



A Journal that deals with investigative journalism. Published in Arabic, Kurdish and English by the Network of Iraq Reporters for Investigative Journalism NIRIJ

- **NIRIJ** wins the first and the second prizes for the best Arabic investigative report in 2012



- **NIRIJ female journalist wins UNICEF prize for print media in the Middle East and North Africa**



NIRIJ brings its supervisors together with media academics in an investigative workshop led by a Danish expert

NIRIJ

organizes five specialized workshops on investigative journalism with participation of 36 journalists

NIRIJ feature stories explore serious facts about:

- Al-Ishaqi massacre by the American forces,
- Trade of corrupted medicine in Kurdistan Region
- Funding al-Qaida in Iraq





A Journal that Deals with Investigative Journalism, Published in Arabic, Kurdish and English, By the Network of the Iraqi Investigative Journalism

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Network of the Iraqi Investigative Journalism

Network of the Iraqi Investigative Journalism (NIRIJ) is the first network of investigative journalism in Iraq, founded on 9th of May, 2011 by a number of professional investigative journalists and has been working since then on providing financial, editorial and advisory support for the investigative Iraqi journalists to perform detailed investigative reports based on searching for documented facts and supported by variety of sources who are strongly related to the investigating topic.

The main mission of NIRIJ, in addition to performing detailed investigative reports, is improving the skills of the Iraqi investigative journalists and working on spreading the investigating culture in Iraqi journalism, to be a regulatory device which diagnose the faults and follow financial and administrative corruption cases, indicate deviations and mistakes in the official and the civil behavior and the violations committed against the different society factions in Iraq.

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NIRIJ organizes a series of workshops on investigative journalism in Baghdad, Erbil, al-Sulaymaniyah and Duhok

NIRIJ started to organize a series of workshops on investigative journalism in July, August, September and October in Baghdad, Nineveh, Erbil, al-Sulaymaniyah and Duhok to identify the techniques of investigation, the principles of performing investigative reports and enabling Iraqi journalists to select assumptions for systematic investigative reports that can be performed for the network and can be published.

"NIRIJ ran a course on investigative journalism from 16 to 20 July in the capital Baghdad with participation of several Iraqi journalists from the different Iraqi papers and media channels", NIRIJ supervisor and trainer Khlood al-Amiri said "the course aimed at enabling journalists to realize the aspects of investigative journalism and the ways of performing thorough feature stories, in addition to selecting investigative topics to be performed by NIRIJ", she added.

In Duhok, a workshop was held under supervision of NIRIJ trainer Saman Noah between 17

and 21 July with participation of 12 journalists from Kurdish media channels and Arabic agencies and papers from different regions of Duhok and Nineveh.

The workshop which started with illustrating the differences between investigative and traditional journalism, explained the principles of investigative journalism, the way of building a mind map that helps the investigative journalist indicate his work priorities, the mechanism of selecting his sources, documenting the information related to the report and practical exercises on selecting the assumptions for a thorough feature that can affect the public opinion.

Another workshop was held in Shekhan (Nineveh) from 17 to 19 September under supervision of NIRIJ trainer Dlovan Barwari; 15 journalists from different Arabic media institutions and the different national and ethnic components of the province took part in the workshop.

"The workshop dealt with the principles of investigative journalism, what distinguishes it

from traditional journalism, assumption in investigative journalism, the different kinds of sources and the ways of reaching them, structure of investigative reports, planning and strategy of research in the report and occupational safety, in addition to the way of building the mind map that helps the journalist to perform his report and practical exercises to select the assumptions and perform an investigative report", said Barwari.

In Erbil and under supervision of NIRIJ trainer Muwafaq Muhammad, another workshop was held between 2 to 5 September 2012 with participation of several Kurdish journalists.

"the workshop included a detailed explanation on the principles of investigative journalism, the world of resources in investigative journalism including inner sources and sensitive sources and the ways of reaching such sources, the problems and challenges that face investigative journalism, the ways of indicating an assumption, writing it and later building the mind map



which is the starting point in investigative journalism, in addition to general characteristics in style of writing investigative reports and practical exercises to select the assumptions and perform an investigative report", said Muhammad.

Another workshop was held in al-Sulaymaniyah from 22 to 25 July 2012 under supervision of NIRIJ trainer Koral Nouri and with participation of several journalists from different Kurdish media channels.

"the workshop aimed at defining the techniques of investigative journalism as journalism in Kurdistan Region lacks thorough investigative reports, it was also an attempt to know investigative young reporters who can perform systematic investigative reports for NIRIJ", said Nouri, adding "the workshop included the main topics that every investigative journalist should know and be professional in, such as the main differences between investigative journalism and traditional journalism, the ways of selecting a complete assumption

that includes the three main pioneers of a report (act, subject and object), the ways of indicating the major and minor sources and dividing them into available and unavailable sources to invest time and effort in performing an investigative report, in addition to putting a mind map that enables the investigative journalist to know the steps that should be taken in each phase of performing the report."

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ing the skills of the Iraqi investigative journalists and working on spreading the investigating culture in Iraqi journalism, to be a regulatory device which diagnoses the faults, follows financial and administrative corruption cases and indicates deviations and mistakes in the official and the civil behavior and the violations committed against the different society factions in Iraq.

In this context, NIRIJ works on helping the investigative Iraqi journalists to choose detailed investigative reports that deal with financial and administrative corruption, the community violations against women, children and the weak components in a society like Iraq which witnesses a crucial transformation, in addition to working on completing the suppositions related to the investigative journalists' reports and funding the reports such as costs of translating documents, transportation, accommodation, laboratory tests, advices, printing, communications and all other requirements of a detailed investigative report.





In a specialized workshop under a significant international trainer:

NIRIJ gathers its trainers and supervisors with media academics to put an academic curriculum for investigative journalism

Network of Iraqi Reporters for Investigative Journalism (NIRIJ) organized an extensive workshop in Erbil and gathered its trainers and supervisors with media professors of college of media – Baghdad University; the workshop, led by the Danish professor Lars Moller who has several books on investigative journalism, can be the first part of a comprehensive training program that aims at preparing an academic curriculum for investigative journalism to be studied at media schools and departments in Iraq.

According to general supervisor of NIRIJ Muhammad al-Ruwba'i eight of NIRIJ supervisors and trainers and six professors of school of media at Baghdad University including dean of the school Dr. Hashim Hassan, took part in the workshop that included a presentation of the main principles and general characteristics of investigative reports, the difference between such reports and the traditional features, putting supposition and scientific planning to perform the reports and putting sketches for the steps, in addition to building a mind map that indicates the reports' group of resources; the workshop also included the problems and challenges that the investigative journalists in Iraq face.

"In six days and for ten hours a



day, Lars Moller presented deep observations on the characteristics and specifications that are required for an effective investigative report, depending on the world's most deep-rooted journalistic and academic institutions that are interested in investigative journalism and their accumulated experiences in this type of journalism starting from indicating the report's assumption and its core and ending with the reports structure", added al-Ruwba'i "Moller's lectures also included the new methods of the scientific material presentation and using interactive ways to convey the maximum experience to the trainees, in addition to the methods of encouraging the trainees to take part in the activities, show their abilities and experiences and convey them to

the other trainees.

The workshop also included a detailed presentation by NIRIJ members on the ways they chose their assumptions and the ways of performing their reports that won advanced awards of the Arab world in 2010, 2011 and 2012 including the first and second prizes of ARIJ competition in the Egyptian capital Cairo as the best investigative reports of the Arab world in 2012 and another prize for the best investigative report of the Middle East and North Africa for 2012 in UNICEF's competition.

The workshop tried to mix the training and educational abilities and the school of media professors' experiences with the ground experience and writing of the investigative journalists to reach a clear view on the ways



of writing investigative reports and the ways of teaching journalists to prepare such reports depending on sober scientific and academic bases.

NIRIJ provides an Iraqi definition for "investigative journalism" after a specialized workshop led by an international trainer

During a workshop held in al-Sulaymaniyah and led by Danish investigative specialist Lars Moller, Network of Iraqi Reporters for Investigative Journalism (NIRIJ) provided an Iraqi definition for investigative journalism and completed its workshops towards performing an academic curriculum for investigative journalism.

According to NIRIJ assistant supervisor Saman Noah "the workshop, led by Lars Moller, started discussions about the definition that NIRIJ will adopt for investigative journalism to reach an Iraqi definition for this type of journalism like other Arabic and international investigative institutions; the participants finally reached a conclusion that investigative journalism is a type of journalism that depends on detecting defects in the system, or the fault policies and practices that certain parties or individuals try to hide or hide their roles in; the process of revealing depends on advanced searching in issues of great importance and documenting the facts that the journalist gains through his or her personal efforts, to correct the mistakes and make a change for the sake of the public interest and make the people in authority face questioning and punishment".

"the workshop also included

completing the discussions that aimed at preparing an academic curriculum in cooperation with School of Media – Baghdad University, to be studied at media and journalism schools in Iraq; the international expert Lars Moller made a detailed review on the credit types of journalism in the world today and the newest methods of investigative journalism", added Noah.

The workshop also included a review of the scientific principles required for building effective feature stories, the difference between claims and assumptions in a feature story, the inner sources and the sensitive sources of building a story, the principles of comprehensive training, techniques of making an interview, the different structures of the most popular investigative reports, the method of writing in the different structure types, planning and strategy of searching in an investigative report and finally the safety procedures that an investigative journalist should take to prevent risking his life.

NIRIJ workshops come as a part of the network's expanded plans to put a sober scientific and academic curriculum on investigative journalism to be adopted in Iraq's journalistic and academic institutions; they are also a part of the network's program to organize workshops in Iraq's different cities to make investigative journalism known and select journalists to prepare assumptions for systematic investigative reports that NIRIJ can fund and provide editorial supervision and legal reviews for, before they are published and prepared for Arabic and international competitions.

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Meanwhile; NIRIJ works, through its annual and biannual plans, to provide training chances inside or outside Iraq for the Iraqi investigative journalists and preparing a number of the distinguished journalists to join NIRIJ in the future as supervisors or trainers.

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A NIRIJ female journalist wins UNICEF prize for print media in the Middle East and North Africa for 2012



Member of NIRIJ and female Iraqi journalist Mayada Dawood won the first prize of print media in the regional media competition for children rights in 2012, Dawood won the prize for her feature story on using the homeless children by the armed groups and organized crime gangs in Iraq, declared the UNICEF regional office in the Middle East and North Africa.

A statement of the UNICEF regional office in the Jordanian capital Amman is cited saying that member of the Iraqi NIRIJ Mayada Dawood "won the first prize of the UNICEF regional competition for print media, after writing an effective report on the challenges that face the homeless in her country; she has shed

light on the necessity of providing secure shelters for children to support them psychologically, socially and protect them from danger".

According to the statement "this is an annual media prize that appreciates unique coverage for the children issues in the Middle East and North Africa", adding "in the last five years, the prize has concentrated on the children lives, their health and education; this year's topic was (children in the Middle East and North Africa, rights and challenges)".

"The jury panel included media specialists who have taken several principles into consideration including: the importance of the topics, type and originality of the journalistic approach and depth

and accuracy of the investigative work", according to the UNICEF statement.

"The prize won by member of NIRIJ Mayada Dawood for her feature story on the homeless lives in Iraq, is the second prize won by Dawood in less than a month as she won the first prize for the best investigative report of the Arab world in 2012 in the International ARIJ Competition in which 98 reports from 11 Arab countries took part and the results were announced on 25th November in Cairo", said the general supervisor of NIRIJ network Muhammad al-Ruwba'i. Adding "Mayada's report that deals with using the homeless people in Iraq by al-Qaida and the organized crime gangs, has

already won another prize for the best investigative report in the Arab world in 2011 in ARIJ International conference held in the Jordanian capital Amman last year".

According to the UNICEF statement, five other Arab journalists won prizes in different journalism branches, "in the TV programs, a weekly talk show of Dubai TV channel called (Sawalifna Hilwa) won the prize after discussing child labor issue in the region, while a report of Amal Allam in the Egyptian Radio won the prize of the radio programs as the report deals with exploiting children and use of violence against them; the report also touches the sufferings of thousands of homeless children and the increasing rate of disfiguring female sex organs around the country".

Adding "Fuad al-Alawi from Yemen won the prize of the electronic media, he deals with the homeless children in his country and discloses their deprivation from their principle rights of education, healthcare and protection; in photography branch, a Palestinian photographer won the prize while the Lebanese caricaturist Anas al-Qais won the prize as she presents in her works to the children lives in heartbreaking and effective contexts at home and in school". Mayada Dawood who won the UNICEF regional prize for her

feature story on the homeless in Iraq, has contributed, with an elite group of Iraqi journalists, in founding the Iraqi Network of Investigative Journalism (NIRIJ) and was the first Arabic female journalist who won three consecutive prizes for investigative reports; she won the second prize of Seymour Hersh International Competition in 2010 for her report on children recruitment by al-Qaida, later won the prize of the best investigative report in the Arab world for 2011 and the grand prize for the best investigative report in the Arab world for 2012 for her report on the arbitrary killing of 11 Iraqi civilians including five children and four women in al-Ishaqi area in 2006.

Winning the UNICEF regional prize of 2012 by Mayada Dawood after less than one month of her winning the best investigative report of the Arab world for 2012 for her feature story on al-Isaaqi massacre (the story can be viewed through this link (<http://www.nirij.org/?p=743>) and winning the prize of the second best investigative report of the Arab world for 2012 (the report can be viewed here <http://www.nirij.org/?p=735>), NIRIJ could collect the main prizes of the Arab world for three consecutive years as member of NIRIJ Dilon Barwari won the prize of the best investigative report in 2010 for his report on

female genital mutilation in Kurdistan Region (the report can be viewed here <http://www.nirij.org/?p=622>) while Mayada Dawood could win the second prize of the same year for her report on child recruitment by al-Qaida (the report can be viewed here <http://www.nirij.org/?p=628>) and both reports were performed for Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism (ARIJ). Meanwhile Mayada Dawood and her colleagues Muwafaq Muhammad and Saman Noah could win the first and the second prizes for the best investigative report in the Arab world 2011 (the reports can be viewed here <http://www.nirij.org/?p=635> and <http://www.nirij.org/?p=632>), both reports were performed under supervision of Muhammad al-Ruwba'i and were funded by NIRIJ.

