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War and healing: Iraqis and Americans to look at effects of the Iraq War through art, film, and dialogue in Minnesota

Minneapolis, MN (January 3, 2010) – The Iraqi and American Reconciliation Project (IARP) and our partner the Muslim Peacemaker Teams (MPT) are pleased to announce the opening of *Navigating the Aftermath* on February 14, 2011 at the University of Minnesota Quarter Gallery in Minneapolis. Through art, film, and special events, the seven-month campaign will generate discussion in Minnesotan and American communities on the effects of the Iraq War and ways for each country to move forward toward healing.

The visual art exhibit at the University of Minnesota (called *Navigating the Aftermath*) will run from February 14 to March 4 and will bring Iraqi and American artists together in dialogue on the war's effects and ways forward. It will build on IARP and MPT's recent Minneapolis exhibit, *The Art of Conflict: Iraqi and American Art in Dialogue* and will feature established and emerging Minnesotan, American, and Iraqi artists. It will include talks with artists about how the war has shaped their lives and work, as well as opportunities to respond artistically and personally to the war.

The show's curator, Tricia Khutoretsky, says, "From the American perspective, the artists will be veterans, friends and family of soldiers or those closely tied to the war through activism. The voice will be that of the lives changed and the lives taken in Iraq. The majority of the Iraqi artists will represent the voice of a young and modern Iraq, one that is still hopeful and invested in the future of the country. Twelve carefully chosen artists will answer through their art: What needs to be remembered? What can we let go of? And how do we move forward? Both Iraqi and American artist perspectives will contribute to a two-way dialogue, where the first step towards addressing, 'what's next,' is to listen."

The opening reception of the show is scheduled for February 18 at the University of Minnesota Quarter Gallery and will provide an opportunity to meet the artists and talk about their work. On February 25, talks by several artists about their work will be accompanied by a benefit concert with Iraqi-American musician Salam Murtada. On March 4, a panel discussion will ask four diverse, respected Iraqi and American voices to explore the war's effects on both countries and ways that each country can move forward toward healing and a more peaceful future.

On April 15, IARP and artist Monica Haller will release *Iraqi Voices*, a book highlighting Iraqi voices speaking about present-day Iraq. The book asks Iraqis to respond to the question, "What do you need, in the wake of almost 8 years of military occupation and 30 years of wars and sanctions." The book will help Americans imagine specifics of present-day reality for Iraqis.

An online forum will provide opportunities for Americans and Iraqis to respond to the book and the show, participate in advocacy efforts, and share stories with each other.

Beginning in May, 2011, a tour will make stops at six Minnesotan towns, including St. Cloud, Mankato, Bemidji, Winona, Ely, and Duluth. It will include a portion of the art exhibit, programming with local community organizations, and screenings and discussions of the documentary film *The Unreturned*.



Directed by Minnesota native Nathan Fisher, *The Unreturned* looks at the continuing middle-class Iraqi refugee disaster and portrays the lives of five displaced Iraqis from diverse ethnicities and religions. It has won numerous awards, including Best of Festival at the 2010 Minneapolis-St. Paul International Film Festival.

While the Iraq War continues, *Navigating the Aftermath* aims to generate serious reflection and discussion about what the war has done and is doing to the United States and to Iraq. While Americans have seen a small part of the devastation and tragedy of war through news and images, *Navigating* will allow Americans and Iraqis to take a step back and look at the collective and long-term effects of the war and how both countries might start to move forward toward a more peaceful future.

With over 4,400 American casualties, at least 100,000 Iraqi casualties, over 32,000 Americans wounded, and at least 2 million Iraqis forced to flee their country, the Iraq War has etched itself onto American and Iraqi history. *Navigating the Aftermath* will provide a way for Minnesotans, and for all Americans and Iraqis, to interface with American and Iraqi perspectives on the war, reflect on its effects, and act.

For further information, please contact IARP or visit our website.

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Event Schedule

February 14 – March 4: *Navigating the Aftermath* exhibit at the Regis Art Center Quarter Gallery at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis. This curated exhibit will bring Iraqi and American artists together in dialogue on the war's effects and ways for each country to move forward.

February 18: Opening Reception for *Navigating the Aftermath*

February 25: Talks by participating artists (including Minnesotan and veteran artists) and a benefit concert by Iraqi-American musician Salam Murtada

March 4: Panel discussion at the University of Minnesota. Iraqi and American experts will discuss the effects of the Iraq War on both countries and ways each might move toward healing and a more peaceful future. (**panelists here**)

April 15: Release date of *Iraqi Voices*, a book produced by IARP and artist Monica Haller that will highlight Iraqi voices speaking about present-day Iraq.

TBD: *Navigating the Aftermath* exhibit and screening of *The Unreturned* in St. Cloud.

June 10 – June 22: *Navigating the Aftermath* exhibit and screening of *The Unreturned* in Mankato

June 20: Launch date of "Campaign for Iraq's Middle Class," a campaign to advocate for Iraqi refugees, many of whom were middle-class Iraqis displaced by the war.

July 1 – July 14: *Navigating the Aftermath* exhibit and screening of *The Unreturned* in Bemidji

August 4 – August 16: *Navigating the Aftermath* exhibit and screening of *The Unreturned* in Winona

TBD: *Navigating the Aftermath* exhibit and screening of *The Unreturned* in Duluth

TBD: *Navigating the Aftermath* exhibit and screening of *The Unreturned* in Ely

This activity funded, in part, by the Minnesota arts and cultural heritage fund as appropriated by the Minnesota State Legislature with money from the vote of the people of Minnesota on November 4, 2008.