



## **Gender-Based Violence against Iraqi Interpreters during the US-led Invasion in 2003**

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### **Abstract**

Iraqis have paid the highest cost for Washington's decision to remove Saddam Hussein from power using military intervention in 2003. As important players who have actively participated in facilitating communication between the military forces and the locals, many coalition-employed Iraqi interpreters have consequently forcefully lost their homes, families, parts of their body, or even their lives. The dominant public opinion was that interpreters deserve such destiny as they are traitors who have helped foreign occupiers to murder, oppress, and humiliate their people. Another important, yet neglected in research, aspect intensifying the losses among interpreters was the deeply-rooted and culturally-specific restrictions on women's freedom to work. Even patriot and loyal, female interpreters were socially looked at with suspicion and often viewed as prostitutes. The present article tries to attract attention to both the causes and consequences of this gender-based violence. It applies Walter Fisher's (1984,1985,1987,1997) Narrative Paradigm wherein humans are Homo Narrans, i.e. storytellers who interpret and assess all forms of communication from a narrational perspective. Moreover, it conducts questionnaires with people who have lived the circumstances of this war, especially former male interpreters and independent observers. The quantitative analysis of the data shows an agreement among the participants on the role of gender on the quality and quantity of violence perpetrated against interpreters at that time.

### **Keywords**

Gender-based violence, Us-led invasion, male and female interpreters, Homo Narrans, culture-specific traditions

## العنف المبني على الجنس الموجه ضد المترجمين الشفويين العراقيين

أثناء الغزو الذي قادتته الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية في ٢٠٠٣

### المستخلص

كان العراقيون الخاسر الأكبر نتيجة لقرار واشنطن إزاحة صدام حسين من السلطة باستخدام التدخل العسكري في عام ٢٠٠٣. وفي هذا الوقت العصيب شارك المترجمون الشفويون بفاعلية في تسهيل التواصل بين القوات العسكرية والسكان المحليين ، ولكن لكل شيء ثمن ؛ فقد خسر العديد منهم منازلهم وعائلاتهم وأجزاء من اجسادهم أو حتى حياتهم. كان الرأي العام السائد هو أن هؤلاء المترجمون يستحقون هذه النهاية لأنهم خونة ساعدوا المحتلين الأجانب على قتل شعوبهم وقمعهم وإهانتهم. ومن الجوانب المهمة الأخرى التي تم إهمالها في البحوث السابقة هو ربط الخسائر بين صفوفهم بالقيود المتجذرة اجتماعيا المفروضة على حرية عمل المرأة؛ لذا فمهما كن نزيهات في عملهن مع قوات التحالف ، كان المجتمع ينظر للمترجمات على أنهن غير مستقيمات.

يحاول هذا البحث جذب الانتباه إلى أسباب العنف المبني على الجنس ونتائجه بالاعتماد على النظرية السردية للكاتب "التر فيشر" (١٩٨٤ ، ١٩٨٥ ، ١٩٨٧ ، ١٩٩٧)، والذي يعامل الناس فيها على أنهم " هومو نارانس " ، أي رواية للقصص يفسرون جميع أشكال التواصل وقيمونها من منظور سردي. وعندما تم إجراء استبيانات لأشخاص عاشوا ظروف هذه الحرب ، وخاصة من المترجمين الشفويين السابقين والمراقبين المستقلين اظهر التحليل الإحصائي لبيانات البحث أن هناك اتفاقاً بين أغلب المشتركين على أن هناك دوراً فاعلاً للجنس في تحديد نوعية العنف الموجه ضد المترجمين الشفويين وكميته في ذلك الوقت.

