SAYYID AMMAR AL-HAKIM: "Non-centralism is the viable option for solving administrative corruption and masked unemployment."

The return to dialogue via the anticipated national meeting can enable us to bypass the problems and defuse the present crisis. Iraq is now passing through a strangulating crisis, and we had warned several times about the political crises turning into political complexes if they are not treated and if no suitable solutions are put for them. Everyone must understand that the policy of destroying the other cannot be useful, nor can it benefit any group without exception, and we have no choice for settling the matters other than returning to the dialogue, to the dialogue table, to frank and serious discussions of the problems, obsessions, fears, solutions, anticipated and needed treatments for these problems. We work in one country. We belong to one homeland, to one nation, and to all movements, parties and political forces. Let the national forces know that they do not only represent themselves and their leaders but represent their masses, their people, and they must, when undertaking fateful decisions, look at this people, instill hope in it, enhance comfort and make it feel secure. Any step or position a group undertakes which does not help strengthen security and comfort on the street must be re-considered. An effort must be exerted to make sure that such positions are sound. We should not have made the image of heated disputes the one that is before our eyes so the Iraqi street may find its leaderships monitoring the scene with a great deal of tension, releasing harsh statements so they would break each other, exchanging accusations with each other. This worries the Iraqi street a great deal. The Iraqi situation which we nowadays live witnesses a status of disintegration and of retreat in its political reality. It has started undertaking dangerous turns. The regional situation is living a crisis-plagued and tense situation, and it is facing all options. In the shade of these circumstances, we should best return to the dialogue table, to calm, to realistic solutions that guarantee everyone’s interests and that bring comfort to everyone. It is not acceptable that the options should be sharp and unilateral because a break cannot treat such problems through which we now are living. If everyone calls for reform, what is the real reason that prevents everyone from sitting at the dialogue table, put their fears and demands on the table to deal with them, discuss them and reach realistic solutions for them?

We need honest intentions and a serious will from all groups and not talk in teh language of politics and politicians but speak the language of the homeland and of patriotism which enables us to bypass these problems and go forward to serve our citizens. This requires all groups without exception to defuse the present explosive crisis, to defuse it, and this cannot happen unless we return to the dialogue via the said anticipated national meeting to sit and submit the topics for treating them so we may achieve comfort for our citizens and so we may push our political reality with big steps forward.

We need mutual concessions from everyone so we may hold the stick in the middle and take Iraq to the shores of safety...

Iraq deserves from us to demonstrate flexibility in order to solve the problems so its ship may sail peacefully. The Iraqi nation, which has expressed the highest levels of loyalty and regards for its leaderships and national forces during harsh times and predicaments, deserves to see the political forces and challenging leaderships demonstrating mutual flexibility towards issues of concern. We need mutual concessions from everyone so we may hold the stick in the middle, and so we may take Iraq to the shore of safety; otherwise, if the groups keep sticking to their visions while everyone is ditched in a position and a certain attitude, this person says “I want this” and that person says “I want that,” such inflexible positions cannot represent a solution for the problems which we now find, and we will not reap from this harshness anything but more fragmentation, dark doubts, the country stagnating and so are the citizens’ interests as a whole. Therefore, we sense all of this with a great deal of regret and concern about what is going on, the statements which we hear and which have reached the degree of a war of words among political forces that move on the field. As long as the problems and mutual criticisms remain clear and known to all, and as long as we sit with a group, it narrates a long list of remarks about the other group. If the criticisms are wll known, and if the problems are defined, why do we not sit to discuss these problems and put together the solutions and reatments which bring comfort to everyone and which take us back to harmony, mending the cracks, love and the one team that serves the homeland and the citizen? The absence of realism in solving problems and our turning round the problems without going to their solutions, without treating them, will deepen these problems, manify their circles and nobody will benefit from such a status.

Any harm caused to the Arab-Kurdish relationship harms the one Iraq as a state, homeland and nation…

The Arab-Kurdish relationship is strategic and historic. It is not an issue which we imposed on the reality. Rather, it is a natural product of the unity of destiny, of the struggle, of the great joint history between the Arabs and Kurds in this good homeland. Any harm to this Arab-Kurdish relationship harms the existence of the one Iraq as a state, homeland and nation, and we have to be keen about safeguarding this Arab-Kurdish relationship. We emphasize not turning the political dispute into a dispute having ethnic or sectarian dimensions, and to keep it within its circle. The political struggle can be treated, but if we go to ethnic or sectarian struggles, the matters will greatly complicate and the solutions and treatmetns become much more difficult. We call for not risking this historic relationship by competing with convulsive statements, media exchanges and breaking the other here and there, for this relationship is not the property of the politicians. Rather, it is a relationship owned by the Iraqi people in its Arabs and Kurds. It is a relationship which was founded by the great leaders during lengthy decades of time, joint work and great effort exerted by the Arabs and Kurds. This relationship became stronger due to the pure bloods that spilled in order to strengthen freedom, honor and dignity for our Iraqi citizens in all their positions. We, therefore, wish politics and political positions be distanced from this Arab-Kurdish relationship and the same to all other

components because safeguarding the purity of the relationship among components, ethnicities, sects and creeds is the one that will safeguard Iraq and unite it. It will make us capable of transcend all standing problems. We cannot pretend to forget the bodily parts that intersected, the hands that held to each other by one jailer when they were hurled into cells and killed in mass graves, in Halabja, the Anfal and others. We cannot transcend all this history which is fraught and filled with common stances, common injustices, common challenges and big joint achievemetns. The blood of the Arab youths was mixed with the blood of the Kurdish yuths on the mountains of Kurdistan as they chanted the song of freedom, resisting the fiercest dictatorships of the present century represented by the Saddami regime that targeted us, Arabs, Kurds and Turkmen in all our trends and positions.

