

My diary in (Laonf) campaign

As I was visiting Mr. Yousif in his isolated electronics place, which always turns you over to invisible worlds and other worlds which siege us and almost choke us in our blazing day of Baghdad, I found him like that he was trying to pass on something important to me, a bunch of thoughts, symbols and signs similar to puzzles and mysteries, which you must take apart and re-arrange it again. And when the image was clear for me, I found the term (Laonf) “non violence” on the green map of Iraq. From here was the beginning.

Monday, 7th of May:

You must decide and knock on the door of the “Sadr tendency”, here we must stick to our relations which have roots outspread to the deepest point inside the city and its poor districts and maybe the poorest districts... Al Thawra city, (Al-Sadr nowadays).

So, where are you (Aba Baha’a)?

- He asked (through his mobile) to give him two days, so it’s Thursday then!

Tuesday, 8th of May:

The approvals on participating in the campaign are coming into sight. Sheikh Mohammed Al-Ghairy and the (The League of Ulamaadeen) expressed his will to release the idea in the mosques and the districts that are related to them.

The Youth Democratic Unity, assured there active participation in the campaign, and the ability to propagate the leaflet and poster in the colleges of Baghdad University.

Wednesday, 9th of May:

In the evening, my friend (Yasir) from Basrah called me, clarifying that there is an acceptance for the idea in the city and a tendency to activate it from the students and youth bureau of (Al-Fadhila Party), also the center of social researches and studies in Basrah.

Also we received approvals to participate from Al-Najaf, Mosul, and from some independent activists, too.

We, as we are working in limited efforts and abilities, and with very real fears, have a hope for carrying out this simple campaign, for the Iraqi

stipulation in general, and especially in Baghdad, for any work may not be as it is in other countries; here, you can't guarantee anything, your projects are mutilated and its wings are cut off, cause the birds, here, die on the sounds of bombed cars, mortars, and bullets' rumble while they are in the wide sky, which have room for anything beautiful and humanistic, room for all the colors from all spectrums, for everyone, but, here, it's so tight upon us like a hole of a deserted grave!

Thursday, 10th of May:

As you are dribbling to the building of (Al-Shaheedain Al-Sadrain Center) in Al-Baladiyat district in Al-Risafa side of Baghdad, and by the attendance of the young guards, I asked one: Why didn't you frisk us?

He answered: (welcome) with a shy smile which spread through the circularity of his brown skinny face and his beard, as it's like that he wanted us (me and Abu Baha'a) to feel our dangled paunches and our lazy walk, we, can't frighten anybody, maybe in the whole world, too!

When you enter this new cultural edifice, which seeks to present a national service through its clear capabilities in the field of communications and social researches and studies with staffs of young and passionate members, you meet the excessive hospitality. A magnificent building at one of Baghdad's corners which reaches everyone!

While I was visiting the center, I had a hope that its cinema hall can present shows for the new Iraqi cinema, also some serious shows from all over the world, a hope for its theatre to present various performances which concentrates on the Iraqi sorrow, the ambitions of the Iraqi person who rises up from the destruction, a hope for its splendid halls to present conferences and activities of the activists in the human rights sector and civilian society, and to be a platform to fertilize the thoughts and opinions of all Iraqi trends, who do not find a shelter to resort to through the mumbling of death, assassinations and kidnapping which became a daily matter snapping the Iraqi's souls.

"We are delighted for your visit, we appreciate your campaign, and we shall do our best to be with you". With these friendly and lovable words, we were invited by Sheikh Yousif Al-Nasiry, head manager of the center, a medium-sized with a simple and traditional appearance of a sheikh (cleric), in his elegant office, a friendly person in the forties of his age, beholder, his speech focused on the national sorrow and the suffering of the secluded sector in the community. His speech wasn't empty from admonishing because of the stinginess of the national press in general, especially in

covering the activities of (Al Sadr tendency) hinting that this thing maybe in purpose.

But the taste of the (lemon tea) which we sipped, in the Sheikh's office, as it was gleaming in the (little cups) (In Iraq, known as Istikan), was hot and delicious, beside the approval of the superiors that the logo of the center must have a place in the leaflet of the expected campaign.