### الكلمات المفتاحية

العنف المبني على الجنس ، الغزو الذي قادتته الولايات المتحدة ، المترجمون الذكور الإناث، هومو نارانس ، التقاليد الثقافية الخاصة



## 1. Introduction

The violence that Iraqi interpreters have met was based on the public's perception of the role they have played during the war. The primary and seemingly less problematic task was facilitating communication between the coalition forces and the locals. Their role, however, has exceeded the routine limits of intercultural mediation, as they have worked in different environments under varying circumstances. Coon (2017) asserts that '[d]epending on the situation, they (i.e. interpreters) often filled the role of an intelligence officer, diplomat, etiquette coach, soldier, or peacekeeper.' To visibly act as 'intelligent officers' or 'soldiers' may have justified the violent treatment that interpreters have encountered. As a former interpreter, Abbas (2013) gives one example that shows the public angry reactions: 'I was viewed as a traitor by many Iraqis. While on patrol, people shot me angry looks and called me names. I was spat on. Many interpreters were kidnapped for ransom; others disappeared or were killed.' Another former interpreter, Mustafa (2011), affirmed this perception, but at the same time, admits her active role in intelligence and in interrogating Iraqi militia leaders. She (ibid.) exemplifies the violence interpreters have faced: '[a]t least 1,000 Iraqis who worked as interpreters for the U.S. have been assassinated over the years. Many were tortured first and some were beheaded.' The most striking aspect of this violence is that it was sometimes socially and religiously authorized by some Sunni and Shiite Sheikhs and Imams throughout some Fatwas (i.e. religious permission). In this respect, Mustafa (ibid) proposes that '[i]nfluential Shiite leaders like Moqtada al-Sadr have singled us (i.e. interpreters) out in aggressive speeches. Militia leaders are said to have lists of collaborators.' Fahmi, another former interpreter, clearly records this sense of justified hostility: '[i]f the insurgents catch us, they will cut off our heads because the imams say we are spies...I've been threatened like fifteen times, but I won't quit. A neighbor saw me driving and said, 'I am going to kill you' (Krane, 2005).'

Though studying interpreters as 'traitors', 'collaborators' or 'spies' is interesting, it will be less emphasized here as it has been approached by different researchers and from different perspectives (see, for example, Baker, 2008; Inglleri, 2008). It is, however, more appealing to tackle gender-based



violence against interpreters, especially females. This kind of violence is culture-dependent, so before investigating the details of the public narratives on female interpreters and the consequences of such narratives, a brief account of women's freedom in the Arab, especially Iraqi, and western cultures is useful.

## 2. Eastern and Western Perceptions of Gender

There are many aspects in which eastern and western cultures diverge 'because Eastern and Western people not only live in different environments but also are educated in distinctively different ways' (Wang, 2009). In the Arab world, Rebrisorean (2013) asserts, 'the rights of women are expressed solely in their roles as wives and mothers.' Shaheen (2018) intelligently comments on this aspect. She supposes that 'Arab Women face obstacles to enter the labor market in their countries, because of several factors mostly dominated by social values, and on different scales within different social classes.' The clear influence of social values has also been profoundly investigated by many Arab and non-Arab thinkers and activists, such as Al Attia (2006) who assumes that '[c]ustoms and traditions prevent women from working in certain places and positions and dictate the degree to which women participate in leadership roles and decision-making.' Al Damluji (2006) attributes this sort of discrimination to the strong impact of the rural traditions on Iraqi urban society: 'the rural immigrant population has surpassed that of the urban population in Iraqi cities. As a result, the values and traditions of rural society have come to prevail in cities.' Kaya (2016) draws attention to the consequences of women's employment in socially-restricted positions in Iraq, as she proves that '[w]omen receive death threats simply for working.'

Discrimination, and consequently, violence against western women, is less visible (Kochhar et al, 2017). For example, there is no room for dominant Arab masculine attitudes such as 'the place of a woman is her home'. Depending on their qualifications, western women can work as police officers, soldiers, drivers of public transportation, and so on. Therefore, to overlook the gender of murdered, tortured or threatened Iraqi interpreters is



misleading. As will be thoroughly explained shortly, western observers and media must consider gender inequality in Iraq.

