

SAYYID AMMAR AL-HAKIM: “Basra, due to the resources it has, is qualified to be Iraq’s economic capital.”



Initiative of Basra as Iraq’s economic capital indicates belief in the necessity to improve the country’s economic reality...

We were honored last week by visiting our people in fragrant Basra governorate, capital of goodness. Basra enjoys a special place in our hearts and consciences; all cities of Iraq have their places in our hearts, but Basra is distinguished in being the capital of goodness, in being the source of outgiving for all Iraqis, from the north of Iraq to its south, from its east to its west. Basra is all outgiving for all Iraqis. Yet it has not been awarded the opportunities and the needed help to earn even a portion of its good things for building and reconstructing it so it may be in the level where it can continue its generous outgiving for all Iraqis. This is a serious injustice recorded in favor of the people of Basra more so than all other governorates. This is so because those who give and who do not get anything back, though little, feels a great sense of bitterness. Anyone who moves on the basis of justice and equity will also sense such bitterness: “Is the reward of goodness not goodness?” We have not rewarded the people of Basra. We have not reciprocated goodness with goodness. It is time for the people of Basra to get a portion of its good things in building this unique, good and generous governorate, generous in its good and forgiving people, generous in its huge riches, deeply-rooted civilization, it deserves all Iraqis stretch the hand of love, support and backing. The initiative which we have launched in regarding Basra as the capital of goodness, as Iraq’s economic capital, did not come out of a particular political background and agenda; rather, it came out of belief that the country’s economic reality has to set out, to rise, and the beginning of the setting out is from Basra governorate. Many global experiences in countries that witnessed quantum leaps in their development set out of a city that has a strategic depth. They started with that city, setting out of it to cover all countries. I do not wish to go to lengths in reviewing many world countries in this regard; Basra is the governorate for Iraq’s strategic, economic and development depth. If we want true development in Iraq, we have to start it from Basra. Based on this background, we set out this initiative: Basra for Iraq is like the heart for the body: The heart pumps blood in the veins, granting strength and energy for man.

Basra pumps 70% of Iraq’s budget and financial resources, awarding this homeland the strength and the chance to keep going, to stay alive, to progress forward. We all realize that no matter how politics centralize, and no matter how the State institutions diversify, they are unable to live and to continue except through the financial support and the presence of big revenues that push the political plan and the country forward. If Basra represents this big share of Iraq’s revenues, thrust and ability to continue, it has to be awarded a special care, and it has to be a basic economic axis for the country. Seldom do we find a governorate that has this extent of features and distinctions which we find in Basra.

Basra is Iraq's only water outlet. It contains in its fertile soil more than 80% of the proven oil reserves till now, and it has a big gas reserve with which no other governorate can compete. It provides 70% of Iraq's budget and revenues. It embraces a large population that has made it one of the largest Iraqi governorates. It is the place where the Tigris meets the Euphrates in order to form Shatt al-Arab so it may provide its good things to the entire Gulf.

Basra embraces the largest area of Iraq's date trees which represents the symbol of this good homeland. Basra is Iraq's gate overlooking the Gulf, and it is the strategic location the borders of which are shared with three good neighboring countries: Iran, Kuwait and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as well as three main governorates: Thi-Qar, Maysan and Muthanna. Ultimately, all these characteristics and qualities qualify Basra to be an economic capital, a capital of goodness for this good and honored homeland. Therefore, this project is in full harmony with the basic strategy for building the economy and for the development of our homeland. We cannot build a sound and healthy economy without looking at the capital of goodness and without giving it the pivotal status which it deserves from the economic standpoint.

I call on my brothers in the National Alliance and in the Kurdish Alliance to adopt and support this initiative...

