

Tuesday, 3OCT2000, was Shajarat al-Dur's (Umm-Muhammad) visit. Even though, I was unable to go to sleep early the previous night, I woke up at seven thirty and stayed in bed till eight forty-five. After that, I got up and got dressed, then went to the doctor. I took 'Isa with me because the place where the doctor's office is located is crowded, and I needed someone to stay in the car. I told him about my finger that got broken some years ago and told him that it was traumatized two month before my arrival to Geneva. That was the reason I went to see a specialist. The Doctor told me he does not recommend surgery as it will not change the condition. He did an X-ray on my finger, and we discussed the condition. And the specialist agreed that the surgery is not needed.

I went back home and ate breakfast. Then, I left the house with 'Ali at eleven o'clock heading to Freiburg. We arrived at one o'clock. Since the university is closed from twelve to two in the afternoon, we sat at a coffee shop, and we ate sandwiches and drank tea till it was time to go back to the university.

We met the official, and he came with us to show us the room where 'Ali will be staying. He told us this is a temporary room until another room becomes available. We returned to Geneva, and we arrived at four thirty. 'Ali went to study French and to prepare for the exam that he will take on the nineteenth of the month.

I went out with Saja and we took

Rex with us to walk in the area near the house. She told me about what happened between her and her brother the night before. She said that Muhammad said that by being in Geneva he can keep a better eye on his brother as he is more mobile than I am. I told her that this is true, but 'Ali, by the grace of God, is a man now and he does not need someone to watch over him that close like when he was a child. As a matter of fact, he should be helping us. And Muhammad did his job, and he took care of you. And he should go to Baghdad and get married. He has every right to look after himself, especially after his affairs became in order. At the same time, he should come here when necessary and stay with you when I go to Baghdad. We are not telling him to stay there or return to Geneva..... We returned to the house after about an hour; then, 'Isa arrived with Nur, who left directly after school to buy some fruits and vegetables.

As for Muhammad and Saja, they went to Saja's university to meet an official in the Students' Affairs department and to speak with her about the importance of providing Saja with a letter to the Visa office telling them about her studies, when she will finish her bachelor's degree, when she will start her master's and the time needed to accomplish that. That is why this appointment was at three thirty and my appointment at 'Ali's university was at two o'clock in the afternoon. These appointments were extremely important to the family since they are in regards to 'Ali's and Saja's future; so, we were sadly forced to cancel our visit to Shajarat al-Dur. This was the first time this happened, but it was out of our control. Therefore,

Saja called the person who is responsible for Shajarat al-Dur at the center where she is at and told him that we will not be able to visit this week for reasons beyond our control.

When we met for dinner, I asked Saja and Muhammad about what they accomplished during their meeting with the Students' Affairs representative. They said that she was very nice and understanding. She also stated that this is within Saja's right and she will prepare the letter to explain everything in accordance with the university's regulations. I was very happy to hear that.

'Ali returned from class around eight o'clock and joined us for dinner. After dinner, we watched T.V., and I wanted to watch an Iraqi satellite channel, especially the news. I started watching the news and saw and heard the President during a meeting with the Minister of Military Manufacturing and a number of University Professors. They talked about the events in Palatine. He was very upset and he spoke harshly. He was using colloquial Arabic and putting the blame on Arab leaders. He also spoke harshly about America and Israel. What he said reminded me with my father and grandfathers when they get upset while sitting in offices with other men. They were always harsh, and they always blamed the opposite side, especially when it comes to issues that are considered routine or when they are considered taboo. He said that he knows how to use political ways but he will not use it. He said that we must use the sword, and the Jewish people are now killing Arabs because they now know that the Arabic sword is rusted and dull...etc. He said, "When will the moustaches of men start to tremble

and the Arab leaders,” he said “when they cannot do some things for fear of Israel and America. Why don’t they give Iraq a piece of land near Israel and see what Iraq will do”... I agree with everything the President said but I have a remark. It is:

A. Israel won wars against the Arabs for a very important reason. This is because Israel chooses the time to fight, not the Arabs. Therefore, I ask, isn’t it time now for the Arabs to choose the right time for a battle? Or will we always loose our temper and act spontaneous?

