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## Economic Files

A weekly business-oriented television show produced, written, directed, and broadcast by Iraqis with additional support provided by the Center for International Private Enterprise

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### Episode 14 Synopsis: Economic Culture

Airdate: October 1, 2005

**Featured Guests:** Dr. Dhia'a Sayed Safi Al Mogoter (Economics Professor, Mustansiriya University), Mr. Bassim Jameel Anton (Vice Chairman of the Iraqi Businessmen Union), Mr. Abdul Zahra Al-Hindawi (Media Expert), Mr. Sinan Kadhem Al-Sa'adi (Iraqi Ministry of Industry and Minerals), and Dr. Hazim Abdul Hameed Al-Noa'aimy (Political Researcher, Mustansiriya University).

The episode evaluated the role and importance of economic culture in the economic development of Iraq. Discussions focused on the following issues:

- What does "economic culture" mean?
- A survey of the current economic culture in Iraq
- Challenges that are hindering the growth of an open and tolerant economic culture in Iraq

While discussing the issues that are inhibiting Iraq's economic culture, featured guests identified several problems. First, the participants felt that **the legacy of the former regime's state-run economy and Iraq's isolation from the outside world** during that time have resulted in a severe lack of economic and political knowledge. Many Iraqis are suspicious of terminology such as "capitalism," "free market," and "privatization" simply because they do not understand what these terms mean.

Furthermore, the long period of isolation and repression prevented **the development of a free media**. The participants emphasized that the Iraqi media has so far failed to present economic information to the public in a clear manner. Another challenge identified by the guests was **the shortage of "knowledge infrastructure"** including internet and phone lines.

The participants discussed several recommendations to address those concerns. First, a campaign should be initiated by the government to **educate the public about economic concepts**. Further, a review and revision of university economics and political science curricula should be undertaken in order to modernize them and improve the quality of the programs. To strengthen the free media, Iraqi journalists should receive **training on effective methods of reporting economic information**. Finally, Iraqi NGOs and civil society groups should become more engaged in filling the economic knowledge gap through conducting activities such as seminars and informational campaigns.