

IGF Iraq 2025

Narrative & Impact Report

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Executive Summary

IGF Iraq 2025 marked a historic milestone as **Iraq's first national Internet Governance Forum**, held on **30–31 August 2025** at the Babylon Rotana Hotel in Baghdad under the United Nations IGF framework. Organized by **Tech4Peace**, the forum brought together over **500 participants** from government, business, civil society, academia, international organizations, and the tech sector to shape the country's digital future. The event offered a unique multi-stakeholder platform to discuss internet governance, digital economy growth, cybersecurity, and online trust in a fast-transforming Iraq.

Over two days, the forum featured:

- **High-level plenaries and ministerial panels** where the Ministry of Communications and Communications & Media Commission outlined Iraq's roadmap for **5G rollout, telecom competition neutrality**, and transparent **site-blocking/exam-shutdown protocols**.
- **Workshops by Meta and Google** on content creation, platform safety, and generative AI, bringing international expertise directly to Iraqi creators, developers, and SMEs.
- **Lightning talks** showcasing private-sector innovation, including Asiacellular's 5G readiness and infrastructure investments, Digital Zone's creator-economy solutions, and Wayl's fintech offerings.
- **Four private roundtables** tackling critical issues: Transit & Connectivity, AI Governance, Misinformation & Election Integrity, and Digital Payments & Inclusion — each producing actionable recommendations and identifying focal points for follow-up.

Why IGF Iraq 2025 Mattered

Iraq is in the midst of a rapid **digital transformation** — expanding fiber networks, enabling digital payments, and investing in data infrastructure. The forum created a safe and neutral space where policymakers, regulators, private sector, and civil society could converge on solutions for **connectivity gaps, digital literacy, platform accountability**, and **economic inclusion**. It also sent a strong signal of Iraq's readiness to engage regionally and globally on digital policy,

attracting participation from international tech giants and development partners like **UNDP**, and coverage by media outlets such as iNews, Al-Samaraa TV, Kurdistan24, Rudaw, and 964media.

Outcomes & Impact

- **Policy Signals:** MoC confirmed a competitive approach to 5G licensing and encouraged open access models for infrastructure. CMC revealed negotiations with regional partners (Saudi Arabia, Oman) to position Iraq as a regional **internet transit hub**.
- **Ecosystem Momentum:** Asiacell pledged continued network expansion and 5G readiness; banks and fintechs pushed for financial inclusion reforms; media and CSOs called for Arabic/Kurdish fact-checking capacity and online safety mechanisms.
- **Social & Media Reach:** The campaign achieved **8.5M Facebook views** and tens of thousands of interactions across platforms, sparking national dialogue on digital rights and opportunities.
- **Commitment to Continuity:** Tech4Peace announced that IGF Iraq will become an **annual platform**, ensuring ongoing dialogue and alignment with the global IGF process.

Overall, IGF Iraq 2025 successfully **elevated Iraq's digital conversation**, connected domestic stakeholders with international peers, and laid the groundwork for concrete initiatives that will advance connectivity, trust, and inclusion in the years ahead.

1) Context & Objectives

Iraq is positioning itself as a regional connectivity corridor and digital economy hub while advancing data infrastructure, digital payments, and citizen services. IGF Iraq aligns with UN-IGF themes and Iraq's national priorities for inclusive, secure, and innovation-friendly digitization

Objectives

1. Convene ≥ 400 multi-stakeholder participants across at least 6 sectors and 10+ institutions.
2. Produce actionable recommendations in 4 tracks with named focal points and 90-day check-ins.
3. Amplify public awareness via $\geq 10M$ social video views and $\geq 40K$ interactions.

Success criteria. Session outputs compiled; cross-sector sign-ons captured; platform safety and payments working groups initiated.

