

TEXT OF SPEECH BY SAYYID AMMAR AL-HAKIM DURING HIS ATTENDANCE OF THE ANNUAL GRADUATION CELEBRATION FOR BAGHDAD UNIVERSITY'S MEDIA COLLEGE



In the Name of Allah, the most Gracious, the most Merciful. Praise belongs to Allah, Lord of the Worlds, and Allah blesses our Master Muhammed and his pure Ahl al-Bayt. Gentlemen deans, respectful professors, good brothers and sisters: Assalamo Alaikom, the mercy of Allah and His blessings. It is a happy and precious opportunity to stand anew to talk to you, dear respectful young men and women at the Baghdad University and under the banner of media on Iraq's land.

Youths, the media message and Iraq's worries

We have to quickly point out to the "Youths and their roles, the media and its message and Iraq and its worries." How can we in a hurry absorb these three labels? The youths are the hope, the energy, the ones with the ambition. The youths are the ones who are adorned with courage, will, fervor, keenness and zeal about the homeland. The youths are those who are not permitted by big interests in this life's details and commitments which may hinder their enthusiasm for the greater interest, the wider scope and the greatest which is: the tent of the dear homeland. You find the youths enthusiastic, excited, ambitious, grateful, going straightforward with a big will desiring to make an achievement, willing to offer something for their people and homeland. This is the characteristic of youths everywhere. Since these attributes are those of manliness, of man when he shines; therefore, we find the youths are those who assume the highest and the most important positions. Nowadays, when we ask: What is the best that one hopes for? We will be answered that it is Paradise. And when we review the texts relevant to the Shari'a, we find out that they talk about Paradise being the abode of only the youths, so much so that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) once teased an old woman, telling her that there is no place for the elderly in Paradise, so she wept and was in pain, then he made her happy, telling her that she will be among the residents of Paradise but she will not enter it as an old woman, that even the old woman will turn into a youth in Paradise. This is evidence that Paradise is the best of all places. It should be for the youths. This is a sign pointing out to the role of the youths, to their spirit and status. Al-Hassan and al-Hussain are the masters of the youths of residents of Paradise. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) is quoted as having said that the residents of Paradise are all young. Also, the companions of al-Mahdi (ú) are all young, not elderly. Those who carry out the radical change on earth, the great transformation witnessed by man, those who shoulder this project, those who rally round al-Mahdi who will carry out the comprehensive reform process, are all youths. Some texts tell us that some elderly folks objected to our Imams (ú). They said, "Where is our place?" The answer was: "Yes, there is a role for the elderly but similarly to the measure of salt in the wood, the kohl in the eye." This is the measure, role and area of the elderly in the reform process, in the great change. Get to know your worth, loved ones, your measure, your opportunity, these great and huge opportunities which can become available when the youths are familiar with their position in this life, with their energy,

role and available opportunity. You have to look after your youths because opportunities pass like summer clouds. Perhaps one may not get to know the value of youth, the entitlements of this important phase and life's responsibilities. If one procrastinates, if he is upset, becomes puzzled, keeping himself busy with trifling..., he probably put cinder blocks for successive procrastinations that will continue for the rest of his life:

