

Military Resistance 1311

Palestinian Family Fights Zionist Soldier For Their 11 Year Old Boy: Child Was Not Involved In Demonstration Because Occupiers Attack Had Broken His Wrist Two Days Previously



30 August 2015 by Sheren Khalel, Middle East Eye

NABI SALEH, West Bank - Nariman Tamimi says she and her son were watching the protest from afar when she noticed something was not right.

The soldiers, who she says would usually block the protest before it could reach the steep hillside of her village, seemed to be encouraging protesters to descend down the slope. By the time she had figured out why, it was too late. She says dozens of soldiers were hiding behind trees and boulders on the hillside, jumping out to capture unsuspecting protesters.

“We saw that the soldiers had my nephew and a foreign activist they were going to arrest, and everyone ran to help them,” Nariman says.



AFP



One of the most shared photos in the series shows Mohammed's sister, Ahed, 14, biting the hand of the soldier during the struggle to free Mohammed. [See above] (MEE/Abed al Qaisi)

When the other demonstrators ran to the aid of the two protesters who were being arrested, Nariman's son, Mohammed Tamimi, 11, stayed behind and continued to watch from a distance. That's when he was captured alone.

What happened next was caught on camera in a series of photos depicting a young boy being pinned to the ground by an Israeli soldier, as the boy's mother, aunt and sister struggle to pry the grown man off the child.

The photos and video of the incident spread rapidly across social media, catching the attention of international news outlets.

The Tamimi family, who are well-known Palestinian activists, were shocked at how quickly the photos spread.

Bilal Tamimi, an uncle of the boy who was being detained on camera, filmed the entire attack. "(One of my videos) has reached over a million views just today," Bilal tells Middle East Eye from his family home in the small village of Nabi Saleh just outside of Ramallah.

"I can't believe it, none of us can. "Mohammed's aunt, Nawal Tamimi, who was captured on film desperately pulling and hitting at the soldier's face and body – trying with all her might to pull the soldier off her nephew – says she's just thankful the cameras were there.

"These kinds of incidents aren't uncommon for Nabi Saleh or for Palestine," Nawal says. "We are thankful people are seeing these photos and seeing what is happening from the occupation, but worse than this happens all the time. If so many people with cameras weren't there that day they very well could have just shot us and taken Mohammed, it wouldn't be abnormal."

The village of Nabi Saleh has organized a weekly demonstration every Friday –without exception – since 2009, in protest against the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory, and the confiscation of Nabi Saleh land by the nearby illegal Halamish settlement. The village is known for the intensity of clashes at its protests and the organization of its popular resistance committee. Nabi Saleh's strong resistance movement means Israeli forces frequently carry out overnight home raids, and clashes there are common.

All of Nariman's children, even her youngest son, 9, partake in Nabi Saleh's demonstrations. She says she doesn't keep her children home during the protests because even in their home they aren't safe.

In the photos, the young boy being pinned down is wearing a cast on his arm, an injury his mother says was caused when Israeli forces attacked their home only two days before Friday's incident.

"You can see in the photos he is wearing a cast," Nariman says. "The soldiers shot tear gas into the house and broke our windows, one of the metal canisters that flew inside hit his arm and broke his wrist. Mohammed wasn't protesting on Friday because his wrist had just been broken."

“So, there is no safe place in Nabi Saleh inside or outside, but the children are less traumatized being out there facing their fears than in here hiding, it makes them feel better, psychologically,” Nariman insists.

Photographers were the first to reach Mohammed, capturing the initial moments of the incident on Friday, while screaming at the soldier to release the boy and warning the soldier that the child’s arm had been broken.

Mohammed’s sister, Ahed, 14, was the first to physically come to his aid.

“At first I tried to speak with the soldier to get him to let Mohammed go, but he wouldn’t so I just did anything I could to get him off my brother. Anyone would do the same for their brother or for someone that they love, if you love someone you protect them” Ahed explained.

One of the most shared photos in the series of viral images shows Ahed biting the hand of the soldier during the struggle to free Mohammed.

“I didn’t know what I was doing, I was just doing anything to get my brother free,” she says.

Ahed and Mohammed’s mother who can be seen clawing at the soldier’s face and mask shared the same sentiment.

Nariman arrived at the scene right after Ahed.

In the video, before she reaches the struggle between her two children and the soldier, she can be heard screaming “My son, my son,” repeatedly. “I wasn’t thinking about anything but getting that soldier off of my son, no matter what,” Nariman says when asked if she was at any point scared of possible consequences for getting physical with an Israeli soldier.

