



## MIDDLE EAST PRESS REVIEW

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## **A. POLITICS**

### **A.1. Ambassador Hill: Kirkuk issue will be solved through political process (al-Iraqiya TV)**

U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, Christopher Hill believes the Kirkuk issue will be settled through the political process and not the election law. Ambassador Hill indicated that he is trying to incorporate everyone's viewpoints to reach a solution to the issue while avoiding the possibilities of interfering in Iraq's interior affairs. Hill further stated that he expects the Parliament will reach a solution to conduct the voting process on the Election Law today; pointing out that passing the law will create the proper atmosphere to hold the elections, and will enable Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) to resume its job and to help provide the international monitors with their requirement to make their tasks possible during the elections.

### **A.2. Talabani reaffirms Iraq's desire to strengthen cooperation and coordination with the UN (Independent Press Agency)**

Iraqi President Jalal Talabani, met with the UN Special Envoy of the International Compact with Iraq, Ibrahim Gambari, and discussed bilateral relations between Iraq and the UN and ways of strengthening them.

A statement issued by the Presidency of the Republic, said that during the meeting, Talabani expressed Iraq's desire to strengthen cooperation and coordination with the International Society, which will serve the aspirations of the Iraqi people in peace, security and development. Talabani stressed to Gambari the role of the UN in helping Iraq to get out of Chapter VII, so the Iraqis can move forward and build a Federal Democratic State through the use of the frozen Iraqi funds. Talabani shed light on the current political situation in Iraq, and the efforts being made to adopt the elections law, and hoped that the elections will take place as scheduled.

Talabani pointed to the advancement of Iraq's relations with neighboring countries and the Arab World, saying that Iraq is looking forward to strengthen these relationships, which ensure the common interests of these countries. Gambari reaffirmed the intention of the International Organization through the UNAMI to support Iraq's efforts in building a modern democratic state.

### **A.3. Parliament session resumes today to vote on the Election Law (al-Iraqiya TV)**

Parliamentary sources pointed out to the initial agreement between the political blocs on the election law draft, clarifying that only one point related to the voters' registration records remains disputed.

Al-Iraqiya reporter from Baghdad was asked the following question:

Q: What is new in the Parliament building today?

Reporter: "After adjourning yesterday's session, a meeting was held inside Ayyad al-Samara'ie's house. The meeting included al-Tawafuq Front, the Dialogue Front, and Turkmen and Arab representatives."

"According to the information available to us, there was some sort of agreement between the Arabs, Turkmen and al-Tawafuq Front on the proposal submitted by the Iraqi Coalition and the National Iraqi Alliance, which provides to use the 2009 voters' registration files and establish a committee to compare it with the 2005 registration files. In the event an abnormal increase in census is discovered, elections in Kirkuk will be canceled."

### **A.4. Samarraie: The referendum on the security agreement is in the hands of the Government and IHEC (Independent Press Agency)**

Abd al-Karim al-Samarraie, Deputy Chairman of the Security and Defense Committee, said that the matter of the referendum on the security agreement between Iraq and the U.S. is in the hands of the Government and IHEC.

Government sources had announced that the date of the referendum on the security agreement will be in sync with the next Parliamentary elections for financial and logistical reasons. On Sunday, Samarraie told IPA, "There is unanimity within the Council of Representatives to hold a referendum on the security agreement. The implementation of the agreement now, is dependent upon the Government and IHEC."

According to the security agreement, U.S. forces are scheduled to completely withdrawal from Iraq at the end of 2011. Samarraie said that the Iraqi security forces are able to hold the security file in the country. Adding that the bombings that happened in August and October, are not an excuse to give the U.S. forces more power in the security file.

Some news had indicated that there is an intention to give U.S. forces a greater role in Baghdad, after the bloody bombings in October, which targeted the Ministry of Justice and Baghdad Provincial Council. Samarraie added, "We don't want to expand the advisory role of the U.S. forces, especially deploying them in the disputed areas, this can only be done by changing the security agreement. We are awaiting the day when foreign forces will be out of our country, so we can rely entirely on ourselves in handling the security file."

According to the security agreement, the mission of U.S. forces is limited to an advisory role in their work with the Iraqi security forces. It is noteworthy that the Top U.S Commander in Iraq, General Raymond Odierno, had proposed the formation of joint Iraqi Army, Peshmerga and U.S. forces to be deployed in the disputed areas.

#### **A.5. MPs to submit a request to oust the first deputy to Parliament's speaker (al-Jewar)**

A parliamentary source said that more than fifty deputies signed a request to dismiss the First Deputy Speaker, Khalid al-Attiya. The source added that the sponsors based their decision on Al-Attiyah hindering the House of Representatives' role by delaying the cross-examination of corrupt politicians. This led to the spread of financial and administrative corruption in all state agencies, waste of public funds and many of the government institutions failed to execute their duties.

The source further stated that the deputies also accused al-Attiyah of exploiting his position for personal and partisan interests and protecting officials from his political party.

#### **A.6. Iraqi Parliament Fails Again to Approve New Electoral Law (EXSUM)**

The Iraqi parliament has postponed the vote to approve a new electoral law, Saturday, that it needs to hold January 16 parliamentary elections. It was the seventh time in the last month that Iraqi MPs were unable to resolve disagreements.

It was several times in recent weeks that the Iraqi parliament tried and failed to reach a consensus over a new electoral law to pave the way for scheduled parliamentary elections on January 16. Iraqi TV had reported, earlier in the day, that a compromise had been reached over the thorny issue of Kirkuk, which pits Kurds, Turkomans and Arabs against each other, but the announcement proved in the end to be wishful thinking.

The head of Iraq's Electoral Committee, Faraj al-Haidari, has warned Iraqi politicians repeatedly that if they don't approve a new electoral law, soon, it will become impossible for elections to be held. He says that each and every delay in approving the law affects the timeline of the election and the electoral commission will have to base all its planning on the text of the new electoral law, so it's difficult to say exactly when the (parliamentary) election can actually be held.

The Iraqi parliament has been quarreling for weeks over the key issue of how to apportion seats in the ethnically mixed, oil-rich city of Kirkuk. An alliance of Sunni Arab politicians hope to divide seats equally in Kirkuk between Arabs, Kurds and Turcomen, while a Kurdish coalition is pushing to use a 2009 electoral role, reflecting recent growth in the city's Kurdish population.

Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki has warned parliament that Iraq could be plunged into a new cycle of chaos and violence if elections do not go ahead as planned in January. U.S. military officials have also warned that a postponement of January parliamentary elections could put a damper on plans to withdraw U.S. forces from Iraq during the course of 2010.

#### **A.7. MP al-A'alyan: We strongly condemn any visit by any Iranian official to Iraq (al-Arabiya TV)**

President of the Dialogue Front, Khalaf al-A'alyan, expressed his rejection to the President of the Iranian al-Shura Council, Ali Larijani's visit to Iraq, describing it as an intervention in Iraq's interior affairs.

Al-A'layan stated: "Larijani has ambitions in Iraq and Iran interferes widely in Iraq's interior affairs, which is a known fact to everyone."

"We have nothing against the people of Iran, the Iranians are our brothers, friends, neighbors and are Muslims, but the Iranian Government's intervention in Iraq's affairs has led us to take a stand against it."

"We strongly condemn every visit by every Iranian official to Iraq, we believe that such visits are interventions in Iraq's affairs, these visits are to give directives and give orders; they are not to consult or assist."

#### **A.8. Iraqi National Unity will explicitly announce the negatives that accompanied the political process (al-Arabiya TV)**

Abdul-Adhim Muhammad, Member of the new Iraqi National Unity Coalition, which was established and announced yesterday, stated that the new coalition came to reform the negatives that accompanied the political process.

Muhammad stated: "We've talked about foreign agendas that interfere in Iraq's interior affairs. Iran intervenes very comfortably in Iraq's interior affairs, so does other regional countries. It is unfortunate to say that these interferences are occurring while the government is watching and not acting."

"The new coalition came to identify in a frank and explicit way the negatives that accompanied the political process."

#### **A.9. A new coalition was announced in Baghdad today under the name of the National Unity Alliance (Al-Sharqiya TV)**

A new coalition was announced in Baghdad today under the name of the National Unity Alliance, headed by Nihru Mohammad Abd al-Karim, to take part in the upcoming elections. new alliance comprises a number of political blocs, including:

1. The Iraqi National Unity assembly, headed by Nihru Abd al-Karim
2. The National Dialogue Council, headed by Khalaf al-Olayan
3. Usala Grouping, headed by Fadhil al-Maliki
4. Ansar al-Risalah (supporters of the message) Organization, whose secretary general is Mazin Makkiyah
5. Al-Fudoul Party, headed by Rafi'a Abd al-Karim al-Fahdawi
6. The Iraqi National Trend, headed by Hussein Ahmad al-Safi
7. Al-Wala'a lil Iraq (loyalty to Iraq), headed by Ala Barjas al-Issawi
8. The Iraqi Democratic Trend, headed by Abd al-Ghafour al-Yasiri
9. Well as number of political figures and tribal chiefs. The constituent statement of the alliance, which was read in Babil Hotel in Baghdad, said that the alliance includes broad segments and spectra of the Iraqi people that avoids all sectarian basis and the allocation of sectarian quotas that were established in the past stage.

#### **A.10. The disagreement of views were larger than the sum of the Election Law (Al-Iraqiya TV)**

The disagreement of views were larger than the sum of the Election Law. Political rivalry, narrow-minded nationalism and the desire to procrastinate and evade carried more weight during today's parliamentary session than preserving the interests of the homeland and taking the Iraqi people's interests at heart. What has happened is unprecedented and never has taken place neither at the regional level nor in the world at large. Hence Iraq is embarking on a state of political void and constitutional crises that would render its parliament irrelevant should the parliament fail to ratify the new Election Law. Vice Chair for the Legal Committee in Parliament Saleem al-Jabouri affirmed that reaching an agreement on Election Law in today's morning session was aborted, additionally that it is likely to happen tomorrow after parliament has adjourned and reconvened in hopes that it might revive the dying law. Against this background several delegates were insistent on remaining in their seats until the Election Law would be voted in the affirmative. Earlier Jabouri had noted that whatever fresh proposals that are being presented shall be merged into a single one that addresses the issue of Kirkuk.

United Nations Representatives to Iraq Ad Melkert ruled out that parliamentary elections in Iraq shall be held on its due date on January 16, 2010. He described the task as being "impossible". Melkert elaborated on the role of the world organization as seeking to find a compromise among all parties and that any agreed upon resolution shall be fully respected and upheld by the world organization. Meanwhile, the Kurdistan Alliance had circulated its proposal of which the Parliament's Primacy Council was kept appraised. The delegate for the Alliance Mahmoud Othman noted that the amendment made by the Alliance provide the holding of elections concurrently throughout all the provinces with no exceptions. It called for the elimination of the phrase "the fellowship" (those that have entered into a brotherly association). The amendment could either maintain the number of seats as is 275 or use equal base rates in accordance to the natural demographic growth of every province. He noted that vice presented Adel Abdel Mahdie has presented the Parliament's Primacy Council with a fresh proposal.

The delegate from al-Hiwar Front Mohamed Salman al-Ta'ei noted that Parliament has reached a dead-end with respect to the Election Law. This he attributed to the falling out, evasion and double-dealing attitudes among the political entities with regard of reaching a "agree to disagree" among the opposing parties over the issue of Kirkuk. This problematic situation has positioned Parliament in a state of incapability to reach a final decision as a foundation for the new Election Law. The situation is grim for reaching something new that could be accepted by the contending parties of Kirkuk. Member of Parliament Haider al-Abbadi noted that the core and root of the stalemate revolves around the voters' registries in the province.

He disclaimed the existence of a struggle over the compensatory seats that could be awarded to the Arab and Turkmen constituencies. Abbadi noted the dilemma behind authorizing the registries for the year of 2005 observing that such blessings shall lead to election deferment. Delegate Mutlaq al-Jabouri from the Arab/Turkmen Constituency indicated that the joint proposal addressing the issue of Kirkuk stipulated that the voters' registries for the year of 2005 are to be authorized in the coming elections. It further provides a rerun of the elections in the province should the rate of misconducted votes exceed 10 percent. He observed that the 2005 registries are reasonably truthful, and that those of 2009 that were severely tainted.

Vice President Tarek al-Hashimi expressed deep concern over the manner that could be embraced to deal with the election deadline given the deficiency in voting as of yet on the

law. He described the dilemma as exposing the country to a severe labyrinth at the constitutional level. Hashimi advocated for connecting all endeavors and marshalling all available means to address the technicality of the problem rather than its political component. Revered Spiritual Leader Ali al-Sistani met with the Iranian Chair of the Consultative Council in Iran Ali Larijani who had arrived to the Holy city of Najaf at the helm of a blue-ribbon delegation.

#### **A.11. Iraqi Lawmakers Fail to Vote on Election Law (VOA)**

The Iraqi parliament has again failed to approve a law that would govern next year's national elections. Iraqi lawmakers say they will consider the bill again on Sunday.

Their repeated failure to reach a consensus on the controversial bill has raised doubts that the elections will take place as planned on January 16, 2010. The election commission chief Faraj al-Haidari had warned parliament that if it did not approve the bill this week there will not be enough time to get ready for the vote.

Lawmakers cannot agree on the voting guidelines for Kirkuk an oil-rich province that is home to Kurdish, Arab and Turkmen communities. Some parliamentarians support using current voter records for Kirkuk which would favor Kurds. Others have suggested using a voter registry dating back to 2004 which would favor Arabs.

#### **A.12. Larijani holds a meeting with ISCI Chairman Ammar al-Hakim (al-Sharqiya)**

Iranian Shura council Speaker Ali Larijani held a meeting with Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI) Chairman Ammar al-Hakim. A number of ISCI members attended the meeting in addition to other members of the Iraqi National Alliance.

In statements made following the meeting al-Hakim said that there are lengthy consultations to form a big political bloc to pave the way for the elections and serve the goal of forming the next Iraqi Government.

Then Al Sharqiya TV aired a video report in which Ammar al-Hakim said, "There are ongoing and lengthy consultations with all political sides. Whenever we form bigger blocs and more comprehensive lists we will be more capable of restoring the stability of the political process and ensuring a strong government during the post-elections era. We hope to form big blocs that ensure a strong government and parliament and identify strong negotiators who represent all of the political sides in a way that contributes to re-enhancing stability in Iraq and achieving the aspirations of the Iraqi people by coming up with solutions for good living conditions."

#### **A.13. Maliki forms committees to regulate traffic in Bagdad (Radio SAWA)**

Iraqi Prime Minister, Nuri al-Maliki instructed to form committees to follow up on checkpoints in Baghdad and regulate the traffic movement to ease the traffic congestion in the streets of the capital.