1. Care about neatness. There is interest and focus by the Shari'a-related texts that a young man must take care of his appearance. Renouncing life and yearning for the Hereafter does not mean that you should not care. No! One must take care of his youth. Notice this narrative about the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ): "One who admires his youth must look after himself." One who knows the value of his youth, who likes colors and appropriate clothes, this is part of one's personality. We cannot separate ourselves from the reality. We cannot be radiant and distinctive in reality without being so in our appearance. And we cannot take care of the inside without completing the outside. One must be honest with himself, becoming his own friend, appearing in public in real outfits, so the process of twinning, fusion and the process of meeting both the outside and the inside, when one demonstrates all of this to others in movements, stillness, conduct and the reality in which he lives with his Lord..., such is the appearance. 2. Focus on moral structure; without it, one feels isolated, estranged. There should be a trend to focus on moral building, on spirituality, no matter how one shines in other fields. But if he is morally empty, he feels estrangement and isolation, his conduct is not normal. There is a story about a big millionaire who reached the stage of youth and who drank poison in order to commit suicide, but he started feeling that there was no place in the world which he did not reach, that he had nothing to do and simply reached the finish line; there was no taste for this life in him. He does everything and realizes all material dreams, yet he reaches the moment of committing suicide by his own choice. The doctor asked him, "Are you sure that you will drink this liquid which contains death in it?" He said, "Yes. I have decided with full awareness to drink the glass." He took the glass, drank its contents and was gone. So, the moral side of man is the one that gives the heat, the vitality, the incentive to man so one would continue and face a status of comfort: "Indeed, in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest." If this status affects man, no matter how big the material obstacles may be, and so are the educational and social problems..., one can overcome all of them because he lives a bliss in his reality when he is connected with the Absolute, Allah, Praise and Exaltation belong to him, and such is the ethical and moral structure. 3. We badly need a moral network that enables us to feel strong. We badly need a moral network that makes us feel strong, happy, at ease and confident. These matters do not

happen if one lives a status of moral vacuum between himself and his Lord. Notice what Imam al-Sadiq, peace with him, says: "If one recites the Qur'an while being young and a believer, the Qur'an will mix with his flesh and blood." If he is old, it does not necessarily mean that it will leave the same impact. This purity, cleanness and goodness of the heart, which is available with the youths, makes the latter interact with these concepts and facts: "And Allah will place him in the company of the good messengers," with the great ones, the friends of Allah, the righteous. A step made by a youth is equivalent to a thousand by an elderly. The path is short for you, loved ones, and "The Qur'an will answer for him on the Judgment Day." The thing that one fears the most is when he stands on the Sirat (path) and the embarrassing questions start. This is the most difficult. We sometimes worry a great deal while going through examinations. That will be the final exam: Paradise or the Fire. He will be asked the most difficult questions, and the Qur'an will answer for him because he learned it by heart; it is the Book of Allah and it can provide the best of answers. Look at the right answers, at the safety of one's soul, at directing attention towards Allah, the most Praised One. It is a step which one undertakes then goes on, receiving these great impacts. Why do we focus on the moral aspect for the youths? We do so because the strength of the youth makes them rush towards illicit desires and fantasies which harm him, and they harm his moral network. Conditions come to him in his strength and youth. He intends to commit a sin, rushing towards it and, God forbid, commits it, then he sits to blame himself, to weep over his sins when repentance is of no avail. The more pure one is, the more immune he is to falling into prohibition.

4. Focus on scientific building in the youthful phase in order to re-produce what one receives. Scientific and informational building in one's youthful phase is ardent, capable of receiving in the right way, so a youth analyzes, develops and delves deeply into what he knows, repeating his production. This is the mission of a youth when he interacts with the scientific reality and shines in a magnificent way. He scores great scientific successes. This is what we see in most creative and innovative people: They belong to the youthful class. Days ago, I was monitoring in the press a youth, actually he is yet to reach adolescence, from an obscure African or Asian country going to France without having an official residency in that country, living in poor areas that are distant from the hands of authority under very touch conditions. He enters an intellectual chess contest or something like that and becomes the champion in France, the top in all of France, this youth and in this way! So, when a youth is convinced that he can do something, he can shine and achieve a great deal. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) is quoted as having said, "There is nothing I love more than a youth from among you coming to me with knowledge or leaving as a learned one." This shows how much care is to be awarded youths, knowledge and learning. When he learns something, he teaches the others. If he does not know, he learns. It is not a shame if one learns if he does not know, or

