

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION
FALK AUDITORIUM
THE FUTURE OF IRAQ:
A CONVERSATION WITH SUNNI LEADERS

Washington, D.C.
Monday, May 11, 2015

Panelists:

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Former Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Iraq

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Governor of Ninewah Province, Iraq

Moderator:

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. POLLACK: Good morning, and welcome to the Brookings Institution. I am Ken Pollack. I am a senior fellow at the Center for Middle East Policy here at the Brookings Institution, and I am absolutely delighted to bring this program to you this morning.

As all of you know, in the last few months, Washington has seen two extremely distinguished visitors from Iraq. Prime Minister Haider Abadi was here in March, and just recently -- or in April -- and just recently, we had President Masoud Barzani of the KRG. But as we all know, there are many different communities in Iraq, all of them in great tension at the moment; some of them virtually at war with one another. And as we all know, at the hearts of Iraq's communal differences lie its Sunni community. We all now know that it was the alienation of the Sunni community that began after the 2003 American invasion which drove the Sunnis of Iraq out of the political system and drove them into opposition and helped usher in Iraq's Civil War. We all know that it was in 2008-2009 that with help from the United States, the Sunnis were brought back into the fold. A new power-sharing arrangement was forged in Baghdad, the Sunnis were once again given their rightful place, given political power, and economic benefits commensurate with their demographic weight, and that was a critical element in resolving the civil war, pacifying the country, and putting it on a pace and in a direction towards real progress.

We also are well aware after the painful events of last year that it was the unraveling of that agreement and the actions of the prior Iraqi government that alienated the Sunni community once again, and that opened the door for Daesh or ISIS or ISIL, whatever you prefer to call it, to come back into Iraq.

Today, one of the critical questions facing Iraq, and one of the critical

questions for the United States and every country in the world that cares about Iraq, that sees Iraq's future as tied to its own interests, is what the future of Iraq will be. What kind of an Iraq can bring all of its communities together again, help them to live in peace and tranquility? When you speak to Iraqis in Baghdad, in all other parts of the country, what you often hear from them, in fact, almost invariably, when you talk about the course of the fighting so far and what it will take to defeat Daesh and bring peace to Iraq, what you inevitably hear is what will matter, is what the future Iraqi government looks like. For the Sunni community, that is of intense interest. Many Sunnis feel that they were badly betrayed, in particular by the events of 2010, 2011, 2012, and 2013, when they bought back into an Iraqi political system only to find that political system used against them by a prime minister who saw many of their most important members as his enemies.

If Iraq is going to be safe, secure, peaceful, unified, the real question is not how fast can we defeat Daesh and how fast can we drive them out of the country, the real question is whether there is a political solution to be had, a political solution that will allow the Sunnis to once again feel that they are full members of Iraq's political system. That once again they have the political strength and the economic benefits commensurate with their demographic weight, and that they are not enemies of the state; that they are not objections of persecution by the government but full partners in that government. When you talk to Iraqis, you often hear -- and this is a paraphrasing of something I heard directly from one person in particular but I'm going to put a slight twist on it so it's not a direct quote -- what you often hear from them is you are asking me to fight for the future of Iraq. Until you tell me what that future looks like, I can't tell you whether I'm willing to fight for it.

And for that reason, I ask today two very important, very well known, and very highly regarded leaders of the Sunni community, to come to Washington, to help us

to understand the perspective of their community on these critical issues. I know that for many people in this room, both of these figures are well known to you, but I also know that for some they are not particularly well acquainted with them. So let me give them quick introductions.

To my farthest right, to your farthest left, is Dr. Rafe Al-Issawi. Rafe was born in Anbar, near Fallujah. He was trained as an orthopedic surgeon and rose to become the head of the Fallujah Hospital, including most famously during the November 2004 Battle for Fallujah. He was elected to the Council of Representatives in 2005. In 2006, he became Minister of State for Foreign Affairs. In 2008, Deputy Prime Minister of Iraq, and in 2010, Finance Minister. In 2012 and 2013, Rafe came under attack by the previous government. His bodyguards were arrested. He was the target of an assassination attempt and he was forced to resign from the government. He is the personification of the events that led to the alienation of the Sunni community in 2012 and 2013.

To my immediate right, to Rafe's left and to your immediate left, is Governor Atheel Al-Nujayfi. Governor Nujayfi was born in Mosul. He has degrees in engineering and law. I also found out in looking over your bio, Governor Atheel, that you were an engineer in the Iraqi Air Force during the Iran-Iraq War, which is something that I did not know. In 2009, Governor Atheel became the governor of Ninewah Province, and at that time, it was a tremendously important event in Iraq, and I can remember some of your early adventure when you first took over the governorship, which I think were critical in broaching or breaching the differences between Sunni and Kurd in Ninewah Province. In addition Governor Atheel is still the governor of Ninewah, and his brother, Usama Nujayfi, was the speaker of the Iraqi Council of Representatives from 2010 to 2014.

Now, as again I think many in this audience already know, if there was

one thing that the previous government of Iraq was successful at, it was fragmenting the Sunni community. There are many different voices in the Sunni community these days, and there is no question that there are other people who will claim to be this or that or speak for this or that community.

The reason that we brought you Dr. Rafe and Governor Atheel today is because these two men have longstanding histories of acting as eloquent voices for their community, as being committed to the peace and stability of a future Iraq, and of being committed to a U.S.-Iraqi partnership moving forward. For those reasons, I can think of no two better voices to help us understand the situation in Iraq and with its Sunni community than Dr. Rafe and Governor Atheel.

We'll begin with some prepared remarks by both of them. Dr. Rafe has a bit of a PowerPoint presentation to give you a sense of what's going on. Then they'll come join me and we'll have some questions talk show style. I'll ask them a series of questions, and then finally we will open things up to you in the audience to ask them your questions.

So first, please join me in welcoming Dr. Rafe Al-Issawi and Governor Atheel Al-Nujayfi.

(Applause)

MR. AL-ISSAWI: Good morning, everybody. I would like first to thank my friend Ken on this invitation and thank you all for your attendance. And if you bear with me, I would like especially to thank my colleague and my old friend, Dr. Shakali. Since you are talking about my medical history, he was my boss at the Ministry of Health when I was director of the Fallujah Hospital.

Please raise your hand.

Thank you very much.

The only cause that I made my comments on PowerPoint is to make it easy for you on specific topics on the situation in Iraq. I agree with Mr. Ken; in order to talk about fighting to defeat extremism in Iraq, to restore building back the state in Iraq, we have to know to describe exactly what's going on on the ground in Iraq now on political, on security, and other aspects.

So now I'll talk about defeating extremism and building back the state because we are talking about an almost fragile damaged state in Iraq for the favor of violent nonstate actors in Iraq now, both on the ISIS side, on Daesh, or on the militia side.

Simply, I put this map of Iraq which is burning to give you the impression what the exact picture looks like now in Iraq. And in order not to repeat the mistakes that took place to end in that picture, we have to know the exact events and causes that led to that situation. And I would like you just to focus on the next coming video which is about one minute.

I divided the screen into two sides, one for the militia on the right side -- this is the flags of the militias -- and the left side is Daesh-ISIS. So these are the flags -- the black one of ISIS, the yellow one of many of illegal violent nonstate actors, militias who are working in Iraq. This is one of the militias threatening Saudi Arabia, and that one from ISIS is threatening Saudi Arabia also -- I mean, threatening the neighboring countries so they are identical in committing their crimes. And on this side, this is a brutal dealing of the militias and some of the Iraqi security forces. With the Sunnis on that side, ISIS is dealing with the Shiites on the other side. So, in fact, I would like to give you the impression that this is identical criminal groups who are now playing on the fate of Iraq.

