

1988**A meeting between Saddam Hussein and some Iraqi officials regarding political relations between Iraq, Iran, and the US****Citation:**

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Summary:

This undated 63-minute audio file contains a meeting between Saddam Hussein and some Iraqi officials regarding the political relationship between Iraq, Iran, and the USA.

Original Language:

Arabic

Contents:

Transcript - Arabic

[Saddam Hussein]

—In the past, if there was not a true development in the present. Not the kind that would blind us from looking at the past in order to see the future. So, forget that you were an empire and we were a small country that you can manipulate as you wish. You need to start behaving normally and without complexes toward Iraq and that is because we have brought Iraq a long ways since then. And that is all.

Iraq will escape the hands of everyone trying to control it. In 1972, we targeted the Rashdi Oil Companies. And who owns these oil companies? They are owned by America, France, England, and-

[Taha Yassin Ramadhan]
And Holland.

[Saddam Hussein]
—and Holland. Three big [nations] and a small one among them. It is all about banking [money]. We persisted—after a war that lasted for years, we turned around and said, "Okay." Just as we discussed, do you remember? Right before the war started? This was in the hopes that we re-establish relations. We re-established the relations not even after six months past the end of the war.

So, what is this? I mean, this America? It is true that it is a strong nation, but, in reality, what is a strong nation? And what do they want? We have not invaded them; we have not taken their lands, or taken anything away from them-

[Taha Yassin Ramadhan]
—They did so themselves.

[Saddam Hussein]
None of that at all. We are in our lands and this span is ours. A span is a span nonetheless. What we truly want is for our relations to be normal with them and develops so as to benefit both of our interests and if they were to benefit in a legal manner, then, that is the law of nature. But, if they want to be our enemies, then, they can beat their heads against Korak Mountain [a mountain in northern Iraq]. What is this? What do they want? Why, I mean, did they not conspire against us during the war? Their conspiracy was obvious. But, we Iraqis need to be reminded sometimes, meaning-

[Taha Yassin Ramadhan]
Yes they did, sir.

[Saddam Hussein]

I mean, they conspired against us in 1985 and they conspired in 1987.

[Taha Yassin Ramadhan]

Yes they did, sir.

[Saddam Hussein]

—with al-Faw. Nobody gave al-Faw [to the Iranians] except for America and England.

[Taha Yassin Ramadhan]

Yes, and during the "decisive year" [in the war with Iran].

[Saddam Hussein]

They conspired against us in the "decisive year." The Iranians say, "this time, we will come to you with our sons and our turbans [the Mullahs of Iran]" and the Americans were the ones who came with them.

[Taha Yassin Ramadhan]

Yes.

[Saddam Hussein]

What is it? What happened?

[Taha Yassin Ramadhan]

The one with Majnoon [oil field in Iraq].

[Saddam Hussein]

In the "decisive year" [in the war with Iran], who was our army chief of staff?

[Taha Yassin Ramadhan]

In the "decisive year"—it was—Jawad.

[Saddam Hussein]

No, not Jawad.

[Unidentified Speaker 1]

It might be—Sa'di Aziz.

[Saddam Hussein]

At the beginning, it was Sa'di Aziz—it was—Sa'di Aziz—yes, he was. And with Sa'di Aziz who fought them. Jawad I thought! Is there anyone who would change his army chief of staff and the battle is still ongoing? The fight was still on and this Sa'di Aziz was—an army chief of staff? This one is high! Go away! Curse your father and your upbringing! Go away—leave, far away out there!

What is this? I mean—he said it is the news—the news? He has a corps, he has a division—
[laughs]

[Taha Yassin Ramadhan and Unidentified Speaker 1]
[Laughing]

[Saddam Hussein]
I mean-

[Taha Yassin Ramadhan]
True-

[Saddam Hussein]
These were the Iranian armies. Do not believe that America was not afraid of Iran—and Russia was not afraid. We were the only ones in the world who did not fear Iran. What? Do you think the Iranian armies were small? They would bring every 50 divisions together; their eyes were blindfolded and they were chanting. They would bring the Mullahs to read to them until they enter the line of fire.

[Taha Yassin Ramadhan]
They make him cry until-

[Saddam Hussein]
Right? They make him cry until he can come face the black fire. One wishes that this sort of thing does not happen, but it does happen and what the enemy wants I don't know that; let the enemy go bang their heads. So what? That is it. That is what you do. It is a campaign that will run for a while then stop.

[Taha Yassin Ramadhan]
Huh.

[Saddam Hussein]
In addition to this, my comrades—in addition to everything that you just said, in 1970, '72, '74, and '77; we were backwards and wearing muddy flip-flops. We had an ax here, a dagger here, a revolver here. If during a fight and we were smeared on the ground, we would not care about it. But now, we are well dressed, wealthy, wearing cloaks, robes, shoes--one would be astonished to see our high-level appearance. Our effort is not to let a small gap distort our great reputation. What would happen then is our enemy would exploit us. No, we say: we will smash him and smash his father. I mean, just this—and what is it with America? It wants to—I swear there is no coward like America on this planet.

[Taha Yassin Ramadhan]
Certainly, sir. Libya-

[Saddam Hussein]

I swear the Iranians, with shoes they lifted them up off our faces. But the Iranians were in alliance with the Zionists and they knew they could kill us and they knew that the Zionists would protect them from the "big strike." That is why sometimes they hit a well, or something, etc. We are not entering a war with America and we do not want to occupy the land of America, strike an American ship, or close a strait against America. This is not our job. We are in our small lands. We defeated the Iranians. When I tell a story sometimes, it is not in vain, I swear. If we engage in a fight with them, we will enter with a new communiqué number one. The others are long gone, my brother. I said it straight in the media. Did you catch it?

[Taha Yassin Ramadhan]
Yes, we all did.

[Saddam Hussein]
The war ended and we came out of it as winners. The enemy was crushed. But, in the future if they want to enter into a new war with us, we will enter it with a new communiqué number one-

[Taha Yassin Ramadhan]
And a new name.

[Saddam Hussein]
—And a new name. Al-Qadisiyah is long gone. That is it; we won.

[Taha Yassin Ramadhan]
That is it.

