

CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE

**AYAD ALLAWI: RECONCILIATION
IN IRAQ**

WELCOME:
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MARINA OTTAWAY: Good afternoon and welcome to the Carnegie Endowment. We are extremely pleased to see you all here today. It's a tribute to our speaker that so many people turned out on a hot Friday afternoon in July, with not even 48 hours' notice. So I think that tells a lot about who it is that we have to listen to today.

Dr. Allawi will give a brief introduction and then we'll go right away into questions and answers. Let me – I don't think I need to go into a long introduction of Dr. Allawi; I think the fact that he is here really means that he does not need any introduction. Let me just say very simply that here is a man who has played a very important role in his country, long before 2003, that played a very important role in the initial transition period, including being the prime minister in the interim government of Iraq in 2004, 2005, and I think we can say, with some degree of confidence, will continue to play an important role in the politics of his country.

Before I let – the visit of Mr. Allawi was facilitated by the American Friends Service Committee. And before we start, a representative of the committee would like to say a few words.

KITTY HSU DANA: Thank you very much, Marina. And special thanks, again, to the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, for putting together and hosting us for this very important visit.

The American Friends Service Committee is very honored to coordinate this visit by Dr. Allawi. I am Kitty Hsu Dana; I'm deputy general secretary of the American Friends Service Committee. And we are an organization that is 90 years old and has worked throughout this time for peace and dialogue, and understanding between nations and between individuals in communities as well. And it is in that vein that we have helped coordinate previously a delegation of Iraqi parliamentarians to the U.S. last month, also hosted by the Carnegie Endowment and now, with Dr. Allawi's visit.

I'd like to give special thanks to Raed Jarrar, who is working with the Iraq program of AFSC, and has done a great deal in connecting the U.S. Congress with the parliamentarians. A little bit of a personal note why this is so meaningful to me: I think for many of us the picture of the Iraqis with purple fingerprints after voting, which was hailed as one of the great accomplishments of the U.S. invasion occupation of Iraq and yet many years later, we have scarcely heard from the full spectrum of parliamentarians, of the legislators who were actually elected by the Iraqi people. So it's a great privilege to be able to participate in helping that happen, introducing that to the U.S. and to the U.S. Congress starting last month and again today. So again, great thanks to Dr. Allawi for your visit. And again, the American Friends Service Committee thanks the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace for hosting this important visit.

MS. OTTAWAY: Without further ado, Dr. Allawi.

AYAD ALLAWI: Thank you very much for having me here and thank you all for attending this meeting. It shows the commitment towards Iraq, towards civility in the region, which is a very important region, and civility in Iraq as a country is very important. And thank you again for participating in this event. I am going to speak for a few minutes only so we will allow time for questions and answers.

Without going into the history after the war, and what happened and the mistakes that have been committed, I would like to start by talking about the surge. The surge in Iraq has caused some success; it has temporarily improved the situation, but the situation is still fragile. I think it is the role of the government now to capitalize on what has happened in addressing two major and important issues. The first issue is the reconciliation, the issue of reconciliation. We have, as you know, millions of refugees and displaced people inside Iraq. We have problems with the constitution; we have problems with a lot of the laws that have been politicized, such as deBaathification and the dismantlement of the army. So reconciliation is becoming really a must in Iraq, and that is the only way that security can prevail once we can achieve this objective.

The second issue is the change now to both the institutions of the states on a non-sectarian basis, on Iraqi – national Iraqi basis. We know that a sectarian police, a sectarian army, a sectarian security, would not be able to uphold the responsibility in the whole of the country. That's why we have been calling for a non-sectarian army, a non-sectarian police, and this is where we see the surge has opened the doors now to a transient, temporary stability that we Iraqis should capitalize on this, and do whatever is necessary to get the country running and to get the country stable.

I am full of confidence that Iraq would pass through this bottleneck and it will definitely get out of the bottleneck victorious. I have a lot of faith. We had full tyranny for a very long time. I personally fought tyranny for 30 years and I think the Iraqi people have the strength and the stamina to continue fighting for freedom, not only for Iraq but also Iraq is a key country in the region and the greater Middle East. And stability of Iraq is the stability of the greater Middle East, and the other way around also is correct; instability in Iraq, God forbid, will cause instability in the region.

The second issue I wanted to talk about is the issue of what we hear about the draw-down and pulling troops, and the mandate of the United Nations, which is ending at the end of this year, and statements coming from here and there. And we are really puzzled by what is going to happen. We in the parliament – I am a member of the Iraq parliament; I head the list in the Iraq parliament – we don't know exactly what's happening vis-à-vis the agreement with the United Nations and the United Nations mandate, nor do we know about what is happening between the bilateral agreement, between both nations, both countries, the United States and Iraq vis-à-vis the proposed security agreement.

We know that the mandate will end by the 31st of December and we know that there is a time constraint here. The Iraq parliament will recess in two days' time and I guess the Congress also, the same here, and we don't have time to sit down and negotiate a bilateral agreement unless the two governments agree without getting through the Iraqi parliament. And I can't speak, of course, on behalf of the Iraqi parliament; most or all of the components, constituencies in the Iraqi parliament do insist that the agreement should be passed through the parliament and the parliament should ratify this agreement. Based on this, we need to have and to consider options because we have few months left. This agreement does not hold, does not get the approval of the Iraqi people, then we need to look at various options, including the option of extending the mandate of the United Nations.