One last point that needs attention is the peculiarity of working with the army if soldiers are deployed away from their families and society. Sex is the defining behaviour of male soldiers in war zones. Williams (2005) reports this aspect based on her experience as an interpreter in the United States' Army in Iraq in her famous novel *Love My Rifle More than You: Young and Female in the U.S. Army*. She (ibid:18) confirms that 'sex is a key to any woman soldier's experiences in the American military. No one likes to acknowledge it, but there is a strange sexual allure to being a woman and a soldier.' She (ibid: 21) accepts that the army 'is not a monastery. More like a fraternity. Or a massive frat party. With weapons. With girls there for taking-at least some of the time' where guys also 'are there for taking too. And we took. I took. But mostly I chose to be a bitch.' That is to say, she emphasizes that sex for American males and females is 'a simple matter of supply and demand'. Most significant is her reflection on the Iraqi culture-specific perception of foreign female soldiers. She (ibid) emphasizes that '[a]pparently, Iraqis asked the guys if we were prostitutes. Employed by the U.S. military to serve the troops in the same way the Russian army managed sex for its soldiers in Kosovo.' This last point is fundamental; viewing female soldiers as prostitutes shows the common and deeply-rooted Iraqi understanding of the work environment that females are allowed to or prevented from. That is to say, the coalition-employed female Iraqi interpreters were also viewed by locals as 'prostitutes'. Such a view, which indicates violating religious and social values brings dangerous consequences, particularly honour killing. Therefore, the gender of the threatened, tortured, or murdered interpreter is very important and any negligence of this aspect will lead to inadequate conclusions as we will see below.



### 3. Narration and Gender-Based Violence

The set of values that determine the actions and reactions of Iraqi people during the US-led 'invasion' in 2003 was very complex. After years of dictatorship, Iraqis have felt they become free to express their opinions as well as enjoy their social and religious rights. The division of the Iraqi society into major and minor sects turned to be very plain. Nevertheless, the ideological conflicts among these sects brought about dangerous consequences. The security scene gradually weakened. Moreover, there has been a strong disagreement with regards to the US-led 'invasion': while some welcome the presence of international troops, many have verbally and physically rejected and resisted this unjustifiable occupation. In different parts of the country, insurgents launched attacks against the troops and their international and local collaborators, including interpreters. In addition to being viewed as traitors, female interpreters were treated as 'prostitutes' who play a very active role in humiliating Muslims and Arabs. The number of casualties gradually increased. There is, however, a lack of official statistical data on the overall killed or wounded interpreters, especially one that differentiates between male and female victims (for further information on partial data, see Aarif, 2006 and Miller, 2009 ). What is significant though is the way Iraqis have come to believe in the narrative that *the coalition-employed female interpreters are agents of sexual immorality* (my emphasis). To elaborate on this important aspect, Fisher's (1984,1985,1987,1997) narrative paradigm is useful. This framework is a classic research theory that provides a strong foundation for the interpretation and assessment of human communication, especially how it functions to 'influence the hearts and minds of others- their beliefs, values, attitudes, and/ or actions' (Fisher,1997:314). All forms of human communication are treated as narration, i.e. as 'symbolic actions- words and/ or deeds- that have sequence and meaning for those who live, create or interpret them' (Fisher, 1987:58) wherein the audience 'is not a group of observers but are active participants in the meaning formation' (Fisher, 1984:13). Within this paradigm, moreover, people are viewed as 'Homo Narrans', i.e. storytelling creatures who rely on honest and coherent stories shaped by history, culture, and character. Though these stories are highly persuasive emotional mechanisms



that take part in shaping identities, their meaning is not inherent in events. Furthermore, as the world is a set of stories in which people live, decision-making is highly influenced by good-reasoning, i.e. 'value-laden warrants for believing or acting in a certain way' (Fisher, 1987:xi). Hence, in Iraq, the stories narrated about and actions observed have contributed to the establishment and prevalence of the public narrative *the coalition-employed female interpreters are agents of sexual immorality*. Ultimately, this narrative has started to dominate 'the hearts and minds' of the locals because, taking into consideration the overall conditions at that particular time, it was both coherent and honest. The availability of material evidence such as photos, videos, or eye-witnesses has both strengthened and fastened the process of spreading this narrative. In this process, the locals have played the role of Homo Narrans, i.e. storytelling creatures, who attempted to convince others to embrace this narrative, not through emotions but good-reasoning. The impact of this narrative was clear because it has mobilized the locals to participate in gender-based violence against the female interpreters. This last aspect will be investigated in the next section.