[Saddam Hussein]
They want more? Let it suit their bad luck. They want to engage in a war, God willing it will not happen. But, by God, if it happens, nothing will happen but the worst luck for them. They will be crushed in a way that will not compare to what happened in Al-Qadisiyah. Even if America were to scream a 100 times more this time, stronger than it did before, they will not escape from the grip of our hands. So put your faith in God, and celebrate your victory and look at peace with strength and optimism. God willing, all this will happen.

[Taha Yassin Ramadhan]
God willing.

[Saddam Hussein]
Yes, comrade Taha [Taha Yassin Ramadhan, the then-vice president].

[Taha Yassin Ramadhan]
Thank you Mr. President! Mr. President, I would like to tell your Excellency that, as you expressed, your Excellency, that the smallest battle on the front, when a error occurs against us, I used to be very anxious [on any given battle] more that I would be concerned about this campaign. Praise be to God. I am not sure whether we should respond or not. I do not see it fit

because I am convinced by its motives. I mean, I am not surprised and startled by why this, or if there is something hidden-

[Saddam Hussein]

It is known, comrade Taha, that among Arabs, Arabs know immediately. There is a certain level of awareness, from the simple porter to the president; they are all like—oh, wow! It is so obvious what this is about. We poor Arabs, it is too much for us to be victorious.

[Taha Yassin Ramadhan]

Yes. When the reason is understood, it becomes a normal matter. If I want to get treated for a certain disease, I might use a certain treatment that may hurt me for a little while, but it will cure me nonetheless. So, why are we bewildered? I mean, what is it that we want? The Zionists and America are not going to be upset about it. The most important part is—the truth is, we were immunized from measles and smallpox by America tickling us in recent years. If we have a premonition of two percent or one percent, I mean, it is possible that America might take a stand or it may not. I am convinced that America would conspire against us when given a chance or an opportunity because it does not accept that this rule of the Baath Party and Saddam Hussein continue. It will use the worst and dirtiest of means. We know it is devious and it almost made us forget about Iran gate and al-Faw before that. It came to us-

[Saddam Hussein]

Do you know that the strike against that house was American?

[Taha Yassin Ramadhan]

—Yes. Yes. It was-

[Saddam Hussein]

I was not totally convinced of that, but I did not want to tell you at the time. Completely convinced, that the information and the indications—they were deceived by the official cars that were there. They thought that I was there—they were deceived by the name Saddam, because he called them and told them that he was coming to you.

[Taha Yassin Ramadhan]

Yes.

[Background Noise]

[Saddam Hussein]

[They said,] "Man, it is over. The war has ended. Let us at least get rid of him, so the deal was a strike with a counterstrike, and it will happen one way or another."

[Background Noise]

[Taha Yassin Ramadhan]

So-

[Unidentified Speaker 1]

[Unintelligible]

[Saddam Hussein]

It is—my conviction is: I don't have information. Nobody told me. I have a strong feeling that they were behind it.

[Unidentified Speaker 1]

Mr. President, these clips [shots] are not from an Iranian mastermind, because we have been fighting them for eight years. They are from an Israeli brain, the sort of Israeli attacks like the ones in Entebbe, the attacks on Gaddafi, and the attack on the Palestinians in Tunisia. This is the Zionist approach.

[Background Noise]

[Taha Yassin Ramadhan]

Mr. President, I believe all of this shook us a little and fortified us more against the American danger; and when I say American danger, I also mean the Zionist danger. It certainly became clear now. I mean, right when I went over the details of the report of the [U.S.] Congress, honestly—it is unheard of for members of Congress and during 24 hours—they received the news and acted on it—the decision was made as easily as counting one and two. This is how it is: a Jewish trader, who works in finance houses, is claiming this person is such and such; this person is tied to such and such banks—any representative—if any national bank that has an American representative must oppose such an agreement—. But, it has been months since the decision was made months ago and today it was released. And what is with this "24 hours" thing? It is known that rapid decisions are typically general— [Clears his throat]

This is a thorough resolution and it shows how to deal with a general issue; form a committee to prepare a detailed report. What Congress has presented is something very detailed and well studied. Every point in it shows that America has control over the Iraqi economy. I mean, it is clear. This situation, I mean, is familiar, and we will see from the first day of the Geneva negotiations, Mr. President, the role of America through the role of the [UN] secretary general. The secretary general with whom we have agreed on August 8th about our oil, as well as the land, the sea, and Hormuz such and such—clean-up, and he said, "Okay," and the Iranians agreed. He came to say, "Provide some flexibility?!" They came and said this is a new thing, what Iraq is proposing, forgetting—[Clears his throat]

—disregarding the agreement of August 8th. No matter how sly he may be and no matter how many millions of connections, de Cuellar [Javier Perez de Cuellar, UN secretary general in the 1980s], is this de Cuellar's position, Mr. President; is he capable of doing such thing? If it were not for somebody behind de Cuellar, which is America.

I, only with regard to the negotiations, wanted to know how—because what I am expecting is what if tomorrow they come up with another issue, another provocative matter. So, let it be, I

mean, I am not saying we should not defend ourselves, but, we should not burden ourselves with this sort of subjugation and those who drain themselves over subjugation-

[Saddam Hussein]

—No one is draining himself. You should not drain yourself as well. We have not drained ourselves-

[Taha Yassin Ramadhan]

No, I swear.

[Saddam Hussein]

All this talk— [Laughing] and no one is tired. We are not tired and nobody said anything-

[Taha Yassin Ramadhan]

But how do we shorten the time that provides an opportunity for such actions, which is the time of negotiations. Apparently, they have a method of carrying out negotiations, the duration—of course, I mean, I am not as anxious as I was before that during the added period of time, there will be an arsenal in Iran and there will be—because we were still cautious, despite the fact that the information indicates that there was indeed a flow of weapons and there was a—to Iran-

[Saddam Hussein]

—But it was not weapons.

[Taha Yassin Ramadhan]

—A flow of people [soldiers]. I am not worried about this. But, I mean, one cannot disregard this. It is more important than throwing stones here and there. It does not hurt to some extent. So-

[Saddam Hussein]

This is all nothing but an attempt to distort our reputation-

[Taha Yassin Ramadhan]

Yes.

[Saddam Hussein]

And to lay the ground for America to restore its relations with Iran under a new condition, because the American public is charged against Iran. So, when an attack occurs on Iraq as the second party, and the Iranians show that they accept the decisions and they are interested in the negotiations while the Iraqis are stalling, and the Iraqis are using chemical weapons, then—the decision of restoring economic relations and the economic and military support of Iran would be much easier and this is at the heart of the essential intended goals-

[Taha Yassin Ramadhan]

Intended.

