

# INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON THE SITUATION OF IRAQI ACADEMICS

March 9-10-11, 2011

Ghent University - Belgium

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MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA

**MENARG**

RESEARCH GROUP



[registrationseminar@brussellstribunal.org](mailto:registrationseminar@brussellstribunal.org)

<http://www.brussellstribunal.org/Seminar/>

## Day 0 – Tuesday March 8, 2011

18:00-19:00	Signing Ceremony	The Ghent Charter	PERISTILIUM
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## OVERVIEW OF THE THREE DAYS

## Day 1 – Wednesday March 9, 2011

09:00–09:30	Introductory Session	Objectives of the Seminar	AULA
09:30–12:30	First Plenary Session	Manufacturing Crisis	AULA
14:00–15:30	Session 1A	Culture as Political Technology	AULA
14:00–15:30	Session 1B	The Destruction of History and Culture	RAADSZAAL
16:00–17:30	Session 2A	The Destruction of Intellectual Life	AULA
16:00–17:30	Session 2B	Political, economic and social context for the current crisis in Iraqi education	RAADSZAAL

## Day 2 – Thursday March 10, 2011

09:00–10:30	Second Plenary Session	The Human Right to Education Under Occupation	AULA
11:00–12:30	Session 3A	The Crisis of Higher Education	AULA
11:00–12:30	Session 3B	Gender and Access to Higher Education After 2003	RAADSZAAL
14:00–15:30	Session 4A	Academics under attack - Academics in exile	AULA
14:00–15:30	Session 4B	Domestic Challenges and Threats	RAADSZAAL
16:00–17:30	Third Plenary Session	Reflections and directions	AULA

## Day 3 – Friday March 11, 2011

09:00–12:30	Workshop 1	Academics in the Diaspora	AULA
09:00–12:30	Workshop 2	Education inside Iraq	RAADSZAAL
14:00–16:00	Fourth Plenary Session	Conclusions and recommendations	AULA

*The three aims of the Ghent Seminar are:*

- 1. to provide an up-to-date account of challenges facing the Iraqi academy and Iraqi education in general;*
- 2. to highlight and expand international efforts in support of Iraqi academics;*
- 3. to generate ideas and practical responses that address key issues in the fields of Iraqi academy, culture, and general education. This implies attention to the basic rights and requirements of Iraqi academics and students both at home and in exile. It also implies support for Iraqi academics as they seek to direct their collective efforts toward the rebuilding of a peaceful and prosperous Iraq.*

## DAY 1 – WEDNESDAY MARCH 9, 2011

09:00–09:30	Introductory Session	Objectives of the Seminar	AULA
<p>Following a brief welcoming address by Sami Zemni (MENARG), Saad Naji Jawad will then introduce the overall objectives of the seminar.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Welcome – Sami Zemni</b></li><li>• <b>The Ghent Charter</b></li><li>• <b>Objectives of the Seminar – Saad Naji Jawad</b></li></ul>			