B. Politics is the art of what’s possible and not the art of suicide. Your enemy should never know that you are weak, doing well, or in better shape than normal.

The other issue is, why doesn’t the president use politics that he said he knows how to use? At any rate, if using political dialogue does not help, it will not hurt. Personally, I believe it is helpful and necessary during various events and occasions.

Wednesday, 4OCT2000, I took Saja to the city to buy some personal items. We sat at a café that I frequented before to have tea and read the newspapers. At two thirty, I met a Lebanese person who worked for an Iraqi Corporation that worked for the Intelligence in Europe. We met based on my request. The reason for the meeting was to ask him about the residence laws regarding students in France and how to obtain residency. Will it be after they are accepted in French Universities or will it be through the cultural attaché? I also asked him about life in Paris, rent...etc. I was not able to obtain enough information from him,

but I asked him to find out. He promised to contact me once he gathers enough information. I took him to the airport, and Muhammad was with me. We went home, and we all had lunch, Saja, Muhammad, 'Ali, Khawlah and I. That was at four in the afternoon.

After that, I took Saja to art school, and I had to pick her up with 'Ali at eight thirty.

Muhammad went with Mr. Ilyas to meet the president of the university where Muhammad was going to school. He wants to get a letter from the university and provide it to the residency office to let them know that he needs additional time to finish his research for his doctorate and for his thesis dissertation. Muhammad could not do that in the past due to his mother's illness and due to the catastrophe that happened to us. During the last year, we intentionally tried to delay his research because Muhammad's residency is connected to his studies, and once he is done with school, the Swiss will not extend his stay. We needed to be there to supervise his brothers. Now, the Swiss put us in a corner and they asked us to provide them with a time frame signed by the university stating when Muhammad will finish his studies. The law there also does not allow anyone over the age of twenty eight to go to school. Muhammad was only a year shy of twenty eight; that is why they wanted to know how soon he will be done.

When Muhammad returned I asked him about what happened. He said that he was not able to meet with the president of the university because there was a misunderstanding about the appointment and location and told me he will call him tomorrow.

Thursday, 5OCT2000, as always, I stayed at home. Then I went to pick up Nur at 3:30 in the afternoon from school because Rafi' is busy with Muhammad. I went again at 4:30 to pick up Khawlah. I ate lunch with all the children. After that, I went for a walk and took Rex and 'Isa with me. Saja went to her university at six in the evening and Muhammad went with her. I stayed at home, and he had 'Ali, Nur, and Khawlah who were all studying. 'Ali wanted to play 'Atandu [TC: Possibly Nintendo] in a different room, but I told him "Let's watch CNN to find out the latest on Yugoslavia." He asked me what the matter with Yugoslavia was. And I told him that I saw on Aljazeera news that they are having huge demonstration, and I believe that things will not be in favor of the Yugoslavian president, Milosevic. In the past, I told 'Ali, that this president will leave. I said that before the election, as I was sure he will lose the election or he will tamper with the results. Either way, he will push Yugoslavia into a dark tunnel.

'Ali turned on the T.V. on the CNN channel, and we saw huge demonstrations with people climbing the walls of the parliament building and the government's radio and television building while breaking the windows...etc.

The announcer, all of a sudden, said that the president has disappeared. He might be in Russia, White Russia or in China. This did not surprise me, but I was happy about this outcome. I was hoping he would have the same destiny as Ceausescu, the president of Romania, and his wife, as I truly believed he deserved it, and he tried with all his might to get to the same end. I was happy because the number

of tyrants was reduced by one, and the will of the majority won. I also hoped that people like Malevich everywhere in the world would learn a lesson from what happened to this dictator.

Muhammad met with the University President and explained to him the residency situation and the circumstances that forced him to postpone presenting the research for the doctorate. Muhammad told me that the man was very understanding, and he promised him to send a letter to the residency office explaining the situation and telling them that Muhammad needs two years to finish his studies. I told him, "No, you must get this letter so we can send it with Saja's letter and a letter from me explaining what needs to be explained." He agreed and told me he will ask the president to give him the letter.

