

**Wealth of ideas** Global

The latest attempt to increase school attendance in poor countries has raised €21bn from rich nations. The Global Partnership for Education also encourages countries to increase education budgets.

**Q&A**

**Jennifer A Duncan**  
Director, *Fape*  
Washington



The Foundation for Art and Preservation in Embassies (*Fape*) is a non-profit organisation that places permanent artworks by American artists in US embassies worldwide.

**Q** Why is it important to have American art represented in US embassies?

**A** Having a great work of art by an American artist is a gift to the embassy and to the people who go there. It's not easy to get a visa into our country so this is a way for us to share our culture with people around the world. Art is in a language that doesn't have any words but it still expresses something about our nation.

**Q** What is the impact of these artworks on diplomacy?

**A** People thought the painting of Colin Powell [who is of Jamaican descent] by Dorothea Rockburne that we were giving to the US embassy in Kingstown was going to be a portrait of him. But when we installed it they said, "What is that?" After we explained that it was the night sky when General Powell was born, it resonated with them. When I was in Guangzhou, I found it interesting that the idea of a non-profit organisation in China is foreign. When they learned that a group of donors in the US support art in our embassies and pay for these masterpieces, they wanted to figure out how they might initiate something like that in their country. [Art] makes a difference.

**Q** How do you ensure cultural propriety?

**A** We check colours. Joel Shapiro did a 22-foot-high blue sculpture for the US embassy in Guangzhou and we made sure that blue didn't have a negative meaning in Chinese. At one point, the way his sculpture was pointing towards the building wasn't feng shui, so we had to adjust it. — SK

AMBASSADOR NO.27

**Middle ground**

London [BAYAN SAMI ABDUL RAHMAN]

Unusually for a foreign legation, Bayan Sami Abdul Rahman's office contains two flags: the red, white and black of Iraq and the red, white and green of Kurdistan. Rahman, the Kurdistan Regional Government's (KRG) high representative to the UK currently spends her days assembling tactful answers to the question of how much longer she's going to need both banners. The partial conquest of Iraq by the fundamentalist militia known as The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Isis) has emphasised the relative stability and prosperity of Iraqi Kurdistan; the waiting, for the state-in-waiting, is surely nearly over.

"For the Kurdish public, wherever they are, it's a very exciting moment," says Rahman. "It's something that every Kurd dreams of. All of us have sacrificed family members for this. We've given a lot individually and as a people."

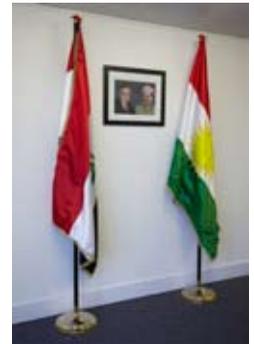
Rahman is no exception. Her father, Sami Abdul Rahman, a general secretary of the Kurdistan Democratic party, was among dozens killed in a suicide bombing in Erbil in 2004, along with one of her brothers. Among the decorations in her office is a framed black-and-white photograph of her father as a guerilla in the 1960s. He is alongside Mustafa Barzani, the Kurdish figurehead whose son, Massoud Barzani, is now president of Iraqi Kurdistan.

"I come from a very political family," says Rahman. "My father was in the leadership of one of the main Kurdish parties. My mother, though she was theoretically a housewife, was very active as well. I grew up in an atmosphere where in our house – whether it was in the mountains, in Baghdad, when my father was a minister or when we were refugees in Iran and then Britain – there were always people turning up and then later I'd see them on TV giving a speech."

Rahman has lived in the UK since the age of 11. Before being appointed to her current job in 2005 she had a distinguished career in journalism, including a stint as the *Financial Times'* Tokyo correspondent.

"I grew up with foreign journalists, who were very exotic and exciting, coming to our house," she says. "So all of that was in the blood as well. But I will do whatever I can for my country. I say that from the heart. I could have stayed a journalist but I've chosen this because I believe I can contribute something to promoting my country."

As for which country that is, President Barzani has promised a referendum on Kurdish



independence within the coming months. Invited to predict an outcome, Rahman is at once diplomatic and yet not.

"I don't know what the question will be," she says. "But if there's a straightforward 'Do you want an independent Kurdistan?' it will be yes – overwhelmingly." — AM

**The embassy**

Until 2011, the KRG's office was off Edgware Road in the heart of London's Middle Eastern community. Seeking an address with slightly greater diplomatic heft, they now rent part of a building on Buckingham Gate.

**The staff**

Just seven, plus – as Rahman puts it – "some very bright and helpful interns". The office is run on a tight budget, tightened further by Baghdad's suspension of funds to Kurdistan in a row over oil revenues.

**The challenges**

Preparing for two contradictory outcomes – Kurdish independence or reconciliation with Iraq – while continuing to promote Kurdistan as a secure and reliable commercial, diplomatic and military partner.