The same thing is killing on the left side. ISIS are killing someone. The only way I cover the picture is because this is a very, very offensive picture. On this side also, militias are killing Sunnis. So here Sunnis are killed by the militia, and on the left

side you see the Daesh or ISIS are killing the Shiites. So this is the situation in Iraq right now. In order to change, you will come to the practical points we'll tackle on the government side, on the American side, how to end this tragedy in Iraq.

It is so identical that on the left side this is slaughtering, in fact, by a knife. It is killing one of the Shiites with a knife. And on this side, the militia are slaughtering by a knife. That is why we want to focus on short-term the real threat is ISIS. It is damaging to the country and threatening the region and international community and it is a global battle with Daesh, with ISIS, in fact. But in the long run, you cannot deal with a country filled with a militia which is illegal and which is a nonstate violent actor.

Now, the question, Sunni Arabs are part of Iraq. I'm afraid that this rapid presentation may give you a not exact picture about the situation, so my answers to your question can cover the shortage.

Let us jump back to 2003-2004. The Sunni Arabs were divided into two groups -- one who believes in participation in the political process; others will boycott until now. I, and some other colleagues of mine, participated since 2005, so what is the result now? (Inaudible) vice president and (inaudible) the chief of (inaudible) the first Sunni block in the parliament, and also (inaudible), Foreign Relation Committee in the Parliament, (inaudible), all of them are leaders of Sunni. All of them are in exile now. They are outside the political process, wanted, in politicized judiciary decisions.

So now Sunnis are looking, is there any benefit of political participation if this is the end of the people who participated since 2005? Second, I'm talking about some legal constitutional steps taken by Sunnis and how the other partners dealt with the Sunnis. The first one is participation. Second, when Sunnis found it difficult in participation to achieve their goals, they went towards demonstration. Or before they

demonstrated, they want to declare regions, like Diyala, Salahaddin, and Ninewah. In order to get a little bit of some sort of decentralized authority to decrease the grasp of the central government over them.

What happened in Diyala, especially in 2011, the militia entered the government building, occupied the Office of the Governor, and the governor was in (inaudible) and KRG for six months. He was not capable of going back to his office. While this a constitution, legal according to the Iraq constitution, changing the provincial region. They refuse that also.

So we moved into a third step, which is the awakenings. Awakenings to fight al-Qaeda. This was back to 2006 and 2007. What happened also, almost all the leaders of the tribes who fought al-Qaeda have been assassinated and the government didn't protect them. After that, the Sunnis said, okay, let us go to the street for demonstration. For more than one year, Sunnis demonstrated in the street. What happened in Hawija and Fallujah and Ramadi and Mosul and Diyala also, the former government sent tanks and attacked them and they killed people who demonstrated legally, constitutionally, peacefully.

And when Sunnis came to say, okay, let us return back to talk with the government to find some sort of recruiting Sunni people for the local National Guard in order to participate in the security forces catch ground and defeating ISIS until this moment, and fortunately, the draft of the National Guard has not been sent or finalized in the parliament. And when it comes to Sunnis now who stood after the control of ISIS over Mosul and Salahaddin and some other big places, tribes want to fight them until this moment. Thousands of people are not recruited officially by the government, keeping in mind we are talking about official legal recruitment, not warlords (inaudible). We don't need to see Sunni armed groups and Shiite armed groups because it will end in Sunni-

Sunni conflict, Sunni-Shiite conflict, and Shiite-Shiite conflict. So we are talking about institutionalization of the security forces.

So when they stood up to fight ISIS, they didn't receive their ministerial orders and the weapons, too. We are talking about almost 600,000 families displaced. With a minimum of five in a family, we are talking about more than three million people displaced outside their houses. All of them are Sunnis also. This is because of ISIS, I mean.

And this also put a real challenge over everyone, including the central government, how to deal with displaced Sunni people. This wave of displacement was from Anbar. Unfortunately Baghdad dealt with them as that you have to bring a sponsor to enter Baghdad. You have to bring a sponsor to be accepted to enter Baghdad from Ramadi, so some of them returned back to a very risky, very dangerous situation in Anbar.

And we are talking about Sunni complete imbalance in the institutions on top of the security institutions. When we took Diyala as a model, we are talking about 16 agencies, both civilian and security. The 16 agencies in Diyala, which is a Sunni-dominated province, all the 16 leaders are Shiite leaders. So what sort of partnership are we talking about? That's why I said really Sunni Arabs are part of Iraq. Tens of thousands of people are arrested, in jails, and too many agreements with the previous government and with this government about reconciliation and amnesty law, which is not moved in the parliament yet and even in the government -- on the government side, I mean.

So all this environment makes the society of Sunnis ask the question, is it justifiable to be part of the political process? Are we part of Iraq? If the answer is yes, the government should be an Iraqi-inclusive government for all Iraqis. This is one. And

you have to be accepted in security forces. You have to fight it. Even when you come to fight against ISIS being Sunni no one supports you. So what sort of partnership can the government do if the government fails to make partnership with those who are fighting a global threat which is ISIS?

Now, to return back to ISIS, around 2012, everyone knows very well that ISIS was in the western part of Iraq, and some good signals from governors, especially the governor of Anbar to the former central government, to the prime minister, that ISIS is there and you have to deal with them. The question is who left ISIS to enter Ramadi and some other cities? Those who are controlling the security situation. You are absent. You are absent in the situation. So the central government and the Iraqi central security forces which control the security, failed to deal with the entrance or control of ISIS over our premises. The question is we keep saying that Iraqi security forces were not built on a professional national model and this is the end. You will see ISIS controlling our provinces. Many divisions have been defeated in Mosul by a few hundred ISIS until June.

ISIS presented itself as a protector of Sunni, putting in their mind this unjust dealing of the government, the marginization of Sunni. So at the beginning they are misleading or cheating Sunnis that we will protect you. With time, Sunnis started to discover that Shia -- in fact, ISIS are threatening Sunni more than anyone else because the displaced people, millions of people are Sunni. People are killed whether bombing or by criminals of ISIS are Sunni also, and infrastructure, including hospitals, houses, everything bombarded in the Sunni provinces were the first dark threat of ISIS on Sunni. And later on it is a threat to all Iraqis, to the region, and it is really a global threat rather than a local one.

And now talking about cleansing of Sunni provinces from ISIS must be a

Sunni endeavor. Why I put this, I highlighted this point, because talking about sending sectarian forces, whether militia or anyone else, will really complicate the situation. We are encouraging everyone to keep the momentum of the people who are ready to fight ISIS in our provinces. That means Sunni. That is Sunni ISIS fighting. So we don't need to lose that momentum to change it to Sunni-Shiite fighting because of the behavior of some of the militias which prove that as I presented at the beginning a very similar set of crimes like ISIS.

Militia involvement in Diyala and Tikrit really complicated the situation. Some of the militia bombarded houses, killed people. Like I mentioned, slaughtered like ISIS, so we were very frank with our colleagues in Iraq saying, look, why you are sending our sons from the southern part of Iraq Shia to fight on behalf of Mosul or Anbar or Diyala? Anbarian Mosulian Sunnis can fight ISIS. Your role is just to accept them, to recruit them officially, and to give them weapons. This is your role only. Otherwise, you send your guys to be killed. And at the same time some sectarian behavior took place that gave adverse action from Sunnis against them, all of us will lose, Sunni and Shiite, because the battle will be deviated from fighting Daesh into fighting a civil war.

We're talking about thousands of people in Kabani, Ramadi, (inaudible) Anbar and Mosul. Atheel will talk about Mosul and some other provinces. Thousands of them. They are coming to the camps of training even without uniforms now. So this will come later on on the American side and government what they can do just to accelerate the process of liberation of Iraq from ISIS and to restore back the state. So fighting ISIS is a very dual-pronged approach. It is not only a security one.

