



An Interview with " Hamas in Iraq" (former faction of the 1920 Revolution Brigades) January 4, 2008

Hamas in Iraq: An Interview with the Commander of the Diyala Sector Dated January 4, 2008



[This document is the translation of an official Arabic-language communiqué obtained by NEFA investigators and translated into English on behalf of NEFA's TerrorWatch subscription service. This translation is provided for educational and informational purposes only. For more on the 1920 Revolution Brigades, Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, and the "Islamic State of Iraq", see "State of the Sunni Insurgency in Iraq: August 2007" (<http://www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/iraqreport0807.pdf>).

Q: "Did you try to unify the jihad movements and did you make any efforts at negotiation or reconciliation in order to end the battle with Al-Qaida?"

A: "Before I answer the question, I offer my deep appreciation for everyone who has asked or sent in a question. We do appreciate their concerns about jihad and the mujahideen, and we apologize for those who have stepped beyond the boundaries of good Muslim behavior... after a series of criminal actions launched by the Al-Qaida network targeting innocent civilians and, separately, other jihad movements. We have sought to find solutions to stop the harm and unify the ranks of the mujahideen—yet, neither our efforts nor those of others have yielded anything but betrayal and a lack of reciprocation by the Al-Qaida network. Ansar al-Islam knows quite well that, from the very beginning, we asked for their commander to be the mediator between us and [Al-Qaida], but they refused to do so."

Q: "Did you join with the American occupiers in fighting Al-Qaida?"

A: "We did not participate in any fight against the Al-Qaida network alongside the occupiers, and... we will never, ever cooperate with the occupiers. In the last two months, we have carried out many operations against the American forces, and we promise to increase them in the coming weeks. We could even argue that Al-Qaida's fight against the resistance and mujahideen units should be considered towards the benefit of the occupiers, as it has put a drain on our youth and weaponry. The occupying forces were unable to enter many districts and villages of Diyala until Al-Qaida paved the way for them when they began killing the Sunnis and demolishing their homes, mosques, and their hospitals. They did what the sectarian militias loyal to Iran could not do, and they finished off the job for them... Brother Ahmad Abdelaziz al-Sadoun spoke the truth when he stated, 'the Al-Qaida network has actually made people here think that the occupation forces are merciful and humane by comparison.' Regarding what was circulated about infighting with Al-Qaida during the 'Arrowhead Ripper' operation—this battle lasted less than two hours, and none of the operations published by [Al-Qaida] occurred either at the place or time cited. Even after the Al-Qaida network fled to the Hamrin Mountains, the American forces launched several raids in that area and arrested and killed many resistance fighters."



Q: "What exactly did Al-Qaida do in Diyala that caused the tribes and the people to request the aid of the insurgents, including Hamas al-Iraq, to stand with them?"

A: "Anyone who has followed the impact of Al-Qaida in the Diyala province will generally find that wherever they go, they cripple daily life. We can summarize their actions in the Diyala province as follows: demolishing mosques (as what befell the Kanaan Mosque) and interrupting prayers; stealing the salaries of deserving retirees; preventing rations from reaching the people of Diyala for allegedly supporting the Iraqi Ministry of Trade; stealing livestock, especially from the families of martyrs from the mujahideen; killing women and children, and mutilating their bodies, as what befell our brothers from Asaab al-Iraq al-Jihadiya and some of our mujahideen in Kanaan and Bahraz; shuttering hospitals and stealing many valuable pieces of medical equipment, destroying them or else exporting them to unknown locations. They betrayed every envoy sent by the mujahideen—even betraying the messenger of their commander [Abu Omar] al-Baghdadi. I will give you an example of their treachery. The Al-Qaida network captured eight of our mujahideen, so we seized the same number of theirs. Then, the Al-Qaida network spread pamphlets saying that the 1920 Revolution Brigades are apostates and that their blood and money are permitted to be taken as booty. Following this, our mujahideen arrested their Diyala military commander named 'Raed Abu Dawoud' from Khankin [in Diyala], born in 1978. He was carrying a police ID badge under the name 'Kazim Jawad Kazim', and was wearing an explosive vest—which he was not able to use. We asked him why he was instigating these actions against the mujahideen brigades. He insisted that he had no knowledge of the situation and swore to resolve the problem in a few hours—even though we found a scrap of paper in his possession that was titled, 'the essential plan to exterminate the brigades.' In order to prevent further harm and to unify the ranks of the mujahideen against the occupying forces, we released him after he heard from the tribal elders and local notables regarding what Al-Qaida had done to their sons, their social infrastructure, and their mosques. We videotaped the meeting, gave him a copy of it, and released him. A day later, another meeting was scheduled with them in the village of Bushahin [north of Baquba], where they were represented by a young Saudi Arabian national born in 1982 known as 'Abu Sulaiman' and several of his colleagues. The meeting resulted in an agreement by both sides to release their hostages. However, after we released two of our captives to demonstrate our goodwill, we discovered that our mujahideen [held hostage] had been betrayed and killed... In the name of Allah, we forgave the other captives and released them in public on Friday in order to show that we honor our commitments and we do not betray others."