In this regard, Baghdad Operations Command spokesman, Maj. Gen. Qassim Atta told Radio Sawa that the Office of the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, has formed several committees to follow up on the checkpoints, visiting and

examines the sites as well as conducting surprise visits to checkpoints to inspect members' progress Atta attributed the traffic jams in the streets of the capital to the closure of some main roads and the intensification of inspections, as well as the start of the Baghdad International Fair.

#### **A.14. MP Mahmoud Othman: Parliament announces Shahrستاني' interrogation result after Eid al-Adha (Radio Dijla website)**

Kurdistan Alliance MP, Mahmoud Othman said that Oil Minister, Husayn al-Shahrستاني was doing well in most answers, but others were vague and unconvincing during the parliamentary interrogation.

Othman said in a press statement, "We cannot determine the outcome, unless we scrutinize the question-response. Shahrستاني was talking in numbers and scientific terms, which acquire details." Othman denied that the Kurdistan Alliance had any agreement between Shahrستاني and his bloc.

Some local media outlets mentioned an agreement between Shahrستاني and the alliance, indicating that the alliance would not 'pull the trust' from him in exchange for oil contracts with Kurdistan region.

Othman confirmed the lawmakers will announce their decision on the minister's fate after Eid al-Adha. He expects that the minister will be voted out.

#### **A.15. FM Zebari: Iraq's neighbors seek to redirect the political map of Iraq (al-Iraqiya TV)**

To influence the next Government is not a new thing for Iraq's neighboring countries who are trying to interfere in Iraq's internal affairs for the goal to redirect the course of Iraq's political map, according to Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari.

During a press conference held in Baghdad, Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari stated: "Sending United Nations Representative to Iraq is considered a victory for the Iraqi Government."

"We have handed the UN envoy the entire security and intelligence information, evidence and records available to us, as well as the unannounced and undisclosed information due to sensitivity."

"We have not accused any country's specific involvement in the bloody bombings, however; all the available evidence and investigation indicates the involvement of Iraqis remnants of the ousted regime and banned al-Baath Party, who are linked with the terrorist al-Qaeda Organization and cells.

"The UN's special envoy is now in the process of putting together his report to submit to the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon, during the next short period."

#### **A.16. Talabani meets with the Egyptian Ambassador (al-Iraqiya TV)**

President Jalal Talabani called for active Egyptian diplomatic presence in the Iraqi arena during his reception to the new Egyptian Ambassador to Iraq Sharif Kamal al-Din Shahin.

Talabani stressed the need to attract the Egyptian companies and businessmen to participate in the reconstruction campaigns and the investment projects in Iraq, expressing his desire to widen horizons of cooperation and joint-work with Egypt. On the other hand, Ambassador Shahin stressed his country's commitment to deepen friendship-binds and activate aspect of cooperation with Iraq.

#### **A.17. Kurds willing to probe ethnic abuse claims (AFP)**

Iraq's Kurdish regional government said on Thursday it is willing to probe allegations that its forces had abused ethnic minorities, but rejected claims by Human Rights Watch (HRW) of widespread abuse.

The New York-based rights group on Tuesday said the autonomous region had used "heavy-handed tactics including arbitrary arrests, detentions and intimidation" against "anyone resistant to Kurdish expansionist plans" in Iraq's disputed areas.

A government statement described the main thrust of the HRW report as "seriously misleading" because the Kurdish authorities had "made greater efforts to protect minorities than anywhere else in Iraq."

The statement said, "The regional government and the Peshmerga did not create the mess in the disputed areas, but on the contrary the Peshmerga sacrificed their souls to protect the residents of those areas from terrorists."

The Peshmerga are fighters who fought against the forces of now executed dictator Saddam Hussein for a free Kurdish state. However officials are ready to work on those issues according to Kurdish and Iraqi law raised in the HRW report the government said.

"The regional government will accurately investigate all the information in the report, and there might be some mistreatment or negligence. The government is not pretending virtuousness," it said.

Iraq's disputed provinces include Nineveh of which Mosul is the capital, the oil-rich province and city of Kirkuk and Diyala, and lie immediately south of the Kurdistan region.

They were the focus of Saddam's "Arabization" policy under which hundreds of thousands of Kurds and minorities such as Assyrian, Chaldean, Christians, Turkmens, Yazidis and Shabaks were expelled.

#### **A.18. Talabani meets with Maliki (Al Forat TV)**

President Jalal Talabani met with PM Nuri al-Maliki and they discussed the preparations of the upcoming Parliamentary elections and Talabani's visit to France, which is scheduled for next Monday.

A Presidential statement said: "Today, at his residence, President Talabani met with PM Nuri al-Maliki, and they discussed a number of issues in the Iraqi arena and ways to address the

challenges that the political process is facing. They reaffirmed the need to find the necessary mechanisms for creating the appropriate atmosphere for the upcoming elections."

At a news conference after the meeting, Talabani said, "We affirm our unstinting support of the PM's efforts in defending Iraq and its sovereignty. I expressed my support to Maliki for his position in the defense of Iraq, its sovereignty, and in dealing with terrorism. We discussed my upcoming visit to France, bilateral relations between the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan and the Da'awa Party. Our views are identical."

For his part, Maliki said: "This meeting is a continuation of ongoing meetings with the President of the Republic. We addressed all the issues that concern us in the political arena, such as the atmosphere of the elections, the future, the challenges down the road and bilateral and future relations. We also discussed the President's visit to France. Iraq today is not the isolated besieged Iraq of the past, it now look forward to having relations with everyone; and everyone is looking forward to having relations with Iraq."

#### **A.19. Polling sites to go up in states with over 20,000 Iraqis (al-Iraq News)**

An Independent High Electoral Commission source said polling stations will be established in countries with more than 20,000 Iraqis citizens to accommodate Iraqis' eligible to vote outside of Iraq. Reportedly, the countries that qualify for polling stations include Jordan, Syria, Iran, Sweden, Denmark, Lebanon and Egypt.

#### **A.20. Iraq presidency council seeks January 18 election date (AFP)**

The former national security advisor, Muwaffaq a-Rubaie in an interview with the Italian news agency AKI, on Wednesday said that Iraq has contributed greatly to undermining terrorism activities and weakening the logistical support provided to insurgents.

Iraqi's efforts have helped stabilize the security situation throughout Iraq and drastically reducing the number of suicide attacks and foreign fighters infiltrating the country.

He added, "I believe that our war against terrorism should be regional where neighboring countries ought to participate with Iraq in confronting terrorists and drying their financial resources and training."

Rubaie, who is currently a member of the Iraqi parliament, said neighboring countries must intensify their security measures by any means to control the borders and stop terrorists' infiltration and putting an end to the activities of humanitarian organizations that provide direct support to terrorists.

#### **A.21. Iraq Approves Deal on British Navy Trainers (Reuters)**

Iraq's presidency council approved a deal on Wednesday allowing up to 100 British navy trainers to return to the country.

British forces had withdrawn from southern Iraq to Kuwait after Iraq's parliament failed to pass the deal. After months of delay, lawmakers finally inked the agreement in October, but it needed the council's approval before becoming law.

"The presidency council has approved in its session the law ratifying the agreement of training and navy support for Iraqi forces," the council said in a statement on its website.

Britain sent troops to the Gulf for the 2003 U.S.-led invasion but ended their mission earlier this year. The agreement, however, allows British trainers to stay for one year to help Iraq protect its southern oil terminals. Iraq exports most of its oil through the south..

## **A.22. The Iraqi Elections: Same Names, Different Teams (NY Times)**

After much delay, the Iraqi Parliament finally passed a law on Sunday allowing for national parliamentary elections — the third since the American invasion in 2003. Voting is scheduled to take place in the second half of January.

For Americans, the elections will be a crucial test of how secure Iraq has become, and thus how quickly U.S. soldiers can leave. The stakes will also be high for Iraqis, who will be putting in place a political infrastructure that, in theory, will outlast the American presence in their country.

As the elections approach, one major worry will be how much ethnic and religious allegiances, which plunged Iraq into deep violence in 2006, influence voters' choices. The early 2009 provincial elections, in which the two main Shiite and Sunni Islamic Parties lost their ground to nonreligious parties, have given much hope that sectarianism will play a lesser role this time, too. But while the coalitions look different than they did during the last national vote in December 2005, many of the same candidates remain on the lists. Are voters less likely to vote along religious lines? How many Shiites will vote for Sunni candidates?

In addition to the question of religious allegiances is the fragmenting of what were essentially Iraq's Big Three voting blocs — Shiite, Sunni, Kurd — in politics. Voters have new options in the upcoming election. Secular Shiites, for instance, have a choice beyond the National Iraqi Alliance that most Shiite Islamic parties have joined. Most prominent is the State of Law slate formed by Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki, a Shiite. Sunnis have similar alternatives to the Iraqi Islamic Party, the most powerful Sunni party since 2003. Even with this diversification, though, voters will probably support their sects' parties.

The number of new choices may actually make forming a new government much harder. At best, the strongest coalition seems likely to gain less than 20 percent of the total voters, too weak to dominate the process of choosing the prime minister and president. After the previous elections, just three Sunni, Shiite and Kurdish coalitions dominated Parliament, occupying more than two-thirds of the seats.

Four years ago, the American government played a significant role in pushing the Iraqis to form the current governments. Most significantly, they succeeded in halting Ibrahim al-Jaafari's bid to become the prime minister in 2006. Now, however, United States officials have limited influence in Baghdad. If the debate over the long-awaited electoral law took several months, how much longer will it take to pick the next president, the prime minister, speaker and the cabinet? How effectively would a lame-duck government be able to rule in the interim? Would delay and infighting make Iraq less stable?

Finally, there is the thorny issue of the Kurds. Since 2003, they have been the kingmakers, so to speak. How much time and political capital should the Arab coalitions spend on the Kurds? It is not likely that any coalition can form the majority without them.

Much attention has been paid to the issue of security in Iraq prior the election, yet I would be much more worried about tensions after the election.

## **A.23. Iraqi leader warns of violence in run-up to vote (AP)**

Iraq's prime minister warned on Wednesday that insurgents will try to undermine the country's fledgling democracy in the run-up to January's national elections.

Nouri al-Maliki told tribal leaders from Baghdad's Shiite Sadr City district that maintaining security would remain his top priority because the insurgent groups do not want the January vote to be held in a secure climate.

What has been achieved in the field of security needs to be safeguarded since the enemy is continuing to try and undermine the political process especially now that elections are imminent," said al-Maliki, whose chances of winning a second, four-year term in office after the January vote are heavily dependent on whether he can maintain and improve the nation's security.

"The enemy does not want the election to be held in a climate of stability in which voters can make the best choice," said al-Maliki, who has been in office since May 2006.

Iraq has seen a significant security improvement over the past two years, but attacks blamed by the government on al-Qaida in Iraq and Saddam Hussein supporters continue to hinder the country's return to normalcy.

The latest high-profile attack was on Oct. 25 when 155 people were killed in a pair of bombings targeting government offices in the heart of Baghdad. Another pair of bombings two months earlier, also against the government, killed at least 100 people.

The attacks undermine confidence in the abilities of Iraq's security forces ahead of the scheduled withdrawal by August 2010 of all U.S. combat forces. The last American soldier is due to leave by the end of 2011, under a U.S.-Iraqi security pact that came into force this year.

"The task of maintaining security must remain at the top of our priorities," said al-Maliki, who is contesting the election at the head of a coalition that groups his Dawa Party as well as smaller independent groups that include fellow Shiites and some Sunni Arabs.

The prime minister, however, warned in his televised comments that repeated blows to insurgents have forced them to rely on sleeper cells, a development that he said placed the counterinsurgency effort primarily on the shoulders of security and intelligence agencies.

Al-Maliki's "State of Law" coalition has made impressive gains in provincial elections in January and will be hard pressed to emulate that success in the next general election now that his Shiite rivals have joined forces in a bid to win the prime minister's job.

Sadr City, whose tribal leaders al-Maliki spoke to Wednesday, is the stronghold of one of his main rivals, followers of anti-American cleric Muqtada al-Sadr who, together with the Supreme Iraqi Islamic Council, constitute the backbone of the rival Shiite-led alliance.

There are an estimated 2.5 million Shiites living in the densely populated Sadr City and al-Maliki appeared to be taking a campaign message to them on Wednesday, promising free or state-subsidized housing and better services.

"Sadr City must be put ahead of anywhere else in Iraq when it comes to services," he told the tribal leaders. It was time, he said, to pay attention to the district after years of neglect. The

area suffers particularly acute drinking water and sewage problems and, like the rest of the city, gets only several hours of city power a day in the summer, when 100-plus (40-plus Celsius) temperatures are routine.”

#### **A.24. UN calls organizing Iraq elections a "Herculean task" (Christian Science Monitor)**

The United Nations special representative to Iraq appealed on Tuesday to Iraqi officials to meet a series of deadlines in what he called the "Herculean task" of holding national elections in a little more than two months.

"Now there are less than 10 weeks available to organize these elections, which is truly a Herculean task," Ad Melkert told a news conference at the Independent High Election Commission (IHEC). "I hope everyone is aware IHEC is under tremendous pressure to deliver credible elections in a very short period of time."

The Iraqi parliament pushed a final deadline to the brink last week, passing an election law after weeks of negotiations that will allow parliamentary elections to be held in January as mandated by the Iraqi constitution.

Mr Melkert said officials were considering holding the poll on Jan. 18 to ensure it took place before the start of 40 days of mourning observed by Shiite Muslims to commemorate the killing of Imam Hussein, the grandson of the Prophet Mohammad. Advance voting for Iraqi security forces, who will be out in full force on election day, is expected to be held on Jan. 15.

The vote will be the first national election since the US handed over control of security here to Iraq with the passage of a bilateral security agreement late last year.

Political coalitions have until Friday to register and individual candidates until Nov. 16, election officials said.

In what is shaping up to be one of the most logistically complicated polls overseen by the UN, Melkert also urged patience in awaiting the final election results. Iraqi politicians passed an election law only after agreeing to a complicated formula for voting in Kirkuk and other areas claimed by Kurds, Arabs, and Turkmen. In addition, there are new formulas for determining what percentage of the vote is needed for candidates to be awarded one of the 323 seats in parliament.

Nineteen million Iraqis are eligible to vote this time, including three million citizens who were too young to take part in 2005 parliamentary elections. It's expected to take days to count the ballots from the 52,000 polling stations across Iraq.

"Every time there is a strong learning process from a previous occasion and some things are in better place than they were before, at the same time the law has changed in a number of ways and time is very, very short," says Melkert, a former member of parliament in the Netherlands.

Melkert, standing next to senior IHEC officials, also urged the current Iraqi parliament to hold off on any calls for change in the election body until after the election – a reference to a parliamentary inquiry called to investigate charges of corruption

#### **A.25. New round of EU-Iraq negotiations on partnership agreement (KUNA)**

EU and Iraqi negotiators begin here Thursday another round of negotiations aimed at concluding a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA), said the European Commission in a statement on Thursday.

