

Hadi al-Amiri
Head of Badr Organization
Translated from Arabic

Hadi al-Amiri arrives at interview and sees Charles and the rest of the crew in their socks. He gets furious and asks the guards never to do it again. Eventually the camera crew, including Charles, puts back on their shoes.

AL-AMIRI: Why did you made them take their shoes off?

(does a mouth tick which gives the order of "that's not right")

AL-AMIRI: Wear your shoes. Wear your shoes. No...No, wear your shoes. That's fine, I am wearing mine. Who told them it's not allowed to take off their shoes anymore? Tell me who did it. What's your name? I have told you 100 times- no one is allowed to take his shoes off. I have told you this 100 times. Go and call the guards for me now.

AL-AMIRI: We are proud we carried weapons against Saddam Hussein. We were the first to diagnose that there is no way to deal with this regime only by weapons. The Americans came after 20 years and found the same thing we wound that there is no way to deal with this regime only by weapons.

We are proud that we carried weapons against Saddam Hussein. We have taken in consideration all moral measures while carrying weapons in targeting only the regime members. We did not target services. And we did not target Iraqi people. When we were carrying any operation against the regime members and that operation would harm the Iraqi people we would stop it.

We are proud that when it was necessary to carry weapons we carried weapons. And we are proud that when Saddam regime collapsed in April 9, 2003, we let down weapons with our full will without any exterior power asking us to do so.

Now we are a political organization and we have a wide public representation. We have participated in last year provincial elections. And now more than 6 or 7 provinces are controlled by mainly by us. And 6 of these provinces, the governor is from us including Baghdad.

Anyhow, in the current parliamentary election we have participated. We have more than 15 members from Badr Organization in the current new parliament. And we believe in Democracy,

multiplicity and the peaceful transfer of power through ballot boxes.

Despite the rumors against us of being a militia organization, but we are proud that we were of those who called for the dissolution of the militias. And we seriously worked with the order 91 for the Ambassador Bremer in regarding the militias dissolution.

Anyway, we believe that Iraq by God will, will have open wells and it has a prosperous future.

INTERVIEWER: Can I ask you just briefly in a simple way to describe the relationship between SCIRI and Badr?

AL-AMIRI: SCIRI was never a party since its formation. But it was like an out-frame just like the governing council. It was like a group of allied parties. At that time when SCIRI was formed, Dawa party was part of it in addition to the Work Organization, Badr, the Kurdish Islamic movement and a group of independents. So SCIRI was not a party in itself, but a frame that represents a group of parties and independents.

Therefore, now we are Badr organization but in the general frame we are with in the SCIRI. Just like the other parties and independents in the SCIRI.

INTERVIEWER: Both your predecessor and Mr. Hakim's brother were assassinated, who do you think assassinated them?

AL-AMIRI: We have found the enemy who did all of these terrorist attacks. Whether it targeted Sayid Al Hakim or the Iraqis, they are two groups of terrorists: the remnants of the Baathist Saddam regime, and the Tekferies who are the group of Zarqawi, Al Qaeda and the others. Simply its Takfiris plus Al Qaeda and their people in addition to remnants of Saddam regime.

INTERVIEWER: I would like to ask you about the Americans and their policy. First do you think that the Americans did a good thing or a bad thing that the Americans came and invaded Iraq and removed Saddam?

AL-AMIRI: For sure that Saddam regime wasn't meant to be removed by any means only by outside forces. We were believing in two theories in removing Saddam regime; either by a strong outside support for the people of Iraq to remove Saddam system, or the other way of a long and armored conflict

with the regime.

And this support should come from the neighboring countries, but unfortunately that didn't happen. Because as you know that the neighboring countries were either afraid from Saddam or sympathizing with Saddam.

So without an exterior support, the Iraqi people would have never got rid of Saddam regime. And there is no other way than the entering of the US forces to get rid of the regime. The operation of removing Saddam was like a picnic for the US forces. I think the USA has lost no more than 50 casualties in the war against Saddam Hussein.