#### 4. Research Data

To explore the impact of the narrative *the coalition-employed female interpreters are agents of sexual immorality* on the quantity of gender-based violence, a survey has been carried out. It involves two carefully-designed questionnaires (participation was voluntary). The research is participant-oriented, therefore, Saldanha and O'Brien's (2013:150-204) throughout elaboration on the choice of participants, the quantitative research design involving questionnaires, and statistical treatment of results has been adopted. The first questionnaire was face-to-face. The sample consisted of 60 male and female Iraqi educated people of different professions (excluding translation/interpreting) situated in three different governorates, namely Mosul, Baghdad, and Basrah. Depending on their region, they were divided into 3 sessions, each session included 20 participants. Their age was between 40-60 (to ensure they have been mature at the time of invasion). They were handed the questionnaire sheets and asked to respond (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree) to 10 statements within 20 minutes.



The statements were designed to explore the currency of the dominant public opinion circulating in the Iraqi street. These statements are:

1. Interpreting for the coalition forces and international corporations has been a culturally and religiously sensitive issue.
2. There were no restrictions on women's freedom of work after the US-led invasion.
3. The majority of Iraqi families allowed their daughters to work for the coalition forces and international corporations.
4. Iraqi people respected female interpreters working for the coalition forces and international corporations because they have not violated religious and social values.
5. People have narrated stories about the sexual immorality of female interpreters working for the coalition and corporations.
6. There was solid evidence, such as eye-witnesses, pictures, and videos, that contribute to the sexual immorality of female interpreters working for the coalition and corporations.
7. Gender played a vital role in the escalation of violence against interpreters working for the coalition and corporations.
8. The most important factor behind the assassination of female interpreters was not disloyalty to the country but honour killing.
9. Both Iraqi people and security forces have paid satisfactory attention to investigate the identity of assailants.
10. Female interpreters fully recognized the risk of their profession.

The second questionnaire was an online self-completion. The sample consisted of 30 former coalition-employed male interpreters (female interpreters were excluded to roughly ensure the transparency of information obtained as their responses may be biased). The questionnaire sheets were sent via email to the participants because they live abroad such as in the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Denmark, or Jordan (it was very difficult to find participants inside Iraq as former interpreters who were still alive have fled the country because of death threats). They were asked to respond (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree) to 15 statements and send back the answers within 24 hours. The statements are:



1. The interpreter's gender was an important factor in determining the kind of treatment s/he received from his/her international supervisors in the camps or bases.
2. Female interpreters faced sexual harassment from international soldiers and contractors in the camps or bases.
3. Most of the female interpreters complained and reported these harassments.
4. I have seen many female interpreters in socially-unacceptable situations with internationals in the workplace.
5. Female interpreters had suspicious sexual relationships with some internationals in the workplace.
6. Internationals told male interpreters about the intercourses they had with the female interpreters.
7. Female interpreters accompanied internationals to unknown places after business hours.
8. Female interpreters dressed in a western-like fashion to satisfy internationals.
9. Female interpreters ate only halal food and drank alcohol-free.
10. Female interpreters danced publically with internationals in parties arranged in the camps or bases.
11. Female interpreters gained credits, such as visas or extra pays, through suspicious sexual relationships with internationals in the camps or bases.
12. Female interpreters received death threats to leave their jobs with the coalition.
13. Violence against female interpreters was more severe than against male interpreters.
14. Female interpreters returned to their usual everyday life after leaving their jobs with the coalition.
15. The most important factor behind the assassination of female interpreters was not disloyalty to the country but honour killing.

## 5. Results

Data received were statistically treated. The number of responses to each of the scales and the percentages they stand for is shown in Tables (1) and (2) below. As can be seen, full statements are not mentioned, alternatively, numbers in the first column stand for them as they appear in the previous section.

