

*ORSAM MINUTES OF THE MEETING
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ISLAMIC SUPREME COUNCIL OF IRAQ'S PRESIDENT SAYED AMMAR AL-HAKEM'S SPEECH AT ORSAM ON 19 NOVEMBER 2009

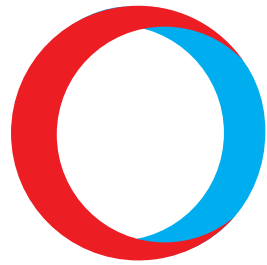
IRAK İSLAM YÜKSEK KONSEYİ BAŞKANI SAYIN
SEYYİD AMMAR EL-HEKİM'İN ORSAM'DA
19 KASIM 2009'DA YAPTIĞI KONUŞMA

الكلمة التي القاها السيد عمار الحكيم
رئيس المجلس الأعلى الاسلامي

لدى زيارته مركز (اورسام) بتاريخ ١٩ تشرين الثاني/ نوفمبر ٢٠٠٩

ORTADOĞU STRATEJİK ARAŞTIRMALAR MERKEZİ
CENTER FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STRATEGIC STUDIES
مركز الشرق الاوسط للدراسات الاستراتيجية





ORSAM

MINUTES OF
THE MEETING



STRATEGIC INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND INDEPENDENT THOUGHT PRODUCTION

CENTER FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STRATEGIC STUDIES

History

In Turkey, the shortage of research on the Middle East grew more conspicuous than ever during the early 90's. Center for Middle Eastern Strategic Studies (ORSAM) was established in January 1, 2009 in order to provide relevant information to the general public and to the foreign policy community. The institute underwent an intensive structuring process, beginning to concentrate exclusively on Middle affairs.

Outlook on the Middle Eastern World

It is certain that the Middle East harbors a variety of interconnected problems. However, neither the Middle East nor its people ought to be stigmatized by images with negative connotations. Given the strength of their populations, Middle Eastern states possess the potential to activate their inner dynamics in order to begin peaceful mobilizations for development. Respect for people's willingness to live together, respect for the sovereign right of states and respect for basic human rights and individual freedoms are the prerequisites for assuring peace and tranquility, both domestically and internationally. In this context, Turkey must continue to make constructive contributions to the establishment of regional stability and prosperity in its vicinity.

ORSAM's Think-Tank Research

ORSAM, provides the general public and decision-making organizations with enlightening information about international politics in order to promote a healthier understanding of international policy issues and to help them to adopt appropriate positions. In order to present effective solutions, ORSAM supports high quality research by intellectuals and researchers that are competent in a variety of disciplines. ORSAM's strong publishing capacity transmits meticulous analyses of regional developments and trends to the interested parties. With its web site, its books, reports, and periodicals, ORSAM supports the development of Middle Eastern literature on a national and international scale. ORSAM supports the development of Middle Eastern literature on a national and international scale. ORSAM facilitates the sharing of knowledge and ideas with the Turkish and international communities by inviting statesmen, bureaucrats, academics, strategists, businessmen, journalists, and NGO representatives to Turkey.

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November 2009
ORSAM - Ankara



ISCI Leader Sayyed Ammar al-Hakim and an accompanying delegation made an official visit to Turkey. During the visit, al-Hakim held meetings with President Abdullah Gul, PM Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu. Al-Hakim, one of Iraq's leading political figures, joined a round table conference jointly organized by ORSAM and TEPAV in Ankara on November 19, 2009. Here, al-Hakim delivered a speech on Turkish-Iraqi relations before the forthcoming general elections in Iraq. In his speech, al-Hakim discussed Iraq's current political process, political atmosphere, his party's approach towards Iraq's fundamental issues, relations with Turkey and the forthcoming elections in Iraq. In the discussion session, al-Hakim shared his opinions regarding security conditions in post-invasion Iraq, relations with Iran, the Kirkuk issue and the Turkmens. The text below contains al-Hakim's full speech and his answers to questions.

Sayyed Ammar al-Hakim:

Bismillah al-Rahman al-Rahim.