2) Governance & Organizing Model

- **Organizer:** Tech4Peace (T4P) under the UN-IGF umbrella.
- **Government partners:** Prime Minister's Office (PMO), Ministry of Communications (MoC), Communications & Media Commission (CMC), Central Bank of Iraq (CBI).
- **International / private partners:** Meta, Google, telecom operators/ISPs, banks/fintechs.
- **Approach:** Open, multi-stakeholder program design; transparent curation; inclusion emphasis (youth, gender, regions); documentation and public comms via website and social channels.

3) Program Overview

- **Tracks:** Infrastructure & Connectivity; Digital Economy & Payments; AI & Data Governance; Online Safety, Media & Trust; Youth & Skills.
- **Session types:** High-level opening; ministerial & industry plenary; day-two focus panels on **Digital Content in Iraq** and **Women's Safety in the Digital Space**; **2 skills workshops** (Meta, Google); **3 lightning talks** (Asiacell, Digital Zone, Wayl); **4 private roundtables** (Transit & Connectivity; AI Governance; Misinformation & Elections; Digital Payments & Inclusion).

4) Program Deep-Dives

A) Main Stage Activities – Day 1 (30 Aug)

Opening Session – “Internet Governance in Iraq”

- **Moderator:** Laith Al-Jazaeri
- **Speaker:** Dr. Hayam Al-Yasiri, Minister of Communications
- **Core messages:** Law-based internet governance; enabling **direct contracting** to accelerate e-government; linking institutional data to the **National Cybersecurity Center** and **National Digital Transformation Center**; clear decision flow for **exam-period shutdowns**; roadmap to introduce a **new government-backed operator** with a time-limited **5G exclusivity window** to ensure competitive parity; **CMC** to set license pricing.

Ministerial & Industry Plenary – Telecom Policy, 5G & Infrastructure

- **Moderator: Ali Al Hilli** – Chairman of IRADA Network
- **Participants:**
 - **Dr. Buraq Abdulqader** – Advisor to Minister of Communications.
 - **Mohammed Al Gharbawi** – Deputy President, Communications & Media Commission
 - **Omar Falih** – Communication & PR Director, Asiacell
 - **Martin Frank** – Strategic Advisor, IQ Networks
- **Highlights:** Operators outlined readiness (data centers, towers, fiber, enterprise solutions); calls for **neutral, transparent regulation** and route diversity; Asiacell emphasized >8,300 towers in 2025 on course to ~9,000 by year-end, and readiness for **5G** pending licensing.
- **Takeaways:** Shared understanding on 5G sequencing, spectrum/licensing transparency, and infrastructure neutrality.

Lightning Talks

- **Asiacell** (network & 5G readiness)
- **Digital Zone** (Digital Commerce)
- **Wayl** (Fintech).

E-Payment Panel: Digital Fraud & Awareness

- **Moderator: Ahmed Adel** – President of Asraflak (National Financial Inclusion Campaign)
- **Participants:**
 - **Zaid Gaith** - Public Policy Director, **Meta**
 - **Ali Tareq** - Executive Director, **Iraqi Private Banks League (IPBL)**
 - **Radwan Jamal** – Head of Cyber Security Department, **Central Bank of Iraq (CBI)**
 - **Ahmed Jassim**, Deputy Director for Cybersecurity, **Iraq National Security Service (INSS)**
- **Highlights:** IGF Iraq's e-payment panel united Meta, CBI, IPBL, and NSS to tackle fraud, align platform and banking controls, and launch coordinated public-awareness campaigns for safer digital payments across Iraq.
- **Takeaways:** Fraud rising; awareness, reporting, and data-sharing must rapidly scale.

B) Main Stage Activities – Day 2 (31 Aug)

Panel – “Digital Content in Iraq”

- **Moderator: Ahmed Al Shagra – CPO of 1001**
- **Participants:**
 - **Dr. Murad Abdulsammad** – Deputy for National Security Advisory, Prime Minister Office
 - **Taha Abo Ragheef** – Executive Director of Al Rabea Sport Channels
 - **Zaid Jawad** – Founder and CEO of Iraqi Cinema
 - **Charles Chaban (Online)** – Chief Representative Officer, International Trademark Association (INTA)
- **Focus:** Role of content in economy & culture; creator sustainability; platform partnerships; support programs; combating fraud and harmful links.
- **Signals:** Commitments to strengthen the creator ecosystem, support Arabic/Kurdish fact-checking capacity, and align brand safety with local context.