The other side should be political. Talking about political, it means the government program that Mr. Haider Abadi, the prime minister, committed himself in front of the parliament that this is my governmental program to be implemented with all other

partners, political partners. That includes reconciliation, amnesty, National Guard, Sunni recruitment and training in armed forces, and resolving the study of displaced people, millions of people. All these things are really not new topics or not new request or demands of Sunnis. These are agreed upon with the government. The problem is the government put a timetable three months, six months, one year, but nothing is implemented yet unfortunately.

On the other side, the other threat is the militia. We talk about the men, international global threat to Iraq and the region, the whole world is ISIS. Now talking about militia, talking about teams of militia working illegally outside the structure of the state of security forces. And this will reach a point of institutionalization of security forces. All of them -- Sunni, Shiite, Christian, Muslim -- all these groups will find warlords who are fighting inside Iraq between (inaudible). Let us assume after post-Daesh, post-ISIS, you will find Sunni-Sunni providence, Shiite-Shiite providence, Sunni-Shiite, providence. No one accepts that. Why are you putting that (inaudible) security forces really can't give a guarantee not to reach such a bad result.

Some sectarian actions of militias, especially in Diyala, including two days ago, they attacked one of the jails, released some of the criminals that belong to the militias and killed more than 52,000. In fact, they have been executed rather than killed, in front of the jail. I said all these criminal sectarian crimes will really not only -- it will prolong the life of ISIS because it will give them the justification that they are protecting some groups, and they are really not protecting. And I say that militia and ISIS, both of them commit identical types of crimes.

Utilizing militias in the short term to fight ISIS is exactly like utilizing (inaudible), for example, to fight Daesh. Is it accepted to fight ISIS by (inaudible) and Nusra. They are also a terrorist group. Let us assume that ISIS later on divided into

groups. One -- each one fights the other. Is it acceptable to adopt the group which is fighting? No. We have to fight ISIS legally, by legal, constitutional, institutionalized security forces that include all Iraqis. So I mean, on the short term, all the resources should be focused on ISIS and defeating ISIS. But we cannot close an eye on the crimes of the militia on the other side because it will complicate the situation and it will pull into civil war.

And when I present the short video, on the right side, Al-Batat, one of the leaders of the militias, is threatening the neighboring countries that we are coming. We will occupy you. On the other side he is just putting or throwing the passport of Egypt and Jordan and Saudi Arabia saying that we will come to occupy you. So both Daesh and militia want to occupy neighboring countries. That's why I said there is not only one threat in Iraq.

Now, post-ISIS defeat, without institutionalization of security forces, you will find Sunni-Sunni warlords, Shiite-Shiite warlords, Sunni-Shiite warlords, and everyone carrying weapons which don't belong to the government will not be capable of controlling him. Now some of the militias are outside totally the control of the central government. So without institutionalization of the security forces and weapon distribution to trustworthy people who commit to fight ISIS and to bring back or restore back the state of law, the result will be much more tragedy.

Institutionalization, I talked about it. Millions of displaced people need to be located (inaudible) and compensated. This is also -- I don't think that the government, the central government is capable to do it alone because the Iraq economy is not that good. In 2005 and 2006, you have this trail of international compact, so it is possible on the American side which I will come to in a minute we will talk about international funds that can help people.

Political resolution and reconciliation is needed. The Iraq constitution (inaudible) to create federal region, because I mentioned that when Diyala, and Salahaddin, and Mosul declared a region on a provincial level, have been occupied by the militia. So Sunnis ask now, what's the solution? Demonstration is not accepted. Region not accepted. Participation not accepted. Fighting, that is not accepted. Where should we go? We have been training the National Guard. The National Guard is very important. By the way, we agreed upon the National Guard both with the American side and the central government side. But unfortunately, the draft has been changed and it is now waiting in the parliament. It has not passed the parliament yet.

Rebuilding the Iraq Army, nonpartisan, nonsectarian balanced armed forces in order not to see a second model of Mosul withdrawing Iraqi Army. Defeated Iraqi Army at the hand of a few hundred ISIS is a tragedy we should not see. The only way is to rebuild, restructure the Iraqi Army in a professional background.

And here with all those problems, really mission not yet accomplished. It is really not yet accomplished. After the U.S. withdrawal, Iraq is in a fragile both security and political situation, and I already explained that. Sunnis are in a position (inaudible) targeted and intimidated outside the political process by using politicized judicial system. And an agreed upon government program that was presented by Mr. Abadi, which is a very good program. By the way, I'm not talking about Abadi himself. Abadi was the head of the financial committee in the parliament when I was the minister of finance. And I think he's trying. But trying is (inaudible) and very bad situation (inaudible) need a lot of resources, both American, central government, Iraqis, to stand united together to defeat the illegal, violent, nonstate actors. So several militia under mind rule of law and in the past to democratization and remind also by militia and by ISIS, both of them.

So now the vision, I think we need to adopt a new counterinsurgency

model. I keep saying modified General Petraeus model. General Petraeus's model wasn't bad, for example. He created the model of Awakening because the presence of America at that time was huge. So now because the presence is different, but still they are there, so let us modify that model. And the modification means creating a joint committee -- American, central government, local people. That is local governor or chief provincial council, whom else, to supervise the study of recruiting Sunnis and arming them directly, arming them directly, arming them without this bureaucracy. This joint committee would be responsible about supplying and overseeing the training and it would be a win-win situation for everyone. Americans would supervise everything. Central government will not say that I'm not attended and nothing has been coordinated with me; they will be attended in the study. And local people who keep complaining that government didn't accept them and didn't arm them would be also on that committee, so everybody would feel comfortable that they will be recruited officially again to fight ISIS.

Now, after this, as I mentioned very rapid -- I'm sorry, I don't mean to confuse you, but I hope the answer can put you much more aware. We have the central government -- we have the partners, in fact, local people, what to do. Central government, what to do. And Americans as heading the international coalition fighting ISIS, what to do.

Let us start with the central government. On the political side, the program of the government, including reconciliation, amnesty law, counterterrorism law, amendment, all these things need to be implemented. And by the way, I am talking about de-Ba'athification, I mean. Restoring back balance to Sunni, Shiite, Christian, Muslims in the security forces and other institutions. All these topics that you see agreed upon. So we are not talking about new conditions and a new agreement. All agreed upon the problems, the timetable, and the implementation.

On the security side, talking about ISIS, all resources should be directed toward unifying all Iraqis to defeat ISIS. With full coordination, we are the potential ally to the United States of America in fighting ISIS, but keeping in mind also that we have to dismantle and decommission the militia and strip them from their weapons. Otherwise, you will see a very weak army, very weak government, very strong militia. No one will accept this country to be in that model.

Restructuring the Iraqi Army. I talk a lot about the Iraqi Army. How it was defeated in Mosul. We don't need such divisions of the Iraqi Army withdraw in front of a few criminals like ISIS. Arming Iraqi tribes to fight ISIS to be the precursor to be included later on in the National Guard. Some National Guard legislation to the parliament because at the end of the day it is the local people in the National Guard who will control the ground in the post-ISIS period.