Dear friends, ladies and gentlemen, this conference is a great opportunity to discuss mutual relations between Turkey and Iraq with you. I will base my speech on this framework. Then we will discuss the issues during the question and answers session.

A free, independent, stable, developed and united Iraq

Some Iraqi groups are afraid that the painful incidents of past will reoccur, some look to the future, some try not to lose the opportunities they were given in the past, and one other group is concerned both for the past and for the future. Iraq's democratic experience has raised fears in the region. Some emerging political groups and formations in Iraq concern regional states as well. The restructuring of Iraq evolved in the chains of these fears and worries. At the same time the presence of multiple foreign forces in Iraqi territories was another matter of concern for regional states. If we draw the main lines of Iraq's new political structure independently of these concerns, we could summarize it in five essential points: freedom, independence, stability, development and unity. We have struggled hard to achieve freedom in our country. More than 50 satellite channels, more than 100 free and independent newspapers and journals and tens of local radio and TV stations have become available in Iraq within six years. It has been said that granting political freedom has led to aimlessness in resolving issues since the opposition groups are free to say whatever they want. Despite everything, and especially when

we compare it to the old dictatorship, we can see that these freedoms are an important milestone for Iraq's transition period.

Iraq's independence and freedom are the most important objective of every Iraqi group and formation. We struggled hard to accelerate this process and to achieve freedom. It is well known that Iraq's administration was reassumed by the Iraqis from the occupation forces one and a half years prior to the date foreseen. We have been through a variety of processes within only six years: the transitional administration council era, then the transitional government, the Iraqi interim government and finally, the current central government of Iraq. We have signed treaties in order to make the occupation forces withdraw from our country. As a result of these efforts, occupation forces have withdrawn their troops from the city centers as a start. Now we are waiting for them to leave all of Iraq.

We hope for new openings in international relations, but we do not want military intervention. We want to establish relationships based on mutual interests. We want to establish relations in the fields of politics, economy, technology, science and culture. We want to arrange security partnerships to prevent international terrorism, but these goals must be achieved without the presence of foreign forces on Iraq's territory.

Maintaining national security is the third aspect of the new political structure. As you know, Iraq has suffered greatly from terrorism. All groups have been subject to the war crimes, mass murder and slaughter that the UN has described. Hundred thou-

sands of Iraqis have died, been injured or forced to flee as a result of these incidents. We try to analyze the nation's terror incidents from a political perspective in order to build a strong, independent structure that can maintain security and protect its people. We believe that the roots of Iraq's security problems are not only criminal, but that violence is triggered by political reasons, too. Today, peaceful and conciliatory openings are flourishing in Iraq. We have made important steps to make peace and to reduce violence. We are happy to see that we are learning how to make peace and reduce violence, but at the same time we feel sorry for all the innocent lives that were wasted for political interests. We think that security measures have developed in recent years. In the past, we were wondering why there were no bombings today. Specialists were researching how and why violence was interrupted or reduced for a specific period of time. Today, we are asking why "Black Wednesday" or "Bloody Sunday" had to happen. That means daily life is normalizing and security levels are relatively better now. These are positive developments. Full security in Iraq has yet to be achieved, but we are working toward this, and we believe that success will be achieved through the efforts of the Iraqi Army.

We also struggle to protect a united Iraq. The real achievement is to protect and defend Iraq's unity. Only in this way can we maintain political stability and protect the interests of all Iraqis. Iraq's unity is the unity of its people. Iraq's unity is the protection of the rights of its nations and organizations. We believe that a single-party government or a single-group government will fail to govern Iraq.

Iraq needs to be governed by all its elements. Our motto is, “Everybody wins.” We do not want any Iraqis to feel frustrated. Everyone has understood that the only result of policies of violence will be conflict in Iraq. We want to establish a balance of power and for this reason we have introduced reconciliatory democracy. It is embarrassing how long it takes to pass a law in our parliament. The process of resolving many issues takes a long time, but we see this as a transition period leading to reconciliation and unity. This unity can only be achieved by a strong Iraq. A strong Iraq needs a strong and accomplished central capitol providing equal opportunities to all its provinces. At the moment we are trying to maintain unity and national peace and to create political consensus. At the same time we are trying to solidify the administrative structure and secure a strong central government by increasing its activities in Iraq’s various provinces.

