

Sayyid al-Hakim: It is Unfair to Treat the Sacred Karbala no differently from the Other Governorates and the Citizen Alliance is Launching "Karbala, the Pride of Iraq" Project Necessary for its Growth



Sayyid Ammar al-Hakim, head of the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, stated during a public gathering organized on Sunday, April 7, 2013 by the Citizen Alliance 411 in Karbala that the governorate of the sacred Karbala must be given particular attention in terms of budget allocations, services and construction, and it is unfair to treat it no differently from the other governorates because it is the city that attracts visitors the most all year round- it is visited by millions of people in several occasions which makes its services and infrastructure crack under hard pressure for it exceeds its carrying capacity, thus neglecting its citizens' affairs. He considered Karbala one of the main religious destinations in the region and the world, and a place that welcomes the whole world, not only the Governorate inhabitants or Iraqis. "The Citizen Alliance has the honor to announce "Karbala, the Pride of Iraq" project", he declared, stressing the need to return the favor of Karbala citizens who served the city and its visitors and calling for relieving the pressure felt on them as a result of the human overflow into their province. He also voiced his concern about briberies and the influence exerted on voters who are seduced with monies, positions, contracts, enterprises, land distribution and grants. "These are ill-gotten property forbidden by the religious reference", he said, warning that manipulating and stealing the voters' will is prohibited in Islamic laws and considered as an unforgivable treason against the country.

The standing of Karbala is what motivated the Citizen Alliance to launch "Karbala, the Pride of Iraq" project

His Eminence explained that the "Karbala, the pride of Iraq" project stems from the fact the Karbala is indeed the pride of all the Iraqis, irrespective of their religious beliefs: Sunnis, Shia, Arabs, Bedouins, Turkmens, Christians, Yazidis among others. "Hussein belongs to the whole mankind, and Karbala is the city of Hussein", he confirmed. "Like any great people who plume themselves on the deeds of their heroes, the Iraqis take pride in Imam Hussein, the master of all martyrs and the first fighter for freedom". "Imam Hussein and the city of Karbala hold a special place in the conscience of all Iraqis from different rites and religions and this is what motivated the Citizen Alliance to launch the "Karbala, the Pride of Iraq", he said confidently. According to him, the project consists of allocating, for a period of 5 years, 1% of the Iraq budget to the Karbala Governorate; creating a supreme council for reconstruction to help bring the reconstruction plans and projects in the province to completion; offering exceptional facilities to the private sector to encourage the investment of national and foreign capitals in the service sector as well as the other basic industries; building a modern highway network that connects Karbala to the nearby Iraqi provinces as well as a railway between Najaf and Karbala linked to the national railroad in order to relieve the pressure off the transportation system during the visits millions of people would pay to the city and

building as soon as possible the Middle Euphrates Airport, bridges, crosswalks and tunnels that are compatible with the nature of the visits made to the city and ease overcrowding and congestions. The project also envisions the construction of "Abu al Fadl" residential area with a capacity of 100,000 units that is an answer to the problem from which the province citizens are suffering, i.e. the lack of dwellings; the advancement of the University of Karbala and increase of the religious tourism-related specialties; the building of Al Hussein Medical Centre with high standards in addition to providing subsidies for professional people in Karbala and easy long-term loans for farmers so that they can grow their business and develop the infrastructure of the Karbala villages such as road paving, providing electricity and potable water, increasing the number of educational and medical institutions, granting easy loans to the hotel and restaurant owners to improve their facilities while taking into consideration the holiness of the city and the number of visitors. He continued that the project anticipates the swift implementation of "Ya Hussein" road from Karbala to the nearby provinces to facilitate the movement of pedestrians during the sacred visits and increase the green spaces, especially in the desert, west of Karbala, to stop desertification, freshen the environment, make parks and open areas available to Karbala citizens and visitors, as well as encouraging investments to turn Lake Razazah into a resort that would be a source of pleasure and enjoyment for the province citizens.

The Citizen Alliance projects are not mere ideas and wishes, but are based on facts and studies

Sayyid Ammar al-Hakim confirmed that the projects laid out by Martyr of the Niche movement and the Citizen Alliance are not mere ideas and wishes, but are based on facts and studies, wondering, "What is 1% of the budget of Iraq for a limited period comparing to the growth of a city that is the pride of Iraq?!". He said no province or a segment of the Iraqi society will oppose this project, because most of the provincial citizens spend many days in year in Karbala since it is a modern and prosperous city that brings joy to everyone. The 1%, according to him, is usually dedicated as social aids in some countries, but not to develop a city as historically important as Karbala which receives every Friday night large number of visitors. In fact, it receives every year around 750,000 visitors from all around the world and 20,000,000 from Iraq, he explained. He pointed that Karbala pumps about USD 2,000,000,000 whether directly or indirectly in the Iraqi economy and that everyone has a duty to fulfill toward Karbala and "Karbala, the pride of Iraq" project, stating the members of the Martyr of the Niche movement and the Citizen Alliance are asking Allah to enable them to serve the sacred city and its citizens. "We are not saying we are the only ones working for this beloved city which we are sure is dear to all".