Friday, 6OCT2000, at nine thirty, I went to meet with the urinary tract physician to discuss the lab results and the medical reports. I met him at ten and we spoke, discussed, and came up with a strategy for the new upcoming phase. The nurse drew blood for tests.

I returned home at eleven thirty. 'Ali was studying French for the 19OCT2000 test. I asked about Saja, and 'Ali told me she went for a walk near the house with Rex. I asked about Muhammad, and he told me that he is out and went to work (Muhammad is always busy; he does not tell us what he is busy with). I ate breakfast and read the newspaper. I followed up on Yugoslavia through the TV, etc. In the evening, I followed up

on Yugoslavia through the TV again and learned that the United States, England, and France announced that they will lift the embargo over Yugoslavia the following week when they meet with the European Secretaries of State.

The TV also showed a meeting between Slobodan Milosevic and the Russian Secretary of State, who delivered a message to him from the Russian President suggesting that he should step down and allow the opposition who won the election to take over. Before that, he met with the elected president and conveyed the Russian president's best regards. This means that the most important supporters of Milosevic accepted the fact, and they are unable to keep quiet or to defend Milosevic. The TV reporter from Belgrade said that the elected president refused to accept authority without the customary constitutional ceremonies, which are based on specific protocols for occasions like this.

I liked what he did, and I appreciated its deep meaning. It meant not to rush things and to take things easy. It meant to safe guard traditions and to allow legal customs to be followed. It also meant that this man is not crazy about power and is not in a rush to sit on that seat. How I wished that the Arabs can have the same mentality and way of thinking as this man. We are always in a rush. This rush always causes a lot of problem, losses and a lot of bloodshed. I was happy about the results and told 'Ali, "The number of varmints has been reduced by one."

After that, we spoke with the children about the latest speech by the President, what is happening in Palestine, and what the newspaper is reporting about the speech. 'Ali said, "Dad, I think he went too far."

I said to him that I agree, but I believe that this is the right time for this type of speech because this is the first time in thirty years the Arabs are moving. Therefore, the simple folks will appreciate this speech very much, and it will be recorded as a plus for the president. I added that I am worried that the president will get carried away and decide to aid the Palestinians. Muhammad said, "Do you think he will send armies or something like that?" I told him that it will be difficult for Iraqis to accept that, and I don't think the army will fight. The army may actually go against the government if this happen. I told him that the Palestinians used people, and now you can see it. Did they asked the approval of the Arabs or Muslims when they went to Oslo and signed that secret and insufficient agreement with Israel? Muhammad said, "No." I said, "And they are still using people and asking for their help as if they were their partners with the Palestinians from the beginning. Jerusalem is a mutual interest even for the Christians of the world. Therefore, they must be included one way or another to support this issue."

Saturday, 7OCT2000, we all ate breakfast together because the children were home on Saturday. After that, I read the paper and watched the Arabic news and the news about Yugoslavia on TV. I watched King of Speeches, the Palestinians. They spoke through the TV and asked Arabs and Muslims for things they were unable to accomplish as if Arabs and Muslims were responsible for this predicament. I heard that the family of Milosevic escaped to

Moscow. I said to myself, "This is the end of any careless family who God put in a powerful position and who do not treat others well." I wished that Milosevic receives his punishment, and I really appreciated the actions of the new president and his insistence to receive his new role from the parliament. Sure enough, they announced that the new president took the presidential oath in the parliament, and he was crowned as the President of Yugoslavia. He stated that he has so much to do and that he will take care of many important issues starting with democracy, security and economy, etc. I liked how calm and clever he was and appreciated his knowledge of what he will be facing. In my opinion, this is half the battle to achieving success because he knows his tasks. Others do not know what awaits them once they are in power. They start their training while in power. It is known that training while in position is not a good thing, and it causes a lot of problems, abuse, losses and even disasters. The result of this type of training usually leads to tyranny that destroys the country.