09:30–12:30	First Plenary Session	Manufacturing Crisis	AULA
<p>Part 1: 09:30-11:00</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>“It Started in 1990” – Hans von Sponeck</b></li><li>• <b>“State Ending” – Raymond Baker</b></li></ul> <p>Part2: 11:30-12:30</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Panel Discussion – Sabah Al Mukhtar / Raymond Baker / Hans von Sponeck</b></li><li>• <b>Chair – Lieven De Caeter</b></li></ul> <p><i>The session situates the on-going crisis of Iraqi higher education within the context of sustained efforts between 1990 and 2003 to diminish, discipline and ultimately “end” the Iraqi state. Attention to this longer trajectory of state ending reveals both the crucial role of sanctions in fragmenting Iraq’s intellectual life, and the relatively recent (and globally distributed) genealogy of the current sectarian malaise in higher education. The conscious and consistent nature of these efforts at fragmentation, together with their wider effects on ideology and identity, will also be highlighted.</i></p> <p><b>Hans von Sponeck:</b> „Iraq Academics – What Next?“ ‘Eduicide’ in Iraq preceded 2003. Much evidence is available. What is needed is the will to discover the facts, use these without bias and ideology and challenge governments and international organizations to review and debate this material and draw conclusions. Of course for the history books this is necessary but it is much more important for restoration. Accountability must not remain a victim of cover-up. Iraqis, especially Iraq’s youth, need to be reassured that human rights and justice are indeed valid and universal. Clarity about the perpetrators and their responsibility for the destruction of education as a major life support system in Iraq is necessary but not sufficient for a peace process. Iraq’s recovery demands much more. Required is a non-partisan Iraq-led effort to re-build a system of education and training which gives opportunity for Iraq youth to prepare for life. This calls for professionals, not politicians, and for doers, not operators. At stake, for Iraqi and non-Iraqi alike, is the obligation to finally make a difference. The ultimate aim must be to re-install a state of the art education system at all levels. Ghent offers a unique opportunity to take a first step.</p> <p>Hans-C. von Sponeck, University of Marburg and former UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq January 2011</p> <p><b>Raymond Baker:</b> For all the misinformation and outright lies of the Bush administration, that infamous “mission accomplished” banner contained a terrible truth: the American-led invasion of Iraq aimed to destroy the Iraqi state, and the Iraqi state -- and so much more -- was indeed destroyed. In the wake of the invasion museums were looted, libraries burned, and academics murdered, all part of undermining</p>			

the cultural foundations of the modern Iraqi state, all part of a deliberate policy of “state-ending”. Mission accomplished

14:00–15:30	Session 1A	Culture as Political Technology	AULA
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- “Cultural Turns, Counterinsurgencies and the Colonial Present” – Derek Gregory
- “Education Aid and Counter-Insurgency Strategy” - Mario Novelli
- Chair – Christopher Parker

*This panel focuses on the role of academic disciplinary knowledge in producing objects, rationales and technologies of military intervention; and—more particularly—on the production of cultural knowledge in service of the war and occupation in Iraq. The winning of hearts and minds has long been a key pillar of counterinsurgency strategy. Yet never before has this activity been filtered through a framework so culturally essentializing as that being deployed today in Iraq and Afghanistan. And never before have so many anthropologists been deployed at or near the front lines. Meanwhile, as Rochelle Davis and Omar Shakir have noted, many Iraqis find “the question of culture insignificant in the context of a brutal occupation [...] emphasizing instead basic human values and the need for the US to respect Iraqis as individuals and as a country.” The contributors to this panel call attention to the colonial ideologies that preface the use of culture as a technology with which to manage occupation, and the contradictions and elisions engendered as a result.*

14:00–15:30	Session 1B	“Destructive Destruction:” History and Culture Under Occupation	RAADSZAAL
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- “Cultural Destruction and the New Sectarianism in Iraqi Visual Arts” – Hashim Al-Tawil
- “Smashing Idols and Institutions: Antiquities Under Occupation” – McGuire Gibson
- Chair – Caroline Janssen

*The artifacts of culture have long played been deployed in the articulation of national identities. Arts, antiquities and literature played a particularly salient role in efforts to forge new political subjectivities under the Ba’th. In Iraq as elsewhere, such projects inevitably involved a degree of misrepresentation and manipulation. Nevertheless, evidence of manipulation does not mean that the underlying sense of shared history to which such projects refer are any less real than alternative sectarian idioms of belonging today being promoted in Iraq. Looking from the perspective of both representation and institutions, this panel links struggles over the artifacts of culture to wider issues of social cohesion and distintegration.*

**McGuire Gibson** is one of the world's leading authorities on ancient Mesopotamia. He has done fieldwork in Iraq and elsewhere in the region and has published extensively. He was as part of a National Geographic delegation visiting Iraq to inspect archaeological sites in 2003. He also has provided expert advice to UNESCO and other cultural and scholarly organizations working to preserve the archaeological heritage of Iraq. His fieldwork has taken him to Nippur, the religious center of ancient Mesopotamia. Additionally, he has done fieldwork in Yemen, Saudi Arabia and northeastern Syria. In 1992, he and colleague Augusta McMahon published *Lost Heritage: Antiquities Stolen from Iraq's Regional Museums*, the first academic publication to call attention to the problem of looting after the first Gulf War. He also is the author and co-author of numerous articles and books on ancient Mesopotamia. He will give a presentation on the destruction of Archaeology, especially the deterioration of what had been the best,

most professional Antiquities organization in the Middle East and the present state of the organization after years of re-organization and politicization.