Here, we must praise to the efforts made by our skinny active friend (Amjed) who use to work in (Tareek Al Sha'ab-the official newspaper of the communist party), and now he is in the Sadrian (Al Ahd) radio station, for he was acting as a guide for realizing this important cultural edifice and its looking forward staff.

Saturday, 12th of May:

While I was shuffling along trying to reach the building of the Independent Syndicates union in Al Waziriya, the road wasn't so easy because the National Guards and Policemen had encircled the region where the Turkish embassy, the Academy of Fine Arts, and the Senior Appealing Courts are. It means the region which extends from the remains of Al Sarrafiya bridge and the English cemetery to Al-Maghrib Street and the beginning of Al Kasrah district, so one must roam, but my feet sneaked to Al Waziriyah in the end of its spring which was in 1970's of the past century without taking notice, the roads shaded with the long trees, houses of the Aristocracies getting old under the rising of Al Ba'ath generality and its (socialism) procedures, quietness and calmness, the sleeping luxury among the eucalyptus trees' lines where there I see the lovers' hideaway at the end of their running days towards the wars and death which are waving through the fascist drums sounds and its destroying ascent.

Al Waziriyah Streets, the rest of Baghdad in its (1950's) might, where the British Educational Center in an old Baghdadian building, hiding behind the shades of tamarisk and green eucalyptus, that humble building with prosperous educational activity; the teaching staff of the center were from British ancestors for most of them, and how can I forget Mrs. Margaret Hasan, a clear person who was passionately fond of Iraqis while she was teaching them English, then her work in the humanistic field all those years till the tragedy came and the black evil hands of terrorism took her away!

The library of the center, with its prosperous references (at that time), almost competed with most of Baghdad's big libraries, while the cinema shows which were part of the teaching schedule had enjoyment and educational prosperous and especially that most of the shows were for Shakespeare's great plays, and we used to have tea and milk in addition to

coffee in the luxuriant garden from the hands of (uncle Hamza); well, the world is spinning.

The memories didn't stop until I found myself entering into a building (in another term, remains of a building) with a blue notice board sating (the Iraqi Independent Syndicates Union).!

I noticed a bunch of confused young men, maybe they can't get use to the place, no electricity no water in it, and for the guests room I think that it is trying to gather itself up to tell you: welcome, come in, here we are!

You will be surprised by the attendance of (Abu Al Hasan) who takes you into the scene, the scene of (The New Iraqi Youth Union) which is an organization which is included in the group of (The Independent Syndicates Union) where all of them represent the (Al Sadri Tendency).

He puts you in the scene of the union and its activities, its humble and eager newspaper, a young staff, most of them are students in the universities, whom have a hope to create and work with others for a new Iraq.

(Abu Al Hasan), a young man who passed the third decade of his age, speaking in Iraqi reality which is trying to rise but slowly; he gave me a notion that they are clear for others, but that needs efforts and continuity between the two parts, and I think that, this is important. After a discussion about the concepts of the campaign and the nature of making the leaflet, we reached an agreement that the logo of the Iraqi New youths Union will be inside the leaflet.

**Note **

While we were busy preparing for the non violence campaign in Baghdad and number of Iraqi governorates, I received some warnings from friends from the inside and outside (of Iraq), after they have been aware of the campaign's nature and its aims, some of them said clearly (you are liable to the expiatory and the remains of the ex-regime and others).

And between this and that, some comments came in about phrasing the leaflet; in my opinion, they were expected and must be considered, but it made a definite and important deflection which needs a lot of flexibility, and trying to get it away from (personalizing) the project. There were critical moments, either the project stops, or passes, yet everybody's desire was to make it succeed and see the light, in addition to its national importance, so the project passes along.

Tuesday, 16th of May:

It seems that are colleague (Uday) is eager to make the campaign succeed without his other (non violence) equals whom didn't respond to the call and for unknown reasons, but we admonish with notions and we don't want them to be friends of (halfway) or permanent colleagues for (Amman's) conferences only.

The other negative sign was the diffident participations which are almost missing in the leaflet of (Laonf) which was a simple symbolization for that humanistic idea which gathered us someday!

Wednesday, 17th of May:

We grabbed the leaflet and poster of the campaign with interest while it was instantly out from the printing machine; it was hot like a loaf of Iraqi bread which has came out at once from the furnace with its appetizing smell and splendid taste!