Panel – “Women’s Safety in the Digital Space”

- **Moderator:** Rafeef Al Hafedh – Journalist
- **Participants:**
 - **Rasha Al Temimi** – Iraqi Lawyers Association
 - **Sahar Tawfeeq** – UNFPA
 - **Ahlam Maki** – Al Amal Association
 - **Sara Jassim** – Tech for Her Protection (Tech4Peace Initiative)

Focus: Privacy & security, **digital violence**, hate speech, barriers to women's participation; practical safety resources and reporting pathways.

Signals: Cross-institutional coordination on safety responses; integrating **digital literacy** and safety in schools; scaling NGO support services.

C) Private Round Tables

- **#1 Transit & Connectivity** — Open licensing vs. monopoly; Iraq's potential as a **regional transit corridor**; SLA reliability and outage reporting; civil-works coordination to protect fiber; pragmatic FTTH timelines; consortium investment appetite given **clear rules**.
- **#2 AI Governance** — Interim **data-use** and **privacy** guidance; form a national **AI Committee** with technical authority; IEC/ISO-aligned standards; **open data** for research; capacity-building (student clubs, national AI center).
- **#3 Misinformation & Elections Integrity** — Election-period harms; gendered abuse; Arabic/Kurdish **fact-checking** capacity; platform **liaisons/local presence**; rapid-response training for media and creators.
- **#4 Digital Payments & Inclusion** — Onboarding **small merchants** (KYB/KYC), standardized **dispute/chargeback** timelines, customer-care SLAs, academic integrations, curriculum-level **financial literacy**, bank DR & connectivity upgrades.

D) Workshops

Meta Workshop – Content Creation & Safety

Meta’s session trained Iraqi creators and SMEs on content strategy, monetization, and platform safety tools, equipping participants with practical skills to grow responsibly and combat harmful or misleading content online.

Google Workshop – Generative AI Fundamentals

Google introduced participants to generative AI concepts, demonstrated responsible AI use cases, and provided hands-on experience, encouraging Iraqi developers and students to adopt AI safely and innovate solutions for local challenges.

E) Participation & Inclusion Analytics

Overall Attendance & Representation

IGF Iraq 2025 recorded **1564 registered participants in the online form**, representing **263 unique organizations** — a strong cross-section of Iraq's digital ecosystem. High-level participation included representatives from the **Prime Minister's Office (PMO)**, **Ministry of Communications (MoC)**, **Communications & Media Commission (CMC)**, and **Central Bank of Iraq (CBI)**. Key international stakeholders — **UNDP**, **Meta**, **Google**, and **TikTok** — attended and contributed directly to panels, workshops, and policy discussions. Around 500 participants in person for the two days and more than 64,000 participants in online (Live in IGF Iraq and Tech4Peace social media).

Diversity & Youth Engagement

Youth participation was a defining feature: dozens of student innovators, hackathon alumni, and early-career professionals attended workshops led by Meta and Google. **Gender balance** was notable in several sessions — particularly the *Women's Safety in the Digital Space* panel, which drew strong attendance from women-led NGOs and digital-rights groups. Interpretation and bilingual moderation (Arabic/English) ensured accessibility for international observers and diaspora participants.

6) Media, Communications & Digital

Strategic Communication Approach

The IGF Iraq 2025 communications strategy was designed to amplify the forum's key messages — connectivity, trust, and inclusion — across digital and traditional channels. The campaign ran from early July to early September 2025, combining owned media, earned media, and user-generated content (UGC) to ensure that the forum reached audiences far beyond the conference hall.