We see Turkey as a regional strategic partner

We need to work hard to develop, reorganize and restructure Iraq. During this process we should consider the security situation, peace among Iraqis and Iraq’s goals in regional and international terms. We need to focus on Iraq’s reconstruction. In order to achieve this goal we need the support of Iraq’s friends. We need their help. We see Turkey as Iraq’s regional strategic partner. We should establish a balanced mutual relationship based on common history and interests. Mutual major interests should be protected. This way we can make contribution to the stability of the region. The experiences of the Republic of Turkey set a pattern for Iraq. Turk-

ish democracy has adopted beneficial aspects of European democracy and made them compatible with its own nation, its eastern culture and its circumstances. It sets a great example for leaders like us. To us, the structures, organizations and democratic openings in Turkey are gateways to peace and security. Turkey’s role in the Arab-Islamic world and in the region is growing, enabling Turkey to reassume its historical role. Throughout history, Turkey has contributed to the solutions of regional issues and acted neutrally. This attitude indicates that Turkey is a beneficial element in international relations and in relations with the West. Turkey is the bridge that connects the Islamic world to the West. We appreciate and support Turkey’s EU membership process. Turkey’s membership will make Iraq a neighbor to the EU. This is a great advantage for Iraq and the Arabic world. Turkey and Iraq share a common history. They are partners in terms of politics, geography, economy and business. Iraq is one of Turkey’s major trade partners since they have common economic interests. Commercial relations between Turkey and Iraq have already reached 5 billion dollars, but this could increase to 20-25 billion dollars depending on commercial agreements. We are here to improve relations between Iraq and Turkey. This is an important opportunity for us to meet Turkish leaders and this elite audience here.

A Strong Parliament and Government will be achieved with the contributions of all parties

We believe that the coming elections will be a breakthrough for Iraq. Elections are the indicators of a strong and successful democracy in every country. We don’t favor postpone-

ment of the elections. I believe that eight months are enough to reach consensus among Iraqi groups. An unexpected situation developed while we were waiting for the President and his deputies to approve the law enacted by the chamber of deputies. Deputy President Tariq al-Hashimi chose to veto the law. Yet we were expecting him to approve the law and discuss the problematic paragraphs in the parliament in order to hold elections on schedule. This would also open the law to a discussion with the participation of all groups. It is not possible to satisfy everyone in a state like Iraq made up of many different ethnic and sectarian factions. That's why each group is expressing and defending its own wishes. But other people's wishes should be considered as well. In order to please everyone, each group must compromise and make concessions for the sake of the other groups. We were convinced that the electoral law was able to maintain balance and that we can hold elections immediately. Necessary amendments could be made afterwards. We still think the same way.

As of October 19, 2009, the electoral law is being debated in the chamber of deputies for the second time. This is because our Kurdish brothers, their partners and some other groups have objections. This has brought us back to where we began. Because of these discussions the elections can be postponed, and we may have a gap in the legislative process which can jeopardize security conditions. Coalitions are established for the first time in Iraq. They include all of Iraq's ethnic groups, and this is very pleasant. We are members of the Iraqi National Accord Group, which includes fifty different Iraqi political factions.

This block embraces Arabs, Persians, Kurds, Turkmen, Shiites, Sunnis, and Christians, conservatives, nationalists, bureaucrats and civilians. We hope that this accord will become one of the cornerstones of Iraq's political structure.

This list is ready for legitimate, transparent elections. It will contribute to Iraq's security, stability and new political process. After the elections, we will work to build a broad and inclusive national front. This front will include the representatives from all groups. A strong parliament, a strong government and a strong decision-making body will be formed with the contribution of all groups. We always approve the partnership of different powers. A power that emerges out of consensus and cooperation is the strongest of all.

The Iraqi constitution prohibits the presence of a terrorist group that poses threat to any other country. The efforts carried out by the Turkish and Iraqi governments are to prevent the Turkish nation and other neighbors from the attacks of armed terrorist organizations. We want Iraq to become the envoy of peace and friendship in the Middle East. We don't want Iraq to become a matter of concern for any country, and we need the support of our neighbors to achieve this goal.