“That soldier’s machine gun was just dangling there next to my son’s head and his hand was around his throat.”

When Nariman saw the photos for the first time she says she went through a whirlwind of emotions. “I was laughing and I was crying. At first I was laughing when I saw me and my daughter’s faces when she was biting the soldier and I was pulling at him and at the look on that soldier’s face,” she exclaims.

“But when I looked and realized the fear on Mohammed’s face I just cried. No mother wants to see their child’s face have that kind of fear.”

While Mohammed looks terrified in the photo, he quickly discounts the notion that the incident might have been the scariest moment of his eleven-year-old life.

“The scariest moment of my life was not on Friday,” Mohammed explains, picking at the frayed cloth on his casted arm. “It was when I was nine. The soldiers came to the village in the middle of the night and there weren’t any journalists to see and we ran from them, but the older kids were faster.

"Like on Friday, Mohammed and had been split off from the group, the rest of his older cousins had made it up a hill, but he and another cousin were still at the bottom, with soldiers closing in, he says.

"The soldiers were going to arrest us, but our cousins started throwing rocks and we got away, but when I got to the rest of the guys they shot my cousin right in front of me. That was the scariest time, not yesterday."

Nariman is no stranger to intense situations, but she says any mother would do what she did out of instinct, regardless of the risks.

"If you are a mother you will protect your children without thinking. Even if a cat sees something hurting its young she will attack, and that is what I did," Nariman insists with fervor.

"They weren't just trying to arrest him, the way the soldier's hand was around my son's neck he could have killed him."

To check out what life is like under a murderous military occupation commanded by foreign terrorists, go to:

<http://www.maannews.net/eng/Default.aspx> and
<http://www.palestinemonitor.org/list.php?id=ej898ra7yff0ukmf16>

The occupied nation is Palestine. The foreign terrorists call themselves "Israeli."

POLICE WAR REPORTS

Family's Attorney Says Police Shot Seneca Teen From Behind:

"His Car Was Not Moving, Contrary To Police Reports That The Car Veered Toward The Officer"

"It Is Physically Impossible For Him To Be Trying To Flee Or Run Over The Officer That Shot Him"

“It Is Clearly, Clearly From The Back”



Seneca Police Lt. Mark Tiller was the officer who shot and killed 19-year-old Zachary Hammond (pictured) in the parking lot of Hardee's restaurant, Chief John Covington said Friday. (photo: Greenville News)

July 31, 2015 by Ron Barnett, The Greenville News

A lawyer representing the family of a Seneca teenager who was shot by police Sunday night said the autopsy shows that Zachary Hammond was shot from behind and his car was not moving, contrary to police reports that the car veered toward the officer during a drug sting.

Eric Bland, a Columbia attorney hired by Hammond's parents, said he has requested the state Attorney General to call for a statewide grand jury investigation into the incident.

“It is clearly, clearly from the back,” Bland said after viewing pictures of the bullet wounds at the coroner's office Wednesday. “It is physically impossible for him to be trying to flee or run over the officer that shot him.”

Seneca Police Chief John Covington on Wednesday stood by the account told him by the officer who was attempting to make a drug arrest that night, explaining that the shots were fired from near point-blank range into the open driver's side window.

“He actually had his hand on or very close to the car, possibly pushed off from the car,” Covington said.

But the teen, he said, “was not shot from behind.”

“The attorney wasn't there either,” Covington said. “He's got to put his spin on things.

“His clients are the parents and they're grieving. I understand that. My heart goes out to them.”

The car, which was driven by the 19-year-old Seneca High School graduate, was turning toward the officer as if to run over him and the officer fired in self-defense, the chief said.

The officer has been placed on administrative leave while the State Law Enforcement Division investigates the shooting, which is standard in any police shooting.

Bland said the autopsy indicated that the first shot went into Hammond's left rear shoulder, throwing him forward in the car, and the second one went at a downward angle into his side from the rear, through his heart and lungs and leaving out his lower right side.

The entry wounds were five inches apart, he said.

"The shots were so close in proximity to each other that it would be physically impossible unless the car was stopped and the officer came up very close to an open window," Bland said.

"Picture a car going 20 miles an hour and I'm fortunate enough to get a shot off, and I hit you —there's no way I can get the second shot if the car's going 20 miles an hour," Bland said.

Oconee County Coroner Karl Addis released a statement Tuesday saying Hammond died from a gunshot wound to the upper torso, but the statement didn't indicate if the bullet came from the front or back. He referred questions to SLED, the Seneca Police and the 10th Circuit Solicitor's Office.

