

“Saddam and Senior Advisers Discussing Iraq's Stance toward International Law, Relations with Turkey, Kurdish Autonomy, and Other Issues”



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Key: UM = Unidentified Male Speaker

Translator comments, clarifications, and additions are italicized in brackets

[The Kurdish insurgency from 1986 to 1989 in northern Iraq was called by Saddam's regime The Period of Sabotage. In this meeting, it is referred to as the Sabotage]

[Time Stamp: 00:00:15]

Saddam Hussein: Welcome. God's blessings. Welcome.

Tariq Aziz: Check it out, your Excellency.

Saddam Hussein: Good evening. Welcome.

[For the next four minutes or so, Tariq Aziz and Saddam Hussein are reviewing a statement together. They are speaking inaudibly to each other while greeting men as they come into the room.]

[Time Stamp: 00:04:18]

Saddam Hussein: *[Inaudible]*...to explain or to clarify the misunderstanding?

Tariq Aziz: Clarify the misunderstanding.

Saddam Hussein: Explaining to clarify the misunderstanding. This is what I have to do?

Tariq Aziz: Yes, to clarify any misunderstanding that may have occurred.

Saddam Hussein: Read it to the comrades to see if they have any comments about the idea or the style.

Tariq Aziz: Mr. President ordered this morning that the Minister of Foreign Affairs release a statement to reaffirm Iraq's standing and respect for all the international treaties within the framework of international law, including the 1925 Geneva protocol, towards all parties that also respect these treaties and agreements and abide by them accordingly. The statement has been written in the following way: statement by the Minister of Foreign Affairs: Iraq has confirmed in all the international occasions and meetings participated in recently, including sessions of the United Nations General Assembly and the Security Council, that it does respect all provisions of international laws and treaties as a whole and not in separate parts. This is despite the ongoing, ill-motivated campaign that is being waged by known circles in the United States and some other countries in the West, whose motives and intended objectives Iraqi officials have already uncovered. To clarify any misunderstanding that may have resulted from this deliberate campaign, the Minister of Foreign Affairs confirms that Iraq respects and abides by all international laws and treaties that have been agreed to by the international community, including the Geneva Protocol of the year 1925 which forbids the use of chemical weapons, poison gas, and biological weapons in warfare, and all other treaties within the frame of international humanitarian law towards all entities abiding by these treaties.

Saddam Hussein: *[[Saddam suggesting different wording, inaudible]...international and humanitarian law.*

Tariq Aziz: Yes, sir. They use the term “international humanitarian law” when they refer to the laws that regulate conventions of warfare and the treatment of war prisoners.

Saddam Hussein: Alright.

Tariq Aziz: *[Back to reading the statement]* towards all entities respecting and abiding by these treaties and agreements, whoever this entity may be.

Saddam Hussein: ...as a whole, not in separate parts, whoever this entity may be.

Tariq Aziz: Yes.

Saddam Hussein: Any comment on the idea? Doctor, welcome back.

Sa'doun Hammadi: Thank you, Sir.

Saddam Hussein: You travel to the East and to the West, and I see it's taking its toll on you.
[Saddam laughing]

Tariq Aziz: Can I send it, Sir?

Saddam Hussein: Yes.

Tariq Aziz: So we gain time.

Saddam Hussein: Yes, send it. The second subject is the Kurdish issue. Some people are using it for political gain against us. So this is our opportunity to tell them whatever you want, we'll do it! Autonomy? Let's discuss autonomy. Kurdish state? Let's discuss a Kurdish state! *[Saddam laughing]* We will do whatever you want, it is no problem for us! I mean, we are the powerful side in all these issues but now you're politically bargaining against us like we're afraid to discuss an issue?! Let's discuss capitalism, marxism, the Kurdish issue, etc... Anything you want to discuss, let's discuss it!

UM: They will learn a lesson, Sir.

Saddam Hussein: Yes, so that next time they want to play, they will think a hundred times before playing us! We will demand all parties and governments to support the autonomy and develop it and so forth... Yes, doctor. *[Saddam laughing]*

Sa'doun Hammadi: Mr. President, if you excuse me, I would like to give you another opinion.

Saddam Hussein: Sure, go ahead. *[Still laughing]*

Sa'doun Hammadi: This invitation, Mr. President, let's discuss its chances for success and for failure. I mean if there will be a meeting and if there will be no meeting.

Saddam Hussein: No, there will not be a meeting!

`Izzat al-Duri: There will be no meeting.

[Time Stamp: 00:09:30]

Sa'doun Hammadi: Ok, so we agree that there will be no meeting!

Saddam Hussein: What meeting?

Sa'doun Hammadi: So, if it won't happen...

Saddam Hussein: This is only for one purpose, Doctor, so they will say someday you did this. Just for the future.

Sa'doun Hammadi: This will be a beginning for internationalization.

Saddam Hussein: No, not internationalization! We are talking with the involved countries only, willingly, and not with other countries.

Sa'doun Hammadi: Yes, Mr. President, but when we discuss the Kurdish issue on a three or four countries-level, it won't be a national, internal issue where each country can discuss it and decide on its own. When we discuss it between three or four countries, it means a beginning for discussion outside the national borders and involves internationalization. Internationalization does not necessarily mean all world nations, only part of them. The Kurdish issue becomes a regional discussion.

Saddam Hussein: So what if it becomes a regional issue?!

Sa'doun Hammadi: Mr. President, this can mean something else in the future that won't be suitable for us elevating the issue from the national level to an international discussion.