It is a simple call searching for a space of (kindness) among the crashing of helmets and turbans, tanks and hateful weapons clamors and sirens which became the disharmony music of the Iraqi street.

Thursday, 18th of May:

With some shyness, simplicity and a great hope, (Uday) affixed the first poster on a frontage of a small and old café facing the Bab Al Mu'adam Garage which is full of university students, workers, government employees returning to their homes tired and being haunted by the obsession of bombings, and insistent beggars who are lying down on the garage's pavements and all around.

This little café was the (resort) for the city's educated who were far from the governmental education institutes and there is just about to be a distance which cannot be cancelled. They haven't declared themselves as a group or forum within the days of the past regime, but they have formalized an educational pressuring group with activity against the education and culture of the fascists regime, among them are famous paupers who have reached the time of the bombed freedom's space, and so they left the café and didn't come back!!

It's (The free education assembly) with its poor signboard and wrong English translation.

(Abu Salwan)

.... How did I forget (Abu Salwan) that lean hard-worker, the newspaper salesman on the pavement of (Al Baya'a) garage with his

exhausted booth which doesn't protect from coldness or heat, a hardworking person who brings the daily newspapers in their various issues in their golden era (the history of press in Iraq hasn't passed along a situation of freedom in writing and such multiplicity of newspapers since the rising of the Iraqi nation in 1921).

In the early hours of morning, which come after the curfew, you can see him carrying the daily newspapers with all the warmth, it's his daily living.

(Welcome Abu ...) that's how he greets you with a smile which carries a lot of pleasure and delight surprises; a man stepping clearly towards the sixth decade of his age, a cigarette hanging from his mouth while he is searching for most important articles in the so – and – so newspapers or he brings you good news about a published article of yours or a poem or else, he grabbed the (Laonf) call, examined it clearly, he blessed the idea and project and asked for a bunch of copies to distribute them from his simple booth which is surrounded by garbage stacks and noises of (mini bus) drivers in addition to the booths of the fruits and vegetables sellers with their signs that have burning prices that chill the breasts of people with limited incomes and those who are economically crushed!

The poet (Ahmed Abdul Hussein)

- I've took an oath.

That's how our creative poet (Ahmed Abdul Hussein) answered me after he read the script, planned to be distributed with the poster next week.

Afterwards, he said: I'll write about this thing, also I'm so concerned about it, so let's cooperate!

While he was sipping cold water to kill the thirst, we where in the (resort) café, this poet who left his exile (Canada) and came to settle in Iraq and work as a supervisor on (Ara'a) well-read page in (Al Sabah); the Baghdad based newspaper.

Non violence affections

- 1- We are leading a campaign against violence with limited possibilities and legal aspirations, but as a result we participated in moving the inactive lake. And as for the risks, it was something beyond questions and it must look for us, otherwise we are in some prosperity to be envious of, the response is wide and the hand is handcuffed.
- 2- The numbers say (we distributed about 19.000 copies of the leaflet, we posted a thousand poster till now, tens of

organizations cooperated with us). This is a deaf language with no life, doesn't care for what happens in the burning Iraqi street, but the working on how to connect and deliver and its sorrow and danger, how simple people cooperated with us and death is awaiting every moment, that is the soul of work and its meaning.

- 3- God have mercy upon (Al Hallaj) as he said: "If you say it, you're dead, if you don't your dead, say it and die".

Friday, 19th of May:

There must be a problem in communicating Al Sheikh Al Ghrairi because we neither could reach him, nor members of his association. It's obvious that the connection is cut without knowing the reasons!

There was almost a problem in Basrah concerning the campaign because of misunderstanding, but we tried in all efforts to fix it, so it passed!

(Ismael)

In the multitude of the campaign, I didn't see our friend Ismael, I thought that he wasn't there, or he isn't there, I don't know were he is, I looked for him in Baghdad's burning districts and in the haunted regions and didn't find him, I never heard his voice as he never heard mine, and as Ismael was like (a clove of salt which melted)!

I didn't know that the (trails) of the (civil society and human rights) have stolen you from us! But...

I didn't find you as I was attaching the (laonf) poster on the front wall of Al Shahbender (café) or on the poles of Al Mutanabbi street, I stammered in answering myself (Where is Ismael, is it reasonable that he can't come at least at Friday to Al Mutanabbi) !