Tori Dianna Morton, 23, of Pickens, was in the car with Hammond but wasn't hurt. She was arrested for possession of marijuana.

Covington said the officer approached the car with his gun drawn, as is common practice in making narcotics arrests.

An undercover officer had arranged a drug buy to lure Morton into the parking lot of Hardee's restaurant on U.S. 123, according to an incident report.

The report says the officer executed a search warrant and found a bag of marijuana in the car. It makes no mention of the shooting. Covington said the officer will file a statement later.

Both the officer and the city have hired lawyers for the case, the chief said. "Ultimately, it would appear it's headed toward litigation," he said.

Pretty Boy Floyd [Another Point Of View]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1BQJgg3R-Ew>

Messing With Major: "Retaliation?"

“Sure Looks Like It”

Aug 20, 2015 by Mumia Abu-Jamal, Prison Radio

His name is Major -- (his real name)--Major Tillery of West Philadelphia.

Although he had a reputation as a gangster, in prison such things matter little. It's as a jailhouse lawyer that he shook the prison walls in the case known as Tillery v. Owens, a ground-breaking prison conditions case where double-dealing (or the placement of four men in a cell) was declared unconstitutional.

The prison medical department was declared unconstitutional and living conditions in part of the prison were declared a violation of the constitution.

Shortly after his glorious win, Major Tillery was sent to a prison in another state;

Retaliation?

Sure looks like it.

Several months ago, Major saw me in the library, and expressed shock at my appearance, my carriage, and my level of wakefulness. He argued with me, insisting I go to the prison infirmary.

I resisted, saying I was ok, or would be in a few days. Major said, “Dude - I'm looking at you - your skin is shedding; you are so tired you can't stay awake. You ain't cool, Mu!”

He went further. He walked up to the prison superintendent, warning him that if Jamal wasn't hospitalized immediately, he might die.

The warden responded, “I suggest you worry less about another prisoner, and more about yourself.”

Major responded immediately: “That's what I'm doing, cuz that's my brother - and I want for my brother what I want for myself!”

From that day forward, Tillery was hit by daily harassments, daily shakedowns, and he was removed from his job of Peer Facilitator.

He was transferred - first to the other side of the prison, and soon thereafter, to nearby SCI- Frackville. Once there, he got another surprise: he received a misconduct for drug-trafficking (of suboxone), using stamps. He was given 6 months in the hole!

Here's the only problem with such a charge. At Frackville (as in Mahanoy), all stamps are ripped off of envelopes by the mailroom before prisoners receive their mail.

Tillery demanded he be charged by the State Police to prove the falsity of the charge. The prison refused to do so.

Retaliation?

Sure looks like it.

To make matters worse, Major Tillery, and dozens of other men, are also suffering from skin rashes and getting little relief.

Major is in the hole not because of drugs, but because of something prison administrators hate and fear above all things: prisoner unity; prisoner solidarity.

On Sept. 5, 2015, Tillery will turn 65 years old, in the hole for blatant retaliation.

MILITARY NEWS

Hitting A Child-Raping Mother-Beating Corrupt Afghan Cop Gets Sgt. Kicked Out Of The Army

August 21, 2015 By Kyle Jahner, Staff report; Army Times [Excerpt]

A decorated Green Beret says he's being kicked out of the Army for losing his cool in 2011 and striking an Afghan local police officer — one who had allegedly confessed to raping a boy and then beating the child's mother for telling authorities.

Sgt. First Class Charles Martland wrote that he and his detachment commander, Capt. Daniel Quinn, received a "relief for cause" from that 2011 deployment to Konduz province, Afghanistan, for the assault, according to documentation provided to Army Times by the office of Rep. Duncan Hunter, R-Calif.

Martland, 32, said in a memorandum to the Army in his defense that he understood they were "absolutely wrong in striking one of our (ALP) commanders."

Martland had fallen under the Army's Qualitative Management Program, a process that can be triggered by derogatory information on their record.

Though technically not a draw-down tool, it is aiding in force reduction efforts by weeding out less desirable soldiers; a black mark on their record, such as a relief for cause, can trigger a formal QMP review and result in involuntary separation.

Hunter, in an Aug. 18 letter to Ash Carter, has asked the defense secretary to intervene on Martland's behalf. The congressman took on Martland's case after receiving a plea from help from the soldier.

The Army could not comment on the administrative decision to separate Martland after 11 years of service, according to spokesman Wayne Hall.

