

## Tareq Aziz: A Son's Plea

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"We don't need spectators to witness our suffering and tell us they feel with us. We need help to put a stop to it." (Raja Shehadeh, 1951-: "When The Birds Stopped Singing.")

"Madam Felicity, when I was ten years old, I was handing out leaflets on the streets of Baghdad, putting them through people's doors, to stop the British getting hold of our oil. I am not about to give up on Iraq now." (Tareq Aziz in an interview, 1999.)

Iraq's former Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, Tareq Aziz (76), who largely ignored his already ailing health before the illegal 2003 invasion of his country in order to travel and argue eloquently against the embargo's crippling toll on the population, and later to attempt to avert invasion, has now been imprisoned – in the country he loves and for which he fought verbally, with passion and tenacity – for nine years.

His son Ziad, who with his family, in addition to the pain of his father's incarceration, now bears the burden of exile, has fought tenaciously for his father's release, but very rarely speaks publicly of the family's ongoing grief at his plight.

It is a measure of his fears for Tareq Aziz that he has sent a letter expressing deep fear and concern for his father, following his family's visit to Iraq to see him, to a group affiliated with the Brussels Tribunal (i) including human rights, legal and medical organizations, asking for all possible assistance in resolving the situation.

His words are quoted with permission:

"I just want to update you on my father's health condition. My mother and sisters visited him last Friday (25th of May) in the Iraqi prison in which he is being held in Khadimiyah." (Khadimiyah is part of Baghdad Old City, on the eastern side of the Tigris.)

"They thought he had deteriorated since their last visit, he has a strange cough and he is still not able to walk on his own. He asked to be seen by a doctor about the cough, but the prison officials have yet to decide on that."

"The heat is not an easy thing for him to endure, it really worsens his health condition and lowers his spirits." (This is May. Baghdad's sweltering Augusts can bring temperatures of 140 fahrenheit – 60 celsius.)

"... time is not on our side (ii.) I am afraid that his deteriorating health condition won't last

him the summer with the suffocating heat and lack of medical attention.

"Time is of the essence" and speedy resolution critical. "I realize these things take time, but as I said earlier, time is not on our side. My family and I are ready to help in any way we can, if there is anything we can do.

"Respectfully yours,

Ziad Tareq Aziz."

It is a measure of the precarious health of a proud man, from a proud family of the proudest of nations that his son should need plead to those of us from nations responsible for the destruction of his.

The letter ended graciously: "Lastly, I would like to thank you again for all your efforts."

Tareq Aziz and his incarcerated colleagues never did give up on Iraq, never fled as they could have, before the impending invasion. They are paying a terrible price, meted out in kangaroo courts.

The vengeance and lawlessness of the liberators and their puppet government, equals – and indeed largely exceeds – those they decry as tyrants and dictators. Sadly, the West's paper thin, sham democracies, nevertheless make all their nationals of conscience equally culpable.

i.

<http://www.brussellstribunal.org/>

ii.

<http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=31055>

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