But we have problems with the politics that came after the fall of the regime. We always said that the removal of Saddam regime was always simple. I have said this in AL-Arabiyah channel in an interview. I have told them that Saddam regime will fall in 3 weeks. If there were two axis for the invasion: one from Kuwait and the second from Turkey.

After that Saddam fell from only one axis from Kuwait. And we were saying that the neither the Iraqi people nor the military forces would resist.

INTERVIEWER: Can I ask what you think of the American occupation since the war, do you think that the American occupation has been run wisely that American policy has been good or America has made mistakes?

AL-AMIRI: Until now we propose that until the fall of the regime, the decision was a wise and correct one. And what the American forces has done before the fall and until the fall of the regime was a fantastic and daring job. And it was breath taking and has astonished the whole world.

But the real problem started after the 9th of April. Too many mistakes were done after April 9th. First leaving the borders opened. And what's called the Arab fighters and Al-Qaeda, started traveling into Iraq in huge numbers believing in the theory that the field of battle with the Americans is in Iraq.

Some say it was the American policy to make Iraq a battle field with terrorists. And they opened Iraq, which is already an opened field unlike Afghanistan which is a mountains area. And to have Iraq as an opened battle field for America with terrorism.

Terrorists as well think that Iraq is the best field to fight Americans. And America thinks Iraq is a good battle field against terrorists. So for both theories, Iraq became a real terrorism front. Also the remnants of Saddam regime, has fled at the beginning while at the time it was necessary to know their addresses and put them under observation. And those did not find any one to punish them for what they did, so they found it O.K. to re-organize themselves and started the resistance.

Also weapons were available in Iraq, in addition to money and personnel. Also those suiciders who are from Qaeda, and Zarqawy organizations. So all of these were used to form and start the resistance against the Americans and the Iraqi people.

The delay in the formation of the Iraqi government is another problem. We had a study in the province of Salah Al Din meeting (Tikrit) before the fall, which says that there is a necessity of forming a government in Iraq before the fall. Unfortunately that didn't happen. And the American forces came in and instead of being a liberating force they declared themselves as occupying force.

We were saying that they were liberating forces. Which allowed for the Iraqi people to resist because there is no human being on the earth to accept an occupation. So instead of dealing with these forces as friendly forces that came to liberate them they dealt with it as occupation forces and they found to themselves the reasons to resist.

INTERVIEWER: Did you say that even the Shiites had that feeling about the Americans?

AL-AMIRI: No I am not saying about the Shiites, they were understanding of this role. And some of them they started talking in away that this is occupation and we should force it to leave.

Anyway I have attended some of the negotiations between the Kurds and our brothers the Sunnis. The Kurds were calling them liberation forces while the Sunnis were saying they called themselves occupation forces. Then the matter was left to whether we should bring a military government to run a civil administration.

That was the time of the Governing Council. When the enemy had the chance and time to organize itself and led to what is happening now. I think if from the beginning of the fall if there was a government or if we formed a government in two days from outside before the fall, nothing of what we

are seeing of bad security would happen.

INTERVIEWER: What about the dissolution of the Iraqi army was it a wise decision?

AL-AMIRI: Not only this, all of their wrong decisions wouldn't happen if there was a formation of a government shortly after the fall. I believe that the dissolution of some of the departments were based on a correct decision. And if there was a daring decision for the Americans then it is the dissolution of some of the security departments. And myself I regard that the bravest decisions that Bremer made were these decisions and he will be mentioned in the history for these brave decisions because these security departments were corrupt and the only solution for it is just the dissolution. Just like cancer, the only treatment for it is cutting it.

INTERVIEWER: Are you referring to the Army as well? Or just to the Republican Guards and forces?

AL-AMIRI: The Republican Guards, the Intelligence, Special security, the General Directorate of Security, the National Security Directorate and so many of the police forces and many of the Army divisions. But the Army should have been restored some of it because in the Army there are too many of the good members with out any doubt.

INTERVIEWER: What do you think of Muqtada Al Sadr and Mahdi Army?

AL-AMIRI: Good question...first, part of the bad policies is that they don't deal in the right way with realities like this. The Governing Council has brought people who have no one supporting them. Maybe even their own sons are not supporting them. And left a vast number of people without any representation in the GC.