He cited privacy concerns. The soldier is to be involuntarily discharged no later than Nov. 1 according to an April 13 notification sent to Martland.

In 2011, Martland's Special Forces unit was conducting village stability operations in Konduz province, requiring frequent coordination with police.

Martland, in his letter to Hunter, said he had encountered corrupt police officials who were conducting beatings, honor killings and rapes — and going unpunished.

When a police officer was accused of raping a boy and then beating the boy's mother, Martland said it was too much. In a memo to the Army Enlisted Records and Evaluation Center, Martland admitted to striking the Afghan.

"My detachment commander and I felt that morally we could no longer stand by and allow our ALP to commit atrocities," he said in the memo.

Hunter's office shared the documents with Army Times. Hunter's spokesman Joe Kasper said he understood that the Afghan police officer confessed and laughed in the soldiers' faces when confronted.

"It's sad to think that a child rapist is put above one of our elite military operators," Hunter said in a statement on the Army's decision to discharge Martland.

"The Army should stand up for what's right and should not side with a corrupt Afghan police officer."

Hunter stressed in his letter to Carter the quality of the character references he had collected regarding Martland, who has served for 11 years and earned a Bronze Star with "V" Device. His evaluations provided by Hunter's office were largely positive.

One evaluation did mark him down to "needs some improvement" for "responsibility and accountability," citing the "physical altercation with a corrupt ALP member."

Special Forces Maj. Samuel Kline, his current commander at the Special Forces Dive School in Key West, Florida, — where Martland has worked as an instructor since 2012 — recommended Martland remain on active duty.

"Of the NCO's I have worked with throughout my career, SFC Martland has indisputably exhibited the greatest amount of loyalty and reliability of those I have encountered," Kline's wrote in a memo.

Company Sgt. Maj. John Theis noted in his supporting letter that Martland was runner-up for the "Special Warfare Training Group 2014 Instructor of the Year" out of 400 instructors.

Quinn left the Army before the current proceedings initiated. When reached by phone, Quinn declined comment for this story. Emails and phone messages left for Martland were not returned as of Friday afternoon.

“Democrats’ Election Outreach Efforts To Veterans May Need To Start With A Refresher Course” “For Starters, They Don’t Wear Polish Military Uniforms”



August 28, 2015 By Leo Shane III, Staff writer; Army Times [Excerpt]

Democrats’ election outreach efforts to veterans may need to start with a refresher course on what U.S. troops look like.

For starters, they don’t wear Polish military uniforms.

Until Thursday, the Democratic National Committee’s “Veterans and Military Families” website had as its only picture a shot from White House photographers during President Obama’s visit to Warsaw in 2011.

The president had been cropped out, but faces of four elderly veterans wearing European-style military uniforms were visible above several paragraphs asserting the party’s “commitment to America’s veterans.”

The Polish military’s White Eagle insignia was clear on the headgear of two of the veterans.

While largely harmless, the error points to a common complaint among U.S. veterans groups about the lack of knowledge of many Americans about military life, tradition and challenges.

The original image was posted in several White House photo streams and is captioned only as Obama visiting the Warsaw Tomb of the Unknown Soldier “with veterans,” likely leading to the mistake.

Most Americans Think Government Failing Vets: “Only 13% Said They Think Corporations Are Doing Enough To Support Veterans”

August 19, 2015 By Leo Shane III, Staff writer; Army Times [Excerpts]

A majority of Americans don't think the U.S. government or American businesses are doing enough to help veterans, and few believe that charities are doing enough to help cover those unmet needs, according to a survey released Wednesday.

The survey, conducted earlier this month by the research firm Ipsos, found that fewer than one in four had a favorable view of government efforts to support veterans. Conversely, 26 percent of respondents had a “highly unfavorable” view of the federal outreach.

The biggest area for improvement respondents identified was providing health care services for veterans.

The Veterans Affairs Department has battled numerous care delay scandals for the past 18 months, including records manipulation accusations that forced the resignation of former VA Secretary Eric Shinseki.

Almost half of those questioned said they believe troops are not prepared to succeed in the civilian workforce when they leave the military, and only 13 percent said they think corporations are doing enough to support veterans.

Among charities and nonprofits, support for veterans is even less well known. The survey shows that 23 percent of respondents think those groups are providing critical help to veterans, 34 percent think they are not — and 43 percent say they don't know enough about those efforts to make a judgement.

Military Resistance In PDF Format?