This will be the ninth round of talks since negotiations started in November 2006. The negotiations will be led on the Iraqi side by Mohammed Haj Hammoud, Deputy-Minister of Foreign Affairs, and by Hugues Mingarelli, Deputy Director-General for External Relations in the European Commission.

Launched in November 2006, the PCA negotiations will lead to the first ever contractual agreement between the EU and Iraq.

The agreement will provide for political dialogue on bilateral, regional and global issues wherever the EU and Iraq have a shared interest in working together and also to improve the trade arrangements between Iraq and the EU, to promote investment and to integrate the country in the international economy.

The previous rounds of negotiations "have been very productive" with most chapters now already agreed, in areas such as combating terrorism, countering proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, cooperating on energy, and promoting human rights, noted the statement.

"The negotiation process underlines the European Union's determination to play a significant role in Iraq's transition, and to help Iraq improve the living conditions for all its citizens," it said.

The EU has contributed over 900 million euros towards the reconstruction of Iraq since 2003, with a focus on assisting the Iraqi people in accessing basic services, promoting democracy and good governance.

#### **A.26. Ban Ki-moon asks GoI to resolve differences with KRG (Al Sharqiya TV)**

Secretary General of the UN, Ban Ki-moon, called on neighboring countries of Iraq, to respect Iraq's sovereignty and not interfere in its affairs.

In the report to the Security Council, he called on the members of the Council and especially the neighboring countries to respect Iraq's sovereignty and stop interference, which is a primary principle of the UNAMI.

He welcomed the agreements that were reached in the Iraqi Parliament on the amendment of the election law.

He called on the Federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government to resolve their differences through talks, especially on the disputed of internal borders, and the sharing of the natural resources. adding that this is an essential requirement for bringing political stability and lasting peace to the country.

#### **A.27. Al-Hakim, Our Priority Is Openness on the Arabs (Al-Jazeera)**

Ammar al-Hakim, chairman of the Iraqi Islamic Supreme Council [ISCI] has said that openness on the Arab countries is an Iraqi priority. He noted that the Arabs and Iraq together shoulder responsibility for restoring relations.

He revealed that it has not yet been agreed to form an alliance with the [State of Law] Coalition of Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki participate in the elections together. Hakim

also denied that the Shiite religious authority supports Al-Huthi's group in its war with the Yemeni authority.

In an exclusive interview with Al-Jazeera Net on the sidelines of his visit to the Qatari capital, Doha, Al-Hakim said that he will conclude his regional tour by visiting Jordan and Turkey, after he visited Bahrain before his arrival in Qatar. He noted that his expected visit to Kuwait might be made at a later time.

He pointed out that his country maintains a special relationship with Jordan. In addition, the Egyptian ambassador in Baghdad has presented his credentials as well as a document for strategic cooperation between the two countries, to the Iraqi authorities.

He added the Arab hesitation toward Iraq should be addressed. He said that the Arab countries shoulder a part of the responsibility, while Iraq also bears another part of this.

#### *Relations With Saudi Arabia:*

On relations with Saudi Arabia, Al-Hakim said that contacts have been made with Riyadh on more than one occasion for the purpose of visiting it; "however, it seems that the Kingdom is in the phase of examining the relationship with Iraq, and it has not yet decided on its options. We think that it is a big neighbor and we have many interests with it. New Iraq is yearning for relations with Saudi Arabia."

Al-Maliki has recently said that the Saudi positions toward Iraq were negative and that all steps toward improving relations with it "were met with rejection. This convinced the Arab and regional parties that make efforts to improve our relationship with it to stop these efforts."

In his interview with Al-Jazeera Net the IISC chairman justified this by saying that some of the expectations of the officials in the government are that the Arab countries should be more open. Al-Hakim noted that Al-Maliki's statements are out of love, blame and the desire to set up special brotherly relations.

Al-Hakim denied that his party's relationship with Iran is one of dependency or that the ISCI is a Persian policeman. He said that the ISCI is an Iraqi political entity that has millions of supporters, and its members act as part of the state institutions. He noted that the relationship with Tehran is governed by the Iraqi interest, which requires setting up balanced relations with all neighboring countries.

#### *The Alliance With Iran:*

In response to a question on how he reconciles the alliance with Iran with the special relationship with the United States, Al-Hakim rejected the policy of axes. He said, "We want to be a country that opens up to the world, away from problems and differences." He noted that Iraq can constitute a bridge for meeting of rivals in a manner that achieves the interest of Iraq and the interests of the other countries.

Regarding the internal Iraqi situation, he said that talks are under way with Al-Maliki's coalition to run in the elections, scheduled for January 2010, with a joint coalition-based list, which has not ripened. He stressed that efforts are still under way to this effect. He denied that the visit of Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani [to Baghdad] last week has a role in the dialogue with Al-Maliki.

In response to a question on Tehran's push for forming a unified religious list between Al-Maliki and the ISCI for the purpose of excluding the secular forces and figures, Al-Hakim

said that the ongoing competition is not an ideological one between Islamists and liberals. As evidence of this, he said that the ISCI led alliance embraces respectable liberal figures and forces. He said that the slogan of the ISCI's slogan in the coming stage is to achieve social welfare, provide services for the citizens, and deepen the sovereignty of the political project of new Iraq.

#### *Federalism:*

The ISCI chairman said that the question of federalism is no longer a priority at present, since the ISCI has previously defended it and explained its positive aspects to the Iraqi people, which has the right to adopt it or not. As for what was mentioned previously about his support for the Kurds' demands in the issue of Kirkuk:

Al-Hakim said that the compromise solution was presented by the Iraqi National Alliance. He reiterated that he will support anything that leads to building confidence among the components of the Iraqi people, in all its sects and ethnicities.

The ISCI chairman denied that federalism would pose a threat to the future of united Iraq, or that it might lead to fragmenting it. He said: "The most united and most harmonious countries are the major industrialized nations, which are administered by the federal system This confirms that decentralization is not a reason for dividing the country, but it might be a reason for achieving quick, comprehensive development."

At an earlier time, Al-Hakim held a news conference and met with the Iraqi community in Qatar. In his opening speech , he praised his meeting with Qatari Amir Sheikh Hamad Bin-Khalifah Al Thani. He also praised Qatar's interest in international and regional affairs and its role in the development and reconstruction of Iraq.

In response to questions by reporters, the ISCI chairman denied that the Shiite religious authorities have a role in the ongoing war between the Huthists and the Yemeni authorities. He said, "I do not know what is the sect of the Huthists, but they are Arab Muslims. I hope that this issue will not take a sectarian dimension."

He stressed the principle of noninterference in the internal affairs of countries. He added that when the Yemeni crisis is examined, this is done out of the desire to resolve the Arab and Islamic problems.

#### **A.28. Iraq's Kurdish parties lose unity ahead of January election (By Abdul Hamid Zebari)**

Iraq's Kurdish politicians, locked in dispute with the Baghdad government, will lack unity for the first time when fighting January's general election, due to the rise of a new opposition force.

The two biggest Kurdish parties, who have reigned supreme in shaping policy in the autonomous northern region for three decades, have announced the creation of a broad 12-party alliance ranging from Islamists to Communists.

But the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), led by regional President Massud Barzani, and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), headed by national President Jalal Talabani, face competition from the Goran (Change) movement.

The split has fractured the unity that the Kurd parties have presented in all elections since the overthrow of Saddam Hussein after the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. In addition, two Islamic parties from the region -- Jamaa Islamia and the Islamic Kurdish Union -- have presented independent lists for the planned January 18 election.

"Our coalition includes all tendencies, from the socialists to the Islamists," said Fadil Mirani, secretary of the KDP's political Office in Arbil, at the Kurdish coalition's election launch on Thursday.

"We hoped that all the political factions would join us. We contacted them but they refused," he added, saying they "respected the choice" of Goran leader Nijirvan Mustapha to break away, but ultimately regretted the move.

The KDP said the Goran's decision to contest the vote alone weakens the Kurds at a critical moment as they contest with the central government the status of the country's disputed provinces, including oil-rich Kirkuk.

The regional government in Arbil has also irked Baghdad by signing oil contracts with neighbouring Turkey, and placing Kurdish Peshmerga fighters, who fought for freedom against Saddam, in the disputed zones.

Mirani underlined the high stakes of the election run-up by describing it as a period that "requires that we join ranks to confront the enemies of the Kurds, particularly those who want to reduce our power in Baghdad."

As a sign of raised political tension the parties have already traded blows, dishing the dirt on each other in an effort to solidify support. Several local daily newspapers, close to the KDP and PUK and citing anonymous sources, have said Mustapha has agreed a post-election deal with Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, a Shiite and arch-foe of Kurdish President Barzani. The Goran movement has denied any such deal.

The Goran came to prominence when it won a surprising 23.57 percent of the vote in the Kurdish regional elections in July, after a campaign focused on the alleged corruption and hegemony of the KDP and PUK. It is likely to repeat those tactics in January's elections.

"The two principal parties asked us to join them but we refused and we will not reverse our decision," said Adnan Othman, a leading figure in the Goran.

"We have our own electoral programme to address the needs of the province and relations with Baghdad. This election must work on the basis of one party having one vision, not several parties with different visions," he insisted.

However, Othman did not rule out a post-election alliance with other Kurdish movements hoping to do well in the poll. But political analyst and former Kurdish minister of culture Sammy Shorash believes the split seriously risks weakening the common interests of the area, which has been autonomous since 1991.

"In general, plurality and choice is good for democracy but in the Kurdish context, and Iraq, it presents disadvantages because the region is in a strained position with Baghdad," he said.

#### **A.29. Talabani meets with Maliki (Al-Forat)**

President Jalal Talabani met with PM Nuri al-Maliki and they discussed the preparations of the upcoming Parliamentary elections and Talabani's visit to France, which is scheduled for next Monday.

A Presidential statement said: "Today, at his residence, President Talabani met with PM Nuri al-Maliki, and they discussed a number of issues in the Iraqi arena and ways to address the challenges that the political process is facing. They reaffirmed the need to find the necessary mechanisms for creating the appropriate atmosphere for the upcoming elections."

At a news conference after the meeting, Talabani said, "We affirm our unstinting support of the PM's efforts in defending Iraq and its sovereignty. I expressed my support to Maliki for his position in the defense of Iraq, its sovereignty, and in dealing with terrorism. We discussed my upcoming visit to France, bilateral relations between the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan and the Da'awa Party. Our views are identical."

For his part, Maliki said: "This meeting is a continuation of ongoing meetings with the President of the Republic. We addressed all the issues that concern us in the political arena, such as the atmosphere of the elections, the future, the challenges down the road and bilateral and future relations. We also discussed the President's visit to France. Iraq today is not the isolated besieged Iraq of the past, it now looks forward to having relations with everyone; and everyone is looking forward to having relations with Iraq."

### **A.30. Iraq PM warns of threat in run-up to January vote (AP)**

Iraq's prime minister warned on Wednesday that insurgents will try to undermine the country's fledgling democracy in the run-up to January's national elections.

Maliki told tribal leaders from Baghdad's Shiite Sadr City district that maintaining security would remain his top priority because the insurgent groups do not want the January vote to be held in a secure climate.

"What has been achieved in the field of security needs to be safeguarded since the enemy is continuing to try and undermine the political process especially now that elections are imminent," said al-Maliki, whose chances of winning a second, four-year term in office after the January vote are heavily dependent on whether he can maintain and improve the nation's security.

"The enemy does not want the election to be held in a climate of stability in which voters can make the best choice," said al-Maliki, who has been in office since May 2006.

Iraq has seen a significant security improvement over the past two years, but attacks blamed by the government on al-Qaida in Iraq and Saddam Hussein supporters continue to hinder the country's return to normalcy.

The latest high-profile bombings were on Oct. 25 when 155 people were killed in a pair of bombings targeting government offices in the heart of Baghdad. Another pair of bombings two months earlier, also against the government, killed at least 100 people.

The attacks undermine confidence in the abilities of Iraq's security forces ahead of the scheduled withdrawal by August 2010 of all U.S. combat forces. The last American soldier is due to leave by the end of 2011, under a U.S.-Iraqi security pact that came into force this year.

"The task of maintaining security must remain at the top of our priorities," said al-Maliki, who is contesting the election at the head of a coalition that groups his Dawa Party as well as smaller independent groups that include fellow Shiites and some Sunni Arabs.

The prime minister, however, warned in his televised comments that repeated blows to insurgents have forced them to rely on sleeper cells, a development that he said placed the counterinsurgency effort primarily on the shoulders of security and intelligence agencies.

Al-Maliki's "State of Law" coalition has made impressive gains in provincial elections in January and will be hard pressed to emulate that success in the next general election now that his Shiite rivals have joined forces in a bid to win the prime minister's job.

Sadr City, whose tribal leaders al-Maliki spoke to Wednesday, is the stronghold of one of his main rivals, followers of anti-American cleric Muqtada al-Sadr who, together with the Supreme Iraqi Islamic Council, constitute the backbone of the rival Shiite-led alliance.

There are an estimated 2.5 million Shiites living in the densely populated Sadr City and al-Maliki appeared to be taking a campaign message to them on Wednesday, promising free or state-subsidized housing and better services.

Also Wednesday, the head of Iraq's electoral commission said the presidential council has informally asked the commission whether the election could be held Jan. 18 instead of Jan. 21, a date that was proposed this week.

Faraj al-Haidari said the commission is capable of organizing the election three days earlier, but that the final decision on the balloting date is up to the council.

The date of the vote has been up in the air for weeks due to haggling over a key election law. Lawmakers finally passed the legislation Sunday, allowing the vote to go forward. An earlier date would avoid having the vote interfere with preparations for a major Shiite religious holiday.

### **A.31. Talabani meets with Maliki (Al-Forat)**

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such as the atmosphere of the elections, the future, the challenges down the road and bilateral and future relations. We also discussed the President's visit to France. Iraq today is not the isolated besieged Iraq of the past, it now looks forward to having relations with everyone; and everyone is looking forward to having relations with Iraq."

### **A.32. FM Zebari: Iraq's neighbors seek to redirect the political map of Iraq (Al-Iraqiya)**

To influence the next Government is not a new thing for Iraq's neighboring countries who are trying to interfere in Iraq's internal affairs for the goal to redirect the course of Iraq's political map, according to Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari.

During a press conference held in Baghdad, Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari stated: "Sending United Nations Representative to Iraq is considered a victory for the Iraqi Government."

"We have handed the UN envoy the entire security and intelligence information, evidence and records available to us, as well as the unannounced and undisclosed information due to sensitivity."