Dear ones! I, through you, appeal to all good political forces and parliamentary blocs to stand, defend and adopt this project and to provide assistance to Basra as the prelude for a big economic launch which Iraq in its entirety witnesses distantly from any sensitivity or bargaining: This project represents a portion of the gratitude for Basra's brimful outpouring to all Iraqis. No matter how viewpoints and political opinions divide us, the true plans to build Iraq are the ones that can bring us together. We must converge on them and set out from them. I call on the parliamentary Muwatin (citizen) bloc to adopt this topic and to start talks with all other blocs. I also call on my brothers in the National Alliance to seriously look at this project, adopt it on the level of the National Alliance and keep in touch with the other respectful parliamentary blocs. A special request I direct to beloved Kurdistan which we all know about its passion for Basra which is no less than its passion for Arbil, Sulaymaniyya or Dohuk, to make a stance and to emphasize the level of their patriotism and Iraqi identity, their great concern about Iraq, all of Iraq, including all the common ordeals, pains and worries, when they extend a helping hand, when they support such a project and stand with fragrant Basra, the Basra of goodness, in this project. Basra stood with them in a lengthy history with its outgiving, riches and resources.

I call on representatives of Iraqi governorates, especially Nineveh, Anbar and Salahuddin, to support this initiative...

Dear ones! Allow me, also through you, to direct my call to the representatives of various

Iraqi governorates, particularly Nineveh, Anbar and Salahuddin governorates, to adopt this project, to work so it will be a project for all Iraqis because the background in regarding Basra as an economic capital serves the common interest and is connected to the interests of all Iraqis and not to the interest of only the people of Basra. I also hope that the educated people, the thinkers, the specialists, the news media and everyone who has the ability to have a vision and a role in this process to take part in maturing this project and pushing it forward so we will thus have achieved a big patriotic gain for the people of Basra and for all Iraqis by regarding Basra as the capital of the Iraqi goodness. I am bound to profusely thank and to express my gracious praise of the honest people of Basra for their generous hospitality and good sentiments which we won during this visit.

Recent crimes in Haditha and Tallafar demand getting out of reaction to the position of action and surprise in clear security plans...

We have witnessed a serious security escalation in a series of terrorist and criminal operations that covered the Iraqi governorates. The attack in honored Haditha city represented a bloody massacre that claimed the lives of tens of our military and civilian citizens who were martyred or wounded. One who becomes acquainted with the details of this incident, the timing of this criminal operation and the lengthy period that this heinous crime took in broad daylight and with its details can point out that these details indicate a red light that must be lit before all of us and a serious dangerous prospect that the breaches can reach this level in our Iraqi cities. This prompts all of us to adopt a responsible stance to thank the security services for their efforts and, on our part, to provide questions that are articulated by our Iraqi countrymen: What are the security plans prepared for such breaches? Till when will the bleeding continue like that? When is it possible for the Iraqi citizen to feel assured that security and stability are present, that he can move, go and come from his work without being exposed to such massacres?

Now, before we also meet, we came to know about another incident, a big massacre that took place in the beloved city of Tallafar which is dear to our hearts. Every day we can hear about scores of martyrs and of the wounded falling here or there. This requires that we come out of the position of reacting to that of acting, to taking the initiative, to adopting the surprise element within clear security plans that cause the terrorists to miss the chance to harm our countrymen in such a savage way. We denounce and condemn these criminal operations that have taken place in Hadith, Tallafar and any other area of Iraq, and we hope the security services will bear their full responsibility to put an end to this daily suffering of our citizens. We have to undertake a lengthy stance before the needed plans to protect Iraqi borders in the shade of the confusion which we witness in the domestic security reality, in the transformations, and in the severity of the struggle which we witness in the region that surrounds us. We have to undertake real steps and draw plans that ensure the protection of the borders against the infiltration of terrorists and the transfer of weapons from and to Iraq.

This represents a danger to the domestic Iraqi security and taking lightly the lives of the citizens, and it may form a danger to other nations and countries from which weapons come out or in which weapons enter across the Iraqi borders. Iraq has always stressed its good neighborliness policy and non-interference in the domestic affairs of other countries as well as its desire that it finds other countries not interfering in its own affairs. Holding the borders and controlling this movement will elad to an important development in the security reality, and the chances for maneuver and swift movement of terrorist networks, in the way about which domestic and global security reports discuss, will minimize. Therefore, we support all measures mentioned by the crisis cell in holding the borders, and we hope there is a doubling of intelligence effort that puts an end to these bloody attacks and to the daily suffering of our countrymen.