Returning and compensation of people, displaced people, because this is a very big problem now. Millions of people are outside their houses. On the American side, supporting political reform and reconciliation, they're supporting (inaudible). They keep support, but I mean to start with despite all the marginalization of Sunnis, we keep saying that the solution should be political in participation, division of power, power sharing, all these things. In order just to squeeze terrorists at an angle would not accept an illegal nonconstitutional solutions. Ensuring adoption action of government formation agreements, the government formation agreement of Mr. Abadi is an excellent program. The idea is to dig deep over their timetable and implementation, assisting and rebuilding security forces on a nonsectarian professional basis. We're talking about 50,000 according to Mr. Abadi himself. 50,000 ghost soldiers. So the minister of defense paid for them and they are really not in service. Now only at this point the 50,000 are to be compensated by 50,000 good guys would restructure the Iraqi Army in a good way. Do

you see? We can defeat forces. Like Ninewah, we don't need to see that model in order not to see the defeated Iraqi forces. We have 50,000 and others. In fact, the number is increasing. Rebuilding the Iraqi Army on a national background is mandatory.

Just one minute. I lost -- I'm about to complete.

Assist to develop state of law. I'm talking about state of law that is restoring the law to the country, not state of law Mr. Maliki who damaged the law, in fact.

Assist and provide technical assistance legislation for National Guard. Dismantling, decommission of militias because we don't need America to build its partnership with militias or with ISIS. Both of them are violent nonstate actors. The partnership and the framework with America is with the state, with Iraq.

Help, pressure the central government regarding displaced people and their location of many in creating a fund to displaced people.

The story of a lot of debate about arming Sunnis. I think the battle against ISIS is an international one, but ISIS is threatening everyone, so everyone should participate in that battle in a way. Sunnis in Iraq are the greatest potential ally in fighting ISIS. I don't think that anyone can liberate Sunni provinces without Sunnis. Sunnis need the assistance of the United States and the international community in order to fight ISIS. Arms and assistance need to reach trustworthy Sunni leaders, and they are on the ground now fighting ISIS. Proving to work with Anbar Awakening movement's model. As I mentioned, the model of awakening direct armies, direct financing from the American side encouraged people to defeat al-Qaeda in 2006 and 2007.

There is some reservation talking about let us assume that arming Sunnis may use it now to fight against ISIS; later on they may use it against the government. The question, why does the Sunnis fight against the government if it is their own government? If they are participating, if there is real power sharing, why are they

fighting the government? So all this suspicion is not accepted. The only way is to restore back the state of law and partnership of all Iraqis in order not to come to this reservation. And the central government cannot be a partner with Sunnis who are fighting with the international community against ISIS. So who is the partner of the central government?

So this is the situation. The real threat in Iraq is equally ISIS and militias on the left side. But it can be restored back again. It is difficult, but not impossible. It is very possible, but it depends upon all the partners -- the American side, central government side, and the local people and the tribes.

Thank you.

(Applause)

MR. POLLACK: Governor Atheel, please.

MR. AL-NUJAYFI: Good morning, everybody.

Thank you, Ken, for that introduction.

Ken, you are an expert in Iraq, but even more, you are a friend of Iraq. You have my special thanks for that friendship with Iraq and our friendship. Thank you for organizing this forum.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the people of the United States, the brave pilots, all American forces who support them, President Obama's administration, and the United States Congress for their vital assistance to our common fight against Daesh, or as you say here, ISIL.

I welcome this chance to express my view on the Iraqi situation as an Iraqi, as a Sunni political leader, as one who was born in Mosul, of many generations of Mosul fathers and mothers, and as the elected governor of the province of Ninewah, in which city of Mosul. Mosul is the largest -- second largest city in Iraq of nearly two million people, now occupied by illegal, murderous regime of Daesh. Their clear hit is the battle

to liberate Mosul, Iraq's second largest city. Iraq cannot be Iraq without Mosul. It would be like the United States without Chicago or without San Francisco.

There are a few points I want to leave with you. These points will mean success or failure for the liberation of Mosul and for the world's fight against Daesh. Success in the Mosul battle, and just as important, what comes after the battle is crucial. These points, in addition to the importance for fighting Daesh, are concrete steps toward national reconciliation in Iraq. After 11 years of just talking about reconciliation with no actual steps taken, the Sunnis in Iraq will no longer be interested in more talk. The Sunnis need to see actual and concrete steps.

I will leave -- maybe Dr. Rafe will take most of the time -- I will leave and only outline these points so we can have your questions and a good discussion. I'm talking about Mosul as a model, but I think what I'm talking can be for all the Sunni areas.

First, the people of Mosul are the key to liberate the (inaudible) of Mosul. The Mosul people must be shown why liberation is better for them than the regime of Daesh. History shows that the people are the reason armies succeed or fail. In a city of nearly two million people, soldiers, no matter how many, even in thousands or how well equipped and trained, can do only so much. We need the people of Mosul to rise up and to help the soldiers throughout Daesh.

Will the people rise up against Daesh? I believe they will. But we must give them a vision of what their lives will be like after the liberation of Mosul in addition to the support they need during and immediately after liberation.

Before I tell you what I believe that the vision should be, I want to tell you the planning and work that is going on right now for the liberation of Mosul. We have now two training camps. In these camps, American, Canadian, and Turkish Special Forces are training thousands of Mosul police and volunteers on the combat skills and

maneuvers they need to have to be in the fight for the liberation of Mosul. One of these two camps is for Mosul parties; the other is for the volunteers who are organized in a military structure commanded by officers from the previous army. The previous army officers want to fight ISIS. The volunteers are ready to be part of the National Guard as soon as the role for this guard is enacted. The volunteers are ready to fight as soon as they get weapons. By now, we have thousands of fighters who have graduated from these camps and are ready to fight, but they don't have weapons. They don't have the weapons they need for the fight for the liberation of Mosul from Daesh. Since last January, now five months ago, we are still waiting for the promises of weapons that have been made by our government in Baghdad. Promises are nice, but it is the weapons that our volunteers need, not promises.

The force which holds Mosul after liberation must be trusted by the people of Mosul. That means the force must be from Mosul and its surrounding province Ninewah. If these forces can be trusted by the Mosul community, the Mosul people will be on the side of the liberation, and Daesh cannot make a comeback into Mosul. The liberation comes first, of course, but it's the period after the liberation that will be decisive. Our people would be watching when we bring (inaudible) so that the people of Mosul can survive. President Obama last month pledged \$200 million in humanitarian aid. Will this humanitarian aid President Obama promised be on hand in Mosul immediately after liberation or it will be tied up in Baghdad's bureaucracy?

In addition to the training camps, we have taken other steps for the liberation of Mosul. We know that the liberation of Mosul is not just a military fight. I organized a forum called Sunni Muslim Scholars in cooperation with (inaudible) in Egypt, which spotlighted Daesh crimes in Mosul. These Muslim scholars are continuing their work against the ideology of Daesh in a committee established by that forum. I

established a set of cells of the people inside Mosul who would join the liberation force if needed but these cells need to trust that force also.

I have good working relations with most of the Arab tribes in the Mosul area. These tribes will be critical in the liberation of Mosul, and I will say also that these tribes need also to trust the force. Whatever we have done, we still need to give the people of Mosul a definite vision that they had from the previous government in Baghdad.

This brings me to the second point. The people of Mosul want democracy to be installed soon through elections. The people of Mosul should elect their own representative, not have them imposed from outside. Not by the government in Baghdad, not by the extremist Shiite or Sunni, and certainly not by Iranian-supported groups of any kind. I personally welcome international observers to monitor this election. This election must be free and without any interference.

You may ask, what is our vision after liberation? This will bring me to my third and final point. We need autonomy as a part of a strong federal Iraq as the Iraqi constitution expressly spells out. I want to be clear -- I want to keep Iraq as a unified and federal country and to always follow the constitution of Iraq. The articles under our constitution are 119, 120, and 121. These articles explain how the provinces in Iraq become a region. We just want to undertake what our constitution expressly granted the people of the province the right to do.

