Iraqi):

"Should I give you the good news? I just got a message from the Sheikh telling me that soon Noor is getting the divorce papers." (9')

FATIMA SEES THE TEXT
MESSAGE ON HER PHONE

Sheikh (In Iraqi):

"The thing God dislikes most is divorce, but it doesn't apply to Noor because she is a young girl who was abused by her father and then by her husband." (14')

SHEIKH ON CAMERA

GV OF MOSQUES

NARRATION

Sheikh Saad Al-Hussainy says Islamic law does not sanction a marriage like Noor's. (5.5')

SHEIKH ON CAMERA

Sheikh (In Iraqi):

"Islam orders a man to respect the wife but if I start abusing her by hitting her and starving her, this is not marriage." (14')

NARRATION:

CLOSE UP NOOR'S FACE
PRISON CELLS
BACK SHOT OF NOOR

But Noor is still waiting for justice. Her father and husband were recently imprisoned for counterfeiting and other illegal activities, but they have not been held accountable for their brutality towards her. (16')

SILHOUETTE SHOT OF
NOOR

Noor (In Iraqi)"

"When I was told they were in prison. I was very happy, as happy as if I had seen my daughter - because now I have hope that I will see her." (10')

NOOR WATERING PLANTS
IN THE GARDEN

NARRATION:

NOOR WITH FATIMA
WALKING
STREET SHOTS OF KIDS

Noor also has hope that she can finally restart her life. Meanwhile Fatima is one of thousands of activists who are fighting to transform Iraq into a country of laws and political participation... a democratic Iraq whose future is still being written. (19')

TAG

Since our story, Noor has moved away from Basra. She is being sheltered by activists in northern Iraq.