The Sadr movement and Muqtada himself, part of Dawa party, Badr organization, the Faily-Kurds, in addition to Turkumanies who were represented by a woman who no one knows and left the well known national figures.

Therefore in the GC when it brought some people and left others, it left those who are not represented with a feeling of unjust. The lack of a detailed knowledge of the Iraqi structure...we told the Americans that some of the personalities in the GC, if they made a 100 election they are going to win the

elections. And some of them if America support them with all their force they wont win.

And we made it obvious, in the second elections Adnan Pachachi did not win one single seat. And others like Ahmad Al Chalabi for example did not win one vote. That's in general. Now when you come to the Sadr movement, it's a reality in the political field. I think if there was a wise dealing with Sadr movement there weren't have gone into two wars with the Sadr movement.

And there are others who are not Americans, who are Iraqis, who are pushing the Americans to finish the Sadr movement. Or they are pushing them to finish a certain party. I remember I have told General (Barbara) Fast, who is the head of the American Military Intelligence during Gen. Sanchez time- the leader of American forcercs in Iraq- I have told her that you are going to make a mistake if you fight Sadr movement. And that Sadr should be contained instead of being targeted.

Because these are public movements, as far as you pressure it they get wider and wider. And I told her that Saddam Hussein pressured us for 20 years. And when ever he increases his pressure we were deeply rooted. I also advised her to open a discussion with Sadr movement instead of going to a confrontation with them.

And now you see that the Sadr movement is part of the political process. And we must keep containing it in the political process. And even Mahdi Army, we should deal with it by what is called the law of integrating the militias. And it's possible to contain them.

So we can avoid a direct confrontation with them. Myself I believe that the armed forces should be the only power that holds weapons. And there should be no weapons at all only in the hands of the Army forces. And my hope is that the security situation would progress for better. And even our personal security guards we would relinquish it.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think that the Mahdi Army should disarm itself now?

AL-AMIRI: I think- and this is my belief- is that there should be security first. And also there should be timing of the strengthening of the security forces and at the same time the process of containment of what's called militias and paramilitaries.

There are two ways to contain the Mahdi Army; first is a battle with Mahdi Army and removal

of Mahdi Army weapons by force. Which I think is a wrong way, which will lead to more casualties and more sacrifices and it will make Mahdi Army more consistent in keeping its weapons.

And the other way is to win them to our political process and make them let down their weapons voluntarily. And we tell them that it's banned to have any armed people in secure areas. I don't think they will disagree. The problem some times is that there are some areas which are under threats not only because of Mahdi Army or any other forces. In this area and in these cases they must carry weapons to defend themselves. That's why we must encourage them to defend themselves. In other conditions, for example, if it's a secure area there must be no one single armed man.

INTERVIEWER: Who do you think is responsible for the killings of Sunnis civilians especially in Baghdad over the last several months?

AL-AMIRI: I am surprised, there is more killing against Shiites much more than Sunnis. Why don't we ask who is responsible for the killing of the Shiites?

INTERVIEWER: The killer for the Shiites is Zarqawy, but the new phenomenon of killing Sunnis that people don't know it?

AL-AMIRI: Then why don't we say that Zarqawy is killing Shiites and Sunnis? Is there a contract Sunnis and Zarqawy, that Zarqawy should not kill from them?

We say that Zarqawy and the remnants of Saddam's regime are willing to create this civil war in Iraq. He wants to kill Sunnis and Shiites to create a sectarian trouble among Iraqis. If we say that Zarqawy, we are saying its not Zarqawy, we have info that says the remnants of the Saddam regime are killing Shiites more than Zarqawy does.

Yes, we have info that that the remnants of the former regime are cowards and thus they don't do these suicidal attacks, but Zarqawy does. That's why we should not ask who is killing the Sunnis. We are giving a river of blood every day. Why these rivers of blood? No one is asking about it, not the American Ambassador not the British Ambassador and when one of the Sunnis got killed President Bush.....off media.....

