Upon the invitation of Mr Bakhtiar Amin of the International Alliance for Justice, and of No Peace Without Justice, in cooperation with the Iraqi Council of Representatives and the Kurdistan National Assembly–Iraq, and with the support of the Italian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, an International Conference on the Status of Armed Forces and Groups in Iraq was convened from 8-10 November 2008 in the majestic and auspicious surroundings of the mountains of Dokan.

The Conference gathered representatives of the Iraqi National Assembly, the Kurdistan Regional Government and, with representatives of all the major political groupings and experts and scholars with experience from security related challenges around the world.


Discussions were conducted in a spirit of mutual respect, objective analysis, dialogue and friendliness, and were underpinned by a shared commitment to the best interests of Iraq as a whole, with a view to discussing and resolving complex issues by taking into account the widest variety of positions and interests.

Within this constructive atmosphere, participants discussed questions related to the future form and purpose of Iraq’s armed groups and armed forces, as part of a process of promoting the peaceful resolution of differences, and strengthening the rule of law, democracy, and federalism within Iraqi society.

Discussions started with an in-depth analysis of the current state and proliferation of armed forces in Iraq and consideration of the allocation of responsibilities, control and competences across federal, regional and provincial administrations. This was followed by a survey of the options available for demobilising, assimilating, and integrating militia and armed groups, concluding with discussions of the political priorities and technical challenges for the process of demobilisation.
As a result of the discussions, and having considered the opinions submitted and presented, participants agreed upon the following principles:

1. The national army should be founded on a doctrine of loyalty to the Iraqi state, and its size should reflect its role in the defence of the borders of Iraq. The army should not interfere with politics, nor with the transfer of power, and its composition should reflect the diversity of Iraqi society in accordance with article 9 of the Constitution.

2. A clear distinction should be made between the functions of the police and the functions of the military. Law enforcement and maintaining internal stability should be the mandate of the police.

3. The police should be trained and prepared to deal with their civilian duties. To that end, its current structures should be reformed, heightening their professional capacity to serve in accordance with human rights principles.

4. Oversight mechanisms should be strengthened so as to ensure civilian control of the armed forces and their independence from any political factions.

5. A concept of Iraqi citizenship that takes into account the full diversity, plurality, and character of Iraqi society should be promoted.

6. Resources should be allocated to encourage members of militias, including members of the Awakening movements, to retrain for civilian professions, seek further education, and return to employment in the civilian sector. Some members should also, on an individual basis, be reintegrated into the Iraqi armed forces as part of a framework of a training and rehabilitation, fostering a sense of loyalty to Iraq.

7. Measures should be taken to support members of those groups that cannot be integrated into the police or army in such a way that they are permitted to pursue their goals and values in a non-military setting, contributing the reconstruction and demilitarisation of Iraqi society.