

## Zarqawi's Mysterious Pre-Election Audiotape

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As the resistance movement unfolds, Al Zarqawi is presented in media reports not only as the mastermind behind “the insurgency”, but also as the main obstacle to democracy in Iraq.

Barely a week prior to the January 30th Iraqi elections, another mysterious Al Zarqawi audiotape surfaced on the internet.

While the news reports warned that “the authenticity of the tape could not be determined”, they confirmed almost immediately, that “the voice in the tape appeared to be that of al-Zarqawi”. In his own words, Al-Zarqawi has declared “a fierce war on this evil principle of democracy and those who follow this wrong ideology” (AP Press Report, 23 January 2005).

Predictably, Washington's response was to accuse Al Zarqawi of attempting to sabotage what the US media has described in chorus as “the first democratic elections in half a century”.

The Al Zarqawi pre-election audiotape usefully served the disinformation campaign, by underscoring the evil and insidious links between Al Zarqawi and former Saddam regime loyalists.

In the Zarqawi audiotape, the Shiite majority is presented as “evil”, serving to create divisions within Iraqi society. Secular Sunni Baathists and jihadists are said to have joined hands.

“The leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq, Abu Musab al- Zarqawi, whose “young lions” are attacking polling stations and killing candidates, has described Shias as “the most evil of mankind . . . the lurking snakes and the crafty scorpions, the spying enemy and the penetrating venom”. Understanding that elections favour the majority, he said that the US had engineered the poll to get a Shia government into power.” (quoted in the New Statesman, 31 January 2005)

With Iraq under US military occupation, the propaganda ploy now consists in broadly portraying Islam as “un-democratic”, with Osama and Al Zarqawi as the spokesmen for the resistance movement:

“The questions Zarqawi raises go way beyond the elections in Iraq to the whole issue of modernization of the Arab world. Is democracy un-Islamic? Is there a fundamental clash between the principles of representative government and the principles of Islam?” (WP, 30 January 2004)

Meanwhile, the illegality of the US occupation under international law and the Nuremberg charter, the deaths of more than 100.000 Iraqi civilians, the torture of POWs in the Abu Ghraib prison, not to mention of course the missing weapons of mass destruction, have been overshadowed by the the Bush administration's commitment to holding "free and fair elections" in Iraq.

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