US Occupation of Iraq is the Cause of Sectarian Strife and Al Qaeda Attacks

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The former United Nations humanitarian coordinator in Iraq says that recent crises in some Iraqi cities have resulted from the US occupation of the country.

"The recent fighting in Fallujah, Ramadi and other towns is a clear result of the American invasion and occupation of Iraq," Denis Halliday told Press TV on Sunday.

Halliday said the United States has created sectarian divisions in Iraq since it invaded the country in 2003.

"During that period they encouraged division between Sunni and Shia in Iraq, which had not been the case generally speaking prior to the American invasion."

He went on to say that "the tragedy now is that the strife between religious interests in Iraq as in other parts of the region has become dangerous and life-threatening calamitous to Iraq, to Syria, to Lebanon as well."

"Americans can be blamed" Halliday said, but added that "only the people of the Middle East can resolve this."

The cities of Fallujah and Ramadi have been the scene of deadly clashes between security forces and the al-Qaeda-affiliated militants over the past days. Security officials said the fighting left more than 100 people dead in the two flashpoint cities on Friday.

Iraqi forces reportedly lost control of Fallujah in Anbar to the militants on Saturday.

The violence broke out on December 30, 2013, when the army removed an anti-government protest camp in Ramadi. Authorities said the camp was used as "headquarters for the leadership of al-Qaeda."

Iraqi security forces are preparing for a major attack on Fallujah. According to a security official, Special Forces conducted several operations in the city on Sunday.

Fallujah is the nearest town to Baghdad on the road between Baghdad and Anbar province.

Secretary of State John Kerry on Sunday said the US would support the government of Iraq against al Qaeda-linked groups, but would not send troops, saying "this is a fight that belongs to the Iraqis."

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