The autonomy must be in two states. First, geographical for Ninewah province, and second, regional. Remember the words of the Iraq constitution when you hear anybody or anything from anybody alleging that I want to split up Iraq. I believe authority in Iraq should be split up, but not Iraq itself. We need to have a balance in power and authorities in Iraq which would have a double effect -- maintain the (inaudible) dimensions of Shiites, Sunni, and Kurds, and also protect minorities such as Yezidi,

Cassian, Turkmen and other minority groups.

I believe this autonomy will strengthen the unity of Iraq. First, geographically, by (inaudible) in Ninewah province. Geographic autonomy for Ninewah province will have at least three effects. This will give the Sunni community its own autonomy with its own special constitution. This autonomy will protect minorities within Ninewah province and autonomy will prevent Baghdad from interfering with the rights of the people of Ninewah province. We tried in the past to follow up constitution steps but unfortunately, Prime Minister Maliki blocked this decision.

The second stage I envision, the Ninewah province will sit down. We will sit with the KRG and other Sunni provinces and negotiate about their own relation under the umbrella of Iraqi constitution.

In conclusion, I want the people of Mosul first involved in liberation of their city. Second, to have a chance to choose their own representatives. Third, to get a chance to vote in the (inaudible) according to the Iraqi constitution. If people choose, the future will be bright.

Thank you for listening. I welcome your questions and look forward to our discussion. Thank you.

(Applause)

MR. POLLACK: While you guys are getting mic'd up, let me thank you both. Thank you, Governor Atheel. Thank you, Dr. Rafe. Those were both terrific presentations. In fact, you managed to cover my first four or five questions, so I'm going to dispense with them. That's actually a terrific thing.

I want to spend the bulk of my time with you talking about, in particular Governor Atheel, what you were talking at the end, but also, Dr. Rafe, what you were talking at the end of your presentation about what this future Iraqi relationship, political

relationship might look like. But before I do that, I want to go back to a point that Dr. Rafe raised in his terrific presentation.

You made the point, and Governor, feel free to disagree with this if you do, but I have the sense that you also agreed with this, and it was certainly the impression I think most of Washington got, which is that the problem is not Haider Abadi per se. Prime Minister Abadi wants to do the right thing, and that was certainly the impression that he left here in Washington; that he very much knows where Iraq needs to go and wants to do it. The problem is not the what; the problem is the how. And if that is something that you both agree with, I'd love to get your thoughts on how you believe that the United States might help him to better actually achieve those goals.

Rafe, would you like to start?

MR. AL-ISSAWI: Thank you very much, Ken, again.

This is a very broad and a very big question. If we answer it, it will mean we will liberate Iraq from ISIS and from the militias, so all our presentations we answered that. Thank you very much.

Look, Ken, and gentlemen -- ladies and gentlemen, talking about Haider Abadi is a person who inherited a very damaged political and security situation, and he's a good guy. Yes, I agree with you. He's trying, yes. He needs to be supported with both Americans, both Arab Sunnis and Shiites. Yes, I agree on that. But until this moment, the program of the government is not implemented according to its commitment in front of parliament. I'm talking about timetable. So some of the stories, like amnesty, talked about six months, for example. Now, nothing took place. And if you come to all other points of reconciliation, de-Ba'athification, et cetera. So yes, I agree, we should help Haider Abadi. America can help to rebuild the American security forces that I talk about, because without building national security forces, it means Iraq would be controlled totally

by militia on the side and by ISIS on the other side, and this is a question to the study of arming Sunnis, whether arming Sunnis will divide Iraq. The question, is Iraq united now? More than 50 percent is under the control of ISIS. We want to bring back to restore the united Iraq by arming Sunnis. So when we see Sunni fighters and (inaudible), in fact, you want to liberate it from ISIS to bring back unity of Iraq. So helping him in dismantling militias on the Shiite side, bringing back the state of law, supporting him in very rapid -- accelerating the process of arming the Iraqi army and fighters, what could have been Sunni according to our suggestion of this committee. Because the central government keeps saying, "Look. What if we push the weapons to the Sunni fighters? They may purchase it." The question, if Sunni tribes purchase the weapons or they defeated the Iraqi army who will give (inaudible) in Mosul when he's defeated, you see? So this is not a justification. You cannot keep saying putting a question mark on everything. You have to trust people who are fighting ISIS. So this is a point of restructuring security forces, dismantling militias, putting all the resources of all Iraqis supporting them and fighting ISIS, supporting Iraqis in presenting the draft of National Guard, because you agreed upon local forces that catch security on the ground in Ninewah on its own and Anbar, and as a local, by the way. And on the southern province also. So the South also has its own National Guard. The problem is the National Guard has not moved yet. So these are the main topics where America can help.

Finally, on the composition, America can work also to support Abadi because of the price of oil now collapsed. It's very difficult for the government to cover all this huge number of displaced people the (inaudible) of international funds may (inaudible).

Governor Atheel?

MR. AL-NUJAYFI: I believe in the (inaudible) of the (inaudible) groups. I

think Iraq will not be united if we strengthen one group and weaken the others. So what we need is to strengthen the Sunni group so they can fight ISIS. Also, they will return to balance the Iraqi forces. And the U.S. can do that. Strengthen the Sunni group, the Kurds, and the legal Shiite group within the Iraqi constitution.

MR. POLLACK: Governor, let me follow that up with a specific question to you, but Rafe, I would also be glad to get your thoughts. The process of reconciliation was something that you both talked about, that Prime Minister Abadi talks about. Again, it is clear that every Iraqi who knows anything about the real situation understands that this is critical. Does the U.S. have a role to play in fostering that process of reconciliation? Because, again, we see people like you, we see people like the prime minister talking about the process of reconciliation. We don't really see it happening. Is it happening behind the scenes? Is there more that can be done? Should the U.S. be doing more?

Governor?

MR. AL-NUJAYFI: I think that is a real wish for the reconciliation in Iraq. Especially when some of the Shiite groups get the authority, they didn't want to lose it. So they want the reconciliation to keep their authority, their power in their hand, and it cannot be a reconciliation like that.

If we are talking with real reconciliation, as I said, we need to strengthen the other groups to give them the freedom to choose their representatives so they will be in balance with the others, and that's what I'm talking about elections. We need elections which get all the groups of the Sunnis, not only me and Dr. Rafe. All the Sunni groups must be involved in that election. And so we will have all the Sunni community inside the political process.

MR. POLLACK: Before I let you answer, Governor, if I could just follow

up on that. Don't you worry that if there were elections in Iraq at this point in time that the Shia militias would capture a huge number of the seats? Isn't that a problem? So when do we do these elections?

MR. AL-NUJAYFI: It will happen in the Shia provinces, but we can also use or change the law, the election law, that in each part, small part, not with a big list, we can get representatives from each portion in Iraq.

MR. POLLACK: Dr. Rafe, please.

MR. AL-ISSAWI: Let me comment on the last point. If the situation keeps going, following the current situation in Iraq that's controlled of militia, it means the militia will draw all the political situation in all Iraq -- Baghdad, south Shiite provinces, Sunni provinces, because they (inaudible). That is why I'm talking about dismantling, legalization, institutionalizing security forces at this point.

Partnership of Sunni reconciliation. It looks like all Iraqis are talking about (inaudible) everyone is thinking about. Let us make a very rapid assessment of that story. From 2010 to now, not from 2005 or 2004 or so, before the second (inaudible) of Maliki, we met in Arbaeen, in what's called (inaudible) agreement, and on top of that was reconciliation, including de-Ba'athification, restoring Ba'ath people, political. Let us assess from 2010 until now. Hashimis after 2010 have been exiled by the president. Prime Minister, the speaker, and the former minister of finance, after (inaudible) also have been outside (inaudible) so the story is not keep talking, shouting. The story is to implement the arguments. Otherwise, if you come to the draft, I have this, the draft of the program of the government. It is such an excellent one presented by Mr. Abadi to the parliament. The problem that I (inaudible) in front of you is the timing. It talks about displaced people. It talks about reconciliation. Security forces should be totally Iraqi national. No arms and weapons should be outside the control of the government. No

militias. All (inaudible) mentioned the program. The question is, is it implemented? The answer is no.

