

Forced Internal Displacement: As a Result of Political Mobilization in Iraq Post 2003

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Introduction

Displacement in Iraq has been considered as being the largest in the Middle East in 60 years according to United Nations of High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Iraq has experienced the most massive displacement to the extent that the monthly rate of displacement after 2006 jumped from 50,000 to 60,000 persons (UNHCR).

Why did this displacement occur after 2003 and increase massively after 2006? Who may have been involved in displacement and what kind of networks mobilized them? What is the direct reason? In current times, it might be hard to highlight clear answers due to the shortage of accurate evidence, especially in recognizing the “network” and “organization” of those who have driven people out of their places of origin and understanding their “aim.”

I will focus on displacement from the point of view of the displaced people themselves: their perceptions regarding the impact of environment created by the political developments; the reasons behind their displacement; and who might be responsible and take a role in their displacement. The findings of my research refer to the importance of political developments after 2003 in creating a suitable “atmosphere” for the emergence of “sectarian” militias, which in turn, have displaced people. For this purpose, I will try to identify the general atmosphere that prepared the way for displacement and how such an environment was perceived by displaced people (regardless of their communal basis). To explain why displacement happened, it will be important to show the reflection that has dominated people and has triggered them to leave their places of origin. The theme of the research examines how the political process including the political structure has been perceived as the general environment which led to displacement; in turn, it led to the mobilization of “sectarian” militias which became involved in the conflict and the displacement. The developments in the political process after 2003 have been identified as relevant factors leading to the displacement of people utilizing “sectarian” identification as a tool.

For this purpose, I interviewed 29 internally displaced persons: one Christian, nine Sunnis, and nineteen Shias. The results of these interviews will be used for the purpose of showing the perception of displaced people towards their displacement; the general environment; the involvement of militias; and how these trends were connected to each other.

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I am not going to accuse whoever displaced them, since much evidence is still missing, but I will show what people said and how such testimony has become the dominating “fact” among displaced people.

1. Literature on Displacement in Iraq

Since the military strikes against Iraq in 2003, the situation has been characterized by instability and chaos in different dimensions including security and its impact on population distribution. Since that time, Iraq has suffered from a severe humanitarian situation and insecurity. This matter has led to displacement due to both the military operations and to social violence. Yet what became critical in the issue of displacement is the massive increase in the number of displaced families after 2006 which led to a clear change in population distribution cross Baghdad in particular and Iraq in general.

Many scholars are still trying to provide different points of view to correlate some factors including violence, security, and insurgency and their influential role in triggering displacement. Different arguments are highlighted to explain displacement as a strategy used for some interests, while others have argued that displacement has been a natural result of invading the state. Others say it is not only a matter of accusing the USA of being responsible for the current severe situation, but in addition there has been no serious action implemented to tackle the issue of displacement.

1-1 Displacement, the Military Action in 2003 and Importing External Ideologies

Roberta Cohen points out that the US Administration is responsible for what is going on with displaced categories and has to show more concern about the displacement issue; more attention should be paid to supporting the Iraqi government in implementing the programs necessary to achieve durable solutions for both internally displaced persons and refugees in terms of establishing a return process and giving financial support. The Iraqi government still needs much to be able to overcome the “lack of urgency” and “incompetence” in its institutions [Cohen 2008: 339]. Furthermore, Julie Peteet argues that the assault against Iraq triggered a flow of displaced people which has attracted no attention for finding serious solutions; a massive flow of Iraqis left their place of origin, causing a humanitarian and political crisis which has only been tackled in a spatial way that didn’t even cover the minimum scale of basic needs and the shortage of humanitarian assistance. This is considered as a conspicuous proof reflecting the failure of the Bush administration to deal with Iraq after the invasion [Peteet 200: 2–3].

Philip Marfleet agrees with Peteet in saying that displacement is considered as a result of the invasion and changing the regime in Iraq, the state formation and the reformation process.

Philip Marfleet emphasizes the role of the external effects of some strategies and ideologies which shaped the process of state reconstruction. Such a change as the clashes between privatization and liberalization cannot be ignored when demonstrating their contribution to economic and political trends after 2003 [Marfleet 2010: 1–26]. Furthermore, Philip Marfleet examines the “dynamics” of the refugee crisis: the invasion and the changing of the regime are responsible for triggering displacement; he refers to the continuous increase of pressure that was imposed on Iraqis by neo-liberal globalization, and neo-conservatism. Overthrowing the Ba’athist state has led to communal violence that has dominated Iraqi society as a result of clashes between new trends of liberalization. Given the fact that Iraq was unfamiliar to such trends since it had been under the total control of the restrictive Ba’athist regime and isolated by long years of economic sanctions, the collapse of the state and decentralization stimulated new conflicts to enlarge the scale of displacement. The clashes of these trends in Iraqi society have caused the massive displacement [Marfleet 2007: 397–414].

Marfleet tries to show that displacement post-2003 has its own features. For this purpose he makes a comparison between displacement pre-2003 and post-2003. Pre-2003, displacement was neither more nor less than a process of repression practiced by the Ba’athist regime against certain ethno-religious groups living in the north and south areas. While in post-2003 displacement gained another feature related to the process of reformulating the state of Iraq after the military action against it to topple Saddam Hussein; the character of displacement has been based on the ethno-religious dimension in which millions of Iraqis were forced to find new areas to live in harmony with people sharing the same values of culture, religious, and ethnicity after drawing fabricated boundaries among the areas [Marfleet 2010: 2].

1-2 Displacement and Minorities

Elizabeth Ferris and Kimberly Stoltz try to explain the displacement in terms of minorities. In this regard, they say that Iraq as a country has different sects including Shias who are the majority of the Iraqi population, Kurds and Sunnis who represent the minorities, and in addition “micro minorities” represented by Christians, Yazidi,¹ Faili, Mandeans,² Jews, Turkomans, Palestinians [Ferris and Kimberly 2008: 8]. It might have been intended that minorities were exposed to repression and displacement such as what happened to Kurds during the Ba’athist regime, as they were relocated in different areas of Iraq because of a policy implemented against them to shatter a particular minority. Yet in the context of the current situation in Iraq, the communities are characterized by being mixed ones. Even though

1 Yazidi religion is practiced by small portion of Iraqi community; they used to live in the north of Iraq.

2 Mandaesim: it is a religion which is practiced by minority in Iraq called Mandeans. They are followers of prophet Yahya(John) who came before Jesus.

the Shias are considered as being the majority, they have been targeted by the minority Sunnis. This could have happened in some areas in Baghdad and Iraq where the Shias lived in small or minor communities within Sunni-dominated areas. In this case, it was possible to target Shias who were the minority within Sunni dominated areas. People have been targeted and displaced for being a minority within some areas or governorates even though they are regarded as a majority at the state level. As concluded by the authors, “violence against minorities often does not occur at the state level, but rather in local communities” [Ferris and Kimberly 2008: 4].

1-3 “Sectarian Partition” or Returning Process as Displacement’s Resolutions

Rhodri C. Williams argues that displacement is triggered due to ethnic conflict caused by the assault on Shia Holy Shrines. He says that there will be a potential for displacement if property issues are not restituted. Furthermore, he criticizes what the policy makers in the USA and the media have been pondering about whether Iraq should be partitioned into several political sectarian units or not. The partitioning of Iraq was suggested as a conflict resolution. With partition, there will be sectarian separation and political boundaries among different separated sects.

Since resolution by sectarian partition has not had much support in the government of Iraq, the government has tried to support the initiatives of the returning process and the national policy of displacement to tackle the displacement crisis. There is an obstacle to returning as long as the insecurity issue has not been settled. Furthermore, the restitution problem has not been solved. Rhodri C. Williams argues that “demarcation of such regions would be highly contentious” [Williams 2008: 49]. He adds that different political, ethnic, and sectarian groups have yet not settled their disputes over oil resources. What will be challenging is that their unsettled disputes over resources will drag them away from addressing the restitution of property and the returning process of displaced people. In addition, this might result in a new potential for the movement of displacement and permanent ethnic division [Williams 2008: 47–49].

Roberta Cohen stresses the importance of entirely settling the critical issues among the different political fronts. Addressing displacement is conditional on resolving the political tensions. According to the author, displacement is one of consequences of several issues such as “sharing of oil revenue; developing an effective police force to deal with sectarian and tribal violence; disbanding of local militias; implementing a more decentralized form of government (as in Kurdistan regional government); and a decision on the future status of Kirkuk” [Cohen 2008: 338].

1-4 Manipulation of Displaced People and Political Agenda

In reference to political agenda, [Joseph Sassoon 2009: 12] refers to displacement, after 2006 in particular, as being “a deliberate strategy of the warring parties.” He says that neither the war with Iran in 1980s nor the Gulf war in 1990s caused any disorder in the regime of Saddam, yet the invasion in 2003 and mismanagement post-2003 exacerbated the situation in Iraq. As a result, Sassoon says, identity politics dominated the political system represented by tribalism and sectarianism, and a few blocks started to dominate power [Sassoon 2009: 2]. Within the “dysfunction in the political system” in Iraq, the Sunnis became dissatisfied with the Americans and the Iraqi Interim Government [Sassoon 2009: 11].

In a special paper prepared basically on the interviews done by Ashraf Khalidi and Victor Tanner and their assistance team [Khalidi and Tanner 2006: 1], they refer to the displacement as being mainly driven by “radical groups” within the context of sectarian violence which is neither “spontaneous nor popular.” Many ordinary people don’t believe that they are displaced due to civil war as long as they have not been attacked by neighbors to drive them out from their homes. Rather those displaced people believe these sectarian attacks are implemented by extremist religious armed groups from both sides. From Sunnis such as the Association of Muslim Scholars (AMS), and the Islamic Party and from the Shias represented by the office of Muqtada as-Sadr and the Supreme Council of Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI). The main drive behind the activities of these groups is to maintain their “political agenda,” to further their domination over their territories and expand them [Khalidi and Tanner 2006: 1].

The concept of “civil war” is distinguished from the context of violence by the interviewed displaced people in the special paper of Ashraf Khalidi and Victor Tanner. What is highlighted by Sarah Lischer differs in explaining the displacement in the sense that displacement is basically a “strategy of civil war”. In this regard, Sarah Lischer argues that displacement has become a “central strategy” in the “civil war”; it has become a strategy of war in which the political and militants groups utilize the displacement crises for manipulation and militarization; by which, displacement has become a strategy to instigate panic among Internal Displaced Persons (IDP(s)) and they will be treated as tools or “demographic bargaining chips” [Lischer 2008: 95].

Furthermore, displaced people are manipulated by different extremists and militants groups for purposes that might be political. As long as displacement is a “strategy” as Lischer indicates, the massive displacement has been utilized as a strategy to show that the Government of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki is not capable of managing Iraqi affairs in terms of imposing law and order; displacement has become an obstacle to the political process in Iraq and to be sure it will be highly welcomed—if it is not supported—by “extremist leaders” to develop their “agenda” to feed sectarian cleansing by misusing the displacement

crisis [Lischer 2008: 96].

Lischer argues that the idea of manipulation is based on the activity of a militant group to drive out “undesirable” groups from their territory by using violence, or any kind of threat. From the opposite side, the “desirable” group might come as the aftermath of displacing the “undesirable” group as the new residents in the area, and they will be under the patronage of a militant group. As insecurity is increased by the existence of militant groups, displaced people will not be encouraged by the idea of return. They are afraid due to what they have experienced in their place of origin, so they are unwilling to return as long as the militant groups still dominate the area. For this reason, the violence might be shaped in different ways to cause displacement. Within this movement of displacement, the persecuted, displaced people will face the attacks of militant groups with counter attacks if they are influenced by their leaders to undertake political or even military activity. According to their point of view, displaced people will consider their counter attack as self-defense [Lischer 2008: 100].

Sarah Lischer goes on to say that displacement will become more and more sophisticated and be expanded to take the shape of attack and counter attack; displaced people will be militarized and involved in the cycle of contention under the supervision of extremists; the dangers of manipulation and militarization expose the state to more conflict if there is no serious containment in terms of adopting an active strategy to find resolution and humanitarian assistance. The issue of containing displacement is not restricted to those within the border of Iraq but includes those who find safe shelter in other states [Lischer 2008: 100–101]. In this regard, Elizabeth Ferris expresses her concern on the danger that might result from not containing the displacement issue in terms of humanitarian issues. The insecurity could affect the future of security issue causing an eruption of the accumulated conflict. The displacement issue should be seen as a threat to the security of the government and/or host governments. So they should have a role in providing displaced people with humanitarian assistance; their contribution will be effective in containing the crisis through providing humanitarian assistance and also in terms of reducing the security threats. If displaced people don’t get sufficient attention, this will be a potential threat to security [Ferris 2007: 1].