On to withdrawal and the draw-down: I have been hearing lately about the 2010 deadline. This may be right; it may be wrong. But I am – personally, I believe in combining two things together: conditions and timeframe work. We have to work on a timeframe and we have to combine this to what conditions we want to see prevailing before we decide realistically on troop

withdrawal, on getting out of Iraq. No Iraqi, no citizen of any country, would like to see foreign troops positioned in their countries, and this definitely goes for Iraq. And we, as the parliament were, in our program in the first election and in the second election as well, the only ones who called for conditional withdrawal of the multinational forces based on the conditions and based on objectives. That's why I think we need a linkage of discussing timeframe work and objectives, what objectives should we need in Iraq to make Iraq a stable country.

I think the driving issue here is, as far as we are concerned, stability. Stability is the most important issue. We need to have stability, otherwise there is no progress. And as you know, all of you, the whole region has severe turmoil and tension. And if anything, this tension and turmoil is expanding, and is hurting the people of the area and is rendering the stability a far-fetched objective. And then, the heart of stability is security, and the heart of security, as far as Iraq is concerned, are the institutions worthy of handling the responsibilities and the reconciliation.

I would like to stop here and allow for questions and answers, to go deeper into any question. And thank you for listening to what I have said.

MS. OTTAWAY: Well, we have learned one thing, that you keep your word. You said you were going to speak briefly and you did speak briefly. (Chuckles.)

So okay, the floor is open. Two points: Please identify yourself, and please ask one question and not three questions. (Chuckles.) Okay, let's start here.

Q: Dr. Allawi, it's good to see you again.

DR. ALLAWI: Thank you.

Q: And thank to you and to my old employers, the American Friends Service Committee. I used to work for your group for organizing this, I think is extremely important. Anybody who is serious about democratizing Iraq and the Middle East – yes, yes – anybody who is serious about democratizing Iraq and the Middle East, they should support your group. Non-sectarianism is what is going to work.

My question is there have been atrocities committed by Saudi suicide bombers – oh, my name is Ali Alyami; I am from the Center for Democracy and Human Rights in Saudi Arabia. Many atrocities have been committed against the Iraqis by suicide bombers and by these insurgents who are supported by the Saudi government; these are facts. The Saudis are building a fence along the Iraqi-Saudi borders. My question is why are the Saudis building the fence and the other part of the question is what kind of relationship do you see between Iraq and Saudi Arabia, given the fact that so many bad things have happened.

MS. OTTAWAY: I think a second question, if you don't mind.

DR. ALLAWI: All right. She doesn't want me to answer yours, it seems.

(Laughter.)

MS. OTTAWAY: No, no, okay, go ahead.

DR. ALLAWI: No, no, let's go for the second.

Q: My name is George Hishmeh and I am a columnist for newspapers in the Middle East. Did I understand it to say that you don't like the idea of Mr. Obama setting a deadline of 16 months? What is going to bring about an American withdrawal from Iraq? When you talk about stability, are you talking about security only or internal fighting, or is it external groups coming into Iraq? Please elaborate.

DR. ALLAWI: Thank you.

MS. OTTAWAY: Both questions. (Chuckles.)

DR. ALLAWI: Okay. (Chuckles.) Well, my friend, thank you very much for your question. And let me be very candid in answering – you asked me to be candid and I'll be candid.

You know what happened in Nahr al-Bared in Lebanon. There were some Iraqis caught in Nahr al-Bared - terrorists, fighting the establishment in Lebanon. And they sneaked from Iraq and went to Nahr al-Bared and joined the terrorists, and joined the al Qaeda, and they were fighting there and they were caught. Now, these Iraqis who are, I think, still in prison in Lebanon, have not been sent by the Iraqi government or by the Iraqi political roots. They had beliefs, they had ideas, and they decided that they wanted to do it this way and so they went and decided to go to Lebanon.

I am sure that there are a lot of terrorists from various Islamic countries, including Saudi Arabia, and I am sure also – I have, on many occasions, spoken to the Saudi leadership on these issues. And we found, and I got from them, all coordination on the issue of al Qaeda and the allied groups with al Qaeda, Ansar al-Islam and Ansar al-Sunna, and so on.

Let me say this: Let us make a distinction between our criticism to various regimes in the region and the fact that we all are in one boat, fighting extremism and terrorism. And this is something which is occurring throughout the Middle East and beyond the Middle East, and the greater Middle East: Pakistan, Afghanistan, Indonesia. And if we don't join hands in fighting this disastrous phenomenon, then all of us are going to be losers. We do understand that sectarianism is another face of terrorism, and sectarianism could only generate and be a precursor to terrorism and extremism. And extreme beliefs, those who have even changed the face of Islam, are really not Muslims; they are trying to inflict damage and havoc on Islamic countries. And they are destroying Islamic countries such as Iraq. Iraq is, by and large, an Islamic country, yet we are facing problems as well as Saudi Arabia – Saudi Arabia is facing.

Now, this is beside the point, whether I have reservation or you have a reservation on the way that how things are administered with Saudi Arabia. But this is something that will affect our lives, all of us, and when you see somebody coming from Syria, you cannot blame the Syrian government. When somebody comes from Yemen, you cannot blame the Yemeni government. When somebody comes from Morocco, you cannot – some people came from Pakistan, from Iran, to Iraq. You can't blame the governments and say well, these people came because the government wanted to send them. Maybe the governments are inefficient; maybe their security services are inefficient. Maybe the cooperation between Iraq and these governments are not enough.

On the issue of the wall, I think it is far-fetched. I don't think it's going to happen, and I think it is fictitious and only a media thing.