Iraq after the withdrawal of US Troops

We hope that the withdrawal of alien forces will not create a security problem in Iraq. Today, national forces are ruling our cities without the assistance of alien forces. If we can find the balance between all groups in peace, if we can build a base to secure eve-

ryone's rights, no chaos will emerge in Iraq. I believe that mutual understanding, constructive debates, tolerance and showing concern to other's opinions are the roads that lead to solution. Foreign presence is not a solution. Other than their assistance, foreign forces have made many mistakes as well in the last six years. Even their politicians have admitted this fact. Now Iraq will be reorganized, but we are not concerned, and we hope to maintain security.

Federalism Debates and Relations with Iran

Federalism is the constitutional right of all Iraqis, and it is their choice to practice or cancel federalism. ISCI has granted this right to its citizens in recent years, but today federalism is not our priority. It depends on the will of the Iraqis.

Iraq and Iran share a 1400 kilometer border. We can't ignore the fact that Iraq and Iran share common history and interests, just as we do with Turkey. No one can oppose or criticize Iraq for being regional partners with Turkey. Turkey is neighbor, a powerful state and its policies are in favor of Iraq's interests. The same goes for Iran as well. Iran is a powerful state and a neighbor of Iraq. It would be unwise to cease relations with Iran. Iraq shouldn't be questioned for establishing relations with Turkey and Iran. But that noble Arab state should be questioned for not establishing balanced relations with the rest of the Arabic World. Iraqis have made a great deal of effort to establish connections. We have great respect for the Turkmen and Kurdish communities in Iraq, but we are an Arab state, and we are proud of our Arab roots.

Throughout history Iraq has had Arab identity and will continue to do so. Iraq also embraced other identities with great respect and secured their rights. Today, there are different ethnic elements in Turkey, but Turkish identity is the essential reference. I believe the same can be applied to Iraq, too. No one should be upset when we proclaim our Arab identity.

Iraq's opening to the Arab World needs the efforts of Iraqis. Iraq should clear their concerns convince them that Iraq is posing no threat to anyone. Arab states should take steps as well. Cooperation between Iraq and Arab states will build strong relations and provide Arabic support to Iraq. This will maintain balance in the region. We are taking steps to this end. Iraq doesn't want to become a part of regional arguments. Iraq doesn't want to take sides. Iraq wants coherence and sharing. Iraq wants to establish relations based on mutual benefits. That's why we need to establish good relations with Turkey, Iran and others. We hope everybody will respect this point o view.

Turkmens and Kirkuk

How could I give a speech in Turkey without mentioning the Turkmen of Iraq? We see the Turkmen as one of the essential elements of Iraq. I'm honored to be accompanied by two Turkmen representatives in the chamber of deputies. I also feel honored for having three Turkmen representatives in the ISCI. This indicates how much importance we attach to the Turkmen and how much we value them. I want to mention that we will always support them. We can't achieve success without the contribution of different elements. Now that

we are trying to develop formulas on how to protect the rights of Christian and Shabak minorities, how are we supposed to ignore the Turkmens who are one of the essential elements of Iraq? We will always value them, respect them, protect their rights and stay on their side.

Kirkuk is the small Iraq. I refer to Kirkuk as a bunch of roses. Kirkuk is a bouquet that contains every color and beauty. This is how we see Kirkuk. Kirkuk is made up of different elements that get along well, and will continue to do so. We will always support different ethnic and sectarian groups and will try to maintain balance. We will do our best to preserve

Kirkuk as the beautiful prototype of Iraq. We have to stop conflict immediately and learn to see through our hearts and souls and hear one other's voices. Everyone's rights will be protected by common solutions. We need to build an environment where everyone in Kirkuk can keep their place and status. We can set a pattern for Iraq by making Kirkuk a center of peace and harmony. There are certain local and regional sensitivities. We always knew that we have to consider regional concerns to maintain balance in Kirkuk.

I'd like to end my speech now. Thank you to everyone.

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