I wonder, where are you, friend.?!

The Logistic

It is obvious that the duty of a logistic is not a picnic or traditional performance, because you have to grab the string of the mission assigned to you with a skill, diplomacy, and fast moves, and of course an accomplish with less of losses!

Al Haj Al Khishaly

The remark of Al Haj Al Khishaly sounds logical and reasonable, for at the time that he praised the contents of the leaflet and its importance especially in this period where killing is now on the identity and that Islam is free from these deeds. He drew my attention to that (Mighty Allah) obligates

writer and readers of his holy Quran to begin with (In the name of god, most gracious, most merciful) and to end by (Great Allah is sincere). Since the verse was obvious in the holy books of the Judaism, Christian and Islam religions and also the earliest legends, our duty was to respect that. I thanked Al Haj on his remark without sailing in an argument that won't lead to a result, and preferred to withdraw after I asked him to read it and giving his opinion and if it was possible to attach the poster on one of the café's posts, he told me that I can attach it near the (water thermos) or on the board near it! I was surprised a lot, because all the café's habitués drink water from this place and the poster and leaflet will be in front of them all the time!!

Unlike the others, a book seller in Al Mutanabbi told me as I was giving him the leaflet;

- Islam is the problem and it's the source of violence!!

It was a hot afternoon and he was almost closing, but he promised that the leaflet and poster will find there place at the entrance of the (Kaysariya) which was someday the old military bakery in Al Mutanabbi street.

Sunday, 21st of May:

The organizations and activists received the leaflet and poster from the printing house, some of them postponed it to the next day, well that doesn't matter, but we were like someone who is sitting on pins and needles just to make the campaign come into existence, we forwarded it to Al Basrah groups, Mr. Jameel received the share of Al Sheikh Mohammed Al Ghrairy (The League of Ulamaadeen), the Sadri's were the first to receive, and the last were the communism youth for they received it in the evening at the outskirts of Baghdad.

Monday, 22nd of May:

I received a call from Mr. Yousif yesterday, telling me that the forty days memorial of Dr. Ali Hasan Mihawish (Dean of the College of Engineering in Al Mustansiriyah University) in Bab Al Mu'adam, who was assassinated after he was kidnapped by some anonyms. That was a brilliant idea and chance to release our leaflet and attach the poster, yet the time was so tight to contact and arrange the procedure through the responsible organization. Yet four of the independent college students volunteered to distribute, the distribution was done with an amazement and clear response and care by the attendees. That was the first step of the campaign.

It was clear that Mr. Al Ghuraify was from the activists in the field of prisons' inspection for checking the status of prisoners in Al Najaf and he

has a worthy experience which deserves to be observed, so, you must make your mind Mr. Ghuraifi and continue with us in the project of Equity Net for Prisoners.

This eager young man, as he is in the final year in Law college in Al Koofa University, showed willingness of his organization to support this campaign financially if necessary, and to distribute the leaflet and poster in Al Koofa University and in the corners of the holy city of Al Najaf. Notice that Mr. Al Ghuraifi was eager to receive the leaflet and poster in Baghdad.

From Basrah, I received a signal from the (Civil Conversation Assemble) (Marwan Abdul Hafidh and Safa'a Abdul Adheem) who are enlightened young men who support this campaign as I saw, because the youth are so eager to it, and that is a missing good sign in the middle of the roaring of local and imported death monsters!!

Mr. Abdul Muhsin, the informational spokesman of Al Basrah University, as he was examining the leaflet in the center of literature authors in Baghdad, he opened his heart and told us (we are with you in this campaign and we support you). While Mr. Ahmed Al Mudhaffar, a well-known journalist, poet, announcer and informational, distributed the leaflet by his hands inside the center of literature authors and showed his tendency to have us as guests in (Al Baghdadiya) Satellite channel next week to cover this event. As for the journalist Mr. Sa'adoon Hlail, he was very keen to the publicity of the campaign on the last page of (Tareek Al Sha'ab) newspaper.

As I was talking to our brother (Abu Al Hasan) by the mobile, I felt that he was nervous and almost crying: "four of our colleagues are dead in a restaurant bombing in Al Shu'ula this morning.

That's how he told me as I was continuing in our non violence campaign with him. What a black sarcasm that rules our fates!!