Saddam Hussein: For me, if the Arab nation were in good circumstances I would discuss the Kurdish issue. So what? Even if the Kurds want to become an independent state, let it be. Every situation has its needs and the Kurds are a nation. If humans don't want their situation, there's no law in the world that would make them stay in the same situation. So this is our case. If you want a state, take it. Whoever doesn't want a state, we'll discuss something else. Maybe the Iraqis someday, you know, these things are not in our hands and the Iraqi fate is not to be decided randomly. But if Iraqis someday are to be convinced in some case, will we do it or not?

Sa'doun Hammadi: Yes, Sir, but now in these circumstances we're immediately calling for a discussion on a regional level. This means, if someone tomorrow wants to discuss it in the

United Nations, it'll be hard for us to say this is an internal national affair. They will say you were calling for a regional discussion yesterday so why not discuss it at the Security Council?!

Saddam Hussein: No, this is only for the involved countries that have a Kurdish minority. They discuss this subject between them.

Sa'doun Hammadi: The other thing Mr. President, is that I think Turkey will feel annoyed by this statement.

Saddam Hussein: Let it be annoyed. Damn Turkey and Iran together!

Sa'doun Hammadi: Yes, Mr. President, currently in these circumstances, their position is good for us.

UM: *[Inaudible]*

Saddam Hussein: Huh?

UM: *[Inaudible]*

Saddam Hussein: Yes, I swear. I mean, damn them, they're just like Iran minus a few known details.

UM: In the early days *[of the war]*, they *[Turkey]* were against us.

Saddam Hussein: I mean the Turks are bargaining with us! Talking with Europeans' markets? And talking about the Kurdish issue?!

Sa'doun Hammadi: But they had good positions and they benefited us regardless of whether it's in our interest or their interest, their positions were beneficial.

Saddam Hussein: I wanted this to be a hint. I wanted to annoy them.

UM: You want to bargain with us?! Then there you go!

Saddam Hussein: Exactly, there you go. We have given the Kurds autonomy and we don't mind doing anything we think is right to maintain unity, security, and stability in the region. Alright, if they want to bargain more, we'll do more! When were we afraid of an issue being discussed or not discussed? As a general principle, we're not that type of people to be scared of an issue whether it's political, economic, Kurdish, or any other issue. The Turks will say, "let's discuss the Turkmen issue" *[Turkmen is a minority of Turkish descendants in Kirkuk, Iraq]*; we'll say, "thank you." Let's discuss the issue of Turkmen and the issue of Arabs. We're ready. I mean, if a Turk asks me now--the Finance Minister talked very well with the Turks—if a Turk asks me, "What do you think about the Turkmen issue?" I will say, "Listen, we have Turkmen that were left from your days of occupying us while you have Arabs that you insulted and whose honor

you disgraced, etc.” So let’s discuss the Turkmen issue and the Arabs issue. We’re not afraid of this.

[Time Stamp: 00:14:26]

Sa'doun Hammadi: No, Mr. President, I’m not saying that we’re afraid.

Taha Yassin: If they have people, we have the land and the majority of people. İskenderun and Diyarbakir had Arabs too but there are none left. Only a few are left.

Saddam Hussein: It’s just harassment.

Sa'doun Hammadi: It’s...

Saddam Hussein: I mean it’s just a political game. I’m telling you, it’s just a political game. Otherwise, would they discuss the Kurdish issue? Do they believe in something called the Kurdish issue? Would our party have believed in something called the Kurdish issue if it hadn’t been for us convincing them with hints? It’s an organized party so they committed to it. I mean, if we had a western democracy, I swear they wouldn’t get autonomy for 100 years. I’m the son of the party and I know its ideology very well. “Are the Kurds a nation or what?” The National Party Convention concluded with “what” because one of the comrades wanted it to be sarcastic. They’re a what? Not a nation! Am I right? *[Saddam asking ‘Izzat al-Duri]* Were you attending?

‘Izzat al-Duri: Yes, I was attending.

Saddam Hussein: We told him *[the person who wrote the quote]*, no it’s not like that. So this is our nation! The human is like the devil. The devil is even better.

‘Izzat al-Duri: Calmer.

Saddam Hussein: Calmer than humans. They’re *[humans]* never satisfied! So this is your people as long as they have other people playing with their minds. The autonomy was not suggested by Barzani, I had to take it out of his mouth! I spoke to Dara Tawfik and he said, “Oh well, we want you to remove the economic sanctions and return the fired government employees.” I said, “Who are these people fired from work?” *[Saddam is suggesting this is not worth discussing]*. I told him to send my regards to Barzani and to tell him we want a solution that brings the rifles down to the floor that does something good for the people. Let him tell us what he really wants so we can say yes or no. He came back saying let’s do it that way or that way, so I asked if they want autonomy and he said yes autonomy or something similar. It was like pulling them to say it. When we went to the meeting, I had to scare off half of my comrades to make them accept the deal. I had to frighten them. I scared them with the revolution, that it will go down and so forth. I know them. Once I say the revolution will go down, they get scared *[Saddam laughing]* Then they will agree. The other half *[of the comrades]* was convinced. And the third half, now it’s three halves! *[Saddam laughing]* The third half said whatever, meaning they were not convinced. Now the Turks will give autonomy to the Kurds?! And the Iranians?!

UM1: That's impossible.

Saddam Hussein: So it's all just a political game of harassment. If you're convinced this is a good way to annoy them...

UM1: Maybe this is not the time for it, Sir.

Sa'doun Hammadi: Well, Mr. President...