Back to your question: I am not criticizing Obama's saying that in 2010, he has to withdraw. What I am saying is that there must be conditions prevailing. And these conditions, I highlighted some of them. Inside Iraq, the conditions are very clear to me; they relate to reconciliation, they relate to institution building. This is inside Iraq. Outside Iraq, we need to prepare the regional environment to create a healthy environment in the region, based on economic ties and trade ties, and non-interference in internal matters. And this is what we have to achieve through the auspices of the – and the help of the Security Council of the United Nations, the Arab League, the Islamic Conference Organization, and the Gulf Cooperation Council.

And this is what we tried to do in the first conference in Sharm el-Sheikh, where President Mubarak gracefully accepted to host the conference there. It was our suggestion, and I spoke to him, and the conference took place. And one of the mechanisms that emerged out of this conference, one of them only, was the creation of a tripartite committee between Iraq, the multinational forces in Iraq, which is the United States, and Syria to discuss problems between both countries and to create the right atmosphere to prepare for stability, for good economic ties and economic creations.

So I think now that it is very important, not only to meet the conditions inside Iraq – reconciliation and institution building – but also it is high time to activate the United Nations, to activate the regional platforms, the ones I mentioned, including the Arab League; to create the right and healthy atmosphere for friendship and trust. Otherwise, it will be pretty much you're talking about withdrawing forces because we see, and everybody is seeing, that there is an escalation of violence, escalation of problems. We just have recovered recently in Lebanon and it still is 50-50, touch and go. We see what's happening in Palestine and Somalia and Sudan and elsewhere in the Middle East. Thank you.

MS. OTTAWAY: I'll take advantage of the privilege of the chair to follow up on your comment.

Until recently, relations between Iraq and other Arab countries had been somewhat distant. Most countries have hesitated in opening embassies in Iraq. We are beginning to see some signs of change; a few countries have announced that they'll do so. Can you tell us a little more about why – you know, why the situation is evolving. Are we entering into a different phase, essentially, in the relationship between particularly the Gulf countries and Iraq? Can you elaborate a bit on this?

DR. ALLAWI: Well, insh'allah, we hope, you know, the good officers of the United States have been engaged in fierce diplomacy to try and bring about recognition and cooperation from many countries in the area with Iraq. And, as you probably are aware, and it was public, the recent meeting in Bahrain of the Gulf Cooperation Council, where Dr. Rice attended and was seeking the help of the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Arab countries to open up to Iraq and get their embassies there opened in Iraq.

Some of the countries, I think three, agreed and the rest are still reluctant. There are a host of issues and a host of problems, but we – some of them are the nature of the relationship that has

been evolving between Iraq and some Arab countries. The second, as the media campaigns that have been raging in various countries, including Iraq, against Arabs and in some Arab countries against Iraq, and also the overall tension in the whole region. Those have been all contributory factors, plus other factors, of course, for the problems that have occurred between some of the countries in the region and Iraq.

As an example, when the Egyptian ambassador, who was an outstanding person, and both President Mubarak and the official minister of foreign affairs told me personally two years ago that this guy was hand picked by the president and by the foreign minister because of his extreme efficiency. He was killed in Baghdad and a statement came out from the government of Iraq, I can't recall which minister said, well, this guy had been talking to terrorists and terrorism and was killed.

So these are not healthy – does not provide for a healthy relationship between brotherly countries and whether we want it or not, Iraq is part of the Middle East, part of the Islamic countries and part of the Arab countries. It's not something unique. That's why I think now, as the ball is in the court of the government, Iraq government, to again, as the surge, to capitalize on the opening of the Arab embassies and relations with Iraq, to work very hard to gain the trust of the Arab world and the Islamic world. So all of these countries will come and step forward to help Iraq build its capabilities and to help Iraq stabilize itself.

I may use an example here of how the Arabs helped Iraq. When we were confronting Zarqawi, al-Qaeda in Fallujah, I was in office. And we didn't have arms; we didn't have army as we do have now. We had nothing practically. I had to call Arab leaders personally. I called first the British prime minister. I said, we can't fight these people with a clash and course. Our army is equipped with nothing. I called the – His Majesty King Abdullah the second, I called President Mubarak, I called the prime minister of UAE and the chief of staff, Sheik Mohamed bin Zayed.

I said, we don't have weapons to fight these guys and they are inflicting damage on Iraq. I need your help. Without hesitation, they opened their depots, they sent me arms, they sent me armored carriers – all free of charge, everything. You know, they feel responsibility towards Iraq. They feel that they can contribute. They need encouragement from the Iraqis and I don't see why the Americans should mediate between Iraq and the other Arab countries because, you know, this is amongst brothers. There should be discussions, there should be dialogue between Iraq and these countries, the Arab countries and the Islamic countries to create the right atmosphere for a good relationship. Thank you.

JESSICA MATHEWS: Jessica Mathews from the Carnegie Endowment. We all remember that the purpose of the surge was to create a breathing space for political reconciliation, as you mentioned. Can you give us your assessment of what has been achieved so far and what would need to be achieved in order to allow a safe U.S. withdrawal?

DR. ALLAWI: Well, I – as I said, what we need to achieve inside Iraq is real political reconciliation and institution-building, building of the institutions of Iraq, especially the security institutions. And regionally, we need to involve the region: the United Nations, the Arab League, the Gulf Cooperation Council in creating the right environment for stability.

As far as reconciliation, unfortunately, we are getting away from – further away from reconciliation. It's not only the 6 million or 4 or 5 million refugees outside Iraq. The problem is not

only the members who had to join the Baath party or who are enemies of the state. It's not only the ex-army or the ex-police who are the enemies of the state. Now we have the enemies of the state also the Sadrists, the Fadeela, [and] we, the liberals, we are all considered as against the political process. And this is not a healthy sign really, to embark on the course of reconciliation in our country.