**Hashim Al-Tawil** is Professor of Art History at Henry Ford Community College, Michigan (USA). He completed his education in Iraq and in the USA, and worked in Iraq in the seventies and eighties on the faculty of the college of Fine arts, University of Baghdad, and was active in the Iraqi visual art and cultural scene. His research interests are directed towards history, art, and visual culture of the Arab world and Islam. As a visual artist, much of his work is derived from the subject of his research. His recent focus is on the hybridity of the Mediterranean culture in medieval time. He received a Fulbright senior research grant for 2007 in Italy, and a fellowship from Nantes Institute for Advanced Studies, France for 2011. Since the invasion of Iraq he has given tens of lectures and presentations on the destruction of Iraqi culture and more specifically in the area of the systematic and deliberate dismantling of Iraq's diverse and inclusive modern art landscape. His presentation will be about the adamant destruction of public monuments, national landmarks, and cultural identity of decades of Iraqi accomplishment, while nurturing sectarian and regressive forms of visual art in the "new Iraq".

16:00–17:30

Session 2A

The Destruction of Intellectual Life

AULA

- **“Killing the Intellectual Class” – Dirk Adriaensens**
- **“Murder on Campus: A Systematic Campaign?” – Riadh Al-Dabagh**
- **Chair – Saeed Al Musawi**

*Since 2003, there has been a deliberate and organized campaign against intellectuals and higher education in Iraq. This campaign has sought to undermine the standards of higher education in the country, leaving graduates unprepared to play a critical and productive role in rebuilding Iraq beyond occupation. Various Iraqi higher education institutions lay in ruins up to the present day. Universities and institutes have been looted of equipment and infrastructure, while libraries well-known for their rich references and unique books have lost much of the collections. The campaign culminated in targeting scholars, scientists, and other active university teaching staff members through organized assassinations as well as psychological and physical threats. Hundreds of scientists, researchers and creative personnel have lost their lives, while others have been forced to quit the homeland and immigrate to different countries for security and safety. This contributors to this panel argue that this violence must be seen within widespread corruption and the mixing of personal and sectarian agendas under the occupation regime.*

- Dr. Basil Hussein Al-Ghurey
- Mustafa Ayash Al Kubaisi
- Hani Hadeeth
- Chair - Mundher Al Adhami

**Political dimension:** Starting with one major specific decision on Iraqi Education after the occupation, Ijtithath, or political changes in the curriculum, the panelists will discuss the consequences for the sector, and what can be done now or in the future to remedy the situation politically.

**Economic dimension:** Starting with one major specific economic or administrative decision on Iraqi Education after the occupation, e.g. on funding, student fees, staff pay or allocating responsibilities, discuss the consequences for the sector, and what can be done now or in the future to remedy the situation politically.

**Social dimension:** Starting with one major specific social decision on Iraqi Education after the occupation, e.g. regarding women, religious practices in the campus, or insecurity, discuss the consequences for the sector, and what can be done now or in the future to remedy the situation politically.