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Nirij Website

www.nirij.org

● English ● Arabic ● Kurdish



Two NIRIJ journalists win the first and the second award for the best investigative report in the Arab world for 2012

General supervisor of NIRIJ declared that Iraqi journalist and member of NIRIJ Mayada Dawood won the prize of the best investigative report of the Arab world in 2012 among feature stories made in 11 Arab countries including Egypt, Morocco, Jordan and Algeria within the competition of the Arabic ARIJ held in Cairo. Iraqi Kurdish journalist Muwafaq Muhammad, on the other hand, won the second prize of the competition.

"Dawood won the first prize of the best investigative report of 2012 in the Arab world for her story (hidden by the American army for years: new facts require reinvestigation into the crime of "arbitrary killing" of 11 Iraqis in al-Ishaqi); the report made the American army reinvestigate al-Ishaqi massacre committed in spring of 2006", said Muhammad al-Ruwba'i, adding "the prize is the highest Arabic prize granted in investigative journalism this year".

According to al-Ruwba'i another NIRIJ member and Iraqi Kurdish journalist Muwafaq Muhammad, on the other hand, won the second prize of the best investigative report in the Arab world for 2012 for his story on involving Kurdish influential forces in trading expired and corrupted medicines, what threatens lives of hundreds of citizens or deteriorates their

health conditions".

Adding "the two prizes that NIRIJ members won this year (2012), made Iraqi investigative journalism at the top of Arabic Investigative journalism for a third successive year after winning the first and second prizes of the best investigative report in the Arab world for 2010 and the same for 2011".

Chief executive officer of NIRIJ Rana al-Sabagh highly commended Mayada Dawood for her story, adding that it deserves to be at the top of the Arabic investigative reports of 2012.

NIRIJ assistant general supervisor Saman Noah stated that winning the first prize of the best investigative report by Mayada Dawood this year "made her the first Arab investigative journalist

who wins three advanced prizes for three successive years as she won the second prize among the best investigative reports in 2010 for her story on recruiting children by al-Qaida and the first prize of the best investigative report in the Arab world 2011 for her story on the shortcomings of the homeless law that drags many of the homeless to crime, violence and deviation; and finally she completed her achievements by winning the first prize in 2012".

Winning the UNICEF regional prize of 2012 by Mayada Dawood after less than one month of her winning the best investigative report of the Arab world for 2012 for her feature story on al-Isaaqi massacre which was supervised by Muhmmad al-Rubai'i and winning the prize of the second best



investigative report of the Arab world for 2012 for the story of the corrupted medicines which was supervised by Muhammad al-Rubai'i and Saman Noah, NIRIJ could collect the main prizes of the Arab world for three consecutive years as member of NIRIJ Dilovan Barwari won the prize of the best investigative report in 2010 for his report on female genital mutilation in Kurdistan Region ,while Mayada Dawood could win the second prize of the same year for her report on child recruitment by al-Qaida, and both reports were performed for Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism (ARIJ). Meanwhile Mayada Dawood and her colleagues Muwafaq Muhammad and Saman Noah could win the first and the second prizes for the best investigative report in the Arab world 2011, and both reports were performed under supervision of Muhammad al-Rubwai'i and funded by NIRIJ. Network of Iraqi Investigative Journalism (NIRIJ) is the first network of investigative journalism in Iraq, founded on 9th of May, 2011 by a number of professional investigative journalists and has been working since then on providing financial, editorial and advisory support for the investigative Iraqi journalists to perform detailed investigative reports based on searching for documented facts and supported by variety of sources who are strongly related to the investigating topic.

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Mayada Dawood who won the first prize in the Arab world for 2012, is an Iraqi journalist who started her investigative journey in 2003 with the (al-Zaman al-An) newspaper which is issued in Baghdad and later worked for several other Iraqi and Arabic news agencies and papers including al-Hadath paper, al-Ahali

paper, Aswat al-Iraq news agency, Niqash website, Iraqi – German economic forum and other media channels. Dawood participated with 10 other journalists in founding NIRIJ in mid 2011; her first investigative report for ARIJ, which deals with child recruitment by al-Qaida, won the second prize of Seymour Hersh competition in 2010 and later performed a thorough feature story for NIRIJ in 2011 (deviation of the homeless people due to the shortcomings of the homeless law) and won the first prize of the best investigative report of the Arab world in 2011.

Muwafaq Muhammad Salim, an Iraqi journalist and another member of NIRIJ, has worked as reporter and editor for several Iraqi and Arabic papers and news agencies such as al-Alam, al-Shams, al-Ahali newspapers, Aswat al-Iraq, Mawtini and al-Iraq Baituna news agencies; he is now news director of the Arabic department of the Kurdish magazine of Gullan. Salim started his investigative journey in Summer of 2011 when he and his colleague Saman Noah performed a thorough investigative report on the phenomenon of committing suicide by burning among women in Kurdistan; the report deals with the social, economic, political and mental factors behind committing suicide of 14,000 Kurdish girls from 1990 to 2011. The story won the second prize of the best investigative report of the Arab world in 2011 and caused in a civil and governmental movement in Kurdistan to reduce the phenomenon and increase educating campaigns to eliminate it.





Iraq should investigate “Arbitrary Execution” of nationals by US forces

● by: Maiadah Daood

Ishaqi, Iraq – Ibrahim Harat, a former army officer who lost one of his legs, bowed down to pick up the empty shells. These bullets were the ones used by US soldiers six and a half years ago – in this very house, now turned to rubble – to kill nine of his family members, including five children, the youngest of them barely nine months old.

The US military is yet to disclose what really happened the night its forces raided the home of then 28-year-old elementary school-teacher Faiz Harat. It claimed the victims fell in a “tactical operation” to arrest a Kuwaiti fighter called Ahmad Abdullah al-Utaybi and assassinate another Iraqi, Uday Fares. Nevertheless, new evidence uncovered by the author of this investigative report shows that what occurred was nothing short of an arbitrary execution.

The Iraqi insurgent killed in the operation according to US claims was actually incarcerated in its infamous Camp Bucca — Iraq’s Guantanamo jail — near the port city of Umm Qasr. Fares is now spending time in an Iraqi prison, awaiting his execution after being convicted of committing several acts of violence.

The Kuwaiti fighter – whose arrest entailed the murder of 11 Iraqi citizens – was handed over by the US military to the Iraqi government in October 2008. The latter decided to hand him over to Kuwait in the fall of 2010, to complete a sentence for a prior conviction in a security-related case.

The author of this report, aided by a high-ranking security official, has uncovered new documented evidence showing that Utaybi was actually in custody by the US military, just one day before the operation.

Today, all that remains of Faiz Harat’s house, raided at dawn on 15 March 2006 to kill and arrest the supposed insurgents, is the wall where the victims were lined up, their hands tied, and executed. In the midst of the hundreds of empty bullet casings, charred pieces of paper were scattered. They were the last English language exam given by the teacher in the elementary school of Ishaqi, 100 km north of Baghdad.

These are the only remaining witnesses to the “massacre,” other than the US military, which, at the time, exonerated its soldiers from the crime of arbitrary execution following an internal investigation. It claimed the “incident” occurred within the rules of engagement.

But, contrary to US army press statements, all forensic reports obtained by the author from Tikrit General Hospital, which received the victims that morning, confirm that they were killed by bullets fired at close range to the head and chest.

Local investigating committees and eyewitness accounts from tens of residents of al-Saffa village, where the operation took place, also confirm that the victims pulled out of the house an hour later were mouth-folded and handcuffed.



For six years, Faiz’ brothers and several local human rights organizations failed to convince the US military forces to reopen the investigation and uncover what really happened the night of the “massacre.”

But the issue was brought back into the limelight in the fall of 2011, when Wikileaks published a classified document shedding new light on the incident.

The communication was sent by Philip Alston, United Nations Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions, to the US State Department on March 27, 2006. He wanted to draw its attention to the incident where “MNF

[Multinational Forces] troops entered the house, handcuffed all residents and executed them. After the initial MNF intervention, a US air raid ensued, destroying the house." The communication indicated there were reports of at least 10 victims, including four women and five children.

The document was sent 12 days after the massacre. But it did not convince the US military that arbitrary execution occurred in the operation. They were neither moved when it was published by Wikileaks. A Pentagon spokesperson responded to the Wikileaks report by saying that "the incident was properly investigated at the time and no new information has surfaced." This meant that the US will not reopen the investigation into the incident.

Details of the Night of Terror

Eyewitnesses who watched the raid on the house of teacher Faiz Harrat recall the painful details of that night. Each of them carries a piece of the story that is yet to be completely recounted.

This investigative journalist met with tens of relatives of the victims and a similar number of policemen, judicial investigators and local officials. She attempts to put pieces of the story together, uncovering the sharp inconsistencies in the statements of the US army. The report also points to the suspicious silence of consecutive Iraqi governments towards the Ishaqi massacre and

other crimes committed by US forces, whether those where no one was found guilty or the ones where the perpetrators received lenient sentences, which are incomparable to the number of victims or the ugliness of the crimes.

Faiz Herrat's older brother Ibrahim recollects the beginning of the massacre. Several US military Chinook helicopters had been hovering over the village. Some began landing and dozens of soldiers jumped out and were deployed among the different houses, raiding them one by one. Ibrahim could clearly see his brother's home, no more than 75 meters away, from his windows. The horrific scene was ingrained in his mind. Unable to do anything about it, he had to watch his brother's home come under heavy close-range fire from tens of US soldiers from all sides.

The full moon and the Chinook searchlights illuminated the perimeter of the house, with the soldiers taking turns shooting in its direction for a full 15 minutes. Then they began the raid from the back and the front of the house. He could hear shooting coming from inside for another 20 consecutive minutes. Then they left and let the Chinooks finish up the job, destroying the house completely with six successive missiles.

To this day, nobody knows precisely what happened inside the home of Faiz Herrat. When the

US soldiers rushed into Ibrahim's house after a few minutes, the brother went after them "like crazy" demanding to know what they did with his mother and his younger brother's family. They replied with a "strong boot kick" which threw him a few meters aside along with his prosthetic leg..

Ibrahim is still surprised that the US soldiers did not kill him on the spot, although he recalls one of them screaming at the top of his voice: "Kill him". But if his missing leg, whose replacement had rolled on the floor, was the reason behind another soldier objecting because he was "disabled and does not constitute a potential threat," then why didn't that soldier save the 9-month-old Houssam from the bullet that blew his head off? "He was an infant, who cannot even hurt a dove. How can he be a potential threat to a battalion of heavily-armed US soldiers?" Ibrahim asks.

"When we found him, his hands were tied at the front. The bullet went through his skull from the back, spilling out his whole brain," he recalled while showing pictures of young Houssam taken right after the incident. His eyes were closed, as if he had just fallen asleep.

In Search of the Victims

Issa Harrat, another brother, recalls that six US soldiers raided his home that night. They took him with his family to the garden and forced them to lie down with their faces to the ground.

Issa says this is the reason why he and several people from the surrounding houses were unable to see anything. They just heard the sound of bullets echoing over the entire place and the roaring helicopters above the village's houses. The attack on Faiz's home and the raids on the remaining houses in the village took two hours, before US forces retreated.

When it was all over and the hum of helicopters fading away, everyone ran to Faiz's home calling out victims' names one by





one. But nobody answered. Another brother, Ubaid Harrat, who had been an officer in the Iraqi army before the fall of the previous regime, says that the search for victims inside the house did not take a long time. They were lying in the only room that was partially intact. The US soldiers had covered them in blankets before they left.

Faiz' brothers and several villagers maintain that all the victims had their hands tied to the back, except baby Houssam, whose hands were tied to the front.

Military expert and retired Brigadier-General Nateq Jawad al-Maamouri believes that tying the hands of little children in such operations is always an indicator of an interrogation under threat of killing or torturing the children. In most cases, this happens when the person being interrogated is "the child's father or mother."

The expert's opinion corresponds with the confessions of former US soldier Jesse Macbeth in the spring of 2008, who claimed that the US army in Iraq committed atrocities during investigations carried out in some house raids. He said the soldiers would threaten to kill the youngest child in front of his parents to

force them to confess. They would kill a different child every time they needed more information.

According to Maamouri, this could explain why the US soldiers abandoned the idea of killing Harrat, after finding out he was disabled. The forces that entered his home only wanted to terrorize the inhabitants of adjacent houses, while those in charge of direct killings did their job at Faiz Harrat's home.

Faiz was never part of an armed group, despite the fact that many al-Qaeda and various other armed groups appeared in the area during the sectarian violence that erupted in Iraq at the beginning of 2006 and continued till the end of 2008. He steered away from violence and focused on teaching English in the village's elementary school, according to a security official in Ishaqi and several village dignitaries.

Macbeth was accused by US officials of faking his confessions, but they concur with what many other US soldiers recounted after returning from Iraq and documented on video during several meetings. They admitted that US forces would raid homes and threaten women and children. They also indicated that they

kept the helicopters roaring above to terrorize the residents. The soldiers said that such operations would often be based on misplaced fears and false intelligence information.

The head of the Hammurabi Human Rights Organization (HHRO), who arrived at the scene of the incident early in the morning of March 15, feels sorry for the loss of several pieces of evidence about the executions as villagers untied the bodies and threw away the binds to prepare the victims for burial.

Dr. Abdul-Rahman al-Mashhadani related this to conservative customs held by the tribal sheikhs who gathered at the house after the massacre. They objected to photographing the bodies of the women, who seemed to have been violently gagged by the soldiers with their head covers (hijabs).

Mashhadani's comments are verified by a video recording obtained by this investigative reporter. It shows the bodies being pulled out of the rubble and transferred to the morgue, while some men were attempting to push back the cameraman shouting: "Woman. Woman."

The Police Investigation

Police investigations in the city could not reach a specific conclusion concerning the reasons behind the massacre and its details, despite the continuous attempts to collect related data.