[Saddam Hussein]

Intended.

[Taha Yassin Ramadhan]

Of course, in addition to that, there is in this a type of draining the energy of Iraq and pressuring it to enter into negotiations that would benefit Iran. I mean-

[Saddam Hussein] —

There are many goals-

[Taha Yassin Ramadhan]

—Many goals.

[Saddam Hussein]

They are all about the war or its consequences.

[Taha Yassin Ramadhan]

Or the results of war. Mr. President, no one can take the consequences of war. We are happily accepting-

[Saddam Hussein]

—But, you see—this is part of our thinking.

[Taha Yassin Ramadhan]

Yes.

[Saddam Hussein]

It is not removed from us.

[Taha Yassin Ramadhan]

Not removed.

[Saddam Hussein]

Along with military and political leadership. We said we should hurry up because they are coming up with a political statement—coming soon—I mean, statement-

[Taha Yassin Ramadhan]

I say, Mr. President-

[Saddam Hussein]

We said they are no longer able to tolerate us, "guys, watch out, pay attention to your [unintelligible]."

[Taha Yassin Ramadhan]

During this period, there is hope in conspiring. I believe the chemical [weapons] issue and the reports were light. But, I do not exclude the possibility of another kind of conspiracy, a technical kind. I mean, I am fearful of that kind, which repeats those types of bad actions. You never know... one can fail in one or two [such technicalities]. Because as much as we are happy now, there are Arab citizens who are even happier compared to us who are living this happiness. By the same token, they are upset and that is why they do not mind doing anything. Perhaps this concerns Zionism and concerns America even more than Iran. I mean, Iran, when the turban-wearing people go, and reasonable ones come, but here [the answer is] no. This rule will remain. As practical measures, I see that, even if America officially repealed the decision by Congress, I see that we should polish our economic relations with America because the bigger the size of our relations, the-

[Saddam Hussein]

They will not behave in the same manner. But the intentions are also not honorable.

[Taha Yassin Ramadhan]

Not honorable intentions. No.

[Saddam Hussein]

I mean, the situation is—they have already taken offense.

[Taha Yassin Ramadhan]

Yes.

[Saddam Hussein]

They will target certain conditions with the blockade and they will be forgiving in other matters so they can come around to say that they ignored a number of things. You see, that is Congress—you know—but we, as a government, this is what we were able to do for you. So they keep some sort of proximity. The proximity they need to so they can strike right where they wish.

[Taha Yassin Ramadhan]

Yes.

[Saddam Hussein]

Because distance does not give them such a chance.

[Taha Yassin Ramadhan]

Yes. My conviction is, now that I read the trade report [Ministry of Trade] and I will write my viewpoint regarding this topic, which will be somewhat different, I find that they will end up acting as you said and this is something agreed upon because what happened in Congress is not against the [U.S.] administration. It became clear from the conversations with their ambassador and our ambassador.

[Saddam Hussein]

The administration gave them the official framework and official statements.

[Taha Yassin Ramadhan]

—cannot possibly be clearer than this, and then we are to go back to [unintelligible] after Panjaween [town in northern Iraq, Sulaymaniyah province], and the press conference of the Ministry of Foreign [Affairs], and they said that it was the actions of low-level officials. This seems like the beginnings of the Irangate from the newspaper in Beirut and a story from here and another from there starting with a \$10 million conference and ending up to be \$1.26 billion. This is the same thing. There was no Congress and no one knows about anything. They send messages to a few Arab presidents that they will ease up—I mean, America will try to sell itself as an administration—on the opposite; it does such things to ease the situation of Congress. We must be well aware that this is how the American administration behaves and the White House. Just like in Irangate, there was no of intelligence and of machines. It is the work of the American administration and of President Reagan himself. This is something I am sure of. Therefore, we must step on ourselves and be more proactive—and we can find more ways—. There are four or five articles during the two or three years of sanctions that we are living under, by America, with facilitation and adjusted prices, etc. I say, we are in a situation where we should not fall under this issue, and try to reduce it in a way that would make the farmers, unions, and these boards that want to keep doing business with us because we are a good buyer; they understand that Congress was responsible for us cutting back [on purchases]. The things that we are not able to get, we will not get; and the things we can get, we will get and say thank you and use it for relief. We have a million markets and it is a matter of four or five years until our agricultural situation improves and we complete our irrigation projects. It is just wheat and rice. That is it, nothing more. If they do not give us-

[Saddam Hussein]

—Even before the blockade, the decision was made to grow rice in every district in Iraq.

[Taha Yassin Ramadhan]

Mr. President, we bring [agricultural projects] with double the price from other countries and we do not accept such—they deny us acquiring the technology. Taking this step—is this even a stand to be considered? We are capable, I mean, we are a small [country], it is true, but we can put a mechanism to let other parties stand up to Congress and the administration and tell them, "you are hurting us," because we are the number-one country that buys rice from the American market. There is now movement and unrest about Iraq not having access to the [American] market to buy rice, because they [Iraqis] eat rice, as most of our purchases originate from them. Now, are they the only ones who have it? Now our people—

[Unidentified Speaker 1]

We buy over a million tons.

[Taha Yassin Ramadhan]

Huh?

[Unidentified Speaker 1]

We buy over a million tons.

[Taha Yassin Ramadhan]

Now, we are the number-one country in the American market when it comes to buying rice. Our rice imports represent 30 percent of all American rice exports. Okay. Let us pressure them a little bit; we will tell them why? Just like what we did with Germany—I mean, this has—because who brings up the Congress? It is brought up by these boards and farmers, etc. I mean, we continue relations with them, accept what they say, ease up these situations but—we must—I mean, all what we can do and at the same time, I say this year, I was very concerned that the size of our purchases from America was very large. I mean, double the size of that of three years ago; I mean, it is a burden. Even when one wants to distribute it—but, we still have not negotiated the purchases for year [19]89 let us look at our situation. So that, if one day they say, "No more," our market will be not be effected and there will be a commotion in the country. Most of the discussions for [19]88 took place and have been already contracted. And the interested parties, the sellers, do not want to stop selling. But the discussions for [19]89, in my opinion, we have to work on reducing them and there are ways for [seeking] other markets. Now, we just have to move a little so we can get the things we want and need, and the commodities in a—there is no comparison between this year and last in the degree of suffering—Huge. There is a great eagerness now. Thus, in my opinion, I believe that we can face this even with regard to the current economic impact in such a way that any harm to the American companies should not be less than the harm it will cause us, if not more, if we focus a little more. Therefore, even in this aspect, we can face this issue. But, the topic of these negotiations and this straying, this maze [in which we find ourselves] especially before signing the cease-fire agreement, is very clear. We expect that a peace agreement has a big chance of not taking place. Is it going to remain like

this? Or should we look to take action, in some form, so that this will be implemented in a short time frame. Thank you, Mr. President.