We will stand to protect all ethnicities, sects and religions in Iraq so we will be one group defending our common issues….

We are fellows of yesterday in the big predicament and in facing dictatorship, and we shall remain fellows, cooeprating with each other, allied to each other, no matter what the circumstances may be. We have to put an end to such problems and mutual criticisms so we may return to our anticipated and usual unity. We are the ones who stood during the struggle times, living the highest levels of cooperation and unity. Can politics divide us? We must not allow it to happen, and we will keep safeguarding the Arab-Kurdish-Turkmen relationship, the Shiite-Sunni relationship, the Islamic-Christian-Sabian-Yazidi and other relationships. We shall stand to protect all ethnicities, groups and creeds in this good homeland so we may become one group, one mold, standing and defending our common issues. Everyone must leave the contention zone and return to the dialogue zone, to understanding and dealing among these groups. Through this dialogue and understanding we, by the will of Allah Almighty, will be able to strengthen our unity and cohesion and safeguard all achievemetns which we have together scored and to safeguard the major national interests. So, beware of harmign these relationships, the historic and the important ones.

Non-Centralism is a constitutional reality and the only solution for creating a comprehensive and big growth renaissance in the country to push Iraq forward, to serve the homeland and the citizen…

We said many times that administrative non-centralism is not a call for fragmention and partion but for the unity of the homeland. Whoever wants the real unity must go to administrative non-centalism, to granting broad authorities to the governorates and local governments because these local governments are able to tackle the big problems from which our areas, citizens and residents of these governorates suffer. These will minimize the pressures on the federal government and help it avoid the consequences of procrastination and failure in carrying out the projects so the federal government in the center may remain distant from the local struggles and failures. This will enhance its authoritative and pivotal role, strengthen its role in uniting the homeland and its prestige among all governorates. When the federal

government in the center becomes party in these problems, it will lose this opportunity, but when it remains looking after the governorates, and whenever tehre is a dispute in the governorates and local governments, they go back to the central government seeking its arbitration, complaining to it and demanding solutions from it. The role of the federal government will then be enhanced and strengthened, and the local governments will assume their roles and opportunities to serve people and to solve their problems. Administrative non-centralism will help minimize the sensitivities towards the policies undertaken by the federal government in the center especially since these criticisms are linked to people's problems, services and daily concerns. Every day we hear many complaints about projects halted or procrastinating, and it is said that these probjects were contracted with federal ministries. The local government has no authority over these projects or contractors in charge of executing these projects. So, why should the federal government interfere and become a party in such skirmishes and accusations? It is better it remains looking after all Iraqis, giving the opportunity to all local governments to rise with such big tasks. We emphasize the need to grant broad powers to governorate councils and local governments as they have been ratified by the constitution without any deficiency. This will help mobilize the energies and explode the great and huge abilities. It will give the chance to the Iraqi minds that spread in all these governorates to work, provide and compete. This will help the realization of serving the homeland and the citizen. Yet we see that many service ministries in the center have become big, over-weight and suffering from routine, bureaucratic management, nepotism, favoritism, partisanship and corruption in contracts, causing a lot of talk from members of the parliament and the news media. Some of these ministries lack quality competencies, abilities and energies that enable them to achieve big anticipated projects. They now procrastinate about serving the governorates and meeting their obligations towards the Iraqi governorates; so, what is the need for all of this cycle which is full of problems and criticisms? Why do we not permit the governorate councils to move, build and compete among themselves as the government in the center monitors, evaluates and verifies the accuracy of performance and method? It is now very difficult for the citizen to complete a transaction in such ministries. The Iraqi citizen is the one that primarily pays the price when he wants to complete an administrative transaction or solve a problem. He has to spend long time in the lobbies of ministries as this and that takes him and throws him to the other, and he keeps spending time and effort without his problems find solutions. So, why are residents of our various Iraqi governorates demanded to come to Baghdad and go to the ministries to solve their problems? Why do we not give this power to the local governments to solve people's problems in their own areas of residence. This is a basic issue which we must get to know. The local governemtns are also the ones that pay the price as a result of thee policies, when the projects procrastinate, when they stand before the Iraqi street and citizens and are remonstrated with due to not completing the projects. Many of these projects are outside their specializations. Administrative non-centralism is the successful option for solving many problems which we now face in the country, and on their top stand the problems of corruption, bureaucracy, administrative backwardness and masked

unemployment which we find rampant and spread in many of our ministries. Non-centralism is not an option which we accept or reject; rather, it is a constitutional reality and the only solution for creating a comprehensive and great growth renaissance in the land in order to push Iraq forward to serve the homeland and the citizen. Times will prove the accuracy of this vision about which we talked for so long, reminding others of it, pointing out that the constitutional articles emphasize this fact. But we, at the same time, emphasize the necessity of respecting the full powers of the federal government so it will be strong and capable of safeguarding the unity of the homeland, and this does not intersect with administrative non-centralism.

