



BRIEFINGS

[August 25th, 2008]

IRAQ: The Betrayal of the *Sahwa* [Awakening] Councils in Iraq

In a blunt warning to the U.S. Administration, Columnist *Tariq Al-Hamid* writing today in *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, has detailed the danger of the *Maliki*'s government call to disband the Sunni *Sahwa* Councils in Iraq without any serious attempt to absorb its members into the regular security forces. Most analysts are aware that although the councils were created by tribal chiefs, the enforcement members are mostly composed of the defunct military *Baath* party. The movement was nevertheless credited for countering and reducing the power of *Al-Qaeda* in Iraq. The earlier decision, also by *Al-Maliki*, to use *Al-Sahwa* to counteract another Sunni Front, *al-Tawafuq* seems to have finally given way to the strongest feelings of existing animosity between the *Sunni-Shi'a* communities. In justifying his warning, *Al-Hamid* quoted Army Brigadier *Nasser Al-Hayti* who described *Al-Sahwa* movement as "a cancer that must be eradicated and which days are numbered." *Al-Hamid* concluded that the unfortunate message being sent by this action is that the U.S. cannot be counted upon to support those it has recruited to fight *Al-Qaeda*. Destroying the *Sahwa* Movement, he points out, shall lead to a serious blow to the security conditions in Iraq. There are those in the U.S. who have blamed *Al-Sahwa* for fracturing Iraqi politics and making reconciliation harder to implement. As the writer clearly indicates however, the dismantling of *Al-Sahwa* is not supported by the majority of the Arab world, who consider the *Maliki* regime as an untrustworthy Shi'a - Iranian sponsored government bound on totally eliminating the chance of a Sunni military power comeback, regardless of how small it is.

Source: <http://www.asharqalawsat.com/leader.asp?section=3&article=483993&issueno=10862> - 8/24/2008

GAZA: Shame...shame...shame

The Blockade Conquerors are not Arabs



With these words, many in the Arab press explained the arrival of two boats, "Liberty" and "Free Gaza" with 44 human rights passengers on board, all westerns from 17 countries including one Israeli, with the purpose of breaking the sea blockade imposed on Gaza by Israel. Several writers, who lamented the lack of similar action by Muslims and Arabs, targeted mainly the Egyptian authorities for refusing to open the "Rafah" crossing into Egypt from Gaza.

Writing in a style reminiscent of Western calls to take down the Berlin Wall, *Al-Hayat* newspaper columnist Mahmud Al-Mubarak called on the Egyptian government to break the Rafah blockade.

- 8/24/2008 <http://www.alhayat.com/opinion/08-2008/Article-20080824-f5eb6327-c0a8-10ed-01bf-ee33dbc0e350/story.htm> Source: 8/25/2008 <http://www.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/73B2F681-45CA-4278-98E8-A217B87E6850.htm>

PAKISTAN: Taliban Movement Banned



It is still unclear how much support or enforceable power Interior Minister *Rahman Malik* has in banning the *Taliban* as a movement in Pakistan. The ban comes just after an open condemnation of the movement by the head of the Pakistan People Party [PPP] *Asif Zardari*, who labeled the *Taliban* as a terrorist organization. The condemnation and ban came on the heels of the murder of three family members of the leftist parliamentarian *Waqar Ahmad Khan* from the *Awami* [People] National party. Anxious to assert his power over his rival *Nawaz Sharif*, who is known to be closer to the Islamists, *Zardari* walking in the footsteps of his assassinated wife *Benazir Bhutto* seems to be declaring an open war on the Taliban.

Source: <http://www.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/02AA039C-AF0C-490B-AA8F-199FEF9535CF.htm> 8/25/2008

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