**Table (1) Results of Independent Observers' Questionnaire**

Statement No.	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	53	88.33	7	11.67	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	2	3.33	3	5.00	2	3.33	11	18.33	42	70.00
3	1	1.67	2	3.33	3	5.00	4	6.67	52	86.67
4	3	5.00	2	3.33	2	3.33	45	75.00	8	13.33
5	39	65.00	12	20.00	1	1.67	2	3.33	6	10.00
6	41	68.00	10	16.67	2	3.33	3	5.00	4	6.67
7	42	70.00	5	8.33	2	3.33	6	10.00	5	8.33
8	40	66.67	10	16.67	2	3.33	3	5.00	5	8.33
9	4	6.67	1	1.67	2	3.33	30	50.00	23	38.33
10	40	66.67	12	20.00	3	5.00	2	3.33	3	5.00

**Table (2) Results of Former Interpreters' Questionnaire**

Statement No.	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	20	66.67	6	20.00	2	6.67	2	6.67	0	0
2	18	60.00	7	23.33	2	6.67	2	6.67	1	3.33
3	1	3.33	1	3.33	3	10.00	6	20.00	17	56.67
4	12	40.00	7	23.33	0	0	5	16.67	6	20.00
5	6	20.00	19	63.33	0	0	2	6.67	3	10.00
6	2	6.67	1	3.33	0	0	6	20.00	21	70.00
7	7	23.33	18	60.00	1	3.33	1	3.33	3	10.00
8	5	16.67	16	53.33	0	0	3	10.00	6	20.00
9	3	10.00	2	6.67	1	3.33	6	20.00	18	60.00
10	6	20.00	3	10.00	2	6.67	8	26.67	11	36.67
11	14	46.67	9	30.00	2	6.67	3	10.00	2	6.67
12	20	66.67	6	20.00	2	6.67	1	3.33	1	3.33
13	16	53.33	8	26.67	1	3.33	3	10.00	2	6.67
14	1	3.33	1	3.33	1	3.33	5	16.67	22	73.33
15	17	56.67	8	26.67	2	6.67	2	6.67	1	3.33

## 6. Discussion

Tribal traditions and religious instructions dominate the Iraqi society, hence it is difficult to launch a quick change, especially if the sponsor of this change is the coalition forces viewed by the locals as an 'occupier'. On the contrary, from time to time, people proudly remember their heroic ancestors' struggle to fight occupations and the ideologies they adopt, especially the so-called Great Iraqi Revolution triggered in the middle and south of Iraq in 1920 to expel the British army (Cf. Kadhim, 2013).

Despite their positive role in terminating the Saddamic dictatorial regime, the existence of these forces on Iraqi soil was not welcome. This appears in the responses of the independent observers to the first four questions tending to measure the social and religious sensitivity of working with the coalition forces. As shown above, 88.33 % of them strongly accept the sensitivity of this issue. Additionally, it is very hard to identify any impact for the freedom of women that the coalition was calling for, as 70% of



the observers have strongly rejected the dominant misconception that women have gained greater freedom and thus played a larger part in the country's future shortly after the 2003 war.

The observers have also strongly refused (86.67%) the opinion that Iraqi families were convinced to allow their daughters to work with the coalition. Such rejection may be based on two socio-religious aspects, the deeply-rooted refusal of the freedom of women to mix with men, especially if men are foreigners ( non-relatives and/or holding non-Iraqi nationality, perhaps not Muslims), and more importantly, the prohibition of working with the coalition adopted by many prominent Sunni and Shia Sheikhs and Imams. One example is the fatwa of the top Shiite cleric, Ali Hussain al-Sistani, available on his Arabic website. He states that 'it is not permissible (for men and women to mix) if it leads to the breach of something that is the obligation of women towards the foreign man (this does not refer to an expatriate, but to a man who is not a father, brother, or husband), or vice versa, whether in terms of caring for discreetness, morality and so on' (my translation). As for the permissibility of working with the coalition forces as interpreters, he declares that 'it is permissible in the interest of the Iraqi people not to perpetuate the occupation' (my translation). Fatwas have also been issued by many Sunni clerks. This can be touched in the response of Sheikh Dr. Sulaiman bin Abdullah Al-Majid, the judge in the General Court in Riyadh, in a live TV program called 'The Meaningful Answer' on Al-Majid Satellite Channel to a question by one of the callers named Abdullah from Iraq about the religious permissibility of working as an interpreter with the 'occupying forces' in Iraq. The Sheikh answered that 'America is an occupying country for Iraq and the Iraqi rulers say this, so it is not permissible to work with them as an interpreter in this place because it is a backup to them and they have first to get out of this country, especially since they came as occupiers' (my translation).