2. The Political Developments in the Aftermath of the Invasion in 2003

The political structure has been significant in creating the atmosphere that has triggered displacement. This is what has become the dominating reflection as perceived by displaced people to understand the reason behind displacement. Displaced people perceive the political developments regarding the new government of Iraq as having an influential role in mobilizing different militias which have utilized not only sectarian identification but also pro-government boundaries as well. From this regard, it will be important to explore the basic

phases in the political process and the resulting basic different political and religious stances. These political developments led to an escalation in the violence and sectarian violence, activation of sectarian militias, and created sectarian lines to be imposed among people from different communal groups. Within the political developments, it will be important to show the significance of the political process and the political reactions of different political parties and religious groups towards the political process. Overthrowing the Ba'athist regime, occupation, and sectarian allocation in the beginning of political process has had its own importance in stimulating the sectarian violence and sectarian targeting of people, who are from different communal groups, and associated with religious places and figures.

For the purpose of showing the environment which has triggered displacement, I will illustrate the political developments and different political and religious stances and their significance in this chapter.

2-1 The Invasion of Iraq and Overthrowing the Ba'athist Regime

After eight years of Iraqi-Iranian war and severe economic sanctions imposed on Iraq on 1990s after invading Kuwait in 1990, Iraqi social and economic structures had been destroyed and had become vulnerable. In March 2003, as a “failed state,” the Ba'athist regime had no strength to confront the power of the US, and was then easily overthrown [Anderson and Stansfield 2004: 83–84].

The historical records show that Sunnis dominated the power in Iraq since the inception of the Iraqi state. Liam Anderson and Gareth Stansfield say that in 1968 the “Ba'athist regime was dominated by Sunnis (mainly Tikritis)”³ [Anderson and Stansfield 2004: 139].⁴ The power had started to be confined to (Sadam's) immediate and extended family during the 1990s. This restriction was due to several cases of unrest caused by some Sunni tribes [Anderson and Stansfield 2004: 93].⁵ Sakai goes on to say that Saddam Hussein's rule relied mainly on his followers and was based on nepotism, and the notion to restrict the ministerial composition to Tikritis started to appear in the late 1980s [Sakai 2008: 208]. Yet through establishing the National Assembly, Saddam was trying to show that this assembly was a good representation of Iraqi social strata, especially after including the “new elite”⁶ in 1989

3 Tikriti is a Sunni tribe representing close followers of Saddam Hussein.

4 Under the monarchy, governance was dominated by the Sunni middle and upper class; under the republic, by lower-middle-class Sunnis; and under the Ba'athist regime, by Sunnis (mainly Tikritis) from the bottom tier of society. The basic dominance was by Sunnis.

5 During the severe years of economic sanctions on Iraq, it was believed that the situation would not improve while Saddam was still in power; two officers from al-Juburi tribe were plotting a coup when they were arrested and executed in 1993. Furthermore, unrest was experienced in Samarra and Ramadi [Anderson and Stansfield 2004: 93–94].

6 In this reference the author distinguished between the “old elite” which was based on close clans or tribes, and the “new elite” which refers to the newcomers to the political process during Ba'athist regime. For further details see the reference [Sakai 2008].

[Sakai 2008: 211] while knowing full well that the Assembly was totally supervised by the regime and had no authority to function as a law making institution [Sakai 2008: 211].

The Ba'athist regime imposed its power strongly on different political parties and Islamic movements. There was no local opposition to face the Ba'athist regime [Allawi 2007: 40]. With the increasing power of the Ba'athist party, the opposition raised in exile was represented by different political parties.

Outside of Iraq, opposition was activated against the Ba'athist regime aiming at overthrowing it. This opposition has been considered as a mixture of different ideological, political, and religious opposing parties and movements, with different aims for creating an Iraq post Ba'athist regime. Yet despite such a variety of opposition trends,⁷ they agreed on toppling Saddam Hussein. For this purpose, they held different conferences⁸ to gather their efforts and gain international support, especially after the intifada ash-Sha'baniya of 1991 [al-'Ajli 2000].

Regarding Islamic oppositions, two distinctive trends were activated inside Iraq which are considered as underground movements. The first trend was represented by the Dawa party under the leadership of late the Mohamad Baqir as-Sadr; In addition to his role as being the Marj'iya, he was activate in politics aiming at establishing an Islamic state; he was struggling against the secular Ba'athist regime until he was executed in 1980 [Aziz 1993]. The second trend was represented by Muhammad Sadiq as-Sadr, who activated the Sadrist movement before the overthrowing of Ba'athist regime [Aziz 1993].⁹

Regarding the Sunni opposition, as Ali Allawi says, "They were left out from the debates¹⁰ on discussing the future of Iraq...and it might be due to their paucity of numbers in Diaspora, as well as their association, rightly or wrongly, with the policies of Ba'athist power" [Allawi 2007: 72]. There were no recognized Sunni opposition networks as in the Shia opposition networks of the Da'wa party, or SCIRI. Yet, the prominent Sunni opposition was manifested through some independent opponents such as Adnan al-Pachachi, or by members within certain political parties which were characterized as being secular ones such

7 Islamic movements aimed at creating an Islamic state of Iraq after overthrowing Ba'athist regime. Yet, there were other oppositions which were represented by the communist party, the Iraqi national accord, etc. which were basically secular ones.

8 Different conferences were held such as in London, Vienna, and Beirut with the participation of different political and religious parties and movements to discuss supporting the opposition and identifying suitable methods such as the formulating of certain committees for different functions. For more details see [al-'Ajli 2000].

9 Mohammad Mohammad as-Sadr was in confrontation with the Ba'athist regime. As-Sadr was trying to revitalize the institution of Marji'iyya after two decades quiescence under Grand Ayatollah al-Khoei. He was trying to mix religion with political affairs; He firmly believed in the "Wilayat al-Faqih," the institution of the primacy of jurists over all Muslims. He was assassinated in 1999 [Aziz, 1993: 59].

10 Discussions through conferences and seminars were held regarding the future of Iraq; discussed issues were federalism, constitutional government, human rights and democratic institutions.

as the Iraqi National Congress (INC) and the Iraqi National Accord (INA) in exile.

In the London Conference of 2002, the political parties didn't discuss critical issues, namely: "The possible overhaul of a Sunni-dominated system; Federalism as a halfway house to Kurdish separatism; the role of religion in Iraq's public life; the extent of Iranian influence in post-Ba'athist order; or the scope of de-Ba'athification."

These issues remained unsettled and created tension when the political parties came to power in Iraq after the invasion [Allawi 2007: 86].

2-2 CPA policy, Occupation, and Resistance:

As it will be indicated,¹¹ there was strong resistance from different communal trends towards the occupying Coalition Provisional Authority. Some supported the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) but others did not; this led to insurgency.

Paul Bremer, the ex-ambassador, was assigned as administrator of the CPA. He introduced critical decisions such as de-Ba'athification and the dissolution of the Iraqi army which led to many ex-ba'athists and ex-officers being jobless without compensation or pension [Fawn 2006: 9]. Furthermore, such decisions didn't take into consideration the social and economic implications for this category of society who had become used to having their own prestige, power, and financial advantage from their previous important role in the institutions of the Ba'athist regime. Making such a step was done in a very critical time when Iraq was in need even for its previous humanitarian resources as represented by specialized people holding important and vital posts [Stover et al. 2005: 844].

It could have triggered them into being activated into armed groups for the purpose of getting financial benefits and taking revenge on the new government which had deprived them of getting a new space in the new state. "It is widely recognized that the support offered to insurgency comes from these expelled Iraqi officers, soldiers, security services personnel who had been left without job or compensation or as a result of De-Baathification" [Hafez 2007: 37].

2-3 Governing Council, Sectarian Allocation and Political Reactions

Since the Governing Council (GC) has been appointed rather than being elected by the Iraqi people, it has lost its legitimacy in the eyes of Iraqis and it has been considered as being a creation of the CPA [Anderson and Gareth 2004: 228]. The structure of the GC, which was established on 13th July 2003 to function until 1st June 2004, is based on ethnicity and sectarianism; There are thirteen Shias, six Sunnis, four Kurds, one Turcoman, and one Assyrian [Anderson and Gareth 2004: 228–229]. The sectarian affiliation is taken into consideration in the distribution of power. Only sectarian and ethnic factors were followed in

11 See the section 3-2 Displacement and "resisting the occupation," to get further details.

formulating the GC. The effect of cabinet portfolio distribution will enhance existing ethnic and sectarian affiliations and increase mutual suspicion as well; it emphasizes that each community has to be represented in the governmental formulation [Anderson and Gareth 2004: 240].

The GC was not welcomed as it was considered as a tool of occupation; the Association of Muslims Scholars (AMS),¹² which is a Sunni organization, refused to participate in any political process under the “tutelage” of the CPA and the GC. Instead of participation, it legitimated “resistance” targeting the occupier and its allies [Allawi 2007: 183].

There has been a trend of objection to whatever might be relevant to the CPA and the GC; no cooperation was provided by the vast majority of Sunnis [Allawi 2007: 187]. Many Sunni groups who are not part of the GC including the AMS, Friday prayers leaders, tribal chiefs, former military officers, academics and professionals see the GC as only a “sectarian entity” and “the entire transition process to be rigged against Sunnis” [Allawi 2007: 220]. Meanwhile Sunni politicians inside the GC, despite their hatred for the occupation, had to follow a way to be close to the CPA to protect their interests [Allawi 2007: 220].

In order to transfer the sovereignty to Iraqis, there should be a written constitution as a prior step. The plan should go through appointing the GC, appointing a Cabinet, nominating a committee to draft the constitution and then presenting it to referendum as a prior step to elect the new government [Allawi 2007: 213] yet, what challenged the GC and the CPA was choosing mechanism in which the power will be transferred from the CPA to a sovereign Iraqi government; the subsequent step was the 15th November agreement which has been considered as a roadmap to the transitional process [Allawi 2007: 214].

For the Shia’s part, Ayatollah as-Sistani expresses his reservations on the 15th November¹³ agreement stating that there will be no legitimacy for transitional basic law if it is presented without the approval of the Iraqi people; furthermore, the mechanism used in this plan to choose the members of the transitional legislative assembly doesn’t guarantee a real representation of the Iraqi people [as-Sistani official website]. The fear of as-Sistani stirred the anxieties of Sunni members in the GC over holding elections under an unstable phase of political process [Allawi 2007: 216]. The challenge was to present the agreement without

12 The Association of Muslims Scholars was founded immediately after the fall of Ba’athist regime. It is considered as one of the most radical Sunni political organizations. It clearly rejected the occupation and the CPA and proclaimed resistance to be a form of “jihad” and developed so called-fiqh al-muqawama (the jurisprudence of resistance) [Allawi 2007: 183].

13 The 15th Nov. agreement aims at drafting the transitional basic law which intends 1) to provide the legal framework for the Gov. of Iraq; 2) ensure an accord to be signed between the GC and the CPA to state the status of Coalitions forces in Iraq; 3) (which is most controversial) the selection process for the Transitional National Assembly “TNA,” it’s members were to be selected via caucus of eighteen governorates; 4) restoration of Iraqi sovereignty by 30th June 2004; 5) identifying a timetable for the elected convention that would write Iraq’s new constitution which would be subject to referendum [Allawi 2007: 215].

election and the request of Sistani and his followers to hold elections. The concern of the CPA for not holding the election in such an uncertain environment is about the possibility of electing individuals who might compromise the principles of the transitional constitution [Allawi 2007: 219].

The dilemma of the 15th November agreement was tackled in a single document, Transitional Law, to deal with several issues such as providing a timetable for the new Iraqi government and election deadlines [Allawi 2007: 220]. Yet, as this document passed through it faced contentious reactions over article 61 (C): it allowed the Kurdistan Regional Government the possibility of rejecting any permanent constitution in the referendum if two-thirds of the voters of three provinces rejected; the Sunnis welcomed such an article since it will limit the power of the Shias; Shias in the GC showed their reservations on that article saying it gives a chance for a minority to control the majority of Iraqis. While such reservations and some compromise was done, the document was signed in spite of resentment from Shia Academics and professors [Allawi 2007: 223–224].¹⁴

2-4 Iraqi Interim Government (IIG)

The IIG was established in June 2004 to be not only the basic requirement for the restoration of power but also for stabilizing the country [Allawi 2007: 280]. In the IIG, the Transitional Administration Law will be the supreme law during this transitional period [*Washington Post* 2004 (Mar. 8)].

There was an “atmosphere of anticipation” about who was going to get the premiership and the distribution of key cabinet ministries. The Shia community, who represented 60% of total number of the GC and key politicians wanted to get the potential premiership; Kurds wanted to get the presidency as their population represents 20%; on the other hand, a Sunni was a candidate for the presidency as well.

Sectarian allocation played a vital role in the distribution of presidency, premiership and key ministries as it was adopted by the UN envoy and the CPA to transfer the sovereignty. As Sunnis were “embittered by their exclusion from the power” after the invasion, it became necessary to include them in the political process [Allawi 2007: 283]. It was concluded that Sunni participation might be a condition for stability in Iraq [Allawi 2007: 289].

