

Chronology of Events in Iraq, January 2003*

January 6

Ansar al-Islam confirms death of Al-Qa'idah member in northern Iraq. (London-based newspaper *Al-Hayat*)

The Ansar al-Islam command in northern Iraq announced the death of Abu-Abdallah al-Shami, a group member and one of the Arabs who fled from Afghanistan to Iraqi Kurdistan after the 11 September events. He is of Syrian origin and his real name is Nur-al-Din al-Shami, and he was authorized by Usamah Bin-Ladin's Al-Qa'idah to receive financial help. Jordanian Prime Minister Ali Abu-al-Raghib had earlier stated that the mastermind behind the assassination of an American diplomat in Jordan few weeks ago was living in one of the areas in Iraq's Kurdistan. He is a Jordanian called Fadil Nazzal al-Khalayilah, an Al-Qa'idah operative known as Abu-Mas'ab al-Zarqawi, who is regarded as one of the Ansar al-Islam leaders in Iraqi Kurdistan. According to confessions made by detainees who had launched a sudden attack on the areas controlled by the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) near Halabjah on 4 December, the dead member Abu-Abdallah al-Shami was Al-Zarqawi's deputy. Sources in the area said Al-Shami was killed during the recent attack on the PUK supporters' positions on the eve of *Id al-Fitr* after being hit by an artillery shell. The attack commander Mulla Abdallah Khulayfani was killed with him. Ansar al-Islam announced on its website the death of its leader Abu-Abdallah al-Shafi'i but then withdrew and corrected the report to confirm the death of Abu-Abdallah al-Shami. Al-Shafi'i now leads the group on behalf of its leader, Najm-al-Din Farah, nicknamed Mulla Frikar, who was arrested by the Dutch authorities after his expulsion from Tehran. There are reports that Arab families are being assembled in the Darka Shikhan area, a remote village on the Iranian-Iraqi border, after withdrawing from the villages of Kharbani, Zardahal and Bayyarah.

Military coup attempt, reportedly preempted by the government. (London-based newspaper *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*)

An Iraqi opposition group said that a group of Iraqi officers sought to stage a coup attempt against President Saddam Husayn. It added that the attempt was foiled and the Special Security Forces that are commanded by the president's son Qusay Saddam Husayn launched a campaign of raids and pursuits to arrest the masterminds behind the attempt. A statement from the Iraqi Justice and Development Party [founded in December 2002], said the Special Security Forces commanded by Qusay, the Iraqi president's second son, raided the houses of several officers in Tikrit and Mosul on the night of 6 January. The statement cited "informed sources" as saying that these

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officers are at present undergoing investigations and being subjected to barbaric means to force them to confess. The statement added: "Our sources inside Iraq said another raid was made that same night and at the same time in Al-Habbaniyah Air Base (west) and Imam Ali Base in Al-Nasiriyah (south). The raids were carried out after Qusay received in person a tip-off from an officer who claimed he was part of the plan that was intended to be carried out on the morning of 6 January, the anniversary of the establishment of the Iraqi army."

January 7

Iraqi oil minister forced out. (BBC)

Saddam Hussain has removed from power his long-standing oil minister, General Amer Mohammad Rasheed. The official reason for General Rasheed's removal was that he was beyond Iraq's mandatory retirement age of 63. But experts were questioning whether the sudden departure of General Rasheed was connected to the role of his wife, Dr Rihab Taha. Dr Taha is known to be near the top of a list of biological weapons scientists the UN inspectors are trying to interview. The decision to remove General Rasheed was announced on Iraqi state television and was said to have come by decree from President Saddam Hussain.