A high-ranking officer at the Ishaqi police station recalls the moment his forces arrived at the destroyed house at 7:30 a.m. He was shocked by the magnitude of the devastation inflicted by the shelling and the number of empty bullet shells covering the floor where the victims were executed.

"Everyone was stepping over the rubble of empty bullets casings. The remaining wall was full of hundreds of holes. A few meters away from the destroyed room, I saw the corpses of four cows, torn to pieces. It looked like a battleground where everyone was killed," he said.

The Coroner's Report

Forensic reports from the city of Tikrit indicate that the majority of victims had been shot in the head and chest. Bullets tore the flesh of other victims in various parts of their bodies.

None of the victims had gunpowder on their bodies, which confirms, according to a forensics expert, that "they did not use any type of firearms."

This contradicts the allegations of the US army that its soldiers were fired at from inside the house, which was the cornerstone of the US military's case concerning the massacre.

The coroner's report about Faiz's mother, Turkiya Majeed, 74, indicates that she was killed by a bullet directly to the head.

Here, Issa Harrat goes back to the moment he saw his mother's body in the rubble, the night of the massacre. He fumbled for her in the dark to try to pull her out. When he finally saw her face, the top part, from the nose up, had been blown away.

His sister Faiza, 32, a teacher who had been widowed early in her life and was taking care of two children, was buried while her mouth was still gagged by her veil. The US soldiers had tied it with such a force, that any attempt to remove it would have disfigured her face.

The coroner's report indicates that her body "had bullet wounds

in the head, chest and legs."

They buried her two children next to her, Osama Youssef, 3 and Asma, 5. The reports say that they were both killed in the same manner, "bullet shots to the head, chest and abdomen." One of the bullet went through Asma's side, taking with it a piece of her red dress that came out of the other side.

Faiz's wife, Sumayya Abdul-Razzak, 24, was also shot in the head and chest. Her mouth was tied with her own veil, just like Faiza Harrat. But they had managed to remove it, unlike with her sister-in-law.

Sumayya was also buried with her children Aisha, 3 and Hawraa, 5. Both girls were killed by shots to the neck, chest and abdomen, according to the coroner's report.

Hussam Faiz Harrat, who was less than nine months old, was buried with them. But out of all the bodies, everyone remembers the horrific way the infant was killed. His tiny hands were swollen due to being tied to the front. A bullet pierced his head from the back and emptied out his brain.





Two bodies were not part of the household. The first belonged to their neighbor, Iqtisad Hameed, 23. She was visiting Faiza and was killed with the family, according to Issa Harrat.

The second was their relative Aziz Khalil, 24. His father had kicked him out of the house, due to family problem. He was staying with Faiz's family and was killed as a result of "gunshots to the chest and upper extremities." The US Investigation

In a statement issued on June 4, 2006 – four days before the assassination of al-Qaeda leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi- the US army exonerated its soldiers from the massacre.

Major General William Caldwell, a US military spokesperson said that "an investigation was launched into that incident the very next day (of the Ishaqi massacre). The investigation revealed the "ground force commander while capturing and killing terrorists at that location operated in accordance with the rules of engagement governing our combat forces in Iraq."

He admitted that the investigation showed that between 4 and 13 civilians might have been killed in the operation.

In the statement, Caldwell said that "Coalition Forces conducted a raid in the vicinity of Ishaqi on March 15, capturing Ahmad Abdallah Muhammad Nais al-Utaybi, aka Hamza, a Kuwaiti-born, al-Qaeda cell leader."

They killed "Uday Faris al-Tawafi, aka "Abu Ahmed", an Iraqi involved in making improvised explosive devices as well as recruiting locals to join the insurgency," he added.

Caldwell recounted the story in the familiar pattern of the US military at the time. He said that "the forces, upon arrival, began taking direct fire from the building. As the enemy fire persisted, the ground force commander appropriately reacted by incrementally escalating the use of force from small-arms fire to rotary wing aviation, and then to close air support."

They conducted "a thorough

tactical search" in the targeted house "and documented the discovery of the body of "Abu Ahmed" plus three non-combatants."

"The investigating officer concluded that possibly up to nine collateral deaths resulted from this engagement but could not determine the precise number due to collapsed walls and heavy debris," Caldwell explained.

He concluded his tale by saying that "allegations that the troops executed a family living in this safe house, and then hid the alleged crimes by directing an air strike, are absolutely false."

Caldwell's comments contradicted what the US military had been saying since the day of the massacre, insisting that only one suspect, two women and one child were killed in the attack.

According to Caldwell, four people were killed (Abu Ahmed, two women and a child) in addition to the nine others (the rest of the victims). This means the total is 13 killed.

The contradiction in numbers – 4 bodies in the initial US military reports, 13 bodies in Caldwell's statement, and the 11 bodies removed from the devastated house according to Ishaqi police – is a clear indication that the US forces had been hiding the details of the massacre, including the real number of victims.

The question that was never answered by the US in all its statements, is how did Utaybi stay alive when such heavy gunfire was directed at the Harrat home for 15 minutes and from all sides? And how did he survive the following 20 minutes of consecutive gunfire inside the house?

Why were they all killed, including five children, while Utaybi escaped? And if the US soldiers were able to arrest Utaybi without killing him, why did they decide to eliminate the unarmed civilians, including women and children?

The US army refused several times to reply to questions posed by this journalist or to give a statement on the issue. "No

comment," said the US Embassy. The (Living Dead) Iraqi Combatant

US forces justified their attack by saying the house contained an Arab combatant called Ahmed Abdullah al-Utaybi and an Iraqi combatant called Uday Fares.

The first revelation reached by this investigative journalist, was that the Iraqi, whom US forces claimed was killed during the raid, Uday Fares Abdullah al-Majmai, AKA "Abu Ahmed", was still alive. But all attempts by the author to contact him at prison in Tikrit were blocked by Iraqi authorities.

Fares had risen to fame when he managed to escape his prison with another 15 al-Qaeda combatants in September 2009. All Iraqis followed the details of the search operations and the rest of the escaped prisoners. The last one to be captured, two years later, was none other than Uday Fares.

In a phone call arranged by some contacts, Uday's father told the author of the report that his son was arrested by US forces in 2005. He then heard he was killed in Faiz Harrat's house from the news. But this was untrue, because he was able to visit him in jail several times following the Ishaqi operation.

The author of the report is still waiting for the Iraqi authorities to allow her to visit Fares in jail to uncover the truth behind him being killed, according to US documents, and his imprisonment and remaining alive, according to official Iraqi documents and prison records.

In Search of the Kuwaiti Chief US forces in Iraq are refusing to comment. All those who were in the devastated house were killed. Iraqi combatant Uday Fares is either dead, according to US forces, or was not even in the house because he was under arrest. This means that the only remaining witness is Utaybi, whom US documents claimed was already at the Harrat house and was arrested during the operation.

Reaching Utaybi or finding out about his whereabouts was not easy, especially more than six years following his alleged arrest. US forces, who were still in Iraq when this investigation began end 2011, were imposing a total blackout concerning detainees. Information about Utaybi on jihadist websites indicated that he was 24 years old when US troops committed the Ishaqi massacre. He had been arrested in 2005 in Kuwait, suspected of planning to overthrow the Kuwaiti regime with the members of al-Qaeda's Osoud al-Jazeera ([Arab] Peninsula Lions). He was later released on bail in August 2005.

After his release, he fled Kuwait and snuck into Iraq through Syria, under the pretext of trading purebred Arabian horses. US documents claim he was rearrested inside Faiz Harat's home in Ishaqi on March 15, 2006. Documents concerning Utaybi were made available to this journalist by a high ranking Iraqi security official on condition his name and position will not be to preserve his career.

The documents show that, although Utaybi's arrest required the elimination of a whole Iraqi family, according to US statements, he was later released from their custody and transferred to Iraqi authorities in October 2008. He was sentenced to six years in prison for entering the country illegally, despite admitting to US interrogators that he had conducted military operations in Iraq on behalf of al-Qaeda.

Utaybi spent around two years in Sousa prison in Sulaimaniya in northern Iraq. The documents provided by the security official indicate that he was suffering from rheumatism and was sent to the hospital for treatment more than ten times. In November 2011, he was released and sent back to Kuwait, at the height of good relations between the two countries.

The Secrets of the Night They Arrested Utaybi

The aforementioned records concerning Utaybi indicate that he had infiltrated into Iraq via Syria in order to fight alongside al-Qaeda. He was arrested by US forces on 14 March 2006, but his official administrative detention began on 15 March.

This crucial piece of information shows that Utaybi was incarcerated by US forces at the time they were perpetrating the Ishaqi massacre. The same situation applied to alleged-combatant Uday Fares.

Military expert Nateq Jawad believes that this is an indication that Utaybi's name was slapped onto the case, to be able to cover up the truth behind the massacre. This happened on several other occasions, when the killing or arrest of combatants is announced while they were actually already dead or incarcerated in previous battles. Jawad does not deny the possibility that Utaybi could have been in the house on 14 March, since it is the date the warrant was issued, not when it was implemented.

But he adds that "there is a very small chance that such a mistake could happen, although it is possible. Ultimately, the issue will be revealed when the justice ministry releases the documents related to the case in full."

"Forbidden" Documents

It will not be possible to verify all the details concerning Utaybi without accessing all the documents. This means a detailed search for all documents concerning his case at the Iraqi justice ministry and the Higher Judicial Council, which keeps a copy of all the documents of cases which reached a decision, in addition to Sousa prison where he was incarcerated.

Sousa prison warden, Brigadier Momen Khodor, refused the author's requests to access the records without a formal approval from the justice ministry.

From the end of 2011 until August 2012, the Justice Ministry has refused numerous attempts to allow this journalist to access the documents.

The Higher Judicial Council also rejected her requests. Spokesperson for the council, Abdul-Sattar al-Bairaqdar claimed that "details of trials of detainees are secret and their records cannot be revealed."

The office of the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) in Iraq, in addition to an ICRC official in the Jordanian office and another ICRC official in Sulaimaniya, refused to provide any information on Utaybi's file classified under number IQZ012953.

After several attempts, the US Embassy said, "No comment." Similar attempts with the US army also failed. The latter justified this at the beginning by saying that there was no new information. Then, the new Media Advisor for the US Army in Iraq, Nader Soliman, said he will not comment on the case because it was "old."

The search for the former advisor became an absurd game and finally concluded with a returned email saying: "Delivery Failure." The lack of the right to access information in Iraq and its parliament's failure to pass such a law proposed nine years ago makes it very difficult to convince authorities to allow the press to access the records of a former detainee, even if he is no longer considered a threat to national security.

Policy of Terror

Head of the Hammurabi Human Rights Organization (HHRO), Abdul-Rahman al-Mashhadani, explains that this is a familiar method used by US troops. The massacre "is part of the policy of terror that has been adopted to terrorize civilians in Iraq's villages and towns. They randomly target a home and kill all its residents."

Eyewitnesses, including Harat's brothers and several adjacent neighbors, stressed that the at-



tack came out of the blue. Not one bullet was shot from the house before or during the raid. The attacking troops did not warn anyone in the house or ask them to surrender, as is usually the case.

Military expert Omar Jabbouri argues that the Chinooks, which carried the troops and attacked the house, are equipped with high tech infra-red sensors that can detect the number of people in the house. They can also detect the size of the persons inside – whether they were fully-grown adult or small children, and their location.

Jabbouri believes that the US forces knew exactly who was in the house since the beginning of the raid. Nevertheless, they kept claiming that they did not know there could be five small children inside and gave contradictory numbers in their statements.

According to Jabbouri, this clearly indicates that US forces have something to hide, especially since all other similar raids were usually videotaped moment by moment by the attacking forces.

The expert believes that they

decided to wipe out all the witnesses other than the soldiers themselves.

Between Baghdad and Washington

Several attempts were made by this journalist to contact Ali al-Moussawi, advisor to the Iraqi prime minister, to comment on the statements of the Pentagon's spokesperson, who said that the Wikileaks cable about the massacre will make the US army reopen the investigation.

"We will reopen the investigation based on the new information published by Wikileaks. The government [of Iraq] will use all legal means to ensure the victims' rights," he finally replied.

Moussawi explained that Iraq "cannot initiate an investigation without the cooperation of the US side, because it has all the basic details." The troop withdrawal agreement between the two countries stipulates that Baghdad has the right to "initiate an investigation, only in the case of evidence of arbitrary execution by US troops."

However, the prime minister's advisor, reaffirms that Iraq "will

not abandon the rights of its citizens and will follow the case until the investigation is reopened." But he did not go into details.

The author informed the Harrat family of the prime minister's advisor's comments that the Iraqi government will attempt to reopen the investigation into the massacre.

They said that demanding the rights of Iraqi citizens "dead or alive, is the duty of the prime minister." But they did not hide the fact that such comments might be for "media consumption, no more."

Tarek Harb, a legal expert, commented on the government's obligations by saying that this is "not easy at all." Such an investigation can only be initiated through diplomatic channels. He explained that the agreement gives "immunity" to US soldiers. They cannot be tried in Baghdad, only in US courts.

Harb's suggestion remains a theory. Such a case "is financially very costly." Often, reopening such investigations "is close to impossible." Harb suggested that



the Iraqi foreign ministry could try "to ask its US counterpart to reopen an investigation in light of the Wikileaks cable."

A high ranking official in the foreign ministry told the author of the report that "there are cases similar to the Ishaqi incidents, which might be dealt with in the future according to the US-Iraq agreement." But this will be based on "future evidence." But he said that his statements should not be considered an official declaration, "due to the sensitivity of the issue."

Possible Scenarios

Military experts and security officials propose three likely scenarios for what actually occurred during that operation.

The first scenario was that Utaybi was actually inside the targeted house. He could have been a guest, like many al-Qaeda operatives around Iraq. He might have also forced the family to host him and began shooting at the troops when they approached the house. So, they fired back.

This scenario makes Utaybi a witness to the events inside the house that night.