From morning, the children started nagging me to go to a restaurant in the evening. They always want to go out and visit the city or have lunch or dinner in a restaurant or a hotel. They always tell me that they are happy at home, and my answer to them is that I don't miss anything. Today, they were really insisting, and I was unable to refuse. They reserved a table in a restaurant about forty kilometers north of Geneva. I could not do anything except agree. Before we left the house, I watched the events on TV and knew that

the Lebanese Hezbollah hit Israel with Katyusha rockets and kidnapped three Israeli soldiers. I said to myself that Hezbollah has beaten President Saddam Hussein by striking Israel with missiles. I was afraid the president would do that because of his enthusiasm, especially after the liars in the West Bank held his pictures during their demonstration. The president views this, as a big deal as if they are pledging their allegiance to him as the Muslims and Arab Caliph. This behavior always caused the president to issue decrees that were not beneficial to Iraq as a country and brings more pressure on Iraqi citizens. Imagine that. The Palestinians know how to stroke the feelings of the president and they know how to push him to make a specific ruling or to render a decree. How is that when it comes to great countries and to Israel?

Barak threatened to hit Beirut if the Israeli soldiers are not freed. I felt that even though he is threatening and using strong words, deep inside he knows that escalating the matter is not beneficial for Israel. To the contrary, he knows that the time is not for war, but for calming the situation. At the same time, he is not afraid as he knows that the Arabs are not thinking of a massive show down. He also knows how Yasser Arafat and his group think. Half of his group is connected with the Israeli and American intelligence, and the other half is only concerned about stealing and living an extravagant life style, not caring about the Palestinian whom

Arafat and the Arab leaders turned into bridges to use when they want to reach a specific goal. They do not try to take them over the bridges to common dignity or to common goals. They are using them as wood for fires. The Arab leaders benefit from using Palestinians.

The Egyptian president announced that an Arab summit will be held before the end of the month. Imagine the manipulation amid the apathy about the blood of their people. I believe that a simple person following the events will understand his carelessness. If the Egyptian president cared, he would have used the events as a cover-up and called for the summit within twenty four hours, like what took place in 1990 when Iraq took over Kuwait. What will come out of this summit if it takes place in two weeks? Either the uprising will be done by then, or the bloodshed would continue for no reason. There are many arrangements to normalize the relationship between Egypt and Israel. This can be a bridge between Arabs and Israel. Why aren't they using it to their advantage? Especially when these arrangements can somewhat prevent Israel from doing what it's doing. It can make them stop and think before infringing on the rights of the Palestinians, the Arabs, and Muslims. This summit, that will take place, will supposedly allow Arabs to render decisions against what Israel is doing to the Arabs. Since the beginning, Egypt has been following a policy for its own benefit without taking into consideration the benefit of others. When Sadat went to Jerusalem and did the same thing that Arafat did secretly in Oslo

and without anyone's except the American and Israeli's intelligence knowledge. Arafat followed the same strategy Sadat used. What Sadat did is the reason for everything going on now in the Arab world. Sadat made Egypt a neutral entity in the Arab-Israeli fight and encouraged Israel to neutralize important countries in this fight. They are negotiating with one side at a time and not negotiating with all Arabs at the same time. That is the reason we find Jordan fleeing towards Israel after Arafat signed an agreement with Israel. This is why Syria was left to slowly burn by itself; however, this did not happen because the Syrian president is a smart calculating person who did not rush to make a decision, and now his son who is as experienced as his father is running it with the aid of trusted people that he listens to and follows their advice without getting mad at them.

I also watched the demonstration in several gulf cities that did not know this type of demonstration since they became countries. The demonstrations were due to the pressure, the turmoil and the refusal of the Arab people to what Israel is doing. The demonstrations were allowed to take place in Egypt and several Gulf states to absorb the anger of their citizens. I feel that the anger must not be absorbed and be left to brew to show Israel and America that there is a single Arab society, and when lines are crossed this society will not stand and watch. As for the demonstrations that happened in Iraq, it was orchestrated by the regime to take advantage of what is happening and to tell

others that we are here and no one is better than us especially under the circumstances affecting Iraq and its government, now. What I am trying to say here is that everything within reason is good and will lead to great results.

At eight thirty, we went to eat at (DULLY) restaurant which is about forty kilometer from Geneva. It was 8:00p.m. It is a simple, but elegant small restaurant for 50-60 people. The service is great, and the food is very good. They only offer a few dishes that are not offered in other places. The atmosphere there is nice.

We spoke about normal topics and we enjoyed the time we spent together there and the great food we had. We returned home at 11:30, and we watched the same news on TV. Then, we went to sleep.

