

## Behind Iraq's "Civil" War

Posted by

Sunday, 03 December 2006 23:18 - Last Updated Sunday, 03 December 2006 23:18

---

### Behind Iraq's "Civil" War

**IPS** - Dahr Jamail and Ali al-Fadhily - "Civil war as the media expresses is not yet a solid fact," professor of political science at Baghdad University Zahi Yassen told IPS. "The violence is still within the limits of political conflict between ruling parties, and all the killings are conducted by gangs hired by politicians. No Iraqi has killed his neighbour for being Sunni or Shia, but how long would people keep reason and patience?"

[www.dahrjamailiraq.com](http://www.dahrjamailiraq.com)

### **Shias Too Lose Faith in Iraqi Govt**

#### **Dahr Jamail and Ali al-Fadhily**

[Dahr Jamail's MidEast Dispatches](#)

Inter Press Service

December 4, 2006

BAGHDAD, Dec. 4 (IPS) - The noisy demonstration that greeted Iraqi Prime Minister Noori al-Maliki on his visit to Sadr City last week was more than just a protest. It meant that the leader of a Shia-dominated government was being rejected by an angry and influential group of Shias.

Maliki's heavily guarded convoy was pelted with stones and with shoes -- a grave insult in Iraq. And this happened in a Shia area.

About 60 percent of the 25 million population of Iraq is Shia, and Shia leaders now dominate government. The government faces increasingly more aggressive opposition from Sunni groups who feel persecuted. Sunnis, an estimated five million, were the dominant group earlier under the regime of Saddam Hussein. The rest of the Iraqi population is Kurdish in the north. Kurds include both Shias and Sunnis, but stand apart ethnically as Kurds.

Iraq is now a deeply divided Muslim world. Sectarian clashes between Shia and Sunni groups have been growing by the day. Shias are a Muslim group who believe - unlike the Sunnis -- that Prophet Muhammad designated his nephew Imam Ali to lead the Islamic community after his death. That old schism is now deepening.

Sunni insurgents are suspected in the bomb blasts that killed more than 200 in Sadr City. Noori al-Maliki had gone there to pay condolences to the families of the car bomb victims. But he was

## Behind Iraq's "Civil" War

Posted by

Sunday, 03 December 2006 23:18 - Last Updated Sunday, 03 December 2006 23:18

---

abused as a traitor to the cause of Shias.

"He and other Dawa party leaders did not keep the promises made to the Sadr movement before the elections," a leader of Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr's movement told IPS in Baghdad. Noori al-Maliki is from the Shia Dawa party, but the Sadr group is far more influential among Shias in this area.

"People are complaining that this government is not paying any attention to them and their ruined city despite the huge contracts signed for reconstruction," the Sadr leader said. "We believe that this government is not suitable for leading the country, and we might withdraw support to it if no major change is conducted."

Differences also arose between Maliki and the Sadr movement, on which he depends heavily for political support, over his meeting with U.S. President George W. Bush in Amman last week. The Sadr movement has 30 MPs in the Iraqi government, and a withdrawal could damage a government with little popular support.

The Mehdi Army, the armed wing of the Sadr group, has issued stern warnings over the government's relations with the United States. "America is our enemy, and Bush wants to save his chair and party at our expense," Hussein al-Bahadly of the Mehdi Army told IPS. "The Amman meeting was a conspiracy against the Shias, especially that King Abdullah of Jordan was its godfather."

Both Iraqi and Iranian Shias consider King Abdullah of Jordan an enemy because his father, King Hussein, supported Sunni-administered Iraq during the Iraq-Iran war in the 1980s. Disquiet is arising all around because the present Iraqi government is losing support and so is the United States in its occupation of Iraq. Recent news that Britain expects to withdraw its 7,000 troops from southern Iraq by the end of next year is likely to bring further frustration to the Iraqi government and the embattled Bush Administration.

Italy and Poland have already announced withdrawal of their remaining troops. These forces in the south are likely to be replaced by U.S. troops, who are then likely to face increased attacks from the Mehdi Army, which has already launched an uprising twice against occupation forces.

## Behind Iraq's "Civil" War

Posted by

Sunday, 03 December 2006 23:18 - Last Updated Sunday, 03 December 2006 23:18

---

Further frustrating Washington is the recent visit to Tehran by Iraqi President Jalal Talabani. Talabani is seeking help from Iran for preventing Iraq's extreme violence from sliding into all-out civil war. Much of western media already calls the violence in Iraq a civil war, but many within the country remain reluctant to do so.

"Civil war as the media expresses is not yet a solid fact," professor of political science at Baghdad University Zahiu Yassen told IPS. "The violence is still within the limits of political conflict between ruling parties, and all the killings are conducted by gangs hired by politicians. No Iraqi has killed his neighbour for being Sunni or Shia, but how long would people keep reason and patience?"

Shia death squads composed of members of the Mehdi Army and the Badr Army, the armed wing of the Iran-backed Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq are responsible for much of the recent bloodshed in the country. Sunni insurgents too have been hitting back.

It is widely believed that Shia militia groups are backed by senior Shia leaders in the government and parliament.

---

(c)2006 Dahr Jamail.

All images, photos, photography and text are protected by United States and international copyright law. If you would like to reprint Dahr's Dispatches on the web, you need to include this copyright notice and a prominent link to the <http://DahrJamailIraq.com> website. Website by photographer Jeff Pflueger's Photography Media

<http://jeffpflueger.com>

. Any other use of images, photography, photos and text including, but not limited to, reproduction, use on another website, copying and printing requires the permission of Dahr Jamail. Of course, feel free to forward Dahr's dispatches via email.

More writing, commentary, photography, pictures and images at <http://dahrjmailiraq.com>