Saddam Hussein: No, I think it's time for it.

UM2: It's time for it.

Saddam Hussein: You know why it's time for it? Because when we say this from a comfortable position then they'll say we're moving the Kurds against them. But since they did this, then let them have it and let's discuss the Kurdish issue!

'Izzat al-Duri: *[Talking to the Turks]* This is your fault. This is what you wanted and it's one of the consequences of your actions.

UM: *[Inaudible]*

Sa'doun Hammadi: But, Mr. President, can't we say this to them between the two of us? The same effect of harassment and being annoying happens if we tell them in a dual meeting without announcing it publicly.

Saddam Hussein: Yes, you all decide. I just wanted to talk about that. Discuss it however you want.

Sa'doun Hammadi: I mean our point can be achieved without a public announcement. We can tell the Turks by diplomatic channels. If you see the Kurds being oppressed, then let's discuss it between the two of us. This is possible. So we don't push the Kurdish issue to internationalization and then there comes a day when this useless public statement will be used as a base for something bigger. We don't need such things.

[Time Stamp: 00:19:02]

Saddam Hussein: Yes, Comrade Taha.

Taha Yassin: I don't have a comment about the concept of the idea except that I can't find any other better or courageous way to do it. It has been painful for years that the two countries which have double what we have of Kurds don't even acknowledge it—not only regarding autonomy or the rights that we gave to the Kurds. Practically, Iran is barely reaching the level of discussions that we were at during the sixth National Convention *[when the Ba'ath Party discussed the Kurdish issue for the first time]*. Is it like “a nation or what?!” They're calling them Arians while others called them the Turks of the mountains. I mean, they don't even give them a name.

Saddam Hussein: Yes, they don't even call them Kurds!

Taha Yassin: Yes, the Turks call them the Turks of the mountains. The Shah of Iran himself said in a press conference when asked about the Kurds that they're not the only minority here so his answer is clear. Iran can't do such a thing [*giving autonomy to the Kurds*] more than Turkey because there are many other ethnicities, and if they do such a thing then Iran will decompose. So the problem in Iran is much harder than in Turkey, which has Arabs and Kurds, but in Iran there is much more so the process is much harder. The Turks are a majority in Turkey, but the Persians are not a majority in Iran. Thus, it is harder in Iran. However, for years we've not seen Turkey but Iran use this subject against us. If your house is made of glass, don't throw stones on others, so I find it very strange. Of course, the reasons for this are colonization, world powers, and Zionism. Turkey, if it weren't hard for them, they would also use it. They are not less committed to harming Iraq, but rather they have a different perspective. On Wednesday, before they made their statement about the chemical weapons late Friday night, I talked to their Minister of Finance and I wrote it to you in a report, Mr. President. I saw the comments made by their Prime Minister in advance before letting him [*the Finance Minister*] talk about it, and he said, "I came here to follow-up on issues like increasing efforts, peace, Iran, and to congratulate [*Iraq for winning the war*] without any problems." I said, "I have two points, the Euphrates agreement and the other issue." I know he's a very close friend and a financier for Ozal, and a member of the same political party. I said, "I am aware that Ozal has subjected himself to a vote of no confidence because of the economic situations and inflation so will they dissolve the Parliament or have elections?" I also told him we will not allow this to be an excuse used against us or for irresponsible opposition. There are newspapers that even Ozal said were financed by the Israeli cultural attaché in Ankara. But the Prime Minister is now talking to gain Kurdish votes and consequently we will be free to react too. When we signed the 1984 agreement between us, many of these creatures [*Kurds*] that you now have were here. Even in the Arab region we were insulted by many for signing such an agreement with Turkey and about how we signed an agreement to let Turkey get into our lands, even for just five kilometers, to follow whoever they want! Now, you're the ones apologizing for them [*Kurds*] and making statements about it? Yet, we have no objections. Let him [*the Prime Minister*] go adopt them or whatever he wants do with them, but don't ask us for help afterwards. He [*the Finance Minister*] had a pale face and said, "No we don't mean it this way. You're correct. This is all political bargaining because of the government's situation." Surely, this is the reason for their insistency about the chemical weapons. The more we ask them about it, the more they release statements like every two hours about it, saying we don't accept it and no one should come here and so forth. But, I mean, will this end? Will Turkey be in a better situation...? [*Interrupted*]

[*Time Stamp: 24:03*]

Saddam Hussein: I talked with the military Chief of Staff to tell the envoy of the Turkish General Chief of Staff office that this is unprecedented and we never forget unprecedented events.

Taha Yassin: Yes. Never.

Saddam Hussein: Anything you declare will be unprecedented and you did not work according to the agreement which is something also unprecedented. So, just letting you know.

Taha Yassin: Thus, Mr. President, the two sides [*Iran and Turkey*] should be cooperating with us. The idea that your Excellency suggested will be important for both of them. But we should avoid [*some of the results*] that can come up with it, like Dr. Sa'doun said. First, we should ask if we should do this now. Should we announce it publicly as an invitation for a meeting between the three countries? Or should we tell it to the three countries in memoranda, even if we're now at war with Iran and have good relations with Turkey. Or in direct meetings, we say that we have no problem meeting about this issue? I mean, such a public announcement may cause misunderstanding and different misinterpretations; however, we must pinch these two countries strongly. How can we do such a pinch without causing something international? Turkey is easy. Tomorrow, we'll have high level meetings and tell them that we noticed this issue and so on. We'll suggest a three countries-meeting and we already have experience with autonomy so we'll see what the problem is, agree on a framework for coordination, and discuss any ideas you have. Then we tell them...

