

Thank you very much for the kind words. It is always a pleasure to be here in New York. I was walking this afternoon. It reminded me of when I was still working here. It is always a pleasure. During the year I was in the Red Zone, I was not allowed to go even to the garden of the house.

Let me begin, just very shortly and very quickly, with what I did during the first five months when I went there and why I was in the Red Zone.

The Red Zone is by opposition to the Green Zone, which is a very strongly protected area in Baghdad, in which you have all the embassies, the government, the Parliament, and everybody. Why did I choose to be in the Red Zone? When I negotiated myself the resolution that sent me there about working for reconciliation, I noticed that the Iraqi people cannot have access to me if I choose to live in the Green Zone, especially those that were opposing the American occupation by use of force. The only possibility to have access is to live outside of the Green Zone, which I did. So I went immediately after that resolution, dividing the Iraqis into four major groups:

- The first group is the politicians, including the two groups that accepted to participate in the election and those that were opposing to have any political process under occupation. I was talking to everybody.
- The second group is the religious leaders. They have a lot of impact. Iraq is the old Mesopotamia, so you have all kinds of religions. You still have some followers there.
- The third group is the tribes, the leaders of the tribes.
- The fourth group, which is a new group in Iraq, is the civil society and the representatives of other groups taking care of the situation of women and children and others.

So the first five months I was just listening. I received between 150 to 200 people from all sides, just trying to listen, to understand.

I discovered after the five months that the Iraqis are facing a lot of problems. They have an internal problem between them, as Iraqis; then they have a regional problem-they are in a very complicated area; and then an international problem, because of the forces from the United States, the United Kingdom, from all over the world.

One of their internal problems is they don't trust each other at all. Those who were brought to power, the majority of them were living for decades and decades in exile. So a lot of them are animated by a spirit of revenge-"This is *our* time to take revenge." Some are looking for revenge for 12 centuries ago. They don't trust each other.

I, myself, had no problem with any group. I tried to understand, to have a very correct relation with everybody, at the same distance with all groups. Actually, my real problem was much more their relation between themselves. I was so shocked by so many stories.

For example, the Arab League didn't provide security or people working for me, so I hired some Iraqis to work for me. Those Iraqis that I hired, I was insisting on only one thing, that they believe in their own country. So, by chance-it was by chance, I had three Shia-two Sunni, two Christian, some Kurds-a small Iraq-I noticed that the Iraqi people themselves, they are not sectarian at all. They are used to living together. That was not the case with the Iraqi elites.

I was so shocked sometimes when I had to meet some ministers, that when they realized that there was an Iraqi girl or boy with me coming to take some notes, and they realized that his accent talking in Arabic is so different than mine, that he speaks with an Iraqi accent, they took me aside, asking me, according to what they are, "Which sect is he?" If they are Shia, they would like to know if he is Sunni, and vice versa. They don't want to talk in front of someone from the other side. Those are the elites. Very strongly sectarian. Each one believes that they should resolve the problem in his favor, and you have just to try to bring the others.

I talked to all kinds of people, because I was so clear that I was going to talk to all Iraqis-except for only one group that I was very clear from the beginning, those that have a project going beyond Iraq, meaning Al Qaeda. They are looking just to take advantage from a situation, to swim in troubled waters, and Iraqi waters were so troubled. But those that believed in the country, they are against occupation or in favor or whatever, I was listening and talking to all of them, not only in Iraq, even in Damascus, in Amman, and in other capitals.

After these talks with these people, I realized how hard it is-because for those who are in the government, they consider, since they had an election, they had a constitution, that in a way the train had already left. By the project of national reconciliation, they mean that are ready to stop in the current station and to give the others some position to join them. But that is totally unacceptable for the others, the insurgents or the resistance or whatever. They say, "No. Even if the train left, it must come back and we have to agree about a political project." This is the main difference.

The first group is strongly supported in this position by the U.S. Administration, although there are lots and lots and lots of mistakes-you know, the kind of constitution, the elections themselves, everything is based on sectarianism.

It was so clear because everybody-I don't know how I can translate the French proverb, *la fuite en avant*, that someone is fleeing forward [and continuing with the same mistakes] instead of facing the real problems. That's the situation of everybody in Iraq-not only the Iraqis, even the other forces.

The situation I was witnessing during 2006-and that was the worst security time-there was a joke that was reflecting the reality: The Americans made the war against Saddam Hussein, but who won the war? Iran and Al Qaeda, because they didn't exist in Iraq before and they are so strong now.