Q: "Is there any evidence of cooperation between the Al-Qaida network and Iran that you are aware of, since you are in a province bordering Iran?"

A: "We have irrefutable evidence of Iran supplying Al-Qaida with weaponry. This was exposed because of the weapons they used in the Diyala province several days ago—specifically on December 25, 2007. Our mujahideen from the Uthman bin Affan Brigade dismantled a car bomb in the Al-Onaq neighborhood in the region of al-Hadid [west of Baquba]. Hidden inside the car were three large rockets, three antitank mines, a quantity of TNT, 53 hand grenades, and a quantity of chlorine hidden inside the gas tank. [These items] were confiscated, and upon examining the weapons, we discovered that they were Iranian-made. We also obtained confessions from some of those who we have captured from [Al-Qaida] that they had transferred their wounded to border hospitals."

Q: "Can you specify the manpower of and the areas controlled by Al-Qaida in your sector?"

A: "After the formation of the Political Council for the Iraqi Resistance (PCIR) which helped coordinate all of the prevailing mujahideen groups in the Diyala province—such as Hamas al-Iraq, JAAMI [the Salahudeen Brigades], the Mujahideen Army, and the Mujahideen Army of Iraq—most of the Al-Qaida activity has ceased, praise be to Allah, and they are only in control of some villages in the outskirts of the province, and near the Hamrin Mountains."

Q: "The 1920 Revolution Brigades have denied that the so-called Udayy al-Bahrazawi was a commander of one of their brigades—they even accuse him of belonging to Hamas al-Iraq. Can you please explain this matter and offer further details?"

A: "After the split that occurred on March 9, 2007, all the brigades in the Diyala province pledged their allegiance to Fatih al-Islami, a.k.a. Hamas al-Iraq. Approximately a month later, the so-called Udayy al-Bahrazawi and his brigade were dismissed [from Hamas]—so instead, he began to spread a rumor amongst the public that he was a commander of the 1920 Revolution Brigades in Diyala and that he was receiving money and orders from them. He published and distributed many pamphlets and stickers in the name of the 1920 Revolution Brigades, and some of those stickers are still hanging on his walls of his command post. For this reason, all of the news channels that broadcast news of his assassination in an explosion reported that he was the 1920 Revolution Brigades commander in Diyala, and they failed to even mention that he had belonged to Hamas al-Iraq... even though, this matter is of no concern to us."

Q: "What is the nature of your relationship with the Association of Muslim Scholars (AMS)?"

A: "[The AMS] is a committee that some [Sunni] clerics and preachers belong to. We criticized them for interfering with our activities, spreading rumors without verifying them first, and supporting a side that even they knew had provoked the fight between the resistance and jihad brigades—and this has given them a bad name in our province."

Q: "In the past, we heard news about the killing of Shaykh Younis al-Taai—a well-known tribal elder in Diyala—and, at the same time, the Al-Qaida network had claimed credit for attacking one of the Awakening leaders named Shaykh Younis al-Taai. What is the story behind his death, and which movement did he belong to?"

