

Iraq Now Panel Discussion

Panellists Bio Profiles

Dr Ahmad Alrubaie

Senior Lecturer at UNSW and President of Iraqi Australian University Graduates Forum

Dr Ahmed Alrubaie is a Senior Lecturer at the University of NSW and serves as Educational Supervisor and Examiner at the Royal Australasian College of Physicians. He has been extensively involved in teaching of undergraduates, postgraduates and general practitioners. Dr Alrubaie migrated to Australia in 1994 following years of opposition against dictatorship and wars in Iraq. He is active within the Iraqi community in Australia, particularly amongst medical graduates and other professionals. This includes his current role as the President of the Iraqi Australian University Graduate Forum where he is also responsible for coordinating courses for Overseas Trained Doctors. Dr Alrubaie is heavily involved in human rights promotion and protection movements and is currently the Coordinator of Amnesty International Australia's Defend Human Rights Committee. He is also a member of Cultural Salon which represent the main instrument in cultural field of Iraqi and Arabic community in Australia.

Mrs Donna Mulhearn

Writer, Speaker and Activist

Donna is a writer, speaker and activist. She was a human shield during the 2003 Iraq War and returned several times as an aid worker, human rights observer and researcher focusing on the impact of toxic weapons on the Iraqi community. She was an eye-witness to the April 2004 attack on Fallujah and co-author of *The Sacking of Fallujah – A People's History* published in 2019 by University of Massachusetts Press. Her professional background includes more than 30 years as a journalist, human rights work in various war and conflict zones, and being a sought-after speaker and media commentator on issues relating to the Iraq war and peace activism. She is the author of the memoir *Ordinary Courage: My Journey to Baghdad as a Human Shield*, published in 2010. Donna completed her master's degree at the University of Sydney's Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies.

Mr Bashar Hanna

Community Leader and Community Fellow at Western Sydney University

Bashar has made a significant contribution to Western Sydney region, working closely with the refugee and migrant community as an Arts and Community Development Consultant. He is the founder of music therapy community-based groups: The Choir of Love, The Peacemakers, The Mesopotamian Ensemble and The Global Band. He also established the Arts & Community Development Centre in Fairfield, the Colours of Mesopotamia Festival (a biennial event); and the LETS Program (Learning English Through Songs). Using the power of music and creative arts, Bashar's therapeutic initiatives support healing, language development and social inclusion for refugees and newly arrived migrants. Bashar was the ZEST Award recipient in 2015 and was recently named a Community Fellow at Western Sydney University.

Ms Ilham Dawoud

Women's Rights Activist

Ilham is an accomplished Program/Project Manager in Information Technology. Being a working woman who has worked in large corporate organisations in Australia and abroad with diverse cultures,

she has experienced the consequences of the imbalance in gender economics at the workplace. Therefore, she was a member of the organising committee of the Gender Economic Conference in 2014 and 2019 to discuss the impact of systems, processes and frameworks which are founded on gender inequities. As well as Ilham is an advocate for women rights at workplace, she is an active member in the Amnesty International Women's Group and UN Women National Committee in Australia to proclaim injustice wherever it happens and work together to stand for human dignity. She is also a member of the Australian Mesopotamian Cultural Association, part of the organising committees and a presenter in many Iraqi community events.

Dr Laith Barnouti

Community Leader and Musician

Dr Barnouti serves as a Public Officer at the Australian Arab Affairs, a not-for-profit organisation established to represent the Middle Eastern/Arabic community in the Australian public arena. He is also the founder of Australian Arab Choir. His objectives are to break down religious barriers and get the community together. The Arab Choir musical performances send powerful message about the importance of peace and harmony. Dr Laith is the co-founder and Vice President of the Iraqi Medical Professional Association in Australia, a not-for-profit organisation that supports health affiliated members of the Australian community. Dr Barnouti is also a founder and Director of Australia Plastic Surgery Clinic, the largest plastic and reconstructive surgery clinic in Sydney. It provides services for patients with hand injuries, skin cancers and reconstructive and plastic surgery services.