
Rebuilding Iraq From Within

A CONVERSATION WITH SALIM AL-JABOURI

FLETCHER FORUM: *You have spoken about several major challenges for Iraq; the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) is the biggest challenge, but there's also sectarian conflict, tensions in the Iraqi army and militias, internally displaced persons, and economic issues. Once ISIL is no longer a threat, which of these other issues do you think is the biggest challenge, and how will it be addressed?*

SALIM AL-JABOURI: Every challenge has its own political roadmap to settlement. Although it may seem that some of these challenges are unrelated, they are actually very much intertwined because, currently, we are spending so much of our budget in the fight against ISIL. My concern is not only about how we should defeat ISIL, but also about how we should create a unified vision for how we are going to face these challenges.

FLETCHER FORUM: *Right now, what support is the Iraqi government giving to moderate Sunnis in ISIL-occupied areas?*

AL-JABOURI: We are assisting in terms of humanitarian aid, but definitely provide more than that. We support the army in its efforts to liberate those areas. We can tell the real success story: those liberated areas will be a model. Once they are liberated, we will make sure they receive physical

Salim Al-Jabouri is the current Speaker of the Iraqi Parliament. He has served as a member of the parliament since 2005, when he was elected to the Council of Representatives of Iraq for the Iraqi Accord Front list, and became deputy head of parliament's legal committee. Dr. Al-Jabouri received his PhD, with distinction, in law in 2001, and worked as a law professor at Al-Nahrain University in Baghdad.

services and reconstruction work, so people believe in the importance of this liberation. We will also share this message of liberation through reparations and other efforts, so that Sunnis in these areas can play a strong role after liberation.

FLETCHER FORUM: *You've spoken of this wave of liberation that began in parts of Anbar Province and then continued on to Ramadi. How do we continue this liberation—thinking especially of practical, logistical ways to implement it?*

AL-JABOURI: The first important point about the Anbar liberation was that it engaged the potential of the local people. When the local people of

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When the local people of Anbar found that they were fighting ISIL, they were determined to liberate their areas, and there were no sectarian concerns on their minds. ISIL, they were determined to liberate their areas, and there were no sectarian concerns on their minds. Of course, one of the most important parts about this cooperation was that the local people knew how to fight ISIL, practically speaking, and they were also determined to save Anbar.

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FLETCHER FORUM: *What are your thoughts on disarmament following liberation? Once ISIL is gone, how will this be implemented?*

AL-JABOURI: Once ISIL is defeated, if then we have an army, militias, and tribes that all possess weapons, this scenario is going to lead to anarchy. The solution is, firstly, to achieve the reintegration of those who are willing and able to be part of the security and defense apparatus of the state. Secondly, we must consolidate the establishment of these security and defense institutions. These integrated people should not have any competing political loyalties; instead, they should be loyal to the state. Finally, we need these institutions to be effective in their operations.

FLETCHER FORUM: *How do we build strong, effective institutions?*

AL-JABOURI: First and foremost, we must protect our promises and agreements. We need to reach a conviction that the constitution that we wrote together applies to all of us and that everyone is equal. This means no sectarian differences or discriminatory policies.

FLETCHER FORUM: *In rebuilding and achieving this equality for all, how can the Iraqi government work with local populations to return them to areas that have been cleared of ISIL? Specifically, what can be done for the reconstruction of infrastructure and services so that these people can return to their lives?*

AL-JABOURI: We would like to empower implementers in the international community in these areas because we need their help and we cannot advance alone. Also, we need to make sure that cities are revitalized, that life is pumped back into these cities, so that people can return to their place of origin.

FLETCHER FORUM: *At this point, with so much mixing of ethnicities and sects, is it difficult to determine everyone's place of origin, especially with members of armed groups and internally displaced persons? How can the Iraqi government assist in this process?*

AL-JABOURI: We have to rely on the local people, most importantly, because they can determine who was a member of an armed group—they're the people who are able to differentiate who was a combatant and who was not. With their help, we can minimize the security breach that could come from former members of armed groups. If we neglect the local people, we will not have their help in maintaining the security of their areas.

FLETCHER FORUM: *How can the Iraqi government take care of the local people in a way that enables them to be helpful?*

AL-JABOURI: For the internally displaced persons who have left their place of origin more than two years ago—they've missed out on education, they've missed out on family life, and their income generation has been at its lowest point. We need to address these issues to ensure their return, and it's important that these people who return to houses that were destroyed are compensated for their losses. They also need access to healthcare and education, so social services must address these standard of living issues.

FLETCHER FORUM: *You have referenced international investment and cooperation to aid in the development of social services. What would that look like?*

AL-JABOURI: Investment always depends on two factors: legal frameworks in which to operate and security in which to implement projects.

We are working to advance these two needs. Recently the Iraqi parliament was able to enact certain laws to create these frameworks to encourage international investment. For example, we have worked on laws that minimize the restrictions on foreign capital in Iraq. In liberated areas, especially, we have huge reconstruction efforts creating opportunities for investment, which is strategically important for those areas. It's very important that the international community support these efforts, because they will lead to a stable environment that would block the revival of extremists groups like ISIL again.

FLETCHER FORUM: *Under which conditions could the reemergence of armed groups be prevented?*

AL-JABOURI: There are several issues we have to focus on. For example, the inclusion of Sunnis in the fight against ISIL is essential. It's also important to achieve political reform and social justice by beginning a reconstruction effort that convinces people that we are doing what's right here.

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The international community should work with us with the conviction that they are not just working in a temporary war, or a war against ISIL. It's a war that helps humanity; it's a war to respect human rights. So we need the international community to be determined about this aspect of the war.

FLETCHER FORUM: *What more could the international community do that it is not currently doing?*

AL-JABOURI: We need the international community's support in terms of increased arms, military aid, and guarding the borders that are used as crossings by armed groups and terrorists. So, we would like to see a stronger determination within the international community to help us with these things.

FLETCHER FORUM: *How can the Iraqi government work to mitigate the sectarian tensions that outside actors may try to employ to influence groups*

within Iraq? Do you anticipate difficulties from outside actors—that is, regional powers with an interest in Iraq—trying to influence the government?

AL-JABOURI: The Iraqi government has the opportunity to be for all – not to be sided with one faction again – and to work under the banner of social justice. This means thinking of and including all parts of Iraqi society, whether Sunni, Shia, Kurds, or other minority groups. More importantly, the government itself should not be under the influence of a regional power. Because if the government were to follow the influence of a regional country, then this will upset the people, the constituents. The current government has the intention to implement this equality and impartiality, but it's facing huge domestic challenges. It has weakened its own structure, and thus is struggling to convince the Iraqi people that it can implement these things.

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FLETCHER FORUM: *What is your vision for Iraq after ISIL is gone, ten years down the line, as civil society starts to rebuild?*

AL-JABOURI: Once we decisively defeat ISIL, we will be able to enter into a new era, especially as regards the Iraqi people, and Iraq can play an important role in regional and international settings. But, again, that all depends on government politics and policies. Right now, our concern is avoiding the place we came from; we are working to avoid a situation in which terrorists recapture now-liberated areas, and we restart a never-ending cycle of violence. *f*