A: "Shaykh Younis al-Taai is a member of the Association of Muslim Scholars, and he is certainly not part of the Awakening movement, because the Awakening Council in Diyala is dominated by sectarian militias and there are no Sunnis in it. The reason for the killing of [al-Taai] and his family by the Al-Qaida network was because he had called upon the people of his region to join the mujahideen and he refused to pledge his allegiance to the Al-Qaida network. The reason he reacted [negatively] to their proposal was quite obvious, because he witnessed the dreadful behavior of Al-Qaida personnel. We interviewed those who were with him and who were wounded during the incident, and we will publish [that interview] soon."

Q: "Is there cooperation in executing jihad operations with the other organizations prevalent in the Diyala province?"

A: "Yes, praise be to Allah, there are many joint jihad operations carried out with the other resistance and jihad brigades—such as JAAMI [the Salahudeen Brigades], the Mujahideen Army in Iraq, the Mujahideen Army, and some units from the Islamic Army of Iraq (IAI)."

Q: "Have any problems occurred in your sector between the mujahideen brigades? And, if so, why?"

A: "No problems have occurred between any of the mujahideen brigades prevalent in our sector. When we are conducting an operation in a particular location, we discuss with each other 'who are the brothers in that location'... This should lead you to the conclusion that we share the same vision and ideology, praise be to Allah."

Q: "Has a joint military council been formed by the mujahideen in your sector? And what is its fate?"

A: "Yes, a joint mujahideen council was formed on March 3, 2007, and it still exists presently. It covers the mujahideen units in Bahraz, Al-Tahrir, and Baquba—the largest city in the Diyala province. [The council includes] JAAMI [the Salahudeen Brigades], the Mujahideen Army in Iraq, and the Mujahideen Army. It is our intention to invite the remaining others to also join for the purpose of unifying the ranks of the resistance in Diyala."

Q: "Can you define the following terms—'Awakening Council', 'Support Council', and the 'Popularity Commission'—and clarify your positions on them?"

A: "The Awakening Council of Diyala [was] established by sectarian militias under the command of Raad al-Tamimi. All of its members are from these militias and there are no Sunnis among them. We published a statement number 25 through our political office dated December 26,

2007, clarifying our stance on those Councils—that is, we have had nothing to do with them, as you can plainly see. The ‘Support Councils’ were formed mostly by Sunni tribes to confront the allegiance of the Awakening Councils to Iran. The ‘Popularity Commission’... is comprised of the volunteers who work on protecting the social infrastructure, such as schools, hospitals, utility departments, water, and ration warehouses.”

Q: “Do you have any relationship with the current government, through the provincial council, or by other means?”

A: “We do not recognize any government under the occupation so how can we have a relationship with it?! We work with the mujahideen at all levels—militarily, politically, and socially. We could care less about the deceivers and betrayers, as they will eventually disappear according to the will of Allah. We have widespread public support to confront the occupying American enemy and his schemes.”

Q: “What is your stance on the Muslim Brotherhood movement? Are you one of their wings?”

A: “The Muslim Brotherhood is a deep-rooted organization which spearheaded the moderate concept of the Islamic religion, and this is why you will find that many Muslims either belong to them or support them. In our province, there are many who follow the Brotherhood ideology, but they are not connected with the group or the organization. For this reason, our movement does not represent a wing of this blessed organization.”

Q: “What is your stance regarding the Iraqi Islamic Party? And are there any communications with them?”

A: “We consider any political process carried out under the umbrella of occupation as illegitimate, and the occupiers are merely trying to use it in order to carry out his objectives and schemes. Thus, we have witnessed the Islamic Party as it has strived to take part in this process—and they will carry the burden of it alone, as we have had no relationship with them.”

Q: “What is your stance on the Council of Iraqi Ulema?”

A: “We consider the Council of Iraqi Ulema to be one of the most important religious authorities for our movement, especially because many Shaykhs and clerics in Diyala belong to it. We take our fatwahs and rulings from them.”

Q: “What is your stance regarding the American occupiers? And are there any conditions to start negotiations with them?”

A: “The American occupiers will always be the prime enemy of Hamas al-Iraq, and these occupiers will not rest night or day until we push them out of our country. This is the reason for which we pledged our allegiance to this movement and to our mujahideen in the Diyala province. Regarding negotiations with the occupiers, our movement has published statements more than once assuring the public that there will be no negotiations with the occupiers until they recognize the resistance as the legitimate representative of the Iraqi people—and this is to be done with the endorsement of the entire mujahideen corps.”

