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**IRAQI NEWS for 18 Dec 04**

**US troops reportedly kill two schoolchildren, wound seven in Mosul—Al-Diyar**

Al-Diyar Satellite Channel In Arabic, Baghdad, 18 Dec 04: Armed men attacked an American patrol in Hayy al-Dubbat [officers' district] in Mosul on Saturday [18 December] morning, Al-Diyar TV reported. US troops responded by firing indiscriminately at a bus transporting a number of schoolchildren, killing two of them and wounding seven others.

**Gunmen kill women working at US base—Al-Sharqiyah**

Al-Sharqiyah Satellite Channel, Baghdad, in Arabic, 18 Dec 04: Two Iraqi women working at a US base in southern Baghdad and their driver were killed by gunmen on Wednesday [15 December], Baghdad Al-Sharqiyah TV reported on 18 December. An Iraqi police source said a group of unidentified armed men opened fire on the car transferring the two women in Al-Dawrah district, southern Baghdad, killing both of them and their driver. He added that Ibtisam and Inas Ayshu were working at a US base, south of Baghdad.

**Shops attacked in several cities—Al-Sharqiyah**

Al-Sharqiyah Satellite Channel, Baghdad, in Arabic, 18 Dec 04: Gunmen have attacked a number of shops in Al-Saydiyah district in southwestern Baghdad, Al-Sharqiyah TV reported on 18 December. Witnesses said the attacks, at 2200 [1900 gmt] the previous evening, targeted music shops and a barbershop on the main street in the district. Two shops were damaged, and there were no casualties. Similar attacks had earlier taken place in Al-Nasiriyah, Basra and other cities targeting alcohol stores, male and female singers, and actors. In a related development, an Al-Sharqiyah correspondent said gunmen shot dead the son of well-known pop singer Abd-al-Jabbar al-Darraji outside his house in the Jamilah district in Baghdad. Al-Darraji's son is a first-lieutenant in the judicial police, which is affiliated with the Iraqi Interior Ministry.

**Two killed in Tikrit mortar attack—Al-Sharqiyah**

Al-Sharqiyah Satellite Channel, Baghdad, in Arabic, 18 Dec 04: A source in Tikrit Police Force said two people were killed and a third seriously wounded in a mortar attack against the Al-Dujayl Youth Centre in southern Tikrit, Baghdad Al-Sharqiyah TV reported briefly on 18 December.
**Demonstration urges end to operation in Al-Fallujah - Al-Sharqiya**

Al-Sharqiya Satellite Channel, Baghdad, in Arabic, 18 Dec 04: Some 100 Iraqis demonstrated in front of the Green Zone in Baghdad on 18 December calling on the US forces and Iraqi government to end military operations in Al-Fallujah and to expedite the process of returning civilians to their homes, Baghdad Al-Sharqiya TV reported. The demonstration included clergymen. Iraqi National Guard vehicles surrounded the participants in the peaceful demonstration.

"Huge" fire breaks out in oil pipeline - Al-Sharqiya

Al-Sharqiya Satellite Channel, Baghdad, in Arabic, 18 Dec 04: A huge fire broke out on 18 December in an oil pipeline transferring crude oil from the northern Kirkuk oilwells to Al-Durah Refinery, south of Baghdad, Al-Sharqiya TV reported. The pipeline passes near the Tigris River to the south of Tikrit. Colonel Hasan Ahmad of the Salah al-Din Police Command said emergency services rushed to the scene and were starting to tackle the blaze.

Cleric criticizes "widespread" corruption in government - Al-Diyar

Al-Diyar Satellite Channel In Arabic, Baghdad, 18 Dec 04: Sayyid Ahmad al-Safi, representative of religious leader Sayyid Ali al-Sistani in Karbala, said the interim government has become more corrupt than Saddam's regime and complained about its inability to curb violence and sabotage in Iraq, Al-Diyar TV reported on 18 December. In his Friday sermon, Al-Safi said bribery is more widespread than before. "There is more theft, more administrative corruption, and more Ba'thist-like people. Do you think the state agencies are unable to put an end to these things? The situation in the country calls for real concern because there is still no clear political plan for this country," he said.