Tuesday, 23rd of May:

Nine o'clock in the evening (a daily attitude)

Basrah: The freight didn't reach them till this moment, that's what I was told by our friend (Yasir), maybe because the way between Basrah – Imarah was cut for two days because of tribe disturbance which led to taking over the highway which connects the two cities, nevertheless the daily newspapers said that the National Guards forces and police forces have retrieved control on this important road.

The New Iraqi Youth Union (Al Sadriyoon)

Through a continuation with our brother (Abu Al Hasan) by the mobile, he said: we've started a distribution in the colleges of Al Mustansiriyah University and we'll continue our work in the popular regions and the Huseiniyat next Friday.

I was told by activist Uday, that the leaflet and poster were distributed and attached, relying on him, in the colleges of Education (Ibn Al Haitham), Arts, Information, and Languages, while they couldn't do such a thing in the College of Education which is located in Al A'adhamiya, for they were satisfied only by distributing the leaflet because of the continuous threats that this college suffers from the Ba'ath members and expiatory; well, these are actual fears.

Al Najaf; I couldn't reach with Mr. Amir Al Ghuraifi!!

Samara'a; I couldn't reach with Mr. Ali Al Samara'ai!!

The department of Housing Case; the leaflet was distributed and the poster was attached, and (Mrs.) the General Manager gave compliments on the idea of the leaflet and ordered that it must be distributed among the employees and natives who visit the department and attaching the poster on the exterior walls of the building which lies in Al Mansour district, yet they were surprised next day for they saw that the posters attached outside the building were all ripped apart.

With vitality mixed with hard work and optimism, I found Mr. Jameel from The League of Ulamaadeen interacting with us in the campaign, for he said to me through the phone: (The leaflet was spread out through the forum of Al Hafriya youths along with a lecture about the subject, also we spread the leaflet and attached the poster in (Mulahithiyat Al Waqf Al Sunny) in Al Suwwairah and the same for Al Azeeziyah and some other official departments) and (your forehead is a blessing for us), that's what Mr. Jameel told me because after he received the leaflet and poster directly, he was told that his arrested brother was released. I was revealed for hearing such news and what affections it had, so I wondered: when will Iraq be released from the violence turbulence within?!!

Wednesday, 24th of May:
(Daily attitude)

Baghdad – Democratic Youths: (There is a delay in spreading because the final exams are knocking on the doors, but the distribution was done in The College of Sports Education, Politics Sciences, and Teachers Institution).

Al-Najaf – Al Rasid Organization for Human rights: The distribution was done after a good welcome from the Presidency of Al Koofa University for the campaign, on the other hand the representative of the Democratic youths didn't receive the needed amount and didn't spread it and we don't know the reason yet, although he came and there was an agreement between us). (The Posters and leaflets were finished and the shooting came to its end).

Al Basrah – The freight was received, then (distribution was done to the Parties', Al Sayyid Al Ha'iry Bureau, Al Fadheela Party Bureau and the Communist Party, and also to The National Center for Social Studies and Researches. Other authorities and parties didn't respond and refused to receive the leaflet and poster!!

Thursday, 25th of May:
(Daily attitude) Nine o'clock in the evening

Diyala – 800 leaflet copies were added to the share of Mr. Uday with 200 copies of the poster in order to spread it through Diyala governorate (districts and regions) and Uday received them all in the morning and it will be spread out tomorrow (Friday) with the cooperation of the city council in those districts.

Al Basrah – Mrs. Hameeda and Mr. Yasir, with the help of some activists, made the distribution in Colleges of Administration and Economics, Arts and Fine Arts. While the group of students whom wanted to participate were prevented from entering the Basrah College of Medicine, in addition to the refusal of the Matran of the Kildans Catholic to distribute the leaflet among the attendance of today's mass, to beware of the campaign of having some undeclared political provisions, for there are under threats.

Baghdad – The Democratic Youths distributed the leaflet in The Railway Institution and Al Shalchiyah Factories that are subsequent of the General Railway Department, and I was also told by Mr. Haleem that he and a bunch of activists spread the leaflet and poster in the College of Political Sciences / Baghdad University.

