



IRAQ SHINES AT THE IRVINE GLOBAL VILLAGE FESTIVAL 2026: Celebrating Diversity, Diplomacy, and 10,000 Years of History

Last weekend, the **Iraqi American Cultural Center (IACC)**—operating through IraqiAmerican.org—proudly presented the **Official Iraqi Pavilion** at the **Irvine Global Village Festival 2026**. Organized in formal partnership with the **Consulate General of the Republic of Iraq in Los Angeles**, this milestone exhibition brought the vibrant spirit, history, and traditions of Iraq to the diverse community of Irvine and visitors from across Southern California.

Marking the **fourth consecutive participation** by the IACC and the Consulate of Iraq, this year's exhibit carried a special significance as it also celebrated the **National Day of Iraq on October 3**.

A Beautiful Mosaic of Unity and Diversity

In a powerful display of national unity and harmony, the pavilion beautifully reflected the diverse cultural tapestry of Iraq. Representatives of **Assyrians, Chaldeans, Arabs, Kurds, Turkmen, Armenians, Mandaean (Sabaeans), and many other minorities** danced together hand-in-hand. Together, they proudly presented authentic artifacts dating back over **10,000 years of history**, demonstrating how Iraq's ancient Mesopotamian roots serve as a shared foundation that unites all its communities.

Immersive Cultural Exhibits and the Legendary Shabandar Café

The pavilion welcomed approximately **5,750 visitors**, offering a deeply immersive experience. A major highlight of the exhibition was a meticulous replica setup of Baghdad's famous, historic **Al Shabandar Café**, beautifully designed by **IACC Co-Founder, Engineer Areij Alnajjar**.

Reflecting on the architecture and its mission, **Engineer Areij Alnajjar** shared:

"Architecture and design are universal languages. Recreating the iconic Al Shabandar Café wasn't just about constructing a physical space; it was about building a sensory and emotional bridge between Baghdad and California. By bringing the heart of Iraq's cultural and

intellectual history to the City of Irvine, we invite our neighbors to step directly into our heritage, fostering a deeper, shared human connection."

Throughout the festival, the pavilion was alive with vibrant activities, including traditional dances, live folkloric singing, a traditional dress-up station, and deep cultural information exchanges.

Honoring Our Roots and National Reach

The expansive growth of the IACC stands as a testament to years of dedicated grassroots leadership. We extend our profound appreciation and thanks to **Senior Manager, Engineer, community leader, and former Los Angeles Mayoral candidate Asaad Alnajjar**, whose foundational vision has steered the organization's growth.

Reflecting on this expansive journey, **Former Los Angeles Mayoral Candidate Asaad Alnajjar** stated:

"The journey of the IACC began with a localized mission right here in Los Angeles, driven by the desire to give our vibrant community an authentic voice. Over the years, we have worked tirelessly to expand this cultural bridge—not just across California, but all the way to Washington, D.C. Our goal has always been to build an elevated, precise, and dignified image of Iraqi American culture, showing the nation the immense depth of our shared heritage and our contributions to the fabric of American society."

Words of Gratitude from Iraqi Diplomatic Leadership

The collaborative effort drew high praise from Iraqi diplomatic leadership. **Dr. Saif, Acting Consul for the Consulate General of the Republic of Iraq in Los Angeles**, expressed his profound gratitude to the hosts and organizers:

"On behalf of the Iraqi diplomatic mission, we extend our heartfelt thanks to the City of Irvine for providing this magnificent platform to celebrate Iraq's National Day and our 10,000-year legacy. We also commend the Iraqi American Cultural Center for their exceptional organization. The IACC stands as an indispensable partner in cultural diplomacy, brilliantly showcasing the unified spirit and rich diversity of the Iraqi-American community."

The Definitive Voice for Iraqi Americans in the Western USA

This monumental success underscores a critical reality: **The Iraqi American Cultural Center (IACC) is the only legitimate, officially sanctioned non-profit organization dedicated to representing the Iraqi-American community across the Western United States.**

The historic bond between the organization and the local municipality remains uniquely profound; building upon years of close collaboration, the **City of Irvine was officially named an Honorary Member of the IACC in 2025**, solidifying an enduring alliance built on mutual respect and shared cultural appreciation.

Distinguished Recognition & Official Endorsements

The profound impact of our cultural diplomacy was formally recognized by local leadership. We were deeply honored to receive official accolades from **Irvine Mayor Larry Agran** and **Vice Mayor James Mai**.

Furthermore, we extend our sincere gratitude to **California State Senator and former Irvine Mayor Dr. Steven Choi** for his distinguished presence, support, and long-standing engagement with Orange County's diverse communities. His visit to our pavilion highlights the deep civic relationships the IACC continues to cultivate across all levels of leadership.

A Sincere Thank You

We extend our highest gratitude to our core partners and supporters who made this fourth annual showcase a historic success:

- **The Consulate General of the Republic of Iraq in Los Angeles** and **Acting Consul Dr. Saif Aljouani**, for their unwavering diplomatic partnership and official endorsement.
- **The City of Irvine, Mayor Larry Agran, and Vice Mayor James Mai**, and Village staff for their warm hospitality, leadership recognition, and continued fellowship as honorary IACC members.
- **State Senator Dr. Steven Choi**, for his meaningful support and attendance.
- **Senior Manager, Engineer, and Former Los Angeles Mayoral 2026 Candidate Asaad Alnajjar**, for his foundational leadership and national advocacy.
- **Engineer Areij Alnajjar**, for her brilliant design work in bringing Iraqi culture to life.
- Our dedicated volunteers from every community and background, and the thousands of visitors who stepped into the pavilion.

Our heritage connects us. Our culture brings us together. As the definitive nonprofit representative for our community in the West, our partnership with local and global leaders builds a stronger, more unified future.

#Iraq #IraqiAmericanCulturalCenter #IraqiAmericanOrg #IrvineGlobalVillage2026
#IraqiHeritage #IraqUSA #CulturalDiplomacy #IraqiAmericanCommunity
#SouthernCalifornia #Mesopotamia #ShabandarCafe #Baghdad #IraqNationalDay
#CityOfIrvine #StevenChoi #AsaadAlnajjar