General amnesty law... We have to identify the innocent so they may come out and go home, and we must be reserved about the criminals so we will not cause more killing and destruction...

These days, the general amnesty law is being discussed in the parliament for ratification. The ratification of this law requires adopting a precise balance between two realities to which we must attract attention and which we must adopt: The first reality is that there are innocent citizens against whom no indicting evidence has been proven, and they have been living in prisons for months, and some of them for years. When a question is raised about why they are detained, the answer comes that they are suspects, but there are no indicting evidences against them. How do we tackle these suspicions, and for how long will these stay there till these suspicions are no more? Why should an innocent person bear all this suffering together with his family, reputation and conditions so he is kept in prisons? As some reports talk, their numbers are many, not few, and this puts us before a legitimately patriotic responsibility: We must not permit one innocent person to stay in jail all these months and years without getting a chance for release and return to his family and home. This law can represent a prelude for dealing with this problem, with this bitter reality which we have for so long been living in our homeland. The second reality is the big worry about taking advantage of this law to get people who are involved in abusing our citizens out of prison, people whose hands were immersed in the blood of Iraqis, people who in one way or another took part in cutting to pieces people's parts on the road in these bloody massacres that take place in all parts of Iraq. This is what security reports emphasize: Whenever a large number of prisoners and detainees are released, the pace of terrorism escalates. How can we identity the innocent so they may get out and return to their homes and families while being reserved about those criminals so we may not cause more bloodshed, killing and destruction in the country?

Our dear ladies and gentlemen members of the parliament have before them to conduct the needed precise balancing act in passing this law in addition to putting true restrictions that ensure that the abusers and those involved in shedding the Iraqi blood will not be released, that there will be a chance to release all the innocent from the Iraqi prisons on the sideline of

this law.

We support undertaking strict measures against opportunists and interest seekers who forge certificates. But there is a segment that has spent its life serving this people or being kept at dark cells which prevented them from continuing their education. I wish to submit an important and a basic subject. I hope my dear members of the parliament will take it into consideration as they make up their mind about this law in order to lift injustice and inequity from an important segment of our Iraqi society that is now facing a serious crisis as a result of some measures which take place: the segment of the Mujahidin and of the political prisoners who sometimes are charged of using wrong documents to reach positions of social service in some government offices. We respect knowledge and scholars, and we stress the importance of awarding competent people and those who bear high degrees with jobs in the government and its administration. It is a non-negotiable issue. We emphasize the need to undertake strict and tough measures against the opportunists and interest seekers who forge certificates in order to ascend to positions and steal them from the competencies, from the Iraqi minds. We do not support any opportunist or interest seeker who wants to profit at the expense of Iraqi minds, energies, cadres and competencies. This issue, this matter, without doubt, has to be dealt with strictly. But there is a segment that spent its life serving this people. One may have spent ten, twelve or twenty-five years in dark cells or on fighting fields, in the marshlands or in some areas where he faced the Saddami regime so we may live the freedom which we now live. Had it not been for such sacrifices and bloods, had it not been for such stances, we would not have been able now to live this freedom. All the gentlemen officials who now assume various positions of responsibility in the Iraqi State would not have sat in these seats without these folks' sacrifices. The talk about these brave, heroic and honorable Mujahidin is about honest patriots who for so long undertook their stance and offered their lives cheap for the same of Islam and of Iraq. Do these people not deserve that we stand by their side and respect all these years during which they sacrificed for the sake of our people, offering everything precious and invaluable for our people? Is it not out of fairness that we should appreciate their years of true service not in a university but on the fields and arenas, in big sacrifices which they offered, or in dark cells where they were persecuted, causing them to waste their youth, preventing them from continuing their studies at universities?

Great admiration of the stance of Kurdistan Province from people who offered such sacrifices...