Saddam Hussein: [*Talking to the Turks*] We have this idea and we wanted to talk to you about it. So if you don't accept it or rethink your policy, we'll have to say it publicly.

Taha Yassin: Yes, that's all I wanted to say.

Saddam Hussein: And when we say it publicly, it may create a case for the internationalization of the Kurdish issue as a whole.

Taha Yassin: In my personal opinion, this is possible in a friendly way with Turkey and they will understand its meaning. Also, it has to be somehow discussed with Iran. Turkey may even talk with Iran, asking for help and to stop politically bargaining over this issue. This is better than making our announcement public because some Zionist parties will try to benefit from this and use it against Iraq. Thank you, Sir.

Saddam Hussein: Comrade 'Izzat.

'Izzat al-Duri: Mr. President, I am with the...

Saddam Hussein: [*Interrupting*] Then Comrade Tariq...

'Izzat al-Duri: For me, I support the idea with considerations to what Dr. Sa'doun and Comrade Taha said from a point of view regarding what they said about the future. Although we're not scared, just like you said Mr. President, it might be internationalized. The international community is in agreement today but in disagreement on some issues for the last 40 years like the Palestinian issue. Or like South Africa, where it has been in disagreement for 30 years and just issuing orders from the United Nations and the Security Council. What did they do for these countries and the oppressed nations? They do nothing when the countries involved have capabilities. Yet, we're not in a rush for the statement. We can deliver the idea of Mr. President in the way that you mentioned to reach the same purpose, especially the way Comrade Taha said.

We tell them, “if you bargain these issues against us one more time, we’ll publicly announce this.” I personally think that we don’t even have to tell them that we’ll publicly announce it because they will be scared with just raising the issue. They will apologize for what their Prime Minister did and make up excuses for their position. But I am surprised today for what you said *[talking jokingly with Saddam]*. I heard new things today about the Kurdish nation.

Saddam Hussein: This has been my belief since the beginning.

‘Izzat al-Duri: Mr. President, this won’t happen anywhere in the world.

Saddam Hussein: I’ve even said it to the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

‘Izzat al-Duri: I swear it’s a disaster for Iraq if you think this way.

Saddam Hussein: *[Interrupting]* Yes, this is what I think. I said it four years ago with the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

‘Izzat al-Duri: Because... *[Interrupted]*

Saddam Hussein: Right, Tariq? The same words I just said.

‘Izzat al-Duri: Because let’s say that Iraqis fall into five ethnicities. This means five nations. This means we believe Iraq should be divided into five states.

Saddam Hussein: No. I believe that Kurds will never accept secession. But that’s why I am annoyed. So Kurds want to talk? Then let’s do it! What do you want?

‘Izzat al-Duri: Let’s suppose Mr. President that suddenly *[Interrupted]*.

Saddam Hussein: I mean, will Kurds become slaves for the Turks or for the Iranians and leave Iraq if there are healthy conditions for them here? No, they won’t leave.

‘Izzat al-Duri: Mr. President, all of a sudden *[Interrupted]*.

Saddam Hussein: They’re historically Iraqis, isn’t that enough?

‘Izzat al-Duri: In some inadvertent time and under unhealthy conditions, just like you said, unhealthy international conditions with conspirators working against us, it can suddenly become true and when it happens it becomes a principle *[a reason for other minorities to secede as well]*. Turkmen will demand a nation.

Saddam Hussein: *[Interrupting]* From us?

‘Izzat al-Duri: Yes, from us.

Saddam Hussein: From us, I swear they can’t get an inch from Iraq.

‘Izzat al-Duri: No, if we do it *[Interrupted]*.

Saddam Hussein: From anyone else, it can happen. It may happen but in slight chances. I mean, Iraq sometimes becomes this big and sometime this small, depending on historical developments.

‘Izzat al-Duri: Now if we want to say, in these unhealthy conditions internationally and even in Iraq because of the war and the Sabotage in the north, we say: now alright, the central national government believes that if the Kurdish nation wants to secede then they can do it and decide their own fate. I think if we hold elections now, they will win and secede even if they become agents for Israel, because they have so much destruction.

Saddam Hussein: Is that how we treat our people? Telling them it is however you want it?

‘Izzat al-Duri: Just an example.

Saddam Hussein: *[Interrupting]* No, how come?!

‘Izzat al-Duri: As an example.

Saddam Hussein: *[Interrupting]* No. Where’s our leadership role? Where’s our responsibility?

‘Izzat al-Duri: So, on this issue, I mean now after 40 years of insurgency—not insurgency, but Sabotage because it’s wrong to call it insurgency. Forty years of sabotage and international manipulation of an Iraqi national issue regarding the Kurds was culminated by leading Iraq into a war never fought before by another nation or country since a thousand years *[recording stops]*.

[Time Stamp 00:31:38]

‘Izzat al-Duri: The last horse of the Kurdish insurgency is killed. The last big white horse is dead, yet we want again to give *[revive]* another spirit for the saboteurs against our Kurdish nation to say *[to the Kurds]* you have a very big hope for possible secession or deciding your fate, and so on. Currently, from the Kurdish nation, whoever is a saboteur we kill them or they will go *[to another country]* and never come back or will return and we kill them. Our Kurdish nation after all this, I think, Mr. President, will never have the idea of sabotage and insurgency against the national government or against the great Iraq or against the Iraqi people or the Iraqi soil. Because when else will they have the chance to think about secession like the saboteurs are telling them now? There was a war with Iran and they were told by Iran that they will get secession from the first day. They were told that they’ll be given the north and allowed to secede. Then they were defeated along with the Iranians. The saboteurs and the Iranians were defeated.

