

My Trip to America and My Burning Questions

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Brief Analysis

Editor's note: *The following is a personal essay. The author is currently a Member of Iraq's Parliament. Previously, due to his public stances against extremism, sectarianism, and continued conflict with Israel, his two sons were assassinated, his party's offices closed, and he was forced to take temporary refuge in Erbil.*

On election night in the US, Islamic parties and allies of the Iranian regime were sure they already knew the winner and thought nothing could surprise them. But the outcome was the opposite of what they expected. The news came the following morning, like an earthquake. Its impact on Arab and Iranian Islamists was like that of a thunderbolt. They felt that the gates of hell would open before them. Most of them, out of fear and trepidation, sent telegrams of congratulations and blessings to President-elect Donald Trump.

Yes, fear hangs over the criminals, the terrorists, the extremists, the war-mongering bigots who reject peace, the violators of human rights, the people who despise women to the point where they see them as goods to be bought and sold, as if they themselves have never had mothers, daughters, or sisters, and simply see women as war booty or a means of satisfying passing whims.

I boarded a plane for a long journey, which I spent buried in my own thoughts and questions. What would be the new future of Iraq and the region? Has the time come for America to leave, after turning the region and its people into firewood, removed of its identity, for an Islamist Nero to burn as criminality, terrorism, and Islamo-fascism - the legacy of Arab nationalist fascism - spread?

It is criminally naive of some politicians to try and convince us that murder and execution under the knives of Daesh is an unforgivable terrorist act while simultaneously demonstrating that killing civilians, secularists, Jews, Christians, and Yezidis is a crime that can be forgiven.

I asked myself: what should I do in Washington? The Trump administration has not yet been formed, and Americans are happy and busy with the holidays. Despite that, I told myself "No, I will go - who knows?" Maybe Trump will be a strong leader who can create peace. Can Trump be the saviour of the peoples and societies in the Middle East that have been deprived of their humanity and a dignified life? Kurds and other peoples dream of attaining their natural rights, as laid down by divine and international law, of which they have been deprived by fascists, whether religious, Arab nationalist, Sunni, or Shia.

I woke up to the sound of the aircraft beginning its descent into Washington, D.C. Later, at a meeting with a group of

those following Iraqi, Iranian, and regional issues at the Washington Institute, I laid out my questions and my fears.

My fears were only heightened by the truck attack that turned a joyful Christmas celebration into a tragedy, creating new victims of terrorism as had happened previously in Nice. The assassination of the Russian ambassador to Ankara quickly competed with the attack for broadcast coverage and footage time.

News of other terrorist attacks alarmed me: an attack in the Jordanian city of Karak, one in Egypt, one in Yemen, and a double bombing targeting the headquarters of the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (KDP-I) in the village of Koi Senjak, Iraqi Kurdistan. This last one reminded me of how the Iranian Revolutionary Guard had assassinated Kurdish Iranian opposition activists, killing KDPI leader Dr. Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou in Vienna in 1989.

As the pilot announced that we were soon to land, I thought of the recent past. I was horrified by the capabilities of the Islamists who, in a cowardly crime, killed my only two children, Ayman and Jamal, and blew up my house in Baghdad. Adding insult to injury, they then canceled my right to a safe house in the Green Zone with an order from the Prime Minister: not under the rule of Saddam or Daesh, but under my Islamist friend Nouri Al-Maliki - the Prime Minister of Iraq!

I thought of how Iraq and all its peoples – including children, women, and the elderly -, have the right to live in peace with other peoples in the region and the world, enjoying art, knowledge, and life. I remembered how they made it halal to kill Jews, Christians, Baha'is, and Yezidis, then permitted cutting the throats of Sunnis and Shiites, announcing in resonant tones: "Let us embark on jihad at all times and in all places!" ❖

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