**ELECTIONS NEWS**

**UN envoy says "sufficient" staff for elections - Iraqi Islamic Party Radio**

Dar al-Salam Radio, Baghdad [voice of the Iraqi Islamic Party] 1100 gmt 18 Dec 2004) Ashraf Qadi, the UN secretary general's special representative in Iraq, said preparations for holding fair elections on 30 January have been completed, Baghdad Dar al-Salam Radio reported on 18 December. He urged the interim government to do its best to guarantee maximum participation. Qadi said there was no need to focus on the number of the UN staff inside Iraq which, we said, was small but sufficient, and he described Iraq's criticism of the UN failure to play a greater role and help prepare for the elections as a misunderstanding, saying the United Nation's was guardedly optimistic about the elections.
Defence Ministry takes measures to protect polling stations- Al-Sharqiyah

Al-Sharqiyah Satellite Channel, Baghdad, in Arabic, 18 Dec 04: The Iraqi Defence Ministry has set up a three-level security system to protect voters and polling stations, Al-Sharqiyah TV reported on 18 December. An official source in the Defence Ministry said security cordons would be set up to prevent vehicles from approaching them to commit acts of sabotage. The Iraqi National Guard will also set up checkpoints around cities by deploying armoured personnel carriers for the first time on the streets, the source said.

Al-Sadr to "tolerate" polls if foreign troops leave thereafter- Al-Najaf News

Al-Najaf News Network web site, 18 Dec 04: Rebel Cleric Muqtada al-Sadr said he would tolerate the participation in elections by Iraqis if it signalled a prelude to the departure of occupation forces, according to a statement published in the Al-Najaf News Network web site on 18 December said. The statement issued by Al-Sadr said: "We or any other person may tolerate participation in the elections -despite the occupation -so that the elections may be a prelude to their departure. Otherwise, I would be hurling myself into something that is absolutely useless. The occupiers are shelling our cities and towns one after the other while no one is saying anything. This too is a way to make us preoccupy ourselves with what is important and to forget what is more important. What should come first help to these cities or the elections?" Al-Sadr urged religious authorities and leaders to "make the occupiers, their followers, and their unjust armies pledge to leave our country or to schedule their departure immediately after the elections. Otherwise, not participating [in the elections] would be more likely."

Election roundup for week ending 18 Dec- Agencies

Official registration ends

The period designated for the registration of candidate lists for the 30 January elections ended this week with the announcement of more than 100 registered slates, leading to the beginning of the official campaign. Monitored Iraqi television, however, has not yet begun broadcasting campaign commercials, although regulations governing media coverage were issued just as the registration period was coming to a close. Among the principal Sunni groups, the Iraqi Islamic Party played down the significance of its decision to register a full slate of candidates, suggesting it may yet opt out of the elections. At the same time, the feasibility of plans to enable as many as a million Iraqi expatriates to vote was brought into question by the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq (IECI) and Kurdish leaders continued to call for a delay in provincial elections in Kirkuk, with Vice President Shawis hinting at a boycott over the issue.
Electoral slate registration ends

(AFP, Al-Jazeera TV, 16 December): With the close of the designated period for registering candidate lists, the Electoral Commission announced this week it had approved more than 100 slates. According to a statement on 16 December a day after the deadline passed the final count included nine multiparty coalitions, in addition to 66 single-party lists and 25 individuals running for seats on their own. All in all, the slates were said to include some 6400 candidates.

Among the more prominent of the lists are:

- **The Unified Iraqi Coalition** - the overwhelmingly Shi'i 228-candidate list that has been widely linked to Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani and criticized in some of the media as a Shi'i list; it includes a wide range of parties and figures but the leading Shi'i Islamist parties the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) and Islamic Da'wah enjoy a leading role (Nahrain New Site, www.nahrain.com).

- A 240-candidate list representing **a coalition led by Prime Minister Allawi** and his Iraqi National Accord (Al-Diyar TV, 16 December);

- **The Iraqis' Grouping** 80-person slate headed by President al-Yawar, who stressed in a statement that it included "members of different groups from Iraqi society of various religions, ethnic groups, and sects" (Al-Sharqiyah TV, 16 December);

- A coalition dominated by **the two principal Kurdish parties** the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) (Nahrain News Site).

- The 275-candidate slate of the most significant of the registered parties oriented towards the Sunni vote the **Iraqi Islamic Party** (IIP) which has strongly urged a postponement of the elections (Dar al-Salam radio, 15 December).