Saddam Hussein: No it *[Iran]* never said something like that to them.

‘Izzat al-Duri: Just like...

Saddam Hussein: *[Interrupting]* They were told that there will be an Islamic government in the freed part of Iraq to free the rest.

‘Izzat al-Duri: But Mr. President, Jalal *[Talabani]* and Maso’ud *[Barzani]* both were told...

Saddam Hussein: *[Interrupting]* They’re separate; Jalal and Maso’ud.

‘Izzat al-Duri: They were told this is your historic opportunity...

Saddam Hussein: *[Interrupting]* Maso’ud is different. He is not a secessionist. Maso’ud is like his father, a tribal sheikh who wants to be a leader. But Jalal is a secessionist, a true secessionist.

‘Izzat al-Duri: Anyway, Sir, they were told this is your historic opportunity. It was the last one in my opinion too. I am convinced that Jalal told them this is the last historic opportunity for the Kurds: Iraq is about to collapse and become three countries. A Shiite nation in the south, a Sunni nation in the middle, and we’ll be a Kurdish nation in the north. He established the alliance with Iran and convinced his staff and troops based on this concept.

[Time Stamp 00:33:50]

UM1: *[Interrupting]* Comrade ‘Izzat, I apologize for interrupting. We found a letter that was sent when they took over Mard and moved on to Azmir *[two cities in Sulaymaniyah, Iraq]*. Then the morning after we pushed them back as you remember, your Excellency, when we found *[an Iraqi]* colonel with 20 soldiers all tied and executed. Then we found Iranian war prisoners who said, “Don’t shoot us because we shot the ones *[the Kurds]* who killed your Iraqi friends.”

Saddam Hussein: *[Inaudible]*

UM1: Sir, just mentioning it as a historical fact. It’s an official letter from Jalal’s headquarters.

Saddam Hussein: *[Inaudible]*

UM1: Addressing the fighters saying, this opportunity will never be back for the Kurdish revolution.

‘Izzat al-Duri: Yes, I’ve read this letter.

UM1: If you do not hold on without retreating, the Iraqis will humiliate us in history forever. This is from an official letter obtained by us, Mr. President.

Taha Yassin: *[Interrupting]* We have all their letters.

UM1: So it’s not only an issue of being satisfied.

Saddam Hussein: My comrades, let me repeat my thoughts that I just said as the following: We can’t let anyone scare us with anything because we’re not the type of people to get scared of anything, including our national issues. Tomorrow we’ll have someone tell us, “You socialists are not capitalists, so we suggest you become capitalists.” Our answer would be, “let’s discuss it nation to nation.” I mean, it will be internal interference and we will not tolerate it, but what I am

saying is that we should be prepared for political harassment. We should be prepared with an offensive spirit [*strategy*], not a defensive one, scared of discussing the issue as if we are feeling guilty for being different. So the Kurdish issue exists, and Iraq has Kurds. Sorry, I mean there are Kurds in Iraq as part of its nation. There are Kurds in Turkey and they are part of its nation as well. There are also Kurds in Iran and they are part of its nation, in addition to the Soviets and in Syria. Don't they exist in all these places? I mean, in all of these places, except for the Soviets who gave them [*Kurds*] a special arrangement within the Communist Party in a way that is also not suitable for us. I mean, if it wasn't for the Sabotage, we would have unmatched experience and we have the ideology and the will to develop it to be an outstanding model. So we're not scared. We should be the ones using the Kurdish issue against our neighbors, but the Kurds we have are traitors and agents for Israel and Iran has been playing them for tens of years. Otherwise, why would we not fix the Kurdish issue? We can work on the Kurdish issue and discuss autonomy for Kurds everywhere.

'Izzat al-Duri: How...

Saddam Hussein: [*Interrupted*] When they get autonomy and want to discuss further steps, we should not be scared either. Again we tell them, "Let's discuss it." The meaning of "let's discuss" is not that you're welcome to interfere in our internal affairs, but that as an issue we're not afraid of its developments when we have the leadership role in our country. I'll go back to the topic of the people and us. The people: did we ask them to vote on who wants to join Khomeini, and who's against it? Didn't we cut the head of everyone who wanted to join Khomeini? So we don't believe in such things. But suppose that, let me say this: now if the Shiites in our nation, after all the leadership we did, they say we don't want you anymore then I'll say yes we have to fight. That's what I believe when it comes to the people. Otherwise, if our people say we don't want you but we're hanging on to power, then it's not leadership. The real leadership should play its role by all means, including beheading those who oppose the nation from here, not from there [*Saddam pointing to his neck*] and just shooting them on the move without even stopping at them. But when you see that a whole population wants a different situation despite doing everything for the minority and the majority, then we should tell the people to decide. That's what I mean regarding the Kurdish issue. [*Time Stamp: 00:38:57*]

Accordingly, this is the understanding of the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party and the Command. Thus, I believe that we can keep the Kurdish issue in our hands instead of it being used against us. This is our opportunity to remove the traitors and never bring them back. If they come back, they'll come back according to our law, not theirs. Meaning, they'll come back walking forcefully on the Revolution track, out of respect and not out of belief. Then, the Kurdish public will live according to the principles of the Revolution. If they go abroad to sweet talk our enemies, and as long as they keep going abroad, they're not scary for us. Throughout the world, the most important thing is the people inside the country. If few people go abroad whether they're Arabs or Kurds or Shiites or Sunnis or Christians, they don't have any value because the real value is inside the nation. But when it's up to the democratic liberal issue and accepting the Western pressure which keeps playing the saboteurs, then surely there will be no good results.