Trying to obtain Utaybi's confessions, the author spoke with three Kuwaiti and other Arab journalists working in Iraq to intervene. They all apologized due to the sensitivity of the case. The second possible scenario is that the US troops received false information that led it to attack the house by force. When the soldiers saw the bodies of the victims of the random shooting from outside, they decided to kill those who remained and bomb the house in order to hide the crime.

The Ishaqi massacre came only a few months after the famous Haditha massacre, where 24 Iraqi citizens were slaughtered, and was still fresh in everybody's mind.

Neither of those scenarios explain why the victims' hands were tied and their mouths gagged. Which opens the door for the third scenario.

US forces might have repeated what they did several times in the past, interrogation by way of tying up children and women, then killing family members one after the other.

Up to now, it seems that uncovering the truth depends, in the first degree, on the Iraqi government responding to calls to reopen an investigation in the case or the rise of a rights movement that can put pressure to reopen the files for all the massacres committed by US forces in Iraq.

There does not seem to be any other way to uncover what happened during the Ishaqi massacre, except if the justice ministry allows access to Utaybi's file or a direct interview with him to record his account of the massacre.

US troops left Iraq in 2011. Utaybi is back in his country, welcomed as a hero by many jihadi and armed groups websites. It is up to Iraqi authorities to uncover the truth during that night when 11 Iraqis were killed – 4 women, 3 men and 5 children.

The victims included a 9-month-old infant called Houssam Faiz who was found with his hands tied together and his head blown away by a US soldier who evaded justice.

Box

The Ishaqi massacre was not the only one of its kind in Iraq. It was preceded and followed by many other massacres in several towns. The most famous of those was al-Haditha massacre, almost four months earlier, where 24 civilians, including 10 women and children were killed. The courts later revealed that the operation was retaliatory. It was committed by US troops following the death of one of their companions when a roadside bomb exploded during a patrol.

The trial lasted three full years. People thought that it will bring down harsh sentences to deter US soldiers from killing Iraqi civilians at whim.

The actual sentence came as a

shock. The US court dropped the charges against six of the defendants. The US Judge in Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton in California decided to demote the commander of the group that committed the massacre, Sgt. Frank Wuterich.

The sentences were an indicator that US courts do not care about protecting Iraqi civilians from being killed by US soldiers. None of the sentences reflected the magnitude of the crimes. The lives of 24 Iraqi civilians in Haditha only warranted the demotion of one of the soldiers who committed the massacre.

The same thing was repeated in a massacre committed by the US army at the end of 2006. They killed 36 Iraqi civilians living in two adjacent houses, including 6 children and 8 women.

The incident was never investigated, since the US military concluded, according to a statement issued later, that "the soldiers operated within the rules of engagement when replying to gunfire from the targeted houses."

Ishaqi was no different. The US commander of the nearby base denied any knowledge of the raid at first. He later informed the residents of the village that the operation was carried out by soldiers who arrived in helicopters from a base in Baghdad.

US forces carried out a cursory investigation with Faiz Harrat's brothers. They were done in a couple of hours.

Some time later, an American with a Lebanese accent contacted the brothers and offered them a "reasonable" financial compensation if they waive their right to sue the US army for the Harrat family massacre.

The brothers refused the offer. They were never contacted again and the investigation was closed. It remains so until today.

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Al Qaeda

Collects 5 Million Dollars Monthly from Mosul, while State Departments Facilitate the Process

This report was written in cooperation with Nirig Network for Investigative Journalism

● Dlovan Barwari and Coral Nuri

"I'll pay, I swear I'll pay." These were Ahmad's last words, before three guns that were pointed at his head were fired.

On that day, the pharmacist said goodbye to his young wife and kissed his only daughter, 6-year-old Zuhoor and drove his car to the pharmacy, not knowing that this would be the last time - or that he would never see his unborn son, Rami.

With a pale face, Um Rami (Rami's mother who was born an orphan) related the incidents of that day in 2010. "My husband refused to pay the protection racket six months in advance; now I am a widow and my children are orphans," she said.

The pharmacist thought that the statement, "payment or death", was no more than intimidation. So he insisted paying monthly because he couldn't pay that much due to the pharmacy's low revenues and the upcoming expenses of his son's delivery. His widow says he realized too late how the slogan was.

Stories about the protection racket and the murders of those who don't pay started in 2004, when armed groups, especially those associated with al Qaeda, began collecting money from the private sector, state departments and businessmen in Mosul to

finance their armed activities. Since the end of 2004, those groups conquered Mosul. And they often act as official authority, collecting protection money from various businesses in the city.

Shadow State

Many of Mosul's citizens call these groups the "shadow state"; they impose charges on citizens that far exceed their commitments to the actual state, to the extent that protection racket - or the "contribution" as members of the armed group call it - has become a normal part of citizens' lives in Mosul.

According to Zuhair Al Chalabi, Advisor to the Minister of State for National Reconciliation, and chairman of the construction committee in the campaign of Um al Rabiain, the amount of "contributions" collected in Mosul exceeds US\$5 million monthly. He confirms that, "all public and private projects pay protection money to Al Qaeda in different ways. The payments are either in the form of monthly payments or as a percentage of their total revenues."

However Abu Obada, 45, a dissident from inside the groups, including the Islamic State of Iraq, states that the money actually far exceeds that, especially after the group implemented a new strategy in 2007, when it

decided that Mosul was to be the "primary base and centre for financing the group". He also stated that public and private projects are included in this scheme and that whoever refuses to pay is killed without mercy.

"The "Islamic State of Iraq" has a number of institutions that cover all activities in the city, and it applies itself as a state power - this has become possible due to the weak performance of the official state authorities," says Salim Hussaini, an expert in the affairs of armed groups. He further confirmed that the group takes measures to add a sense of legitimacy and authority to its actions, including "issuing receipts for payments and collecting fixed taxes that are announced at an earlier time". One construction worker stated that the contractor he works for paid IQD 3 million (around US\$2,500) to the Islamic State of Iraq. He further stated that the person who received the money gave the contractor a receipt to ensure that other groups don't harass him.

The Islamic State of Iraq which was formed in October 2006, is an umbrella organization that includes seven armed groups, the most prominent of which are Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia, the leading group working mainly in

the central, northern and western governorates. In addition to them, there are several other groups active in Mosul too, such as Ansar al Sunnah (Followers of Sunnah) which includes extremist Salafist factors and Ansar al Islam Group (Followers of Islam) which was formed in the Sulaimanyah originally but which moved its activities north in 2003. This group targets Kurdish headquarters and political personalities in particular.

Other groups active in Mosul include; the Return Party (Al Awda) which is made up of followers of the banned Baath party, and Al Jamaa Al Kasanzanyah, which has a Soufi nature; members of this group are mainly former Iraqi officers and followers of the toppled regime. Other armed groups and militias become active now and then.

Pay or Die

The Islamic State of Iraq implements a strategy that compels all targeted groups to pay without any exceptions, and people who refuse to pay put their lives and the lives of their families at risk.

Abu Obada, formerly of Al Qaeda, says that when citizens feel that their refusal to pay would mean death, they pay without hesitation, especially if they knew threats had been carried out previously and that people were actually killed.

The pharmacist Ahmad, for example, was paying US\$200 monthly to support the resistance as everybody does, but according to his wife, he was considered "uncommitted" because he was unwilling to pay six months in advance.

The security forces are helpless before these groups and their strategies. According to Abdul Rahm Al Shamri, head of the security committee in Ninawa, they are unable to put an end to these practices. Al Shamri considers "weak intelligence infor-

mation" to be one of the primary reasons for this failure; Mosul lacks well established intelligence systems and "lacks coordination between the security forces and local government on one hand, and the local government and central government on the other," which results in the current vulnerable security situation.

Armed groups' power just increases because citizens are reluctant to report the incidents to the police, because if they do they may be in danger themselves.

This is actually what happened to Munim Al Obaidi, a merchant, who was threatened with death and the bombing of his house at the end of 2009, 24 hours after reporting that he was being blackmailed to the police.

State Departments

Senior officials in the local government of Ninawa stated that their departments are considered a "reliable bank that finances the activities of the Islamic State of Iraq". The protection money is not only collected from citizens and the private sector, but from government departments as well. And these departments actually pay the largest sum of money to the armed groups.

Abu Obada, a dissident from Al Qaeda, confirms that all government departments, without exception, pay either directly or indirectly. Productive departments, such as those involved with construction or the petroleum sector, pay a percentage of the production, while less productive departments pay in other ways.

The former Al Qaeda member states that, "some entities such as the University of Mosul grant all construction contracts to contractors associated with the organization".

Other departments pay in a more

creative way. According to a State employee: "for a year now the department has been deducting IQD 2,000 (less than US\$2) from my salary each month and when I asked the accountant about the deduction he said that the amount is being deducted from all employees without exception. When I repeated the question several times he said, "this money goes to our brothers, the Mujahideen, in return for protection." Another employee, who refused to reveal his name, stated: "there is an employee in our department, we all know he is a member of Al Qaeda. He behaves as he pleases and no one can say no to him, even the director - actually his authority exceeds that of the director himself".

He added that, "we do not even think of reporting him, because with one gesture from him he can end our lives. What is the point anyway? The government and security forces know all about it, and they even may be partners - so why would we volunteer to sacrifice our lives?" A story related by a contractor confirms these statements by employees. The contractor said that he met the "Haji" a few months ago. The contractor, who recently won a contract to install electricity towers, stated that locals advised him to go visit the "Haji", who is the Wali of the Islamic State of Iraq in the area where the project is being implemented.

The contractor says, "the Haji asked me what I wanted and I told him about the project. When I started talking about the details, he asked me to wait for a moment and he asked one of his men to bring him his black bag. He pulled a stack of papers out of the bag and then he waved one paper in front of me and asked if this was the project's referral letter. When I answered in the affirmative he asked about the value of the contract, and



other details. In the middle of the conversation he pulled out another paper and inquired if it was the details of the tender submitted to the department."

he contractor says he was shocked especially when, after a few seconds, the Haji pulled out a third paper and asked if it was the contract he had signed with the department. At the end of the conversation he said "you can work, but you have to pay the specified percentage".

The contractor states that all the documents the Haji had, were copies of official papers from the project's file at the government department. He also stated that after he agreed to pay, the project went ahead without any obstacles. However he refused to reveal the amount of money he is paying. And he justifies his failure to report on the Haji saying, "there are several people like him, and the moment I report him, the project will be cancelled and my family and I will be killed."

The "Haji" is not a state employee but he has assistants inside government departments. A senior officer elaborates: "In each department there is at least one representative of the Islamic State of Iraq. These employees are appointed by the governorate and they are counterparts

for the directors of the department, they facilitate the work of the Islamic State of Iraq such as approval of tenders and referral of contracts".

He further stated that any director who refuses to cooperate or to pay is murdered. This is what happened, for example, to Mohammad Zibari, director of the Enterprise for Petroleum Products; there were three unsuccessful attempts to assassinate him in 2010 because he refused to cooperate with the Islamic State of Iraq. The assassination attempts failed and he later died in his bed.

The same thing happened to the director of one of the big state enterprises; he refused to pay and so a bomb was planted under his car seat. It exploded in front of his house without anyone being injured. But this bomb was a warning and it worked, the director agreed to cooperate with the Islamic State of Iraq. In a special interview with the governor of Ninawa, Atheel Al Nujaifi, he admitted that there were militias extorting money from citizens, government departments and the private sector. But at the same time he said that there is some exaggeration and things are not as bad as they seem.

The governor explained that in

the past, the protection money was collected from official departments and entities, especially in the oil and construction sector. The amounts collected were even larger than what is being collected now but the governorate had taken some measures to counteract this activity.

According to the governor's information, apart from contractors who already have problems with these groups, protection money was no longer being collected from contractors and businessmen. The practice was stopped thanks to the cooperation of citizens, "although many of them are still afraid of these groups' penetration of security forces."

On the issue of Al Qaeda members working in government departments, Al Nujaifi said that there were some suspicions about some employees before 2008, as they seemed to have unjustifiable power and no official title. "We moved these employees to remote areas to fragment this network, and now most of the State Departments are safe of these employees," he said. "The financing of Al Qaeda was cut substantially."

Abdul Rahman Al Shamari, Head of the security committee in the Province Council stated that maybe there were employees who belong to the Islamic State



of Iraq but he denied any relation to the governor or the governorate.

The strategy of the Islamic State of Iraq includes a plan for the contracting sector, as contractors were targeted in a particular manner, so that they become "major contributors". According to Abu Obada, this sector has become the "most important source of funding for Al Qaeda".

A source from the security forces confirmed that there is a group of contractors known for their allegiance to the organization and for their monopolization of the major contracting jobs in the city. These contractors, who have taken part of acts of violence, are now monopolizing most of the contracting jobs because of contacts with powerful people in local government.

On this note, the source explains that employees associated with Al Qaeda in government departments facilitate the winning of contracts for these contractors, while the armed groups threaten other contractors so that they don't tender for the same jobs.

One of the contractors interviewed by Al Haya was forced out of Mosul a year ago after he failed to respond to a phone call that demanded he withdraw from an important tender. After he insisted on taking the job his son was kidnapped.

The contractor has been running his business from a distance ever since, he said. "A person from the government department leaked information about the details of the offer I submitted, which was much lower than the prices offered by contractors associated with the organization. They abducted my son, who is 10 years old, and demanded a ransom of US\$100,000 as well as my withdrawal from the bid," he said.

The contractor withdrew from the bid and paid the ransom.

In some cases, militias leave contracting jobs to contractors who are not associated with them, provided that they receive a percentage that varies between 10 percent and 20 percent of the total value of the contract, according to Al Chalabi, advisor to the Minister of State for National Reconciliation.

The source from the security forces confirms this information: "according to intelligence information all contractors, without exception, are extorted and forced to pay protection money. But when questioned they deny that because they fear for their lives and businesses. After 2003 a lot of contractors or members of their families were killed".

Hameed Ahmad is one of the contractors who abandoned his profession and moved to Kurdistan, after armed groups kidnapped his 14-year-old son while he was on his way to school. They killed his son after Hameed refused to pay the money.