MR. POLLACK: As always in Iraq, that is the issue. There's no shortage of the right ideas.

MR. AL-NUJAYFI: (Inaudible) to answer not as a political; to answer as one who is looking for a solution. So these are the answers of a man who is just alerting his allies that there is a burn in Iraq. Come to extinguish.

MR. POLLACK: Thank you.

All right. Let's move on a little bit because, again, I want to leave time for questions from the audience as well.

I'd now like to come to this great issue that's looming ahead of us. It's not the immediate issue. The issue that we have right in front of us is the expulsion of Daesh and whether it's going to be Anbar or Mosul first, but there's this issue that's lying behind it which both of you addressed which is critical, which is the nature of the future Iraqi state, and a future Iraqi state in which all of its communities can feel comfortable.

We invited you here because we were hoping that you could, as well as anyone, give us a sense of how the Sunni community is thinking about exactly that set of problems. And I recognize that I can't ask you both to speak for six or seven million Sunnis, but I've got to ask someone to do that because I can't fit all six or seven million Sunnis in this room, nor would they come, nor would they get visas if we invited them. So I'm going to ask you to ask as their surrogates.

I'm going to start with you, Governor, because you covered it in such wonderful detail in your remarks. Help us to get a sense of what you think that future Iraqi state will look like. You spoke today. You've spoken in the past about the importance of decentralization of authority, but nevertheless, within a strong federal

system.

Now, that sounds exactly right but, of course, the devil is in the details. Help us to understand the details. What kinds of powers are you thinking about that should be devolved from the federal government, the central government, to the governorates, to the regions? How would that work? And Rafe, I'm going to ask you to do the same after the governor. But Governor, please start us off.

MR. AL-NUJAYFI: Maybe we can get the KRG as a model. I think till now, the political life in KRG is suitable. There are no problems even between enemies. Now they become all friends. And they can solve their problems inside their autonomy. But maybe there is other problems with Baghdad with some of them.

I think dividing the authorities inside a province like Ninewah or like -- I will not say Sunni region but maybe it will happen, as the Anbar or Salahaddin want after that, after negotiation with them. But anyway, I think we can solve our problems. We can get our security. We can get our suitable political life inside that province. In Baghdad, it will be the final relation. It needs to be that there is not any event or any problems happen from this province to Baghdad, but they can make their reconciliation between the people easy. Maybe there are some problems with some parties or some groups of the Shia with those who are in Mosul.

So it is more easy to solve that problem in the provinces, and we can get, as I said, the KRG as a model. I believe that Iraq will stay in their province (inaudible) until it becomes a real federal country which will get its autonomies the rights to avenge the problems inside their province.

MR. POLLACK: I have several follow-ups, but I'm going to turn to Dr. Rafe first for his overview.

MR. AL-ISSAWI: The sensation of Sunni (inaudible) participation in the

participation (inaudible) versus nonparticipation and everyone is in exile. Awakening assassination. Demonstration tanks attacking them. Calling for a regional occupation by militia in Diyala, for example. So all this gives the impression Sunnis are not partners. It needs real solid confidence building. It needs not only promises. We have to go into an action plan in detail how to restore Sunnis to bring them back to the political. They are already (inaudible), but no one can trust -- everyone is not trusting the other (inaudible). But I mean, all these things are taken by Sunnis on the constitution are legal background. It ends with illegal, nonconstitutional movements from the government side. So this is one.

Second, on the authorities, what sort of authorities and what Iraq will look like. In fact, everyone is talking about the constitution, implementing the constitution, respecting the constitution. The constitution reclarified that point. There are central federal government authorities, there are regional authorities, and there are shared or mixed authorities between the two. Respecting and implementing the constitution is a guarantee.

MR. POLLACK: Dr. Rafe, let me ask the first follow-up to start with you, but again, Governor, I'm going to ask you for your views as well.

As you are painfully and personally aware, one of the problems with the current federal system is that we've had a corruption of the justice process and key Sunni leaders, again, present company included, have been targeted by the central government using that judicial system. How would you feel about a future Iraqi system that would prevent that from happening? How do we go about creating an Iraq in which you and Tariq Al-Hashimi and Ahmad Al-Awani and others can't be personally targeted by this system?

MR. AL-ISSAWI: It depends upon Iraqis, all Iraqis, Sunni, Shiite Kurdish,

Muslim, Christian, whether to select to live together, to give unity to Iraq, to respect the law of authorities. Now for sure there is interference in the judiciary system. America you and here can help a lot in rebuilding and restoring. Everything needs to be restored. Everything is damaged, so you have to restructure damage, mend Iraq. So restoring Iraq back again means you have to build again.

On the corruption side, which is really in the security and nonsecurity institutions, part of this is totally controlled by militia. So money creates militias, and militias took money, and it is a vicious circle. That's why I said the challenge is to restore back again the state, so it depends upon how serious are Iraqis, including me and my colleagues, to rebuild Iraq. Otherwise, if everyone keeps only observing Iraq's burning and they say, "This is not my job," or only keep beating others without participation or giving promises without implementation (inaudible).

MR. POLLACK: Governor, anything you'd like to add on the judicial system?

MR. AL-NUJAYFI: I think the corruption and all that problems may be solved easier if we are near to the people, not far away from the people. Now with controlling everything from Baghdad, they have no interest or on concern what happens in Mosul or in Anbar, what the people of Anbar want. They want to form Mosul and Anbar and other things. They want them to belong to them, not to follow the problems or the corruption in their city. And that's what happened in Mosul exactly before the collapse of Mosul. The corruption in the Army is too much, but Baghdad didn't care with that corruption. They care that the Mosul people must belong to them. So I think dividing the authorities as I said, and we can see (inaudible) KRG as a model dividing the authorities, even if there is a problem between some of the Kurdish leaders in Baghdad, there is no real problems between them that they can solve that problem inside their

autonomy.

MR. POLLACK: Thank you.

Governor, I want to shift to another specific aspect of a future Iraq that you in particular raised in your remarks and in your first answer to me. You said now several times that the KRG ought to be a model. And that's actually very helpful because I think it's one that we can really get our hands around. Right? That's something that we can understand. But that's also a very big statement, and I want to ask you about a couple of specific aspects of it, starting with the military and security side. Do you believe, as you've kind of implied, that what Iraqi Sunni Arabs are looking for in a future Iraq is a situation where the military and security forces of the Sunni provinces of the Sunni regions are separate from the Iraqi Central Army? And under that vision, do you think that Sunnis would be willing to have Iraqi Central Army units in the Sunni provinces? Or would they have to be split? Just as the KRG has its peshmerga who are responsible for security and military matters in the KRG and the army of the central government is more or less out of the KRG?

MR. AL-NUJAYFI: Maybe I will have a difference between two securities.

MR. POLLACK: Please.

MR. AL-NUJAYFI: The local security for the provinces and that must be managed inside the province or inside the autonomy. There's no need to have interfere from Baghdad with the local security in the province, but there is also another security which is the (inaudible) security, and that, of course, we need the Iraqi Army to involve in it. So we don't like that we have the Iraqi Army even in our provinces. We like to have the Iraqi Army, but this Iraqi Army must not be involved in local security, and it must not be involved with the people inside the province.

MR. POLLACK: So perhaps more a division between the Ministry of Interior forces versus the Ministry of Defense forces.

Rafe, would you like -- please.