Conditions in military prison reported. (Iraqi Communist Party newspaper *Tariq al-Sha'b*)

Sixteenth Army Division's central prison, situated at Al-Ghuzlani Camp in the city of Mosul, is specifically connected with the military units of that army division, the headquarters of which are in the Bartallah Administrative Subdistrict. The prison comprises two chambers. The area of each is 120 sq.m. in addition to a hall used for the detention of the officers who are to be referred to military courts. Around a hundred detainees on various charges are crammed into each of the chambers used for the detention of soldiers and others of various ranks. The charges of desertion and non-compliance with the orders and duties constitute the highest percentage of these charges, in addition to the charges of overstaying the period of regular leaves of absence and forging leave application forms. The security officer of the prison, Major Abd-al-Amir Muhammad, applies an exemplary method in meting out punishment to the prisoners. He labels them as traitors and cowards. He forces them to take off their clothes in winter and make them plunge into pools of filthy water for long hours. He also forces them into hard labour to build new chambers in the camp. The commander of the prison is Colonel Muzhir al-Duri. The guards' commander, Sergeant Muhammad Shadhr is accused of taking possession of most of the food rations allocated to the prisoners. He also refuses to allow the sick detainees to be transferred to the clinic except after paying specified bribes. The amount of bribes imposed on the detainees whose health condition necessitates that they should be taken to the military hospital in Mosul stand at up to 25,000 dinars.

January 11

Iraq government cuts petrol supplies to Kurds. (Reuters)

Iraq's government has cut off petrol supplies to the breakaway Kurdish-run north of the country, Kurdish officials said, sending prices soaring and ordinary Kurds rushing to stock up on fuel. Aside from a small oilfield in the east of the area and a converted refinery near the city of Suleimaniya which once refined sugar, north Iraq's three million Kurds rely almost entirely on supplies brought from the government-held region. One Kurdish official in the city of Suleimaniya said petrol had been cut off before due to wrangling over prices with Baghdad.

Iraqi government restricts Internet access. (Radio Netherlands)

On 10 January, the Iraqi government shut down all Internet access as well as its two E-mail servers. No official explanation was given, and a partial service was resumed on 11 January morning. The Internet was only introduced in Iraq in 2000. Baghdad has about three dozen public Internet centres, and other major cities have several each. There, customers (mostly young men and students) surf the net for 2,000 Iraqi dinars (about 45 US cents) an hour. That's still quite expensive: the take-home pay of a government employee is only 10 US dollars a month. An E-mail subscription is even more expensive: 80 US dollars per year. It's widely assumed that E-mail is heavily scrutinised by Iraqi security services, which probably explains the speed of the decision to block access.

January 12

Ansar al-Islam reportedly preparing members for suicide missions. (Iraqi Kurdish newspaper *Jamawar*)

A news source in the region of Hawraman said that Ansar al-Islam in Kurdistan [PIK, Kurdish: Pishtiwanani Islam la Kurdistan; Supporters of Islam, SIK] has recently started a special training course for some of its cadres on how to carry out suicide missions. Some Algerian, Afghan and Chechen experts are running the course. Some times ago the Suleimaniya Security Department arrested a number of people who were sent by SIK to the city of Suleimaniya to carry out suicide missions.

Iraqi Kurdish Islamic Group reportedly sets up intelligence agency. (Iraqi Kurdish newspaper *Jamawar*)

According to an informed source from the Halabjah area, senior officials of the Islamic Group in Kurdistan said that the group has established an intelligence department, called *Parezgari* [safeguarding] similar to *Parastin* [protection] Department of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and *Zanyari* [information] of Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). The department is different from the group's security and military intelligence. It is directly linked to the emir of the group, Mamosta Ali Bapir. According to the same source, the headquarters of the new department would be based in Ahmadawa [the Islamic Group's headquarters]. A number of experts of the Iranian intelligence service *Etela'at* are currently training selected cadres of the new department. It has been reported that a former cadre of the Kurdish Islamic radical group Ansar Al-Islam, Ramazan Hawleri, has been appointed to run the department.

January 13

Iraqi decree allows reacquisition of forfeited citizenship. (Iraqi news agency INA)

The Revolution Command Council [RCC] has issued the decree No 15 allowing Iraqi citizens to reacquire the Iraqi citizenship they lost due to acquiring a foreign citizenship. Following is the text of the decree:

“Based on the provisions of Paragraph A of Article 42 of the constitution, the RCC has decreed the following:

“1. a. Iraqi citizenship shall be returned to Iraqis who lost their citizenship due to acquiring a foreign citizenship. However, they should first abandon their foreign citizenship and submit an application including self-criticism of their decision to acquire a foreign citizenship.

