

Nature of the Iraqi Resistance

Interview with a Member of the Iraqi National Foundation Congress

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The following is from an interview with Saad Naji Jawad who is a professor of political science at the University of Baghdad. He is a member of the Iraqi National Foundation Congress.

Iraqi National Resistance

Whenever there is occupation there is resistance. All nations have experienced this. Resistance to occupation is legal, legitimate and acceptable. On top of this are some people who hate the US and found Iraq a suitable place to fight their war. They came to the country after the occupation, and the Americans are now paying the price.

Al Qaida and Musab al-Zarqawi are separate from the rest of the resistance. There is no coordination between the resistance and these groups, whom we consider to be terrorists.

There are also groups dedicated to political and peaceful resistance, civilians who try to resist in a positive way. Demonstrations, writing, objecting and criticising are also part of the resistance.

Inside the armed resistance there are different groups and trends. You have Baathists, Islamists, Sunnis, Shias, sometimes you also have Kurds. The main characteristic is Arab nationalist.

Even from the beginning you had many people inside the resistance who were happy to see the end of Saddam Hussein because they felt he had driven the country to disaster. Some had some faith in US promises, and felt that the Americans were going to make Iraq an example of democracy in the region, but then became disillusioned.

The Iraqi National Foundation Congress was founded in May 2004. It was originally established by two different bodies—the Arab nationalists, who are a mix of Sunnis and Shias, and the al-Khalisi school, headed by Sheikh Jawad Khalisi from the Shia Khadamiya mosque in Baghdad.

Then other organisations joined, including the Association of Muslim Scholars, some personalities, smaller parties and groups. There are differences on certain issues—some are Islamists others are secular—but all agree on national liberation and the need for real democracy.

The Congress has support among a wide layer of people, but because we boycotted the elections we are unable to measure exactly the depth of this support. We called for a boycott of last January's US sponsored elections, and more than half of Iraq joined the boycott. Muqtada al-Sadr, the radical Shia leader, also called for boycott. We said we would participate in the elections on the following conditions—an end to military attacks, all people must have a vote (the election body could strike your name from the register) and an international body must supervise the elections. Our demands were rejected, so we called for a boycott.

Liberation

The Iraqi National Foundation Congress is similar to organisations such as the African National Congress and the PLO. It is an alliance of forces united around one main demand—national liberation.

In our opinion Iraq's draft constitution does not solve any problems. The political situation is so complicated that the only way forward is through dialogue, a lot of forgiveness and openness.

The new constitution could lead to the division of the country.

We do not necessarily object to federalism, but what sort of federalism is on offer? If we listen to the main Kurdish parties we find they are talking about independence, not federalism. Similarly there are those who would like a federal state in the south, who claim the south suffered more than the rest of the country, that the south creates most of the wealth through oil.

We reject the draft because it deepens sectarianism and does not reflect the Arab nature of the Iraq. The Arabs are more than 80 percent of the population.

The US would rather have one state that they control, rather than a divided Iraq. But colonialism always keeps its options open. The Americans use the threat of federalism. They say, "If you do not support us and follow our policies, you could end up destroying your country".

Iraq will have to spend many years repairing the damage done by the Americans. We have to clear out the corrupt exile politicians who have grown rich from the occupation. We have to build a national army—and above all we have to convince people that without unity we have no future."

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