"We have not accused any country's specific involvement in the bloody bombings, however; all the available evidence and investigation indicates the involvement of Iraqis remnants of the ousted regime and banned al-Baath Party, who are linked with the terrorist al-Qaeda Organization and cells.

"The UN's special envoy is now in the process of putting together his report to submit to the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon, during the next short period."

### **A.33. Ban Ki-moon asks GoI to resolve differences with KRG (Al-Sharqiya)**

Secretary General of the UN, Ban Ki-moon, called on neighboring countries of Iraq, to respect Iraq's sovereignty and not interfere in its affairs.

In the report to the Security Council, he called on the members of the Council and especially the neighboring countries to respect Iraq's sovereignty and stop interference, which is a primary principle of the UNAMI.

He welcomed the agreements that were reached in the Iraqi Parliament on the amendment of the election law.

He called on the Federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government to resolve their differences through talks, especially on the disputed internal borders, and to share the natural resources, adding that this is an essential requirement for bringing political stability and lasting peace to the country.

### **A.34. Iraqi Politicians demand to file a complaint against Iran (Al-Sumaria)**

According to multiple articles about Iran's demand to return port Khor al-Amyeh to Tehran, Iraqi Politicians demanded to file a complaint to the UN Security Council against Iran for re-demarcation of the border with Iran.

Abd al-Hadi al-Hasani, a leader of the Da'awa Party, in an interview with Alsumaria News, said that they will not allow any country to take one inch of Iraq, adding that Iran's demand is illegal and will face rejection, noting that this will strain relations between Iraq and Iran.

MP Osama al-Najaifi, Secretary General of the "Iraqyoon" movement, said that Iran's demand is serious and dangerous, it reveals Iranian ambitions in Iraq, as Iran is trying to fill the security gap after the withdrawal of U.S troops. He added that Iran is seeking to establish its political, economic and security power in Iraq, noting that Iran is abusing the Iraqi territorial waters, oil wells and the border, which proves that Iran is seeking to intervene in the Iraqi affairs.

Kurdistan Alliance MP, Mahmoud Othman, called to file a complaint to the Security Council asking for re-demarcation of the border, because the former border was the result of mistakes of the former regime and numerous wars, and urged the U.S. to help Iraq in this direction.

In an interview with Alsumaria News, Othman said that Iran's goal behind this demand is to pressure Iraq to implement the Algiers Convention, pointing that the demand is unreasonable, because if Iraq responds and demarcates the border as Iran and Kuwait want, then there will be nothing left for Iraq, and it seems that the goal is to stifle the country to not have a port on the Gulf.

Legal Expert, Tareq Harb, said that the Algiers Convention didn't indicate that Khor al-Amyeh is in the Iranian territory, it only identified land and sea borders between the two countries.

Khor al-Amyeh is located west of Shatt al-Arab, and it's the area where Tigris and Euphrates rivers meet at the border of al-Qurna town, it extends about 180 miles to the Arabian Gulf.

### **A.35. Minorities demand more seats in parliament, threaten popular reaction in Basra (Al-Sharqiya TV)**

Iraqi citizens and local officials from the minorities in the city of Basra in southern Iraq have renewed their call for having a representation that is proportionate to their indigenous presence in the Land of the two Rivers. Threatening that there will be a massive popular reaction in case the law, which has an unjust article to their political rights, was passed. They also said that passing the Election Law for the third time without having real representation for them is a deal by big blocs to control the votes of Iraqi minorities... something which has become clear to everybody."

This is followed by a video report in which an unidentified citizen says: "Christians in Basra and the southern areas were disappointed for not allocating a quota seat for them in this area in the Election Law that was approved by the Council of Representatives."

The citizen blames Christian deputies for not demanding a special seat for Basra and the southern area. He adds that since the issuance of that law and till now he has been in contact with some deputies and political blocs to have six seats for Christians instead of five.

### **A.36. Iraqi Minorities Call for Halting "inequity" done to Them (Al-Sharqiya TV)**

Other Iraqi minorities that are historically considered thoroughbred people in Iraq call for halting the inequity done to them represented in giving them a representation percentage that is not based on their real will and does not correspond to their natural size in Iraq.

*Representatives of those minorities ask for seats as follows:*

- \* Three seats for the Shabak in Ninawa
- \* Two seats for the Yazidis in Ninawa
- \* Three seats for the Sabeans in Baghdad, Basra and Maysan.

#### **A.37. Shabab - Iraqi president to travel to Paris tomorrow (EXSUM)**

The Chief of Staff, Naseer al-Ani, said, Iraqi President Jalal Talabani will begin an official visit to France on Monday in reply to an invitation from French President, Nicolas Sarkozy.

A ministerial delegation will accompany the president, including the Ministers of Defense, Interior and Foreign Affairs, Finance, Industry, Science and Technology in addition to a number of other officials and advisers. The goal of the visit is to strengthen the relations and activate agreements signed between Iraq and Paris.

#### **A.38. Hurra - VP Hashimi working to find legal exit for the election law (EXSUM)**

The Iraqi VP, Tariq al-Hashimi stated he is seeking to find a legal way to amend the election law, aiming to increase the quota (number of seats) granted to Iraqi voters residing abroad where it would not affect the election's date scheduled in January.

The Iraqi Council of Representatives is expected to discuss the election law again in the coming days to amend the paragraph related to the quota of the emigrants.

The election law, in its first paragraph, granted the Iraqi minorities and the emigrants 5 percent of the total parliament seats, which comes to 16 seats.

#### **A.39. Iraqi National Alliance discusses preparations for the elections in Karbala (Al Forat TV)**

Head of the Independent Dialogue Front, Tariq al-Kheyakani, said, "Forces in the Alliance will discuss the ongoing preparations for the upcoming elections, and the mechanism for the distribution of seats allocated to the province. We will also be discussing the work of the committees formed recently, such as the media and women's committees."

The Iraqi National Alliance includes the Supreme Council, Fadila Party, Islamic Organization, Reform Bloc, Islamic Da'awa Party and Independent Dialogue Front in the province. In the election law, the number of seats allocated to Karbala are ten seats.

### **B. SECURITY**

#### **B.1. Iraqi Security Forces arrest AQI emir of Tuz Khurmatu (EXSUM)**

Iraqi Security Forces arrested an alleged al-Qaeda in Iraq emir and a suspected associate of an improvised-explosive device network during two joint security operations conducted in northern Iraq today.

ISF arrested an alleged AQI emir of Tuz Khurmatu during a joint security operation with U.S. advisors in Pir Ahmad, located approximately 74 km south of Kirkuk. The arrested individual is also suspected of being involved in weapons procurement for the terrorist group. The security team located the warranted individual in a residential building and arrested him without incident.

During a separate security operation conducted in western Mosul, the 3rd Federal Police Brigade and U.S. advisors conducted a warranted search for a suspected member of AQI. The suspect allegedly facilitates vehicle-borne improvised explosive device attacks in the region. One individual was arrested based on evidence found at the scene linking him to suspicious activity. The warranted suspect was not apprehended during the operation.

## **B.2. Arab-Frenchmen of Moroccans origin fighting in Al-Qaeda ranks in Iraq (Al-Khabar newspaper)**

Joint investigations of Algerian, Moroccan and French security services have revealed that not less than 14 Algerians and Moroccans of French origin are now fighting in the ranks of Al Qaeda in Iraq. Eight others are fighting in the ranks of Taliban and Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan.

The investigations reported that one of the Arab fighters a French national of Algerian origin was appointed to a high leadership position in the so-called Islamic State of Iraq Tariq. Alias Abu Salim Tilimsani was also appointed Amir in charge of the operational sector in the Iraqi city of Al-Ramadi. He used to live in the French city of La Rochelle before moving to Turkey, Syria and then Iraq in 2004.

It is believed that Abu Salim Tilmsani a Frenchmen of Algerian origin whose real name is Abdel Hadi Ait Omer was very close to Abu-Omar al-Baghdadi Amir of Al-Qaeda in Iraq. The investigations revealed that 22 Moroccans and Algerians are currently fighting in the ranks of Al-Qaeda in Iraq and Afghanistan. The majority of the 14 elements currently fighting in Iraq are of Moroccan origin.

According to available information the numbers are not definitive as the security services suspect that other fighters of Moroccans origin had sneaked from Europe to Al-Qaeda strongholds in Iraq, Afghanistan and Somalia. The investigations revealed that six Frenchmen of Algerian origin were killed in Iraq in the last six years. They are Mounir Abdel Qawi Rachedi who was killed in 2005 the so-called Tariq who was killed in July 2004 with another [fighter] called Hakimi Redwan Abdel Halim Mejouj who was killed in the same year. Saif Allah al-Chamali whose real name was Ben daloud Ali and who was killed during an air raid on Al-Fallujah in 2007.

Abu Abbas Al Maghribi (Moroccan) or Abu Abbas Al Andalusi is considered to be the most important part of this group. He is a French national and a native of the Algerian city of Jijel. Available information confirmed by one of Al- Qaida's statements declared that he worked as the coordinator of Al-Qaeda in Europe for a short period time in 2007. Then moved to Iraq during the reign of Abu-Mus'ab al-Zarqawi at the end of 2003. He occupied many leadership positions right from the beginning as he was appointed Amir of Al-Qa'im region, in eastern Iraq. He was promoted Amir of the whole region of Al Anbar after the killing of its head Abu al-Laith. The Americans attribute to him several operations conducted against their forces in the town of Al-Qa'im. He was killed in an operation carried out by the American security services against him in the town of Hasyba in Iraq.

The Investigations revealed that most of the Algerian and Moroccan recruits of Al-Qaeda had moved to Iraq through Syrian borders via Lebanon which they had entered with tourist visas. Few of them had come to Syria through Turkey. As for the recruits fighting in Afghanistan they went through various places, from Dubai to Malaysia and Indonesia and then to Pakistan. Available information revealed that the majority of the Arab recruits of Al-Qaeda who are European nationals hide their real identity even from their own fellow fighters in order to protect their friends and relatives in Europe some of them wear masks permanently.

Al-Qaeda in Iraq had published in several distinct statements issued in the past few months a list of its Arab fighters killed during the period 2004-2006. Eighteen were Algerian five were Moroccan two were Tunisian and three were Libyan. Most of the Arabs killed were Saudis since the number of Saudis killed had reached 35 and Syria ranked second after the elimination of 22 Syrian elements. Jordan with 14 killed followed by Egypt with 13 the Emirates and Kuwait with 12 for each of them. Then Yemen with eight Sudan and Palestine with six and finally Lebanon and Bahrain with four elements killed.

### **B.3. Iraqi Security Forces search for Baghdad AQI members, arrest 6 (EXSUM)**

Iraqi Security Forces arrested six suspected terrorists today during two joint security operations in search of al-Qaeda in Iraq members operating in Baghdad. In western Baghdad, ISF, and U.S. advisors, searched one building for an alleged Baghdad-based AQI leader but was not located. However, the security team arrested five individuals, who were questioned at the scene, and determined to be suspected members of the deadly terrorist organization. ISF arrested the five individuals without incident.

During a second joint security operation conducted in southwest Baghdad, ISF and U.S. advisors, searched one building for a suspected AQI member based on a warrant. The suspect is alleged to facilitate vehicle-borne improvised explosive device attacks against civilians. One individual was arrested based on evidence found at the scene linking the individual to suspicious activity. The suspected AQI member was not apprehended during the operation.

### **B.4. Iraq again seeks international bombing probe (AP)**

Iraq's foreign minister has reiterated his country's request for a high-level international envoy to investigate the extent of foreign involvement in recent bombings of government institutions.

In a letter to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon circulated Friday, Hoshiyar Zebari said the aim of the attacks on Aug. 19 and Oct. 25, which killed and injured hundreds of civilians, was "to paralyze the Iraqi state and its institutions and to abort the democratic political process under way in Iraq."

"These attacks should be investigated because they are a threat to international peace and security and because the security situation in Iraq, which is regarded as the forward battleground in the global war against terrorism, is of great concern to the international community," Zebari said. Iraq has blamed an alliance between al-Qaida in Iraq and Saddam Hussein's outlawed Baath Party for the pair of truck bombings on Aug. 19 outside the Foreign and Finance ministries in Baghdad that killed about 100 people. The Iraqi government wants Syria to hand over several suspects it says are based there.

Zebari said the pair of suicide car bombings on Oct. 25 "targeted government institutions in the same manner and at the same time of day as the terrorist attacks of Aug. 19."

The bombings claimed at least 155 lives, wounded over 700 people, and destroyed or seriously damaged three major government buildings — the Justice Ministry, the Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works, and the Baghdad Provincial Administration, akin to City Hall. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon announced last week that he was sending a senior U.N. official to Baghdad in response to a request from Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki in September that he ask the Security Council to establish an independent investigation commission into the Aug. 19 bombings.

Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs Oscar Fernandez-Taranco held consultations in Baghdad this week, including with al-Maliki and Zebari, U.N. associate spokesman Farhan Haq said. Zebari's letter, written before Fernandez-Taranco's visit, reiterated "Iraq's request for a high-level international envoy to be appointed to assess the extent of foreign involvement in terrorist acts committed in Iraq." "We further reiterate that organized attacks of such size and complexity could not have been planned, funded and executed without significant support from outside parties," Zebari said.

#### **B.5. Egypt's first envoy to Iraq since 2005 arrives (AFP)**

Egypt's new ambassador to Iraq has arrived in Baghdad, a diplomatic source said on Saturday of Cairo's first diplomatic representative in the country since its charge d'affaires was killed in 2005.

Sharif Kamal Shahin, a diplomat with 27 years' experience and a former ambassador to Zambia, arrived in Iraq on Friday, the source said. Egypt's foreign ministry spokesman has described the move as an "important step to promote relations between the two Arab countries." Shahin's arrival in Baghdad comes just days after a visit to Egypt by Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari.

Cairo has had no official diplomatic representative in Iraq since the July 2005 abduction and murder by Al-Qaeda of its diplomat Ihab al-Sharif in Baghdad. In October 2008, Ahmed Abul Gheit made the first visit by an Egyptian foreign minister to Iraq in 18 years. Egyptian oil companies have said they are studying infrastructure and refining operations in Iraq..

#### **B.6. Zebari: We provided the UN delegation unknown information on Baghdad bombings (Asharq al-Awsat website)**

Iraqi Foreign Minister, Hoshiyar Mahmud Zebari announced yesterday in Baghdad that he provided the UN delegation the investigations on the bombings in Baghdad.

Zebari said in a press conference, "An Iraqi committee including the Ministries of Interior, Defense, as well as National Security, intelligence services and High Supreme Court, provided the UN envoy information on the bombings. We want to come to the truth. We do not accuse any particular country directly for its involvement in the bombings. Although evidence and investigations link the Baath party and al-Qaeda to the bombings."