Ayad Allawi got the premiership after being nominated by the GC on 28th May 2004 after a series of meetings and discussions. The nomination of Ayad Allawi has been supervised and endorsed by Paul Bremer, the U.S. civilian administrator of Iraq, and later by Lakhdar Brahimi, the U.N. representative who is leading efforts to form an interim Iraqi

14 These items of information are provided by the author, Ali Allawi as he conducted interviews with Iraqi politicians such as Salem al-Chalabi and al-Pachachi. Ali Allawi was appointed as the Minister of Finance under al-Ja’afari’s premiership and was elected as a member of the United Iraqi Alliance.

government.

When Allawi got the premiership, he promoted reconciliation; he reversed what the CPA and the GC has commenced in demilitarization and de-Ba'athification. Furthermore, he stated the intention of the IIG to provide an amnesty to Muqtada as-Sadr, the Shia cleric, and other armed groups, giving them a chance to participate in the political process [Allawi 2007: 289–290].

Yet, with the progress in the political process, some insurgents had their own “strategy” [Allawi 2007: 289–290]; in the late of spring of 2004, insurgents established a belt around Baghdad aiming at clearing the areas of Shias; the purpose of this “multi-layered” strategy was to create area in which the residents were either supportive or neutral; accordingly, insurgents adopted ethnic cleansing from Shias to the southwest of Baghdad and the Sunni triangle. A similar strategy was implemented in Samarra as the insurgents distributed blackmail demanding that the Shias leave [Allawi 2007: 291].¹⁵

This phase of the political process faced several contentions; the violence in Fallujah and in Najaf justified the emergence of so-called resistance against the occupation in 2003 and 2004. Similar contentions to what was experienced in Shia areas occurred between 2005 and 2008. After the invasion and even after formulating the permanent government, the Multi-National Forces (MNF) were considered as occupants who should be fought. Many families were displaced permanently and temporarily from the areas that faced heavy confrontations between the MNF and the armed groups. Some details about the battle of Fallujah and Najaf will be mentioned in (3.3).

2-5 Iraqi Parliamentary (constitutional) Elections in January 2005 and Transitional Government

On 30th Jan. 2005, Iraqis elected 275 representatives as multi-party parliament to be approved as the Iraqi Transitional Government and be responsible for drafting the Iraqi Constitution. In the elections, the Shia led Islamist United Iraqi Alliance won the majority and the Kurdish-led secular Democratic Patriotic Alliance took second place after the boycotting by many Sunni political parties.

Because of first and second Fallujah battles¹⁶ which happened in April and November of 2004 respectively, it became controversial whether Sunnis would participate or boycott the elections of January 2005. There was increasing demand from Sunnis who were gathering together to postpone the elections; the Islamic Party called for postponing the election for six

¹⁵ This information was provided by Ali Allawi, a former Minister in the former government after 2003.

¹⁶ Both the first and second Fallujah battles happened under the premiership of Ayad Allawi; Fallujah experienced heavily military confrontations led by multinational forces and Iraqi forces against the armed groups in Fallujah. Due to these two battles, many were people killed and displaced.

months, while those who positioned themselves in the Interim Government called for holding the elections on time; another trend called for boycotting elections entirely as represented by the AMS which is headed by Harith al-Dari [Allawi 2007: 340]. After its withdrawal from the government due to the Fallujah battle, the Islamic Party quickly formulated its list saying it might participate in the election [Allawi 2007: 346]. With such a stance, there had been limited Sunni participation represented by Ghazi al-Yawer's list¹⁷ and al-Pachachi's liberal and democratic list [Allawi 2007: 346].

When Talabani became the president, he chose al-Ja'afari for the premiership and then to formulate the governmental portfolios. This time, governmental distribution was done according to the results of the elections, with the clear absence of many of the Sunni political parties.

Al-Ja'afari's premiership witnessed a very important step in the political process which was the drafting of the Iraqi constitution. The contents of constitution faced strong rejection from the Sunni side over certain articles related to De-Ba'athification and federalism, while it welcomed other parts as will be explained in the next section.

2-6 Drafting the Iraqi Constitution and the Referendum

On 28th August 2005, the draft constitution was read to the National Assembly with only three from fifteen Sunnis attending; the American administration intervened to compromise with the Sunnis by calling al-Hakim to take a role in constitutional negotiations as the insurgency would increase if there was no serious Sunni participation in drafting the constitution [Allawi 2007: 414].

About 1000 Sunni (moderate and hard-line members of the AMS, the Iraqi Islamic Party and other main groups of the disgruntled Sunni minority toppled from dominance after overthrowing Regime) gathered demanding to be included in drafting the constitution after boycotting the national elections in January 2005. They were led by the Iraqi Islamic party and Adnan al-Dulaimi¹⁸ as he said: "The country needs Sunnis to join politics... Sunnis are now ready to participate... We think it's time to take steps to save Iraq's identity, and its unity and independence... Iraq is for all, and Iraq is not sectarian" [*Washington Post* 2005 (May 22)]. The gathering of Sunnis came during the escalation of a Sunni-led insurgency that appears to have become increasingly unpopular among ordinary Iraqis [*Washington Post* 2005 (May 22)].

The constitution has been referred to — by those who supported its content — as

17 Ghazi al Yawer was a member of the GC and president of the IIG and then vice president of the Transitional Government. He is considered as a symbol of tribal solidarity.

18 Adnan al-Dulaimi is an Iraqi Politician, and leader of General Council which is one of the components of the Iraqi Accord Front.

a new experience and a positive step since it will shift Iraq from dictatorship, centralization, and the monopolization of power and resources into pluralistic political participation and federalism [*Asharq Alawsat* 2005 (Sep. 14)]. Federalism is highly welcomed by the Kurds as they have their federal government in the north. The Shias supported Shia federalism in the southern region [CNN 2005 (Aug. 27)].¹⁹ Some Shia parties,²⁰ notably the SCIRI, have been willing to have a federal region to include the nine Shia governorates in the south; the southern federation, if applied, will control one of the world largest oil reserves [Cockburn 2006: 196]. The demand of the SCIRI for a federal south shocked Sunnis as Salih al-Mutlaq says “the demand of al-Hakim shocked and frightened us” [*Asharq Alawsat* 2005 (Aug. 13)]. As a result, the constitution has been rejected by Sunnis because of federalism and de-Ba’athification as well [*Asharq Alawsat* 2005 (Sep. 14)].

This time Sunnis had to decide whether to boycott the referendum or participate in an attempt to defend their demands through voting in their majority provinces. The majority of Sunni political parties called for rejecting the constitution through a “No vote” in the referendum, yet the Islamic party didn’t show any clear positive or negative stance.

The results of referendum were declared on 25th October with 78% “Yes vote” and 21% “No vote”. The majority of Shias and Kurds supported the constitution yet it has not been accepted by the majority of Sunnis; the rejection of the constitution was highest in the Sunni dominated areas which are Anbar, Salahudin, and Nineveh; their “No vote” got 96.9%, 81.75% and 55.08% respectively [*BBC News* 2005 (Oct. 25)]. Salih al-Mutlaq,²¹ head of Sunni negotiators on the constitution, called the referendum a “farce” and accused the Iraqi government of being involved in reducing the size of the “No vote” [*BBC News* 2005 (Oct. 25)].

From the other side, the referendum results were welcomed; Laith Kubba, a spokesman for Iraqi Prime Minister Ibrahim al Ja’afari, told the BBC that the referendum was “a victory for the political process” and in addition Bush welcomed the results as a proof that Iraqis meant to “build a democracy united against extremism and violence” [*BBC News* 2005 (Oct. 25)].

2-7 Permanent Government and the Elections of 15th December 2005

The four years of Permanent Government has been very critical in terms of the political process and in terms of security. In reference to the political process, it witnessed a great Sunni participation in the election of December 2005, after a near-universal boycott of the one in January of the same year [Allawi 2007: 437].

¹⁹ See also [*Asharq Alawsat* 2005 (Sep. 14)].

²⁰ Asharq Alawsat in its article says that the demand was not only a shock to Sunnis but even to some Shia parties which have not been named by Asharq Alawsat [*Asharq alawsat* 2005 (Aug. 13)].

²¹ Salih al-Mutlaq is an Iraqi politician and head of Iraqi Front of National Dialogue which is the second Sunni party.

The United Iraqi Alliance is a broad-based coalition of over 20 groupings,²² which has a Shia Majority and yet it is perceived as Shia electoral groupings.²³ They won 128 seats from 275 in the elections.

The Kurdistan Alliance electoral grouping²⁴ is the second largest bloc in the council of representatives which won 53 seats. It is dominated by the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). The Iraqi National List²⁵ is a secular nationalist alliance made up of Sunnis and Shias led by former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi. It won only 25 seats.

The Iraqi Accord Front (Tawafiq) was founded by three Sunni parties: the Iraqi Islamic Party, the General Council for the People of Iraq led by Sunni Adnan al-Dulaimi, and the Iraqi National Dialogue Council led by Khalaf al-Ulayyan; they won 44 seats in elections; they called for the repealing of de-Ba'athification and the dissolving of the Iraqi army [BBC 2006 (Jan. 20)].

According to electoral lists, there is a strong division in the formulation of groupings based on sectarianism. In spite of containing other sects,²⁶ the United Iraqi Alliance (UIA) is perceived as being a Shia electoral list because of the domination of the Da'awa and the SCIRI, list.²⁷ Furthermore, they used the picture of Shia cleric, Ayatollah al-Sistani in their posters as propaganda which gives the impression of Shia domination. Kurds joined the election with Kurdish strength to claim more of their rights [BBC 2006 (Jan. 20)]. That was in addition to the strong Sunni participation in the election after their boycotting of the January elections to participate in the political process with mainly Sunni electoral groupings. UIA won the victory in the election and had to name the prime minister and then cabinet after

22 SCIRI, Badr Organization, Al-Sadr Bloc, Al-Shabak Democratic Grouping, Centre Grouping Party, Community of Justice, Hezbollah Movement in Iraq, Iraqi Democrats Movement, Islamic Master of the Martyrs Movement, Islamic Union for Iraqi Turkomans, Justice and Equality Grouping, Malhan Al Mukatir, The Free of Iraq, Turkoman Loyalty Movement, Da'awa Party, and independents bloc. [BBC 2006 (Jan. 20)]

23 See [Allawi 2007: 437]. Also, see the program of Aljazeera, "al Mashhad al'iraqi" title of series was "al Mashhad alsiyasi alShi'i fi al'ntikhabat," dated on 11th December 2006.

24 It is formulated by Kurdistan Democratic Party, Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, Kurdistan Communist Party, Kurdistan Islamic Group/Iraq, Kurdistan Labour Party, Kurdistan Socialist Democratic Party, Chaldean Democratic Union Party, Turkoman Brotherhood Party/Iraq.

25 Mr. Allawi's party, the Iraqi National Accord Movement, is joined by Hamid Musa's Iraqi Communist Party, the Iraqiyun party of former President Ghazi al-Yawer and National Assembly Speaker Hajim al-Hassani, and Adnan al-Pachachi's Independent Democrats Grouping.

26 UIA contains a big mixture of different political, religious, and independent blocs as follows: Al-Sadr Bloc, Al-Shabak Democratic Grouping, Badr Organisation, Centre Grouping Party, Community of Justice, Hezbollah Movement in Iraq, Iraqi Democrats Movement, Islamic Da'wa Party, Islamic Daawa Party — Iraq Organization, Islamic Master of the Martyrs Movement, Islamic Union for Iraqi Turkomans, Islamic Virtue Party, Justice and Equality Grouping, Malhan Al Mukatir, Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, The Free of Iraq, Turkoman Loyalty Movement [BBC 2006 (Jan. 20)]. Yet, despite such a mixture, it is widely perceived that this list is Shia and under the domination of SCIR and the Da'wa party.

27 See [Jazeera TV].

several debates²⁸ over electing al-Ja'afari and then replacing him with al-Maliki.

The political competition over the permanent government played out against a rising tide of violence as the Shia Holy Shrine was targeted on 22nd February 2006 [Allawi 2007: 437] and 10 days after selecting al-Ja'afari to hold the premiership, he stepped down; al-Maliki became the prime minister on 21st April 2006. He has had to deal with a wave of “sectarian violence.” Accordingly, he came to power presenting his National Unity Government in an attempt to control the insecurity and violence that hit Iraq massively after 2006.²⁹ He called for national reconciliation; and invited armed groups and former Ba'athists to take roles in the political process; at the same time, he has had to deal with the issue of militias such as the Mahdi Army,³⁰ the Badr Brigade,³¹ the Peshmerga³² and control; knowing that these militias are the military wings controlled by political parties [Allawi 2007: 446]. The government of al-Maliki is facing a big challenge to stabilize the situation; his period has witnessed an escalation in the level of violence that has been fuelled by so called sectarianism and the strong activation of the militias, assassination, and the displacement of thousands of families.

During the al-Maliki premiership, strong militias were involved in violence and displacement and they didn't show a clear “aim” whether they were targeting the government of al-Maliki, or the Shia, or stirring up sectarianism, and/or the political process itself. Yet, with the escalation of violence, it has become hard to identify whether it is only intended to target the political process and the Shias. The cycle of violence and displacement spread and targeted the Iraqi community including Sunnis and Christians. The aim might be to show that the Government of al-Maliki is not competent enough or what is known as the Shia government has presented a poor performance. Or the aim may be to establish another governmental system. Different explanations might be highlighted in an attempt to identify the “aim” behind the displacement and violence.