“b. Iraqis who reacquired Iraqi citizenship in accordance with Paragraph A of this article, shall not be allowed to reacquire Iraqi citizenship in the event that they lose it again for reacquiring a foreign citizenship.

“2. The Minister of Interior, in coordination with the Foreign Minister, shall issue instructions facilitating the implementation of the provisions of this decree.

“3. This decree shall be implemented as of the date of its publication in the official gazette. Its provisions shall apply to the cases involving the loss of Iraqi citizenship prior to this decree.”

Measures against desertion. (Communist Party of Iraqi Kurdistan newspaper *Regay Kurdistan*)

According to an order ratified by Qusay [Saddam's younger son] circulated to the air defence leadership, every soldier who violates the following points will be hanged without any trial.

- A. Any soldier who deserts his own unit during an American air raid.
- B. Any soldier who causes a breakdown of the anti aircraft bases.
- C. Any soldier who is slow in preparing missiles to be launched.
- D. Any soldier who causes a failure or breakdown of surface-air missiles.
- E. Any soldier who is caught with American publications in his possession.
- F. Whoever reveals the secrets of his unit.

Government reportedly bans travel to Kurdish region. (Communist Party of Iraqi Kurdistan newspaper *Regay Kurdistan*)

According to a source, the Iraqi government has banned travel between the towns of the Iraqi Kurdish-ruled region and the areas under its control, and has closed all the checkpoints. No one can travel now from the Kurdish-administered city of Arbil to Kirkuk and Mosul under central government control. No one from Iraqi-held regions can travel to Arbil, unless he is resident there who has been to the other side on whatever business, and was returning home.

Iraqi newspaper *Babil* report on the same news on January 25: Iraqi authorities have issued instructions to cancel restrictions on travel of Autonomous Region's citizens, which required ensuring the security authorities' approval of their travel.

Hence, Autonomous Region's citizens are treated like Iraqi citizens in other governorates.

January 14

Iraqi leader orders extension of deadline granted to pardoned to settle cases. (Iraqi news agency INA)

President Saddam Hussain has ordered an extension of one month to the deadline granted to convicts or those held in custody for murder or indebtedness to individuals or the state. Those persons must be covered by the general amnesty issued in accordance with Revolution Command Council Decree No 225 of 20 October 2002. The extension shall go into effect as of 11 January 2003 and ends on 11 February. The aim is to allow time for reaching reconciliation and financial settlements.

January 16

Iraqi tribal chieftains pledge allegiance to Saddam Hussain. (Iraqi newspaper *Babil*)

A number of tribal chiefs have promised leader President Saddam Hussain to rally behind his leadership against his enemies. In a cable to the President some tribal chiefs condemned the "traitors" who live abroad: Hazim Muhammad Baqar al-Suhayl; Khaz'al al-Khashan; Husayn Ali al-Sha'lan; Jawad Kazim al-Raysan; Mujbil Mudashir al-Mahmud; Faysal al-Rumayd; Samir Jamil al-Fatlawi; Jawad al-Khayrallah; Husayn Al Ribat; Ali Ibrahim al-Gharraf; Abd-al-Ghani Nassar; and Mubarak Ajmi Maghamis. The cable was sent by tribal chiefs Hadi Karim Inad, chieftain of the Bani Arid tribe in Al-Muthanna governorate; Fahim Al Khaz'al Al Khashan, chieftain of the Al-Barakat tribe; Hamid Muhammad Baqar al-Suhayl, chieftain of the Bani Tamim tribe; Dayim Husayn Yasir, chieftain of the Al-Hajjam tribe; Duwaysh Kuwak Walid, chieftain of the Al-Khaza'il tribe; Idris al-Sha'lan, head of the Al-Khaza'il tribes; Jari Humayd al-Humud, chieftain of the Al-Imarah tribe; Jasim Muzhir al-Samarmad, chieftain of the Zubayd tribes; Arkan Humayd al-Muhan Al-Khayrallah, chieftain of the Al-Shuwaylat tribe; Abdallah Ghanim Shamran, chief of the tribes of Al-Fatlah; Abbud Durayd Hamzah, chief of a subdivision of the Al-Zubaydat tribe.

