

“Iraq is burning with wrath, anger and sadness...”

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Leaving the hotel is always an adventure. Last night, with a full beard and a kefir draped around my shoulders, Abut Talat wisks me out into the chaotic streets of occupied Baghdad.

As we traveled around the capital, we took side roads, winding varying routes towards our destination, never daring to take the direct, most obvious path. Aside from the obvious threat of kidnapping which is my greatest concern, we travel accepting the fact that anywhere, anytime, we could be in the wrong place at the wrong time. Whether that take the form of a car bomb like the one yesterday which detonated near a US patrol on Sa'adoun street, killing 17 people and engulfing 20 cars in flames, or a full scale battle between occupation forces and resistance fighters like that which occurred in al-Adhamiya today.

The damp night air appeared as a haze which exaggerated the ever-present of smog in the capital. Driving around Baghdad always provides an assortment of smells-from beef kebobs cooking on the roadsides as vendors stoke their fires, or more commonly, as the stench of raw sewage as one passes through yet another un-reconstructed sewage infested area.

One of our stops is at the home of Dr. Wamid Omar Nathmi, a senior political scientist at Baghdad University. An older, articulate man who vehemently opposed the regime of Saddam Hussein, he is now critical of the US policy which is engulfing Iraq in violence, bloodshed and chaos.

He told me that during the buildup to the siege of Fallujah, he had sent John Negroponte, the current so-called ambassador of Iraq, a letter which, along with several other points, asked him, “Do you think that by occupying Fallujah you will stop the resistance?”

Of course his letter was ignored, and now we watch in fear as the resistance is spreading across Iraq like a wildfire, fanned by the pounding of Fallujah.

Dr. Nathmi added, “Certainly the US military can eventually suppress Fallujah, but for how long? Iraq is burning with wrath, anger and sadness...the people of Fallujah are dear to us. They are our brothers and sisters and we are so saddened by what is happening in that city.”

He asked what the difference was between what is occurring in Fallujah now to what Saddam Hussein did during his repression of the Shia Intifada which followed the '91 Gulf War. “Saddam suppressed that uprising and used less awful methods than the Americans are in Fallujah today.”

Dr. Nathmi is a brilliant man and certainly a warehouse of informative analysis about the events in Iraq. He was quick to point out another flaw in the US policy here, of how the US disbanded the entire Iraqi Police force in Ramadi the day before the siege of Fallujah began.

He held up his hands and asked, "Who will provide security in Ramadi now, angels?"

"I can assure you, it is well over 75% of Iraqis who cannot even tolerate this occupation," he said a little later when discussing the Bush administrations attempts to whitewash the situation in Iraq. "The right-wing Bush administration is blinded by its ideology, and we are all suffering from this, Iraqis and soldiers alike."

After our interview, we stopped by Abu Talat's home for a coffee and so I could say hello to his family. His son Hissan somberly asked me, "When will the Americans leave, Dahr?" I had no response. "I don't know Hissan. I really don't know." He then said, "I don't think they are ever going to leave Iraq."

I snuck back into the car and we wound our way across Baghdad, noting that most of the city sat in darkness. "Baghdad is running on the generators Dahr," said Abu Talat, "Even my home has been without electricity since 9am this morning." It was after 8pm.

He insisted we stop for ice cream, which I most certainly did not refuse, then he dropped me back at my hotel.

Today dawned a grey, windy day, with fighter jets scorching the sky en route to Fallujah.

Of course the flames of resistance have now engulfed other parts of Baghdad and Iraq alike. Here in Baghdad, the Amiriyah, Abu Ghraib and al-Dora regions have fallen mostly under the control of the resistance.

A friend of mine who lives in al-Dora said, "The resistance is in control here now, they are controlling the streets."

What few US patrols still roam the streets are attacked often. This fact underscored earlier as several large explosions nearby shook the walls of my hotel this afternoon.

Abu Talat was once again trapped in his neighborhood and we were unable to conduct an interview when fighting broke out nearby his home. He called me and said, "The Iraqi Police found a car bomb, and when they were warning people about it US troops showed up and were immediately attacked with RPG's. The fighting raged for at least half an hour, and several soldiers were wounded and taken away. Now fighter jets are flying so low over our neighborhood, using their loud voices to terrorize people."

Huge areas within the cities of Ramadi, Fallujah, Baquba and Mosul are now controlled by the resistance. Will the slash and burn tactics of the US military in Fallujah be applied to those areas next?

Meanwhile, over near the Imam Adham mosque a huge demonstration organized by the Islamic Party (which just withdrew from the so-called interim government and recently called for a boycott of the elections), broke out. It was comprised of well over 5,000 angry people denouncing Ayad Allawi and demanding his resignation.

They also demonstrated to show that they were unafraid of the US military.

And they called for jihad against Allawi.

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