Sunday, 8OCT2000, we all stayed home as the Swiss do. The weather was nice, so we had a (barbeque). After that, I wrote a letter to the Director of Residency asking him to extend my visa that will expire around 20OCT2000 to 20JAN2001. I explained the reasons and told him that we need to make arrangements for the children and for the medical appointments we already have. I also told him they knew my condition for years.

I watched the news and saw the Iraqi President during a meeting with his cabinet, and he was happily speaking about the events taking place in Palestine.

He was happy and proud of the Palestinian resistance and donated five million euro. He opened training camps, and he was sending medical teams and medicine to treat the Palestinians. I am not sure about what the Iraqi feels about these decisions, but I am sure that the outcome abroad and the opinion of others will use these decisions against us.

On the second day, Gore, the elected vice president, and George Bush, the elected president, were saying that there would be no stability in the Middle East while Saddam Hussein is in power. This was the first rain drop.

Another important issue that was postponed more than once during the last five years was Muhammad's marriage in 1992. This was during the problem with the Ministry of Agriculture when inspectors wanted to examine the ministry as they suspected that there were documents or items hidden there. The government did not allow them because this will be transgression on the Iraqi authority. This escalated the issue, and it almost caused military action.

I was monitoring the news from Geneva when I worked as an Ambassador in the United Nations. And I sent several letters suggesting ways to lessen the conflict, but the conflict kept escalating. I sent a letter to the president through the Minister of State asking for my recall, and I got an extremely fast approval. Later, Muhammad al-Sahhaf told me that the president was happy to recall me as I've always been in Baghdad when problems occurred starting with the war in JAN 1990, which the President called the Aggressive of the Second Retreat. I was also there in JAN

1993 and also in either June or July of 1993 all the way to December of 1998.

After the decision to move me from Geneva to the center in Baghdad, and only a few months after I lost my life partner and the mother of my children, Shajarat al-Dur, I was in Baghdad again.

The following day after my arrival in Baghdad, I called the president's Secretary, 'Abd Hamid, who later became General just like 'Izzat al-Duri , 'Ali Hasan, and Husayn Kamil, but I am not sure why he was never offered the rank of Brigadier. I told him that I am here in Baghdad, and I would like to meet with the president. He told me that he will communicate with the president, and he will let me know.

About an hour later, he called and told me that the appointment is at one in the afternoon at the president's house to have lunch. I was there half an hour early, and I sat with the president's wife, Umm-'Uday, and we talked about the current situation. She agreed with me about what I said regarding being flexible and not giving chances to the enemies to use against us and about making improvements to reduce the tension and allowing the Ministers to elect a Prime Minister who will have reasonable authority. We also spoke about giving the media, the people and the parties the freedom to choose people who are decent and experienced to fill positions while leaving the ultimate power for the party which is the weakest leadership in the history of the Baath Party. Even more, she asked me repeatedly to tell what we spoke about to the president. I told her I came to Iraq for that reason,

and I don't have any other reason for my visit. She left me for a short time and her young daughter, Halla, came. She was sweet and polite and sat next to me. She asked me about my children and their studies. We spoke about Muhammad and his studies and how he works for the Iraqi Airline Office and goes to school. She said, "Hammudi is very smart and very brave." This is how our people talk when they try to get close to someone or when they need the help of that person. They try to be extremely kind, and generous; however, if it was the opposite, then wow! Actually, it is best to leave your belonging to them as this will be better for you.

The president arrived around one thirty, and we sat in the former living room. After an hour, we went to the dining room to have lunch. Our conversation started while we were sitting in the former living room, and we continued in the dining room. We were accompanied by his wife, her son, 'Uday, and her daughter, Halla.