It must be political, social, media and military. I am not saying we should use severe power to control the area. Severe power can never create security to us. The political process should go on. The media case, the social relations and extending it, the use of tribal relations. A group of things, we should prevent sectarian segregation, and we think the way is by using these multiple axis with a strong will. And if we stand strongly against terrorists.

INTERVIEWER: What kind of Iraq do you want to see? If there was a good government will Iraq be ruled by religious rule by Sharia?

AL-AMIRI: We have passed these fears you have. We never said we want a religious government. In our ideology, we want to form an Islamic state, but in reality it's impossible to form an Islamic state. And we made it clear in the constitution. And we defended the constitution. And we are still saying in the constitution we don't want to apply an Islamic state.

Yes it must respect the will of the Iraqi people as an Islamic population. And we want what is in the constitution and nothing more. And in the constitution there is nothing that tells we want to form an Islamic state.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think that women should have the right to divorce?

AL-AMIRI: Yes, yes. In Islam there is the right for women to ask for divorce. There is a contract between man and woman. She has the right to say in the contract to say she wants to have the right to divorce in her hand. And she can divorce at any time. Thus we have no problem in this rule.

INTERVIEWER: So do you believe that women should have legal rights in all areas?

AL-AMIRI: Why not? We believe in their rights. We are the only party among others in preserving women right in giving them more than 25% in fact 30% the Alliance preserved the presence of women in the parliament.

In the Shiite community, there is a great development in women rights. She has the right to be a scholar in religion and even a scientist in religion. And she can do what ever she want in regarding science. But yes we have some conservancy on that she should be well covered and that it. But she has the

right to be every where.

INTERVIEWER: Now, I would like to ask a different set of questions about Iraq's relationship with its neighboring countries. Especially the leader of Iran, who recently for example had said that the Holocaust have never occurred. Do you agree with him?

AL-AMIRI: He can ask Ahmadinejad himself. He can go to Iran and ask him about it there. There are too many American journalists who are going to Iran to ask him this question. I am not a defender or a lawyer or in agreement with Ahmadinejad.

He is a president of a country and I did not vote for him and neither the Iraqi people. He was elected by his own people as a president of his country.

It's like asking me what's my opinion about President Bush. What's the difference if the American people elected him my opinion won't make a difference.

INTERVIEWER: Do you, yourself believe that the Holocaust has occurred?

AL-AMIRI: Do you mean the Jewish burner? It's a historical thing, if he says its not there or I say its not there- where is your evidence. It's well known that it has occurred. Maybe he had done his own study and research someone should go and ask him what is your evidence?

For example the remnants of Saddam's regime say that Halabcha massacre is a lie. Although we have seen Halabcha massacre with our bare eyes. So he should bring evidence that Halabcha has never occurred. So if Ahmadinejad says there is no Holocaust, then let him prove this to us if he made his study or has his own evidence.

However, myself, I did not hear from him directly that the Holocaust is not present. I don't think he did, but I am not defending his opinion or thoughts. You should go to Iran and ask him. I think it's worth it that one should go to Iran and make study about Iran. There are too many journalists who go to Iran to meet him and ask him there is no problem.

INTERVIEWER: "Do you think Iran should procure nuclear weapons?"

AL-AMIRI: "They say we don't want weapons- that's what they say. What do they really believe? Your answer should be as good as mine. They say: we want nuclear power for peaceful purposes and

under the supervision of international agencies. That is what they say in public, as to what their real intentions are, you might know better. I believe those who have the closest relations to Iran are the Americans. They have an old, extensive and deep-rooted relationship. In fact, I should be the one asking you about the Iranian question, because you Americans are better experts on Iran than us.

INTERVIEWER: Two days ago in Baghdad, 14 dead bodies of men named Omer were found in a street. Who do you think killed those men?

AL-AMIRI: I wonder how you knew their names. We know that their names are unknown, unknown people, so how did you know that their name is Omer? Why won't these 14 bodies of people called Ali who knows?

Is it written in their blood test or in their DNA that their name is Omer?

