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ORSAM

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## **HAMOUDI: THE PARLIAMENT WILL NEVER LET ANYONE USURP ITS POWER!**

**Humam Baqir Hamoudi**



One of the significant figures in Iraqi politics, Humam Baqir Hamoudi was born in 1952 in Baghdad. He completed his undergraduate education at the Psychology Department of the Literature Faculty at Baghdad University in 1975 and received his master's degree from the Psychology Department of the Faculty of Education at the same university. Hamoudi did his PhD at the Department of Islamic Economics of Baghdad University. Hamoudi has published articles on politics, philosophy, religion, human rights and convergence of civilizations. Hamoudi worked as the Chairman of the Committee that drafted the Iraqi Constitution in 2005, the Chairman of the Constitution Review Committee between 2006 and 2010 and the Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Relations between 2010 and 2014. Having been a member of the Iraqi Parliament since 2006, Hamoudi is the First Deputy Speaker of the Iraqi Parliament as well as being a prominent figure of the Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council.

**ORSAM: First of all, we would like to speak about ISIS which has become one of the most prominent issues that occupy the agenda of the Middle East and a severe threat for all states. What are the roots of and the current situation about ISIS? Is it possible to eliminate ISIS in a short time?**

**Humam Hamoudi:** As you have stated, this evil which appeared in the region was actually evolved out of the region and grew stronger with foreign support. The main idea of this movement takes its roots from this region and its people. This idea is called *khawārij*. This structuring also includes the ideas of Salafi movement. That is why this movement created a tremendous impression and had an influence on the people. Especially the failure of the leaders in these regions, the corruption which was widespread across the countries and the unlawful practices of the governments aroused interest to this movement. In addition, people in the Middle East considered the leaders of certain countries as Israel's agents since they could not resist Israel. Some nations

started to resist because of the internal disturbance in their country. For example, Palestine and Lebanon started to resist. Another circle was influenced by this movement and adopted a manner which opposed the people. This movement determined its direction as a reaction to the attitudes of some authorities in Egypt as in the example of Sayyid Qutb. This war dates back to an old distorted view; thus will not end easily. There are rich countries which support this terrorist group in the region. Some actors misused this movement and started sectarian violence. Certain people seized the power after the Arab Spring, which risked Israel's safety. Therefore, it started to see this movement as a way to look after its own interests. This movement serves for Israel since the conflicts between Israel and the West changes direction and internal conflicts break out. The leaders of this movement are narrow-minded and inexperienced in the politics. This movement is open to intricacy and disturbance since some of its leaders have a dark past. That is why not the people that supported this movement

but its leaders are accused of being intelligence agencies of Israel and other Western countries. The involvement of the West will not solve this problem. On the contrary, a new war will break out between Muslims and the West. This problem will last much longer if the people do not solve it themselves.

**ISIS is not the problem of only our region. The West is also afraid of ISIS. There is also the problem of foreign fighters coming from Europe and other countries.**

According to the general opinion in Iraq, Western countries help Iraq and Turkey does not cooperate enough in this respect. A very similar situation was also seen before in Syria since terrorists penetrated from Syria to Iraqi lands during 2006-2007. When the conflicts started in Syria, terrorists coming from various countries, especially from Europe and Asia, started to penetrate from Turkey to Iraq. We hope that Turkey will take firm steps in this sense and we are afraid that this threat will damage it.

**A coalition was formed to fight against ISIS with the support of more than 60 countries including Turkey under the leadership of the USA. Turkey tries to fight against ISIS intensely within the scope of this coalition. What can you say about the role of the coalition in its fight against ISIS?**

The coalition has been newly formed. After witnessing the reconnaissance flights and approaches of the coalition towards the target points, we are of the opinion that the coalition does not want to or is not in a hurry to end this crisis. On the contrary, we think that the USA-backed international coalition tries to continue this crisis. The reason is that this crisis is not dangerous for them, they make use of it. This region has oil fields, contains a sectarian diversity in itself and stability is assured when Israel exists in this region, which does not serve the interests of Western countries. As in the Iraq-Iran war, Western countries prefer maintaining these crises to ending them in accordance with their own interests.

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**With Russia's involvement in the coalition under the guidance of the USA, we see that a quadripartite mechanism of Russia, Syria, Iran and Iraq was formed. What is the aim of this coalition? How do you think it will be beneficial?**

This quadripartite coalition only shares information for the time being. We wish that this will make further progress so that it can launch operations since Iraq needs support because of its financial problems and other problems like immigration. The continuation of this crisis also creates social problems since our immigrants have nowhere to go. We do not prefer to be on a certain axis while determining

Iraq's domestic and foreign policy. On the contrary, we hope to benefit from all axes and parties. We have an equal distance to every partner that we will cooperate with.

