

Iraqi Week for combating Violence **(A brief presentation)**

In the 2nd day of June, (which suits with the prescription of a 100 days of the bombing of Samara'a Copula), was the end of the "Iraqi week for combating violence" campaign, which the Iraqi "Laonf" group called and publicized for, with the cooperation of several organizations and Iraqi active independents.

The project of the campaign

- 1- The campaign was found according to a request from: Iraqi "Laonf" group, and entitled: to the devoted Iraqis. The campaign called for a week to fight violence to be achieved by a personal promise to fast against any violent action, for any reason, during the week which started from Saturday, the 27th of May to Friday, the 2nd of June. The release contained the Quran verse which gives the story of Adam's two sons when one of them told the other, when he intended to kill him, that: *"If thou dost stretch thy hand against me, to slay me, it is not for me to stretch my hand against thee to slay thee: for I do fear Allah, the Lord of the worlds"*.
- 2- The campaign was designed to be basically directed to the Students section in the Iraqi Universities, for reasons such as:
 - a- There were no records about tangible violent congestions between the students who are members of racism groups, religious cults, or contrary political ideology, which shows the consciousness of this sector and its privilege against the congestions. And here we must notice the several attempts done by the political authorities, militias, and various groups so as to assign its custody on the University Campus.
 - b- The youth section is the most active section, and the Universities contain the most educated level of this sector.
 - c- The University sector has a mixed nature, which means that our call will reach different parts of the community.
 - d- The campaign activities inside the campus are safer than such activities in the streets.
- 3- The arrangement and harmonization between several organizations was done by (Al-Mesalla Center-Baghdad), including also preparing the script and printing of the leaflet which included the invitation and the poster which was the declaration for the campaign. A number of 20.000 colored copies of the leaflet were printed in size (20 x 29 cm), which carried in its lower part the logos of the organizations that participated in the campaign (to notice that several other organizations actually took part in the campaign without

signing their logos on the script). While the poster was published in 3000 copies in size (50 x 35 cm).

- 4- The arrangement, control and various activities of the campaign was shared out between several organization, although it was in the full responsibility of (Al-Mesalla Center), and the assessment of the activities accompanied with the distribution of the leaflet was left for the organizations themselves according to the available conditions in the work environments, because of the difference in situations between a city and another, and even in the several areas of Baghdad.

The Organizations which took part in the campaign

- 1- Al-Mesalla Center for Human Resources Development (Baghdad-Basra)
- 2- The Democratic Youth Federation (Baghdad)
- 3- The League of Ulemaa El-Deen (Baghdad – Wasit: Suwaira – Al-Hafriya – Al-Azeeziya)
- 4- The Observer Human Rights Center (Najaf)
- 5- The Federation of Youth of New Iraq
- 6- Al-Shahidain Al-Sadrain's Center for General Researchs & Studies
- 7- The Independent Federation of Iraqi Trade Unions
- 8- The Independent Federation of Cooperative Farmers Unions (5~8 are all Baghdad Based, Sader tande).
- 9- National center for social and historical studies. (Basra)
- 10- Al-Najaf Center for human rights and supporting Democracy (Najaf).
- 11- Center of legal support (Najaf)

The campaign was also spread out in Samara'a / Tikrit / Dyala (Ba'aquba / Muqdadiya / Mansuriya / Khalis / and other cities) by several independent activists.

Activities held before and within the week

- 1- **On Monday 22/5**, the campaign started practically, before one day of its actual date, in the College of Engineering / Al-Mustansirya University in Bab Al-Mu'adam. For Al-Mesalla Center took advantage, with the assistance of 4 of the active students in the college, in the commemoration of the college's dean who was kidnapped and killed by anonymous persons several weeks ago. The script was distributed among the attendants (who where the University president, the professors in the University, superiors in the Ministry of higher education and a huge number of the students). The poster was also affixed al the way long to the celebration hall

and in different areas of the college. The activity had a good influence on the attendants.

- 2- **On Tuesday 23/5**, the campaign started in a simple way in Baghdad in the University of Baghdad campus – Bab Al-Mu'adam.
- 3- **On Wednesday 24/5**, the campaign was released in different colleges in Baghdad and also in Al-Najaf – Al-Kufa University.
- 4- **On Thursday 25/5**, the campaign reached its climax, for it was released in Al-Basrah and Al-Najaf Universities, in addition to the Universities and Institutes in Baghdad.
- 5- **On Friday 26/5**, was the big event, for the campaign was defined on the Friday praying platforms in regions which had took part in the violence in Baghdad and its surroundings, such as Al-Sha'ab, Al-Za'afaraniya, Al-Sadr, Al-Hafriya, Al-Azeeziya, Al-Suwaira, and Ba'aquba, also in the weekly cultural gathering which is the open market for selling books.
- 6- **On Saturday 27/5**, the week begun by using the vacation for publicity of the campaign outside the universities environments in several sectors of Baghdad which already had the fundamentals of the campaign from the Friday Prayers Speeches with association from the local organizations within those sectors.
- 7- **From Sunday 28/5 until Tuesday 30/5**, the activities continued inside the Universities but with a Descending line until it stopped practically on Tuesday.