We also discover the isolation of female interpreters working with the coalition forces, as 75% of the sample refused that these interpreters enjoy the Iraqi people's respectfulness. Such disrespect may stem from the interpreters' violation of social norms and religious directives throughout



working with the coalition. Turning to the fifth and sixth statements which shed light on the specific reasons contributing to this isolation, we see that 65% of the sample strongly agree and 20% agree, i.e. a total of 85% of the participants, that there are stories narrated on the immorality of female interpreters circulating among the locals. These stories dominate perceptions and determine actions, which vary in type and intensity as some people may be content with rejecting the issue internally, while others, whether educated or not, may be ideologically-driven by political or religious movements to indulge in some sort of violence against these interpreters.

Besides, the observers emphasize the availability of material evidence documenting the corruption of female interpreters as 68.33% strongly agreed and 16.67% agreed that such evidence, for example, photos, videos, and eyewitnesses have been obtained from those working with the coalition forces or through some blogs and websites, such as the Ghar Ishtar blog ([ishtar-enana.blogspot.com](http://ishtar-enana.blogspot.com)) which publishes ongoing investigations as well as provides some links to photos or reports documenting the sexual immorality of female interpreters. Below are some of the photos published on that blog. These photos show an Iraqi interpreter, named Insam Al-Rawi, in a US military uniform sitting and standing among American soldiers in Fallujah. From the point of Iraqi locals, this situation is both religiously and culturally impermissible; it implies a suspicious (sexual) interaction with male soldiers.



Such photos may have a role in entrenching the immorality of female interpreters in the minds of the locals, thus facilitating the process of mobilizing the masses to revenge. This is what we can see in the observers' response to the statement related to the role of gender in increasing violence against interpreters, as 70% of the sample strongly agreed on the importance of the gender of the threatened or attacked interpreter. Moreover, throughout asking the sample about the possible causes of this violence, it has turned out that 66.67% strongly agree and 16.67% agree, i.e. 83.34 % in total, that the most important factor prompting the attackers to speed up the violence and increase its intensity towards interpreters is gender. This violence was,



moreover, justified as an honour killing that seeks to preserve the Iraqi dignity deteriorated through the female interpreters' sexual corruption. This kind of killing seems not only to dominate the minds and actions of the attackers but also to decrease the sympathy of both Iraqi people and security forces with the 'causalities'. It has been found that 88.33% of the observers believe that there is tangible negligence of investigating the identity of the attackers not because they are afraid of the threat, but because the prevailing opinion is that the female interpreters deserve such punishment as a result of the sins they committed by working with the 'occupiers'. The observers have also confirmed (86.67% ) that the female interpreters realized the risk and serious consequences of their work, but they preferred to continue for a variety of reasons.

As is obvious above, there is an agreement among the independent observers on the immorality of female interpreters. According to them, the prevalence of this narrative among the locals during that period had a very decisive role in the quality and quantity of violence. To reinforce or refute these findings, it is useful to investigate the former male interpreters' understanding of the impact of gender on the escalation of violence as they were in direct contact with female interpreters as well as foreign soldiers and contractors.

As can be noticed in Table (2), most of the former male interpreters accept ( 66.67% strongly agreed and 20% agreed) that gender played an effective role in determining the kind of treatment the interpreter has received from his/her foreign military or civil superiors. In other words, females were closer than males, therefore the benefits or gains they have obtained were greater. Here we also discover that 83.33% of the participants confirm the existence of sexual harassment against female interpreters in the workplace, but at the same time, justify that such harassments have not been reported, possibly to avoid withholding some privileges.