[Saddam Hussein]

We have agreed that time is on our side and that is why we will continue with this policy.

[Unidentified Speaker 1]

It is useful. We will see how they will come to us.

[Unidentified Speaker 2]

Yes.

[Unidentified Speaker 1]

They will, all of them—but a little—a movement-

[Saddam Hussein]

Yes, Comrade Latif [Latif Nssayif Jassim, the then–minister of information]

[Latif Nssayif Jassim]

Sir, please permit me to stress what Mr. Vice President just said. In creating a state of, — continuing the state of joy—because our statements, the campaign and others create a certain level of stress in the environment of the negotiations. We do not want to deceive our people. We gave them the facts but their psychology must be renewed again, because the matter is bigger

than the situation that is facing us. The matter is behind us now whether that is from the side of the offense or as a result of the practical things we did. We have coming up the Babel Festival and the Qadisiyat Saddam Week.

[Saddam Hussein]
Go ahead.

[Unidentified Speaker 1]
The party organizations will take their turn, and they will—Your Excellency said, some time ago, that the staff—"leave politics to us, we will work on it. The media will face up, and will insult, and be insulted, and so on—and people—people—everyone does their job—"

[Saddam Hussein]
People must rejoice as much as they have fought.

[Latif Nssayif Jassim]
Yes.

[Saddam Hussein]
People must rejoice as much as they have fought.

[Latif Nssayif Jassim]
Yes. You take from life as much as you fought and sacrificed. This becomes a motto in the party and people still go on [with their lives]. Your Excellency is still around-

[Saddam Hussein]
Yes.

[Unidentified Speaker 1]
And every day a decree will be issued to relieve the people; it excites them and makes them happy, and everything will be fixed.

[Saddam Hussein]
Yes. These are all minor issues; arrows that missed their aim.

[Latif Nssayif Jassim]
Yes, yes.

[Unidentified Speaker 1]
Your safety.

[Speakers Clear Throat]
[PAUSE]

[Saddam Hussein]

How is the condition of the Kurds? Our people in general?

[Unidentified Speaker 3]

I swear, sir, I mean, I will be honest with you, their condition is better—much better. After the decision; I mean the decision was more of a surprise.

[Unidentified Speaker 4]

The demonstration of Sulaymaniyah was nothing—

[Unidentified Speaker 3]

The-

[Saddam Hussein]

What?

[Speaker 7]

Like a lie; no one can believe it.

[Saddam Hussein]

No.

[Unidentified Speaker 3]

The—

[Unidentified Speaker 4]

I mean, the Turkish populace—

[Unidentified Speaker 2]

The media did not give Sulaymaniyah its share of coverage.

[Unidentified Speaker 4]

Meaning, where the people came from.

[Overriding Voices] [Unintelligible]

[Unidentified Speaker 4]

But it did not give Sulaymaniyah.

[Saddam Hussein]

Look at their number, etc; this is important.

[Unidentified Speaker 3]

God willing, we have some measures after this—I mean the issue of releasing food, and supply materials, and others. This is also a situation that we can appease some of-

[Saddam Hussein]

We have heard your opinion before, but your opinion was different from this now.

[Unidentified Speaker 3]

I beg your pardon, sir?

[Saddam Hussein]

We have heard your opinion before—

[Unidentified Speaker 3]

Yes sir, we did that.

[Saddam Hussein]

—on this topic.

[Unidentified Speaker 3]

God bless you.

[Saddam Hussein]

—And you wanted it to continue—

[Unidentified Speaker 3]

Yes.

[Saddam Hussein]

Whereas the Council of Ministers took measures—

[Unidentified Speaker 3]

No, sir. I have an appointment with the minister of trade. But, just for a week's time until the situation settles down; up until now and from both inside and outside the country, as I just gave the number to Mr. Latif, we have received 28,560 persons and that is up until about 10 o'clock on September 16, 1988.

[Saddam Hussein]

Comrade Latif.

[Latif Nssayif Jassim]

Yes, sir.

[Saddam Hussein]

From now on, you take these numbers-

[Latif Nssayif Jassim]

Yes.

[Saddam Hussein]

—And you convert them until we say stop, you convert them into age groups: this many old, this many elderly, this many women, this many children, this many men-

[Latif Nssayif Jassim]

True.

[Saddam Hussein]

In order not to get an idea that this number represents persons who carry rifles.

[Latif Nssayif Jassim]

Carry weapons.

[Saddam Hussein]

I mean—in the media—

[Unidentified Speaker 3]

Yes, sir. I am not concerned with this situation. I mean, I am looking into asking your permission to count the [total] number and stop.

[Saddam Hussein]

I am well aware.

[Unidentified Speaker 3]

I left this-

[Saddam Hussein]

But, let us proceed now—

[Unidentified Speaker 3]

Right away. But once I receive the information-

[Saddam Hussein]

But we have to convert it when you state it in the media. The number is this and according to the following:

[Unidentified Speaker 3]

Yes.

[Saddam Hussein]

You say the total number reached such and such with this many children, this many women, this many elderly—

[Unidentified Speaker 3]

Right away.

[Saddam Hussein]

This many elderly and how many above the age of such, were ones who carried weapons.

[Unidentified Speaker 3]

Of course. Of course.

Sir, on Friday, last night, a group of journalists came to us. Honestly, I was surprised. We planned for them to come as observers, to listen only, but, the idea was to have them in two provinces. When they saw the families and the fighters there, and they saw flocks of vandals who returned after this period of [presidential] pardon, I mean five or six days ago—and they [the vandals] described to them [the journalists] their destructive work candidly, and very boldly. I mean, they told them the story. I mean, seriously, I could not believe they would talk like this. It was the reality what they narrated. The other thing, sir; one of the journalists was an American. He insisted to see the area of Balisan.