That's why I think we need much more work and we need the encouragement of the international community to the government of Iraq and also the region and to work collectively. There was one, only one and only one, conference that took place in Cairo based on Sharm el-Sheikh resolutions which was really, you can call a reconciliation conference. I am a friend of Masud Barzani, I am a friend of Samah Sayyed Abdul Aziz al Hakim. I am a friend of Jilal Talabani. We have worked together for 30 years against tyranny in Iraq. We don't want to sit with each other to reconcile. We already reconciled. We have our differences, we have our agreements, but we are friends.

But we need to sit with those people who have been disenfranchised except terrorists and terrorism. If we cannot achieve this, even I think stability is going to be far-fetched and far away in Iraq and I think we would not be able to create the right security forces, the right army, the right police to shoulder the responsibility and the threats that are posed on Iraq, whether internal or external. Thank you.

MS. OTTAWAY: I'll go back to taking two questions at a time. We have one here and one here.

Q: Thank you, Dr. Allawi. Gary Mitchell from the Mitchell Report. Yesterday afternoon, General Jack Keane, who is arguably one of the co-authors of the surge, drew a picture of Iraq based on his most recent visit. And he's made several, as you know. And the components of that, I want to just quickly list for you because I'm interested to know whether you think this is an accurate characterization of Iraq today.

He said that progress on the insurgency is finally at a point where, in his view, it's not reversible. He said that al-Qaeda has been operationally defeated in the country, that the Sunni insurgency has essentially folded, that Muqtada al-Sadr is politically isolated and militarily defeated, and that Iran's influence has also weakened substantially and that Suleimani, the al-Quds force has lost militarily in Southern Iraq, and that the Iraqi security forces are in the lead roles today in 75 percent of the campaigns.

My question is, is two-fold: One, is that a picture of Iraq that you see – I think the question was too long and the battery ran out. Is that the picture of Iraq that you would paint, number one, and, number two, if it is, what conditions beyond that would need to be achieved in order for us to – whether it's the Obama plan or some version of it, begin to withdraw or drawdown?

Q: Yes, my name is Greg Aftandilian with C&O Resources. Dr. Allawi, could you talk a little bit more about the debaathification law, the problems, associated with it, whether it's being implemented or not, and what you think needs to be done to make it a better law? Thank you.

DR. ALLAWI: Well, I don't know about that. I haven't read this report. My account of things are slightly different. The Sadrists are still there. Jaish al-Mahdi, a lot of them are in Iran,

some reassembling. Al Qaeda is reorganizing in certain areas of Iraq. I don't know about the insurgency, but I can use the following yard stick, that there are millions of Iraqis outside of Iraq and I don't think they are going to sit idle and watch what's happening in Iraq and they are disenfranchised. I think this is a precursor for insurgency, further insurgency. As we were sitting outside Iraq, when Saddam was in Iraq, we never stayed put. We had to work against tyranny. So these people are disenfranchised now. I don't think they are going to stay, remain watching.

That's why I believe definitely there have been some gains, some successes as far as the surge is concerned. I think what is important really is to capitalize on the gains. Rather than draw a very nice picture, we need to indicate that we have so far, the surge, succeeded militarily, but to succeed politically is the most important issue. If there is no political gains and success, then I tell you there will be severe reversal in Iraq. And Iraq and the Iraqis are very obstinate people. And it's very difficult to twist their arms. And they are very proud people. And they would reject any sort of tyranny or any sort of inhibitions or oppression. This would never, ever happen.

That's why my advice to anybody who would say that, we have, yes, we do have a good picture, a much better picture than before, but we have to capitalize, to build politically on the military improvement and the partial, temporary security improvement. Otherwise, we will lose the gains that have been achieved. This is my attitude.

On the debaathification, you know, the Baath Party ruled Iraq – and I am not defending the Baath Party. I was a victim. I was in the hospital for a year-and-a-half between life and death. I was attacked and the victim of an assassination attempt by the regime in Iraq. But the Baath Party ruled Iraq for about 35 years and played a significant role, political role, in the region for tens of years.

A lot of people joined the Baath Party either because their conviction was in that direction or because they had to join the Baath Party in order to live, in order to get employment, in order to get universities. Anyways, those Baathists, whether they were motivated, whether they believed, whether they had to join, are divided into the following categories: category one, those who committed the crimes; category two, those who joined the Baath Party because they believed – I was a member of the Baath Party at one stage. For 30 years, I fought the Baath Party and that was – (inaudible).

The dividing issue here should be judiciary, should be the law. If you as a Baathi have committed a crime against people or killed people, then you have to go to the courts, then you have to be punished according to the law of the land. And if you believe in something or you haven't committed any crime and you get punished, this is unbelievable; it's unbelievable. This is number one.

Number two, the debaathification, it's law. It became a program in Iraq, a program. And I can give you an example, a program to get rid of the opponents of some of the political factions, especially those who believe in political Islam. We, in our state, two guys were elected by the people of Iraq and they won and they became members of parliament. One of them had a Baath background. He was sentenced to imprisonment in 1979 for a conspiracy against Saddam Hussein and was released later on and lived in exile until he participated in the liberation of Iraq and went back to Iraq. He was debaathified and kicked from the parliament.

And the other one, funny enough, was a Communist in our state. He had nothing to do with the Baath Party. On the contrary, he was a member of the Communist Party. He was debaathified. Okay. Now, until now, it's good. So we tried to go to the courts. We tried to go to the judiciary. We appointed lawyers. We wanted to see why those guys who have been elected by the people of Iraq have been taken out of parliament, their rights have been taken out. We could not, until this minute in time, we could not find anybody to entertain our complaints in the government and the judiciary and the parliament. And they are still outside Parliament.