PM Nuri al-Maliki requested last week for UN support to stop the "regional intrusion" in the Iraqi affairs. Maliki accused Syria for supporting the perpetrators in the Baghdad bombings.

Zebari added that the insurgents might increase their attacks in the country before the parliamentary elections on January 18. The return of violence is a fear felt by most Iraqis, who just started to enjoy some improvement in the security situation.

Security has reigned for 18 months but proved otherwise in the August and October colossal explosions, which targeted government buildings and killed more than 250 people.

More attacks are expected before the elections contrary to Maliki's statements in his electoral campaign, in which he proclaims the improved security situation in Iraq.

Zebari said in a press conference at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "We expect and we believe our enemies will resort to more violence until the forthcoming elections. We hope we succeed. We will have clean elections on January."

IHEC Chairman, Faraj al-Haydari said that more than 18 million Iraqis will participate in the forthcoming elections next January, according to 2009 records. He pointed out that the new parliament will include 323 members instead of 275. By updating 2007 records to 2009 records, they increased the percentage of participating Iraqis in the elections.

Haydari added the voters outside of Iraq vary since there is no defined census in the neighboring countries such as Turkey, Syria and Jordan; although they know the Iraqis statistics in the European countries.

#### **B.7. Feds move to seize N.Y. skyscraper, 4 mosques (AP)**

Federal prosecutors Thursday took steps to seize four U.S. mosques and a Fifth Avenue skyscraper owned by a nonprofit Muslim organization long suspected of being secretly controlled by the Iranian government.

In what could prove to be one of the biggest counterterrorism seizures in U.S. history, prosecutors filed a civil complaint in federal court seeking the forfeiture of more than \$500 million in assets of the Alavi Foundation and an alleged front company.

The assets include Islamic centers in New York City, Maryland, California and Houston, more than 100 acres in Virginia, and a 36-story office tower in New York.

Confiscating the properties would be a sharp blow against Iran, which has been accused by the U.S. government of bankrolling terrorism and seeking a nuclear bomb. A telephone call and e-mail to Iran's U.N. mission seeking comment were not immediately answered.

#### *Religious backlash possible*

It is extremely rare for U.S. law enforcement authorities to seize a house of worship, a step fraught with questions about the First Amendment right to freedom of religion.

The action against the Shiite Muslim mosques is sure to inflame relations between the U.S. government and American Muslims, many of whom are fearful of a backlash after last week's Fort Hood shooting rampage, blamed on a Muslim American soldier.

"No action has been taken against any tenants or occupants of those properties," U.S. attorney's office spokeswoman Yusill Scribner said.

"The tenants and occupants remain free to use the properties as they have before today's filing. There are no allegations of any wrongdoing on the part of any of these tenants or occupants."

The mosques and the skyscraper will remain open while the forfeiture case works its way through court in what could be a long process. What will happen to them if the government ultimately prevails is unclear. But the government typically sells properties it has seized through forfeiture, and the proceeds are sometimes distributed to crime victims.

There were no raids Thursday as part of the forfeiture action. The government is simply required to post notices of the civil complaint on the property. Prosecutors said the Alavi Foundation, through a front company known as Assa Corp., illegally funneled millions in rental income back to Iran's state-owned Bank Melli. Bank Melli has been accused by a U.S. Treasury official of providing support for Iran's nuclear program, and it is illegal in the United States to do business with the bank.

The U.S. has long suspected the foundation was an arm of the Iranian government; a 97-page complaint details involvement in foundation business by several top Iranian officials, including the deputy prime minister and ambassadors to the United Nations.

"For two decades, the Alavi Foundation's affairs have been directed by various Iranian officials, including Iranian ambassadors to the United Nations, in violation of a series of American laws," U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara said in a statement. Skyscraper erected under shah There were no raids Thursday as part of the forfeiture action. The government is simply required to post notices of the civil complaint on the property.

As prosecutors outlined their allegations against Alavi, the Islamic centers and the schools they run carried on with normal activity. The mosques' leaders had no immediate comment. Parents lined up in their cars to pick up their children at the schools within the Islamic Education Center of Greater Houston and the Islamic Education Center in Rockville, Md. No notices of the forfeiture action were posted at either place as of late Thursday.

At the Islamic Institute of New York, a mosque and school in Queens, two U.S. marshals came to the door and rang the bell repeatedly. The marshals taped a forfeiture notice to the window and left a large document sitting on the ground. After they left a group of men came out of the building and took the document. The fourth Islamic center marked for seizure is in Carmichael, Calif.

The skyscraper, known as the Piaget building, was erected in the 1970s under the shah of Iran, who was overthrown in 1979. The tenants include law and investment firms and other businesses. The sleek, modern building, last valued at \$570 million to \$650 million in 2007, has served as important source of income for the foundation over the past 36 years. The most recent tax records show the foundation earned \$4.5 million from rents in 2007.

Rents collected from the building help fund the centers and other ventures, such as sending imprisoned Muslims in the U.S. educational literature. The foundation has also invested in

dozens of mosques around the country and supported Iranian academics at prominent universities.

Skyscraper erected under shah If federal prosecutors seize the skyscraper, the Alavi Foundation would have almost no way to continue supporting the Islamic centers, which house schools and mosques. That could leave a major void in Shiite communities, and hard feelings toward the FBI.

The forfeiture action comes at a tense moment in U.S.-Iranian relations, with the two sides at odds over Iran's nuclear program and its arrest of three American hikers. But Michael Rubin, an expert on Iran at the American Enterprise Institute, said the timing of the forfeiture action was probably a coincidence, not an effort to influence Iran on those issues. three administrations," Rubin said. "It's taken ages dealing with the nuts and bolts of the investigation. It's not the type of investigation which is part of any larger strategy."

Legal scholars said they know of only a few cases in U.S. history in which law enforcement authorities have seized a house of worship. Marc Stern, a religious-liberty expert with the American Jewish Congress, called such cases extremely rare.

The Alavi Foundation is the successor organization to the Pahlavi Foundation, a nonprofit group used by the shah to advance Iran's charitable interests in America. But authorities said its agenda changed after the fall of the shah.

In 2007, the United States accused Bank Melli of providing services to Iran's nuclear and ballistic missile programs and put the bank on its list of companies whose assets must be frozen.

#### **B.8. Five wanted individuals arrested and a bomb defused in Baqubah (Independent Press Agency website)**

Police forces arrested five wanted individuals in a security operations in Baqubah city, Diyala province. According to a police source, arrest warrants were issued against the individuals. They were arrested in al-Tahrir and al-Mufrik neighborhoods in Baqubah. Diyala police defused a bomb in al-Tahrir neighborhood without causing any damages.

#### **B.9. Unidentified gunmen injured a high school principal in Ghadir area, east of Baghdad (Independent Press Agency website)**

A resident in the area informed IPA that the gunmen shot High School Principal, Safaa Abdu al-Amir in front of the school in al-Ghadir neighborhood, east of Baghdad. She was wounded in the face and chest area and is in critical condition.

Ghadir area has suffered traffic jams for a week now, due to road closures leading to the area. The decision was made by the national police to control the area, in which incidents and clashes between the police and gunmen have occurred.

#### **B.10. Iraq warns of more violence before elections (Reuters)**

Insurgents may step up attacks in Iraq before a parliamentary election in January, the government said on Thursday. Acknowledging the fears of many Iraqis who are only just starting to enjoy better security.

Violence has dipped sharply over the past 18 months, but a stubborn insurgency has shown its resilience by staging attacks such as the powerful bombings in August and October aimed at government buildings, which killed more than 250 people.

Further attacks before the poll would be a setback for Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki. Who is campaigning on a platform that seeks credit for increased security in Iraq.

"From now until the election time we believe that our enemies will resort to more violence," Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari told reporters at the ministry's offices which were hit in attacks on August 19.

"But we hope we will succeed. We will have clean elections in January," he said.

Iraq's electoral body has recommended the poll (which will be closely watched by foreign investors eager to gauge stability in Iraq) be held on January 21, but there are talks to have it on January 18.

#### **B.11. Number of Iraqis currently detained by U.S. forces don't exceed seven thousand (Radio Sawa)**

Brigadier General David Quantock, commander of Task Force 134, who is in charge of the American Forces detention facilities in Iraq said, "U.S. forces has detained about 87,000 people since 2003 in Iraq. Some of them was referred to the Iraqi judicial system, while others were released; leaving some 7,000 Iraqi detainees in Camp Taji and Camp Cropper, which are the only detention facilities currently run by U.S. forces."

In a meeting with a number of media outlets Quantock said, "Since the implementation of the Security Agreement between Baghdad and Washington earlier this year U.S. Forces has detained more than 200 people. Which 60 of the detainees were released after failing to prove their involvement in armed action."

In response to a question by Radio Sawa on the number of detainees of the former officials, Quantock said "that American Forces had transferred 29 detainees of the former regime officials to the Iraqi government, the remaining 38 will be transferred to the Iraqi government following the provision of places of detention for them by the Iraqi side."

Quantock stressed that the American detention facilities were emptied from the foreign detainees, after handing them over to the Iraqi government.

It is noteworthy that U.S. forces continue to release about 750 detainees from prisons and camps Taji and Cropper after making sure that they were not involved in armed action, by the Commission involving representatives from the Iraqi side.

#### **B.12. Child abductions in Iraq's oil city (Telegraph)**

"Since September, the kidnapping of children has increased," said General Turhan Yusef, the city's deputy police chief. "We know of at least 10 cases."

"Two were freed by our forces, one child was released after payment of a ransom, three others

were after direct negotiations between the parents and the abductors and four, including two girls, are still being held," he said.

Those still in captivity are a 12-year-old Sunni Arab, a 13 and a 14-year-old Turkmen and a 16-year-old Kurd. Ethnicity is not an issue for the criminals.

Last Thursday, the police announced the liberation of two 14-year-old Turkmen boys, kidnapped by gangsters as they were being chauffeured to school in the centre of Kirkuk.

Ahmed Mohammed Nur al-Din is the son of a famous Kirkuk ophthalmologist, and Judat Sonay, from a wealthy family. Ahmed's family refused to pay a ransom, but Judat's parents paid \$50,000 (£30,216) to get him back.

The wealthy now live in fear of sending their children off to school in the morning.

"We are frightened," said Umm Ruha, the wife of a rich husband who preferred not to give her family name.

"I drive my 14-year-old daughter to and from school every day and I keep the teachers' telephone numbers constantly by my side."

At the end of October, the son of the chief of the Kurdish Zangana tribe was kidnapped.

"It happened at 7:40 in the morning ... and 36 hours later I received a video," said Sheikh Othman Abdel Karim Agha.

"When I saw Mohammed bound, his eyes blindfolded, crying because they had hit him, I fainted," the boy's 55-year-old father said.

Eleven days later, after \$40,000 had been paid, the boy was freed.

Deputy police chief Yussef said there were undoubtedly many more children being kidnapped than the police knew about.

"Many families are afraid to report the disappearance of their children - out of fear of the abductors, because they have no confidence in us or out of social strictures because the case involves girls," he said.

"The kidnapers are not acting with political motives but to collect a ransom," added Yussef, who is himself a Turkmen but has a Kurdish boss.

Psychologist Abdel Karim Khalifa said "families are traumatized because the mafias are growing in the face of an absence of governmental authority and the weakness of the security forces.

"The authors of these villainous crimes belong to all confessions, and choose schoolchildren because they are easy prey," he added.

Sheikh Othman said his Kurdish ethnicity and the fierce opposition of the city's Arab and

Turkmen to the Kurds' longstanding demands for its incorporation in their northern autonomous region had nothing to do with his son's abduction.

He said that while the city's politicians were so divided over the city's future status that the issue nearly prevented the adoption of a law for January parliamentary elections by the constitutional deadline, the criminal gangs shared just one interest - to profit from the atmosphere of fear.

"The criminal gangs and killers get on just fine with each other regardless of their ethnic or religious differences because they're dividing up the proceeds of their criminal activity," he said.

"It's our politicians who are incapable of getting along."

For his son Mohammed, his ordeal at the hands of his kidnapers is a memory that will continue to haunt him.

"They chained me and beat me, and I was in the dark because they blindfolded me," he said.

"I am still in shock from the constant fear of death."

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### **B.13. Former Iraqi official urges regional anti-terrorist efforts (al-Jewar)**

Former Iraqi national security advisor Muwafaq Al-Rubaie, during an interview with an Italian news agency, said that while Iraq has been striving to combat terrorism, the region as a whole would be more effective by collaborating efforts throughout Iraq to disrupt terrorist network resources and hinder their freedom of movement.

#### **B.14. KBR Improperly Billed Security Services, Senator McCaskill Says, By Tony Capaccio (Bloomberg)**

KBR Inc., the largest contractor in Iraq and Afghanistan, improperly billed the Pentagon and was paid about \$103 million for armed security guard services, according to a U.S. senator.

The Pentagon has recovered \$42 million of the payments Senator Claire McCaskill, a Missouri Democrat who is chairman of a contracting oversight panel, wrote Nov. 6 to Defense Secretary Robert Gates.

McCaskill said she was concerned "the Department is not moving quickly enough to recover the remaining \$61 million" and asked Gates for a status report by Dec. 1 of repayment efforts. The billings were part of the company's \$34 billion contract to provide housing, food, laundry, mail delivery and fuel. The Defense Contract Audit Agency first identified the billings in August 2007. McCaskill said the failure to recover all the money by now "raises questions about the sufficiency" of Pentagon efforts "to recover disapproved costs on other contracts."

The Pentagon audit agency "believes the entire amount should be repaid," because the contract "specifically prohibits" contractors billing the Pentagon for armed security guards, said DCAA spokesman Navy Lieutenant Commander Darryn James in an e-mail.

"KBR billed the costs as part of the payments to subcontractors," James said.

Army Sustainment Command spokesman Linda Theis said the service didn't "inadvertently" reimburse KBR.

Instead, "private security costs were embedded in subcontract costs and were not evident in the normal review of interim vouchers," she said.

The Army is "continuing actions to recover the \$61 million," she said.

##### *KBR Response*

KBR officials have not seen the McCaskill letter but "the assertion KBR has engaged in 'improper' billings is false," said company spokeswoman Heather Browne in an e-mail. "KBR has previously addressed billing issues and worked with the government to answer questions raised," she said.

"KBR believes that the contract does not prohibit the type" of billings "for which the DCAA and the Army are withholding the funds," she said. KBR is contesting the \$42 million in court and will fight paying back any addition funds the Pentagon wants back, she said.

#### **B.15. Douri demands to stop the raids and release the detainees (Albaghdadia)**

Sadrist Bloc MP, Maha al-Douri, revealed that Iraqi security forces are conducting a campaign of raids, and are arresting innocent people in different parts of Baghdad.