[Background Conversation]

[Unidentified Speaker 5]

The "evacuation" area.

[Unidentified Speaker 3]

He insisted on seeing it. So, they asked my permission, and I said put them on a plane and let them go see Balisan.

[Background Noise]

[Unidentified Speaker 5]

Very good.

[Unidentified Speaker 3]

Let them see it. He [the journalist] said, "I'm seeing burns on the ground and marks, etc." And we said, "You will see those from here all the way to Baghdad; this is the nature of the region"—and it is so in reality—the nature-

[Saddam Hussein]

—Combustible [flammable]. Anyone throws a cigarette while walking—

[Unidentified Speaker 3]

Sir, it is them. They themselves burn the land.

[Saddam Hussein]

Yes.

[Unidentified Speaker 3]
Sir, all the north; they burn it.

[Latif Nssayif Jassim]
They consider it as fertilizer.

[Unidentified Speaker 3]
It is not just a concept that they have. From the practical point of view-

[Latif Nssayif Jassim]
Even the Jil [sic] they burn it.

[Unidentified Speaker 3]
That's it, the Jil, they burned it, so the climate becomes cold, and it becomes fertilizer and it becomes, etc. But, he [the American journalist] insisted on seeing it. So, I told them [perhaps the guards] to let him get off and see it, and he did. They burned a piece for him to see it. Incidentally, while there, he happened to see some villagers and asked if he could interview them. So, we said, "Okay, you can." He asked them, "What are these fires?"

[No Conversation from 30:58 to 32:17]

[Unidentified Speaker 3]
Let them see the truth as it is.

[Saddam Hussein]
As it is, they are dealing with the people.

[Unidentified Speaker 3]
The families that actually came to us—we somewhat failed to provide them with the [needed] financial and food assistance. As a result, a group of citizens sympathized with them.

[Saddam Hussein]
Nothing wrong with that; let them do that.

[Unidentified Speaker 3]
I said not at all.

[Saddam Hussein]
That's normal.

[Unidentified Speaker 3]
I said it is okay to sympathize with them. We, as a nation, cannot say that we gave them more than we did give those before them. That is not right. Because, before, those who we relocated from their areas they did so willingly. We did not do to them like we did to these. But these, we begin to spoil them so that they become spoiled; not at all, leave them, and no assistance will be

given according to what is laid out in the guidelines. They accepted. A number of them came begging for blankets from among those living in the compounds. There are many of them; it is not a single case or two. This was not a rare case. The general situation was like that.

The situation right now, I assure Your Excellency, is much better. Much better. We do not have anything that would really stress us. Well, there are events like there is one hiding here, an assassination there, a fired gun here—this is a normal thing.

[Saddam Hussein]
Normal.

[Unidentified Speaker 2]
—A normal situation, God willing. Our situation now, I personally am very happy and I did not really expect the communiqué; really the ones who bore weapons were so happy with this communiqué I found the opposite happening. Thank you, Your Excellency.

[Background Noise]

[Saddam Hussein]
Do you have anything [to say], Ahmad?

[Ahmad]
Pardon me. With regards to the situation of the food supplies and after the agreement made with comrade Ali and the Ministry of Trade, they suggested to continue the situation and follow up on it.

[Saddam Hussein]
Yes.

[Ahmad]
Follow up on it, I mean, follow up on the situation until—

[Unidentified Speaker 6]
We treat it and release it consecutively.

[Ahmad]
Yes. They said they would follow up on it.

[Saddam Hussein]
So, as long as we have secured the internal entry points now, where would it be smuggled to?
Iran?

[Unidentified Speaker 7]
[Unintelligible]

[Saddam Hussein]

I mean, the center of sabotage is finished. Now it is possible that it will go to Iran. As long as we are now at the borders where in Iran now?

[Unidentified Speaker 6]

Not a big problem, sir, not really.

[Saddam Hussein]

Well, when you have controlled these gaps, and the devices are controlled, and everything there.

[Multiple Speakers]

God willing, God willing.

[PAUSE]

[Saddam Hussein]

Comrade Taha, you have one other thing? Good. We have the location of the Al-Qadisiyah palace. The comrades, maybe Comrade Emad, might have seen it.

[Unidentified Speaker 8]

Yes, I've seen it.

[Unidentified Speaker 2]

The reality, sir, is that the option in Baghdad is the region of Faris; all of Faris, according to the map of Baghdad. And there is also the location between the two bridges, Sarafya and Adhamiya.

[Unintelligible Background Conversation]

[Unidentified Speaker 9]

Small and not suitable.

[Unidentified Speaker 2]

And there is the location on the left side of the Gate of Baghdad.

[Unintelligible Background Conversation]

[Saddam Hussein]

Not the Gate of Baghdad. Outside of the capital, Baghdad.

[Unidentified Speaker 2]

Sir, we are not saying that we have to agree to all of this but the facilities-

[Saddam Hussein]

I understand what you mean.

[Unidentified Speaker 2]

That is it, sir. The Faris region has three other alternative locations-

[Saddam Hussein]

The other alternatives are Muthanna and Mahatta Al-Alya.

[Unidentified Speaker 2]

Yes, sir. These are typical locations. And, sir, regarding the location in Faris, the first location is 300 meters away from the main street, the airport street; meaning, this is the airport street.

[Saddam Hussein]

Yes, yes.

[Unidentified Speaker 2]

This is the first location. It is in the square [on a map or a piece of paper] and it is 300 meters away from the main street. And the second location is this one.

[Saddam Hussein]

Half of the first location plus half of the second location.

[Unidentified Speaker 2]

It [the second location] is 600 meters away from the front edge of the street.

[Saddam Hussein]

Yes.

[Unidentified Speaker 2]

And the second [meaning third] location is near the mountain.

[Saddam Hussein]

The third [location]!

[Unidentified Speaker 2]

Sorry, the third. It is near the mountain.

[Unidentified Speaker 10]

Near what?

[Unidentified Speaker 2]

Near the mountain.

[Saddam Hussein]

The mountain. Between Abu Ghraib Street and the airport street.

[Unidentified Speaker 2]

Yes, sir. Between the two areas, and the comrades have seen it, I mean, [murmurs].

[PAUSE]

[Unidentified Speaker 10]

But the situation with the airplanes, sir. It is close to the airport. Airplanes go over it.