If you prefer PDF to Word format, email: contact@militaryproject.org

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS



“At a time like this, scorching irony, not convincing argument, is needed. Oh had I the ability, and could reach the nation’s ear, I would, pour out a fiery stream of biting ridicule, blasting reproach, withering sarcasm, and stern rebuke.

“For it is not light that is needed, but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder.

“We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake.”

“The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppose.”

Frederick Douglass, 1852

**I say that when troops cannot be counted on to follow orders because they see the futility and immorality of them THAT is the real key to ending a war.
-- Al Jaccoma, Veterans For Peace**

Soldiers In Revolt: 1917

“‘Our Staff Printing Plant,’ Says The Soldier, Pereiko, ‘Performed A Great Service For The Revolution’”
“The Bourgeois Press, Although’ Supplied To The Front Free Of Cost In Millions Of Copies, Hardly Found A Reader”

Trotsky, Leon; The History of the Russian Revolution; Volume Two

How was it that with this weak apparatus and this negligible circulation of the party press, the ideas and slogans of Bolshevism were able to take possession of the people?

The explanation is very simple: those slogans which correspond to the keen demands of a class and an epoch create thousands of channels for themselves.

A red-hot revolutionary medium is a high conductor of ideas. The Bolshevik papers were read aloud, were read all to pieces. The most important articles were learned by heart, recited, copied, and wherever possible reprinted.

“Our staff printing plant,” says the soldier, Pereiko, “performed a great service for the revolution.

“How many individual articles from Pravda were reprinted by us, and how many small brochures, very close and comprehensible to the soldiers! And all these were swiftly distributed along the front with the help of air mails, bicycles and motorcycles ...”

At the same time the bourgeois press, although supplied to the front free of cost in millions of copies, hardly found a reader. The heavy bales remained unopened.

This boycott of the “patriotic” press at times assumed a demonstrative form.

Representatives of the 18th Siberian division passed a resolution asking the bourgeois parties to stop sending literature, inasmuch as it was “fruitlessly used to boil the hot water for tea.”

The Bolshevik press was very differently employed. Hence the coefficient of its useful – or if you prefer, harmful – effectiveness was incomparably higher.

Lockheed Upbeat Despite F-35 Losing Dogfight To Red Baron



Duffel Blog image from Wikimedia and US DOD photos

August 31, 2015 by armyd, The Duffel Blog

BETHESDA, Md. — A spokesman for Lockheed Martin today denied that there is any reason to be alarmed about possible shortcomings of the military's newest and most expensive fighter plane after reports surfaced this weekend that an F-35, piloted by a crack Air Force fighter pilot, lost a mock dogfight with a Fokker Dr.I Triplane similar to the aircraft once piloted by World War I German Ace Manfred von Richtofen, the "Red Baron," piloted by a World War I reenactor.

"The F-35 isn't really meant for that kind of fighting," said Lance McCorry, a Lockheed spokesman.

"We intend it to be a first-rate multitrole attack aircraft, and to excel at long-range fighting, what we call BVR, or 'Beyond Visual Range' air combat. Not to worry about some Hun who's been dead a hundred years. Frankly, the two aircraft involved in this battle represent two different philosophies of air combat."

The Fokker Dr.I Triplane, made of wood and doped linen, entered service with the German Army Air service in 1917. It was famous for its considerable maneuverability and its high rate of climb. The pilot sat in an open cockpit, exposed to the weather, and had primitive controls by today's standards.

McCorry went on to add, "The Dr.I triplane might out climb, out turn, and out dive the F-35, but where is its radar, huh? Where are its sensors? Where is the laser terrain guidance? Huh? Sure, up close, in a knife fight, the Dr.I has machine guns, and an F-35 pilot just has his sidearm. And (the Dr.I's) cloth wings are nearly invisible to radar. But we have 'the world's most advanced fighter jet.'"

Capt. A.J. Schrag, an Air Combat Command spokesman, said "There's no way to adapt the (Dr.I) airframe to carry the required missiles and radar. It might be good in a

dogfight, but not standing off for close air support, and it's completely hopeless when it comes to engaging targets in a BVR-type air battle.”

Meanwhile, according to a source close to the recent dogfight, the F-35 “turns like a garbage truck. It might be faster than the triplane, but that doesn't matter in a stall fight.”

Lockheed officials have separately downplayed reports that the same F-35, flown by the same pilot, previously lost mock dogfights with the Goodyear Blimp and a beagle on a flying doghouse.

Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Mark A. Welsh III declined comment through a spokesman, saying only, “Curse you, Red Baron!”