On the other hand, 63.33% of the former male interpreters agree that they managed to see female interpreters in Iraqi socially unacceptable situations, i.e. situations with sexual overtones. The rest of the sample,



however, was unable to observe these situations. This could be attributed to the female interpreters' attempts to prevent the disclosure of their secrets, such as by informing their foreign friends of the religious and cultural sensitivity of the issue. At the same time, 63.33% have strongly agreed and 20% have agreed on the presence of suspicious sexual relations between the female interpreters and their foreign male superiors.

As regards the female interpreters' general moral and religious commitments, it has been noticed that the sample affirms that the nature of work, its conditions, and its pressures have led the interpreters to turn on the values, traditions, and religious and social instructions. For example, 53.33% have strongly accepted and 16.67% have accepted that behavioral deviation involved dressing in a western-like fashion, for example, to take off the Islamic hijab. Other immoral actions, according to them, included eating non-Halal food, drinking religiously forbidden alcoholic beverages, and dancing in front of a foreign audience.

The sample's assertion of these immoral behaviours can depict the interpreters' moral decline, culminated in the loss of the most expensive thing that the eastern ( especially Iraqi) girl possesses, which is her honour. Hence, 76.67% of the sample emphasized that among the factors that led to this moral falloff is the interpreters' yearning to obtain additional wages, special treatments, or promises to contribute to granting temporary or permanent entry to the coalition countries, including America, Britain, and Australia.

As is the case with the independent observers, the former male interpreters have underlined the female interpreters' full awareness of the sensitivity and risk of their employment, as 66.67% strongly agreed and 20% agreed on the existence of serious threats of death alarming them to quit working for the coalition. Additionally, 53.33% of the sample strongly accepted and 26.67% accepted that violence against female interpreters was more severe than on male ones. This could be justifiable because the main motive behind the assassinations from the sample's perspective is not disloyalty to the homeland, but rather honour-crimes, in terms of which the



attackers consider coalition-employed female interpreters as a disgrace to society's dignity. This was variably confirmed by 83.34 % of the sample.

On the other hand, only 6.66% of the sample agree on the return of female interpreters to practicing their normal life after quitting. That is to say, most of the participants believe that it is hard, if not impossible, for the interpreters to reintegrate into their communities. This may be attributed to several reasons, including the locals' perception of these interpreters as 'sexually immoral', which led to their social isolation and consequently fleeing the country to ensure their safety. But, the consequences of their work for the coalition did not stop at this point, as many have struggled to find a respectful refuge away from their country. One interesting report that deeply sheds light on the life of the former coalition-employed females, including interpreters, in Amman, Jordan is written by Danielle Pergament on July 14, 2008, published in Marie Claire Magazine. She confirms that these refugees practice prostitution to get the money necessary for their life. She also underlines that 'the crowning irony among many of the women I met: Their best clients in Amman are American and European military personnel and contractors — the same sort of men they had worked for as translators and fixers. Now they are servicing them differently altogether'. In other words, neither quitting from working with the coalition nor fleeing the country have protected female interpreters from the gender-based violence and its fatal consequences.



## 7. Conclusion

In terms of the aforementioned discussion, the study concludes the following:

1. Contrary to the prevailing misunderstanding in the West, it has been found that gender played a significant role in initiating and escalating violence against coalition-employed interpreters in Iraq.
2. There was a dominant narrative among the Iraqi public indicating the sexual immorality of female interpreters. This narrative has mobilized the public to engage in physical and/ or verbal violence to combat this moral corruption and its consequences.
3. This dominant narrative has also influentially contributed to deforming the image of the interpreter in Iraqi society.
4. Even after deployment, female interpreters were socially isolated and discriminated against as they were treated as agents of moral corruption.
5. The absence of independent or governmental authorities providing workable mechanisms to embrace the former coalition-employed female interpreters has adversely affected the interpreters' future career and life.

### *Potential Areas for Further Research*

1. Investigating the impact of the interpreter's religion, sect, or ethnic group on the decrease or increase of the encountered violence.
2. Exploring the impact of the local's geographical region, religion, sect, or ethnic group on the decrease or increase of the produced violence.
3. Studying the variation identified in the quality and quantity of violence as a result of interpreting for the different coalition nationalities, such as for Americans in comparison to Australians.

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