In a statement to al-Baghdadia, Douri said that these forces with the help of the U.S occupation forces are conducting arrests in different areas of Baghdad, especially in the areas of Saba'e Qousour and al-Hasiniya. She demanded the Government release the detainees and stop the raids, and said that instead of arresting innocent citizens, they should bring to justice the perpetrators of the bloody Sunday and Wednesday bombings.

She said that the raids carried out by the occupation forces is another proof that the GoI has no sovereignty, adding that the Government rather than asking for the detainees from the U.S, and preventing the arrests, they are encouraging and assisting them in arresting innocent people.

#### **B.16. Baghdad Operations Command starts redistributing security forces and energizing intelligence efforts in the capital (Al-Baghdadiya)**

After the recent bombings at the Ministry of Finance the Baghdad Operations Command redistributed security forces in Baghdad as part of a new strategy produced by the bombings, including the redistribution of strengthened intelligence forces in the capital.

Security chiefs confirmed at a press conference held at the opening of the Muhammad al-Qasim bridge, adjacent to the Ministry of Finance, that ongoing investigations have uncovered the existence of cells supported by neighboring countries whose goal is to undermine the security and stability of Iraq. Baghdad, along with a number of other cities, has witnessed this and there have been various other security incidents, after which there have been many wanted men and suspects arrested.

#### **B.17. Iraq warns of more violence before elections (Reuters)**

Insurgents may step up attacks in Iraq before a parliamentary election in January, the government said on Thursday, acknowledging the fears of many Iraqis who are only just starting to enjoy better security.

Violence has dipped sharply over the past 18 months, but a stubborn insurgency has shown its resilience by staging attacks such as the powerful bombings in August and October aimed at government buildings, which killed more than 250 people.

Further attacks before the poll would be a setback for Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, who is campaigning on a platform that seeks credit for increased security in Iraq.

"From now until the election time, we anticipate, we believe that our enemies, our adversaries, will resort to more violence," Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari told reporters at the ministry's offices, which were hit in attacks on August 19.

"But we hope we will succeed. We will have clean elections in January," he said.

Iraq's electoral body has recommended the poll -- which will be closely watched by foreign investors eager to gauge stability in Iraq -- be held on January 21, but there are talks to have it on January 18.

#### **B.18. A security plan to protect the public places during Eid al-Adha in Ramadi (Buratha News)**

Security forces in Anbar province said, "We are working on a tight security plan to protect the parks, entertaining areas and mosques during Eid al-Adha."

Colonel Dawwad Almraawi security operations officer said that the plan includes the protection of public areas, mosques and other vital facilities.

Saad Abdullah, President of the Security Committee in the Anbar province said, "Our committee will submit a plan to deploy police troops in civilian clothes for security during the holidays, this will be the first of its kind in the Anbar province.

### **B.19. 87 thousand Iraqis arrested since the invasion of Iraq in 2003 (Albaghdadia)**

General David Quantock, Deputy Commanding General for MNF-I Detainee Operations in Iraq, said that U.S forces arrested about 87 thousand people since the year 2003 in Iraq.

At a news briefing, Quantock said that his troops now have seven thousand Iraqi detainees in Camp Taji and Camp Cropper, the only two that are currently run by U.S forces. He said that since the start of the implementation of the agreement between Baghdad and Washington earlier this year, more than two hundred people were released, and sixty of them lacked evidence that they were involved in armed actions. He pointed out that U.S forces transferred twenty nine prisoners from the former regime officials to the Iraqi Government, and there are thirty eight of them who will be transferred after a detention place is provided to them by the Iraqi side. He said that after the U.S. forces handed over the detention centers to the Iraqi Government they evacuated their detainees.

### **B.20. Study: Army morale down in Afghanistan, up in Iraq (CNN)**

Increased fighting in Afghanistan has caused a drop in morale among U.S. soldiers while the reduction in combat in Iraq has bolstered morale, according to a new U.S. Army report released Friday.

The report summarizes two surveys of U.S. soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan taken earlier this year. New statistics from the Army also show suicides are up in the entire service. Produced every two years by the Army's Mental Health Advisory Team, this latest report comes just over a week after a U.S. soldier went on a shooting rampage at a U.S. Army base in Texas and possibly just days or weeks from an announcement from the Obama administration to send more troops to Afghanistan, where fighting has gotten more intense in recent months.

Authorities have not determined a motive for the shooting. The suspect, Maj. Nidal Malik Hasan, was scheduled to deploy to Afghanistan but had told his family that he wanted to get out of the military.

"Soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan continue to face stress from multiple deployments into combat but report being more prepared for the stresses of deployments," Lt. Gen. Eric Schoomaker, the Army Surgeon General told reporters Friday.

Not surprisingly, the report showed that soldiers with multiple deployments, three or four tours of duty to Iraq or Afghanistan, had much lower morale and more mental health problems than those soldiers who have one or two combat deployments. Increased time at home, however, resulted in improved morale among troops sent back to the field.

The updated survey of soldiers in Afghanistan found post-traumatic stress syndrome and depression in soldiers at the same levels of the survey in 2007, but still about double that of the 2005 survey results: 21.4 percent in 2009, 23.4 percent for 2007 and 10.4 percent in 2005, according to the report.

In Iraq, where the survey has been done every year, lower numbers were attributed to the decrease in combat action there. The 2009 numbers showed 13.3 percent of soldiers suffering from mental health problems, compared to 18.8 percent in 2007 and 22 percent in 2006.

Army officials said that with the push of more than 20,000 additional troops into the Afghan theater of battle over the last few months, there have been fewer mental health professionals in the field to help. Army officials said the ration was about one mental health professional for every 1,120 soldiers.

To combat the falling morale and lack of mental health professionals in the field, Army officials said the service needs to more than double the number of mental health providers and hopes to have at least 65 more of those providers in the field by December, making the ratio one for every 700 soldiers.

The mental health assessment teams also conducted interviews with soldiers and found a drop in unit morale in Afghanistan to about half of what it was in 2007 and 2005, when about 10 percent surveyed gave top ratings to unit morale. In 2009, that number was 5.7 percent

The report also showed soldiers are seeing more difficulty at home with an increasing number reporting they are getting or considering getting divorced, according to the report.

The overall report was based on almost 4,000 soldiers who filled out anonymous surveys in Iraq and Afghanistan between December 2008 and June 2009.

In Iraq, 2,400 soldiers were randomly selected and the results were studied by a mental health assessment team in the combat zone. About 1,500 troops in Afghanistan took the survey, Army officials said.

The survey was different from previous years when all types of soldiers were surveyed together. The 2009 survey questioned combat troops and support troops separately, though Army officials said there were few differences in the results.

On Friday, the Army also released its latest suicide statistics. They show an increase in the number over this time last year.

The Army reported 133 suspected suicides as of October; there were 115 as of October 2008. Of the 133, 90 have been confirmed, and 43 are pending confirmation, according to an Army press release.

Last year the Army totaled 140 suicides in its ranks, the highest the service has recorded.

"Stigma continues to be one of the most difficult challenges we confront," said Brig. Gen. Colleen McGuire, the director of the Suicide Prevention Task Force for the Army.

"The more we educate our Army community about the need to get help, the need to get it early, and that a full recovery is often possible, the less stigma we'll see."

The Army has implemented a number of suicide prevention programs over the past year, including training, a suicide prevention task force and a day off official duties to focus on suicide prevention.

## **B.21. British soldiers are facing an investigation into violating the rights of Iraqi civilians (Radio Nawa)**

The British Ministry of Defense is investigating British soldiers for violating the humanitarian rights of Iraqi including the use of implements of torture and sexual assault.

He clarified in a report published by the British newspaper The Independent, in its Saturday edition, that the investigation is ongoing for 33 cases of assault and torture that have been recorded.

The report from the British Armed Forces Minister Bill Rammell has made sure that official investigatory measures are being taken and that there will be no hasty judgments.

He added that more than 120 thousand British soldiers have served in Iraq, the majority of whom maintain a high ethical standards of behavior, and have shown a significant commitment, while a minority have acted in shameful manner.

The newspaper reported that one of the Iraqi detainees has accused two British soldiers of raping him, while others were forced to remove their clothing and then were photographed.

### **B.22. Iraq Navy Celebrates the Arrival of the Patrol Ship Nasir (Umm Qasar)**

The Iraqi navy welcomed the Patrol Ship Nasir to its new homeport here in a ceremony Nov. 12. The Nasir is the second of four ships contracted from the Fincantieri Shipyard in La Spezia, Italy. The Iraqi manned ship departed Italy Oct. 15, completing the more than 5,000 mile journey in about a month.

The ceremony included a naval review of the Nasir and several other Iraqi ships and boats, as well as a demonstration of boarding tactics and a synchronized diver demonstration. U.S. Army Brig. Gen. James M. McDonald, deputy commanding general, Multi-National Security Transition Command - Iraq, spoke briefly at the event to highlight the importance of the Nasir in protecting Iraq's coasts.

"Iraq is in charge of its security," McDonald said. MNSTC-I's Iraq Advisory and Training Team-Navy continues to help train and advise the Iraqi naval force. MNSTC-I's goal is to assist Iraq in developing a capable-and-responsive force able for conducting maritime security operations in the region.

With more than 75 percent of Iraq's gross domestic product coming from revenues generated by its offshore oil platforms, Iraq has a keen interest in protecting and controlling its territorial waters. The ceremony ended with a tour of the Nasir for assembled guests and a brief cruise in the Shatt al-Arab waterway.

### **B.23. Mohammed Naji: The existence of Fedayeen Saddam in security services is a real danger to the Iraqi security (Al Forat TV)**

Mohammed Naji, Secretary General of the United Iraqi Alliance, said that the presence of Fedayeen Saddam in security services is a real danger to the Iraqi security, and getting them out is a must.

In a press statement, Naji said, "The removal of Fedayeen Saddam from security Ministries is a must, because their existence is contrary to the Justice and Accountability Law, and it is a security breach, because they are the repressive members of the former regime, who are trained in the methods of oppression. They grew up with the aims of the Baath Party, and it's not easy to give up those ideas. We warned that Fedayeen Saddam and others will breach the security, but no one wanted to hear us. After the recent bombings, some officials started putting pressure on the Security Ministers to let those out, who had sensitive positions. It came late, but it is still a good start to clear the security services of terrorists and criminals."

## **C. ECONOMICS**

### **C.1. Marooned on Sea of Iraqi Oil, but Unable to Tap Its Wealth (Timothy Williams)**

The orange glow of the giant natural gas flares in the oil fields around Basra represents this bustling city's wealth of natural resources. But for the impoverished people who live near them, the flames only serve as a reminder of their inability to share in the riches that lie beneath their feet.

The area around Iraq's second largest city and main port, Basra accounts for as much as 80 percent of the country's oil production. It has emerged as Iraq's best hope for stability and prosperity as it prepares to sell off its top undeveloped oil fields to foreign companies at an auction next month. Of the five largest fields that will be bid on four of which are in or around Basra.

Despite the riches trapped below its oil fields though this city of three million is among Iraq's poorest places. People in neighborhoods within a few miles of fields with so much oil that it floats atop the surface in huge black pools live amid mud and feces. Carts pulled by overworked donkeys compete with cars for space on streets. Childhood cancer rates are the highest in the country. The city's salty tap water makes people ill, and there is more garbage on the streets than municipal collectors can make a dent in.

The hundreds of thousands who live in the villages around the fields all dream of finding oil work but that is unlikely. Those who apply are almost always told they lack the education or experience for oil work. But they believe that their only real deficiency is a lack of connections and money for bribes.

"People sit here in the evenings and they watch the flames and wonder how rich they would be if they had only one hour of those oil exports," said Naeem al-Moussuawi who lives in one of the poorer villages in the Basra area.

Last month after Iraq's Oil Ministry announced that it planned to hire workers for its Basra-based South Oil Company thousands of people waited in line for applications some for days. Among them were men in tattered clothing with bare muddy feet. When the line got unruly the police were called, and some applicants were beaten. More than 27,000 applications were filled out for 1,600 jobs most of which require a college education or experience, and most Basrans have neither. In the village of Asdika oil pipelines run along the perimeter, and several thousand people live in ramshackle houses of gray cinder blocks and plastic sheeting for roofs.

There is no garbage collection and household trash is thrown outside to rot in the sun. There is no sewer system so wastewater from houses is dumped outside attracting thousands of flies to the lakes of raw sewage that have formed outside most homes. Almost everyone is unemployed. The village is on government property (an oil field) and its existence is illegal. Residents say the police show up occasionally and threaten to bulldoze the houses. Hussein Flaeh a 29 year old unemployed father of two has lived in Asdika since 2003. Fifteen members of his family live in a concrete-block house with three small rooms. One recent morning Mr. Flaeh's youngest child Essam born two weeks ago was placed outside to get some fresh air.

The baby's face was almost immediately covered by hungry flies. Asked whether he had ever applied for a job at the oil refinery Mr. Flaeh appeared perplexed and did not answer. Pressed his gentle face turned hard.

"You can't even reach it," he said and then added "Don't even talk about it."

Government officials in Basra have called for a fee of \$1 on each barrel of oil produced in the province which would then be used for local projects instead of going to the central government. Even if Basra suddenly became flooded with oil money the construction of new housing, offices and even farmland would be prohibited because almost everything is situated atop untapped reserves of crude oil.

"Ninety percent of Basra is an oil field," said Ahmed al-Sulati a member of the local provincial council. "We can't build anything here. We need to have more housing in some neighborhoods, but we can't because we are surrounded by oil."

Sulati also said, "We are getting sick from breathing gas, and the streets are getting destroyed by the oil trucks." During a recent speech Iraq's minister of planning Ali Ghalib Baban said Basra was on the cusp of being "one of the world's most important economic centers."

But in the village of Shuiba so close to the city's refinery and major fields that the air is heavy with the smell of petroleum farmers have stopped growing tomatoes, and now rent their fields to truck drivers who park their tankers there for about 80 cents a night. It is the village's single school that is the source of most of Shuiba's concerns. Some classes have more than 55 students packed inside. Boys and girls must be taught together which has led some parents to keep their daughters at home. There are no bathrooms and some classrooms have no electricity. The school grounds are littered with piles of garbage.

Oil workers live on the opposite side of the village. In the poorer half of Shuiba the workers are regarded with envy and loathing. Not a single resident from the poor side has been hired for an oil job.

"Everyone would like to work for the oil company," said Moussuawi and added "We know we are poor and many of us are not well educated. The problem is they see the trucks full of oil and they wonder where the money is going."

But even in Shuiba's better-off half adjacent to Basra's sprawling refinery residents say they have unmet needs. The housing is neat, there is no trash and the streets are paved, but there is crowding and rising unemployment even among the college-educated sons and daughters of oil company managers they say.