2-8 “Sectarian militias,” Insurgency, Political Developments, and Displacement

An examination of internal displacement cannot be handled without referring to the

28 See [Allawi 2007: 442–443].

29 See the figure (1), in section 2.8, of the Iraq body account which illustrates the level of deaths that resulted from bombings and assassinations.

30 Mahdi Army is the military wing of the Sadrist trend in Iraq. It is entirely a Shia formulation; it is considered as being a military formulation and non-governmental. It is important to refer to the meaning of the “Mahdi” army; the religious implication of the name “Mahdi” is the name of the Shia “hidden” Imam who will appear at the end of life to save the world from evil; he will establish justice and security in the world after overcoming injustice. The political implication of the name “Mahdi army” is to mobilize the Muslims, especially the Shia because the name of Imam has influence among the Shia who are the supporters of the first Imam, Imam Ali until the twelfth Imam who is Imam Mahdi.

31 Badr Brigade is the military wing of SCIRI. It is considered as being a non-governmental formulation.

32 Peshmarga is a Kurdish militia; it basically acts in the north of Iraq under the domination of the Kurdish side. and it is considered as being a non-governmental formulation.

insurgency and which sectarian militias were involved and how they reacted to the developments in the political process.

Overthrowing the Ba'athist regime was the turning point which led to increasing insurgency and sectarian militias as well as decreasing security as the basic feature of the environment in Iraq. "the Occupation is targeted and the newly established Iraqi army and police are targeted as well as their collaborators [Sakai 2006: 165]. "There has been a shift in the direction of violence from targeting the occupation to targeting Iraqi security and Shias, Kurds and Sunnis who collaborate with the occupation and the new government of Iraq" [Hafez 2007: 110].

Iraq post-2003 witnessed the emergence of different organizations and armed groups which were oppressed or hadn't been activated during the Ba'athist regime, including groups such as the Mahdi Army, the Badr Brigade, the AMS, the Ba'athists, Sunni insurgents, etc. They mobilized before or during the rising level of violence [Hafez 2007: 35], as they got involved in contention against each other and/or against the occupation and the government (based on interviews).³³

Hafez identifies two basic trends of insurgents in a step to identify the aim behind their fighting. He ascribes the violence committed by the insurgents (Islamic nationalists) to their aim in overturning the political process since Shias and Kurds were positioned with the majority at the expense of Sunnis [Hafez 2007: 36].

The second type of insurgents identified by Hafez are the Jihadi Salafi and the Ba'athists who aimed not only at ousting the occupation but also at confronting the political process and dragging the people into a civil war [Hafez 2007: 36]. The Jihadi Salafi have been activated in the collapsed state and aim to create an Islamic state with Sunni dominance as do the Taliban in Afghanistan [Hafez 2007: 70–71].

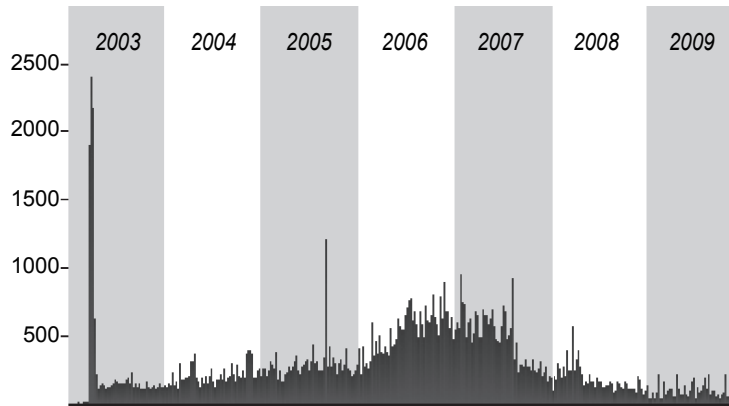
Regardless of the armed groups categorization, the basic strategy of these armed groups is to fight the Shias and Kurds in power. In other words, fighting the political process and creating obstacles in its path. Furthermore, they aim at dragging communities into civil war. What has become critical in the history of Iraq since the invasion is the sectarian violence which was sparked massively due to the strong activation of armed groups and mobilization in the urban areas as in Baghdad in particular (as will be shown in 'displacement' in Section 3).

After 2003, there has been a strong focus — in the nature of violence — on targeting government institutions and religious places, especially Shia Holy Shrines and Shia religious activities. The attacking of the Shia Holy Shrine in Samarra in February 2006 was the most critical one; the level of violence represented by death and bombings registered its

33 Such organizations and armed groups are identified by internally displaced people; IDPs refer to them for having certain roles in displacement as well as in the armed confrontation against people and other armed groups. Many armed groups might be involved but have not been mentioned in this section; some details will be mentioned in the next section.

highest level after 2006, as is indicated in the following graph.

Figure (1): documented civilian death from violence until 16th December 2009



(Source is taken from Iraq Body Count, “documented civilian deaths from violence,” until 16th Dec. 2009, <http://www.iraqbodycount.org/database/> (accessed on January 6th 2010))

The above chart indicates clearly the increasing level of violence as it is measured via civilian death from suicide attacks, car bombs, gunfire and executions. Along with phases of establishing the new government of Iraq, there has been an increasing level of violence and casualties in Iraq since 2003; the level increased massively early in 2006, in particular after the attacking of the Shia Holy Shrine.

The key issue which is focused on behind this violence is the political process and doing what might be possible to hinder it; the political process is the main motivation for the violence and for creating different sectarian fronts.

3. Displacement and Data Analysis

As it was shown in the last chapter, the political process after 2003 faced some political obstacles; within this chapter, I will refer to how the political process and political competition are perceived by displaced people as being the basic aim motivating “sectarian” militias³⁴ to counter each other and use their “communal identity” as a basic tool to distinguish between their side and the enemy.

For understanding the key reasons behind displacement, the thoughts of displaced people are valuable and should be highlighted. What displaced people collectively agree upon in their testimony is that these “sectarian militias” don’t represent the people; militias are mobilized only for their own aims. Furthermore, what is revealed from interviews is that there might be doubled stances behind the mobilization of militias: first, there is the militias usage of

³⁴ I use the term “sectarian militias” since they adopt a communal distinction to identify their target. Yet, their usage includes those who cooperate with the new government of Iraq and the occupation.

Table (1): list of interviewed displaced persons whose perceptions used in this chapter

name of IDP	Sect	Date of displacement	Place of displacement	Work of family	Political affiliation of family
A	Shia	July 2005	Abu Ghraeb	Educational field	No political affiliation
B	Shia	July 2006	Diyala	Educational field	No political affiliation
C	Sunni	Feb. 2007 -June 2008	Fallujah (changing place of work)	Educational field	No political affiliation
D	Shia	June 2006	Doura/ al-Eskan al-Sha'bi	Free work	No political affiliation
E	Shia	March 2006	'Amiriya	Employee	No political affiliation
F	Sunni	May 2006	Ash-sha'ab	Free work	Ex-officer
G	Sunni	Dec. 2006	Al-Talbiya	Educational field	No political affiliation
H	Shia	2005	Mahmudiya	Educational field	No political affiliation
I	Shia	July 2006 July 2007	Saidiya (Hai al-Dhubad) Saidiya (Hai al-A'lam)	Employee	No political affiliation
J	Shia	June 2005	Diyala/ al-Muqdadiya	Employee	No political affiliation
K	Shia	July 2007	Saidiya (Hai al-Ma'rifa)	Employee	No political affiliation
L	Shia	April 2006	Ash-sha'ab	Student	No political affiliation
M	Shia	May 2006	Doura/ Hai al-Mikanik	Employee	No political affiliation
N	Shia	May 2007	Saidiya/ share' al-ettfa'	Employee	No political affiliation
O	Shia	June 2006	Diyala/ al-Muqdadiya	Employee	No political affiliation
P	Sunni	Dec. 2006	Hurriya/al-Doula'ai	Educational field	No political affiliation
Q	Sunni	Oct. 2006	Hurriya/ al-Doula'ai	Educational field	No political affiliation

(Source: this table is made by the author based on the collected and analyzed interviews in March 2009 in Baghdad. The details mentioned in the table are very brief and for safety of interviewers)

“sectarianism” as a tool in their sectarian cleansing; then in some cases, the militias emerged to protect people who have the same communal identity. This point itself is controversial and may lead us to wonder whether there are certain “militias” who are really involved in making violence and displacement and who are using the names of other militias or organization to enlarge the cycle of contention. Another possibility is that there might be no unified “network” within the militia itself and that is why certain militia, in some cases, help and protect people from different communal groups, and in other cases, displace them.

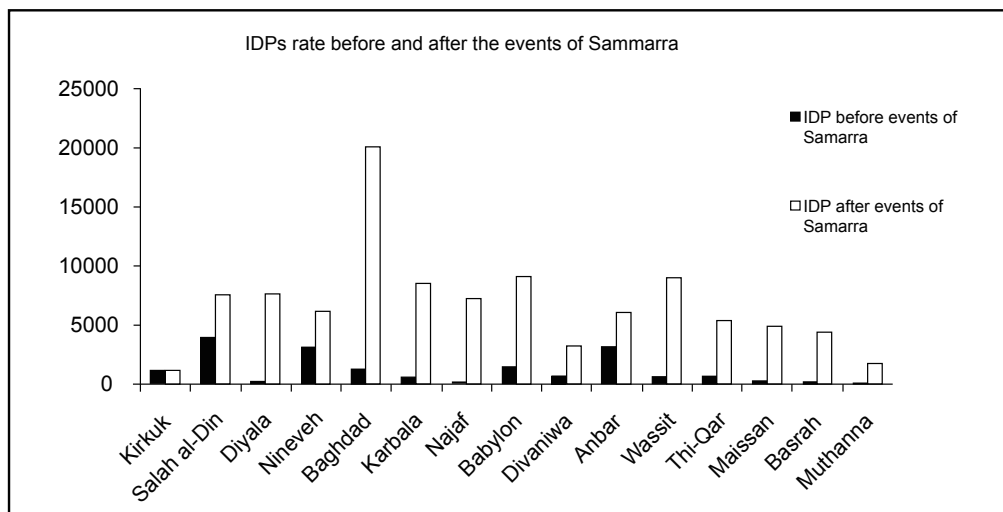
Regardless of militias with their unknown origins, what is perceived by displaced people is that these “sectarian militias” started to classify people, who were from different communal groups into communal fronts. Similarly, they applied communal classifications on their “enemy” militia, the government, and the occupation forces and their “collaborators” even if they shared the same communal identity.

Table (1) is the basic information of those who are interviewed and their testimony used in this section.

3-1 Facts on Displacement

After the invasion of Iraq, displacement cases have been registered in different places with different numbers and in different times. Many families have been displaced especially after 2006, Note following figure. Figure (2): Displacement rate before and after the events of Samarra.

Figure (2): Displacement rate before and after the events of Samarra



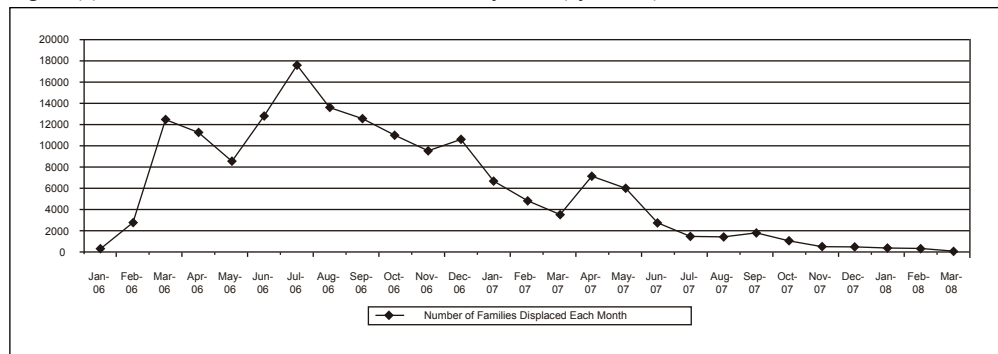
(This figure is taken from unpublished report “Internally Deported and Displaced Families of 15 Governorates” of Iraqi Ministry of Displacement and Migration for 15 governorates except to governorates of Kurdistan regional governorates. The report released by the ministry in 2007)

The International Organization of Migration (IOM) shows that military operations, crimes, and general insecurity were the basic reasons for displacement in 2003, 2004, and until the end of 2005. It is estimated that 402,000 persons were internally displaced including 200,000 persons displaced from Sunni dominated areas which experienced the military operations of Fallujah in 2004 [IOM 2007]. Yet the displacement since 2006 has been considered as most critical due to the increasing of displacement level. In reference to displacement after 2006, note the following figure: Figure 3: The number of IDP families after February 2006 (by month).

Since 2006 the displacement level has escalated to highest level and many ascribe this increase to the attack on the Shia Holy Shrine in Samarra in February 2006. IOM says “this attack triggered escalating violence that drastically changed the dynamics of displacement in which people were targeted due to their religious and ethnic identities” [IOM 2009 (Feb. 22)].