MR. AL-ISSAWI: (Inaudible) constitution really clarifies the type of relationship between security forces local versus federal. The law of 21 of the year 2008 is only talking about 32 of the governors to call for federal forces if there is a real threat in a security situation in his province. So if the security situation is good, that means local forces, whether local police or later on National Guard of provinces, is more than enough. Otherwise, to send an army or federal army is definitely accepted as part of unified Iraq, but also the constitution localized or exactly said how to do it and the law which is implemented now, the governor is the only authorized one that can call for the prime minister to send some troops if he needs it. So this is the way of connecting local versus federal law.

MR. POLLACK: Very helpful.

Let me dig down to another level of detail and let me ask about, as we say here, where the rubber meets the road -- money. Do you believe that Sunni Arabs would envision in this future Iraqi system one where the Sunni provinces or a Sunni region or individual Sunni regions would have their own budget separate from the federal budget, or would they remain a part of the larger federal budgets? And again, going back to the KRG model where there is a separate budget that simply has a revenue-sharing arrangement with Baghdad?

Governor, please.

MR. AL-NUJAYFI: I think the constitution explained that very well, and we need to get our budget according to the population of the province or the autonomy so we can follow the constitution for dividing this budget.

MR. POLLACK: Governor, if I could, before I turn to Rafe, having been governor of Ninewah, are there specific items that right now are handled by the federal government that you think would be better handled by the provinces, by the regions, again, thinking about a future Iraq in which the Sunnis felt more comfortable?

MR. AL-NUJAYFI: I will give an example. For the last year I was governor of Ninewah. Ninewah, according to the constitution, must get 11 percent of the Iraqi budget, but actually, we don't get more than one percent. And that's, I think, one of the big problems that you get in the province.

MR. POLLACK: Rafe?

MR. AL-ISSAWI: The budget is (inaudible) also constitution and law describes that very well. Being the former minister of finance, part of the budget has been paid directly to the provinces. We're talking about province, not region now. What's called in the constitution and law -- by the way, it is called regional development budget. Now in the law it's called -- even it is a province, but it is called regional development budget, which is an investment budget. It almost covers something .5 percent of the total budget of the province or so, but I mean, part of the investment has been paid directly to the province. They put the projects -- they list it in the Ministry of Planning, so this is direct to the province. And their budget is according to law now. It's part of the central government total unified budget. If it's changed to region -- the constitution also is talking about the budget of the region, which is different totally from a budget of a province.

MR. POLLACK: And Rafe, to follow up with that, your expectation is that you would move to either a single Sunni region or to multiple regions?

MR. AL-ISSAWI: I think almost all Sunnis are talking now about regions on provincial backgrounds, geographic rather than ethnic.

MR. POLLACK: Got it. So four different regions?

MR. AL-ISSAWI: So Anbar and Mosul, et cetera. This is what happened in (inaudible), and Mosul. They requested or presented their request to Prime Minister (inaudible) commission as a region province, but unfortunately (inaudible).

MR. POLLACK: I'm going to ask you both one more question and then I'm going to open it up to the audience. And I want to ask you what I think is a hard question but maybe you'll disagree. Maybe it's an easy question to answer.

One of the obvious differences between the KRG and the Sunni provinces, or what would be the Sunni regions, is oil. The KRG has oil, and it's difficult, it's very difficult, but it's conceivable, and we've seen it happen, for Baghdad to have a negotiation with the KRG over which way the revenue flows, which way the oil flows. As all of you know, there is not a lot, at least at this moment, in the Sunni-dominated provinces of Iraq. How do you go to the Shia-dominated provinces of Iraq and say to them, "We want you to continue to give us our share of the total budget but we're going to be more independent. We're going to be less reliant." And I understand your arguments but I'm now asking a practical political question. You know what the reaction is going to be on the other side. How are you going to convince them that this is worth doing for them?

Dr. Rafe, would you like to start?

MR. AL-ISSAWI: Yes.

Also constitutional. I'll keep you constitutional oriented. The constitution gives the right to Iraqis -- Sunni, Shiite, whoever, to make his own region. So calling for a region on a provincial level or whichever level you call it, is constitutional. So Shiite, Kurd, and Sunni. Sunni at that time didn't accept the constitution. But, I mean, the constitution, when it passed, it includes the right to change any province (inaudible). So to be changed (inaudible) constitutional. The constitution also is talking about how to

distribute wealth between Iraqis. So the wealth of the oil in Kurdistan or in Basra, south or north or west, this belongs to all Iraqis. It is not a provincial wealth in order to say, "Look, you are looking for independence. Authority (inaudible) and you are seeking for our own oil." So oil in Anbar is for all Iraqis. The same thing is true in Mosul and in Basra. So, I mean, distribution of the wealth is constitutional. The constitution said it should be distributed according to population number, not region or province. So according to population. Your population is the same whether being a province or a region, so you have to receive your right from that point (inaudible) constitutional. Why do they call it a problem? The idea is to respect the constitution. I keep saying (inaudible) from more than one partner.

MR. POLLACK: Governor Atheel?

MR. AL-NUJAYFI: I think the same problem is occurring now in the Shia provinces, not only with the Sunnis. Basra now wants to be a region and even they think that they must get more benefit from their oil more than (inaudible) or other Shia provinces.

MR. AL-ISSAWI: Is it their oil? This is the question.

MR. AL-NUJAYFI: But on the other side, our provinces, even Mosul with Basra or Anbar with Kabala, we have other benefits which make us united, not just (inaudible). So I think -- I believe that if we invest in our benefits, even KRG, now they didn't -- they know that there are a lot of benefits to be inside Iraq and to have a (inaudible) with Iraq. Even if they have oil or the revenue. It's not enough for them to protect themselves, to have the security, to have a good relation with the surrounding countries. So there are multiple benefits that we need each other even in Mosul with Basra or Anbar with Kabala.

MR. POLLACK: Okay. I'd like to take some questions from the

audience. Our time is short, so what I'm going to do is I'm going to take a bunch of questions, maybe about six questions, and we'll put all of them to our speakers and give them the opportunity to respond collectively to all of them or to whichever ones they'd like to speak to. So I'm going to go around the room this way and pick up a whole bunch of different questions.

I'll start with the lady over there. And I'm going to ask you, please keep your questions brief, and please do keep them to questions.

Please, ma'am.

Oh, and if you could introduce yourself. Just identify yourself to the speakers.

MS. JONES: Thank you both. My name is Kelly Jones. I'm a refugee officer with Homeland Security.

There was a lot of discussion by Dr. Rafe of dismantling militias, and both of you spoke about problems with the militias, and if there were a vote, people would be voting militias in, and the ways in which the militias are currently connected to the government. And could you address how to address these problems when trying to dismantle militias in the future?

I tried to keep it brief.

MR. POLLACK: We'll go back to there.

MR. CAMPBELL: Good morning. Jason Campbell. I'm with the RAND Corporation here in Washington.

Going back to Ken's first question about Prime Minister Abadi's programs that he's advocating for and your support for them, rather than focus on what the U.S. can do, I wonder, given that the political forces currently in Baghdad seem to be successfully holding down their implementation, what will be the catalyst to see that

there's more support for these programs being actually implemented in the future?

MR. POLLACK: Take one all the way in the back there.

SPEAKER: (Inaudible), Syrian Christian.

I want to know the situation for the Yezidi and the Christians in Iraq. Mr. Governor, he mentioned a little bit about. Mr. Rafe, he don't even talk about. I'd like to know if they are going to be safe and secure in the future or we are gone from the region. Thank you.

MR. POLLACK: A hand, right in front of you, Marshall. Right there. Whoever that is.

SPEAKER: (Inaudible). I'm a nonresident fellow at Atlantic Council.