Social Media Performance

Reach & Engagement:

- **Facebook:** 8.5M total views, 2.3M reach, 44.7K interactions, 15K link clicks, 20.1K page visits, and +2.1K new followers.
- **Instagram:** 50.3K interactions, 11.5K link clicks, 42.8K profile visits, and +5.8K new followers — with a higher female engagement share compared to Facebook.
- **LinkedIn:** 43.2K impressions, 5.6K clicks, and a 15.6% engagement rate — well above global B2B benchmarks.

Content Highlights:

- Short-form video (Reels) drove the highest engagement, particularly clips of the Ministerial Plenary and the Women's Safety panel.
- Stories and live updates maintained audience retention across the two-day program.
- Speaker quotes, infographics, and key statistics performed strongly on LinkedIn, attracting policymakers and sector experts.

Web & Online Presence

The official **IGF Iraq website** (igfiraq.com) served as the central hub for agenda, speaker bios, and live-stream access. Traffic spikes corresponded with session start times, with peak concurrent viewership during:

- **Ministerial Plenary** (Telecom Policy & 5G Roadmap)
- **E-Payment Fraud Awareness Panel**
- **Women's Safety in the Digital Space Panel**

SEO-optimized blogs and technology news sites, including 964media and Iraq Business News, published pre-event and post-event coverage highlighting Iraq's first national IGF, its partnership with UNDP, and participation from Meta and Google. This online footprint contributed to positioning Iraq as an emerging digital policy hub in the region.

Traditional Media & Broadcast Coverage

IGF Iraq 2025 secured broad media coverage, including:

- **Television:** Segments on Al-Iraqiya TV, Rudaw, Kurdistan24, and more covering opening remarks and key policy announcements.
- **Press:** Articles in Arabic and English focusing on 5G readiness, digital payments, and online safety priorities.
- **Radio & News Portals:** Commentary pieces featuring Tech4Peace founder Aws Al-Saadi, framing IGF Iraq as a platform for safe and inclusive digital transformation.

User-Generated Content (UGC)

Attendees and speakers actively shared insights under **#IGFIraq**, **#IGFI**, and **#IGFIraq2025**, generating dozens of LinkedIn posts and hundreds of shares across Facebook and Instagram. Influencers and partner pages reposted event highlights, further expanding reach and creating a **community-driven narrative** around Iraq's digital future.

7) Partner & Sponsor Outcomes

Government & Institutional Partners: Prime Minister's Office (PMO); Ministry of Communications (MoC); Communications & Media Commission (CMC); Central Bank of Iraq (CBI).

International/Private Partners: Meta, Google; UN & development partners.

Sponsors (tiers):

- **Diamond: Asiacell** — dominant stage and digital presence; highlighted 5G readiness; network scale (>8,300 towers) and enterprise services; strong booth & stakeholder engagement.
- **Platinum: Tarik Al Thuraya** — premium branding; transit & infrastructure positioning.
- **Gold: Trade Bank of Iraq, Masarat Al-Iraq** — visibility across stage assets; payments enablement narratives.
- **Silver: iQ Networks, Hilal Al-Rafidain** — connectivity branding; ecosystem presence.

Outcomes for partners: High share-of-voice; meetings & lead generation; favorable sentiment in earned media; alignment with policy dialogues (5G, transit, inclusion).

8) Policy & Ecosystem Outcomes

- **Transit & Connectivity:** pursue route diversity and open licensing; establish coordinated civil-works protocols; publish target SLAs and outage reporting.
- **5G & Competition:** maintain operator-neutral infrastructure access; sequence 5G rollout with transparent spectrum/licensing rules; enable enterprise/vertical pilots.
- **AI Governance:** issue interim guidelines on lawful data use and privacy; constitute a national AI technical committee; launch open-data pipelines for research; adopt IEC/ISO-aligned standards.

- **Misinformation & Elections:** set up a national coordination cell; expand Arabic/Kurdish fact-checking; formalize platform liaisons; fund literacy programs.
- **Digital Payments & Inclusion:** simplify KYB for small merchants; standardize dispute/chargeback timelines; integrate academic institutions; embed financial literacy in curricula; strengthen bank DR and connectivity.