We are against politicizing these laws. We are all, and I am personally, all for using the law and order and using the judiciary to punish those who committed crimes in Iraq and those who are committing crimes now. But really, to punish people because they believe in something or joined something and they had never committed anything is very wrong.

And that's why – and we are not talking about 1,000 or 2,000 people or 3,000 or 20,000 or 100,000; no, we are talking about millions of people who were teachers, who were professors, who were members of the army, who were members of the foreign service, technocrats, who were the engine of Iraq, who became the engine. I had to join the Baath party. You can't. You can't, as the communist parties in the Eastern Bloc. So this is what is happening. It's unfortunate, we couldn't – we have failed in building what we call the rule of law and real democracy so far. And this is the truth of the matter. Thank you.

Q: Jaffar al Rikadi, I'm an intern at Brookings Institution. Dr. Allawi, thank you for your speech. In the questions and answers, you made a claim that we're moving away from national reconciliation. And you also said that the state has made enemies of you, has made enemies of many others. Al-Tawafuq bloc has recently announced that it's joined the government, and in the last week their ministers joined the prime ministers in one of their meetings. We hear reports from Baghdad by journalists that thousands of ex-Baathists have been recruited in the army and in the police, but also in the Sons of Iraq groups.

And Prime Minister Maliki, as far as I can see, has been true to his promise when he came that he would face the militias. Clearly he has done so in Basra, in Ramallah, and in other areas. Surely all these examples are examples of an Iraqi government, however flawed, however many problems we do face, and I agree with you, that it is one of an Iraqi government that is moving forward and that is trying to bring about national reconciliation rather than the opposite?

Q: Mervat Hatem. I wanted to ask you to elaborate on what you think are the obstacles to political reconciliation.

DR. ALLAWI: Sorry, the what?

Q: The obstacles to reconciliation since you connect political reconciliation with the U.S. withdrawal, military withdrawal from Iraq. And then my second related question is what role would or can the U.S. play in this process of political reconciliation and that would require its continued presence in Iraq?

DR. ALLAWI: No, the – I'll answer your question first and then come to your comments.

What I said is we need the right conditions linked to negotiating time for the withdrawal of American forces. One of the conditions I'll tell of, and one of the conditions are external, related to the region, the internal condition is reconciliation, this is our view, and also the building of institutions of Iraq, non-sectarian institutions, military-free institutions. Secondly, outside and Iraq and the region is to develop a kind of an environment that would stop the interferences of neighboring countries in Iraq's affairs after the dismantlement of the state of Iraq after the war. So these are the conditions that I think should be addressed.

And the United States could do a lot because the United States is a partner of Iraq and partner of the Iraq people and a partner of the government. And the United States have used the surge, and the lives of the American soldiers could provide the right conditions for the government to make use of what has happened to further the political gains. The surge provides for the military side and the security sides, and the government would provide all the security from the political gains.

So we are interested really in having the commitment, the continued commitment of the international community directed through the United Nations, directed through the Arab League, through the Gulf Cooperation Council, through the Islamic Conference Organization to create such an environment in the region, and to help and assist the process of reconciliation, as did the Arab League when they convened the only and only conference for political reconciliation in Iraq. So we are concerned with two things: the conditions and the time framework. The time that should be negotiated should be linked to the conditions.

On your comments, let me tell you the following. We are against a sectarian Iraq. We cannot believe, we cannot see a Sunni, a Shi'i, a Kurdish composition of Iraq. Iraq was never like this; yes, there were pockets and governments in Iraq that used to practice sectarianism, pockets. But that wasn't as widespread as it is now. The part of al-Tawafuq have gone back under pressure to the government. We have been losing people killed, the settlers have been killed, the families had been killed, but we didn't go back to the government. We are still in the political process. We are defending freedom. The militias are still roaming the cities of Iraq, and the ministers and the institutions of Iraq.

And if you'd like to come to Iraq, we'll take you around and we can show you what is happening. In Basra there are 13 kinds of militias, 13 different militias in Basra; only one was attacked. The rest are still in Basra, operating in Basra. If it wasn't for the help of the United States Army in Basra, the first battalion of the army threw their arms and surrendered and left. This is a fact; it's not fiction. If it wasn't the intervention of the, and the backing of the Army of the United States, nobody could stand to these militias.

The institutions, and this is, I am quoting here the Pentagon, the Pentagon Report, which I read, I saw it and read on the CNN. It says, "10 percent only of the Iraqi armed forces," this is the Pentagon, not the Iraqi minister of defense, the Pentagon and the United States, it says, "10 percent only of the Iraqi armed forces are eligible to shoulder the responsibility." That's not me, this is not Maliki, not the minister of defense in Iraq; this is the Pentagon says it. "It is a well known fact that the police are not – a substantial part of the police are militia." I tell you, we lost thirteen people in the last elections. They were assassinated candidates in Iraq. Thirteen people were assassinated. Hundreds of people were arrested after this all – Iraqi list and supporters of the Iraqi list, hundred.

We wrote letter with names to the multinational forces, to the United States, to the Iraqi government, to the Arab League. Nothing happened.

The only thing that happened, a committee came to Iraq and declared that the irregularities were so gross in the elections that the only way out is to form a government of national unity. That's it. And this, of course, they had two members of the Arab League and it was a Canadian commission which had no powers whatsoever. Well, this is the reality in Iraq. I am not accusing anybody. We all, we including myself and all the current leaders, we have failed in creating what we promised the Iraqi people that we are going to do.