The problem that we have here is that the reality is that the number of Shiites assassinated is away much more than the number of those killed from the brothers the Sunnis. There is an obvious sympathy with the Sunni brothers but there is no sympathy with the Shiite blood shed. And they deal with Shiites blood as water and not blood.

In one of the meetings with Gen. Casey, he asked who is assassinating the Sunnis in Baghdad streets. I answered him I hope that your question was who is responsible for killing Iraqis whether Sunnis or Shiites. So if you know who is killing the Shiites then come and tell us, and then we will cooperate to find out who is killing Sunnis, that was first. And secondly; you are responsible for the security, you Gen. Casey you have the security file in your hand for all of Iraq.

If I were responsible for the security file then you have the right to ask me this question. Therefore I have the right to ask you who is responsible for the killings of Shiites. And also to ask you who is responsible for the killings of Sunnis. And as you are responsible for security in Iraq then you have an obligation to answer this question.

You are not present, who is me to ask me about who is responsible for the assassinations of Shiites and Sunnis. But you as a security official in charge you should provide me with an answer and not asks me.

INTERVIEWER: The Supreme Council complains that the Americans are preventing security forces in Iraq from pursuing the terrorists. And that they are also protecting some of the terrorist. What do you think about that?

AL-AMIRI: We say that there are some hot areas and until today we don't have a clear sight about these sites. Why these hot areas are not targeted? All agrees that car bombs comes from areas at the edge of Baghdad starting from Tarmiyah-- (*see below an explanation about Tarmiyah*)—and ending in Mada'in.

Tarmiyah: a rural area full of farms of Saddam's loyalists. It lies north of Baghdad and part of Salah Adin Province. It's regarded as a pure Sunni area. Its Sunni population dominated former regime intelligence and security forces. Many of the former Iraqi Army Generals came from this area. Since the fall of Baghdad, many of its people were assassinated by Shiites coming from outside the country and specifically Iran. Its people accuse Badr Brigade of being responsible for these assassinations. American attempts to cool the area and eliminate the insurgency in Tarmiyah has failed so far and may be one of the reasons is its difficult geographic structure and the fact that its farms convolute with Tigris River forming this very difficult to control rural area.

We have discussed the issue with them for about 1000 times so far. We asked them to control these areas, but they did not until this day.

I don't think it's difficult to control Baghdad. According to my info the south provinces are relatively secured. And Kurdistan provinces Duhok, Erbil and Sulaimaniyah are secure. Anbar is calm these days according to my info. And the real battle is in Baghdad and Diyalah. And I don't think there is difficulty in controlling Baghdad and Diyalah. If there is a plan and a real will to bring security. I think if there is a will and a plan it won't be difficult to control Baghdad.

INTERVIEWER: If it's easy to control Baghdad, why do you think the Americans aren't doing a proper job?

AL-AMIRI: I did not say it's easy, but I said it's possible to control the security of Baghdad and

its not difficult.

I will give you two examples.....

INTERVIEWER: If there is a possibility, why are the Americans not doing it?

AL-AMIRI: I am puzzled, I say there is something, there are precautions from the subject and now they are doing what is called “favoring” for the political process. And the Americans think that through political balances they can bring on security.

I will give you an example; the road between Baghdad, Latifiyah, Karbala, Najaf and Hilla. The road from Baghdad to Kut through Mada’in area. This area is now converted into what is called “death triangle”. There is no single day passes without the killing of more than 20 to 30 people. This road has become a hell road. In the middle of the day, terrorist groups come and control the road and kill anyone they want to kill.....and steal what they want.....and leave without any punishment.

We explained to them (Americans) that you can control these roads with only one battalion. And now it’s true that only one battalion has controlled the whole area. For more than a year so far, I think no single operation has occurred in the road.

And the road to Latifiyah, as well, there were few limited terrorists operations. And now the security situation is very good in this road. To bring security I don’t think its only the military operations can bring it.....when I say its possible to control Baghdad, it is possible to control Baghdad.....through comprehensive planning.

In any case, I thank him and apologize, because I have another commitment. And I am sorry that I did not have the time to answer all his questions, and if need be, we shall meet again.