**Friday, 26th of May:
(Al Mutanabby Run)**

Among the curiosity of some people, and the un-interest of others, the leaflet which called for discarding violence, was spread in Al Mutanabby Street, this over crowded street which occupies the educated in their weekly day (Friday) within the books that are lying on the ground and the prospected café (Al Shahbender). Mr. Kareem and Mr, Sa'adoon took part in attaching the poster, yet our (historical) friends hid themselves (they might've been ashamed or afraid) because they said that they are working in (secret) and they never participated in distributing either the leaflet or the poster!

I returned from Al Mutannaby like yogurt in a (canteen), it was a fruitless run!!

Saturday, 27th of May:

I was given the photos that document the campaign in the hallways of Al Mustansiriyah Colleges, with all hospitality presented from the (Sadri Youth and through the New Iraqi Youths Union).

The mobile is still ringing, this is a call from Al-Najaf, (Yes, Sayyidna) it's Al Sayyid Al Ghuraifi apologizing for the delay in sending the documental coverage of the campaign in Al Koofa and Al Najaf and he promised to send it tomorrow, and he informed me that the Islamic University in Al Najaf gave us, (Al Messela and Laonf Group), a suggestion in cooperation with Al Rasid Center to hold a conference adopted by the University to discard violence which seeks the students section in Al Najaf, and he asked about how far is our response with such a suggestion.

I informed Al Sayyid Al Ghuraifi that the final exams are knocking the doors and also the summer vacation is not an appropriate time for such activities, so it doesn't matter if it will be in the beginning of the new studying year with an expansion including the governorates of middle Euphrates within, and then we'll see how we can participate according to the status and abilities.

Sunday, 28th of May:

I can't express my feelings, r say a thing towards what was done by by Al Sheikh Mohammed Al Ghirairi and Mr. Jameel Hamid Atiyya who let the national policemen attach the poster on their cars and on the major check points in Diyalah Bridge region, Al Za'afaraniyah, towards Al Mada'in and Al Suwairah by attaching them on the concrete blocks. Also the nice picture

gained by a wedding procession where all of the participants came out of their cars to take the poster, and to take photos of the historical moment, but what a pity, the photos taken were by the newlyweds' parents and not by them; well that was a unique happiness!!

We are on the soil of Iraq, lighting candles instead of cursing the darkness!!

**Tuesday, 30th of March:
(Reportage)**

It seems like an unending run, as you seek Mr. Husam Al Saray who doesn't stop apologizing for his busyness and his eternal appointments. An expression of youth with its higher level with some anxiety with no reasons, accompanied by elegance refusing to let go, little-talking with a shy smile and slimness looks like it has been with him since his childhood... That engineer who began to find himself a place in the Iraqi Press world despite what it carries (Risks and Continuous Death).

From (Al Shahbender) café to the building of (Tareek Al Sha'ab) Newspaper along through Abu Nu'as, you must drag your heavy steps in the middle of the flaming Summer (pan). Through two hours, having some lateral chatting, we accomplished the headlines of the reportage.

**Friday, 2nd of June:
The remaining salt**

I rolled to downtown then to its north side (with my stuff) as someone walking through a mines field, this is where the (La onf)-ian week has ended, the phones stopped, those nice and warm voices, declaring their activities, faded, that bloom is now a memory, where will my feet take me? In the middle of a confusion and anxiety which covered my flabby and exhausted features, I remembered my friend Yousif, does he have enough time to read about what we did?

Salam Alaikum Maolana (special greeting), I said as I was entering to his computer with apprehension, and I don't know where these drifts and unknown lands will take me, maybe to another world, or to our old worlds where the warmth and felicity we left since years.

He held my hands as usual cheerfully, and with my extreme amazement, I forgot my huge thirst in that killing Baghdad's June afternoon, keeping my stuff near me, as I was watching those damn numbers, jumping in front of my eyes, only numbers, symbols and signs on some cosmic monitors taking you away from the faces, smiles and tears and all those

cherished meetings you left straightaway in those districts and cafes and backstreets that are dressed by the stacks of garbage and what the city ejects of daily corpses and heads cut from their bodies!!

So I put my poor papers, where they were trying, ashamed, to find a place or position on those terrifying monitors. As he was coming to the end of browsing into them, and without his attention, I sneaked quietly to the street.

**An Activist from Al Messela Center
Baghdad 6 – 6 – 2006**