We failed in creating the law, the rule of law. And we are still now, until now, failed in creating democracy. Well, look, I'm telling you in a country which enjoys rule of law and enjoys democracy, would you have millions leaving the country? Would you have millions living in the prostitution now, according to the U.N., a report, fourteen-year-old Iraqi girls have gone into prostitution in Syria and elsewhere to live? This is law and order. This is the police. This is the reconciliation. This is the Tawafuq going to the – some of them going back to the cabinet. This is not the answer.

The answer is all of us have to work very hard, have to work together, have to build a balanced political process that will be inclusive of all Iraqis, excluding those terrorists and those who committed the crimes against the Iraqi people. And the rest should be normal citizens of Iraq. And they should participate in building the country, but we are not trusting with each other. We are not joking about each other; we are just pointing out the failures in the Iraqi system that we, all of us, need to rectify. So it's not a matter of who got into the ministry and who left and who was going to be a minister and who is not going to be. Thank you very much.

Q: Good to see you, Ayad. Dr. Allawi. My question is, you talked about reconciliation, about institution building in Iraq. One of the cornerstones of building democracy in Iraq is the existence of national political parties. And right now, we don't have it. Mostly, they are ethnic political parties, religious and this, and probably you are one of the few politicians in Iraq who could use your capital in building or founding these national political parties. I think it's –

DR. ALLAWI: Unfortunately, you are the only one. We have Sunna, Shi'a, Christians, everybody. (Chuckles.)

Q: I know, but I want this, okay, to be probably the nucleus for a national political party to be in Iraq. And probably it will be your legacy for building democracy in Iraq. And I think you are one, as I told you from all the political leaders in Iraq, you are the only one who could do that. It will be your political party of liberal, secular, national people opposing, for example, Islamic religious, from whatever person, some federalist people or non-federalist people. So I don't know, probably you could use the help of the Carnegie Endowment to do these things. (Laughter.) Really, Dr. Allawi, it will be your legacy for Iraq and it will be the foundation of democracy. I can't look for any democratic government throughout history without national political parties. The last national political party, fortunately or unfortunately, was either the communist or the Baathist, and there is none out right now.

MS. OTTAWAY: You know somebody's going to vote for you. (Chuckles.)

Q: Thank you, Dr. Allawi. My name is Mohammed Ihssan. Previously in one of your answers, you stated that the leadership of the countries that have suicide bombers in Iraq cannot be blamed for the actions of those insurgents. Who then, in your opinion, should be held responsible and what are the –

DR. ALLAWI: Sorry, what did I say?

Q: You said that the countries that have suicide bombers, such as Saudi Arabia, cannot be blamed for those suicide bombers. Who then, in your opinion, should be held responsible and what are the steps that need to be taken to giving birth to a new and safer Iraq?

DR. ALLAWI: You have heard of bin Laden, I think. He's a Saudi citizen, but was he asked by the Saudi government to go and do the criminal act he did on New York? What I said, what I said exactly is this, that governments should not be held responsible until you have proof that they are perpetrating these activities. And I give the example that in Lebanon, in Nahr al-Bared Iraqis were found fighting with the al Qaeda. I don't think Mr. Talabani sent them. I don't believe Mr. Maliki sent them. There are people that have their convictions, whether right or wrong. To them, maybe it's right; for me, it's wrong. This is exactly what I said. I didn't say that I don't hold these people responsible.

When you decide to blow up yourself, you must be either deranged or have something else, but you can't say that the government or the king so and so and the government and the minister so and so have decided that they are pushing people to kill themselves and be suicide bombers. The trend – and let me give you an example, maybe I'll make myself more clear. In Iraq, we didn't have ladies suicide bombers; the trend now is increasing.

Q: Decreasing?

DR. ALLAWI: Increasing, increasing, and one lady was caught in Jordan, an Iraqi lady. She wanted to blow up – uh-huh.

Q: The Four Seasons.

DR. ALLAWI: The Four Seasons Hotel. When they asked her, she said, well, I lost my children and husband. I have nothing left, so I'm going to blow up myself. So these people have got something that is not – I went to Germany on a state visit. And three from al-Qaeda wanted to kill me. They had been on trial and last week the court decided that they are to be sentenced to imprisonment. I never knew them. I never knew their names, but they were planning to kill me while I was visiting Germany.

As far as your comments, thank you very much for this, but I am proud that we – I am a Shiite myself, and I am proud of being a Shiite. But I am an Iraqi before I am a Shiite. I have friends from all the Iraqi spectrum: Christians, Muslims, Shi'a, religious, non-religious, Kurds, Turkmens, Arabs, and the only Iraq in my mind that I can see is an Iraq where it does not make any distinction between an Iraqi and another based on the ethnic or political or religious or whatever background. That's why the system has failed and the sectarian system is going to fail, and the Iraqi people are rejecting the sectarian system.

And those who are trying to revive the sectarian system are going to fail, regardless of whether they are ministers or not because the Iraqi people are sick and tired of this game. And even those who advocated sectarianism against us and raised their arms against us and shot out people and killed our people, now they are talking about Iraqi nationalism and a non-sectarian Iraq. They're the same people, which we think is a big gain for Iraq, a big gain forward, a big gain for the stability of the country. And this is the only way forward. If Iraq, God forbid, goes on the route of Shi'ism, Kurdish, and Sunnism, I assure you the wars will rage for turf, wealth, resources, and it will spill over to the world, believe me. That's why we have to close ranks.