It was so clear that facing a situation in which you have three major groups-the Shiites, the Sunnis, and the Kurds, all of them with their own militia and between them there are 14 small groups, religious and ethnic groups-they are lost because in such a situation everybody has his own extremists. But in the case of Iraq, the extremists move. They had the opportunity to move from the extreme to the center of the society by mass killing. And the minorities are just lost, they are just lost.

When you see the statistics, they don't reflect the realities. Everybody, for example, is saying now that because of the sectarianism in Iraq one-third of the Iraqis were forced to leave their

own homes, fleeing outside Iraq or being displaced inside Iraq. But when you go inside the groups, you will be so shocked to realize within the minorities it's not one-third. For example, the [Sabians](#). They are a group who are the followers of John the Baptist and until 2000, there were around 200,000 of them living in Iraq. Now, those that still live in Iraq are less than 10 percent of that, and this 10 percent, all of them moved to Kurdistan.

There are some other groups, such as the [Yazidis](#) in the north-some very local religions that have existed for more than 5,000 years, the beginning of Mesopotamia. You have so many of these groups.

So the statistics are wrong. The Christians, for example-take just the example of a town like Bastora. Bastora until 2003, according to the statistics that were given to me by some priests from different churches, used to have 350,000 Christians. Now they have less than 30,000, so less than 10 percent. When you go to Amman and you meet these people, all of them would like to come back home. You don't feel any spirit of revenge within the normal people, which is for me the only positive point.

On the political side, there were a lot of mistakes-the kind of constitution, dismissing the institutions of Iraq, especially the army.

One of the most scary things was when I heard, for example, President [Bush](#) last time when he was at the meeting in Canada making a parallel between Iraq and Vietnam. I think you cannot make a parallel between Iraq and Vietnam, for one simple reason. At least in Vietnam, with all the complications, you had finally four major actors: the United States, South Vietnam, North Vietnam, and the Viet Kong. In Iraq, you have *hundreds* of actors, and they don't trust each other.

You see, until now the problem was a sectarian one between Shia and Sunni. But all the ingredients are there that the Shia are going to kill other Shia and the Sunni are going to kill other Sunni, and the Kurds are going to-everyone has just another enemy that he considers much more dangerous than the closest one.

The safest area in Iraq is definitely Kurdistan. Everyone is fleeing to Kurdistan. When you see the two Kurdish parties themselves, they made a Kurdish government. Everything is in common except the ministries of interior and finance. [inaudible]

For me, I don't expect any major changes in national reconciliation, because those are imposed by the Americans, they are not negotiated within the Iraqis themselves.

Some of the leaders can never, ever be part of any national reconciliation. When they were talking about having a huge moderate front composed of the two Kurdish parties, the [Islamic Dawa Party Supreme Council](#) from the Shiite side-for me, personally, by definition, any religious party can never ever be a moderate party. If those who have power are religious, it's not going to happen, because what they say openly and what they say between themselves are two different stories. This is what has created a situation where nobody trusts anyone else in Iraq and everyone is trying to gain the maximum points.

When I was in Kurdistan last time-just to show you, this is a map that was done by the Kurdish regional government. It exists everywhere, in all hotels. You see the border of Kurdistan here. This is Kurdistan, and here is [Kirkuk](#), which is a huge problem. Here it is in the center. So you can imagine the problems.

The three major problems were postponed all the year. The first is the problem of Kirkuk, which is a small Iraq. It is creating more and more problems, and it is not going to be resolved, although they agreed that it has to be resolved before the end of 2007.

Then there is the problem of oil. When you see what is done in Kurdistan, signing directly with some companies while the central government is against it. Even the proposals, they are coming with some proposals that there is no precedent.

Let me give you an example. Some were trying to say, "Okay, the oil that was discovered until now will be owned by all Iraqi people, but the new oil to be discovered should be owned by the province." Sometimes, according to some technicians, it is the same fields. You see much more problems.

The only thing that the Iraqis share is this strong feeling of being victims. Each group thinks strongly that they are the victims of the others and they just want the others to listen to them and to give them their own rights. When you open the door for national reconciliation about rights, you go to the killing of the grandson of the Prophet, [al-Hasan](#), 13 centuries ago. So you are not going to resolve a lot of problems.

This is internally.