In Karbala, the Citizen Alliance has a dual obligation: Trust of people and greatness of the city

His Eminence stressed that when the Citizen Alliance introduces his candidates for this province, it places them under a dual obligation: the first is not to lose the trust of people,

and the second and the most important obligation is to work in Karbala, source of nobility, honesty, honor, sacrifice and altruism, calling for investing the election of the provincial councils and choosing with care the list and names in order to elect a responsible team and put Karbala on the right track of development. His view is that citizens are directly responsible for election and must be extremely meticulous about the candidates they will be choosing so they would not regret it later, and that only they would assume the consequences of their choice. He called on Karbala citizens to vote to those who would have worked for them the most, or otherwise to refrain from voting. "The Citizen Alliance is introducing in these elections a qualified and honest team with an integral platform and a clear vision for what Karbala is going through and the required answers and solutions", he confirmed. "And if it wins election, it would honor its obligation by serving this province and its noble citizens." He explained the new and qualified team of the Independent High Electoral Commission has a duty of safeguarding the choices of voters and protecting them against manipulation and fraud attempts. The Citizen Alliance is renewing allegiance to Imam Hussein (P) in building the civilization project

His Eminence renewed allegiance to Imam Hussein (P) in going forward with the civilization project to develop the conscious and committed human being full of dignity and to build a country that embraces everyone and where we can live as brothers by virtue of our relation to Allah, the country and the mankind. Here, he recalled the martyred Imam as-Sadr (P) whose memory happens to be celebrated these days. "Imam as-Sadr is an exceptional figure and a great Islamic philosopher that married scholarship and work, made visible marks in the Islamic library and the social and political course he adopted and influenced his disciples who are still following his lead", he commented. Then he called for drawing lessons from the fall of the tyrant the same day on which Imam as-Sadr was killed, which is illustrative of the fact the Allah gives respite but never neglects. He also prayed for his soul and the soul of his sister Bint al-Huda, who had a pivotal role in assisting her brother, to rest in peace, ensuring that he will seek vengeance for the martyr as-Sadr by keeping on giving away and serving the country and the citizens.

Karbala has many names mainly that derived from Imam Hussein (P)

Sayyid indicated that Karbala has many names especially that derived from the identity and title of Imam Hussein (P) resting in it with the great meanings the name Hussein implies not only in the history of Arabs and Islam, but also in the history of the humanity as a whole. He also explained the necessity of sensing the greatness of this place to realize how big is the obligation and liability incurred in the service of this holy place. He also noted that Karbala suffered during the last decades of the 20th century from exclusion and marginalization for clear reasons, emphasizing the necessity of raising it to the level of world-famous big cities. "It really deserves it and so much more because it is the dearest to the hearts of millions who visit it every year to renew their allegiance to the master of all martyrs and his faithful companions", he added. Furthermore, he pointed that Karbala is the city of Hussein, the

poles for visitors and the capital of redemption and is also the symbol of sacrifice, the torch of freedom and the city of heroes. His eminence quoted Imam Hussein: "I swear by Allah that it is there where we will be settling, our camels be laid out, and our blood be shed", announcing by this saying the birth of a city the history and existence of which would be linked to prophethood, Imamate and religion, and glowed with glory and highness. Sayyid considered it the history of divine redemption and great sacrifice and the start of a revolt whose flame would never be extinguished until God fulfills his promise and his righteous worshippers inherit the land. Moreover, he emphasized that the tribes and families of Karbala Governorate are the pride of those of Iraq for their clean history, uniqueness and creativity, and have clear marks in the history of modern Iraq. This is something Sayyid has no doubt about since they represent the city of Imam Hussein who left his mark in the history of Islam and humanity.

Karbala, with its clans and citizens, has always stood by Iraq because it is a city of sacrifices

Sayyid Ammar said, "Unfortunately, the history is rarely fair to honorable and fervent people. Also in this city, it has neither done justice to its citizens nor highlighted their deeds and attitudes which were the reason for the pride of Iraq. Sayyid added that no matter how ungrateful history is, the truth never dies, stances are never forgotten and heroism never vanishes. Furthermore, he noted that Karbala, with its clans, families and ignoble people, has always stood by Iraq and was in the vanguard of the national process. This came as no surprise since Karbala was is the city of sacrifices, redemption and honor. He also reminded that Karbala gave birth to many political, intellectual and religious leaderships, recalling great people who illuminated the way and protected Islam and the nation. Moreover, Sayyid noted that during the 13th century AH, Karbala was the headquarters of the supreme religious authority and the center of Hawza Ilmiyya (scientific shrine) at the time, where dozens, yet hundreds, of brilliant scientists and great religious leaders graduated from. It was the center of the resistance against oppression, tyranny and injustice, he continued. It was assaulted several times by the enemies of Ahl al-Bayt, (P), but remained a lively city vibrant with continuous giving. He emphasized that Karbala's history is unique and Karbala's standing is unparalleled, and no story was that soaked with the blood of honor like its; it is the existence, the cause, the doctrine and the way of life, honor, sacrifice, pride, heroism and glory.