According to figure (2) and figure (3), some areas have been more vulnerable to

Figure (3): The number of IDP families after February 2006 (by month)



(Source: IOM IDP Monitoring and Needs Assessments, June 2008. This figure indicates the number of IDP families displaced each month (from February 2006 to March 2008). The peak of displacement was between June and September 2006. In October 2007, still nearly a thousand new families were displaced, while from October on, a few hundred families were displaced each month. [http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/\(httpDocuments\)/FA3D2A089CBB959BC125747500473A1D/\\$file/IDP+WG+Update+on+IDPs+June+2008.pdf](http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/(httpDocuments)/FA3D2A089CBB959BC125747500473A1D/$file/IDP+WG+Update+on+IDPs+June+2008.pdf) (accessed on 3 August 2009))

displacement than others. Yet there is a very important fact regarding the increasing scale of displacement of these governorates after 2006. The increasing level of displacement after 2006 which is presented by red columns in figure (2) doesn't mean there is internal displacement on the level of the governorate itself, especially the governorates which are Sunni or Shia dominated area such as Kerbala, Najaf, Wassit, Babylon, and Salah al-Din.

The red columns in figure (2) are signs referring to the fact that these governorates have become a new shelter to families displaced from other governorates. The explanation will be clearer after studying the next table (2): IDP families by governorate of current location and governorate of origin – percent by origin per location (up to January 2007).

When we examine the governorates of black columns in figure (2), which are in Sunni or Shia dominated areas, such as Kerbala, Najaf, and Muthanna, we find that these areas experienced a high rate of displaced families according to figure (2). But according to the grey cells in table (2), we find out that the mentioned governorate didn't experience internal displacement within the governorate itself; for example, Kerbala, which is a Shia dominated area, in figure (2) witnessed a jump in displacement rate after 2006 and such increasing, black columns, ascribed to the fact that this governorate became a shelter to many families displaced from other governorates, mainly Baghdad, Diyala, and Ninewa. Similarly with Najaf, this governorate, which is a Shia dominated area, became a shelter to families displaced from other governorates, mainly from Baghdad and Diyala.

The findings behind this explanation are that such areas with Sunni or Shia domination don't experience internal displacement since they are communally homogeneous;

Table (2): IDP families by governorate of current location and governorate of origin – percent by origin per location (up to January 2007)

Current Location	Originate from:																			
	Total	Anbar	Babylon	Baghdad	Basrah	Dahuk	Dewanea	Diyala	Erbil	Karbala	Missan	Muthanna	Najaf	Ninewa	Salah al-Din	Sulaymaniyah	Tameen	Thi-Qal	Wassit	Unknown
Total	100%	3.10%	1.22%	67.47%	1.61%	0.05%	0.08%	16.67%	0.01%	0.02%	0.04%	0.01%	0.02%	3.09%	2.26%	0.00%	1.75%	0.05%	0.48%	2.08%
Anbar	100%	20.53%	0.31%	67.23%	4.30%		0.23%	0.56%		0.07%			0.07%	0.09%	0.09%		0.31%	0.59%	0.05%	5.57%
Babylon	100%	1.51%	6.64%	79.37%	0.04%			6.79%		0.01%				0.20%	1.41%		0.54%	0.02%	1.03%	2.44%
Baghdad	100%	1.89%	0.21%	76.02%	0.04%		0.03%	17.12%		0.02%	0.02%	0.02%	0.01%	0.20%	1.34%		0.38%	0.03%	0.24%	2.45%
Basrah	100%	7.32%	2.88%	49.41%	0.90%			3.86%	0.02%			0.14%		0.65%	15.83%		4.32%		0.27%	14.40%
Dewanea	100%	3.01%	1.92%	81.83%			2.12%	5.20%		0.03%		0.03%	0.29%	0.09%	2.58%	0.03%	2.30%		0.43%	0.14%
Diyala	100%	0.48%	0.02%	31.98%	0.02%		0.01%	66.19%	0.01%	0.02%	0.06%	0.02%		0.02%	0.33%		0.13%		0.04%	0.67%
Karbala	100%	4.79%	3.40%	68.03%	0.09%		0.02%	15.93%		0.02%	0.01%	0.01%	0.02%	3.77%	2.02%		0.79%		0.08%	1.01%
Missan	100%	1.10%	0.30%	80.48%				7.57%						0.16%	5.01%		1.97%		1.36%	2.06%
Muthanna	100%	12.29%	5.48%	62.41%				8.43%	0.04%					0.64%	3.94%		1.54%		4.97%	0.26%
Najaf	100%	1.94%	1.17%	82.91%				7.59%		0.01%				2.13%	1.28%	0.01%	1.03%		0.10%	1.84%
Ninewa	100%	1.14%	0.30%	47.10%	14.80%	0.16%	0.20%	1.30%	0.06%	0.03%	0.06%	0.01%		33.40%	0.36%		0.83%	0.09%	0.07%	0.09%
Salah al-Din	100%	4.67%	0.20%	69.50%	7.66%	0.01%	0.06%	9.14%	0.08%	0.16%	0.38%		0.03%	0.67%	3.86%		2.35%	0.25%	0.82%	0.15%
Tameen	100%	11.13%	0.17%	29.80%	0.17%			31.31%		0.02%	0.02%		0.02%	3.78%	5.20%		18.10%	0.05%	0.23%	0.03%
Thi-Qal	100%	2.26%	3.49%	72.88%				5.37%						0.55%	5.88%	0.02%	3.49%		1.73%	4.33%
Wassit	100%	1.05%	1.12%	74.63%	0.03%	0.61%		17.60%			0.04%			0.15%	1.25%	0.01%	2.51%		1.00%	

(This table is taken from Iraqi Ministry of Displacement and Migration, "Summary Results IDP Registration - February 2006 to January 2008," it is prepared by the Ministry on January 25th 2007, unpublished report)

“sectarian” militias, who are from different communal group, have not been able to gain access to such area easily. Such a hypothesis is proved when we observe that other governorates which are communally mixed such as Baghdad, Diyala and Ninewa. Baghdad and Diyala, which have experienced a high rate of displacement as shown through black columns in figure (2) apparently also witnessed internal displacement. The grey cells in table (2) state there has been internal displacement in Baghdad, Diyala, and Ninewa with rates of 76.02%, 66.19%, and 33.40% respectively. Accordingly, we can figure out that such mixed governorates became fronts in which “sectarian” militias could easily mobilize and displace families.

According to such findings, 2006 and 2007 have become the years of displacement in Iraq. Many families displaced internally and many crossed the border of Iraq. With such an increasing displacement rate, very few returned; according to the interviews, many internally displaced families don’t intend to return in current time (up to 2009) to their places of origin as they are still frightened of “sectarian” militias. The internally displaced families identify what they have experienced as unforgettable.

Mobilization of “sectarian” militias is the key issue in the displacement process, as I will explore through the next sections of this chapter. This chapter will focus strongly on the perceptions of displaced people towards “sectarian” militias who utilized communal identity in their political motivated-mobilization.

3-2 Displacement during “2003-2005” and “Resisting” the Occupation

In reference to figure (2), displacement from 2003 till 2005, hasn’t experienced a serious increase as is represented by the blue color. Displacement in this period is featured as being a result of military operations, crimes, and general insecurity.³⁵ “Resisting”³⁶ the occupation has become the leading feature of the displacement since 2003 till 2005. The occupation has not been welcomed by many religious and political groups in Iraq. “There was a strong anti-occupation trend which is widespread in Iraq, as began with fighting in the Sunni stronghold of Fallujah and was soon taken up throughout the country; confrontation and demonstration caused scores of casualties; these confrontations are considered as the beginning of the revolt against the coalition” [Fawn 2006: 11].

Referring to the confrontations between occupation and armed groups in Fallujah, they were more than just resisting the occupation; [Toby Dodge 2006: 216] states that there

35 Have a look at the report of IOM emergency need assessments report, 22nd Feb. 2009.

36 It is controversial whether armed groups are making resistance (Jihad) or insurgency. The AMS was the only Sunni Arab organization supported “resisting” the occupation and its allies; the AMS legitimizes “Jihad” as a kind of resistance to the occupation [Allawi 2007: 183]. Shia’s Muqtada justifies the Shia stance against occupation (the battle of Najaf) as kind of resistance to the occupation. See also [*The Independent* 2008 (Apr. 11)].

is a clear indication of the “cause and effect behind the mobilization of political violence”; Fallujah became the center for this violence [Dodge 2006: 216]. Only two weeks after overthrowing the Ba’athist regime, Toby Dodge says that, the US implemented an intensive mission to search for the key figures of the Ba’athist regime; Fallujah was not only known as a hotbed of Ba’athists’ activity, but for being Madinat al Masajid “the City of Mosques,” and for its adherence to the Sunni madhab as well; furthermore it is a deeply conservative tribal city; the matter of accessing this city by occupation forces and searching for key Ba’athists has not been accepted by this city for the aforementioned considerations. With their entering, they triggered a strong resentment which caused “a spiral of violence and revenge” [Dodge 2006: 216]. The confrontation and military operations led to the displacement of 200,000 persons [IOM 2007].

It is worth mentioning that within that time, a kind of armed “resistance” was mobilized in different areas. Yet, the circumstances behind the mobilization of different actors was shared by all. Arab Sunnis in Fallujah followed a resisting attitude against occupation, and they showed a negative stance against the existence of the MNF. So, by their negative stance, they provided a suitable environment in which al-Qaida has grown to carry out its activities against the MNF and against the new government. It became normal to hold small attacks against their bases in Ramadi, the Sunni triangle, and small villages and towns in the south of Baghdad as well [Allawi 2007: 169–170].

In October 2004 Allawi, the prime minister of the Interim Government released an order to the people of Fallujah to hand over Abu Mus’ab al-Zarqawi or they would face an attack [BBC News 2004 (Oct. 20)]. Yet, Harith al-Dari—who headed the Association of Muslim Scholars which was established immediately after the overthrow of the Ba’athist regime—says that Sunnis will boycott the January elections if Fallujah is targeted [BBC News 2004 (Oct. 20)].

On the other hand, there has been a “resistance” trend headed by Shia religious leader Muqtada as-Sadr against the existence of the occupation. “The CPA was clearly observing the growing influence of the Sadrist trend” [Allawi 2006: 167]. Bremer was advised by Ali Allawi not to ignore Muqtada because of his popularity as being a political representative of millions of Shia poor, yet Bremer “didn’t care a damn about the underclass and what they—the Sadrists—represented” [The Independent 2008 (Apr. 11)]. During that time, the Sadrist trend started growing as the only Shia anti-occupation movement [The Independent 2008 (Apr. 11)]. With the clear trend of Muqtada against occupation, Bremer hoped to arrest as-Sadr stating that there are only three options facing him: “surrender, arrest, or death” [The Independent 2008 (Apr. 11)]. The CPA closed “al-Hawza”³⁷ newspaper and arrested Mustafa

37 “Hawza” is the News Paper of Muqtada as-Sadr, the Shia cleric. This news paper established after overthrowing the Ba’athist regiem and it call for resisting the occupation.

al-Yaqubi³⁸ on 3rd April 2004, so that the tension was ignited into critical confrontation on the 4th of the same month and they started mobilizing from the south of Iraq towards Baghdad and centralized in Najaf where the Shia Holy Shrine of Imam Ali is located [*The Independent* 11th Apr. 2008]. By such events, the political religious stance against the coalition manifest through a series of clashes.

This political and religious stance against the occupation led to a series of confrontations and military operations such as what happened in Fallujah, Najaf, etc. IOM estimates that 400,000 persons were internally displaced from 2003 till 2005 and within 15 governorates [IOM 2007]. Resisting the occupation was the main cause for violence and leading to the displacement of many families.

Furthermore, there was a sort of cooperation between Sunnis and Shias during this period. In 2004, Sunnis provided Shia fighters in Najaf with military supplies and likewise Fallujah fighters who had experienced fighting the Americans in Fallujah were assisted [*The Independent* 2008 (Apr. 11)]. This became the unifying factor between Shia and Sunni fighters as they followed a similar trend against occupation.

3-3 Displacement between “Pro-Government” and “Anti-Government”

It was mentioned in the previous section that the occupation has not been accepted by different communal groups, which has led to a series of confrontations between the occupation and Iraqi forces and opposing armed groups. Within such confrontations, some “armed groups”³⁹ adopted certain identification as to what was supposed to be under the category of occupation. Interviews show that “armed groups” generalized the term occupation to include the Government; the latter is considered as being an “agent” of the occupation as well. Accordingly, to characterize the nature of displacement, the main reliance will be on the testimony of displaced people.

Whoever worked in the government started to be targeted; in this respect, interviewee (A), a Shia displaced from Abu Ghraeb in July 2005 says:

Before the bombing of the Shia Holy Shrine in Samarra, there was a dominating idea that any person who was working with the government was considered an “agent” and should be targeted. It happened to me that I was chased by armed groups, and once, they entered my house.

