

*Panel Discussion on*

**The Marsh Arabs of Iraq:  
The Legacy of Saddam Hussein and an Agenda for Restoration and Justice**

October 26, 2004, at Kimmel Hall, New York University

*cosponsored by*  
**Carnegie Council on Ethics and International Affairs  
Environmental Conservation Education Program, New York University  
and  
Al-Khoei Foundation (UK)**

**in conjunction with Harvard University [\\*](#)**

The world is well aware that, over the past three decades, Saddam Hussein systematically violated the rights of the Iraqi people. Much less attention is paid to the concomitant destruction of the environment and natural resources, most notably in the southern marshlands, and its consequences for the region's half million inhabitants. Some scholars and activists have argued that Saddam Hussein's "Plan for the Marshes" – a deliberate strategy to uproot and exterminate the Marsh inhabitants and Shi'a seeking refuge among them by damming and draining the distributaries of the Tigris and Euphrates – was an act of environmental warfare that constitutes genocide.

At this event, a group of experts will address the ecological, human rights, legal, and political consequences of the Iraqi regime's deliberate destruction of the marshlands, as well as the role of the international community in addressing the crisis. The public is welcome to attend.

5:00 **Registration**

5:15 **Opening remarks**

5:30 **Slide show of the Marshes Prior to the Execution of Saddam's "Plan for the Marshes"**

Photographer Nik Wheeler

5:50 **Panel discussion**

Moderated by Sayyed Nadeem Kazmi, The Al Khoei Foundation (UK):

- **The State of the Marshlands After the Draining of the Marshes**  
Curtis Richardson, Professor and Director Duke Wetland Center
- **The Human Impacts**  
Rasheed Bander Al-khayoun, researcher and writer
- **"An Act of Ecocide?" The Political and Legal Implications**  
Joseph Dellapena, Villanova University
- **Iraq's New Plan for the Marshes**  
Amb. Rend Rahim Franke, Iraqi Ambassador to the United States

7:00 **Question and Answer**

7:30 **End of Program**

\* This panel is the kick-off for a week-long event to be continued at Harvard University, October 27-31, 2004 entitled, [“Mesopotamian Marshes and Modern Development: Practical Approaches for Sustaining Restored Ecological and Cultural Landscapes.”](#)

***About the Panelists:***

**Rasheed Bander Al-Khayoun** is a native of the Marsh region of Iraq and a researcher and teacher of Islamic Philosophy, Religion and History, with degrees from institutions in Iraq, Yemen and Bulgaria. He was the cultural editor of the London and Baghdad-based *Somer* Newspaper and, prior to that, for a Yemen-based weekly newspaper. The author of a number of books and articles (in Arabic) on history and religion, Al-Khayoun is also a regular contributor to more than a dozen Arabic dailies, weeklies and cultural periodicals, including *Al-Hayat*, *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, and *Al Meda*. He began his career as a teacher of Arabic at a primary school in Baghdad and more recently was the supervisor of collegiate studies at the International Center for Islamic Studies (London).

**Joseph Dellapenna** is a professor at the Villanova University School of Law where his research and teaching interests focus on water rights, Chinese law, international law, comparative law, conflicts of law, and admiralty. Professor Dellapenna has written many books and scholarly articles on a broad range of constitutional, environmental and international subjects, including the article, [“The Iraqi Campaign Against the Marsh Arabs: Ecocide as Genocide”](#) published by the University of Pittsburgh School of Law.

**Rend Rahim Francke** is a founding member and Executive Director of the Iraq Foundation, a non-profit organization working with Iraqis and non Iraqis to promote its vision of democracy and human rights in Iraq, and for a better international understanding of Iraq's potential as a contributor to political stability and economic progress in the Middle East. Ms. Francke was selected by the Iraqi Governing Council to be Iraq's representative in Washington, DC, where her mandate is to re-establish Iraq's embassy in the U.S. which was closed during the original Gulf crisis. The appointment resurrected diplomatic ties between Baghdad and Washington after 13 years.

**Sayed Nadeem Kazmi** is the Senior Consultant in humanitarian affairs and Head of International Development at Al-Khoei Foundation. He is also the main representative to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations in New York. Kazmi is the editor of the international current affairs Islamic monthly, *Dialogue*. His previous experience includes conducting humanitarian assessment of the Marshlands of southern Iraq and Iran, raising awareness of plight of indigenous Marsh Arab refugees and internally displaced persons at international level; representing the Marsh Arab case at UN and European Parliament level; and lobbying successfully for inclusion of Marsh Arabs in key political resolutions.

**Curtis J. Richardson** is Professor of Resource Ecology at the Duke University Wetland Center and Chair, Division of Environmental Sciences and Policy, Nicholas School of the Environment and Earth Sciences. His research interests in applied ecology focus on the long-term ecosystem response to large-scale perturbations such as acid rain, toxic materials, flooding, or nutrient additions. Professor Richardson led a USAID-sponsored expedition to evaluate damage to Iraq's marshlands, which revealed an environmental disaster. He is the only American researcher to have visited Iraq (in June 2003 and January- February 2004) since the U.S.-led invasion.

**Nik Wheeler** is a professional photographer who started his career as a war photographer for United Press International in Vietnam. After being based for two and one half years in Saigon he moved to Beirut to freelance throughout the Middle East, covering various wars. His first book *Return to the Marshes*, shot in the Marshes of Iraq and published by Collins Press, was an

expansion of a *National Geographic* assignment. His photos have graced more than 200 magazine and book covers and his work appears regularly in leading travel magazines.

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*For an overview of the Marsh Arab problem, see ["Twilight People: Iraq's Marsh Inhabitants."](#)  
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