Ahmad, who is grieving the loss of his son, says: "they demanded US\$80,000 on the assumption that the profits from the project would exceed US\$400,000. But my actual profits were only US\$100,000 because I was the third contractor in line to win the contract. But they did not believe me".

Private companies and Businessmen

According to the strategies of the Islamic State of Iraq, any company or businessman can work in Mosul - but only after they come to an agreement with the organization over protection payments.

So every new business in Mosul is contacted by the "organization" and informed about the money it has to pay, and of course, it is warned that it is going to be targeted if it fails

to pay. Abu Obada explains that the amount or percentage demanded of each business is not arbitrary - rather it is demanded after lengthy research about the type of work and the expected profits. The source from the security forces confirmed that each business pays, without any exceptions, especially communication companies.

Asia Cell is one of the companies that pay regularly - especially after they tried to refuse to pay in 2008. The organization responded by bombing the company's towers. Abu Obada confirmed that Asia Cell has paid huge amounts and since then nobody has harassed the company or any of its employees.

Although the president of the company, Diyar Ahmad, confirmed that the company's towers were damaged he simply attributed the incident to deteriorating security.

At the same time, Ahmad said there was no telling if protection money was being paid without the knowledge of the company, as they work with more than six contractors in Mosul, all of whom deal with more than a thousand sales outlets around the city and suburbs, as well as the company's hundreds of employees.

"Any of these may be forced to pay protection money to protect themselves and their families, but does that mean that Asia Cell is paying? Of course not?" he remarked.

The same reasoning applies to other businesses in Mosul; Abu Obada stresses that there is a special strategy to deal with these. It includes all the details of the business, the type of imported goods, source of these goods, and how they compete with other importers who may be connected to the blackmailers.

For example, the Al Qaeda insider states that the import of



Iranian goods to Mosul was banned in 2009 because most of the businessmen connected to them were importing goods from Syria and the prices of the Iranian goods were too competitive.

One seller of home appliances explained that he failed to sell the refrigerators he imported from Iran because the Islamic State of Iraq had banned all Iranian products – so nobody bought his merchandise. He incurred huge losses while the Mosul market was monopolized by merchants associated with the organization. According to Al Chalabi, Advisor to the Ministry of Reconciliation, all merchants and businessmen in Mosul "pay protection money with no reluctance". The trucks that transport their goods could be sabotaged any time. And the source from the security forces confirms that all truck owners and the transportation sector in general are blackmailed by the Islamic State of Iraq, especially because they are an easy target on external roads and at city entrances.

A truck driver who started working in 2010, and who still works in the same field tells what happened during his first trip from Anbar to the district of Sinjar through Mosul, where he was stopped by an armed group on

the road: "The first thing they asked me was why I did not stop at Mosul to pay the tax. After a long struggle I managed to convince them that I was new to the job and that I knew nothing about those things. After a long discussion on the phone with the owner of the transported goods, he paid US\$700 and US\$200 as a fine for not stopping in Mosul. They gave me a receipt in return for that money."

The driver then added: "If I hadn't paid, I would have been dead and the truck would have been missing."

Examples of racket percentages and charges

Al Haya interviewed a number of shop owners and discovered that they pay the following amounts. Mobile phone shops pay between US\$100 and US\$200, accessory shops between US\$500 and US\$750, car showrooms pay from US\$100 and US\$300 and food shops pay between US\$200 and US\$500. In the health sector, pharmacists paid between US\$200 and US\$500, doctors paid double this amount; around US\$1,500. The same applies to private transporters.

And the phenomenon has been spreading into other levels of

business. Now any person who buys or sells a house or a piece of land pays a percentage to the organization too according to Zuhair Al Calabi, Advisor to the Minister of State of National Reconciliation and chairman of the construction committee in Um Al Rabiain in Mosul.

"Everybody knows about these practices," he says. "Even the government. But nobody can stop them and citizens do not report these incidents because they fear for their lives."

A senior officer in Ninawa stated that all government departments pay protection money to the Islamic State of Iraq - including cement plants, petroleum enterprises, water and electricity, social security and the real estate registry. The money collected from these departments is the largest source of funding to Al Qaeda - and they have even sold large pieces of land to Al Qaeda.

Grain mills also pay US\$10 per ton produced. According to a civil activist who gathered information on this topic, business owners try to avoid payment by trying to hide their actual production. But their efforts are in vain. Al Qaeda has sources in the Ministry of Commerce that provide them with figures for the amount of cereal received from each mill.



Counterfeit Medicine Plagues Iraqi Kurdistan

● Muwaffaq Muhammad

Bikhal, a young Kurdish woman, knows she may not live to see another spring. The leukemia that has ravaged her body since she was treated with defective chemotherapy drugs at a hospital in Iraqi Kurdistan has reduced her to a ghost of her former self.

The 25-year-old gazes at the leaves falling from the plum tree in the courtyard of her home as her father, Hajj Saleh, relates her experience with the bogus medication that wrecked her chance of being cured of this deadly illness. A few days after it was administered at a government hospital, doctors informed her that recovery in Kurdistan had become "impossible."

Bikhal's father did his best to seek redress, even going to the courts to bring the wrongdoers to justice. But he concluded it was futile trying to fight "the dinosaurs", the powerful political and financial interests that protect the trade in counterfeit pharmaceuticals in Iraqi Kurdistan. He is now planning to sell his small house so he can accompany Bikhal to India at the end of the year in search of a last chance to save the life of his only daughter.

Nawrouz Saleh's face and throat have been severely disfigured since she was given a "bad injection" last autumn. She recalls that she previously only suffered from a mild bronchial inflammation, yet overnight became critically ill.

It was the same for Ayah Salim. She remains house-bound two years after she, too, was administered a "bad injection" that lost her the ability to move her right leg, and nearly killed her. She spent seven days "almost dead" in intensive care.

Suzanne Jamal, 32, also escaped death by a miracle after doctors managed to treat the side-effects of a "bad injection" she was given to treat "a simple tooth inflammation."

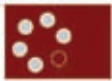
Sarbast Jaafar, was not so fortunate. He died on June 15 after being injected with the antibiotic ceftriaxone, aged 18. Kazaw Abdul-Baqi, 40, was killed by an injection of the same substance on June 30. Masouma Piro died on August 3 due to an injection of cefotaxil.

The bitter truth is that these injections had been banned by the Iraqi health ministry in Baghdad at the beginning of June, says Dr. Salam Tayyeb,

an oncologist at Erbil public hospital. They were on a list of prohibited pharmaceutical products it circulated to all health institutions in Iraq. But they continued quietly killing people in Kurdistan. The Health Ministry in the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) whose annual budget exceeds US \$446 million, can do nothing to prevent the use of these banned injections or the import of counterfeit medicine.

Death Factory

Defective or counterfeit medicine is thought to account for 18% of the pharmaceutical drugs used in Iraqi Kurdistan in recent years, according to former health minister Taher Hawrami. He describes the phenomenon as having turned into a "monster" ravaging the bodies of thousands of Kurdistan residents. Hawraz Sheikh Ahmad, deputy head of the Kurdistan Regional Parliament's Health and Environment Committee, agrees. Defective and counterfeit medicines "are distributed everywhere in Kurdistan," she says. "They are brought into the region through all the border crossings, and the business is monopolized by traders who no-



one can stop, because, in short, they are backed by powerful politicians in Iraqi Kurdistan.”

This is supported by a case in March when the KRG Health Ministry announced that an unlicensed pharmaceuticals factory had been discovered in Erbil. Three tons of dangerous chemical substances were found inside it. They had been smuggled into Kurdistan for the manufacture of counterfeit medicines unfit for use. They would be placed in Syrian or Indian medical packaging and sold to pharmacies as genuine medicine imported from international suppliers, at prices sometimes reaching \$50 dollars per box.

Although thousands of boxes of fake medicine were made at this factory, and these were taken by thousands of citizens in Kurdistan, the case was later shrouded in silence. Nobody dared press for a probe into it – nor into the distribution of 2,500 boxes of insulin injections to hospitals and clinics on official KRG

health ministry instructions, before tests found them to be defective.

According to a member of the Kurdistan regional parliament, who requested anonymity due to the sensitivity of the case, an investigation was held, involving 27 people believed to be connected to the affair including health ministry officials. It resulted in the culprits being given a “reprimand”.

Sterile Procedures

The director of the Pashmag border crossing, Sirwan Abdallah, concurs that counterfeit and expired medicines continue to be smuggled into Iraqi Kurdistan despite efforts to halt the influx.

The normal procedure used by border officials involves cross-checking the importers’ documents, verifying they were issued by the Health Ministry, and taking samples of the medicines and sending them to the KRG standards directorate for testing. The importing companies are then

allowed to store the goods until the tests are complete, Abdallah explains.

If officials have doubts about certain shipment of medicines, they sometimes impound them until the test results are issued.

Abdallah reveals that 47 tons of drugs are currently being held at the crossing and will not be allowed into Kurdistan until they have been legally cleared. A further six tons of drugs are being held which were found to have expired, along with 40 boxes containing what tests proved to be counterfeit medicines.

The impounded drugs are only a small proportion of the massive amount of counterfeit medicine that has increasingly been flooding into Iraqi Kurdistan, as acknowledged by the Reforms Committee set up by the KRG presidency in the aftermath of the Arab Spring of 2011.

The Committee reported in March 2012, after nearly a year of continual work, that large quantities of defective and counterfeit medicines

were entering Kurdistan. It estimated that 90% of the drugs in use in the province had never been tested.

This called to mind a scandal in the winter of 2010 when 400 tons of counterfeit medicines were brought in through one of the border crossing from Turkey. According to a government official who worked at the crossing at the time, a senior official colluded with the owners of the two companies involved to let in the 20 trucks carrying the killer drugs. The affair was only uncovered when one of the trucks was stopped at a checkpoint in the town of Dogan and found to be carrying fake medicine. The other 19 disappeared inside the city without a trace.

To this day nobody knows where those drugs went or how many victims they claimed. But the matter was brought to a close, as many in Kurdistan know, with the official concerned being transferred to a different job, after the intervention of a former KRG prime minister who was related to him.

Awaiting Tests

Although the health ministry takes issue with the Reforms Committee's estimate, it has no figures or estimates of its own to offer on the amount of medicine that comes into Kurdistan uninspected.

Health Ministry Spokesman Khaled Qader concedes that counterfeit and defective drugs have long been coming into Iraqi Kurdistan, but attributes the persistence of the problem to "lack of experience and personnel, and also of the equipment needed to test drugs."

Dr Rozgar Hamid, head of the drugs department on the Directorate of Quality Control in Erbil concurs, saying the shortage of skilled personnel means importers have to wait a long time – up to three months on average – for their test results to come through. "Traders are not allowed to sell the medicines until the final test results have been obtained," he explains.

But nobody can wait that long, neither the sick among Iraqi Kurdistan's population of 5 million, nor the pharmaceuticals traders who went into the business seeking guaranteed and quick profits.

Trader Abu Ayyub invested all his savings in a deal involving medicine for treating heart disease and high blood pressure. He has been waiting over two months for the test result. He worries that the delay may result in the drugs expiring while still waiting to be tested.

"Most of the traders who share their profits with powerful partners do not have to wait for official approval," he protests. "They have backing if they get into legal trouble, and they usually rush to sell their goods as soon as they have come across the border and samples have been taken to be tested by Quality Control."

He says that for traders like himself who lack "backing" the long hold-ups for testing can be ruinous. Traders are forced to spend money on refrigerating and storing their stocks for months at a time to prevent them from spoiling. They are prevented from competing properly in the market, while the expiry dates of the medicines draw

closer — lowering the price — and sometimes lapse.

14 Pharmacists

Hamid says there are only 14 pharmacists working on testing imported medicines at the Quality Control Department, and their experience is "limited to a few years", though they have a massive backlog of drugs to test.

There is also a shortage of equipment for testing certain medicines such as insulin. Samples have to be sent to the capital Baghdad to be tested by specialists there, who return the results in a few days, he says.

Because of this, he believes it is possible that some traders market their stocks before the samples have been tested. Given the long waiting time for tests, and in the absence of strict penalties, nobody can be sure traders don't market their stocks of imported medicine as soon as they have taken delivery of them.

Control of the importation of counterfeit medicines through Erbil International Airport also suffers from the same constraints as at the overland border crossings, according to Goran Said, who is in charge of checking medical imports at the airport. The procedures are the same. Incoming medicines are only examined physically, as there is no equipment at the airport to conduct chemical tests. Samples are retained, and shipments are released to importers pending the results of tests.

By the time results come through, many of these drugs will have already been administered to patients, for better



or worse, notes Dr. Amir Sheet, former head of the Kurdistan Region Pharmacists Union. Those samples that fail the tests are included on lists that are circulated monthly by the Health Ministry and the quality control department in Kurdistan to all pharmacies in Iraq, with orders to destroy any stocks of the batch concerned.

Bloated Budget

For civic activist Ahmad Pireh, the shortage of staff and equipment to test medicines is unjustifiable, given the enormous annual budget the KRG gets from Baghdad (some \$12 billion in 2012) in addition to its proceeds from oil contracts and foreign investments.

He notes that 1.35 million of Iraqi Kurdistan's 5 million people are on the public payroll — over 30% of the workforce, the highest proportion in the region — as either government employees or security personnel. Thousands are employed as guards for the politicians and other prominent figures. For the KRG to hire only 14 pharmacists to vet the deadly influx of thousands of tons of dubious drugs is nothing short of a "crime," he says.

Regional MP Burhan Rashid agrees. He describes the testing process as a "failure" and the work of the quality control directorate as "very bad", adding that Kurdistan "has now become a place to sell anything that is bad quality or past its expiry date." He faults the KRG for failing to regulate the trade in pharmaceuticals "despite acknowledging how big the problem is. As a result, importers seek to maximize their profits by

procuring the cheapest drugs they can procure, even if that means the worst quality and most dangerous.