38 Mustafa al-Yaqubi is senior assistant of Muqtada as-Sadr.

39 “Armed groups” used to refer to those who involved in displacement and violence because there is still no concrete data for identifying clearly the networks and motives of those actors. For that purpose, the main focus will be on the perceived reflection behind mobilization of these actors.

Yet, it was not only the government employees who were accused of being agents, Shia people were considered to be cooperating and to have sided with the occupational force. Interviewee (A) says:

In urban areas of Abu Ghraeb such as the center of the province, the district of “al-Nasr wa as-Salam,” Shia families were totally displaced as they were considered to be “agents” of the occupation.

It could be said that “armed groups” were targeting the government which was perceived by displaced people as being a basic aim, yet it is worth noting that they utilized “sectarianism” as a basic tool to identify their “enemy” in the communities. They followed their own “strategy” towards displacing Shias, accusing them of cooperating with the occupation. This reason was sufficient motive for “possible actors” to be mobilized to target those who were taking a role in rebuilding Iraq after the overthrowing the Ba’athist regime. Such an explanation is derived from the following interview with Shia (B) who was displaced from Diyala in July 2007. He says:

Those armed groups, used to appear—before 2005—only during the night time and covered their faces...they planted bombs in the street to target the national guards, and/or street cleaners in the morning ... they call the national guards “Wathani guards.”⁴⁰

He adds more by saying:

It was hard even to go to Baghdad, the capital, since it was considered by Sunni militias as a Shia governorate...militias used to monitor their car garages regularly if a person went to Baghdad.

From the above citation, militias have shown a clear antagonism to the government, symbolically represented by Baghdad, the capital of Iraq in which the government is centralized. To confirm such a perception from the interviews, a similar view has been shared by Sunnis. One Sunnis living in Fallujah, named (C) who I interviewed told me in reference to the same experience and within same period between 2003 and 2006 as well:

It was risky to say we were employees, since al-Qaida considers an employee to be an “agent” of the occupation.

40 Wathani means anything related to the worshiping of statues. The meaning of this word in this citation is unbeliever in reference to the national guards, and whoever is related to military and security formulation.

Despite the clear focus of the “armed groups” in identifying their “enemy” based on communal identity, there has been a strong identification of “anti-Government” and “pro-Government” trends; such an identification has been terrorizing the people who have the same communal identity and has generalized the sense of fear among people from different communal groups. This was one of the reasons which displaced many families from one place to another. To conclude, it was not only sectarian affiliation, but also working for the government, which caused displacement. Clearly the militia’s “aim” is to hinder the political process.

3-4 Displacement and Overlapping between the *Pro-Government* vs. *Anti-Government* Trend and “Sectarian Violence”

It is mentioned in the previous section that there has been a strong stress on the *boundary*⁴¹ of *pro-government* and *anti-government* trends, in particular, up to 2006. Yet, there has been an overlapping with the *sectarian boundaries*. No clear timing is highlighted to indicate when these boundaries happened separately and when they overlapped; the interviews show that the boundary based on anti-government was felt at the beginning before realizing that the “sectarian boundary” was an influential drive. Chronologically speaking, the “sectarian boundary” has second rank, yet both played a role in displacement as they complimented each other.

There has been a clear overlapping between the trend of *pro-governement* vs. *anti-government* and *sectarianism*. Such an overlap is expressed by the actions of militias. It is perceived by both Sunni and Shia displaced people that al-Qaida and other Sunni militias have their own identification; it is perceived that they have to search first for Shia who are considered *Rawafid*⁴² and cooperators with the occupation and the government; second, for cooperators with the occupation and the government, regardless of their communal identity. Such a perception is expressed by interviewee (C) who changed his place of work to avoid being targeted by al-Qaida. He says:

It is really hard to go through to Baghdad and that is because the Shia Militia is controlling the outskirts of Baghdad, while the way leading to Fallujah is controlled by al-Qaida ... we (Sunnis) feel that we are in between the two sides of hell (baen narayan).

41 The term “boundary” used to show there is a clear identification between “us” and “them” which is utilized by those who are involved in displacing people. This definition is available in “Contentious politics” by Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow in defining the “us-them” boundary.

42 *Rawafid* means unbelievers and it is used by “sectarian” militia to describe people from another communal group. In this citation, al-Qaida identified Shias as Rawafid.

Moreover he added:

Al-Qaida has been disturbing Sunnis; when they stopped mini buses, at the beginning, they were asking the passengers if there were “*Rawafid*,” and if the answer was no, then asking if there are any members of the police or the national guard, and if the answer was no again, they start checking the ID of the passengers and arresting the employees ... we (Sunnis) were afraid to show that we were working in the governmental institutions, so we hid our IDs and any papers or documents showing our careers.

According to the above citation, al-Qaida used doubled identification of their “enemy”. Both the boundary of sectarianism and the boundary of “anti-government” were used by “sectarian” militias in targeting and displacement.

Interviews show that people didn’t ascribe the assassination and displacement to sectarian violence up until 2006. The “us – them” boundary appeared clearly on a communal basis after 2006. Interviewee Shia (A) says:

During September of 2005, 50 persons of our relatives were killed within ten days ... they were ordinary people and they were neither connected with political parties nor working in governmental institutions ... when some of them were killed at the beginning, we were trying to justify the reason saying that the killed person once was in an American base, or another had appeared only in a photo with Abel Aziz al Hakim,⁴³ or he just showed up on TV, etc.... we didn’t think there might be a sectarian reason. We understood later that these accidents have represented a challenge to the existence of Shias in the area when the number of killed people reached to 50.

Interviewee Shia (D) thought that the violence dominating the period between 2004 and 2005 could be ascribed either to the Badr Brigade⁴⁴ or to get money from families but not to a sectarian basis:

When the violence started between Sunni and Shia at the end of 2004 and 2005, people who were targeted were either members of the Badr brigade or rich people.

A similar experience has been shared by interviewee Shia (E) who says:

The general status for the district changed not after the bombing in 2006 but at the end

43 Head of Supreme Council of Islamic Revolution (SCIRI).

44 The Military wing of Supreme Council of Islamic Revolution (SCIRI).

of 2005; many bodies were found of people from different communal groups.

The citation above refers to the fact that such “sectarian” violence had its roots earlier in 2006 due to finding the bodies of people from different communal groups. Similarly, this notion is emphasized by the testimony of interviewee (A). Displaced people did not understand that the violence and displacement was due to a sectarian basis until around 2006. Regardless of the communal basis, it has been perceived that the generalized violence and displacement has been basically ascribed to several reasons including working in the governmental institutions, affiliation to certain political trends and whatever was understood to be siding with the government and the “occupation”. Yet, understanding that there are sectarian divisions was perceived clearly after the attacking of the Shia Holy Shrine despite it having roots before 2006.

The general indicator of sectarian violence appeared after 2006, specifically after the Shia Holy Shrine was attacked in Samarra in 22 February 2006. This attack triggered a strong reaction from different communal militias for being involved in the “attack and the counter attack.”[Laitin 2007: 1]. It is widely believed that this attack was implemented by “Sunni extremists” and led to dramatic conflict between Sunni and Shia [IRIN 2009 (Feb. 22)]. Within one day of the attack, the Sunni leading politician Tariq al-Hashimi said that 29 Sunni Masjids (Mosques) were targeted nationwide [*Guardian* 2006 (Feb. 23)]. It can be considered as retaliation for attacking the Shia Holy Shrine; this bombing has played a big role in stirring more violence and in identifying distinctive communal fronts based on the identity and mobilization of sectarian militias as well.

The attack is perceived by many displaced families as being the shift in the nature of displacement from “pro-government” vs. “anti-government” to sectarian violence. Sunni (F), who was displaced in May 2006 from Ash-sha’ab which is a Shia dominated area into al-A’adamiya which is a Sunni dominated area, told me when the family left their place in Ash-sha’ab:

When the Shia Holy Shrine had been bombed in 2006, and many masajids (Mosques) were burnt, we felt there was a big gap between our status in the district and the rest of the people... one of our Shia friends came to warn us saying it would be better for us to leave the district. And the next day, a group in black attacked our house and ordered us to leave. On the next day, we received a “black mail” with a bullet threatening us to leave immediately.

In reference to displacement as being “triggered” by “sectarian violence,” displaced families refer to the fact that after the attacking of the Shia Holy Shrine, militias appeared

strongly and started to control the areas. Sunni (G) displaced from al-Talbiya in December 2006 says:

After the bombing of Samarra, Shia militia of the Mahdi army dominated al-Talbiya (which is considered as part of as-Sadr city) district ... then they “occupied” three Sunni mosques.

Sectarian violence has been considered as a general trend for displacement apparently after 2006. Yet based on the interviews, displaced people perceived that this trend has roots in 2005 and the end of 2004 which overlapped with the “pro-government” vs. “anti-government” trend.

3-5 Displacement and sectarian violence

As it has been perceived by displaced people that sectarian violence started at the end of 2004 and 2005, it has been considered as being the dominating trend after 2006. It has spread widely due to the strong mobilization of militias from different communal groups in many areas. Many cases of displaced people ascribe their displacement to the activated militias after 2006; the displaced Sunni (G) adds:

These militias started to be mobilized apparently in the daylight, and this is the reason why we left the place.

Shia (A) who was displaced from Abu Ghraeb says:

Bombing the Shia Holy Shrine made a clear divide as people have only to show their identity as Sunni or as Shia.

When the militias from different communal groups mobilized strongly after 2006, it became clear that people had to decide their own identity if they want to get protection. They started to centralize around the militias who were carrying the same communal identity to get protection from other communal groups. Shia (H) displaced from al-Mahmudiya⁴⁵ says:

Only Shia families left the area and displacement continued until ash-Shaheed as-Sadr

⁴⁵ Al-Mahmudiya is one of three areas (Mahmudiya, Yousifiya, and Latifiya) which are named the “triangle of death” since these three areas are known for being dominated by Sunni militias aiming at targeting Shias nearby; this “triangle” experienced the assassination of Shias who resided nearby and also Shia passengers who were just passing through this area to go to other governorates.

established an office⁴⁶ in al-Mahmudiya.

The phase of displacement after 2006 was the period in which militias were involved in direct confrontations with each other in the residential areas after the creation of communal divisions in these areas. Shia woman (I) who was displaced to as-Saidiya Hai al-a'lam in 2007 says:

A sub-district within as-Saidiya named Hai al-Dubad was controlled by a Sunni militia named the Omar brigade, and another sub-district within as-Saidiya named Hai al-a'lam was controlled by a Shia militia named the Mahdi army and they were close to each other ... every day there were confrontations between the two different militias from around 5:00 pm until the next morning...they were shelling the houses of the people from the other communal group ... militias established their own check points to kidnap people ... we as Sunnis and Shias were afraid and many families left as-Saidiya even though their area was dominated by a militia of a similar communal identity.

As the militias are categorized based on communal identity, the people from different communal groups have to reveal their own identity. Shia woman (J) displaced from Diyala, al-Muqdadiya says:

Sunni militias dominated al-Muqdadiya and many ex-Ba'athists joined the Sunni militia ... then the Mahdi Army appeared in the area to encounter the Sunni militias there ... the violence escalated very much after 2006 and after mobilization militias from different communal groups which started to attack each other.

With the strong mobilization of militias from different communal groups in the residential areas, they started to strengthen their existence and cleanse the areas by displacing people from other communal groups. It is still difficult to identify accurately the timing in which “sectarian” militias mobilized, yet many of the displaced people ascribe such “sectarian” mobilization to post-2006 and definitely after the bombing of the Shia Holy Shrine. The difficulty of identifying accurate timing is because these militias started to appear in different locations and at different times. Based on these interviews, they started to appear outside Baghdad around 2005, and then they started to mobilize strongly inside Baghdad around 2006. In some areas, they started to mobilize in 2007, as will be explained in details in this section 3.7.

46 Offices of ash-Shaheed as-Sadr, which are the offices of as-Sadr trend, are distributed in many places in different parts of Iraq. These offices are run by Muqtada followers and Mahdi army members.

They adopted boundaries based on communal distinction. As a result people have only to decide their affiliation and centralizing around these “communal” militias to get protection from being targeted. By which, generally speaking demographic engineering characterized the areas, so only certain communal groups have become the residents of a particular area. This is the reason why many of the interviewed families refused to return to their places of origin. They say:

Sectarian cleansing happened in those areas, and we are still afraid that something might happen in the future... it has become better for us to reside in an area which is related to us communally.

3-6 Trans-communal Solidarity “Social Relationship” between People from Different Communal Groups

I was told by the interviewed displaced people from the Sunnis, Shias and Christians that they all had good relationships with their neighbors from other communal groups. The latter have kept supporting and protecting their neighbors, who are from different communal groups and there has even been intermarriage between families from different communal groups. The Iraqi social strata is based on the weaving together of different communal components.

Displaced people being driven out due to the activation and mobilization of armed groups; they have not been targeted and displaced by their neighbors. Many stories told by displaced people showing the tight relations among communal groups.