I told the President everything I was supposed to tell him directly and in detail, as I always did when I spoke with him about important issues. He got upset, and his voice was raised a few times. He attacked me and told me that I wanted to hold important positions while in Switzerland. And I told him that this is not the case, and he knows me better. I even told him that even if I wanted to hold important positions, then what could be wrong with that? Am I only required to come here and to stand in line to get through (attendance)? I also told him that his brothers and relatives are like his children who he knows very well. I am one of them, and he knows me better than the others because of our relationship and friendship

and the common ground we share. I told him he knows my capabilities compared to the rest, and he should give each person his dues. He attacked me again, and when I mentioned the media and the parties, he said, "You want me to allow the al-Da'wah party to have a voice and to do whatever they like." In reality, what he said was a total surprise to me. I thought to myself what is he talking about and what kind of relationship is between myself and the al-Da'wah party or any religious party for that matter. This was a total surprise to me. He got up and spoke loudly saying, "You must know that I have to use all my privilege to rule and will not accept anything less." I told him that all I said does not contradict with what you want. You are the one who will give others the needed permissions to reduce the amount of stress you are under. You will delegate and hold them directly accountable for what they do. They will not be able to blame others for their own actions or use others to cover-up for their mistakes and shortfalls. I asked him, "Is it a good thing to have Muhammad al-Zubaydi as the Prime Minister of Iraq? Why did you excuse Sa'dun Hammadi who had a great reputation among the educated, the technocrats, and the Arabs from his duties? I know he is a harsh person who is incapable of maintaining a personal relationship with others or with the team he works with in order to encourage them to be more productive." It was my duty to say it as it is.

Sa'dun Hammadi was the Minister of State when the Iran war started. In 28SEP1980, the decree number 598 was rendered by the United Nations to cease fire. Our ambassador, Mr. Issmat al-Katani, in New York sent a letter regarding this matter that arrived at nine thirty P.M., and no one was able to contact the Minister at his house to ask him what they should do about this letter.

Mr. Ahmad Husayn al-Samarrai', who was the Vice Minister at that time and who is the current Director of the Office, contacted me and informed of what is going on. I asked him to check with the Minister; and he answered that the Minister is at home, and he instructed us in the past to never disturb him while at home.

Can anyone imagine how Sa'dun Hammadi operated? However, I knew how he operated, and I told the president what I knew of him. Umm-'Uday spoke and said the same things I said, and he got so angry. He said, "You are not fit to rule because you only think about yourself. You are worried about your diamonds and your jewelry and how to hide it when there is a war." He told her, "Do you want a divorce?" She looked at me and he said, "Take her and bring the Director of the Women's Union and divorce her." I was shocked. Why does he want the Director of the Women's Union? Why the divorce? What is my legal role in divorcing your wife?

Later, when I thought about what happened, I was able to deduce a few things. He asked me to divorce him from his wife because I have a general power of attorney from him.

He gave me the power of attorney in 1969, and during a party in February 1992, while his two brothers were there, I told him you used to fully trust me until Husayn Kamil came into the picture. I also told him, "Do you remember giving me a general power of attorney that allows me to handle anything that belongs to you?" Maybe that is why he made that request for me to divorce his wife. As for the divorce, I believe it was because he wanted that before. This is only my opinion. I have no supporting information in that regards.

Once he calmed down a bit, his wife said that she does not want war, but not for the reasons he mentioned. He asked her to tell him the reasons. She said pointing to her daughter, "Halla, why don't you think of this girl?" He asked, "So you are worried about her?" She answered, "Yes." He said, "Don't worry. I will put her in a safe place where she will safer than here with you." When he said that, and before saying anymore, 'Uday poked his sister to get up and leave, which she did without saying a word and without waiting for anyone to tell her anything else.

After that, the president continued and asked me, "Do you want a woman for your son?" Before I could speak, he said, "I am giving you Halla for your son Muhammad." If he allowed me to speak, I would have said yes, of course. I wanted this to happen because I wanted to maintain my brotherly relationship with him and to develop it even more.

I finally said yes and thanked him. Again, he said, "I will take Halla." He looked at his wife and told her that she should rest assured that I will place Halla in a safe place, and will take better care of her more than she can.

After the President calmed down, we continued our chat.

He started to ask about my opinion in Sa'dun Sabahi as a Prime Minister. I told him he knows how Sa'dun Sabahi is and that he is not my friend, so I am unable to tell him anything about him. I believe there was an effect on him when he left his position, and it will be hard to convince him to go back to the same position. Of course, and without a doubt, the reason Sa'dun Sabahi left the position as Prime Minister was Husayn Kamil. He convinced the president that Sa'dun Sabahi as a Prime Minister is a direct danger to the president because he is Shiite and because of his reputation in Iraq and in the Arab world, etc. This is because Husayn Kamil wanted to be the Prime Minister.