Faulty System

KRG officials and parliamentarians, doctors and pharmacists, heads of pharmaceutical firms and civic activists alike acknowledge that there are scandalous shortcomings in the control of imported medicines in Iraqi Kurdistan. This is not only due to the absence of a coherent system for testing medicines before they are distributed to pharmacies and hospitals, but also to the fact that powerful politicians and political forces have moved into the pharmaceutical business in Kurdistan along with all other commercial sectors.

Dr. Baran Rasoul, who heads the Awamedica pharmaceuticals firm in Erbil, says the resultant state of affairs is "catastrophic". Some of the traders "don't care about anything except making quick profits, even at the expense of thousands of peoples' lives," he says. "It's a new Anfal," he says in reference to the Saddam Hussein's regime's murderous campaign against the Kurds in the late 1980s, "carried out by the counterfeit medicine mafia on behalf of some powerful figures and decision-makers."

Another "catastrophe" cited by Rasoul is that there are only 320 pharmacies and 57 dispensaries in Iraqi Kurdistan with official licenses, alongside 4,000 unlicensed pharmacies, dispensaries and clinics where much of the imported medicine is supplied. That means only 9% are licensed, and the unli-

censed 91 % do not receive the Health Ministry's monthly lists of counterfeit medicines.

Drugs on Demand

Pharmacists Union chief Sheet argues that the single most effective step the authorities could take would be to restrict the importation of pharmaceutical drugs to specific specialist companies, as many of the traders currently in the business know nothing about the field.

But trader Gharib Saadeddin disagrees, maintaining that the problem is with the system used for testing imported medicines, not the people who import them. Whether the latter are pharmacists or not, in the final analysis the judge of the drugs' quality will be the tests conducted by the relevant authority, not "the trader's conscience," he remarks.

Saadeddin says any trader can travel to India, China or Iran and chose whatever drugs secure them the best profits. Pharmaceutical companies in these countries offer traders a variety of options for drugs with different proportions of active ingredients. The lower the proportion the cheaper the drug. Whether they are pharmacists or not, dealers can arrange to buy medicines with a very low percentage of active ingredient, sometimes as little as 1%. "It's here where the traders can make the kind of profits they drool over," he says.

Most traders assume they will be able to get their supplies through unhindered, and will have arranged the sale of their entire shipment in advance, so the drugs are distributed as soon as they have

arrived. They therefore tend to opt for the cheapest and lowest quality products.

Leila Fattah, a customer at an Erbil pharmacy, says that a relative of hers in the pharmaceuticals business advised her to buy any medicine she needs for herself and her family abroad, as the drugs coming into Kurdistan from China, India and Iran are "lethal." She retorts that on her \$350 monthly wage she can barely afford the cheapest brands on sale let alone get them from outside Iraq. Her friend Nadia carefully examines some boxes of heart medicine, trying to determine the quality before deciding whether to buy any. "We don't trust anyone. The region is full of killer medicines. The pharmacist told me they were genuine, but I don't trust anyone anymore." Like most people in Kurdistan, Nadia has heard of fatalities after taking defective medicines, and has heard reports of counterfeit drugs being sold. So she agonizes over whether to buy Indian-made heart pills for her Dad for 2000 dinars (around \$1.5) or the French-made equivalent for \$75.

Selling Death

"Everyone in Kurdistan knows the pharmacies are full of fake and spoiled medicines, but nobody can do anything to change it," mutters Fateh Mulla Muhammad as he pays the equivalent of some \$65 for two boxes of arthritis medicine. "The merchants import the worst varieties of medicine and nobody holds them to account, because they are partners with powerful officials. They sell us death here, and send their

own families to be treated at the best hospitals abroad."

Marwan Karim, the owner of a pharmaceuticals firm, says the growing power of politically well-connected owners of drugs companies has made him seriously reconsider the pharmaceuticals business for some time.

The "powerful" companies sell their goods as soon they arrive, while those without political backing have to wait months, or perhaps a year, for theirs to be tested and approved and then start the process of marketing them. He believes the hold-ups are deliberate, aimed at forcing the firms not connected to senior officials to hold on to their stocks and keep them out of the market.

The Reforms Committee report seemed to uphold this charge. It referred to three unnamed officials who it said were behind the importation of counterfeit and expired drugs.

MP Rashid concurs, and holds the main Kurdish political parties responsible for the abuses, as "they control most of the commercial activity in Kurdistan, including the pharmaceuticals trade."

Dr. Muath Sheet, a former member of the pharmacists' union and currently a health ministry official, is also convinced that "the hidden hands of some officials control the medications trade in Kurdistan." He sees no other explanation for why the testing process is so protracted in the province whereas it takes only a few days in Baghdad. He also questions the shadowy nature of some of the companies that import drugs into Kurdistan. In Baghdad,

he says, the importers are well-known experienced specialist firms with agencies from major international pharmaceuticals corporations. But it is the complete opposite in Kurdistan, where out of 65 companies in the trade, the activities of only 25 are known, while the operations and imports of the remainder are a mystery.

Awaiting Accountability

Article 50 of the pharmacists' law in Kurdistan provides for a sentence of up to three years in jail as punishment for endangering someone's life due to pharmaceutical negligence.

Penalties for pharmacies selling counterfeit or expired medicine range from being issued a caution, to being closed down for a few days or weeks or permanently. But the existence of 4000 unlicensed pharmacies makes it impossible to monitor drugs sales fully or catch offenders. Samir al-Jaff, whose father died after buying diabetes medicine from an unlicensed pharmacy in Erbil, has still not been able to find out the name of the pharmacy's owner, who he wants to prosecute for causing his father's death.

Most patients who suffer serious and sometimes fatal, side-effects from being given counterfeit medicines are unable to obtain compensation from the pharmacists or companies involved. Ultimately, it is very hard to prove a drug was counterfeit if the authorities were unable to determine that previously. Attempted prosecutions are also hindered by lengthy and time-consuming legal procedures, and by political, or even



tribal, interventions, which invariably mean they get nowhere.

But the owners of unlicensed pharmacies and clinics bear only a small part of the blame, says activist Hakar Mohammad. The real culprits are what he refers to as "the big pharmaceuticals whales", while the pharmacies are "mostly victims of the dysfunctional health system in Kurdistan."

Investigations were held into some major violations, such as the smuggling of doctored medicine or the unlicensed manufacture of counterfeit drugs, but no real measures were taken to prevent their recurrence, he says.

The same goes for the recommendations of the Reforms Committee report. "It spoke at length about the need for measures to be taken – including the sacking of officials in the health sector from their posts, putting those complicit in importing

counterfeit drugs on trial, and blacklisting some pharmaceutical firms – to stop yet more billions of dollars being wasted," says Mohammad. "But nothing changed." None of the culprits were punished, nobody was sacked, and meanwhile the list of drugs whose destruction is requested by the health ministry in Baghdad grows by the month.

Says one official at the Quality Control Department of the free hand enjoyed by the dubious drug importers: "I have authority, but only officially. In reality I have no authority at all. The real authority is held by people much more powerful than us and we cannot confront them."

MP Sheikh Ahmad also affirms that none of the people responsible for the many deaths caused by counterfeit medicines has ever stood trial or been held to account. She says there are even efforts

been made to allow the unlicensed factory in Erbil that was closed down for making counterfeit drugs to reopen, albeit under a different name. She repeats her earlier remark about the impunity enjoyed by the big pharmaceuticals traders, "Nobody can stop them because they are backed by powerful politicians in Kurdistan."

While MPs and health and industry professionals warn of the scale of damage inflicted by counterfeit drugs in Kurdistan, the victims whose lives have been devastated, and the relatives of those killed, look forward to the day when the culprits face justice in court rather than mere letters of reprimand

Bikhal, meanwhile, only hopes that an Indian hospital will be able to prolong her life, if only for one more final spring, because Kurdistan's hospitals and its government's multi-billion dollar budget, cannot save her.



Generations of Iraqi females turn suicide under Al-Qadea influence

● A report by: Mayada Dawod (Milad Al-Juburi)

Amal, the young Iraqi girl, was transferred from the illusion of "holy matrimony" to a "suicide bomber in the making" after she was promised eternal life by her recruiters. Amal, who never made it past fifth grade due to her family's poverty, started a romance with a youngster associated with "Al-Qa'eda". He dropped her the minute he found out she was 'pregnant'.

Amal's only way out was to resort to a relative of the treacherous young man to convince him to marry her, but the woman sent her to a clergyman who collaborates with Al-Qaeda. He convinced her that the only way to atonement from her sin was to carry out a suicide mission against "the infidels", through which she will preserve her and her family's reputation and honor, and land her in heaven.

Amal belongs to the third generation of suicide bombers who fell victim to elements belonging to armed groups, according to a security source in Diala. But she never made it to the "promised paradise". She is awaiting a sentence that could reach life in prison, after she failed to detonate her explosive belt late December,

steps away from a military checkpoint, according to a security source in Diala.

Shahla'a, who was involved in an intimate relationship with an Al-Qa'eda element died at the hand of her father, who buried her hurriedly in the house backyard after he was certain she was going to carry out a suicide operation inside a religious congregation in the city.

The security official says that Shahla's father told investigators that his daughter's death and his potential prison sentence are much better than "dozens of people losing their lives to pay the price of a love story between a suicide bomber and an Al-Qaeda operative".

Rania Al-Anbaki and Umm Al-Mo'minin have been in jail for years, and have gained wide reputation after the former appeared in a video footage tied to a steel barrier while explosives experts tried to dismantle them, and the latter in a video strip reciting her confessions about being a recruiter for "suicide bombers".

In addition to Rania and Umm Al-Mo'minin, dozens of women spend their lives behind the bars for participating in recruiting suicide bombers,

or attempting to carry out suicide bombings. Twenty one operations by female suicide bombers resulted in killing 124 Iraqis and injuring 344 others, according to General Abdul Karim Al-Rube'i, who assumed the position of Diala operations director between 2007 and 2009.

The most potent operation was carried out among shoppers in the Buldroze area the beginning of May 2008, killing 33 civilians and injuring at least 60 others.

The Quadruplet of Revenge, Ideology, Ignorance and Poverty

Sociologists, clergymen, security leaders, prison wardens and separatists from Al-Qaeda, hold armed factions, especially Al-Qaeda, responsible for attracting women into the "web of soft death", using them as time-bombs in the sectarian strife that overtook Iraq between 2006 and 2008. None of the parties, however, misses the main reason why dozens of women join the suicide phenomenon: the quadruplet of revenge, an erroneous interpretation of the ideology, ignorance and poverty prevailing in Iraq's small cities and villages.

The main motive is the "desire to revenge" the death



or kidnapping of a husband, father or son. This desire is amplified by extreme ideologies that prevailed unprecedentedly with the arrival of Al-Qaeda cells into Iraq simultaneously with the American invasion in April 2003.

The duet of extreme ideology and revenge, according to sociologists, found a nurturing and rapid-reacting environment; namely, the poverty and ignorance, which prevailed throughout the country as a result of the economic embargo imposed on Iraq since the army of the former president's forces invaded Kuwait in 1990.

Official statistics show that about 30% of Diala residents live under the poverty line. According to statistics, illiteracy has the same ratio among the population. Unofficial statistics raise these percentages to 40% for poverty and about 45% for illiteracy. The larger ratio of these

figures belong to women, in a governorate where the ratio of women exceeds 55% of the total population of 1.4 million citizens.

A former local official describes the poverty situation of Diala, where the phenomena of women suicide bombers prevailed, as "catastrophic". Many peaceful peasants lost their sources of income when their orchards were turned into "training grounds" for Al-Qaeda elements, and continuously hot battlefields, strewn with explosive devices and fictitious checkpoints.

The local official, who refused to reveal her identity for security reasons, says: "seeing dozens of women in black, carrying vegetables on their way to the market on carts pulled by animals, hoping to make enough to feed the family was very common." Women crossing checkpoints at the time was not a reason

for suspicion, which led Al-Qaeda "emirs" to utilize the "deprived women" and turn them into "female suicide bombers".

Psychological Disorders and Different Stories

Rania Al-Anbaki, one of the "suicide project" members, admits that she provided a lot of false information to her interrogators throughout the last three years following her arrest while wearing an explosive belt. Similarly, Umm Al-Mo'minin retracted previous confessions of recruiting 28 girls after saying that she succeeded in recruiting them to carry out suicide operations in various area of Diala governorate.

Deceit, multiplicity of stories and an attempt to conceal facts were noted to be the prevalent features of the confessions of 16 "prospective suicide bombers" or "suicide recruit", or "collaborator" de-



bated by this investigative reporter in the prisons of the Ministry of Interior, Justice and Labor. But reconciling information provided by the suicide bombers with the records of the judiciary, denial and evidence witnesses, data from militants and expert opinion, reveals a lot of the true features of one of the most complicated and dangerous violence files in Iraq since 2003.

Suicide Bomber with a Penalty

Rania Al-Anbaki, who comes from a destitute family, denies that revenge for the death of her father and brother is the motive behind her wearing an explosive belt and going to a checkpoint. Despite that, she did not stop referring to the fact that her father and brother were killed by "militants from another sect" in Abu-Saida area.

Security officials and confessions she made to investigators contradict Rania's story. Her father carried out a suicide mission in Abu-Saida, in which nine people were killed and others were injured. Her brother also carried out an operation in one of the governorate's cities. Her husband, Mohammad admitted belonging to Al-Qaeda, and received a 20 year sentence.

Rania, who gained weight and looks much better than what she looked like in the video when she was arrested, responded solidly every time this reporter asked her about how she was convinced to dun an explosive belt. "I don't know," "I don't remember." And with every piece of information she admitted in

the investigation or on TV screens and was asked about, Rania would say: "I was lying, lying all the time."

Rania provides a loose story about the details of wearing the belt, telling how her husband Mohammad gave her a lift to the house of two relatives, and waited in the room next door. She remembers nothing. Her relatives may have drugged her with a Falafel sandwich and fruit juice before installing the explosive belt on her.

Four lawyers are now defending Rania to reduce her sentence, which was passed on August 3 2009, to imprison her for 7 years from 15 after appeal. One of these lawyers was appointed by the court. The three others were appointed by her husband.