When you see the actors in the region, it is not an easy task: Turkey from one side, Iran from the other side, the Arabs from the third side. Each one has his own agenda, his own groups that are coming to the capital trying to have some support. Those that are strong now in Iraq are definitely the Ithalat [phonetic] and [inaudible] Brigade. The Iranians [inaudible] are very strongly there. They are playing a wonderful game, pushing at the same time their friends to be in the government. I think they have a good relation with the Americans. But on the ground they are having their own-

One of the recent positive developments that happened with the American Army for me is definitely what happened with [the Awakening](#)- the *Al-Sahwa*. During the year 2005, at the end of 2005, and in 2006, Al Qaeda were running villages, especially in Ninawa, even inside [Mosul](#), capital of the [Ninawa Governorate](#) [province], and in DIALA and al-Anbar, some three or four governorates. There are some American bases, but the soldiers were in their bases, and at night Al Qaeda was running everybody, and they were imposing their own law on the tribes. The people there suffered a lot. And Al Qaeda made also a lot of mistakes in the way they were dealing with people.

So it was very easy. Once you offer people some weapons to fight against Al Qaeda, they accepted immediately. When there was a huge move against Al Qaeda in some areas, you see the reaction of the Iraqi government. They were strongly against it, because for the government-it

was a very sectarian government-those people don't care about fighting Al Qaeda; for them they are Sunni, and they don't want a lot of the Sunni. What happened when the army was dismissed, those that came from Iran asked their militia, especially the [inaudible] militia, to join the army and the police. A lot of them are wearing the uniform of the national police, but they are not listening to the Minister of the Interior, except if the minister is one of them. That happened also.

On the international side, I think there were a lot of mistakes. What I regret here for the Americans is that Iraq is becoming a domestic problem, to win the election. But the responsibility in such an area, what happened in Iraq, nobody is talking about that, trying to make up. Everybody is talking now about some improvement in security.

For me this is a lie, for one single reason. If you go to Baghdad now, Baghdad is more now than 46 cantons, and each canton is surrounded by concrete walls of eight meters with only one entrance. For example, it is much easier to go from a Baghdad canton to New York than to go from [Adhamiyah](#), which is very strongly Sunni, to a canton that is strongly Shia. So people cannot move, so of course, you will have less bombing and less problems. But to really succeed in national reconciliation, there is one sine qua non condition, which is that people should talk to each other, according to a dialogue within the Iraqis themselves, to agree about a project.

The same thing is happening because they moved from Baghdad outside of Baghdad. Then you have the new problems that are happening between some groups, for example, in the south held by the army of Al-Mahdi army of [Moqtada al Sadr](#) and by the brigades that are now in the official police.

The same thing with insurgents. During the last three months we heard that-I, myself, can give an account of when I was there. I heard more than 200 names of groups of insurgents, although I have been told that some of them are operating in different areas under different names. But even then, there were at least more than eight groups. About 22 over the last month gathered in a group with the Baathists, and those are the small ones. The Islamists, especially eight of them that are very strong and operating everywhere, they also gathered in a special council.

I thought that there was more fragmentation in the governmental side, that the insurgents are gathering. But that is not true. When I made some calls, they have a lot of problems, because some are very supportive of the Awakening. Some are strongly against it, especially the [Salafis](#); they say for them Al Qaeda is the enemy of the Americans, so they feel much closer to them, although they know the danger of Al Qaeda and they suffered themselves from Al Qaeda during last year.

Because of this situation, what is proposed internationally will not help. When I see the last resolution of the UN, it's a joke. Still taking the center of Iraq, the current government, that is not even governing in the Green Zone, with all its problems.

And which government? When Prime Minister Maliki came after the election, he said, "I have a government composed of Shiites, Sunnis, Christians, of everybody, and I have a project of national reconciliation to those that are opposing us by arms." This is what he said in the

beginning. Now, after 16 or 17 months, half of the people that came with him have left him. And he couldn't convince one single person from the other side to join.

So the political crisis, with all these differences on the security side that are apparent, is getting worse. It's getting worse, and nobody is believing in any project.

When you talk about the possibility of dividing the country, I don't know how you can divide the country. And who is going to recognize any border when you see just the problem of Kirkuk or Mosul? Where are the borders? What will be the situation of Baghdad? How are you going to divide people in the case of civil wars?

I think my 25 minutes are over. I will stop and I will develop much more what interests you through your questions.