

Government for putting plans into place to ensure security and basic services for the Iraqi people during this time of transition.

We know that there will be very difficult days ahead in Iraq; there will probably be more violence. But like any sovereign, independent nation, Iraq must be free to chart its own course. No one should seek to influence, exploit, or disrupt this period of transition. Now's the time for every neighbor and nation to respect Iraq's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

A new Iraqi Government will face important decisions about Iraq's future. But as today's voting demonstrates, the Iraq people want disagreements to be debated and decided through a political process that provides security and prosperity for all Iraqis.

And as they go forward, the Iraqi people must know that the United States will fulfill its obligations. We will continue with the responsible removal of United States forces from Iraq. Indeed, for the first time in years, there are no—now fewer than 100,000 American troops serving in Iraq. By the end of August, our combat mission will end. As I said last year when I announced our new strategy in Iraq, we will continue to advise and assist Iraqi se-

curity forces, carry out targeted counterterrorism operations with our Iraqi partners, and protect our forces and civilians. And by the end of next year, all U.S. troops will be out of Iraq.

In the weeks and months ahead, the United States will continue to work closely with the Iraqi people as we expand our broad-based partnership based on mutual interest and mutual respect. And in that effort, I'm pleased that Vice President Biden will continue to play a leading role.

On behalf of the American people, I congratulate the Iraqi people on their courage throughout this historic election. Today, in the face of violence from those who would only destroy, Iraqis took a step forward in the hard work of building up their country. And the United States will continue to help them in that effort as we responsibly end this war and support the Iraqi people as they take control of their future.

Thanks very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:09 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on the Parliamentary Elections in Iraq *March 7, 2010*

I congratulate the people of Iraq for casting their ballots in this important parliamentary election. I have great respect for the millions of Iraqis who refused to be deterred by acts of violence and who exercised their right to vote today. Their participation demonstrates that the Iraqi people have chosen to shape their future through the political process.

I commend the Iraqi Government and Iraqi security forces for providing security at nearly 50,000 voting booths at more than 8,000 polling stations across Iraq. We mourn the tragic loss of life today, and honor the courage and resilience of the Iraqi people who once again defied threats to advance their democracy.

Hundreds of thousands of Iraqi poll workers contributed to the effort, as well as domestic party and civil society observers. Iraqi citizens around the world also participated in these elections, including Iraqis living in the U.S. who voted in Arlington, VA, Chicago, Dallas, Dearborn, Nashville, Phoenix, San Diego, and San Francisco.

The important work of Iraq's Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) will continue in the days to come as it counts ballots, tabulates results, and investigates complaints. We also salute the invaluable assistance provided by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI).

Statement on the 45th Anniversary of the 1965 Voting Rights March *March 7, 2010*

On this day, 45 years ago, hundreds of brave men and women gathered in the small town of Selma, Alabama, to announce to the world that they, too, sang America. As they marched from Selma to Montgomery, fully aware of the danger that lay ahead, these heroes let their feet speak in a way that their voices alone could not.

Today as we gather in this hallowed place on the anniversary of what would come to be known as Bloody Sunday, let us honor the memory of all those who were shoved and beaten within an inch of their lives because they believed in the simple truth that every American, regardless of race, had the right to cast a vote, had the right to live free, had the right to reach for their dreams.

It would take the marchers three tries to make it to Montgomery in March of 1965, and even longer to secure the rights they fought so hard for. Along the way, leaders were born, men like John Lewis, who endured taunts and beatings with the same quiet grace and dignity and determination that so many of us admire today. For Congressman Lewis and so many like him, no sacrifice was too great to make in freedom's cause.

The movement also had a partner in the White House, a President who declared "we shall overcome," and who understood that our Nation could not move forward as long as any of its citizens were held back. President Johnson helped deliver on that promise by signing the Voting Rights Act in August of that year, a law that aligned this Nation more closely with its founding ideals of justice and equality for all.

Today we stand on the shoulders of all the Moses generation that made the Voting Rights Act possible, that made the Civil Rights Act possible, that made the civil rights movement possible. Yet with all of the progress that has

been made since that terrible day in Selma, we also know that there is still much work to be done by us, the Joshua generation.

Since taking office, I have never forgotten that responsibility. That's why the first bill I signed as President helped ensure that never again will someone be forced to do the same work for less pay simply because of their gender. That's why we continue to give the Department of Justice, led by Attorney General Holder, the tools to protect voting rights and defend fair practices across our Nation. And that's why last month, we sought final resolution with the Nation's Black farmers who had suffered indignation for years because of the misguided actions of their Government.

But we must also remember that the mission at the heart of the civil rights movement was never simply about obtaining the right to sit at a lunch counter or ride on a bus. It was about giving Americans of every race, faith, and station the right to fulfill their God-given potential. That's why we are making unprecedented investments in the education of our children, in guaranteeing quality, affordable health care for every American, and in working to create good, well-paying jobs that will help build the economy of the 21st century.

So let us honor the men and women who marched into history so many years ago, both those who are with us today and those who long ago gave their lives to perfect our Union. Let us remember their courage in the face of danger and recommit ourselves to the journey ahead. Because I am confident that if we stand together in the Joshua generation, as the Moses generation did before us, then, in the words of a song we know so well, "We will face the rising Sun of a new day begun." Thank you.