I look with great admiration at the stances of Kurdistan Province from the likes of these who made sacrifices in the Province where we find honoring, veneration and appreciation, granting them the appropriate privileges that are harmonious with their history and sacrifices. But in other areas of Iraq, I am sorry to say, we did not deal in a suitable and appropriate way with these dear ones. Perhaps some of them were forced to condition their reality with the governmental restrictions and measures, such as submitting some document so he could resolve his problem and take a course after having wasted his youth in prisons and cells or on

battlefields. We now come to pursue these, leaving alone the opportunists and interest seekers. Some political prisoners who spent more than ten years in Saddam's prisons are now pursued by the security services on account of a sheet of paper which they submitted during exceptional and well known circumstances.

My conscience does not permit me to stand idly by and silent facing big injustice to which these who made sacrifices in Basra are being exposed...

Fairness is very good. I am familiar with the tax which I have to pay for talking about this subject, but my conscience does not permit me to stand idly by and silent before a big injustice to which these who offered sacrifices in Basra are being exposed. When I went for the Fatiha commemoration in a distant Mujahidin village , people gathered around me and said, "Sayyid Ammar, in this village we used to shelter the Mujahidin for long years, and we used to take our own food and give it to the Mujahidin so they would continue their Jihad. Now, nine years later, our homes are made of mud just as they used to be during the time of Saddam Hussein, and our roads are dusty, just as they used to be during the time of Saddam Hussein, with the exception of one village. When Saddam was chased at the time prior to assuming the presidency in well known circumstances, he ran away and hid in that village for two nights. When he became President of the State, eh said: Go and build that village that sheltered me for two nights. Saddam builds a village that sheltered him for two nights, whereas you, politicians, leaders of the country, whom we sheltered for years, do not think about building this village."

I felt greatly embarrassed, and I felt that we are falling short of fulfilling our duties towards our people. I say to my dear members of the parliament that the nation that is not grateful towards its heroes, sons, brave ones, and the nation that does not stand and bear the responsibility towards those who sacrificed for its sake..., these steps will result in a negative culture, and we will be the first to be burnt by its fire. We have to be fair and we must not be carried away by bargains and slogans. We are the ones who call for the need to reward competent people. We are the ones who advocate chasing those who forge certificates. But we are the ones who call for taking into consideration the years of imprisonment, sacrifice and Jihad during the years of university education by a number of heroes of this nation who stood and made these epics. We have to include such cases in the general amnesty law so that such people will not remain under the penalty of legal pursuit, homeless, running from one place to another.

Present Year: Year of major electoral entitlements of four permanent members of the Security Council...

Dear ones, this year is the year of major electoral entitlements. Four permanent members of the Security Council have elections on the highest levels. Also, each of them has elections for some regional networks. This will affect the drawing of the general global policies. This will

affect the general atmosphere in the region and the world. We noticed that the Russian elections, which will be followed by the elections in Russia, China and the United States, and also after the Russian elections, we will wait for the elections in the Ukraine and Kazakhstan and its effect on stability in Russia and on the global oil and gas markets. Also, there will be Chinese elections for the congress of the Chinese Communist Party. Reports stress that these elections will witness increasing transformations in the Chinese leadership which will lead to renewed policies for the Chinese leadership which is ruled by the Communist Party. Moreover, there are elections in Hong Kong and for their effects on the Chinese reality and politics in the region. The French elections: France will witness presidential elections in April and parliamentary elections in June. This will affect the European Union network due to the clout which France wields in this network. There will be American elections in November of this year, and with them there will be elections in Venezuela and Mexico. The outcomes of these elections will be reflected on the American arena. All these major global changes can push us to draw new policies in the next four years.

Elections on the regional level... We hope Iran will have an effective and positive role in its regional relations, especially with Iraq...