The Common response on the campaign

According to the questioner that was prepared by Al-Mesalla, to the organizations and activists who participated in the campaign which contained an important question about the common response, the person who had to fill the form should pick one of these options: glow / positive / not interested / negative. Most of the forms pointed to that the response was in glow or positive; the other evaluated the response for it was not interesting, while there were no forms carrying a negative evaluation.

In spite of this, we found in another question concerning the difficulties which faced the campaign, that there were a lot of people who were not exactly satisfied on the invitation and promise form in spite of their acceptance of the idea. Some difficulties accompanied the distribution and the movement of the campaign participants from some groups or responsible people despite the non-existence of any objection on the campaigns significance.

From another side, we must admit that most of the responses gained from the e-mails declare that most of the people concerned with this campaign were not Iraqis, or Iraqis which live outside Iraq, with some exceptions of course. For some Iraqi personalities inside Iraq made

response for the campaign, combined with it, and even publicized it; these personalities are commonly persons who are relative to the civil society organizations. But nor letters neither e-mails have reached our mail box from any person till now (Students or other individuals concerned in this campaign).

We must point to that the groups which worked outside the Universities environmental found a positive and quick response from different species of the community which were unexpected like: policemen from regions such as Al-Hafriya, Al-Suwaira, and Al-Za'afaraniya, for they took part in the campaign by distributing the leaflet and holding the poster on their cars and which was also done by the "mini bus" drivers in Al-Najaf city and different sectors in Baghdad, while the un-interest of Al-Mutanaby Street intellectuals was very disappointing as the reports pointed.

Obstacles and observations noticed within the campaign

- 1- The slight experience in managing such campaigns, in addition to the sparse financial resources which led to nonexistence of some activities within the campaign so it can continue in progress instead of the weakness it had before its end as we noticed.
- 2- The sudden change declared by the Ministry of Higher Education by bringing forward the date of final examinations from 18/6 instead of 3/6 and in some colleges even to 27/5 or 30/5 as it was assigned before, which led to a confusion in the whole universities system for the attendance of students was weak through the week which was devoted for the campaign, in addition to their work in preparing for the early examinations.
- 3- An inexistence of a mechanism for the observation of the results and effects of the campaign (except the freewill response via e-mail). The forms been distributed by Al-Mesalla Center had questions directed to actives who where in charge of the campaign and not for the people; even the question which concerned the people response for the campaign was largely affected by the attitude of the activist towards the campaign and his interest, and that led to an optimistic image but it was not accurate in describing the people's activity. In the future, an efficient plan for observing the people's response and the effect must be considered during the coming activities. Concerning the e-mail, no doubt it's a useful communication toll, but using it for this purpose isn't common and we must not count on it so much for the coming campaigns.
- 4- The anxiety and fear shown by the colleges deaneries from the consequences of the campaign in case it grew up, led to limited

activities inside the university, even though some of the universities prevented us from putting the poster on its walls because of threats, in addition to other activities.

- 5- The strained law and order situation mostly prevented establishing activities outside universities except the Friday prayer meetings which presents the most active meetings.
- 6- The anxiety of some organizations, (organizations with political tendencies and belongings) from the aims of the campaign which they thought that it exceeds its own aim, led to incorporation for some of them. Also the text of the invitation (call) was a point of arguing and reediting for several times. For the genuine call was a true and open call to throw weapons for a month and never using it even under the excuse of self defense. And then the text was lightened to be changed as we pointed into a promise of fasting due to any violent action for a week, and the term “self defense” was totally removed from the text, although is was embedded in the content “for any reason”.

The additional steps

No doubt that stopping violence was the aim for the campaign on the long range, otherwise the campaign would have a quick failure, for the violence didn't stop, even it didn't retreat, and yet the newspapers and Iraqi radio stations talked about the campaign, but we cannot claim that the campaign had the interest of the media, because the news of bombings which were present with the whole week thrilled the media rather than a claim or a call for nonviolence campaign which was empty from thrill.

We must now admit that making a considerable combination of organizations and personalities work together can be evaluated as a good and positive achievement, and now we can say that we have a “none violence” network which has a coordinated and combined activity, and this is a sufficient gain for the present time.

And for that, the first period comes to an end and a new one starts which we want to start it by inviting the organizations' coordinators who took part in this campaign for a meeting to study the campaign directly, and drawing common activities, so we can get benefits from the impulse gained from the campaign.

**Al-Mesalla
Iraq**