ANNIVERSARIES

September 3, 1838 Frederick Douglass Made His Escape From Slavery: “It Is Not Light That Is Needed, But Fire”



Frederick Douglass

Carl Bunin Peace History September 3-9

Frederick Douglass made his escape from slavery in Baltimore and went on in life to become an Abolitionist, journalist, author, and human rights advocate.

[During the Civil War, he pressed relentlessly for the enlistments of former slaves into the U.S. army, and when this was permitted, they served with honor and played an important role in defeating the slave-owning traitors who formed the Confederacy. T]

Frederick Douglass:

“Find out just what people will submit to, and you have found out the exact amount of injustice and wrong which will be imposed upon them; and these will continue until they are resisted with either words or blows, or both. The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppress.”

“Power concedes nothing without demand. It never has and never will.”

“If there is no struggle, there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom, and deprecate agitation, are men who want crops without plowing up the ground, they want rain without thunder and lightning.”

“The thing worse than rebellion is the thing that causes rebellion.”

“I have found that, to make a contented slave, it is necessary to make a thoughtless one.”

“At a time like this, scorching irony, not convincing argument, is needed. Oh had I the ability, and could reach the nation’s ear, I would, pour out a fiery stream of biting ridicule, blasting reproach, withering sarcasm, and stern rebuke. For it is not light that is needed, but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder. We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake.”

CLASS WAR REPORTS



[Thanks to Sandy Kelson, Veteran & Military Resistance Organization, who sent this in.]

**“Protests Here Have Evolved
Into A Broader Rebuke Of The
Political Establishment”**

**“The Demonstrations Represent A
Popular Reckoning With The
American Legacy Here”**

**“They Knocked Out Saddam And
Brought A Hundred Saddams”**

**“This Protest Was Established To
Demolish What The Americans Set Up”**



Security forces containing protesters in Baghdad on Friday. Credit: Thayer Al-Sudani/Reuters

AUG. 31, 2015 By TIM ARANGO, New York Times [Excerpts]

BAGHDAD — Surrounded by the clamor of protest — a sea of Iraqi flags, vendors selling coffee and melon drinks, protesters singing the national anthem and railing against politicians — two friends paused and described their dreams.

“I want to find a job opportunity,” said one of them, Yasir Abdulrahman, 21, who recently earned an engineering degree but remains unemployed. “I want to build a country. I want an opportunity.”

His friend Hussein Ali, 22, quit university to support his family and now works as a taxi driver. He said that even the specter of bombings would not keep him away from the square.

“We are only thinking of reforms,” he said. “If you want to change, you have to sacrifice yourself.”

For five Fridays now, thousands of mostly, but not entirely, youthful and secular Iraqis have gathered in central Baghdad’s Tahrir Square to demand change.

At first, the demands were small, like improving electricity amid a summer heat wave. But the list has grown longer and more complex: Fix the judiciary, hold corrupt officials accountable, get religion out of politics.

The protests have come to overshadow the fight against the Islamic State, Iraq’s main preoccupation over the past year.

Change, at least on paper, came quickly.

Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi announced a set of sweeping measures to placate the protesters. He called for the elimination of several senior government positions, including the three vice presidencies; the end of sectarian quotas in politics; the reduction of ministries; and a new drive to eliminate corruption.

Several weeks later, few of the measures, aside from the firing of three deputy prime ministers and a few ministers, have been carried out, and many protesters now say they are pessimistic about real change.

“We haven’t noticed anything yet,” said Ali Farras, 25, who joined the protests on Friday. “It is just ink on paper.”

Away from the agitation of the streets are the political intrigues of the Green Zone, the cloistered and fortified enclave here for politicians and ambassadors.

There, officials say, the entrenched sectarianism and corruption in the political system may make it impossible for Mr. Abadi to keep his promises.

“He can make all the directives on earth, but who will implement them?” said one Iraqi lawmaker close to Mr. Abadi who spoke anonymously to avoid angering the prime minister. Yet if Mr. Abadi succeeds in eliminating sectarian and party quotas from Iraqi politics, the lawmaker said, he will become “a national hero.”

The protests — and the support for them from members of the Shiite religious establishment in the holy city of Najaf, whose word is final for many among the country's Shiite majority — have provided an opportunity, as well as political cover, for Mr. Abadi to tackle some of the country's most vexing problems.

Since the protests began, Iraqis have noticed a modest improvement in electricity, but not much else.

“Apart from that, he hasn't really changed anything for the people in the street,” said Sajad Jiyad, an Iraqi analyst based in London and Baghdad who sometimes advises the government. “He has to meet people's demands, but he can't go too fast and upset the political elite.”