Q: “What is your stance regarding the sectarian militias loyal to Iran? And do you launch any operations against them?”

A: “We have fought them, and we will keep fighting them until they cease their criminal actions against our people.”

Q: “What is the issue with the propaganda tapes spread in Diyala?”

A: “These propaganda tapes in Diyala showed the people in charge of protecting the schools, hospitals, ration warehouses, and the water and electricity stations. They were condemned by Al-Qaida as second-level apostates! However, we do not target them because they are doing a good service to the people of Diyala and we consider it a beneficial service.”

Q: "A report been aired on Al-Jazeera's English Channel showing a mujahideen celebration, and they were shown carrying a [Hamas] movement banner and, underneath it, the name of the military commander Abu Riyadh. Can you please explain this?"

A: "Abu Riyadh is part of Hamas al-Iraq in the Diyala province, and what was aired in this report on Al-Jazeera are mere fabrications made from a variety of separate clips. The location of this celebration was in the Al-Tahrir district (at the Al-Jahiza roundabout), and the police officer shown is in the area of Bahraz, close to the police station—and moreover, the dates of the two pieces of footage (and the reasons for them) are totally different. The celebration occurred as a result of published accounts claiming that Al-Qaida was in control of the Al-Tahrir area and that they had killed Abu Riyadh, the military commander of Hamas al-Iraq, along with his mujahideen. The demonstration was a spontaneous outburst of admiration for Abu Riyadh and his courageous mujahideen from Hamas al-Iraq and in order to expose the false rumors. Conversely, the reason for the police officer emerging with his squad from Bahraz station is because of the arrest of so-called Abu Shebl and his criminal gang that spread corruption. You can check out the tapes to confirm our words."

Q: "Do you have unconventional weapons? And, also, have you developed specific weapons?"

A: "No, we do not have unconventional weaponry. However, our mujahideen have developed some rockets and explosive devices. You will soon witness their effectiveness on the territory of Diyala. The delays we have had in working on them and distributing them are largely because the mujahideen have been so busy fighting off the villains from Al-Qaida."

Q: "What is the total number of your forces in the Diyala province? And did the split affect membership?"

A: "After our separation from the 1920 Revolution Brigades, all of the brigades from the Diyala province pledged their allegiance to Fatih al-Islami, a.k.a. Hamas al-Iraq, except Udayy al-Bahrazawi and his brigade that he claimed was affiliated to the 1920 Revolution Brigades after it was dismissed from our movement after only a month. Hamas al-Iraq has been steadfast in fighting against the American-Iranian project on all fronts—beginning with the militias and ending with the criminal actions of the Al-Qaida network. Many of the tribes have pushed their sons to join our regional brigades which has raised our numbers, praise be to Allah."

Q: "Do you endorse martyrdom operations? And have you carried out martyrdom operations in your province?"

A: "Yes, we believe that they are supported by Islamic jurisprudence, and we will conduct them should the need arise."

Q: "Are there any elements from the former Iraqi army in the Diyala province? And what percentage do they comprise?"

A: "Yes, there are some elements from the former Iraqi army who are widely known for their devotion to their religion, country, and people."

Q: "Are there any hardships which stymie your efforts in the Diyala province?"

A: "While we were fighting against the American occupiers, the sectarian militias loyal to Iran were our biggest problem, because they know our mujahideen, they know our locations, our whereabouts, and where we live. However, once this problem was solved by the unified efforts of the resistance heroes from all the mujahideen brigades who defeated them, the Al-Qaida network showed up to take over an identical role in creating problems and havoc. This is what has allowed the American enemy to breathe, regain his strength, and to raid the villages and cities of the Diyala province. This Al-Qaida project has helped drain our reserves of fighters and weaponry and has facilitated the work of the occupiers."

Q: "Do you have any final statement?"

A: "This coming month will see an acceleration of jihad operations as a result of Al-Qaida's disappearance from most of Diyala, and there is a surprise that [fighters in] the Diyala province will announce soon, with the permission of Allah."