## DAY 2 – THURSDAY MARCH 10, 2011

<b>09:00–10:30</b>	<b>Second Plenary Session</b>	<b>The Human Right to Education Under Occupation: Palestine and Iraq Compared” – Curtis Doebbler</b>	<b>AULA</b>
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*Maintaining a functioning educational system under occupation is a common challenge for the people of Iraq and Palestine. This paper examines the Palestine experience in facing the challenges created by the Israeli occupation, and points to ways in which Palestinians have managed to remain one of the most highly education societies in the Middle East in spite of these challenges. The widely accepted minimum parameters associated with the human rights approach to education provides the framework for discussion. The focus is on higher education.*

**Chair – Ludo De Brabander**

- **Discussants: Curtis Doebbler - Sabah Al-Mukhtar**
- **Panel Discussion: Curtis Doebbler - Derek Gregory – Sabah Al-Mukhtar**

<b>11:00–12:30</b>	<b>Session 3A</b>	<b>The Crisis of Higher Education</b>	<b>AULA</b>
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- **“The Current State of Higher and General Education in Iraq” – Saad Naji Jawad**
- **“Implications of signing the US – Iraq Strategic Framework Agreement on Iraqi education” – Haifa Zangana**
- **“Practical problems in higher education in Iraq in 2011” – Basim Al Janabi**
- **Chair – Hans von Sponeck**

*Section IV of the Strategic Framework Agreement signed by Iraq and the USA in November 2008 deals with “Cultural Cooperation.” The text emphasizes the importance of “cooperation and coordination in the fields of higher education and scientific research,” and notes the US’s commitment to “strengthen the development of Iraq’s future leaders.” The Iraq Education Initiative (IEI) represents a salient outcome of this agreement. In the media, this initiative has been presented as a story of academic initiative and cultural exchanges. It seems to provide an all too rare example of good news coming from post-invasion Iraq. Closer inspection, however, reveals a different story. Haifa Zangala argues that, in the absence of a national strategy for general education (and the lack of security more generally), the IEI has become yet another arena for corruption and the pursuit of sectarian agendas, practices that ultimately consolidate and confirm the neo-colonial relationship between Iraq and the USA. Saad Jawad will sketch the broader material and political challenges being confronted in efforts to rebuild Iraq’s education system.*

<b>11:00-12:30</b>	<b>Session 3B</b>	<b>Gender and Access to Higher Education After 2003</b>	<b>RAADSZAAL</b>
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- **“The Changing Situation of Women in Academy: Challenges and Outcomes” – Souad Al-Azzawi**
- **“Women Academics in Iraqi Universities between Sectarian Policies and Occupation Effects” – Sawsan Al-Assaf**
- **Chair – Tahrir Numan**

*Drawing on stereotypes regarding the position of women in Arab and Muslim societies, US and British officials have defended the occupation regime in Iraq by suggesting its positive effects for women's emancipation. These claims not only ignored the considerable advancements in women's education and employment made during the first twenty years of Ba'athist rule; they also cover up the particularly detrimental impact of US-UN-imposed sanctions on Iraqi women during the 1990s. Similarly, these stereotypes distract attention from the further deterioration of women's rights and access to education and employment under the occupation regime. Drawing on a comprehensive statistical survey, Souad Al Azzawi shows that the deteriorating security situation drove Iraqi women out of work. At least 85% of educated women are unemployed. Dr. Al Azzawi shows that this has in turn had a dramatic impact on the well being of Iraqi families. Sawsan Al-Assaf picks up on these themes to suggest how the issue of women's rights within the academy has been instrumentalized by those pursuing sectarian agendas.*

**14:00–15:30**    **Session 4A**    **Academics under attack - Academics in exile**    **AULA**

- **“Mapping Academics in Exile” – Yahya Al-Kubaisi**
- **“The Socioeconomic and Legal Situation of Academics in Exile” – Zuhair Al-Sharook**
- **“Academics in Need” – Mazin Kadhim– Omar Al Kubaissi**
- **“Transnational Networks Amongst Iraqi Academics” – Jamil Hikmet – Mahmoud Al-Taie**
- **Chair – Pedro Rojo**

Iraq has suffered, and is still suffering from, a huge brain drain. And—given the continued incidence of targeted assassinations and other practices designed to induce the forced displacement of academics, scientists, doctors, and engineers who make up the bulk of Iraqi society and Iraq's middle class—the problem is likely to get worse before it gets better. Yet in spite of the seriousness of the situation, the on-going forced displacement of academics and intellectuals has fallen from international attention over the past year, as has attention to the resources of and challenges facing Iraqi academics in exile. This session will focus not only on the problems and needs of Iraqi academics forced into exile, but also suggest their potential contribution to meeting the current and future needs of Iraqis at home and in the diaspora.