if he asks and "The zakat of knowledge is its dissemination." When you take knowledge, you must publicize it. You must not keep it to yourself. This action makes the knowledge rest in your mind and lasts longer. The teacher who teaches a subject more than once discovers a new tool. Anyhow, this aspect is very important. 5. Youths must read between the lines and not be dragged to superficiality. Awareness and insightfulness: We must not be superficial. A youth must read between the lines with the ability to analyze. A youth is not a cassette on which he records a group of information so we would present him as it is. Personally, I repeatedly asked specialized ministries to delete questions that require answers learned by heart. What is the value of this? We must bow down before the process of understanding, realizing, analyzing and producing the piece of information anew. We must add to it. We must delve deeply into it, into its scientific and social aspect. Do not be a recipient. Try to take, understand, ask, question and reproduce the piece of information anew. We must add to it our own touches. We must delve deeply into it in our relationships with others, in everything in this life. Try to take and to ask. Who said that Einstein gave this theory? You can add to it. Do not say that these are great professors. These were young one day just like you. They had the will, and they were able to offer much. 6. Thinking about being creative, innovative, besides being self-confident. Creativity and innovation: Think about putting your own touches in every issue, in every step, in every activity, in every subject. You must have characteristics of your own. You must have your own touches, your own soul becomes present in this project which we present. 7. Self-Confidence: We lack nothing. Advanced world countries are now looked up with admiration. Which one of them is equal to Iraq in its civilization, depth and history? You belong to a deeply-rooted people. From the genes is strength inherited. Sense this strength. Have self-confidence, and you will see how you become ahead of others. One of the leaders from a prestigious party whose name I do not wish to mention, and who is well known in the region, do you know what he tells me? Sayyid, you Iraqis are amazing! What we do in ten years, while our conditions are good, Iraq does in six months. In all fields, ours is a nation of a great strength. It has the ability to innovate, to create, during the darkest of circumstances; therefore, we must not forget our energies and potentials. We have to look after the youths and grant them the opportunity. I always say and repeat that the Iraqi youths have not assumed their sufficient role in the living and political process. There are negativities in every field, yet had these energies been given a chance to move, set out and express themselves, their potentials, enthusiasm and capability, the country's affairs would have been totally different from what we now live. So, we need the youths to assume their roles. But I tell you, young folks, this role is not given in our time. It will not be thrown at your doorstep. Roles are taken, and you have to bear your responsibilities in undertaking the initiative and to prove to everyone, in the forefront of whom are the

politicians, that you are able to score many achievements. This requires the youths to show more interest in public affairs, and this is your responsibility. 8.

Requirements of the media message. Credibility, truthfulness, clarity with the people. These give the greatest value to anyone, a man or a woman, or any media cadre or institution. In the media field, be careful about being truthful with yourselves, with your people, with those to whom you direct these messages. Professionalism and craftsmanship: We now need to develop our media methods so they may work at a high professional level. Someone laces honey with poison. We receive them as we sit, yet they are absent from many people, these poisoned messages, because they are presented in an outfit of a great deal of professionalism, we must admit even to our opponents. Yes, they have the expertise and the professionalism. At the moment when we have professionalism, we will then be able to defend the right which we adopt.

Subjectivity: Any subjective individual does not show bias to any opinion at the same level whereby he evaluates the other opinion, dealing with one, with everything negative and positive about him. All aspects of life contain them. The more subjective you are, the more effective the message will be. There are many priorities, facts, issues..., on which should we focus? What are our priorities in every phase? We must determine it so we may know in what direction we send the media message.

Religious and national values and media without ethical values: Media without an objective. Media lives the puzzlement in itself, puzzling people who monitor it. Nowadays, the greatest shocks are directed at the cultural values in our society, in series and programs produced in isolation from these values which we cherish. Do not neglect the Iraqi media establishment. There are nowadays series and programs in the Arab world and there is a trend aiming at targeting our network of values, our roots, desiring to sever them. One who is cut off from his history and roots, what is left for him? We must be keen, and we have religious and national values; we have good customs and traditions which must be safeguarded and defended.