We are Shi'a, you are a Sunni, you pray like this, you pray like this, you pray I don't know; it's up to you and God. It's none of our business. You go to church, you go to mosque; it's not our business, it's your business. This is how we should be. As far as you are an Iraqi citizen, you have the protection of the state and you can enjoy whatever there is in the state as an Iraqi, regardless. Now, it's not. You are this sect, you are this sect, you can have your rights; if you are not, God help you. (Chuckles.) God help the Christians, especially in Iraq.

MS. OTTAWAY: We have two, one here, and then another.

Q: Thank you, Mr. Allawi for coming here and having this presentation. And also, I'm very proud of you for you have done so much for the refugees in Iraq, both Iranians as well as Iraqis. And I have a question, and that is why the Iranian regime is infiltrating and really creating so much crisis in Iraq while, as a neighbor, stability in Iraq should mean a lot in Iran? Thank you.

Q: My name is Henri Barkey from Lehigh University. Given what you just said to the previous question, does this mean that you don't accept the federal nature of the Iraq state, of the Iraqi state and the current constitution, that you would like to change that?

DR. ALLAWI: No, the federalism with the Kurd[s] was agreed, and the maybe what has not been agreed yet is the extent and the geography of this federation. And this has matured through the kids in Iraq. We tried to bomb the Kurds, and we bombed them out and we used chemical weapons. And I belonged to the pan-Arab national movement in Iraq, and we were ultra fascist. I was then young and in medical school.

But this proved all to be wrong, and we decided that we should change course and we should be more civilized and adopt a more constructive attitude towards our brothers, the Kurds, and we agreed gradually. And the Kurds were given their first rights under the Baath party in 1970, this, the "Hukm al-thati"; the decentralization of Kurdistan. So the issue of the Kurds has matured with time and it is ripe now. Maybe there are differences on the geography on the extent of the federation.

On the rest of Iraq, it's not a matter we are against federation or with federation. What we have said, Iraq is not living in a luxury now. And the Iraqis are not living in luxury. They don't enjoy life as you enjoy it here. Every single day we used to lose 100 – 1500, 1600 people. Now we lose that each month. So now we lose 400, 500, 600 people every day. We don't have proper hospitals. We don't have electricity. We don't have water. Disease is ripe. If you get in sick in Iraq, you don't know where to go. So there is a problem of stagnation of services, and there is a problem of security.

And there is a problem of confusion. Even now, those who signed the constitution, they say, well, here we have that wrong. We did it in two months. Have we heard of a constitution that can be concluded in two months? Really, what we said is that we need stability first, apart from Kurdistan because it has matured over the years, the kids; the rest, let us wait. Let's have stability and let the Iraqi people be comfortable, and then they can decide through democratic means whether they want – maybe they want to make Iraq 100 countries, not one or three. Maybe they want to make each governor of two – it is up to them. This is their country, they have to decide, but they have to decide under the normal circumstances and then go, this is our view. That's why we say that some people now are hasty. They want to make this federation as soon as possible. It's wrong, as we did the constitution in two months and then we regretted it. Well, we did it in two months.

We did this cabinet, putting Sunni here and Shi'a here, and now people are regretting this, how we did this. We made the mistake. We need to have stability first and then go into the details. And that's why, when yesterday the parliament passed the law to get the elections of the governors moving, because the president vetoed the decision, he says I don't accept this because there is a problem on the issue of Kirkuk and the federation in Kirkuk. And we don't know when the elections will take place. With the right pressure, appropriate pressure, maybe it will take place in the next few days and then the law will be passed, otherwise next year sometime, god knows when. This is just an example of where we are now vis-à-vis the federation.

On the issue of Iran, I personally helped the Iranian refugees in Iraq and asked them to refrain from intervention in Iranian affairs, internal affairs. And I said, you are guests of the Iraqi people and you are most welcome here. And they gave us their arms, which we used and I turned to the Iraqi army. And this was really to protect the refugees in Iraq, the Iranian refugees in Iraq, and also to show the Iranians that we have no bad intention against internal and domestic issues inside Iran. And we expected Iran to reciprocate, but unfortunately, the stage was not set to create a balanced relationship between Iraq and Iran, between Iran and the rest of the Middle East, the Arab countries and the Arab Gulf states.

And of course, Iran has problems with the United States, with Europe, with this nuclear thing. So all this is complicating issues between Iran and Iraq and between Iran and the Arab countries. We have, as you know, the problems of the islands of the United Arab Emirates, for example. That's why we think that regardless of the Americans meeting the Iranians, we Iraqis, and we Arabs, need to sit down with the Iranians face-to-face and on realistic terms and clear terms explain ourselves and ask the Iranians to explain themselves. We need to build – you know, there is geography in this city, a relationship with Iran, which we cannot ignore, we shouldn't ignore.

But we do not accept interferences in internal affairs, as they don't accept interferences internally, and we do not accept it. The Iraqi people are very proud people, and we don't accept this. One of the reasons why I fought Saddam is because he signed the 1975 agreement, giving away the rights of Iraq and the waterways and Shatt al Arab. But I think this is in a state of ringing the war tone in the region. I think we should have a short dialogue, but it should be a clear-cut dialogue. I can tell you when the Iranian ambassador came to see me just before His Excellency, the president of Iran, visited Iraq saying that the president wanted to meet with me, I said, I am not part of the executive. I am just an ordinary member of the Iraqi public. He said, no, he wants to meet you. I said that if he's ready to discuss the files between us, between Iraq and you, I am more willing not to see him here. I am willing to go to Iran to discuss these and close these files and start a normal

relationship. But if it's just for a photo opportunity, this is not my interest and it's not after this at all.