[Unintelligible Conversation about Airplanes]

[Saddam Hussein]

It is outside the airport. Away from the effects of noise, even. You cannot even hear the noise. I mean, you cannot even hear the noise of the airplanes there.

[Unidentified Speaker 11]

Sir, that third area is comfortable.

[Saddam Hussein]

It does not have acquisition issues, and it is a beautiful location, and it is ready. We are not harming anybody, disturbing anybody, removing anybody's home, or anything of this sort. We go ahead and start building. Unless if any of the comrades has any objection.

[Background Noise]

[Saddam Hussein]

The location opens to two streets. If you want to, use Abu Ghraib Street or the airport street. Plus, the guests of the country would be close to the airport, I mean, there is even a main street there. You can take the street to the mountain and go straight to there. And the location of the guest house, we decided to build it on the top of the mountain. The one for the presidents [who visit Iraq] would stay on the top of the mountain. And on the sides of the mountain, there would something like Amadiya, where houses are stacked around the sides of the mountain.

[Background Conversation about the Location]

[Saddam Hussein]

Yes, Comrade Mohammad.

[Mohammad]

Sir, of course we saw three locations. According to the directive that the location near the Gate of Baghdad is-

[Saddam Hussein]

The Gate of Baghdad is not logical. One cannot go there.

[Mohammad]

For that location, I have just one remark. I mean, if we have any occasions and public ceremonies and they wish to visit the Qadisiyah Palace—I mean, as a public gathering place-

[Saddam Hussein]
The palace?

[Mohammad]
Yes.

[Saddam Hussein]
I hope we do not think of this as Saddam Hussein's [palace]. Let us make it the state palace in order to stay away from the personal situation, the phase situation.

[Mohammad]
I mean, planning for the future, sir—there will not be a major public gathering to visit Qadisiyah, or Qadisiyah Palace, or any such places-

[Saddam Hussein]
No, that would not happen because it is not happening now. Right now, no such thing happens in the Republican Palace. If we let anyone enter the palace, all the gardens will be messed up and everything else will be wiped out.

[Mohammad Laughs]

[Saddam Hussein]
I mean, last time we did such thing was in [19]79. Wasn't it in [19]79?

[Mohammad]
Yes. It was in [19]79.

[Multiple speakers confirmed the date being 1979, the year of the pledge to Saddam Hussein, i.e. the year of the "Mubayaa" when Saddam took power in Iraq]

[Mohammad]
That was my only remark regarding the location.

[Saddam Hussein]
We have a big ballroom [for big ceremonies] that we can use it; let's go ahead, it is beautiful and it is in a nice location.

[Comments in the Background Agreeing to Move Forward with It]

[Saddam Hussein]
It is open. We also intend to put it on a base to raise it a bit higher from the ground. I mean, build a foundation base 17 meters high and it is 30, to make 47 meters total. So, in this case, it will be

almost as high as the mountain next to it. We should also build a 30-meter mosque on a 17-meter foundation base. And we will find a mosque also in the area, on a base of 17 and it will be 30. Not the big national mosque, just a small one.

[Mohammad]

A mosque for the palace.

[Saddam Hussein]

A small mosque. The area is beautiful. But, I do not know how you saw it in the plane?

[Multiple Speakers]

Very nice, sir.

[Saddam Hussein]

Of course, there is a forestation project planned. When there are a lot of trees there, it will become very beautiful.

[Mohammad]

Yes, sir. Water too, nice view.

[Comments in the Background about How Nice the Location Is]

[Mohammad]

Even number two is not bad either.

[Saddam Hussein]

Even number two is not bad at all.

[Unidentified Speaker 11]

But the other location is nicer.

[Saddam Hussein]

The other one is great. The gardens in the palace and, and all the future-planned projects will not be blocked by anything. They are open all-around: right, left, east, west, north, south—

[Unidentified Speaker 12]

Even for safety purposes, we can put a large wall. We can push forward to the north and cancel [block] the street.

[Saddam Hussein]

Yes.

[Unidentified Speaker 12]

We can push it forward. Because the highway, Mr. President, will cut into it.

[Saddam Hussein]
Yes.

[Unidentified Speaker 13]
It will go north of—

[Background Comments Expressing Disagreement]

[Saddam Hussein]
There is a lot of space; I do not think we will need to do that.

[Background Debate about Ways to Convert the Street Access]

[Saddam Hussein]
Comrades, keep in mind that one day we have to discuss this. I mean look into-- think about it. What if this happens, and what if that happens, pros and cons, so that when we begin building the ideas will be mature.

[Unidentified Speaker 13]
Mature ideas

[Saddam Hussein]
Among the signs of peace and stability are many things, but the practical aspect is the principal one. In other words, the outcomes are the principle. But sometimes, the means of attaining those results are important. Other times, the ways or patterns of achieving the results are also important.

[Silence]

[Saddam Hussein]
When the Soviet Union now opened up, it opened up to life. Their political party opened up to life. It opened to other experiences besides those of their party itself. This is generally the case in most Eastern countries which are still under a single-party system and their growth was achieved through the development of the party's vision to life, and its openness to the people.

In addition to this, I would like you to keep the topics of discussion in the back of your minds. What is the use of having the discussions then? Think about this discussion topic. We will allow the formation of other parties besides ours; parties that have their own newspapers, their own independent and interactive entities. We have to think about the traitor parties that have betrayed our nation in their concepts— Whether or not they should be allowed to operate. From a logical and a disciplinary perspective, they should not be allowed [to function]. But, what if such a party changed its names? Someone among us might suggest, "Let it change its name or let it follow the Marxist Lenin philosophy and just operate under a different name." You will face the issue of foreign relations. Is it permissible for a party in Iraq to consider another party in Bulgaria as a brother party?

[Unidentified Speaker 14]

It has to be Iraqi.

[Saddam Hussein]

Or is the theory based on the premise that Iraqi parties do not have roots or any type of connection with the outside [world]? Financing and media: is it possible for ex-Ba'ath Party members who were dismissed to rejoin in any way? Certainly, there are those who say no. There may be those who might say yes. I mean, a number of issues [to think about]. How do we monitor the financial operation of a party to be certain [of such operation]? How can these parties provide a yearly report with all newly admitted members? I mean, for it to be transparent from its headquarters to its last point [of contact]. There should not be a hidden link from the state and from-

[Unidentified Speaker 13]

Liberate the [Unintelligible].