'Izzat al-Duri: This is what we have.

Saddam Hussein: What kind of results should we expect from this? We'll have dangerous results, but this is not what we're talking about. What we're talking about is that our will is present and our leadership role is present so we should keep using this like a fireball against their chests while they keep dodging it. Recently, they've been playing us with it! We're the great, big Revolution with all the capabilities. Our Kurdish nation-Comrade 'Izzat, we must provide them with the circumstances that the saboteurs and enemies of Iraq do not like—circumstances in which it can have a civil and modern engagement with the power elements in Iraq. I mean peaceful circumstances and prosperity, such as peaceful and prosperous circumstances with autonomy and real governance by people similar to the people governing Hilla or Kirkuk—but those people unfortunately do not exist. I instructed the Director of the Diwan [*Office for Presidential Services*] to look for Kurds in all specialties and bring them close to me in the Diwan. I told him to give them all types of duties, in the hopes that they'll be visionary and have the ability to make decisions because it's a disaster that sometimes they say things that we said back in 1968. You know general things, not something in particular. Why? Because there's isolation, they lack experience and they lack engagement in the context that I just mentioned. They are afraid, and perhaps the people they deal with are afraid too, so they stayed this way [*afraid*]. If we have the mentioned circumstances in Kurdistan, then I am confident that the secession idea will leave forever because they will see how big Iraq is and they will see their own privacy practiced within Iraq as well. They won't ask to be part of the lagging circumstances in Turkey or Iran. They will be part of their circumstances and be proud of it while taking their national role. Then at that time we'll be the ones working on the Iranian issue and Turkish issue, in accordance with our policies. That's what I mean by all the ideas that I've said and any idea that you see...

'Izzat al-Duri: [*Interrupting*] ...Yes, Mr. President. When I started talking, I said I support the idea for this reason. But currently the circumstances are ill-motivated, very ill-motivated.

Saddam Hussein: [*Interrupting*] Of course the way to express the idea can be different. That's why I come to you, the Command.

'Izzat al-Duri: [*Interrupting*] It should be expressed this way to fix the situation. Otherwise, we believe in the same idea for its necessity and this is the time for it because the hit that we got from the Turks will never be forgotten. The Prime Minister's position will never be forgotten. Out of all people, the Turks are the most afraid of the Kurdish issue.

[*Time Stamp: 00:43:51*]

Saddam Hussein: Turn off the AC cooling, please.

'Izzat al-Duri: Yet, they use it as a cover and they're politically bargaining it against us in this dark situation we are passing. So today is the time for such a great position from us...

Saddam Hussein: [*Interrupting*] We're not in a dark situation. We're in a great situation. All of those...

'Izzat al-Duri: They are just a few fighters...

Saddam Hussein: All of those are just keeping us busy with small covers *[of resistance]* because they're afraid we'll get to their main defense positions.

'Izzat al-Duri: No, Mr. President, I don't mean the darkest situation in...

Saddam Hussein: *[Interrupting]* Even the Turks. They know what it means for Iraq to come up as a strong nation next to them. At least their sweet talk and blackmailing with the Arabs will end. When the Arabs see Iraqi goods better than the Turkish ones, they won't buy from Turkey anymore.

'Izzat al-Duri: I mean a dark situation, meaning the hardest level of struggle and Jihad. I don't mean we're tired and we're about to...

Saddam Hussein: *[Interrupting]* Let's call it a backstab or opportunistic.

'Izzat al-Duri: We're in the middle of a decisive historic war and they backstab us. That's what I mean. We're all with your idea, but the implementation should be at this level. If it wasn't for the situations we mentioned, whatever you say we won't be scared about because we are self-capable militarily, politically, ideologically, philosophically, and culturally. We are confident in our people and in any issue that we discuss.

Saddam Hussein: Comrade Tariq.

Tariq Aziz: Sir, after the overwhelming victory that Iraq achieved against Iran, I don't feel a substantial danger about the Kurdish issue coming from Iran or Turkey. Substantial as in Iran or Turkey supporting a new insurgency in Iraq. On the contrary, they haven't solved the issue politically, and both countries have no solution for it because Iran has been militarily defeated and Turkey is weak as a country. So they are the ones who expect danger from the Kurdish issue, not Iraq. But recently I've been following this closely especially when I was in Europe and I think Zionism, America, and the West will play the Kurdish issue politically to stain Iraq's reputation and stain the personal figure of Mr. President Saddam Hussein. They will do this according to their planning to remove all the impacts of the Iraqi victory and remove these impacts from the Arabs as well so that the Arabs will be ashamed when they go to Europe supporting Iraq or admiring a leadership figure like Mr. President Saddam Hussein. They can say see what Iraq did, that's the Zionist's plan and I told it to you briefly today. The rule...

Saddam Hussein: *[Interrupting]* Comrade Tariq told me this after reading this.

Tariq Aziz: Yes.

Saddam Hussein: Not before it.

Tariq Aziz: Yes, you had already written it and I read it before I came here.

Saddam Hussein: I told the Secretariat to tell Tariq to read it before coming. When he came he sat down and we talked about it. So he told me this. This statement is not the result of a media campaign, but rather a counterattack. I wanted it as a counterattack from Iraq against all the powers trying to seize the opportunity.