Conflict in Numbers

The number of female suicide bombers documented by General Al-Rube'i in the 21 operations falls short of 60 operations across Iraq during 2008 as documented by this reporter, based on testimony of security officials to news agencies, including Reuters, Iraq Voices and Nina.

Although the two figures are not identical with what was mentioned in Al-Qaeda data (77 suicide bombings of which 40 were in Diala alone), and statements by the US Army spokesperson (27 operations in all of Iraq during the first nine months of 2008), General Al-Rube'i sees that this "sounds understandable in light of the state of hysteria resulting from the widening phenomenon of female suicide bombers, and the security officials' belief that any suicide bombing or the detonation of a booby-

trapped car is a "suicide bombing carried out by a woman wearing an explosive belt."

Agreement between the Ideology and the Belief

The first chapter of female suicide bombers in Iraq gained publicity when the Iraqi official television showed footage of two masked women threatening American forces advancing at the capital Baghdad of suicide operations to prevent them from advancing. Websites of the dissolved Ba'th party mentioned that the suicide bombers carried out a double suicide bombing, killing a number of American soldiers, without referring to the city where the operation took place.

Outside Al-Ba'th statements, there was no indication of such an operation taking place.

Literature from Al-Ba'th, the ruling party in Iraq between 1968 and 2003, point at another Iraqi suicide mission carried out against American forces in the city of Suweira south of Baghdad. A prominent security official at the city, however, revealed to this reporter that the body parts found in the bombed area "were of a man who detonated inside a booby-trapped car," pointing out that the "suicide" story was used by Al-Ba'th for "promotional" purposes.

The same issue (promotion) applied to the mission carried out in the village of Tal'afar close to the Syrian border, where 5 Iraqis were killed and 56 injured. The mission, attributed by Al-Qaeda leader Abu Mus'ab Al-Zarqawi (*) to



a suicidal woman, turned out to be by a young man in his twenties, dressed as a woman, according to an official in the Tal'afar police.

Ignoring publicity spins, evidence documented by a prominent official in the Anti-Terrorism Directorate in Al-Anbar governorate shows that the first true bombing carried out by a female suicide bomber was in March 2004, when a woman detonated in the middle of US troops in the city of Haditha on the edge of Al-Anbar, the center of Al-Qaeda and other extremist Islamic organizations. It is not known whether that operation resulted in any casualties.

After that, no suicide bombing by a woman was recorded in Al-Anbar until 2010, when a woman detonated her explosives inside the government compound in the middle of Ramadi, killing and injuring 31 people.

Al-Qaeda: From Hesitation to Adopting the Female Suicide Bombers Strategy

The time span between the first operation in Al-Anbar (March 2004) and Tal'afar

alleged operation in (September 2005) is free from any suicide missions by females, according to Fa'eq Al-Janabi, an expert in militant groups, who points out that this stage was one of heavy fighting among militant groups or with American and Iraqi troops. Women had no role in these operations except as volunteers to transport arms or letters, or harbouring fighters.

The "dangerous transformation", as Janabi calls it, started when Al-Zarqawi promoted, during the last quarter of 2005, the idea of "suicidal women" against the "cowardly man" in joining the fight in Iraq, after the theoreticians of Al-Qaeda avoided this religiously and socially "sticky" issue for years.

Al-Janabi believes that most researchers were unable at the time to connect between Al-Zarqawi using the "female suicide bombers" to attract more foreign fighters, and the sectarian violence stage which started five months after bombing religious sites in Samarra'a in February 2006.(*)

Importing and Exporting Female Suicide Bombers

Al-Zarqawi's message was met with an unexpected response, according to an expert in militant groups. At the same time when the percentage of Arab and foreign volunteers, who entered across the borders to join the fight with Al-Zarqawi increased, the phenomenon of female bombers entered a dangerous stage as no border officials restricted the movement of female bombers.

The first female bomber arrived in Iraq from Europe, Belgian-born Muriel Degauque (*), considered to be an important part of a wide recruiting ring by radical militants in Europe to support Al-Qaeda in Iraq, according to Mohammad Al-Askari, a spokesman in the Ministry of Defence, who refers to arresting a radical group in Holland, which was training "female suicide bombers" from Belgium and France for the purpose of sending them to Iraq.

Degauque, the blonde Belgian, or Maryam, as she called herself after converting



to Islam, detonated her explosive belt against an American patrol in the city of Ba'qouba on November 9, 2005. This coincided with the more aggressive step by Al-Qaeda; namely, the export of female bombers from Iraq.

This strategy was evident in the bombings carried out on November 9, 2005 in a Amman hotel by two Iraqi suicide bombers, including Sajida Al-Rishawi, whose belt failed to detonate. At least 60 people, mostly guests of a wedding party, died at the hotel bombing. The couple were part of a four-member gang that carried out three simultaneous terror attacks on hotels in the Jordanian capital.

Prior to that operation, three brothers of Sajida Al-Rishawi's, currently awaiting her execution, had carried out suicide missions inside Iraq, including her brother Thamer Al-Rishawi, who was Al-Zarqawi's right arm.

Generations of Female Suicide Bombers

If the features of the first generation of female suicide bombers disappeared in the "publicity" statements of Al-Qaeda after 2003, the second generation of female bombers was clearer, and carried out brutal attacks, most of which were against security centres and civilian areas, promoting terror in all Iraqi cities.

Sheikh Saleh, a man in his forties who fought against Al-Qaeda with Al-Sahwa forces for years, describes how the "second generation" of female suicide bombers appeared.

Sheikh Saleh recalls that at the beginning, this generation was "ideological" – absorbing the doctrines of Al-Qaeda, to

the extent that many female bombers were taken by the idea of connecting with the "hero fighters" who left their nations to join the duty of Jihad on the soil of Iraq.

Many Iraqis who joined Al-Qaeda, according to Sheikh Saleh, offered their young daughters or sisters to "emirs" of Al-Qaeda arriving from the Arab countries, Afghanistan, Pakistan and other places..

Among these was Al-Zarqawi's brother in law, who offered the latter to marry his sister so he can settle down in the city and concentrate on "fighting the infidels", according to Sheikh Saleh.

The most prominent characteristic of this generation is that most female bombers were "wives of Al-Qaeda emires", adds Sheikh Saleh, who points out that a substantial number of emir's wives carried out suicide bombings after their husbands were killed, or died with their husbands, like Al-Zarqawi's wife who died with him in an American air raid in June 2006.

The Generation of Dollars and Explosive Belts

The generation of emir's wives and "ideologues" was followed, according to Sheikh Saleh, by a third generation that spread more widely. The rising star of this generation coincided with the heightening of the sectarian struggle. Most female suicide bombers who belonged to this generation were "minors" from very low social and cultural levels. One of them is Rania Al-Anbaki.

The appearance of this generation was connected to the need for protection, or the

desire to obtain money. Sheikh Saleh describes how many families in Diala rushed to marry their daughters off to Al-Qaeda "emirs" as soon as they arrived at the villages, carrying dollars and explosive belts.

Suicide Bomber Battalions

The story of female suicide bombers witnessed a number of transformations during the sectarian violence period. During the middle of 2007, the phenomenon expanded to turn from individual to group recruitment. During that stage, Al-Qaeda declared the formation of the first "suicide bombers battalion" in Iraq, named "Al-Khansa'a", comprising 26 suicide bombers, most of whom were relatives of Al-Qaeda operatives, according to a high-ranking officer in the investigations department.

Another female suicide bombers' battalion was formed in 2008 by the wife of Al-Qaeda chief in north Iraq, named (Umm Salamah). This battalion spread around a number of Iraqi cities and circulated statements threatening with "revenge" directed by dozens of wives and women who lost children and brothers in Al-Fallujah, Baghdad, Diala and Mosul." To date, nobody knows about the fate of Umm Salamah, but it seems that her battalion "actually carried out a number of missions in Diala and Baghdad," according to the investigations officer."

Female Suicide Bombers' Training Camps

A local official in Jallula'a, which suffered from a number of suicide attacks between 2006 and 2008, believes that female suicide



bombers received their training on explosive belts in areas far from the control of Iraqi forces. He notes that intelligence reports he saw, by virtue of his position, prove that over 25 suicide bombers were being trained until the summer of 2008 in detonating explosive belts in the caves of Tall Humrain north of Diyala.

The chief of Diyala operations, however, underplays the importance of prior training. He believes that using an explosive belt does not require real training. In most cases, "the woman wears, or is helped to wear the belt by a member of her family, and is taught how to push the detonator button." The operations chief notes here that "pushing the detonator button" does not bother Al-Qaeda. Most missions were carried out by remote control carried out by a person entrusted with following and observing the assigned bomber.

Faris Al-Obaidi, a social researcher does not go too far from General Al-Obaidi's idea. He sees that most girls who joined the suicide bombers' battalions had "prior combat experiences they gained from the family itself." Al-Obaidi supports his idea in that most of those he met among Al-Qaeda women told him that they used to listen at the dinner table to their fathers and brothers who are members of AL-Qaeda. They talked about "the details of battles fought by men, and how they transported and timed explosive devices," and sometimes made them manually inside the house.

Recruiting Strategy

Abu Osama Al-Iraqi, who separated from Al-Qaeda, believes that the organization used his control over his Iraqi followers, who were poorer and less educated. This way, the organization succeeded in encouraging these people to convince the family women to carry out suicide missions.

Abu Osama reveals that the recruitment process was done by spreading extremist ideas in the minds of targeted women, and depriving them from all communication tools that may help them find out what is happening outside the boundaries of the village. During that time, adds Abu Osama, it was not allowed for most village dwellers to have a television set or internet, which were considered taboos." The last stage of the recruitment process required repeatedly reciting Koranic verses that encourage Jihad, repeat stories about Jihadist fighters who were companions of the Prophet Mohammad, and women who made their families proud by carrying out suicide attacks against the infidels in many Iraqi cities.

Al-Iraqi notes that a woman with an explosive belt crossing a checkpoint easily invited Al-Qaeda to release some of its emirs to carry out recruitment activities at the beginning, before distributing these functions to women specialized in recruitment.

The most prominent of these emirs were Arab fighters brought by the former regime to Iraq on the eve of the American forces entering the country in 2003, including Abu Layla Al-Souri, Abu Abdallah Al-Daudi and Abu Mu'taz Al-Libi. These disap-

peared immediately after the regime fell, but soon came back to the forefront after Al-Qaeda declared the birth of the Iraq Islamic State in 2006.

Abu-Abdallah Al-Saudi, according to a prominent security official in Diyala "was the personality known best for recruiting women suicide bombers. His fate is yet unknown, but it is possible that he left Iraq between 2008 and 2009 when Al-Qaeda started to crumble as a result of the military operations against it." As for the others, according to the security official, they all died after succeeding in recruiting dozens of female suicide bombers."

In the beginning, Arab recruiters became active in areas such as Al-Miqdadiyah, Dalli Abbas, Ba'qouba, Bahraz, Jalloula'a and Qurrat Tabba. Most young girls, according to the former police chief, were recruited in these areas after being compelled to marry Al-Qaeda elements before becoming suicide bombers, whether by conviction or through threats to kill the father or members of the whole family.

The issue was not restricted to direct recruitment of women. Another method relied on recruiting young, mentally retarded girls, as happened in the dual bombing in a poultry market in New Baghdad area. It turned out that the suicide bombers were mentally retarded, and their explosives were detonated from a distance.

The operation was followed by an investigation which led to the detention of the manager at Al-Rashad Hospital for Mental Diseases, according to the spokesman for Baghdad

Operations, Qassem Atta. He said then that the arrest was made on the basis of information about the collaboration of the hospital manager with Al-Qaeda. Later on, it was clear that a number of the hospital patients actually disappeared without being reported.

Suicide Bomber Recruiters: Influential Women

The recruiters' banner moved from the "Arab emirs" to influential Iraqi women, who are mostly, as Osama Al-Iraqi says, old or middle-aged women. Some of them were known for their connections with murders or human trafficking before hooking up with armed groups.

This contradiction in approaches is explained by a security official in Diala governorate, who specialized in tracing women violence files in the governorate. She says that "money coming from prostitution or illegitimate trade, turned into "Islamic" money, paid by Al-Qaeda emirs to recruit suicide bombers inside the poor areas."

Diala operations chief says that the issue of recruiting women at that stage turned into what resembles "brokerage." The women doing the recruiting, in most cases, split the revenue with the suicide bomber's family. But this does not cancel, according to the security official, the fact that many suicide bomber recruiters were true believers in armed operations, or were pushed by revenge for the death of a son or a husband.

The woman in her fifties, known in Katon area (in Ba'qouba) as the "mother of martyrs", insisted that

"anyone who does not join Al-Qaeda to fight the infidels is an infidel," and pledged openly to wear an explosive belt and detonate herself in an infidel group of civilians, once she is absolutely sure that her five sons completed suicide missions against "infidels".

Nobody knows if this woman did carry out her mission or capitulated, because she disappeared since then, according to the residents of Katon area, who also talk about another woman in the area, who left her Iraq husband and married an Emir from Al-Qaeda who arrived from Syria, then detonated herself in the city market after succeeding in recruiting a number of young suicide bombers.

Umm Al Mo'minin

All attempts by this reporter failed to stop the most infamous female suicide bombers' recruiter from crying after she started to tell her "new" story about accusing her of recruiting 28 suicide bombers, who carried out suicide missions in popular markets, checkpoints and civilian areas.

Umm Al Mo'minin, who retracted her confessions previously broadcast on television, said that the accusation of "recruiting suicide bombers" was a lie started by "hateful" people who tried to blackmail her in order to buy the family house at a cheap price. She does not remember who these people were, yet she remembered, during an interview the names of all the young girls she said she recruited for suicide bombings. The secret behind remembering all these names, accord-

ing to her, is that they are all still alive, and that they will attend the court to prove her innocence from accusations she had to admit under torture.

The fifty years old woman was completely calm and collected as she named eight "fictitious suicide bombers" she summoned to court. She sounded confident that the presence of these women will most certainly change her sentence from "life" to "release from jail".