[Saddam Hussein]

[Clears his throat.] As for the nature of the national front, it is the type of a front we are talking about. So, why do we need a national front? And why do we need to take detours in our current programs and create other parties smaller than ours? One might say these are things to think about and I will speak in the form of "one might say" because this is still debatable. Someone might say, "Why a [national] front? Which front? There is no need for it." Hypothetically, one might say, "Come Aziz, come Mohammad, let us study the situation," and he [Mohammad] would respond "Why do you need to study it?" These are elections and we want to form a committee from all of humanity-

[Unidentified Speaker 13]

Win first, then decide.

[Saddam Hussein]

—It will decide your representation in parliament. Over there, if one day you can dominate the parliament you will appoint from within your party, a prime minister and as many ministers as much as you are entitled.

Is it possible to make a coalition and alliance of two parties in parliament to achieve specific goals in the elections? One might say yes; another might say no. Parties decide by its sheer weight in the parliament, not by coalitions. No coalitions or unions so that we do not replace the Iraqi will with a technical one, as is the case in Western countries. We should leave it to the will of the Iraqi public; the one who gets the majority vote is the one who leads. But, this winning party may not form a government until it wins a certain total number of votes. Also, the total number of ministers must be proportional to the number of votes and the position of each minister is determined by the winning party, for example, who wins the ministerial profile.

I mean, this might be strange as this is a new experience for us and I am not concerned with how it is in the West.

Definitely, the situation requires that we seek out and question ourselves; we look into it. We think about its disadvantages, and see how we can fix a gap, etc. Is it permissible for a party to provide an evaluation of who started the war, other than that of our party? One might say that is not permissible.

[Unidentified Speaker 13]
These are historical facts.

[Saddam Hussein]
This is because these types of issues have entered deep down into the Iraqi psyche. One day, you might have a group that used to be Communists and they are influenced by their own evaluation, and they say that "We believe that we hold you responsible for the era when Saddam Hussein and Saadun Hummadi were leaders." I mean, the history of Iraq will be debated, even if it were after 30 years from now. Is this permitted? There are those who say this is not permitted.

[Unidentified Speaker 13]
Of course. It is not permitted.

[Saddam Hussein]
And there are those who say it is permitted. I mean, what I wanted to say is that one might say we need to create an atmosphere for debate.

[Unidentified Speaker 13]
We debate—

[Saddam Hussein]
Yes, yes. I am not suggesting anything, now. I just wanted to prepare you and get you used to debate, for when you discuss a topic you will do so neatly. Questions like these are often asked. For instance, suppose there is an Arab governing system that is our enemy and with whom we cut off all diplomatic relations; is it permissible to establish relations back with it and is it a form of democracy not to abide by the rule of the majority already in power? To what extent is this permitted in the Arab policy, the national policy, and the internal policy?

[Unidentified Speaker 13]
Do these parties even have a stake in foreign policy matters?

[Saddam Hussein]
None has any role except [the role played] in the Council of Ministers, just the Council of Ministers.

[Unidentified Speaker 13]
How is that?

[Saddam Hussein]

Its role is not to contest [anything].

[Unidentified Speaker 13]

That is it.

[Saddam Hussein]

Once the majority decides on something, no one else could have a say about it.

[Unidentified Speaker 13]

It would not have a right to do so.

[Saddam Hussein]

Does the rule of the majority permit the minority to impose its decisions with regards to foreign policy issues?

[Unidentified Speaker 13]

No.

[Saddam Hussein]

Or is its influence just limited to internal affairs? I mean, a number of issues will be proposed. They will require a number of meetings in order to discuss them thoroughly—cozy meetings with tea cups, not sitting around this table. We will continue the debate until we find a system that works for us. Then, we can put it into practice and expand the sphere of public participation [in politics] and expand the sphere of constructive criticism. I mean, we are not doing all of this so we can criticize [one another] but point to a direction we seek and make a strong effort to achieve the best goal we all wish for Iraq.

[Izzat]

Regarding the new election laws and regulations, do you have any new recommendations?

[Saddam Hussein]

No. We just decided on the elections in the hopes that we might develop the system [of elections].

[Izzat]

We have created a committee for this purpose to regulate the election laws and appointed Dr. Saadun as president [of the committee].

[Saddam Hussein]

Yes. But this committee will just-

[Izzat]

It [the committee] will work.

[Saddam Hussein]

It will exceed the expectations even if it did not work. These central ideas must be applied on the leadership level.

[Unidentified Speaker 13]

Meaning what?

[Izzat]

We formed an official committee and appointed you its president along with the minister of justice and the minister of education—huh--of higher education.

[Unidentified Speaker 13] —

minister of higher education.

[Saddam Hussein]

They will study the-

[Izzat]

These are the guidelines, Mr. President, as reached earlier in the meeting; specific and detailed guidelines.

[Saddam Hussein]

Anyway, Comrade Izzat [possibly Izzat Ibrahim Al-Douri], regardless of the committee, we need to cook this issue at the leadership level, in order to find out what the other vital issues are that we should know about in order to act politically? I mean, among the topics I could think of and that we should discuss is the Revolutionary Council. I think that the name ought to be changed to something like the "Leadership Council," that is all. Why not a Leadership Council instead of a Revolutionary Council? The state "revolutionary leadership" applies to a particular stage in the history of the revolution. Now, we are a system, a rule, a leadership, etc.

[Izzat]

The idea of stability.

[Saddam Hussein]

I mean, this is just an idea that occurs to one's mind. There may be those who oppose it.

[Unidentified Speaker 13]

Mr. President, I mean, more than this, shouldn't we try to find a name for—I mean, for the post-war era? I mean, just like the Soviets who have a name for the new stage. I mean, a name signifying the end of the war. The reason is to make it clear to us, for our people, and for the world that this is a new era [for Iraq].

[Saddam Hussein]

There should be a new stage after the war. A stage that is faithful to the expressions-

[Unidentified Speaker 13]

—But it has to be a true-born stage-

[Saddam Hussein]

—But not an isolated stage.

[Unidentified Speaker 13]

—Not an isolated stage and must originate from the same womb [philosophy].

[Saddam Hussein]

It has to be born and must originate from the same womb. It must be original.

[Unidentified Speaker 13]

It has to be the same, I mean, it must have the same principles.

[Saddam Hussein]

I do not believe we are going to need what the Soviets needed. The Soviets died, froze for 70 years or more—

[Unidentified Speaker 13]

True.