January 20

Eighteen Kurdish mullahs dismissed after attending pro-Saddam meeting. (Iraqi Kurdish newspaper *Hawlati*)

The Ministry of Religious Endowments of the Suleimaniya regional government has dismissed 18 mullahs who had participated in the Ba'athist Jihad conference under the title "Jihad [holy war] is a divine duty of every Muslim". The conference was held by the GOI for religious men on 23 December 2002 in the city of Kirkuk with a view to passing a unanimous resolution by the participants calling for Jihad by all Muslims to protect the current Iraqi government. The GOI has given 250,000 Iraqi print dinars to each participant as a gift. In response to that situation, the Ministry of Religious Endowments in Suleimaniya dismissed 18 mullahs 20 days after the event. Four of the dismissed are within the boundaries of the Kirkuk Governorate and the other 14 are in

the Suleimaniya [Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, KDP-led] governorate. Some problems arose in some mosques at the time of the implementation of the decision. When a new mullah who replaced the dismissed mullah attended the mosque of Bekhud in Khabat District in Suleimaniya, some people close to the previous mullah instigated trouble. Eventually, police and security forces intervened and arrested a number of troublemakers.

January 22

Armed Iranian opposition group said to be carrying out exercises in Iraq. (Iranian newspaper *Etemaad*)

The Mojahedin-e Khalq (PMOI), which has taken refuge in Iraq, has carried out extensive tactical exercises, which apparently constituted training for urban warfare and suppressing popular uprisings. Informed sources inside Iraq have reported that at least 3,000 of these forces have carried out their military exercises at their bases located in Mandali and Khanaqin in Iraq, near the Iran-Iraq border.

January 23

Iraq introduces death penalty for "wartime" robberies, sentences for falsification of conscription documents. (*Republic of Iraq Radio*)

The Revolution Command Council [RCC] has issued a decree cancelling Decree No 560 of 2 August 1987. That decree stipulated that every civil servant inheriting the ownership of shares in an industrial, commercial, or services project, or stocks in a company, should inform his department within 30 days of his knowledge of the transfer of stocks or shares to him.

The RCC issued another decree stipulating that any person who commits any of the thefts stated in Penal Code No 111 of 1969, using weapons in wartime, shall be executed. It noted that other penalties as stated in the Penal Code shall be implemented if the theft is committed without the use of weapons. In case the crime is repeated, the punishment shall be execution.

Another RCC decree stated that any person who commits forgery in his military service registration card or document shall be imprisoned for no less than 10 years and no more than 15 years.

Kurdish authorities blame Iraqi government agents, Islamists for Arbil blasts. (Iraqi Kurdish newspaper *Jamawar*)

According to a statement by a source close to Arbil Security Department, a large number of people who have been involved in spying and sabotage acts have been arrested. According to the source most of the people arrested have been detained by KDP Intelligence Service, *Parastin*. Some of them are identified as government agents and others reportedly belong to an Islamic extremist group.

January 25

Kurdish authorities blame Iraqi government agents, Islamists for Arbil blasts. (Iraqi newspaper *Babil* and RFE/RL *Iraq Report*)

The GOI authorities have issued instructions to cancel restrictions on travel of Kurdistan Autonomous Region's citizens who had required obtaining the security authorities' approval for their travel. Hence, Autonomous Region's citizens are treated like Iraqi citizens in other governorates.

January 28

Iraq Kurdish tribal leaders reaffirm loyalty to Saddam Husayn. (Iraqi Kurdish newspaper *Jamawar*)

A broad meeting was held in Baghdad to renew the loyalty of tribal chiefs to the Iraqi president and condemn the US and its allies attempts to strike against Iraq. Hundreds of people from three governorates under de facto Kurdish authority have attended the meeting. A few days before the conference, scores of people travelled to the GOI-held area and then to Baghdad. Some of them have various ranks within the Kurdish political parties.

January 29

Decree endorses death penalty for eight new offences in the Air Force. (Iraqi Kurdistan Democratic Party newspaper *Brayati*)

The GOI forces in Khanaqin instructed the citizens that every household must provide a fighter and the families who do not have men, must provide a woman to work in hospitals and other public places.

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