A prominent security official in Diala governorate does not share the optimism of Umm Al Mo'minin. The names she mentioned during the initial rounds of interrogations were of women who actually carried out suicide missions. The official explains Umm Al Mo'minin's confidence in innocence in that she manipulated the content of her confessions in every interrogation session. This is what most Al-Qaeda operatives normally do, as they are trained in this type of contradicting confessions, but have never succeeded in misleading the judiciary.

The Girls of Iraq

An official in the "Girls of Iraq" organization, established towards the end of 2007 to mitigate the phenomenon of "female suicide bombers" believes that female suicide bombers succeeded in compensating for the absence of Arab recruits since the beginning of 2009. Yet they were unable to continue recruiting more female suicide bombers as a result of a decrease in sectarian conflicts during that year, compared with 2006 – 2008.



The official, who refused to reveal her name for security reasons, says that the American military formed a counter movement titled "Girls of Iraq", which succeeded in balancing the odds with the "female suicide bombers." While recruiters managed to penetrate homes using various methods to convince young girls whose relatives were killed to carry out suicide missions, the "Girls of Iraq" carry out counter activities, summarized in analysing recruitment cases and contributing to undermining suicide bombings before they take place.

The official points out, in this respect, that her organization; "Girls of Iraq", succeeded in diagnosing a number of suicide networks. She expressed optimism that the end of years of sectarian violence will contribute to deprive female suicide bomber recruiters from the means to convince young girls to join again in the suicide bombing phenomenon.

Researcher Al-Obaidi agrees with the idea presented by the official in "Girls of Iraq." He also sees that the end of civil strife closed the road to Al-Qaeda and decreased its abilities to use the judicial file to continue its recruitment activities.

Al-Obaidi warns, however, that women left behind by Al-Qaeda men may turn into ticking time bombs, unless the state takes the initiative to implement real and effective rehabilitation programs. He calls for utilising moderate religious leaders and tribal traditions prevailing in most Iraqi cities to fortify women against ideas that may lead them to join the suicide

bombers if civil strife returned to Iraq. In this context, Al-Obaidi points that some Iraqi tribes provided safe havens to repented suicide bombers or were working at re-incorporating them into society without informing the authorities, in order to protect the reputation of these tribes.

A high-ranking officer at the Investigations Directorate of Salaheddin Governorate describes the process of containing a number of repented suicide bombers as the most successful means to confront the female suicide bombers phenomenon. Conservative tribal traditions and efforts by moderate religious men in the governorate have succeeded in convincing suicide bombers to repent. The female suicide bombers phenomenon in Salaheddin Governorate was restricted to the only mission carried out by "Suhayla", the suicide bomber in October 2008.

On November 17, 2008, the US military declared that 18 suicide bombers from Al-Qaeda surrendered to the authorities after local clergymen and relatives succeeded in convincing them to give up the idea of suicide bombing.

The statement did not reveal, at the time, the name of the city where the surrender took place, saying that a pledge was signed for reconciliation with their tribes.

A prominent security leader in Diyala governorate, however, believes that the female suicide bombers phenomenon may have receded over the past two years. It is most certain, however, that it will return the minute relations among the Iraqi society components worsen, as a result

of current political strife

The security chief says that intelligence information shows that dozens of female suicide bombers remain outside the light circle, or did not have the chance to carry out operations over the last period. These women may be "sleeping cells" that may wake up again if the government did not work at improving the economic and educational reality of the country very soon.

A researcher at the women prison said that "potential suicide bombers" have a human side as well, that was lost in the midst of the mayhem, and nobody remembers it again. Each female suicide bomber "was once a wife or a lover, led by the sectarian conflict, poverty, hunger and ignorance behind the bars." The researcher mentions the rosy dreams she heard resonating constantly among suicide bombers. They are mostly concerned with hopes to be out of jail and to return to normal life, and to connect with a lover and settle down in simple homes full of children.

Rania Al-Anbaki herself mentioned a similar rosy dream. She believes the court will rescind her life sentence and let her loose, to meet again with her husband, who is spending a 20 year sentence, after he proves his innocence.

Whether Rania Al-Anbaki's dream comes true or not, statistics show a major decrease in the number of suicide bombings carried out by women. This is attributed by researcher Al-Obaidi to the general improvement in the security file, and the relative improvement in the job mar-

ket in most areas that witnessed the expansion of the female suicide bombers.

The latest figures point out that the number of bombings carried out by women receded from 60 operations in 2008 to five in 2010, most of which could not be conclusively traced to women bombers.

Until the first half of 2011, security forces records did not document any confirmed case of a female suicide bombing.

Frames annexed to the Investigation Report Abu Mus'ab Al-Zarqawi

His real name is Ahmad Fadeel Nazzal Al-Khalayleh (1966 – 2006). He was born in Zarqa, Jordan (25 Kilometers north east of Amman). He travelled to Afghanistan in the 1980's to fight the Soviet Union forces there. He spent 7 years in jail after his return to Jordan, and was released after a Royal pardon in 1999. He travelled to Afghanistan again, and then to Iraq after the US invasion in 2003.

Al-Zarqawi established "Monotheism and Jihad", and was appointed by the leader of Al-Qaeda, Osama Ben Laden as the chief of Al-Qaeda in Iraq. Al-Zarqawi declared himself and his organization responsible for most suicide bombings in Iraq after 2003, and the organization aired videos of many slaughters it carried out. He planned the worst bombing his own country, Jordan, sending three male and one female Iraqis to carry out triple bombings that killed 60 people in three Amman hotels in November 2005.

Al-Zarqawi was killed in June 2006 in an American air raid

on his headquarters in the village of "Arab Shoukah" near Habhab (18 kilometers) north west of Ba'qoubah, the center of Diala governorate; the main headquarters of Al-Qaeda organization in Iraq.

Samarra'a Bombings

The bombing of the holy tombs in Samarra'a (125 kilometers north of the capital Baghdad), carried out by Al-Qaeda on February 22nd 2006 represented the start of "civil dissent" that pervaded throughout most Iraqi regions, killing tens of thousands of Sunni and Shi'ite Iraqis, comprising wide sectarian displacement operations that the government could not contain until the end of 2008.

The period between 2006 and 2008 was termed "the sectarian war", "the civil war" or "the sectarian violence", but the Iraqis continue to summarize it with the term: "the days of sectarianism."

Muriel Degauque

She is a Belgian suicide bomber (1967 – 2005) who converted from Catholicism to Islam when she was in her thirties. She wore the Niqab, after marrying Issam Gauris, whose father is Belgian and mother is Moroccan. He was well-known to the Belgian police for his long beard as an Islamist fundamentalist and militant.

Degauque and her husband crossed the Iraqi Syrian border and carried out a suicide bombing on November 9, 2005, in which she died and an American soldier was injured.

Sajida Al-Rishawi

She is an Iraqi suicide bomber who participated in one of the three bombings

targeting hotels in the Jordanian capital of Amman, killing 60 people.

Al-Rishawi survived after her explosive belt failed to detonate inside one of the targeted hotels, while her husband was killed when he detonated the belt he was wearing in the operation. Al-Rishawi was handed the death sentence in February 2007, but the sentence has not been carried out.

Widad's Ideological Life

The story of Widad, a 17-year-old suicide bomber, a relative of suicide bomber Rania Al-Anbaki and her cellmate, personifies the quadruplet of revenge, ideology, ignorance and poverty perfectly.

Widad, whose parents married her off when she was 13 years old to an emir from Al-Qaeda, who carries a Saudi nationality and graduated from a religious university there, comes from a radical family that joined Al-Qaeda early. She adopted the "anti-infidel ideology" under influence from her husband and brothers, three of whom carried out suicide bombings against security centres and civilian areas, resulting in the death and injury of dozens of "infidels."

Widad's mother (N.K.) undertook, for a substantial period of time, the recruitment of female suicide bombers in Diyala area, before an arrest warrant was issued in her name. She fled to an unknown place, according to the records of intelligence departments in Diyala governorate. Interrogator records reveal another face to Widad's story. She is the mother of two little girls who lived in jail



while she was serving her sentence. Widad confessed during early interrogation sessions, according to the women prison director that she agreed to marry the Saudi Al-Qaeda emir against a dowry of "blessing her suicide bombing", and that the promised mission was cancelled by the husband because of her early pregnancy with her first daughter. Her second daughter was born while she was in jail.

The radical ideology that Widad follows, her desire to avenge the blood of her "suicide bomber" brothers, the destitution of her female suicide bomber recruiter mother, her poverty and her radical social traditions pushed her in the end to join the ranks of suicide bombers.

The "Orphan" Salaheddin Mission

Soldier Mahmoud Faris, one of the survivors of the suicide bombing carried out by Suhayla, the 21 year old bomber in Salaheddin governorate, describes the moments of horror he and his colleagues experienced on the morning of 18 October 2008.

Faris recalls how she approached the checkpoint he was manning. A tall woman wearing the Niqab and carrying a plastic bag, trudged towards the soldiers, asking directions to the City Hospital. She did not stop, however, although the soldier repeatedly told her that the hospital was in the other direction.

At that moment, Faris says he saw a wire hanging from the neck-side of her garb. He immediately knew that the woman was rigged, and

shouted: "Suicide bomber", scrambling quickly towards the concrete barriers, and starting to shoot at her. She fell to the ground, and immediately detonated.

Investigations later revealed that Suhayla, the bomber came from a family whose members joined Al-Qaeda from early on. An authoritative source in the Salaheddin operations leadership who provided this information said that need and the seclusion circumstances she had suffered from may have pushed her to carry out the operation. After her brothers were arrested and her husband and one of her brothers were killed at the hands of an anti-Al-Qaeda group, Suhayla had to work in mud-brick making to support her five children and the children of her brothers who were killed or jailed, or joined the fight with Al-Qaeda. Her father recalls that his daughter suffered a great deal because people shunned her and her profession, because her family is connected to Al-Qaeda. "We used to live in dire poverty during the months that preceded the operation. We had no money to live off," adds Suhayla's father, who describes his fellow citizens as hard-hearted because they made their life difficult and pushed her to committing her suicide mission.

Diala: The Safe Haven of Al-Qaeda

Al-Qaeda chose Diala governorate, which extends from the border line adjacent to Iran in the east to the outskirts of Baghdad in the west, to be its safe haven after withdrawing from Al-Anbar governorate as a result of the tribal and military blows it

received there. The trend for violence, radical ideology, poverty and ignorance were all there when Al-Qaeda crowds arrived into Diyala in 2006, according to General Abdel Karim Al-Rubai'e, who was in charge of Diyala operations at the height of the sectarian violence.

The Girls of Iraq

It is a political organization that was established in 2007 with support and financing from the US military. It succeeded in deterring a number of attacks attempted by suicide bombers. The Daughter of Iraq do not reveal their identities in most cases, although they spread around checkpoints wearing the Niqab, performing their duties of searching women, instead of men who cannot search the bodies of women, according to tribal traditions.

Al-Sahwa Councils

Al-Sahwa Councils were established for the first time in Al-Anbar governorate in western Iraq in 2006 to stand up to Al-Qaeda control over many areas in the governorate. The experience was transferred to other governorates such as Salaheddin, Diyala, Ninawa and some areas in the capital Baghdad. Al-Sahwa, mostly led by tribal leaders fought alongside Iraqi forces, and together they succeeded in expelling Al-Qaeda elements from Al-Anbar at the beginning, and then most Iraqi cities.

This investigation was carried out under the supervision of colleague Mohammad Al-Rubai'e, in cooperation with ARIJ



About us

Nirij

About the Network of Iraqi Reporters for Investigative Journalism (NIRIJ)

The Network of the Iraqi Investigative Journalism (NIRIJ) is the first network of investigative journalism in Iraq, founded on 9th of May, 2011 by a number of professional investigative journalists and has been working since then on providing financial, editorial and advisory support for the investigative Iraqi journalists to perform detailed investigative reports based on searching for documented facts and supported by variety of sources who are strongly related to the investigating topic.

The main mission of NIRIJ,

in addition to performing detailed investigative reports, is improving the skills of the Iraqi investigative journalists and working on spreading the investigating culture in the Iraqi journalism, to be a regulatory device which diagnose the faults and follow financial and administrative corruption cases, indicate deviations and mistakes in the official and the civil behavior and the violations committed against the different society segments in Iraq. In this context, NIRIJ works on helping the investigative Iraqi journalists to choose detailed investigative reports that deal with financial and administrative corruption,

the community violations against women, children and the weak segments in a society like Iraq which witnesses a crucial transformation, in addition to working on completing the suppositions related to the investigative journalists' reports and funding the reports such as costs of translating documents, transportation, accommodation, laboratory tests, advices, printing, communications and all other requirements of a detailed investigative report.

Furthermore; NIRIJ directly supervises the investigative report in all its stages, helps in completing the report's structure, reviewing the re-



port for several times down to the last detail of editing and publishing the report in the Iraqi and Arabic media channels, in addition to translating it into Kurdish and English.

Meanwhile; NIRIJ works, through its annual and bian-annual plans, to provide training chances inside or outside Iraq for the Iraqi investigative journalists and preparing a number of the distinguished journalists to join NIRIJ in the future as supervisors or trainers.

NIRIJ has always worked on establishing a professional investigative culture in all aspects of journalism in Iraq ; it looks forward to establishing a unique investigative type to be a tool for detecting the hidden and disclosing facts

that may cause in a positive change in the Iraqi society.

NIRIJ presents a number of services to complete detailed reports that depend on a professional methodology and are based on disclosing facts to the public, the services include:-

1. Costs of transportation, accommodation and other necessary costs for meeting sources or visiting sites for field investigation.
2. Costs of obtaining documents and access to Iraqi, Arabic and universal databases.
3. Costs of the investigative reports' supervisors.
4. Costs of a legal expert to evaluate the investigative report statutorily and making sure that it is free from any statutory violation before it

is published in different media channels.

5. Providing statutory support for the journalist in the case of any legal accountability after publishing the report.

6. Translating the report into both Kurdish and English languages and vice versa.

7. Working on publishing the report in Iraqi, Arabic and universal media channels in addition to NIRIJ website.

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