So I think this mentality should prevail, both in the Arab world and in Iran. And we have to recognize each other and the rights of each other to live, and for all the peoples in the region to live in a dignified way away from wars and fights and operations and so on. I think the relationship is unbalanced. I think that relationship is as it stands and the war is not going to be a solution. We hear every now and then people advocate new wars in the region; this will only flare up the situation. I think we should sit down and talk face to face and clarify things, and then if nothing happens, then as we say – (Arabic) – then one can take it from there and see what will happen.

Q: Bayanne Surdashi with Middle East Broadcasting Networks. Dr. Allawi, you just talked about the bill that was passed on Tuesday in reference to the provincial elections in the disputed city of Kirkuk. The bill was passed through secret ballots which was not guided by consensus, which upset the Kurds. In turn, the president vetoed the bill. What do you think about that and where do you stand on the issue of Kirkuk? Thank you.

DR. ALLAWI: Well, we have a very clear attitude on Kirkuk. When the first time this issue was raised, I was the prime minister of the country. And both brother Jalal and Masoud came to see me in Baghdad and they said, we need to evoke this and to make it happen. I said, well, we can't do this. What I can do is appoint – you know, I was the only prime minister that had both executive and legislative powers because there was no parliament. I said, the only thing I can do, nothing else, is to appoint a political committee and the chairman of a political committee was acceptable by all Iraqis. And this committee should sit down and I will provide the funds for this committee, as a prime minister, and give them all of the logistics they need and discuss the issue of Kirkuk through a dialogue, healthy dialogue.

And secondly, through taking our friend's point and history to decide why we are discussing Kirkuk and the democracy of Kirkuk and the composition of the population of Kirkuk. And let us agree on one thing to start with, that Kirkuk is an Iraqi city. I have no other offer except this. Either take it or leave it. Well, the next day, they agreed to take it and we formed a committee. And I appointed a person called Hamid Majid Musa, who was the secretary general of the Iraq Communist Party as the head of this commission and allocated funds for their expenditures and gave them the parameters.

And I wrote letters to the United Nations and to the secretary general so the United Nations could be a witness and also to the Arab League and the Islamic Conference organization. Unfortunately, this committee was not allowed later. After I left, the office was almost dismantled and scrapped and was replaced by an executive committee composed of a few of the ministers who were under the control of the prime minister and they can't exercise their thinking because they are ministers and they are – they have to abide by the premier's directions.

For this complicated issue of Kirkuk, day after day, and claims started that those people were Kurds, were deported by Saddam, and that they have to come back. Arabs claim that they were deported and they have to come back and the Turkmen also. And Turkey now is involved in this. So it became a bigger and bigger and bigger issue because, simply, we couldn't face each other in a political sense and agree on this political commission to discuss this and put things in the right context, which would benefit the country that we all belong to.

This is a manifestation of really sectarianism which is going to destroy the country and beyond. And that's why we feel that it is time for the Iraqi people to arise and to denounce sectarianism and to act as Iraqis and to identify themselves as Iraqis and to allow for real democracy to flourish. The issue, of course, of Kirkuk is now in the – is the centerpiece of the conflict; it's not the agreement with the United States. It's the centerpiece and this is – the Shi'a are fighting for it, the Sunnis are fighting, and not the populous.

It's the Shiites and the Sunnis who are in power and we do not represent the Iraqi people as such. We represent ourselves. Even the elections were not really the elections that we all anticipated. That's why I think that this issue is going to remain with us for some time. I hope that with determination we will solve it and I'm sure there is the political will and I'm sure the political will is there and will be there. It will be sorted out and I think things will go back to normal.

MS. OTTAWAY: You can take one more round of questions.

Q: Lucia Worthington, University of Maryland. I wonder how many people actually are benefiting from a democracy there. We talk about the people who've lost the hope. You are saying women are now committing suicide as suicide bombers. Are there other people committing suicide, not as suicide bombers? So who are the beneficiaries to become a part of a democracy there?

DR. ALLAWI: I think we all committed the mistakes, including, of course, the United States, after the war. And I think we have to overcome these mistakes and look into the future and create the right Iraq for everyone. I always, even before the war, I always spoke on the issue of stability and continuity rather than democracy. And I said, democracy will come; stability is essential to democracy. Continuity is essential to democracy. And if we ensure stability, if we ensure continuity, then definitely democracy will come because all of us have indicated that we are fed up with tyranny and dictatorship.

Unfortunately, some policy-makers here saw things from a different perspective. To my delight, in fact, one of the people who opposed what I used to say published a book recently, a very prominent politician here in the United States, and spoke about the issue of stability and continuity versus democracy and that this is the way. And, in a way, he referred to the fact that stability and continuity would lead ultimately to democracy. But then he was antagonistic to this, this theory. That's why we – I believe very strongly that we went into things prematurely. We dismantled the state, we dismantled the institutions.

We put Iraq on the road towards sectarianism. We created this sectarianism and we disenfranchised people and we politicized the deBaathification and other laws as we are politicizing now the anti-terrorist law in Iraq. And we created the host of problems that now we are paying for and the Iraqis are paying for and the Americans are paying for. And this is where we have to work, all of us together. We Iraqis together with the Americans, with the international community, to find solutions and tackle the problems and make the environment safer to everyone. Thank you.

MS. OTTAWAY: I'm afraid we are out of time. We will stop here. Before we conclude the meeting, I'd like to make an announcement because clearly this is a group that has an interest in Iraq. On Thursday, at lunchtime, there is going to be here the release of the ICG – the International

Crisis Group – report on the Iraqi refugees. And there will be an event and a discussion of the report. We'll be sending out invitations, but I wanted to point out it ahead of time.

Please help me in thanking Dr. Allawi for his thoughts today.

(Applause.)

(END)