There is also concern that Shiite militia leaders who are close to Iran could exploit the anger in the streets to gain more power. The Shiite militias have become increasingly popular in Iraq because their forces have had success in fighting the Islamic State, also known as ISIS or ISIL, and they have been Mr. Abadi's chief rivals in an intra-Shiite struggle for power.

Already, the ranks of the protesters include many young men who are members of the militias.

“If the current reforms prove little more than window dressing, they will mean the end of the political life of the prime minister and large portions of the political class,” the International Crisis Group said in a recent report. “In their place, militia commanders would ride popular anger and military supremacy to power.

“There are many precedents in Iraq's history,” the report continued. “It was, after all, only a year ago that I.S. used Sunni anger and a lightning military strike to impose repressive rule in large parts of the country.”

Still, for the first time in a long time Iraqis have been given the space to voice grievances.

As in Beirut, where piles of trash on city streets incited popular demonstrations, the protests here have evolved into a broader rebuke of the political establishment. Under orders to treat the gatherings with kid gloves, the Iraqi security forces have protected the protesters rather than shoot them, as they did in 2011 when Iraqis, after the Arab Spring uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia, sought to foment their own revolution.

“People are finally starting to express their opinions,” said First Lt. Ali Thamir, a police officer on duty at Tahrir on a recent Friday. “It's a really great experience for the people. The security forces are with the people. We are protecting them.”

Lieutenant Thamir continued: “The people are tired. Lack of services. Corruption. Electricity. The government is fragile.”

He said the protesters should be patient: “Abadi is not Ali Baba with a magic lamp. He needs some time.”

On a deeper level, the demonstrations represent a popular reckoning with the American legacy here, with the corrupt and dysfunctional political system that has been in place since United States forces invaded in 2003.

For many of the young protesters, the invasion is the most formative event of their lives. When the American bombs began falling, Mr. Abdulrahman said, “it was terrifying, but my parents told me it was good.”

“We thought we would be freed,” he added. “They knocked out Saddam and brought a hundred Saddams.”

His friend, Mr. Ali, said emphatically, “This protest was established to demolish what the Americans set up.”

Most of all, many of the protesters say, they want to see high-level officials charged with corruption. This is reflected in the frequent chants at Tahrir for former Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki to face trial.

Mr. Maliki was replaced last summer amid international calls for a more inclusive leader in the face of the offensive by the Islamic State, which now controls about a third of the country.

“The problem is the politicians are not good people,” Abdulsadr Aboud, 65, said as he stood in Tahrir Square one recent Friday evening. He said he would leave Iraq if only he could afford to pay a smuggler to get him to Europe.

“They stole our money,” he said of politicians, adding: “They didn’t give a share of the oil to the people.”

On Saddoun Street, a commercial thoroughfare that connects with Tahrir Square, is an old tailoring shop that has been in Mwafaq Ali’s family since the 1950s.

The shop has been outfitting Iraq’s political elite for decades. Since the new class of leaders was ushered in after 2003, Mr. Ali has noticed a trend: Many of his customers seem to be getting richer.

Early on, he said, if a politician could afford one of his customized suits, it was usually made of cheap fabric from China. Now, he said, politicians come in to buy several at a time and demand expensive European fabrics, blended from merino wool, cashmere and silk.

Speaking of one unnamed official who has been in government for more than a decade, he said: “First, he was just coming to look. He’d just say hello and goodbye, because he couldn’t afford it. Then he’d buy one suit. And then 10.”

Even with this windfall, Mr. Ali said he supported the protesters.

“It’s not good if I just look after myself,” he said. “I support the reforms, even if it hurts my business.”

MORE:

**Huge Popular Demonstrations
In Baghdad And Several Cities
In The South Of The Country
Against Corrupt Dictatorship:
“The Parliament And The Islamic
State Are Two Sides Of The Same
Coin;**

**“Demonstrators For The Most Part
Made Up Of Youth And With A
Substantial Female Presence”**

**“This Massive Popular Movement Also
Accompanied By Strikes Opposing
Privatization And For Better Working
Conditions”**



Photo: Syria Freedom Forever

Since the end of July, and despite continued terrorist attacks by the so called Islamic State (IS) against Iraqi civilians, massive popular demonstrations have taken place in the capital Baghdad and several cities in the south of the country mainly to denounce corruption in the country and the political bankruptcy of the ruling sectarian political parties.