Breadth of handling topics: Lofty ambitions; we must see some reports that prove that the people behind them are "worn out," taking a couple of statements, sticking them together and making a report out of them. No! He must expand, and he must see them from all their dimensions and angles. Always be keen for your reports to be written with good information that gets the viewer or listener or reader where the reports are.

Diversity and acceptance of the other side, preventing monopoly: No matter how enthusiastic we may be in our principles, one has the right to see himself being right, so he adopts and defends his opinions; this is his right. But he must give the opportunity to the other side to take the initiative and express what he has in his mind and heart in order to listen to the other because part of the truth may be with me or with those in the other group. Part of this

is linked to fairness. To monopolize what is right and true is not right. To keep the other side completely absent is not necessary since he has a portion of the truth; he has the other part of it; so, the media must shed light on the other viewpoint of the issue.

Iraqi Reality: Do we have a national plan after the tyrant's fall?

The tyrant has fallen, do we have a plan? What is our plan? What do we want to do with Iraq ten years after the tyrant's fall? When we say that we determined a plan for us, another question will be submitted: Do we have a vision and a dream? And do we have ambition? It always starts with a vision that turns into a plan made for it. The plans have policies, and the latter require mechanisms. Five essential points: We have to get together in order to know what we want to do with Iraq: Are we on the right track? Are positive things accumulative? Why are there problems? Why are there crises? Part of them is normal, the entitlement of democracy, the other view, and we have to live with it. But part of it is not normal. If we have a vision, a plan comes out of it and on their bases policies are required, in their light mechanisms are set. Iraq's status will then be different. You are the youths, the elite. The university has in it the elite group that thinks, studies, learns and becomes informed. Try to find these five matters. We raised the slogan of building the modern State. Think about it. Do you accept this slogan? Does it sum-up these five points? Building the State, not building cantons, not groups, not sectarianism, racism, politics, regionalism, tribalism..., etc. No, it is the state of institutions, and we want it to be modern. We do not want to try what others have tried. One who tries what has already been tried will regret. We want to start where others ended. We want to achieve success for the successful modern state. We want success and progress. In our Iraqi national relations, we want to advance, we do not want to keep the status of rope pulling, of exchanging accusations among the groups. In our vision for development, what do we want to do for this homeland, for its growth in reconstruction and prosperity, agriculture, industry and trade? Matters will continue if we put the sound image and vision. In the regional and global relation, with what do we want to deal? One day we escalate the tone against a country, another day we make friends with it, which program is the right one? If the escalation is right, why did we cause problems with it? What is the policy of good neighborliness, and if this is right, why did we escalate our tone? Where is the dialogue domestically? Where is the dialogue regionally? Where is the dialogue globally? Countries fight others to go back to the dialogue table for an understanding.

It is not right to try what others have tried.

We try what others have tried. We always stay in a status of tension. Why? Why do we not go to dialogue, sit at a table, put our problems on this table, and let everything be said distantly from deals, from signatures, from bilateral documents under the table, so much so that this has become a new card of the media war among groups. Someone comes out and says, "I shall take out the card." What is this card which you brandish? What is written in it? What are the

commitments in this card? Is it a personal issue? Is it relevant to the country? If it is relevant to the country, it is the right of every citizen to get to know it because it owns something, he has a share in this homeland; so, why are documents signed that become a source of worry for those who signed them? They become a source and a cause for mutual pressure in revealing the cards, in unveiling the secrets. It is better for anyone to be clear. Nothing should be signed behind closed doors. Making statements to satellite channels must be done at ease, when one has one word, one plan. When do we reach the point when the politicians' talk before the satellite channels as well as behind closed doors is one and the same? When? The details and discussions are something else. But the plan must be one and clear. We plead to Allah to help materialize these actions. When the street gets down to the field, when the youths bear their responsibilities, we will be before a different environment. I have taken too much of your time. Thank you for what you are and for your presence, peace, the mercy and the blessing of Allah with you all.