"You need to know somebody or pay a bribe to work there," said Najim Khadim a 26 year old son of Shuiba's unofficial mayor Mohammed Khadim who has worked at the refinery for 38 years as a supervisor. The son who has a college degree in chemistry said not even his father had been able to help with a job. The going rate for a job bribe is \$2,000 to \$5,000 which he said he refused to pay. A visitor is brought a glass of tap water. It tastes as salty as the water in the rest of town.

## **C.2. Iraqi Stock Exchange trades nearly 5.2 billion shares (Aswat al-Iraq)**

The Iraqi Stock Exchange traded approximately 5.2 billion shares worth more than \$7.8 million dollars this week. Iraq's National Capital Market Index closed at 111.78 points, a nearly two point increase from last week. Iraq's industrial sector demonstrated the highest levels of exchange activity throughout the five trading sessions.

### **C.3. The Iraqi Stock Exchange traded over 5.2 billion shares this week, worth more than 9 billion Iraqi dinars (\$7.8 million), of which 27% went to non-Iraqi investors (Aswat al-Iraq)**

The Iraqi Stock Exchange (ISX) this week traded over 5.2 billion shares worth more than 9 billion Iraqi dinars (\$7.8 million), of which 27% went to non-Iraqi investors, as the national capital market's index closing at 111.78 points compared to last week's 109.08.

The industrial sector came in the lead of this week's five trading sessions, while hotel companies kept retreating. However, this week saw e-trading sessions increasing from three to five. The ISX witnessed the first e-trading session on April 19 over five registered companies, three banks and two hotels. The banks were the Ashur International Bank (AIB), Al-Mansour Bank and the Iraqi Credit Bank while the hotels were the Ashtar Hotel and Al-Mansour Hotel.

On June 7, the Iraqi Middle East Investment Bank and the Warka Bank joined the electronic trading sessions. The ISX now holds three electronic sessions on a weekly basis: Sundays, Tuesdays and Thursdays. Iraqi Stock Exchange traded over 7.8 million dollars which 27% was with no-Iraqi investors

### **C.4. The second Italian made naval ship arrives in Basrah (Radio Sawa)**

The Iraqi naval force at Um Qasr base in Basrah celebrated the arrival of the second out four Italian made ships, which Iraq has contracted to buy.

In a speech during the celebration, the commander of the naval force, Major General Ali Hussein, said it took the "Nasr 701" ship [Victory 701] 30 days to arrive to the Iraqi port as it passed through three seas, two channels and three gulfs in addition to the Suez Canal before reaching the base in Basra.

The Navy Force's Chief of Staff, Colonel Abdul Wahid Kazim pointed out that the new ship will protect ports as well as helping crews of commercial ships sailing in the territory of Iraqi waters.

### **C.5. Nippon Oil negotiates to develop an oil field in Nasiriyah (al-Sharqiya TV)**

The Japanese oil company Nippon Oil is still negotiation to develop an oil field in Nasiriyah, despite comments from the Iraqi Oil Minister stating that the Japanese delegation refused to come to the headquarters of the ministry and conclude a deal.

An official spokesman for the company confirmed that a delegation traveled to Iraq but would not provide any further details because negotiations continue.

### **C.6. Iraq, Rebuilding Its Economy (By Rod Nordland)**

Iraq's Baghdad Trade Fair ended Tuesday, six years and a trillion dollars after the American invasion that toppled Saddam Hussein, and one country was conspicuously absent.

That would be the country that spent that trillion dollars - on the invasion and occupation, but also on training and equipping Iraqi security forces, and on ambitious reconstruction projects in every province aimed at rebuilding the country and restarting the economy.

Yet when the post-Saddam Iraqi government swept out its old commercial fairgrounds and invited companies from around the world, the United States was not among the 32 nations represented. Of the 396 companies that exhibited their wares, "there are two or three American participants, but I can't remember their names," said Hashem Mohammed Hatem, director general of Iraq's state fair company. A pair of missiles atop a ceremonial gateway to the fairgrounds recall an era when Saddam Hussein had pretensions, if not weapons, of mass destruction.

The trade fair is a telling indication of an uncomfortable truth: America's war in Iraq has been good for business in Iraq - but not necessarily for American business. American companies are not seeing much lasting benefit from their country's investment in Iraq. Some American businesses have calculated that the high security costs and fear of violence make Iraq a business no-go area. Even those who are interested and want to come are hampered by American companies' reputation here for overcharging and shoddy workmanship, an outgrowth of the first years of the occupation, and a lasting and widespread anti-Americanism.

While Iraq's imports nearly doubled in 2008, to \$43.5 billion from \$25.67 billion in 2007, imports from American companies stayed flat at \$2 billion over that period. Among investors, the United Arab Emirates leads the field, with \$31 billion invested in Iraq, most of that in 2008, compared to only about \$400 million from American companies when United States government reconstruction spending is excluded, according to Dunia Frontier Investments, a leading emerging-market analyst. "Following this initial U.S.-dominated reconstruction phase, U.S. private investors have become negligible players in Iraq," Dunia said in a recent report.

Indeed, even those companies that prospered during the war and occupation, including many of the big military contractors, will simply leave with the United States military as it completes its pullout over the next two years.

KBR was among the earliest contractors in Iraq and has \$33 billion in contracts to support American bases. Yet it has not had any contracts with the Iraqi government to support those facilities when they're handed over - or for that matter, to build anything else in the country.

"KBR is currently assessing the business environment in Iraq in order to make an informed decision regarding potential government contract opportunities there," said a spokesperson, Heather Browne.

A few big American multinationals, like Bechtel, will still be in the midst of long-term projects like power plants and waterworks - but those were five- and 10-year undertakings kick-started with American reconstruction aid.

Now, Iraq is doling out its own oil-financed funds for capital projects, and American companies have so far received surprisingly little of it. Sports City, a billion-dollar complex

of stadiums and housing in Basra planned for the Gulf Games in 2013, was awarded to an Iraqi general contractor, Al Jiburi Construction, over 60 other bidders, many of them American.

"We have a couple American companies as our subcontractors," said Adai al Sultani, an assistant to the firm's owner, with evident pride. When the transportation ministry put up more than \$30 billion in railroad expansion contracts recently, they went to Czech, British and Italian companies.

Those nations had been members of the coalition led by the United States, although all pulled outlong before the United States. But one of the biggest beneficiaries of Iraqi contract money is Turkey, which wouldn't allow American warplanes to use its airbases during the invasion of Iraq, followed closely by Iran.

Turkey has gone from almost no legal trade with Iraq before the war to \$10 billion in exports last year, five times as much as the United States. Turkey's trade minister, Kursad Tuzmen, predicted that number would triple in the next couple years.

Both Turkey and Iran had huge pavilions at the trade fair, crowded with businessmen discussing deals. So did France and Brazil, also not coalition countries.

Last month FedEx, which has been flying packages in and out of Iraq since 2004, announced it was suspending its operations. The reason is that Iraqi officials gave RusAir, a Russian airline, exclusive rights to cargo flights.

FedEx was one of the very few American businesses that braved the risks of working not only on American bases but also in the Red Zone, back when it was particularly dangerous to do so. Now that the danger is much less, its business is being thwarted by an upstart Russian come-lately.

"FedEx Express has had no choice but to use Rus and, as a result, the reliability of our service to Iraq has been substantially degraded," the company said in a statement about the suspension.

It is almost an article of faith among many Iraqis, judging from opinion polls, that the United States invaded Iraq not to topple Saddam Hussein, but to get their country's oil. If true, then the war failed in even more ways than some critics charge.

It wasn't until last week that the first major oil field exploitation contract was signed with a foreign company - British Petroleum, in a joint deal with China's state-run China National Petroleum Corporation.

Exxon Mobil, an American company, has an oil field deal awaiting final approval from Iraq's oil ministry. The Italian oil giant Eni, whose junior partner is the American-owned Occidental Petroleum, is expected to sign a similar deal. These, however, are service contracts, so the foreign oil companies don't actually own rights to any new oil they may find.

The newest edition of the Iraqi Yellow Pages, a business-to-business directory, doesn't have a single ad from an American company. American officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak on the record, disputed that United

States companies were having a difficult time in the Iraqi free market. "I wouldn't read too much into American presence or lack of it at the trade fair as a bellwether," one official said. "I would say the future is very positive."

Another official pointed out that a recent Iraqi-American investment conference held in Washington stirred up enormous interest among American companies. "We had to turn away several hundred companies that wanted to come," he said, adding that the embassy in Baghdad has had many subsequent inquiries from firms. That interest has not translated into action yet.

"After the conference in Washington, I'm surprised you can get on a flight here considering all the opportunities," said Mike Pullen, a lawyer at the British-American firm DLA Piper, who works in Iraq.

"It's a pity we can't get more people to come," he said. "They're losing out to Turkish companies, Russian companies."

"Turkish companies are acceptable to all different Iraqi ethnic groups, because they are not an occupier, and they can implement big reconstruction projects at a lower cost," said an executive of the Iraqiya company, a leading Iraqi construction firm that often works with the Turks. He did not wish to be identified for fear of offending American clients.

Even Iraqi Kurds, many of whom are politically at odds with Turkey, seem to get along with the Turks when it comes to business.

"Turkish companies are not afraid to do business in Iraq," said Eren Balamir, who was in charge of Turkey's pavilion at the fair.

The high cost of security - a cost that most regional businesses don't have - has dissuaded many American businesses from coming; some reconstruction contracts spent as much as 25 percent of their budgets on security.

Security isn't the only impediment. Being seen as the occupier is just not good for business. Although the United States, legally speaking, has not been an occupying power since June 2004 when the Security Council formally ended occupation, many see it that way. Even Iraq's prime minister, Nuri Kamal al-Maliki, has described Americans as occupiers to curry electoral support.

One European ambassador, who spoke on condition of anonymity because of his government's policy, said his own country's trade opportunities greatly increased in Iraq after it withdrew the last of its troops more than a year ago. "Being considered an occupier handicapped us extremely," he said. "The farther we are away from that the more our companies can be accepted on their own merits."

"As a U.S. company you already have a few strikes against you before you even step foot in Baghdad airport," said Marc Zeepvat of the Trans National Research Corporation in New Jersey, who specializes in studying the Iraqi market for institutional investors. "The U.S. government and U.S. companies have to wake up and realize they're not in a privileged position any more."

"The State Department's travel advisory doesn't help either," Mr. Zeepvat said. It tells people, in effect, "don't come."

### **C.7. UAE firm in Iraq farm deal (EXSUM)**

Iraq is close to concluding a multi-billion dollar agriculture deal with a private sector firm in the UAE to lease farmland on a long-term basis an official said.

Gulf countries mainly reliant on food imports have increased efforts over the last year to buy or lease land in developing nations to secure food supplies.

Sami R Al Araji the chairman of Iraq's National Investment Commission said, "We are in the final stages of signing a multi-billion dollar deal with a UAE company which would invest in our agriculture sector and the produce will be shared."

Araji added the company would lease the land over a long-term basis since foreign ownership of farmland in Iraq is forbidden. Declining to give further details on the project or to name the company.

Araji said, "Products such as wheat and barley will be grown, but more importantly the investment will include the installation of a water management system, and this will not be a joint-venture project. It's just a direct foreign investment and it is the biggest deal we have in this sector so far."

Farming in Iraq has been hit hard by decades of war instability and poor environmental management. Iraq imports almost all of its food using receipts from oil to pay for it. Much of the government's budget is spent on food rations.

Declining productivity in Iraq's farmland is largely a result of soil salinisation which is caused by poor drainage.

"Agriculture companies from Germany and the U.S. have also shown interest in developing a project in Iraq, but nothing is final yet," said Araji.

In June the government said that around \$18 billion in investments was needed to restore the majority of farmland. Last December the government started a project to restore six million acres of farmland.

The project aimed to flush excess salinity out of millions of acres of land and cleanse rivers breathing new life into what was once part of what historians called the "fertile crescent".

### **C.8. Kurds keen on role in Nabucco gas pipeline (UPI)**

Natural gas from the Kurdish regions of northern Iraq could aid in regional development if designated for the Nabucco pipeline for Europe, leaders said.

Europe sees Nabucco as the foundation to its effort to diversify the regional energy sector. Despite political backing, however, the Project lacks firm commitments from potential gas suppliers.

Nabucco would run from Central Asian and Middle Eastern suppliers through Turkey to European customers. Iran and Turkey signed a series of energy deals recently, raising the possibility that Iranian gas could feed Nabucco.

Energy analysts, however, say Iran will not be ready to supply natural gas to Nabucco in time for its scheduled 2014 completion date, adding Iraq might be a better candidate.

Massoud Barzani, president of the Kurdistan Regional Government, told European lawmakers that linking Iraqi gas to Nabucco would benefit his region.

"Linking the Iraqi pipeline to the Nabucco would enable Kurdistan to play a major role in the region," he said.

Nabucco is designed to have the capacity to move 1.1 trillion cubic feet of natural gas each year to European customers from Caspian and Middle Eastern suppliers. The pipeline would run from the Caspian region through Turkey to Austria along a route through Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary.

### **C.9. Housing and construction: Strategies to implement bridges and roads projects (Independent Press Agency website)**

An official source said the Housing and Construction Ministry put comprehensive strategies to implement and supervise important roads and bridges projects in all Iraqi provinces.

The general commission for roads and bridges are implementing road maintenance projects and emergency bridges. The commission has its own budget in accordance with statements from roads and bridges directorates in the provinces. In addition, the investment supervises hundreds of rural roads with the collaboration of the specified provinces.

The ministry is making efforts to implement and supervise several projects, despite delays in some provinces due to past security situations. The projects and investment programs are part of the reconstruction of Iraq and the establishment of adequate infrastructure.

The source stated that Shamal al-Amarah Bridge and surrounding roads cost 61 billion ID, while the work on the second road "Kut- Nassiriyah" in the province and central Dhi Qar costs 155 billion ID. Similar projects are being implemented in several provinces.

### **C.10. EU, Iraq conclude trade, cooperation accord (Khaleej Times)**

European Union (EU) and Iraqi officials agreed Friday to significantly broaden their relations by working together to counter terrorism and promote human rights by increasing trade and investment in areas such as energy and services.

Negotiators for both sides said the draft partnership and cooperation deal must now be approved by all 27 EU governments and that of Iraq. It is expected to take effect next spring or summer.

EU External Relations Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner said in a statement the deal "marks a new beginning in our relations."

It is designed to help the European Union play a bigger role in Iraq by improving living conditions, helping the country diversify its economy and providing expertise in transport, statistics and customs.

The EU is Iraq's largest trade partner after the U.S.

EU exports to Iraq amounted to €1.69 billion (\$2.51 billion) in 2008 which paled compared to imports from Iraq of €9.12 billion — 99.9 percent of which was oil. EU exports to Iraq are mainly machinery and transport equipment, chemicals, food and live animals.

The negotiations opened in November 2006 and took three years to complete.