**What is Turkey mainly expected to do in terms of the fight against ISIS? What does Iraq generally expect from Turkey? You are saying that Turkey does not give enough support.**

As Iraq, we want this issue to be a priority for Turkey. However, what we understand from some politicians in Turkey is that Turkey's priorities are the issues of PKK and Bashar al-Assad. ISIS is of secondary importance. We think that this is the only conflictual

point between Iraq and Turkey, which also naturally affect our bilateral relations.

**Let's talk about the internal political developments in Iraq. There is a serious ISIS problem on one hand. On the other hand, there is a small-scale political crisis. The government also makes reform efforts, but the people protests against these reforms. The crisis between Erbil and Baghdad continues. When all these are considered, how do you evaluate the situation of the government and recent developments?**

There is a misperception here. It is perceived that the legislative power delegated its legislative prerogative to the executive power due to the reforms. Non-parliamentary bodies made some decisions. We think that this is a dangerous situation since it keeps the people away from the legislation. As the parliament, we indicated from the very beginning that we support the reforms, but as long as it is put into practice in accordance with the constitution and laws. That is to say, we support these reforms.

However, these should be implemented according to the constitution and regulated by the legislative power. Council of Ministers has no authority to enact laws as the executive power where there is the legislative power, that is, the parliament. This comes under our authority and we never let anyone usurp it. The decision made by the parliament on 2 November 2015 was a warning towards Haider al-Abadi. However, this decision was considered to take back the reform powers given to Abadi even though we stated that we would not give the power, but support from the very beginning. This is clear in certain texts. Reforms can be done, but they should conform to the constitution. The parliament is involved and regulates a law if it is necessary within the scope of reforms. In addition, the religious authority in Najaf demanded Haider al-Abadi to ensure that the decisions made for reforms were approved by the parliament. The reason for this was to ensure that the decisions were binding since these reform decisions will be permanent if regulated as laws.

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**What would you like to say about the last situation of Prime Minister Mr. Abadi? It is now said that he is standing on shaky ground. A lot of names are even mentioned for the new prime minister. Is it possible that Abadi may be replaced? Or will he maintain his position? What are your opinions in this respect?**

There may be such speculations on the State of Law List, but it has not directly been brought to the agenda within the National Coalition. There have been some criticism and problems concerning the reforms and methods that Prime Minister Abadi put forward since the President and the coalition

members do not have any knowledge about the content of this reform and how it will be made. We learn much of it from the media. This necessarily disturbed the president and deputies. The issue of reform is no more Iraq's national problem; it is now a personal issue. That is why not only the national security units, but also several active Iraqi political actors exposed their willingness for launching a parliamentary investigation against the prime minister. Later this situation was perceived as a threat and therefore the vote of confidence was brought to the agenda and presented to the other parties by the State of Law Coalition. Some supported and some others re-



jected this option. Our party, Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, rejected it since first of all; such a step was not going to be healthy while we were busy with Iraq's economic problems, terrorism, fight against ISIS and problem of immigrants. Secondly, the solution to this problem is not as simple as it is seen. It will also lead us to search for an alternative candidate. The Iraqi National Coalition generally refuses the thesis of withdrawing Haider al-Abadi's powers, because it will be difficult to reach a compromise. Instead, we think it is necessary to ensure the coordination among institutions, to preserve the team spirit and sustain exchange of opinions. Our goals will be in this direction for the following period as well. The prime minister has recently started to work in this direction. Three chairs (Presidency, Prime Ministry, and Speakership) organized several meetings with the parties and coalition leaders. As far as we see, the prime minister has started to draw a new line and give more places to coordination. Therefore, the reform issue will cease to be

personal problem and become Iraq's national problem. That is what we hope for.

**On the other hand, another problem that Iraq faces is its relations with Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). What should be done in order to make Erbil-Baghdad relations closer and more intense and also to solve the problems between the two?**

I suppose that the relations are in a better state than in the past. There are two reasons for this. The first reason is that the oil agreement made at the end of 2014 when it is seen that a fair solution was found. As the central government, we adhered to it, but the Kurds did not. Secondly, there are Hoshyar Zebari, Minister of Finance of Kurdish origin and Asil Abdul-Mahdi, Minister of Justice who can be qualified as a friend of Kurds. Since it is your friends who made these decisions, why do not they adhere to these decisions? Also, Erbil's own internal problems changed the focal point. The disagreements with Baghdad became of secondary impor-

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tance. That is why steps can be taken ahead if the agreed solution in 2015 is respected. However, it will be an obligation to resort to other methods if they insist and do not respect the framework of this solution. If we cannot reach a solution and transparency in terms of where and to whom the oil of Iraqi Kurdistan Region will be sold, how much it will bring and where the revenue will go, Baghdad will not undertake anything alone since it is not a compromise, but a necessity. It will be calculated how much Iraqi Kurdistan Region and Baghdad export. This is the only way how financial resources will be provided. This will enforce Kurd-

istan Region to be transparent in its sales amount.