**14:00–15:30**    **Session 4B**    **Domestic Challenges and Threats**    **RAADSZAAL**

- **Shaikh Bashar Mohammed Al Faidhi – Ghazi Raho**
- **Ahmad Kamal – Khalid Al Maaini**
- **Chair – Souad Al-Azzawi**

This session gives an assessment of the practical challenges to education in Iraq today, spanning facilities and the loss of persons, as well as the general deterioration of social culture and public safety amid the collapse of the state and the reign of violent militias and associated leaders. An analysis of the extent of discrimination, corruption and oppression in Iraqi universities and the educational system and how these might be stopped.

**16:00–17:30**    **Third Plenary Session**    **Reflections and directions**    **AULA**

**Panel discussion: Souad Al-Azzawi / Hans von Sponeck / Riadh Al-Dabagh / Pedro Rojo / Mundher Al Adhami**  
**Chair: Sami Zemni**

## DAY 3 – FRIDAY MARCH 11, 2011

09:00–12:30	Workshop 1	Academics in the Diaspora	AULA
<p><b>Chair: <u>Mundher Al Adhami</u></b> <b>Rapporteur: <u>Christopher Parker</u></b></p> <p>09:00 – 09:30 Plenary session on listing of issues and forming of working groups 09:30 – 11:00 Working groups 11:30 – 12:30 Plenary session on sharing draft proposals and further issues</p> <p><i>Those Iraqi academics who have been forced to leave their country find themselves vulnerable in the country of refuge. Their relative invisibility, in spite of international campaigns to support this collective, has made of them an easy target for exploitation by local universities, where they are offered jobs in poor conditions and outside their areas of specialization or level of knowledge. And many more have not been able to find jobs at all. It has been impossible until now to get sound estimate of the number of Iraqi academics in exile. Furthermore, pressure from host governments and fears regarding personal safety and deportation has made it difficult for this group to organize and demand rights. This panel seeks to identify practical measures that might be taken to better identify the whereabouts and needs of Iraqi academics in exile. The ultimate aim is to facilitate the mobilization of this group in pursuit of its basic rights and interests, and—just as importantly—with an eye toward the potential contribution of this group to a peaceful and prosperous Iraqi future.</i></p> <p><b>Saad Naji Jawad/ Haifa Zangana/ Pedro Rojo / Hans von Sponeck / ...</b></p>			

09:00–12:30	Workshop 2	Education inside Iraq	RAADSZAAL
<p><b>Chair: <u>Souad Al Azzawi</u></b> <b>Rapporteur: <u>Lieven De Cauter</u></b></p> <p>09:00 – 09:30 Plenary session on listing of issues and forming of working groups 09:30 – 11:00 Working groups 11:30 – 12:30 Plenary session on sharing draft proposals and further issues</p> <p><i>Now, in the eighth year of a US occupation that shows few signs of ending, the BRussells Tribunal and the Middle East and North Africa Research Group (MENARG) of the Ghent University call for renewed attention to the situation of Iraqi higher education and academic life, stressing its importance to the rebuilding of the country, and the well-being of its people. Accordingly, the urgent task of the proposed seminar is not only to give reasons for the destruction of Iraqi academia, but also to propose ways of rebuilding it, highlighting both the duty of international organizations to respond, and the responsibility of educators around the globe to show solidarity with their Iraqi colleagues.</i></p> <p><b>Omar Al Kubaissi/ Zuhair Al Sharook/ Riadh Al-Dabagh / Sabah Al Mukhtar / ...</b></p>			

14:00-16:00	Fourth Plenary Session	Conclusions and recommendations	AULA
<p>a. Presentations from the two workshops b. Comments and reports from the Conference organizers c. Decisions on the next organizational steps and the protocols of publication and website input</p> <p><b>Chair: <u>Hans von Sponeck</u></b></p>			

## PRACTICAL INFORMATION



The seminar will take place in the Aula of the Ghent University. The Seminar-secretariat is also located here:  
VOLDERSTRAAT 9, GENT.



