



Symposium Outcomes: Water resources in Iraq among the Hammer of Dams, Irrigation Policies, and External Influences

Al-Rafidain Center for Dialogue held a symposium entitled " Water resources in Iraq among the hammer of dams, irrigation policies, and external influences ", at Sergio de Mello Hall, in which the esteemed Minister of Water Resources, Mr. Mahdi Rashid Al-Hamdani present a lecture, the minister reviewed water situation in Iraq in terms of the international and internal dimensions, focusing on the crucial challenges in that file.

Outside, the lecturer mentioned the absence of agreements with Turkey and Iran constitutes an ongoing challenge, as for the internal level, the most prominent challenges are to overtake rivers water and it's pollution.

However, Mr. Al-Hamdani also mentioned the security problems and financial crisis have delayed Iraq a lot from carrying out modernization of its water system. The symposium was attended by a group of academics and specialists in the field of water in the holy province of Najaf.

Below are the most important outcomes of the symposium.

Lecturer: The Esteemed Minister of Water Resources, Professor Mahdi Rashid Al-Hamdani.

Moderator: Dr. Aqeel Al-Khaqani, Senior Fellow of Al-Rafidain Center for Dialogue.

Symposium Date: 20/8/2020





Conclusions:

- 1- Most of the water resources in Iraq are outside the Iraqi territories, about 80-90% come from Turkey, Iran and Syria. This geographical reality constitutes one of the challenges facing Iraq in the issue of water resources management.
- 2- Iraq started early in organizing water resources, however the oldest dam in Iraq is Al-Hindiya Dam, which was established in 1913, followed by dams in Anbar, and then Dokan and Darbandikhan.
Unless the political situations and wars that the country went through delayed the progress of projects to control water wealth, and Iraq intends in the next year to start building Makhul Dam to store water coming from Mosul and Zab Al'aelaa.
- 3- The absence of bilateral agreements between Iraq and Turkey regulating the distribution of water - except Protocol of 1987 that regulates the release of Euphrates water from the Ataturk Dam. In addition to the instability periods that Iraq went through, the Turkish side went ahead with its water projects without consulting with Iraq.
- 4- With regard to the agreement with Iran, there is a protocol attached to the Algiers agreement, but Iraq's reservation to that agreement prevents the implementation of that protocol, and Iraq suffers with the Iranian side as it does with the Turkish side.
- 5- Under the new government, the water file has become in the hands of prime minister - similar to Turkey and Iran, since that file is in the hands of the





- president and the supreme leader - and that means the file will be managed strategically with neighboring countries because the negotiation includes a large political aspect and not only technical aspects.
- 6- The Ministry of Water Resources had an ambitious plan to develop water regulation for the period 2014-2035 and it is needed funding of 80 billion dollars, but the entry of ISIS had brought the ministry's projects back to ground zero, and the financial crisis had affected the projects significantly.
 - 7- Some outsiders are marketing a major fallacy, which is accusing Iraq of wasting water, and this is incorrect and is not presented by those actors in technical meetings, rather, it is presented politically and unfortunately it is returned by Iraqi actors that are not experienced in the subject
 - 8- The water issue is facing an important internal challenge, represented by overrunning the water of rivers
 - 9- The most serious internal challenge is polluting rivers' water with sewage, rendering it unsuitable for use, and this causes a crisis in cities and villages that fall at the tails of rivers.
 - 10-The plan of the ministry in the short term is to limit and end the abuses and to finish land reclamation
 - 11-There is no problem with the dam projects that Turkey is building for the purpose of generating electricity, because it will lead to an increase in water releases to Iraq. The problem lies in the Turkish irrigation projects related especially to the Ilisu Dam, which consumes large quantities of water.





Recommendations:

- 1- Stop overrunning on rivers or polluting their waters, because this constitutes the most prominent challenge to the water problem in Iraq.
- 2- The cooperation of all ministries that relevant to water's issue, as the issue cannot be dealt with only by the Ministry of Water Resources, ministries such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Municipalities as well as local governments all can help in managing the water file in Iraq.
- 3- Do not make any statement that are non-accredited on a scientific and technical basis, including the statement accusing Iraq of wasting water by letting it go to the sea, because these statements serve the idea that the Turks are marketing on the subject.
- 4- It's necessary to not enterprise license without a real study and for personal interest, because this leads to waste water.
- 5- Preserving groundwater and trying to not using it for other purposes than drinking in times of crisis. The experiences of countries in using that water for irrigation