The draft accord provides for regular political dialogue, boosting trade and investments and cooperation in such areas as health, education, environmental protection and energy. It also forces Iraq to push to open up its economy more to its Middle Eastern neighbors.

Since the 2003 invasion of Iraq by U.S. and allied forces, the EU has provided Iraq more than €900 million toward its reconstruction.

The aid has focused on basic services, democracy building and good governance.

Hughes Mingarelli, the EU's chief negotiator, said the draft ended up "far more ambitious than what we had in mind when the negotiations started."

Mohammed Haj Hammoud, Iraq's deputy foreign minister, who negotiated for his country, said his government wants economic progress.

"We have found in the EU a real friend of Iraq," he said

### **C.11. Iraq plan for 12 mln bpd oil output 'crazy' –Total (Reuters)**

Iraq should be able to boost oil production significantly through fresh foreign investment, but plans to raise oil output to 10 million-12 million barrels a day are not realistic, the chief executive of French oil giant Total SA said.

Iraqi government officials have said new bidding rounds to attract foreign oil companies to develop the country's oil reserves may result in eventual production of 12 million barrels a day, or about five times Iraq's current daily output of 2.5 million barrels. Top exporter Saudi Arabia currently produces around 9 million barrels. 12 million barrels is crazy,' Total CEO Christophe de Margerie told reporters late Thursday after a panel talk at Columbia University in New York.

'We know there's a potential to maybe reach 7 to 8 million barrels someday, and that alone would be a tremendous success.'

Total's CEO also said he was skeptical about the success of further oil field bidding rounds in Iraq after a first round in June was abandoned by most foreign majors, including Total, which protested stiff contract terms imposed by Iraq.

De Margerie said he was not convinced that companies signing deals in Iraq so far would produce as much oil as Iraq officials expected them to.

'Why aren't we going forward, why are we doing this? It's because at the end of the day Iraq will say this is what was promised,' de Margerie said.

The only deal that emerged unscathed from Iraq's June bidding round is an agreement under which BP ( BP - news - people ) and China National Petroleum Corp (CNPC) plan to further

develop Iraq's 17 billion barrel Rumaila field, which already accounts for nearly half of Iraqi crude output.

Iraq, which holds the world's third-largest oil reserves, has seen a drop in crude output after years of war. Iraq's government is counting on help from foreign majors to help turn it into one of the world's top three producers by around 2015.

#### **D. CULTURE AND SOCIETY**

##### **D.1. Food insecurity on the rise, says official (EXSUM)**

More and more people in Iraq are being affected by food insecurity, a senior official has said. Reduced domestic agricultural production, inflation, unemployment and a crumbling system of subsidized food distributions have hit poor people the hardest.

"There is still a big percentage of Iraqi people who can't secure enough food. With unemployment running at 18-20 percent they can't buy what they need," said Muna Turki Al-Mousawi, head of the state-run Centre for Market Research and Consumer Protection, adding that about 20 percent of Iraq's 25 million people live below the poverty line. Domestic agricultural production - already affected by reduced rainfall - has also been hit by a lack of government support and lax controls on cheap food imports, with which farmers cannot compete in some cases, she said.

On 31 August, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) said Iraq had its worst cereal harvest in a decade and that its wheat harvest was set to fall to one million tonnes, from an average of 3.5 million tonnes per annum over the past decade. Domestic rice production also fell from an average 500,000 tons a year to an estimated 250,000 tons this year. Iraq imports more than 80 percent of its food needs, al-Mousawi told IRIN. The crumbling subsidized food distribution scheme which was set up in the 1990s and designed to supply basic food items to poor people as part of the UN oil-for-food programme is making matters worse. At least 60 percent of the population depends on the subsidized food, according to Iraqi Trade Ministry figures.

There are quality and distribution problems: "We have comments on the quality of the food items. And it never reaches the families in time or in sufficient quantities. Some of its items are only distributed 8-10 months a year," she said, contrasting the current situation with that prior to 2003 when "there was a kind of stability with regard to food security nationwide as there was control of imported food and government support to agriculture."

Government support for farmers?

After 2003, she said, the borders were opened to random imports without real scrutiny, and government support for farmers diminished, adversely affecting domestic production, which could not compete with cheaper imports.

"The government has realized these dangers over the past two years and started to support the farmers and impose restrictions on food imports, and yet we are still far from the self-

sufficiency we had, as we are only producing 20 percent of our food needs," she said. Three draft laws which aim to protect local production and regulate imports, if approved, could dramatically improve the situation, al-Mousawi said. Abdul-Zahra Al-Hindawi, spokesman for the Iraqi Planning Ministry's Central Organization for Statistics and Information Technology (COSIT), estimates that about 23 percent of Iraqis live below the poverty line, meaning they earn US\$66 a month or less.

"One quarter of the whole population is not a small percentage. It needs a lot of thinking and economic strategies to help change this reality and improve it," he said. COSIT is set to present a national five-year anti-poverty strategy to the Cabinet by the end of November.

## **D.2. Three hundred generators allocated for Baghdad's school (EXSUM)**

The governor of Baghdad, Salah Abdul Razzaq announced that 300 generators have been allocated for the schools in Baghdad.

The governor noted that Baghdad province has allocated more than 300 electric generators for the six directorates in Karkh and Rusafa, which comes to 50 generators for each directorate.

The governor further stated that earlier Baghdad Directorate signed a contract with a foreign company to import more than 500 generators to distribute in different parts of Baghdad that were not included in the past to receive generators.

Baghdad has a complete plan that covers all areas, with the consideration of population density, standard of living of citizens and the gravity of electric power needed for the areas, according to the governor.

## **D.3. Baghdad Police Academy graduates its first class of female police officers (al-Arabiya)**

For the first time in Iraq, and in the history of the Iraqi Interior Ministry, a class of female officers has graduated from the Baghdad Police Academy. Fifty graduates will serve in different areas from criminal evidence, investigation, search, and training.

Jawad al-Bulani: "What distinguishes this class are the female police officers specializing in law and rights. We consider this a great day among Iraq's history, the graduation of this excellent class of Iraqi women to work as police officers, over which men have no monopoly. This ceremony is an important indicator of the renewal and success of the Ministry of the Interior and its security forces, along with the opening of Police Academies in Mosul and Basrah."

## **D.4. Is Iraq the next holiday hotspot? (BBC)**

After more than six years of conflict Iraq seems an unlikely place for a holiday. But could its status as the birthplace of civilisation see tourists flocking?

For most travellers it will, undoubtedly, be years before Iraq becomes a destination of choice. But as the country stabilises its advocates believe its potential is beginning to emerge.

### *IRAQ TOURISM*

At one time Iraq was a regular stop for British travellers. Early flights to imperial India refuelled in the port city of Basra. But the fact that all the country's major cities have been ravaged by years of warfare now make it a more difficult sell.

Even so, for the first time in a decade, the head of Iraq's tourism board is in London to attend the World Travel Market to promote the country as a holiday destination.

"Tourism will help regenerate Iraq," says the tourist board chairman, Hammoud al-Yaqoubi. "We want to prove that Iraq still exists and maybe we can change people's minds about it."

But Foreign Office advice is not to travel to most of Iraq at all. But for the intrepid there is a wealth of cultural monuments.

Known as the birthplace of civilisation, Iraq has thousands of historic sites of note. Landmarks include the ancient cities of Ur and Babylon. According to some historians, the Garden of Eden is 50 miles (80km) north of Basra.

Inside Iraq, there are those who believe, despite the obvious challenges, that tourism has the potential to transform the country. It will help to rebuild confidence and create economic opportunities

#### **D.5. Syria decided to shut down a T.V. station praising violence against Americans (Radio Nawa)**

Nor Media learned the Syrian Ministry of information has decided to shut down the al-Rai satellite T.V. channel, owned by Mrs. Rawa'a alOsta, the wife of the former Iraqi MP Mishan al-Jubouri. The channel was given thirty day deadline to close.

A close Source to Jubouri noted that he sold the property to a channel that will open soon. According to the source, the reason that lead to the closure of the channel was Jubouri's appearance in a weekly program, where he explicitly began to adopt the position of resistance as well as inciting viewers to attack the Americans.

This could be one of the tension factors straining the relationship between America and Syria, according to the source.

#### **D.6. IHEC: Population ratio has increased abnormally (Buratha News)**

The IHEC announced that the country's population ratio has increased in an abnormal way, especially in the provinces of Baghdad and Nineveh.

Today, in a press statement, Head of IHEC, Faraj al-Haidari, said that his office has updated the voters registration for the years 2007 and 2008, and found a significant difference in these two compared to the year 2009, as the population has increased abnormally.

Haidari said that the population in Nineveh province has increased from one million nine hundred thousand to three million, Anbar and Basra provinces have witnessed a large increase, adding that the increase in the number of inhabitants in Nineveh and Baghdad are very large compared to the other provinces. Haidari said that there is a difference between the years of 2007 and 2008, and the Commission will adopt the 2009 voters registration in the upcoming elections.

### **E. RELATIONS WITH TURKEY**

#### **E.1. Iraq: Kurdish leader talks about Turkey and the prospects for peace (LA Times)**

The Kurdistan Workers Party, or PKK, has been battling Turkey for an independent Kurdish state since the 1970s. Now Turkey has promised to come up with a plan to give Kurds more political rights in a bid to end the conflict. At the PKK's main camp in the remote Qandil mountains in northern Iraq's Kurdistan region, the PKK leader, Murat Karayilan, spoke to Babylon and Beyond about the PKK's suspicions of the Turkish offer.

*Q: Turkey has shown a willingness to resolve the Kurdish issue. How do you read the situation?*

*A:* We are serious, and we want to resolve the Kurdish issue in Turkey, and we are working towards peace. We want to solve the issue by dialogue, away from violence and the use of weapons. If Turkey is serious and has true intentions about peace, there must be an initial step of good faith to stop the ongoing military operations against our soldiers and our bases inside Turkey. To begin with, there should be a halt to military operations against us, then dialogue and negotiation, and then we will start talking about giving up our weapons. Any solution or peace initiative to give up our weapons will be considered at the end, not the beginning.

I see a number of politicians demanding that we should abandon our armed struggle, but they do not talk about the Turkish side and the military operations they carry out against us. On the ground, we feel their agenda is unclear and they don't have a road map.

*Q: What is the PKK's stance at the moment?*

*A:* At the present time, we are not satisfied and we doubt the policy of Turkey ... and whether they are committed to peace. Within the ranks of our party we are keen to take all necessary measures to preserve our survival. We have long experience with Turkey, we fear they will attack our bases, but we also have enough strength to confront them.

Currently in Turkey there are many ways to resolve the issue. In a poll by an independent organization, 55% of citizens supported the idea of solving the Kurdish issue through dialogue and peaceful means. In the past, when they had a poll on the same subject, the number did not exceed 10%.

*Q: How do you view the policy of the United States on the Kurdish issue? The U.S. has asked Turkey to resolve the issue peacefully.*

*A:* I am doubtful of this policy by America. When [President] Obama visited Turkey he met with Ahmet Turk, the Kurdish parliamentary bloc representative in the Turkish parliament. The meeting had implications, but America does not want to resolve our cause for their own interests in the region. They want to put pressure on us to make more compromises.

*Q: How do you manage to stay in Iraq? Do you get any assistance from the Kurdish Regional Government?*

*A:* We have no relations with the KRG, we are not in need of their assistance, we rely on our own finances from our people in Turkey and our supporters abroad. The Kurdish people in Kurdistan sympathize with us and support us morally, but not materially. At the same time, we believe the current situation of the Kurds and their role in the political equation in the region is becoming weaker day after day.

**E.2. Turkey Plans to Ease Restrictions on Kurds and Help End Decades of Conflict (NY Times)**

After months of dialogue, the Turkish government announced a plan on Friday to help end the quarter-century-long conflict with a Kurdish separatist movement that has cost more than 40,000 lives.

Times Topics: KurdsThe plan will be debated by Parliament, but the fact that it is being discussed at all is considered to be a landmark. For decades, Kurdish political parties were routinely banned, and the ethnic identity of the Kurds was not openly acknowledged, though they make up almost 15 percent of Turkey's population.

The government's plan would allow the Kurdish language to be used in all broadcast media and political campaigns, and restore Kurdish names to cities and towns that have been given Turkish ones. It would also establish a committee to fight discrimination.

"Today is the beginning of a new timeline and a fresh start," Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan said in a live televised speech. "We took a courageous step to resolve chronic issues that constitute an obstacle along Turkey's development, progression and empowerment, and we are very sincere."

Last year, Parliament approved private Kurdish language courses and a public television channel in Kurdish, as part of what it called a democracy package. And this week, a regulation took effect allowing Kurdish prisoners to communicate with visitors in their native language.

Such measures, many of which have been required for entry to the European Union, were inconceivable in the early 1980s, when aggressive state policies prohibited use of the Kurdish language and other cultural and political rights for the Kurds. That helped empower the outlawed Kurdish Workers Party, known as the P.K.K., which presented itself as the defender of Kurdish rights.

The group, which has been fighting in the predominantly Kurdish southeast, has lost much of its popular support in recent years because of its violent methods. But it still has 12,000 militants hiding in northern Iraq along the Turkish border.

The P.K.K. praised the government's efforts but called for an immediate end to operations against it. Listed as a terrorist organization by the United States and the European Union, the group says it no longer seeks independence, but demands constitutional recognition of Kurdish identity.

Short of that, a blanket amnesty for militants could persuade the group to lay down arms, many Kurdish intellectuals say, a move the governing Justice and Development Party rejects.

Turkey's leading opposition party, the Republican People's Party, denounces any direct or indirect contact with the P.K.K., though it agrees on cultural rights for Kurds as long as they agree to be identified as Turkish citizens and are educated in Turkish.

"The world recognizes us as Turks, not as an ethnicity but as a nation," said Deniz Baykal, the opposition party's chairman. "Neither the E.U. regulations nor international human rights conventions foresee separate state structures and separate language education for each and every ethnic group. There's nothing like that."

The opposition's view resonates among other parties in Parliament, which argue that enshrining various ethnic identities in the Constitution would pave the way for independent states within Turkey and destroy unity.

What almost everyone agrees upon is that the current Constitution, which was drafted after a military coup in 1980 and is seen as the source of many antidemocratic policies, needs to be replaced.

But the government promises that its first three articles — which explicitly recognize “Turkishness” as the national identity, and Turkish as the official language — will remain unchanged.

For Kurdish intellectuals like Sezgin Tanrikulu, former head of the bar association in Diyarbakir, the largest Kurdish town, the debate in Parliament was an achievement in its own right.

“The Turkish Republic is confronting its past and ready to make a new start, which is more important than any specific measure,” Mr. Tanrikulu said. “Such a government attitude would also discourage the P.K.K. from holding on to arms from now on.