[Time Stamp: 00:48:02]

Tariq Aziz: Yes, Sir. I understood what you said. A good rule of thumb is: “Attack is the best form of defense.” Your Excellency confirmed now and we all know as Command members that we are not scared of the future engagement with our Kurdish nation. We were not scared during the darkest and hardest situations because we were confident of the future and the future now became present. The Iraqi Armed Forces currently have full control over the entire Kurdish region. Iraq is victorious. The Kurds are happy for the victory just like the Arabs. There are few ill-motivated people, some of whom are traitors and cannot be treated so if they are killed, or if they leave the country, let it be. Yet, there are some ill-motivated people who can be treated just like when I get treated for the flu and I get better afterwards. The same applies for our people. There are ill people among the Kurds, Shiites, Christians, and Sunnis, and each for their own reason socially or politically. It is our duty as leaders to treat them and the form that your Excellency mentioned for treating or fixing the Kurdistan issue is the nationally correct form. But they will use it against us, I expect, and I don’t mean to belittle it.

Saddam Hussein: They will reverse it.

Tariq Aziz: They will reverse it politically. Substantially, they can’t do something like insurgency or occupying territories because one of the reasons for such insurgency since 1960, Sir, is the military weakness of the state in addition to the political condition. I mean if the state has a big military it can send 60 or 70 brigades with warplanes, tanks, helicopters, and missiles.

Saddam Hussein: And there’s a political solution.

Tariq Aziz: ...and has a political solution. They can’t do it.

Saddam Hussein: They can’t do it.

Tariq Aziz: Your Excellency knows that in 1975, Comrade Adnan and a group of Ba’athist youths were fighting with only a couple of tanks and artillery pieces. If they [*the Iraqi military*] had in 1975—if you—had the 70 brigades that were available under your command 20 days ago, then what can Barzani do after establishing a political solution? So substantially, we’re in control of the region because of your policies, your love of your nation (especially the Kurds), and this process that you just mentioned which I hope to implement in detail. This...

Saddam Hussein: [*Interrupting*] We will implement it. Now we can implement it after controlling Kurdistan...

Tariq Aziz: [*Interrupting*] This means there is no substantial danger.

Saddam Hussein: We must implement the democratic, social, ideological, and practically balanced process for our Kurdish nation to understand its meaning...

Tariq Aziz: *[Interrupting]* Yes, but what will they do to us?

Saddam Hussein: *[Interrupting]* ...Because they did not understand it before.

Tariq Aziz: What they will do to us is staining our reputation politically. If Comrade ‘Izzat Ibrahim, Vice President of the Revolutionary Council, goes to Italy in six months for negotiations, they will come out protesting with pictures of Halabja, and I don’t know what about Kurdistan. We should not belittle this. This can lessen our impact internationally and on the Arabs. “Attack is the best form of defense.” We had some traitors and we fought them by all means whether it was harsh or not, we had a war and treason. Now, come politically and let’s discuss it. Whoever wants to talk about the Kurdish issue, we will challenge them on a regional level. We do not want to scare Turkey or Iran. They’re already scared. I want Israel and America to be scared so when they want to raise it against Iraq, Iraq will throw the ball on Turkey and Iran. They *[America and Israel]* care for Turkey and they care for Iran so they will shut up and remain silent because they will know that when Iraq has the ball it will be thrown over to Ankara and Tehran. They care for Ankara and Tehran, not for us. So “I mean you, and listen neighbor,” *[Aziz is quoting an old Arabic saying about someone talking to his wife while at the same time he is talking intentionally loud for the neighbors to also hear his talk]* not to scare Iran or scaring Turkey because they don’t need to be scared.

Saddam Hussein: *[Interrupting]* Yes, it’s a counterstrike against all the bad circles.

Tariq Aziz: Against the circles that want to play the ball inside the Iraqi court. When the ball is in the Iraqi court, Iraq will throw it over to the Turkish court and to the Iranian court. This will hold tight to the Americans, the Westerners, and as a result all Zionists. This is what I understood from your idea and I support it.

Saddam Hussein: Exactly.

Tariq Aziz: This is what I understood. That throwing the ball into...

Saddam Hussein: Exactly, Comrade Tariq.

Tariq Aziz: Throwing the ball from the Iraqi court into the Turkish court is not meant for Turkey...

Saddam Hussein: *[Interrupting]* No, it’s meant for Turkey and its allies.

Tariq Aziz: Its allies that take care of it and the people who now want to save Rafsanjani and his government. They will be scared and they will say Iraq will make this a bigger problem by changing the Kurdish issue from one against Iraq to an issue against the Turks and the Iranians, so shut up and remain silent. I also think the style that your Excellency suggested is the most powerful style because when one uses an attack weapon it must be fully beneficial. Like we used

our missiles against Tehran. A weak missile every week will not work. You have to use it powerfully once to create an impact, otherwise it's like drops *[metaphorically speaking]* it will not work towards the required results.

[Time Stamp: 00:53:25]

Saddam Hussein: Comrade Adnan.

Adnan: Mr. President, we presented our Kurdish nation, out of content, belief, and good will for national and regional reasons. The Manifesto of March 11th is based on a spiritual principle for leading the revolution. We have been working according to it from the day it was issued until now. And Barzani, with whomever follows him and Talabani, they all know how good it is deep in their conscience if they have any conscience. They don't want autonomy or a solution for the Kurdish issue. They bargain with the Kurdish issue, killing Kurds and getting paid for their treason outside the country, enjoying their lives. Didn't Barzani himself reject the March Manifesto, and we had to fight him in 1974? We threw him outside the country in 1975 on March 6 or 7th when your Excellency was negotiating in Algeria. We had an opportunity, Comrades, to say, "Alright never mind this." The revolution's favor was returned with a fight so that it's no more. But the Command insisted on saying no, just like your Excellency mentioned now. The day before yesterday, Mr. President, during the conference I said you may notice that I am calling them traitors for known reasons because when I call them traitors it's for the following logical reasons.