On the regional level, we witnessed the Yemeni elections, and we get ready to monitor the presidential elections' impacts especially on Iraq. In Egypt and in Libya, there have been elections. And we witnessed the parliamentary elections in Iran which will be followed one month later by the presidential elections in the Islamic Republic of Iran. It was noticeable in the Iranian elections that the participation rate exceeded 64% in a regime that continues for more than three decades and is subject to sanctions, big regional and international pressures, yet the people keep rallying round the leadership in Iran. The participation rate is one of the basic criteria that express the success of States and the extent of the nations rallying round these States. Therefore, we think that these elections have proven that there is an important development Iran is witnessing in more harmony and cohesion in facing the sanctions imposed on it by the region and the world. We congratulate the Iranian people and leadership on the success of these elections and hope for more stability and success for Iran within the integrated region, and that it will have an effective, constructive and positive role in its domestic building and regional relations, especially the relationship with Iraq, its neighbors which respects and loves Iran and is keen about exchanging joint interests with this good country.

International Women's Day... Natural entitlement for a basic component and pillar of the society

March 8th is identified as the International Women's Day, a memory which deserves one to stop at it and to be interested in it. The International Women's Day is a natural entitlement for a basic component and pillar of the society that has a big role in building the society. Woman is half the society. Looking after her, becoming familiar with her concerns and suffering and

working towards providing the opportunities and scopes for her setting out represent an important prelude in the general social construction. We have to work hard to coin a new role for woman that harmonizes with the major changes witnessed by our political system, constitution and the position of woman in the Iraqi constitution. Woman's role must shift from one of a follower to the role of a partner, an integrator, from the role of the nominal partner to one of a true partner that takes its opportunity, position and role in building this good homeland. Also, woman bears a big responsibility in providing these atmospheres by demanding her rights and defending her role in our society. She will find many who stand behind her as she makes this fair demand.

Woman nowadays stands before a big challenge. Some look at woman as being a sin, that her presence corrupts, and that she must stay distant from the fields of challenge. It is a close-minded and unacceptable attitude. Some others find her to be a commodity under the slogan of woman's rights, desiring to make her a merchandise which he uses to stir feelings and sentiments which may be distant from sound human procedures. This is what is advocated by some strict secular schools. Neither that is acceptable nor this one. What is right is that the humanity and the dignity of woman, her sound role as a human being, is that she must stand and assume her opportunities and roles. She is not a commodity, nor is she a sin. Rather, she is a basic element and pillar of the society. Islam did not close the door before woman, enabling her to assume the roles, the big and important opportunities, and this is what we find in the first period of the Islamic history when woman assumed leading and pivotal roles in the society. Woman's role declined after that; it did not progress, and it was not strengthened in the desired way.

Iraqi woman scored many achievements and feats... And she suffers acutely

Woman in Iraq has scored many achievements and feats, and she became the object of praise in the Arab world and among observers in general, but she also has big suffering, and we must stand beside the Iraqi woman as she suffers. Talk about 10% of Iraq's women being widows, 38% of them are unemployed, big numbers that need sound policies to be put in place to deal with these phenomena. Also, woman is subjected to mistreatment, to forced marriage, persecution, family and social violence in one way or another. "Iraq's Aziz One" adopted an initiative to make the first day of the month of Safar as an Islamic Day for opposing violence against woman. The official statistics point out to 987 cases of suicide by Iraqi ladies during the past three years. It is a terrifying figure, a big number. As it seems from the reports, the main background is violence and the psychological and demeaning pressures to which women are exposed in the environment in which they move. This puts us before a big responsibility in this regard.

Compensating victims of terrorism and military mistakes: A new onset for honoring martyrs' families...

Finally, after a long wait, the first installment of compensations of victims of terrorism and

military mistakes who are covered by Law No. 20 for the year 2009 is launched so these people may be granted a plot of land, a grant and a retirement salary. It is a step in the right direction. We appreciate the activating of this law which has been idled since 2009, and we regard it as a good start to honor families of martyrs who were exposed to many ordeals during the past years when they lost their bread earners and kept fending for themselves, struggling for survival and for securing living opportunities. Our hope is great that this process will continue, that the other installments will be paid quickly in order to restore the smile to the faces of those widows and orphans from among the victims of terrorism. We plead to Allah, the most Praised, the most Exalted, to grant success to all of us so we may perform our duties and tasks, and so that we may find this good homeland outfitted in a way which all Iraqis anticipate.