**Kirkuk is one of the most important fundamental issues when it comes to Erbil and Baghdad. It is seen that Kirkuk governor Necmettin Kerim adopts a different manner than both Erbil and Baghdad. What can you tell us more specifically about Kirkuk?**

Reclaiming Kirkuk and Mosul from ISIS is at the top of our priorities. That is why we cannot intervene much in the internal control. Imagine that a house is burning and we will first extinguish the fire and then see what has happened in the rooms.

**We should also talk about Turkmen when Kirkuk is in question. Turkmen draw the greatest attention as the most affected group from ISIS. The latter also invaded Turkmen regions. As a result of which Turkmen were displaced. Most of them migrated to the south or the north. Turkmen also politically fell behind. There was only one Turkmen minister within the parliament. That ministry was also abolished. What can you say about Turkmen?**

There is no effort to move away or weaken Turkmen on purpose. The most important information about Turkmen is that they are divided into two groups as Shiites and Sunnis. They have important personalities in Iraq's history. They played important roles in the opposition before and after Saddam and especially in the Shiite opposition parties. They also adopted some attitudes that made history in the fight against ISIS. Turkmen became the symbol of the fight against ISIS, particularly in Amirli incidents. Turkmen went down in the

history of the region and of Iraq as a source of pride. Tal Afar has an important place in the heart of every Iraqi. The affection towards Turkmen increases gradually as they are in the south. Turkey's policy is also in the same direction. Turkey approached to Shiites and Sunnis equally with a special treatment. That is why I do not think there are efforts to weaken them. The current situation is just temporary. Turkmen are the part of this society and will remain as one of the important nations of Iraqi history also as a part of political change. Turkmen are involved at every point of Iraqi politics. Turkmen take part in every party within the Iraqi National Coalition. Abbas al-Bayati is in the Dawaa Party and Taqi al-Mawla is Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, briefly, Turkmen are everywhere. That is why I do not think there is an effort or purpose to keep Turkmen away.

**Turkey-Iraq relations entered into a phase of positive atmosphere as Haider al-Abadi government. Turkey was the first country to congratulate**

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**the Iraqi government. I really think it is important. The elections were held in Turkey, and a new government will be formed. There comes one-party government. What can you say about the future of Turkey-Iraq relations concerning the elections in Turkey in the following process? Where do you think the relations will lead?**

First of all, congratulations for successfully completing the election process which is the basic requirement of democracy. We wish the results will bring goodness to the people in Turkey and the Middle East. Turkey-Iraq relations were really good during the

prime ministry of Abdullah Gul and the first years of the prime ministry of Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The public welcomed Erdoğan at the airport when he came to visit Iraq during his term as the prime minister, which was a rare occasion since there was a demonstration of strong affection to the prime minister of a foreign country. Commercially speaking, it can be said that Iraq has the highest level of trade relations with Turkey, and this had important consequences such as the importance attached to the Turkish media in Iraq. However, unfortunately, a personal problem arose between the former prime minister of Iraq, Nou-

ri al-Maliki and Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Later a new page was opened with the new period of change in Iraq. Iraqi people make serious efforts so that the relations would be improved. We only wish that Turkey will maintain its relations with Iraq on the governmental basis, because it is possible to mention the entities like Sunnite or Kurdish government when it does politics with other circles. The impact of Iraq's dissolution on the neighboring countries will be bad. Now that the principle of the government in Turkey is justice, it should also act in accordance with this principle when Iraq is concerned. Turkey should act in order to confirm unity, integrity and independence of Iraq. It will not be good if Turkey treats Kurdistan Region specially. As we all know, there are economic and social conflicts in this region. Therefore, special treatment poses a threat to Turkey, Syria and the other countries. Based on all these, AKP (Justice and Development Party) should form an independent, impartial government so that it would increase development

and change the foreign policy.

**Finally, we would like to receive your messages for the Turkish nation and Turkey.**

We wish Turkey will not go through such problems as disintegration, division, civil war, migration, economic and social problems like the other countries in the region. We wish that Turkish people can overcome the domestic problems with experience and wisdom. The government should give more importance to such issues for the continuation of social peace. Turkey should follow its zero problem policy as it did in the past. Turkey should stop creating power by resorting to power since this will cause serious problems for Turkey as in the example of losses in Libya and political problems in Egypt. That is, Turkey should not create enemies. Turkey will gain the support of the people in the region if it creates a more acceptable profile with an attitude which will please everyone.

**Thank you.**

*Turkey should follow its zero problem policy as it did in the past.*

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