We appreciate sending our young men and women on scholarships to the world's universities… What is needed is not politicizing the scholarship dossier and to adhere to justice among the Iraqi governorates.

The Iraqi parliament has set aside in its budget for this year the sum of 480 billion dinars to send ten thousand young men and women on academic scholarships to renown universities in the world to learn and to study. The ministry of higher education played an important role in convincing the parliament of undertaking this path. We thank and appreciate the parliament and the ministry of higher education for this good effort and large allocation to send ten thousand young men and women from among the Iraqis to learn at the best international universities in one year. It represents five times the budget allocated for the past year, 2011. this is an important step forward; it is a step in the right direction. Building the individual, developing the energies, capabilities and competencies is the only way to look forward to a bright future for our citizens, one in which we set out in the light of modern technologies and great scientific development which the world witnesses nowadays. We have to take these international experiments and become familiar with them, and it is not a shame if we become familiar with what others are doing. We have to start from where others have ended, so we have to send our minds and youthful energies to familiarize themselves with the latest schientific developments especially since the long scientific isolation which was imposed on Iraq in the early 1980s and beyond 2003, when the past regime monopolized the scholastic scholarships for groups connected with the ruling party, preventing others from benefitting from these scholarships. But we now are before a real opportunity to push the youthful minds and energies to benefit from such big opportunities to participate in Iraq's reconstruction and prosperity. Such a step is a big message to all Iraqi youths to compete and try to be among those who grab this opportunity, go and study in the most important international universities then return to Iraq with his knowledge, expertise and big experiences to offer them to his countrymen. But the ministry of higher education is now before a big responsibility and a great challenge about how it will place transparent and fair ways that ensure true opportunities for the Iraqi energies and competencies so no youth would imagine that he had the competency and the ability but was deprived of this opportunity to be among those winners of scholarships. The mechanisms must be transparent and clear and they give the chance to the competencies and nobody is given a

distinction on another based on politics. The dossier of scholastic scholarships abroad must not be politicized, so it will thus show the truth of our plan before the others, and we thus achieve true justice when we send the most qualified. Also, justice must be served in distributing these scholarships among the Iraqi govrnroates according to th population density so we do not find one government which is deprived while another is bloated. We want true justice so these opportunities may be distributed among all governorates. All our citizens and youths must have the opportunity to benefit from this matter.

Withdrawing the army and replacing it with police forces inside Baghdad is a step in the right direction…

An announcement has been made about the start of withdrawing units of the Iraqi army that are stationed inside the capital, Baghdad, to its outskirts according to an order by the general command of the armed forces so they may be replaced by Iraqi police forces. It is a sound step and serves the right direction. The army has to return to the barracks to keep itself busy training, developing, interior building and readiness if we one day need it to repel a danger or to meet an external enemy that targets the homeland, God forbid, or due to domestic incidents, God forbid, somewhere that require the interference of the army to solve them without its becoming party in pressuring the citizens. What is common in all the world is that the police service is the one that provides security inside cities while the army is found at barracks getting ready to repel dangers. We appreciate the great effort eerted by the brave members of the Iraqi army during the past years for having stood and faced terrorism, for supporting their countrymen and seriously participating in bringing about security. We wish them success in their new mission and hope that they will exert their efforts for development, preparedness and building in order to be fully ready to defend Iraq if need be. We are hopeful that the Iraqi police nowadays shine and express great abilities and energies in bringing about security, in strengthening stability, in defending the citizens, their security, possessions and lives. In reality, in the new circumstance, lightening checkpoints, opening roads, removing unnecessary concrete blocks and other measures represent a good message to the residents of the beloved capital, Baghdad, and we hope these policies will continue so all good Iraqi governorates will benefit from them.

Postponement of the “Najaf as Capital of the Islamic Culture for the Year 2020”: a need for studying the reasons…

An announcement has been made about the postponement of the “Najaf as Capital of the Islamic Culture for the Year 2020” plan which was scheduled to the year 2020. It is an unfortunate report. It was an important opportunity to introduce the reality, history, civilization and intellectual contributions of Najaf in serving man and in serving our Islamic reality for hundreds, even thousands, of years. It was an opportunity to introduce Najaf’s scholars, dignitaries and the deep thought that set out of Najaf to cover broad areas of the world. Despite the big allotments that were earmarked so Najaf would wear an appropriate outfit and

become capable of hosting this great event, we are very sorry about this matter and we hope that the reasons must be studied that deprive Iraq and its areas of shining, of introducing itself, history and civilization to the whole world.