My question is we're talking about Chad militias as a homogeneous group, but a big part of it is not pro-Iranian and also has a very national stick program. Is there a way to cooperate with these groups and use them maybe to bypass the pro-Iranian militias of the Hashashabi?

MR. POLLACK: There.

SPEAKER: (Inaudible) with Humanized Global.

Recently, Prime Minister Abadi appointed Major General Anad Al-Jubouri as Ninewah Operations Command. What are your thoughts on that and on the next steps that Abadi could take to include the Sunnis and the security forces?

MR. POLLACK: We'll take one more. Right here in front. Waiting very patiently.

SPEAKER: Thank you very much. I am Nisar Chaudhry with the Pakistan American League. And first of all, I will say (inaudible) such a high level of turmoil. I felt like I'm listening to the story of two survivors. Believe me. And one of your main concerns had been, I think, the (inaudible) gap between the actions and words of

Baghdad. And basically, you're asking for decentralization or devolution of powers. This is the main thing.

I wanted to ask you, is the face of Iraq become more secular in nature after democracy or was it more secular in nature before democracy? And part two is that what do you think a timeframe -- when do you anticipate when Iraq and people of Iraq will start reaping the rewards of democracy? Thank you.

MR. POLLACK: A group of excellent questions.

Dr. Rafe, I'll start with you. Please feel free to address any or all of them.

MR. AL-ISSAWI: Yes.

When I keep talking about dismantling militia, because you know, part of Iraqi law and the constitution in the beginning is talking about integration of militia. But this is talking about the previous militia before the fall down of the regime. So extending that model of a new created militia which is pro-Iranian, would really create a huge problem. That's why I'm talking about dismantling. How to solve all these people who are carrying weapons and fighting now is to open recruitment in both the National Guard and the Iraqi Army on a personal background, not groups headed by (inaudible). So we would not accept hundreds or thousands to come as a group headed by a leader to enter the security forces because they will keep obeying their orders. So opening recruitment for thousands, tens of thousands of Shiites as Shiite persons, not as militia persons. The same thing is true for the Sunnis. We would not accept groups to fight outside the institution of the constitution or rule of law. So this is dismantling versus accepting recruitment on the local or personal (inaudible).

For the program of Mr. Abadi, yes, I stress again that Abadi is working, and he's trying to make a change. And we are committed to help him. So the question about if now. Keep promising without implementation will come again to give a lecture

about how Maliki damaged the country. I don't need to come again to say how Abadi (inaudible) will not make it. I hope that the final picture presented of a good map of Iraq (inaudible) will come later on. Building a national nonsectarian, nonpartisan security forces is a big goal. It can be done national-wise by Iraqis, supported by American programming, training, equipment. Time is important because you cannot lose more time both on the militia side and on the (inaudible) side.

The Yezidi problem, I am really sorry I didn't mention it simply because there's much more on Ninewah. It is, yes, national (inaudible) humanitarian. So I would like to apologize on that point, but because I'm sure that Atheel covered it because we discussed yesterday some sort of the topics that we will cover. So being sure that he will cover it will make me not focus on it.

On the militia side, there are -- on the pro-Iranian militia side there are national -- yes, there is national -- I cannot say there is national militia. I can't say there are national Iraqis and popular mobilization. I agree with you. I mean, not all the popular mobilization are bad guys, but definitely under the popular mobilization some of the very bad criminal militias, so we are talking about dismantling those groups, the bad guys, the criminal ones committed to crimes. Others can be accepted as part of the National Guard. Back again to my suggestion is on a personal level, not as groups to come thousands of people who belong to one of the clerics or one of the religions men to be integrated, because at the end of the day you will find an army or National Guard filled with groups. Its loyalty would not be to the state or to the law. So yes, we can get a benefit of some of the Shia who are fighting definitely.

(Inaudible) I think Atheel will comment, but this brings me back to the story of Sunni participation. If our share in the government is only Major Al-Jubouri, it means we have nothing in Iraq. With all my respect, he is a friend of mine, but I mean,

this is only one. We are talking about 1,200-somethingi generals in Iraq. If our person is one thousandth, that is .001. (Inaudible) still alive despite all these problems.

Yes, Iraq is committed, and you may see in my presentation, to democracy. But is democracy fragile, threatened? Is it really a solution? Yes, it is a real solution. Is it an option? It is an option. Are Iraqis (inaudible)? Yes, are Iraqis. But it is not protected. It needs to be protected to help (inaudible) by American friends.

Thank you very much.

MR. POLLACK: Governor, please. The last word.

MR. AL-NUJAYFI: First, I want to talk about the difference between militia and public mobilization. It's not the same, of course. Public mobilization is just the people who follow the majority wish to fight, and they are just people from the Shia who fight, and we know that most of them are good guys and they want to protect Iraq. But there is a militia inside that public mobilization who are organized, equipped, and trend from outside Iraq. And of course, when you see that view, there are people who are not organized and smaller groups which are organized and well equipped and they will get (inaudible) by the weapons that they get to fight Daesh. I'm sure that as soon as the struggle between these militia and the Sunni provinces is stopped even by this militia overcome all the Sunni areas, all is stopped, the problems will create between inside the militia and inside the Shia provinces. And even Prime Minister Abadi knows that problem. They will face the problem inside their provinces and the struggle between that militia will be more than the struggle with the Sunnis after that.

We are not going with this. If we work outside the constitution, outside the law, we are not going to stable Iraq. We are going for more problems. Of course now there are Shia-Sunni problems, but in the future it will be Shia-Shia problems.

More the minorities, I think when I'm talking about the constitution of

Ninewah, if we create autonomy, that means we need to write a constitution for Ninewah. Those minorities, even though they are small minorities when we are talking about Iraq, but they are big minorities in Ninewah. We are talking about Yezidi. Yezidi will be more than 10 percent of Ninewah autonomy or province, so they need to get their rights inside that constitution, and we need to have negotiation with them from now how to write that constitution and to put their rights of Yezidi, or Christian, or Shebek, or Turkmen, or all other minorities so it will be in the step of creating the autonomy.

Major Al-Jubouri is one person. I don't think that he is Superman. If he didn't have an office, if he didn't have his car, so how will he fight to liberate Mosul from Daesh? Talking about one person means nothing. We need to know what they will give him. If there are divisions (inaudible) to be in his command to fight or not. So I didn't follow the names. I want to see what's there (inaudible). Till now, I can see all the work to liberate Mosul is real and the actual steps were done within the model where KRG is there. Between the central government force at Mosul, there is more than 200 kilometers between Tikrit and there are no divisions or there is no army to reach Mosul from that side, so the KRG is just about 20 kilometers away from Mosul, and we believe that the work would be from the KRG model to Baghdad.

About democracy in Iraq, I think the problem is in the law of elections. Yes, there is a democracy, but what happened is that they gave the authority in that law to the big list, not to the people, and that happened from the beginning after 2003. So those people, or those guys who are untwirling the authority from after 2003, have -- they can (inaudible) their people. Until now we see that there is no real representative to the people in the parliament. We know that there is a representative to the main list in the parliament. And, of course, we can prevent some parties and accept the others.

MR. POLLACK: One last word, Rafe?

MR. AL-ISSAWI: Yes. Very short.

Dismantling militia will definitely end in a national Iraqi Army that deserves the partnership with America to defeat extremism. Insisting upon proliferation of militia would only result in Iranian Revolutionary Guard model, which I don't think this model fits for Iraq. Thank you.

MR. POLLACK: Well, obviously, this is not going to be the last word on the subject, but I think that our speakers today have given you a tremendous start in understanding both the problems of Iraq today and the potential solutions for Iraq in the future. Please join me in thanking Governor Atheel Al-Nujayfi and Dr. Rafe Al-Issawi

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Expires: November 30, 2016