[Time stamp 00:55:53]

Saddam Hussein: Did you turn off all the AC cooling or just this one?

UM3: Yes, Sir. All of it.

Saddam Hussein: Why? I didn't say that.

UM3: Sir, it wasn't turned on.

UM4: These units were not on, Sir. We only had the central AC turned on.

Saddam Hussein: We can't live without it.

UM3: I'll turn it on right now, Sir.

Saddam Hussein: Turn on these units and leave those ones off.

Adnan: I said you all, Europeans and Americans, went into two world wars. You fought for four years within Europe. I know there are parties everywhere fighting for votes to get to power, in Britain, France, Spain, Belgium, etc. We hear your radios and see your TVs. But when danger got close to your borders, there were no parties because they all became like the Belgium party or the French party or the British party. They all fought side by side defending France, Britain,

Belgium, and the Netherlands. When the war was over, the parties went back to their own beliefs, but all within one household [*nation*]. I said that Iraq fought an equivalent of World War I and World War II in eight years with a neighboring country three to five times bigger than us in area and population. So the national situations, sectarian situations, and ethnic situations for the one country and its citizens necessitate that Barzani, Talabani, and whoever follows them should come to the central government, saying, “Brothers, you know we are different but now our country is on the edge of a cliff, so our guns will support the government and when Iraq passes this peacefully then we’ll talk.” I said this never happened, but rather they cooperate with the enemy, bringing the enemy deep into Iraq and giving the enemy refuge, food, and information for striking Iraq. When the Iraqi military fights in Kurdistan, defending Kurdistan and Kurdish women, Jalal Talabani kills the injured who are fighting to defend the Kurdish women. So when the country’s sons reside with the enemy and fight with the enemy side by side, is this treason or patriotism? I told them, Sir, about the Manifesto of March 11th briefly and they asked me directly how many Kurds are represented in the country’s leadership; I pointed to Comrade Taha and told them his position in addition to another two comrades [*interrupted*].

Saddam Hussein: The Manifesto of March 11th says there should be three Kurdish ministers in the Iraqi republic. That’s what we agreed on. But we did not do that according to the Manifesto of March 11th. We did it based on the Iraqi spirit.

Adnan: One nation respecting everyone’s private situations.

Saddam Hussein: Comrade Taha came in with the Baathists’ spirit, not with sectarian spirit. The Comrade, Minister of Planning, came in with the same spirit.
[*Adnan and Saddam talking at the same time*]

Saddam Hussein: Maybe someday we’ll have half the ministers be Kurdish. So what?!

Taha Yassin: This is what unites us.

Adnan: So Mr. President [*interrupted*].

Tariq ‘Aziz: [*Inaudible*]

Saddam Hussein: I mean this is no problem.

[*Time Stamp 00:59:48*]

Adnan: I told them that in my opinion, the Manifesto of March 11th does not satisfy all the ambitions of the Kurdish minority in Iraq, but it forms at least 80 to 85% of their ambitions and needs within one Iraq. I told them that not even 1% of what’s achieved from the Manifesto of March 11th was achieved by all the other countries with a Kurdish minority even though some of these countries have double or triple the Kurdish population in Iraq. No one in these countries dares to say “I’m Kurdish” and the countries they live in cannot give them 1% of what Iraq has accomplished. So if they [*Kurds*] are revolutionaries like you call them—my understanding is that revolutionaries have high principles and moral standards—then their principles will not let them

say, “We’ll take 95% of what we want and then shoot the government with a rifle while over there [*in neighboring countries*] they can’t achieve anything.” This is the country’s situation. I told them despite all that, what’s your estimate for the refugees who fled to Turkey or the ones that we shot with “special ammunition?” 5,000? 10,000? 20,000? I said we have more than 2 million good Kurds who love Iraq and are faithful to Iraq so the 20,000 saboteurs can go to hell. Mr. President, what we did in Iraq was out of spiritual confidence. We struggled and your Excellency knows how much we bled on the mountains [*in Kurdistan*]. Yet, they are the ones who are throwing the ball at us like we’re the ones who failed the Kurdish issue and like we’re the ones not acknowledging the rights of our brothers and sons from the Kurds. In my opinion, what your Excellency suggested can be achieved at 9 pm today when we make the announcement from Baghdad. I also think that Turkey and Iran, which are the principal targets, will come and say, “Yes let’s meet in Baghdad or in Istanbul. So what will happen?” Will they give more than what we already gave in the Manifesto of March 11th? I am ready to sign right here in front of your Excellency and the Command that they [*Turkey and Iran*] will not give more than us.

Saddam Hussein: No, it won’t be like that.

Adnan: My point, Mr. President, is that the American and Zionist media framed us in the way that your Excellency has already seen and heard. There are justified people who look at this rightly and can understand our behavior toward our Kurdish nation. There are also people on the margin and there are people who are ill-motivated for their own reasons that your Excellency pointed out. So your Excellency’s required direction is that we announce it internationally not dually with Turkey and Iran. We have to show the beautiful picture of Iraq minus what those ill-motivated [*end of recording*].

[*Time Stamp 1:03:04*]