I told the president he can ask Tariq 'Aziz about this matter. Of course, that same morning around ten thirty, I visited Tariq 'Aziz and told him that I will be meeting with the president, and I will speak with him about these matters. He encouraged me and told me that the Party law and the media are ready, but the President has not asked for them yet.

I stayed with the President until six thirty, and, as he always did in our private meeting when he felt calm, walked me to the car. He is polite, kind, and mannerly when he is calm.

Before I got into the car, he called a staffer and told him to call Tariq 'Aziz and tell him to come for a meeting with him (the president) at the National Council at seven thirty, which was an hour away. I was happy to hear this, so I kissed him and thanked him for giving me Halla for my son, and I bid him goodbye. At the end of our meeting he was agreeing with me on everything.

On the following day, I visited Tariq

'Aziz in his office and asked him about what took place during his meeting with the president. He said that the meeting was excellent, and he asked for the Party and media laws. I then told him about the official business that the president and I discussed.

After a few days, I went back to Geneva and told Umm-Muhammad about what happened. I noticed she felt happy.

In the evening, the grownups in our family were sitting watching TV. This included Umm-Muhammad, Muhammad, Saja and myself. I started by saying to Muhammad that I was younger than he is when I got married and now it is his turn. I told him he can choose one of his cousins or relatives and I said, "You have the daughter of Saddam, your oldest uncle, and you have your cousin, Sab'awi's daughter, and your cousin, daughter of 'Adnan, which I am mentioning here even though I don't recommend because of the problems with al-Bakr, etc."

He said that the closest one to our life style is the daughter of uncle Saddam. At that point, I told him what took place without mentioning the rest of what took place since, they are of no interest to him.

We did not announce this to anyone, but we heard that people were talking.

Later we felt the girl is hesitant, and we realized that her sister who is married to Husayn Kamil is scaring her and told her she was against this marriage. She told her that we will take her to Switzerland, and she will not be able to live there as she does not know the language, etc. She also told her we will force her to learn the language and the etiquette. In Raghid's opinion, we follow the rules all the way, and our way is stricter than others. She also told her that her uncle Barazan and her aunt Ahlam will not be happy

with anyone because we have a special exact measure for people, and we are not easy to get along with. She also told her, "How can you live with such strict people when you live to be "free"? You enjoy being loud and eating with your hands. They don't touch their food with their hands. They always use forks and knives. You don't know how to use forks and knives. "

She told all this to her sister trying to scare her because she wanted her sister to marry Husayn Kamil's younger brother. He was later killed with the rest of his brothers and his father for treason when they returned from Jordan.

The marriage proposal stayed up in the air. It did not advance or move forward. The president tried to convince his daughter and to ease the fears instilled in her by her sister. When I was in Baghdad in March 1994, the president invited me to have dinner with him. This was my last meeting with the president. His brothers were there, and we talked about many general and personal issues and the marriage was one of these issues. I noticed he was hesitant, and he was incapable of forcing her to accept this marriage. I asked how come he cannot force his own daughter when I am the one who gave him a girl who was living in Switzerland to live behind three control points and under stress. I gave her to you because you were kind to me. You initiated the kind acts, and I matched your actions. If you did not do what you did, I would've never done anything for him. I told him, I gave you a butterfly that was enjoying the most beautiful gardens and now living behind control points, as if she is living in a prison.

Our meeting was hectic and extremely upsetting.

In May, Saja came to Geneva and stayed. In September 1994, and after they found out that Saja will not return to them, we found out through the Iraqi media that president

gave his daughter in marriage to one of his relatives. It is apparent to me that the president's daughter cannot live with people who are well established. They can only live with people who are low class, which was proven later and who were established with the help of the president's family.

They were nobodies and had no status before they married the president's daughter.

The president's daughters were not taught well by their mothers. The first and third girl were stubborn, difficult, hard to get along with and they used foul language. It was known that their lives with their spouses were difficult, not for the age differences as they claimed. It is clear that the marriage continued because they were the president's daughters, etc.