A women from the Shias was displaced in July 2006 from al-Jadiriya to Saidiya (Hai al-Dhubad: which is Sunni dominated area) in which her family resided for one year and was then displaced in July 2007 to Saidiya (Hai al-A’lam: which is Shia dominated area) and they resided there until the moment of doing this research. This family passed through a series of displacements. They left the first area since a family member was working in the Mukhabrat, the secret intelligence, and his job was known to the residents of the area; then they moved to Hai al-Dhubad in which all families who resided there were working in the Mukhabrat and Ba’athist party. It was easy for a Shia family to hide itself within the area among people sharing the same “job-boundary” but hiding their “communal identity.” The area was under the domination of the so called “Omar brigade,”⁴⁷ which is a Sunni militia, yet they left the area to Hai al A’lam. In this respect, the interviewed Shia (I) says:

We felt afraid to stay in Hai al-Dhubad since the Sunni militia “Omar brigade” were active there and if they knew we were Shia, they would kill us ... our Sunni friend who

47 Omar Brigade, according to interviews, is a Sunni militia that targets Shia militias such as the Mahdi army and the Badr Brigade. The identification of their enemy included all Shia people.

lived in Hai al-A'lam, got used to coming regularly to our street and telling the residents there that we were Sunni and to take care of us ... despite having good relation with our neighbors, we left the area since we were afraid of the Sunni militia.

And regarding their Sunni friend, she keeps saying that:

That Sunni family (friend of Interviewee (I)), who resided in Hai al-A'lam which was a Shia dominated area, was about to be displaced by the Shia militia "Mahdi army," but their Shia neighbors, protected him and didn't allow the Shia militia to displace the Sunni family ... we have a good relationship with other families who are from different communal groups; the militias are the main reason for the displacement.

Another displaced Shia (K) who left al-Saidiya, Hal al-Ma'rifa in 2007 says:

We have very good relations with Sunni people. They said we will protect you so don't leave. Yet, we felt afraid about my brother, so he left us to stay in al-Harthiya in the beginning ... we stayed, just my mother and me ... we heard that there was militia activity from Sunnis and Shias ... we heard about many accidents and confrontations that occurred between the different militia and this is what drove us to leave. It was not only Shia who left the area; Sunni people left the areas as well since they were afraid about their sons and from the severe situation which was generalized ... in 2007, almost all Shia and Sunni families have left the area, and it has become hard to stay there with the existence of the militias.

Based on the different interviews above——still there many similar cases⁴⁸——people from different communal groups, having different backgrounds, shared the same reason to leave which was the existence of militias who utilized the urban areas and created a battle front; this is what terrorized people who were living together ignoring their communal differences. What happened in Saidiya is a similar example to what happened in al-Mansoor and al-Ghazaliya and many other places that I covered in the interviews. It has become even harder for some families to stay with the militia who share the same "communal boundary," a Shia (L), who was displaced to Kerbala and has now returned to their place of origin which is ash-Sha'ab, says:

We left to Kerbala since different Shia militia and religious trends have appeared in our

48 I have many testimonies of displaced people, yet the limitation of the paper doesn't help mentioning more.

districts ... they started asking people generally to which political party they belong ... some forced women to wear *hijab* (covering the head) and not to listen to music since it is *haram* (religiously forbidden) ... we felt afraid from what is going on, so we decided to leave.

A similar perception is described by Shia (M) displaced from al-Doura Hai al-Mikanik after 2006:

The concept of violence, which was instigated and dominated by al-Qaida, has been changed; it has not only included violence against Shias but also against Sunnis; Sunni people have only to encounter Shias or side with al-Qaida or to be targeted.

She adds more by saying:

When we went to Palestine Street, we saw some Sunni families who were living in Doura Hai al- Mikanik...they (Sunni) were not able to coexist with al-Qaida.

Some families left their areas even though they shared the same communal identity; families faced difficulties to staying with “sectarian” militias as can be concluded from the above testimonies.

There is not enough space to mention it in detail, but all interviewed displaced people from different communal groups agree on saying:

We have good relations with our neighbors....these activated “sectarian” militias don’t represent us (either Sunni or Shia).

To conclude this section, we may ask: is it a purely sectarian-motive that caused families to leave? If it is so, does it mean that families from different communal groups have started fighting each other? An important question that appears here concerns the basis on which these different militias have appeared and what kind of network and background they are fighting for. The next section will show how these militias have activated and deployed and what kind of merits and demerits they imply and what their perceived aim is? How do people perceived the mobilized militia and how have people behaved and what kind of circumstances have been created by the activation of these militias.

3-7 Militias’ Mobilization and Displacement “Process”

Increasing the level of displacement is highly related to the mobilization of militias in the

residential areas. If these militias have no access to the areas, people will not be terrorized and will not leave or be forced to leave. Accordingly, if we want to understand nature of displacement, we have to understand how these militias mobilized within these areas; we have to figure out whether they got support or not from inside the areas and under what kind of circumstances they got support.

There are several factors that facilitated deploying these militias in residential areas. According to these factors, we may understand to some extent, why displacement has occurred at different times and in different places. If we examine the interviews in the appendix of this research and figure out the timetable and locations of displacement, we will see a variety of locations and timings as well; some were displaced in 2005, 2006, and 2007. Despite 2006 being considered as the turning point in displacement, some areas suffered from displacement after 2007.

From conducting these interviews, I met displaced people who originated from several areas inside Baghdad and its surrounding areas. In Baghdad, I met displaced people from al-Mansur, Doura (including Hai al-Mikanik, Hai alathoreen, al-Eskan al sha'bi, Share' setteen), Yousifiya, Hai al'adel, Talbiya, al-'Amiriya, Fallujah, Abou Ghraeb, Doula'i, ash-Sha'ab, Mahmudiya, Saidiya (includes Hai al-Ma'rifa, al'tffaa street, Hai al Muharibeen, Hai al-Dhubad, Hai al-A'lam), and Diyala (includes Muqdadiya, Ba'quba).

In these areas and based on the results of my interviews, it is shown that displacement can be divided into three basic layers. Some areas especially outside of Baghdad, in particular, witnessed displacement—before 2006—as happened in Abou Ghraeb, Diyala, Yousifiya, and Mahmudiya. Some areas experienced displacement in 2006 especially, after February 2006 (as it is perceived by the displaced people). These areas, mainly in Baghdad such as Doura, Talbiya, ash-Sha'ab, Amiriya, experienced displacement in 2006. Some areas such as in Saidiya didn't experience a clear displacement until 2007. We cannot clearly identify the time phases of displacement in these areas. Yet we can get a hint from these results; some areas have been considered more “vulnerable” than others which means that militias easily accessed some areas and found some difficulty in accessing others. We can conclude that there are several factors which facilitate the mobilization of “sectarian” militias:

Displaced people ascribe the reason for displacement to these militias after they approached the residential areas; after coming from outside the area, they were able to find shelter and then they started to control the area by establishing their “headquarters” and “check points” and targeting people.

So, according to what is mentioned above, here I refer to the importance of the geographic factor and its relevance to displacement; the location of the area and what kind of areas (communally) they were surrounded by. For example, it was easy for militias to approach Doura since it is connected to the expressway between Baghdad and surrounding

areas such as Mahmudiya, and Abou Ghraeb. It is an open area on the outskirts of Baghdad.

I interviewed some displaced people from Saidiya and almost all of them were displaced in 2007 describing the situation as the worst for people who were from different communal groups. “Sectarian” militias were able to deploy themselves apparently in 2007 and this may be because of Saidiya’s geographic feature; interviewee (N) who was displaced from Saidiya in 2007 says:

Saidiya has become a “hot area” since it is near to parks and next to al-Doura ... these armed groups entered Saidiya coming from al-Doura and they started to do acts of violence such as bombing and assassination.

Social and economic factors have contributed to the displacement “process.” These militias were trying to find support in the areas in which they were activated. They used financial support, and “faked” religious booklets, etc for the purpose of manipulation. An interviewee (O) from Diyala says:

Al-Qaida has its own way of manipulating people: they are trying to control people utilizing their weak economic status, and using “faked” religious books ... they pay money to those people so the latter have only to follow them since they would not be able to return the money back if they didn’t join al-Qaida ... in such a way, al-Qaida strengthened its organization in the area.

And in reference to those who became supporters of militias, the same interviewee says:

Militias’ supporters have a very simple education and low social morals ... some of them are criminals and/or are of a very vulnerable economic status.

A similar perception is held by Sunni interviewee (P) who was displaced from al-Doula’ai:

Those who support the militias are not known socially, and they are not even Islamists.

An attempt to manipulate people, local residents, is the militias’ tool to dominate the area and displace the people. With such a methodology, the militias were able to get access to some areas and gain support.

During the manipulation process and the domination of the areas by “sectarian” militias, residential areas have become divided communally. Such domination created a front which

experienced heavy confrontation especially in the areas close to each other as happened in Hai al-Dhubat and Hai al-A'lam in Saidiya.⁴⁹ A similar situation was experienced in al-Doula'ai as one Sunni interviewee (Q) says:

There was a tense atmosphere since al Doula'ai is near to the Kadhimiya and Shu'la⁵⁰ areas... confrontations between Sunnis militias from al Doula'a and Shia militias which were escorting Shia people heading to Shia Shrines to commemorate Shia religious anniversaries often happened there.

After displacement to al-Ghazaliya (Share' al-Mushajjar),⁵¹ the same interviewee adds:

When the Shia militia (Mahdi army) started to approach our district, the Sunni militias started to go up to the roofs of our houses for the purpose of monitoring and military confrontations ... we both (Sunnis and Shias) left the area ... it became really terrorizing to stay longer.

Different areas within Baghdad have been affected by the "sectarian violence" which is instigated by "sectarian" militias (as they will be identified according to the perceptions of the displaced people in the next section); their mobilization in urban areas is facilitated by the location of the areas as well as by getting support from some local residents; few were easily manipulated by the militias which utilized those of vulnerable social and economic backgrounds. Then they started to strengthen their bases through establishing headquarters and check points for the purpose of catching their "enemy" from a different communal group and their "enemy" militia.

The process of displacement resulted from the strong mobilization of "sectarian" militias. Areas of displacement became a front which witnessed confrontations between these sectarian militias. People, if they were not targeted, were terrorized by the confrontations.

3-8 Perceived Sectarian Militias Involved in Displacement and their Perceived Aim

Different militias are perceived by displaced people. They have referred to different names of militias who are involved in the cycle of contention and in direct/indirect involvement in displacement; names and militias which are perceived by displaced people are the following:

49 The nature of the two areas was described by interviewee "L" in section (3.6)

50 Kadhimiya and Shu'la are Shia dominated areas.

51 Ghazaliya has become a divided area between Sunni side and Shia side; Share' al-Mushajjar is an area located between the Sunni and Shia sides of al Ghazaliya.

Al-Qaida, Omar Brigade, Harith al-Dari,⁵² ex-Ba'athist, and Kata'b thawrat-el-'ashrin,⁵³ Mahdi Army, Badr brigade, Kata'b Hizbuallah,⁵⁴ Thar Allah,⁵⁵ and az-Zarqawi.

The names which are mentioned above have a role in the displacement process as it is identified by displaced people and more might be involved who I couldn't discover due to the time limitation while doing interviews. Yet it is still a big challenge to find out what their "networks" and their "aims" are exactly at the present time. It is not clear whether there is a shared network between these militias and names or not. Yet what is manifested is the contentious interaction among these militias. They mobilize and encounter militias from different communal groups. From the other side, they mobilize against people who are from different communal groups, and threaten them.

Two basic movements of militias are perceived by displaced people; Sunni militias such as al-Qaida, Omar Brigade, Harith al-Dari, ex-Ba'athists, and az-Zarqawi, and Shia militia such as the Mahdi Army, Badr Brigade, Kata'b Hizbuallah, and Thar Allah. Both movements are involved in the cycle of contention, targeting and attacking each other.

Although it has not been established whether there are any shared networks and shared aims, the political process and the new government in Iraq has an influential role in driving the mobilization of these militias: The big issue in the displacement is to identify who has the power and domination of the new government of Iraq. It is highly perceived that the new government of Iraq, after overthrowing the Ba'athist regime is Shia. As it is shown in chapter two, Shias won the majority in the political process and such a result has become the dominating factor. This fact is perceived by displaced people as the basic drive to trigger these militias in the cycle of contention and displacement as well. Some militias mobilized as a reaction to such developments in the political process and others mobilized as a reaction to mobilization of other militias. So, we can identify the manifested aim behind displacement according to the dominating factor of the political process which is Shia domination and the perception of displaced people.

A government dominated by the Shia has not been welcomed and this is what has mobilized militias to target their "enemy" which is the new government and the Shia, since they seized the power. Sunni militias identify the occupation forces, the government, and the

52 Harith al-Dari is head of the AMS.

53 Battalions of Twenty Revolutions: the names of militias utilize the historical dimension, and such a usage is the method to mobilize people. The name of "Battalions of Twenty Revolution" is the name of battalions that participated in fighting the British occupation. Similarly, the militias try to remind the people about their history and show the similarity between British and American occupations whether in the 1920s or the 2000s. Displaced people perceived this militia as Sunni.