[Saddam Hussein]

—And they wanted to come back to life. We exercised a rejuvenation stage. We experienced the post-war rejuvenation stage during the war itself. We did so, on the economic level and many other aspects.

[Unidentified Speaker 13]

As far as our thinking process, we experienced such rejuvenation even before the war-

[Saddam Hussein]

—Yes.

[Unidentified Speaker 13]

As far as thought-

[Saddam Hussein]

—All of these [matters] and more can be looked into including things like naming [political offices] and questions like "to what extent and until when should the president hold the position of a prime minister?" I mean, these are issues concerning what might happen [in the future]. For the validity of parliament with regards to this topic or to the national council, it may be more appropriate for the president not to hold the position of a prime minister. I mean, to what extent does the state of the Ba'ath Party leadership and the state of—is it performing according to the

needs of the Revolutionary Command Council? Do we still have the same manifestation or did we acquire a new and different one in addition to what already exists?

[Unidentified Speaker 13]

Leadership Council, presidential body, titles of this sort.

[Saddam Hussein]

I mean, these are the types of issues that can be brought to the table. All of these are issues you need to think about. As far as I am concerned, I do not have any full-fledged and coherent idea. Otherwise, I would have let you know about it right away. These are ideas [issues] that I believe face us during the current peace era and I find it necessary to think about them.

[Unidentified Speaker 13]

Mr. President, the elections are six months away and I believe—what I understood is that you put forth a serious measures to revise the [election] law and that the voting is guaranteed to become a more democratic process-

[Saddam Hussein]

—More comprehensive and more valid—

[Unidentified Speaker 14]

It is more than just creating [political] parties and letting these parties fight the [election] battle. I mean, this will take into effect immediately because if we were to wait two or three years, it will never happen. There will be something formal to be declared in two months, then we can form the parties and present our—

[Unidentified Speaker 13]

—Mr. President, the stage he is talking about comes after the end of the [election] term—after the next term-

[Saddam Hussein] —

After cycle number 65?

[Unidentified Speaker 13]

—Each term is two years. We make it four [years].

[Multiple Speakers]

Four years.

[Saddam Hussein]

Four years is too long to wait. We cannot wait four years.

[Unidentified Speaker 14]

It cannot be in four years.

[Unidentified Speaker 13]
It can work as a two-year term.

[Saddam Hussein]
I mean, it is not a great embarrassment if we announce to the world that the National Council will be frozen because the leadership is looking into these issues.

[Unidentified Speaker 14]
Yes.

[Saddam Hussein]
And we make it public, to a certain extent.

[Unidentified Speaker 13]
Mr. President, why cannot we be ahead of the game and make it a two-year term?

[Saddam Hussein]
I suggest we make the election cycle a two-year term just for now, for instance.

[Unidentified Speaker 4]
Why don't we decide on a two-year term plan?

[Unidentified Speaker 13]
You [Saddam] can change it when needed.

[Unidentified Speaker 4]
When it is time [for next election year], the process will be evaluated and a decision can be made based on that. And when it is time, it [the council] can be dissolved.

[Unidentified Speaker 13]
—Can be dissolved.

[Unidentified Speaker 4]
That will be an interruption.

[Unidentified Speaker 13]
He can dissolve it. The president can dissolve the council.

[Unidentified Speaker 4]
It can be after one year, two years, or three years. It can be dissolved whenever there is a need to do so.

[Saddam Hussein]
We will discuss these matters in detail. These issues are the types of things we need to discuss.

[Unidentified Speaker 4]

Honestly, I do not see a reason for postponing the work of the council.

[Saddam Hussein]

These are the types of issues we will be discussing.

[Unidentified Speaker 4]

Yes.

[Unidentified Speaker 13]

It will be part of the next debate.

[Saddam Hussein]

Doctor Saadun will play a role in improving the law which governs the council to see if there are any gaps or loopholes or anything of that sort. That is the committee we talked about. As for the other ideas, they need to be cooked at the leadership level—

[Unidentified Speaker 4]

[Unintelligible]

[Saddam Hussein]

Huh!

[Unidentified Speaker 4]

The will of the people is behind forming—

[Unidentified Speaker 13]

Yes, I mean-

[Saddam Hussein]

I mean, the main doctrine—what is the general framework of the main doctrine that they [the general public] should abide by? How does it work? Is it possible for a party to operate under a religious theology—

[Unidentified Speaker 13]

—Or establishes ties with Arab nations-

[Saddam Hussein]

No, we talked about that. We drew the lines for such practice and said that foreign relations are generally outside of the party realm.

[Unidentified Speaker 13]

Such a function is left to the leadership of the Ba'ath Party and they [other parties] contribute with their input.

[Saddam Hussein]

There is something called the revolutionary theory.

[Unidentified Speaker 13]

The revolutionary theory is more broad-

[Saddam Hussein]

I mean—huh—as long as we reach the same conclusions, let us take wider frameworks—but, what I want is for you to be ready for the discussion and to be courageous.

[Unidentified Speaker 13]

—Psychologically.

[Saddam Hussein]

— [to be courageous] as you usually are. Since eternity, we have been making these types of calculations, but we should not lose track of things. Such matters are not born overnight. Also, it is much more rewarding to make everyone happy. But, everything comes in time. Those who are successful [make good decisions] are usually thoughtful and never ill-prepared. One has to take precautions. I mean, this is the post-war era with its cultural, economic, and political implications—

[Unidentified Speaker 13]

—Educational.

[Saddam Hussein]

I mean, generally, you [ministers] live a relaxed [calm] life because you have been rewarded. I mean, your people [the Iraqis] rewarded you because your party is the leader and your revolution is right. It [the revolution] protected Iraq, the land, the people, the thought, and the history and it foresaw the future—all of this considering that a leader [of a revolution] is not just a technical leader as he is a father and a big brother. He stretches his wings to provide comfort and warmth to others. That is how it works.

[Unidentified Speaker 4]

The new guidelines for the next economic phase were finished last night. Here is the study that we worked on in daily meetings for about a month. We reexamined the action plan for the upcoming four years. We have not reexamined this year's plan.

[Saddam Hussein]

The donations for al-Faw-

[RECORDING ENDS AT: 01:03:00]

[AUDIO FILE STOPS AT: 01:03:35]

TRANSLATION ENDS HERE