Demands of the protesters notably included the dissolution of parliament, the end of the domination of the clergy on the structure of the Iraqi state and the modification of the Constitution to end the sectarian quotas.

The demonstrations also condemned the continuing failures and power outages, deteriorating public services and increasing social inequalities.



Photo: Syria Freedom Forever



Photo: Syria Freedom Forever

The underlying causes of this widespread anger, whose sources are much deeper, are above all the growing authoritarianism and lack of social justice, with over 35% of Iraqis living below the poverty line.

Furthermore, the repression by the security services and Shia reactionary militias linked to the government, of a protest demanding the provision of electricity in an area located at the north of the city of Basra, causing the death of a protester and leaving 4 wounded, has also ignited the spark of protest.

Even if conservative parties allied with the government and religious figures called to participate in the massive protests in an opportunistic attempt and to coax the movement, while without mobilising their membership, the demonstrators, for the most part made up of youth and with a substantial female presence, were challenging the political system as a whole ...

These massive demonstrations calls for a secular state in opposition to a confessional state, against the division between Sunni and Shi'a populations, for women's rights and equality, and clear condemnations of sectarian political parties with placards notably saying "the parliament and the Islamic State are two sides of the same coin", "Daech was born out of your corruption", "the Human does not survive with religion but bread and dignity", "in the name of religion, they act like thieves", "no to sectarianism, no to nationalism yes to humanity", "there is no end to corruption in a sectarian and nationalist regime", etc ...

Former Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, whose eight years, from 2006 until 2014, in office were marred by allegations of corruption, authoritarianism and alienation of the Sunni population and who still has an important influence in the Iraqi regime, especially in the security services and various Shi'a sectarian militias, was particularly targeted by protesters who chanted slogans demanding that he'd be tried for his crimes and corruption cases.

An Iraqi parliamentary inquiry has also found former prime minister Al-Maliki and 35 other officials responsible for the fall of Iraq's second city, Mosul, which fell smoothly into the hands of the IS in June 2014. He was notably accused as commander in chief of the army, to have sought to centralize control of the army in its services and to have played an important part in the weakening of the army particularly in appointing commanders chosen for their loyalty rather than their competences.

Militia groups linked to the former Prime Minister and / or to the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) have not actually hesitated to attack protesters with knives in cities such as Baghdad and Kerbala, while the local security forces remained silent, resulting notably with more than thirty wounded in Baghdad and including dozens in Kerbala.

In addition to this, a large crowd in the city of Kerbala, a highly symbolic Shi'a location, has also not hesitated to condemn the hegemonic influence of Iran on the Iraqi government and its interventions in the internal affairs of the country singing "Karbala is free, Tehran out! Out!" after Shi'a sectarian militia groups, called "popular mobilization forces" trained and organized by the Iraqi regime with the direct assistance of military officials of the IRI to fight the Islamic State, and Shi'a clergymen chanted slogans glorifying the Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei.

The militias then attacked the demonstrators.

Few days later, still in the city of Kerbala, the demonstrators tried to storm the building of the province and local government, but security forces repelled them.

This massive popular movement was also accompanied by strikes in some sectors, particularly in the energy and industry fields, opposing privatization and for better working conditions.

The Iraqi government led by Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, from the Shi'a Dawa Islamic fundamentalist movement, reacted to these protesters by voting new laws against corruption and suppressing important political positions (notably of three deputy prime ministers and three vice-presidents, including Nouri al-Maliki) and privileges of ministers and deputies to try to stop this movement.

The program proposed by the Parliament also addressed the "immediate and comprehensive reduction" of the large number of bodyguards of officials, the abolition of "special provisions" granted to officials and finally the abolition "of sectarian quotas." The plan proposes that politicians are no longer selected according to their religious or ethnic affiliation, but according to "their competences, honesty and experience" .

These measures are nevertheless probably only propagandist and a way to calm the rising wrath of the Iraqi popular classes, because the main beneficiaries of the sectarian regime are these same deputies that voted these law.

We must show our solidarity with the Iraqi popular masses, who have suffered of local oppressions, from the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein to the sectarian and reactionary parties in power since 2005, in addition to the IS, and of the interventions of regional, the IRI and the Gulf monarchies and international imperialists actors, especially of the USA since the embargo in 1991 to the military intervention and occupation from 2003, in their struggle for democracy, social justice, equality and against sectarianism.

The masse popular protests in Iraq are a sign of hope in a region dominated and crushed by bloody dictatorships and reactionary forces.

YOUR INVITATION:

Comments, arguments, articles, and letters from service men and women, and veterans, are especially welcome.

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