54 Battalions of Hizbuallah: an armed group depending on religious implications to mobilize people to their side.

55 Revenge of Allah: an armed group depending on religious implications, particularly the Shia trend, to mobilize people and gain domination.

Shia as their enemy. On the other hand the Shia militias identify the Sunni militias as their enemy.

Al-Qaida's Zarqawi has targeted Shia as his own strategy to undermine the presence of Americans in Iraq by igniting the sectarian violence [*BBC News* 2005 (Nov. 10)]. Attacking the Shia Holy Shrine was the spark which led to the involvement of militias from different communal groups in the cycle of contention [CCN 2006 (Feb. 23)] while the targeting adopted by az-Zarqawi against the Shia has revealed that the US and the Government are not capable of protecting the Shia; this was a justification for the emergence of the Mahdi Army as Shias' self-defense force [*The Independent* 2008 (Apr. 11)].

Looking at the blackmail (in the appendix) which is directed to the Shia families by the Omar Brigade (a Sunni organization); it clearly identifies its enemy as Shia organizations and governmental institutions namely: the Mahdi Army, the Badr Brigade, the national guard, and the police. The Omar Brigade accuses these groups of being followers of the Americans. Sunni militia sided with Shia in power and Shia militias with the occupation. While the Sunni militia accuses governmental institutions and Shia militias of being supporters of the occupying forces, its blackmail is directed at ordinary Shia people who have nothing to do with politics.

Furthermore, the Sunni militia accuses Shia people of attacking Sunni people and displacing them. Similarly, the Omar brigade accuses the Mahdi army and its followers of occupation. Part of the blackmail:⁵⁶

You are Rawafedh (unbelievers) who have been followers of the cross worshipping Americans and their alliance who crossed the oceans and continents ... We are honored to do Jihad for the sake of Allah ... to raise the flag of Islam above this honored land which has no disgrace except the presence of you and the descendants of al-Alqami Magi, who are worshipers of fire and statues. You formulated yourselves under the title of the Badr Brigade⁵⁷ and wore the uniform of the Police, al-Maghawer, the National Guard, and other uniforms but with a similar aim which is helping the occupiers to stay and exterminate Sunnis and displace them from their land ... Since you have attacked Sunnis by assassination, torture, displacement, and attacking the mosques of Allah, we have come to exact "fair punishment" against you; we will punish you through (killing and slaughtering) as "Allah commands" us ... We do swear by Allah that if you will not leave our areas and lands, we will destroy your houses while you are still inside them. We will target you as much as we can through car bombing, and explosions, as well men who will separate your heads from your bodies by swords of right.

⁵⁶ see the indexed blackmail at the end of the research.

⁵⁷ The meaning used in the original blackmail is "Dirty Brigade"

The Sunni militia seeks revenge from ordinary Shia people, who are named as unbelievers, just because Shias came to power and were perceived as collaborating with the occupation. According to this blackmail, the aim of the Omar Brigade is to threaten and displace Shia people for several reasons: first, they are accused of being followers of Americans which means that they have all taken one side; second, Sunni militias attack the occupation and the government, which is established under the “patronage” of the occupation, through attacking Shia people; accordingly, which is third, they use their own methods to achieve their aim through car bombings, targeting civilians, assassination, and the displacement of people; Fourth, as a militia, their acts come as a counterattack to those implemented by the Shia militia.

One Shia (H) displaced from al-Mahmudiya in 2005 confirms such a notion by saying:

We are targeted by Sunni militias since we are Shias...this militia has seen the government as Shia and they target us (Shia) for this reason... but we (Shia) didn't get any benefit from the government...if they want to target the government, they have to do it directly and not target Shia people. We didn't get any benefit from government.

From what is mentioned above, we conclude some very important facts: the first identification is the one of occupation, and the government being aligned with the enemy; the second identification is the communal one targeting Shia people as a part of the first identification. As a result, we can see the “dual” identification used by Sunni militias in their mobilization. Regarding Shia militias, they have become part of cycle of contention; they targeted Sunni militias as a part of their counter attack; and in many cases, Shia militias mobilized and targeted Sunni people for mutual revenge.

Displacement in Iraq gives the impression it is triggered by sectarian violence, and yet in reality, the cause of displacement is the post-2003 political developments that have created a suitable environment to mobilize militias who use sectarian identity to target the government. Using sectarian identification has been a way to identify the government as Shia when both parties share the same communal identity.

Conclusion

Displacement has been triggered by a dimension bigger than the “sectarian violence”; the political developments have been perceived as being influential in mobilizing militias and triggering displacement. The political process was a stimulant that created the boundaries of communal identity and “pro-government” vs. “anti-government”; these two basic boundaries are used by sectarian militias in their mobilization to target their enemy according to the

identification which is built on such boundaries and then develop the cycle of contention.

In the displacement process, the sectarian militias generalized the term “occupation” to include the Government; the latter is considered as being an agent to occupation as well. Similarly, the term agent is used to identify the Shia as they are considered as collaborators in the occupation. It has been perceived that the elected government is considered as being a Shia government; for that reason, the occupation, the new government of Iraq and the Shia are all categorized under the identification of “pro-government” vs. “anti-government.” The mobilization of Sunni militias is countered by the mobilization of Shia militias which started to emerge with equal strength; this strong mobilization of militias created two distinctive fronts which were imposed on people from different communal groups; by such, the scope of displacement expanded by increasing the level of displacement. 2006 witnessed the apparent mobilization of militias as they contribute to enlarge the contention and displacement as well.

What is mentioned above is based on the perceptions of displaced people and what is shown in the blackmail and propaganda of militias, in particular, the Sunni militia; the domination of power by Shias and Kurds at the expense of Sunnis has created a suitable environment to enrich and draw the boundary of “pro-government” vs. “anti-government.” The boundary of “pro-government” vs. “anti-government” has become overlapped with communal identity; both are used as a method of identification by militias who target not only Shias, who are considered as “agents,” but also those who work in the governmental institutions including Sunnis. These doubled boundaries are used as a method by the sectarian militias. Targeting the political process has become the basic aim behind the mobilization of sectarian groups. Yet what has given the displacement a sectarian dimension is the attacks and counter attacks [Laitin 2007] between the militias themselves; they mobilized in different residential areas and started to dominate the territories and then cleanse them from their enemies from other communal groups. This conclusion is based on the testimony of displaced people and the blackmail propaganda.

There have been clear political tensions since 2003 on the political system in Iraq. The participation of different political and religious parties in determining the future of Iraq has been a controversial part of the political process: the sectarian distribution of power in IGC; the ensuing stages of the political process of transitional government and the writing of the constitution; the participation of Shia and Kurdish political parties in the election of January 2005 after the boycott by many of the Sunni political parties; the Sunni rejection of the constitution because of the articles of de-Ba’athification and federalism; the Sunni’s negative stance in the referendum. With all the negative and positive stances towards the political process, there has been a perceived tension; the domination of the Shias and Kurds at the expense of the Sunnis and de-Ba’athification. All the above mentioned issues have become the most sensitive part in the political process which have caused some of the ex-Ba’athists

and Sunni militias such as al-Qaida and the Omar brigade to become involved in violence and displacement. Briefly, the domination of Shia over the premiership and seizing many governmental seats is perceived as the main drive to activate the militias.

The mobilization of the Sunni militia and its role in displacement is “balanced” by the mobilizing of Shia militia such as the Mahdi army and the Badr brigade who are involved in contention. Shia people are targeted not only for being Shia but also for being aligned with the government, while Sunnis are targeted as a reaction to the acts of Sunni militias; Some Shia militias have focused on targeting Ba’athists and ex-military officers. Yet after 2006, targeting Sunnis has been part of the cycle of contention and mutual confrontation between militias such as al-Qaida, Ba’athists, the Omar brigade, the Mahdi army and the Badr brigade. They have targeted each other not only through direct confrontations but also through targeting people who are categorized as being on the same side communally as the mobilized militia.

It is worthy to mention in the last part of this research and to be frank; some mobilized militias have had another role in the process of displacement. In some cases, militias appeared to offer protection to the people from being targeted by other militias; in Talbiya (a Shia dominated area), the Mahdi army offered protection to not only Shia people but also to some Sunni people, while at the same time it targeted the ex-Ba’athists in the area.

In conclusion, it is more than sectarianism which has tormented the Iraqi community and led to displacement; it is the political agenda which has become the fuel of the current tensions. The testimonies of displaced people have emphasized the role of political developments and the Shia domination of power in fueling the violence and displacement; the struggle for power and political competition have complicated the situation in Iraq.

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Appendix

Blackmail

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

قال تعالى :

(وما ظلمناهم ولكن كانوا هم الظالمين) (الزحرف ٧٦)

أيها الروافض الانجاس يامن كنتم و...
 الأمريكان وحلفائهم الذين عبروا المح...
 الدين فساندتموهم وقتلتم في سبيلها...
 لقد اعزنا الله بان نكون مجاهدين في سبيله.. وأن نرفع راية الاسلام على هذ...
 الارض الطيبة. التي ما لها عيب سوى تدنيسكم لها أنتم وابناء العلقم...
 المجوس عباد النار والحجارة فأنضو...
 ولبستم لباس الشرطه والمغاوير والحرس وغيرها من قلوب المرتدين وعل...
 اختلاف المسميات فبالهدف واحد.. وهو ابقاء المحتل وابادة اهل السن...
 وتهجيرهم من ديارهم...
 وللمتم اشباه رجالكم والفساق واللصوص وسميتوهم ب(جيش المهدي...
 هم الا انصار الاعور الدجال وكل الصالحين منكم براء...
 فما مصير ابو مقتدى وما مصير ابو درع وعصاباتهم الم تتعضوا من هلاكهم...
 على يد جند الله هم ومعهم...
 أما وقد اعتديتم على اهل السنة والجماعة بالقتل والتعذيب والتهجير وأعتديتم...
 على مساجد الله فجنابكم بالقصاص العادل لقد جنناكم (بالقتل والذبح) ليس...
 بأمر من مخلوق بل بأمر من الله ونحن أكثر الناس طاعة الأمر الله ورسوله...
 فوالله والله اذا لم ترحلوا عن ديارنا ومناطقنا فسوف تهدم البيوت على...
 رؤوسكم وبكل ما يقره الله تعالى لنا من قوة ووسيلة بسيارات مفخخة...
 وعبوات ناسفة ورجال بسيوف الحق يوصلون رؤوسكم عن اجسادكم القذرة...
 (ارحلوا) لأننا والله تحب الموت بقدر ما تحبون الحياة وأننا عقدنا العزم وانا...
 انشاء الله لفاعلون...
 وقد اعذر من انذر...
 قال تعالى :

(فلم تقتلوهم ولكن الله قتلهم وما رميت اذ رميت ولكن الله رمى وليبلي...
 المؤمنين ان الله سميع عليم بلكم وان الله موهن كيد الكافرين)

(الأنفال ١٧ و ١٨)

فيلق عمر

(English translation)

Bismillahi ir-Rahman ir-Raheem

Verses from Holy Quran: “And it is not we who will be doing wrong unto them, but it is they who will have wronged themselves.” (al-Zukhruf: Ornaments of Gold, 76)

You are Rawafid (non-Muslims) who have been following the “cross worshipping” Americans and their allies who crossed the oceans and continents.

We are honored to do Jihad for the sake of Allah ... to raise the flag of Islam above this honored land which has no disgrace except your presence and the descendants of al-Alqami Magi, who are worshipers of fire and statues. You gathered yourselves under the title of the Badr Brigade and wore the uniform of the police, al Maghawer, the national guard, and other different uniforms but all with a similar aim which is supporting the occupation forces to stay and exterminate Sunnis and displace them from their land.

You have gathered “half-men,” thieves, and non-Muslims and formed the so called Mahdi army. But they are only the supporters of the Antichrist as they don’t belong among the righteous people.

So, what has been the fate of Abou Muqtada and what has been the fate of Abou Deri’ and their gangs? Haven’t you learned from what happened to them when they were killed by the “Soldiers of Allah”?

Since you have attacked Sunnis by assassination, torture, and displacement, and by attacking the mosques of Allah, we have come to exact “fair punishment” against you; we will punish you through (killing and slaughtering) as “Allah commands” us ...

We do swear by Allah that if you do not leave our areas and lands, we will destroy your houses while you are still inside them. We will target you as much as we can through car-bombing, explosions, and in addition our men will kill you by separating your heads from your “unclean” bodies by the swords of right. (Leave) since we do swear that we like death as much as you like life. We have determined to carry out (this threat) and “by Allah’s will” we will do it!

As “He who warns, is excused”

Verses from Holy Quran: “It was not you who slew the enemy; but it was Allah who slew them. And it was not you who cast (terror into them) when you cast (a handful of dust), but it was Allah: in order that He might test the Believers by a gracious trial from Himself: for Allah is He Who heareth and knoweth (all things). That (was Allah’s purpose), and also (to show) that Allah is He Who makes feeble the plans and stratagem of the Unbelievers.” (al-Anfal: Spoils of War, 17 & 18)

Sent by: Omar Brigade

