

## **Sayyid Ammar al-Hakim: Muthanna is the Future Food Basket of Iraq, and the Citizen Alliance is Launching the "Development of Ar Rihab of Muthanna" Project**



Sayyid Ammar al-Hakim, head of the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, stated during a public gathering organized by the Citizen Alliance 411 in Muthanna on Saturday, April 6, 2013 that the province is rich in terms of natural resources, strategic location, means and abilities, yet it lacks vision and planning and is deprived of its due rights. "Muthanna needs a unity of word so that it can feel the real change", he explained. "Muthanna will absolutely get all the rights it deserves. While it is the least densely populated and the second largest province of Iraq, it records the lowest level of services and the highest rates of poverty and unemployment among the Iraqi provinces". He described this lack of services along with the low population density as an unreasonable equation, considering Muthanna as the future food basket of Iraq and its answer to autarky in matter of cereals, especially the spelt. Here, he announced having launched an initiative to develop the province of Muthanna deserts, especially Ar Rihab area, pointing that the Citizen Alliance adopted the "Development of Ar Rihab of Muthanna" project.

Outline of the "Development of Ar Rihab of Muthanna" project

His Eminence said the object of the "Development of Ar Rihab of Muthanna" project is to create a special fund set aside for the project with a capital of USD 1,000,000,000, cultivate an area of 1,500,000,000 m<sup>2</sup> of the lands of Samawah desert and build an industrial complex in the desert with a refinery, a fertilizer plant, a salt factory, cereal warehouses, as well as to establish a free zone on the Saudi-Iraqi frontiers within the borders of Muthana province and open a border outlet between both countries to activate the trade and the movement of goods and Umrah and Hajj pilgrims. The project also envisions the rehabilitation and enlargement of Samawah-Salman- Saudi borders road and its connection to the international highway of Iraq and also to Basra province, the economic capital of Iraq. As he stated, the project aims at conducting a geological survey of the whole desert, resuming the oil explorations in the province, establishing a specialized laboratory for agricultural research in Samawah desert, constituting a company for well drilling crucial for the development of Ar Rihab area and the touristic Sawah lake region by discovering its abilities and making it a tourist attraction, in addition to conserving the great archeological regions in Muthanna province, proceeding apace with the archeological explorations and setting up museums that highlight the historical and civilization dimension of the province.

The Citizen Alliance is sure it has conceived the right plan and strategic vision for the province

"The cost of this fund is half the amount Iraq spends annually on the import of cereals, and with the project of the development of the desert, Iraq will save two billions in year, in addition to the amounts that the employment of thousands of jobless, the land reclamation and

the application of food security yield", he uttered. "And the Citizen Alliance is well aware of the difficulties the province is going through and is not pretending to do away with them in no time; yet it is sure it has conceived the right plan and strategic vision for the province, and will work on materializing them in the province council and the parliament". "The Citizen Alliance is well informed of the lack of services in the province and the fact that ministries are not fairly involved with this", he continued, adding "the Citizen Alliance knows very well that the budget designated for the province is insufficient and that the representation of the province citizens in the federal government is poor, though they are accredited diplomas' holders". He reiterated that the Citizen Alliance recognizes that problems inflicted on Muthanna and has realistic and practical answers.

The fact that Muthanna is the province with the highest rates of poverty and unemployment is disgraceful

According to his Eminence, the Citizen Alliance regards the Muthanna as a place of high significance for the development of the middle and southern provinces in particular and that of Iraq in general, unlike some who consider it of little importance for the future of Iraq and some other who only see it too small in weight to be in their priorities, which, in his opinion, is totally untrue, since Muthanna has 2,000,000,000 m2 of arable lands in the Samawah desert and Ar Rihab area. He felt sorry that Muthanna is ranked as the province with the highest rates of poverty and unemployment, arguing that the Iraqi biggest salt mine is in Muthanna while no salt factory is found there, and that it has the best cement raw materials ever in Iraq and big strategic oil reserves, but its one and only refinery is neglected, and its oil wells unexplored. In fact, although Muthanna is the province that connects between the western and eastern Iraqi borders, a highway has to be built yet between them.

The Martyr of the Niche movement is fully responsible for its candidates' acts

The head of the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq stressed the need to work with vigor, perseverance and patience in order to put Muthanna on the right track, calling on the citizens to seize the election to recompense those who would have worked hard and reiterate their confidence in them, and castigate those who would have failed to fulfill their obligations and take back that confidence. He addressed the citizens of Muthanna, saying "This is your big chance! Let your voice be heard in shaping the future of your province". He also reiterated that the Martyr of the Niche movement is fully responsible for its candidates' acts and will watch them closely and inflict the right punishment on them because it is about the destiny of a people, a province and a nation, and there is no way to show favoritism or nepotism, explaining that such position implies responsibility and assignment, and is not made for enrichment or promotion. He added that he is proud to have met the Samawah citizens who are renowned for their zealotness, generosity, pride, the heroes of the Great Iraqi Revolution of 1920 from which emerged the modern history of Iraq and the sons of Shaalan Abul Jun and of Sheikh Mahdi Samawhi, explaining that his march from Basra to Amara through Nasiriyah to Samawah reminded him of the march of the martyr of the niche in his way back to this ancient

province which reflects generosity, pride, knighthood and manhood. He wondered why not be as such and the heroic and manly Bani Hujaim is one of its tribes, as are the other tribes of the province, who founded the nation history notwithstanding the attempts made to forget about them. "The writing takes its roots in Uruk from the capital of which humans evolved from nomads to civilization", he continued. "It is from Uruk that the modern cities, regimes, writing, laws, arts and literatures started to emerge. In fact, the history is too great to be disregarded and the present is painful, besieged and forgotten, but the future is promising." His Eminence reminded that Muthanna citizens have offered to Iraq martyrs who died while fighting dictators and tyrants, scholars, academics, poets, litterateurs and thinkers who are the pride of Iraq, likening the city to the Euphrates in terms of benevolence and to the desert in terms patience, since it is the daughter of the river and the desert.