The Seminarhotel  
OUDE HOUTLEI 56, GENT



The Nights of The Ghent Seminar  
The seminar ends at 17.30 every day, but in the evening, all participants, speakers and chairs are welcome in Parnassus, a social workshop (but it is also a lovely restaurant in an old church), where a dinner is offered for 12€.  
OUDE HOUTLEI 122, GENT

### Registration and Cost

- We urge all participants to pre-register through <http://www.brussellstribunal.org/Seminar/>
- Participants prices (including coffee breaks)
  - o for one day: €10 (students €5)
  - o for two days: €15 (students € 8)
  - o for three days: € 20 (students €10)
- You can contact us at: [registrationseminar@brussellstribunal.org](mailto:registrationseminar@brussellstribunal.org)

### Breaks during the seminar

07:30-09:00	Secretariat is open	Coffee and tea available	PERISTILIUM
11:00-11:30	Secretariat is open	BREAK 30 minutes / coffee & tea available	PERISTILIUM
12:30-14:00	Secretariat is open	LUNCHBREAK / lunch available: €10	PERISTILIUM
15:30-16:00	Secretariat is open	BREAK 30 minutes / coffee & tea available	PERISTILIUM
17:30-18:00	Secretariat is open	18:00: CLOSING TIME	

### Your Stay In Ghent

#### THE SEMINAR HOTEL

During the period of the seminar in Ghent, we have reserved 50 hotel rooms in the Monasterium for our guests and speakers. We prefer the speakers, Iraqi guests, organizers and others special guests to stay in the same location. It allows sufficient opportunities for mutual consultations and meetings.

We would be very happy to welcome you here on March 8, 2011. The seminarhotel "Monasterium: Oude Houtlei 56, 9000 Ghent - Belgium

More information: [vera@brussellstribunal.org](mailto:vera@brussellstribunal.org)

**HOTELS NEAR THE SEMINARY:** <http://www.brussellstribunal.org/Seminar/pdf/en/Hotels.pdf>

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### IACIS: International Association of Contemporary Iraqi Studies



<http://iraqistudies.org/English/publications/aboutIJCIS.html>

### Women Solidarity for an Independent and Unified Iraq



<http://solidarityiraq.blogspot.com/>

11.11.11



<http://www.11.be/11>

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### IAON: International Anti Occupation Network



<http://anti-occupation.org/>

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<http://icmes.info>

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EURAMES

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### CEOSI, Campaña Estatal contra la Ocupación y por la Soberanía de Iraq



<http://www.iraqsolidaridad.org/>

### War is a crime

War Is A Crime .org

<http://warisacrime.org/coalition>

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<http://www.perdana4peace.net/>

### Iraqi Contemporary Studies Awards



**INTAL, International action  
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<http://www.intal.be/>

**Iraq Solidarity Association  
in Stockholm**



[www.iraksolidaritet.se](http://www.iraksolidaritet.se)

**KLFCW, Kuala Lumpur  
Foundation to Criminalise  
War**



[www.criminalisewar.org/](http://www.criminalisewar.org/)

**El Taller International**



<http://www.eltaller.org/>

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<http://www.iraqcass.com>

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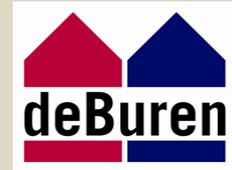
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<http://www.deburen.eu/>

**Victoria Deluxe**



<http://www.victoriadeluxe.be/>

**The American Academic  
Research Institute in Iraq**



<http://www.taarii.org/>

**Kaaithheater**



[www.kaaitheater.be](http://www.kaaitheater.be)

**Democratische school**



[www.democratischschool.org](http://www.democratischschool.org)

**The National League of Iraqi  
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