Media campaign begins:

(Dar al-Salam Radio, 15 December). With the expiration of the candidate registration period, the election campaign officially began. The Electoral commission on 13 December issued a regulation pertaining to media coverage, although spokesman Farid Ayyar indicated that the Electoral commission would defer to the National Commission for Media and Communications, which was expected to issue a code governing media during the campaign.
**IRAQI MEDIA Programme summaries, 18 Dec 04**

**Programme summary of Iraqi Al-Sharqiya TV news 18 Dec 04**

- Iraqi prime minister discuss prospects of wide military action in Mosul, similar to Al-Fallujah operation. Government says known militants have moved to Mosul. Video report, with footage of militant activity in city.
- Iraqis killed in explosion targeting US convoy in Mosul, more bodies discovered in city. US army says it has arrested eight people. Three Turkish guards killed on road in Mosul. Footage of clashes in Mosul.
- Two people killed in attack on election office north of Baghdad.
- Iraqi Defence Ministry erects security barriers around election sites ahead of poll.
- Fire erupts in pipeline running between Kirkuk and refinery in Al-Dawrah in Baghdad. Footage of pipeline on fire.
- Iraqi government says that Arabs and others have received Iraqi passports in exchange for money from Iraqi embassy in Syria. Prime minister asks relevant government ministries to take measures to stop this.
- Iraqi foreign minister to begin official visit to Pakistan.
- Iraqi ministry hands aid to Al-Fallujah refugees. Video report showing civilians receiving aid and talking about their situation and desire to return to their homes.
- Iraqis demonstrate in Baghdad demanding that military action end in Al-Fallujah and the return of residents. Video report showing demonstration.
- US forces admit that Al-Fallujah was heavily damaged during its actions in the city. Footage of US troops in Al-Fallujah.
- Iraqi Education Ministry official says that schools are facing a crisis with many teachers leaving for fear of attacks by militants, asking those living abroad to return.
- 12. 1350 Militants attack record store and barber shop in Baghdad. Footage from attack.
- Two Iraqi women working at a US base are killed by militants in their car with their drivers.

**Programme summaries of Al-Iraqiya TV news, 18 Dec 04**

- Chemical Ali" appears in front of special tribunal ...
- Further election campaigns launched by candidates ...
- Iraqi expatriates in Europe brace themselves for election ...
- Government committee on Al Fallujah discusses return of population to city, announces services to be soon restored ...
- Two killed and several injured in mortar attack on polls office in Baghdad; shop comes under attack ...
- Head of Armenian Catholic church hopes peace will prevail in Iraq ...
- Minister of Education announces re-employment of teachers expelled for political reasons ...
- Minister of Culture announces reinstating expelled ministry staff ...
- Car registrations underway in Muthana to meet set deadline
Programme summaries of Dar al-Salam Radio Arabic, 18 Dec 04

- A short while ago, a mosque in Al-Amiriyah neighbourhood was stormed and inspected by Iraqi national guardsmen ...
- The United States writes off all debts Iraq owes to it ...
- The UN chief's representative in Iraq says preparations for the upcoming elections have been completed ...
- Armed men kill three Westerners and their driver, and three security guards at the Turkish Embassy in Mosul

Voice of Mujahidin not heard since 7 Dec 04:

Iranian based Iraqi radio station Voice of the Mujahidin Shi'i radio which is believed to be affiliated with the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq [SCIRI], has since 1530 gmt on 7 December 2004 not been heard both on AM 720 kHz and via its internet site available at www.radiomojahedin.com.

IRAQI PRESS HEADLINES 19 Dec 2004

London-based Al-Zaman headlines 18-19 Dec 04:

- Commander of the American forces in Iraq: Alternative regional leadership for Saddam coordinates operations from Syria. Allawi investigates claims that Iraqi embassy in Damascus issued passports to non-Iraqis in exchange for money
- Clashes in Al-Ramadi and Al-Sadr supporters prevented from praying at Al-Kufah Mosque. Four Turkish embassy guards killed in attack in Mosul
- Basra airport to open next July
- Al-Fallujah refugees demonstrate demanding return
- Arab Knesset member to become Israeli ambassador in Cairo. Blair and Abu-Mazin discuss in Ramallah arrangements for new peace conference in London
- Jordan and Lebanon ratify Arab League reform document, ignored by the other governments
- Al-Qa'idah detainees collective escape attempt from Kabul's largest prison
- Human Rights Watch: Lack of experience threatens integrity of deposed leaders' trial
- Ankara abandons northern Cyprus in exchange for the start of EU accession negotiations
- Duma empowers authorities to impose emergency [measures] in suspicious [circumstances.]
NB: This is not an official document. The information contained therein was compiled by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, Information Office. If you have any questions/suggestions, please contact us at (+ 962 550 -4631/4703 or Cell. + 962 77 619 731 jarrar@un.org or alsokhni@un.org