Let's return to our topic, Muhammad's marriage, which was postponed due to the stormy circumstances inflicted upon us since 1996 when Shajarat al-Dur became ill and the catastrophe that happened to us in November of 1998. Our sadness continued to this present time, and we will always feel it until we join our beloved. However, she told me that life should go on. And that was the reason I told Muhammad he should get married because he is of age now, and he must start a family while still young. He should have been married three years ago, but circumstances were not in our favor. It still is, but we must acclimate ourselves. I also believe that this is the time for him to get married since they did what they did. As I described before, we were absolved of the commitment.

We started thinking of our relatives to find a girl suitable for our son, and we chose the daughter of my cousin, al-Sayyid Ghazi Ahmad al-Khattab.

Shajarart al-Dur went to Baghdad and visited them. She conveyed my regards and told him that we would love to have their daughter as a wife to our son. He welcomed the idea and said a lot of nice things. After that, Isra' became Muhammad's fiancé.

When she returned, she called him to check on him and they exchanged pleasantries.

This is exactly what I expected from my cousin, even though we were not close and we did not visit each other. This is because of what happened during the early sixties, when Abu-'Uday killed Hajj Sa'dun for a reason we don't know till now. Since Hajj Sa'dun is from al-'Umar sub-tribe, and is the nephew of Ghazi and this type of behavior is not common in the tribe, and Abu-'Uday was from a different sub-tribe not within the sub-tribes of the al-'Umar tribe, the entire tribe was very upset. Our father, may God rest his soul, and our uncle stood by Abu-'Uday against the entire tribe which caused a rift between our father and the tribe. This rift continued and affected us as well and affected our relationship with the tribe and its members.

Regardless of all this and regardless of our relationship with Ghazi, I sent him Shajarat al-Dur, who enjoyed a great name, reputation and lineage and who is considered by the tribal code someone of high stature. Ghazi paid her the respect she deserved and graciously accepted her offer.

There is also my brother, whom I sacrificed the best years of my youth for, and I never hesitated to provide him with anything he asks. My dedication to him is known since we were children, and he was the one who offered his daughter's hand to my son in marriage. Then, he took a step back, which is unacceptable in our culture. We know why he took that step. It is because he knows what he has, and he very well knows she is not suitable for us. He feared this will damage our relationship and lead to things he will not like. We understand this is his right, and for that same reason we decided to consider Muhammad as if he was not there, even though we needed him. He was my first born child, but we wanted this project to work even though we knew how Halla was and that she was not in sync with our ways of life or our up-bringing. We knew our son will face difficulties with her, but endured all that because it was impossible for us to take a step back regarding this matter.

As I previously mentioned, the day after my last meeting with the President on March of 1994, I visited Watban in his house. I told him that the meeting yesterday clearly indicated that the President is going back on his decision to give us his daughter, and it is hard for me to move forward without knowing what is going on or without him coordinating with me. I suggested that he'd go and visit the president and to tell him that I understand that he is going back on his decision and that he does not want to move forward and to tell him that you, Watban, can convince me to let this matter go. However, Watban did not agree and informed me that I misunderstood and the president will never go back on this and that this matter is final, as far as we are concerned, etc.

I was unable to convince him, even though I was sure this was the case.

The President ended up giving his daughter to a third person.

He did not give her to the Kamil Hasan's son either. I believe he felt that maybe by doing this he will not upset either side.

In reality, he did not make anyone happy. The sons of Kamil committed that horrible act against him, and his decision cut deeply inside of me.

The believer must always think that God knows everything and it is all for a reason. Even bad decisions are the will of God when he does not want good things to happen to the person making those decisions.

We agreed that this was the case, and we also agreed that I should stay till the first month of the following year and that he should go to Iraq to get married. When I go to Iraq, he will spend a month with me there; then, he will come back for his siblings. This is so that we can take turns watching over them.

After that, I started preparing the guest list and choosing the menu. The guests were about three hundred people, and I chose seven types of dishes, not to include desert, fruit and the wedding cake. I called our business manager and gave him instructions and asked him to reserve a hall in the hunting club on Monday, 30OCT2000. We wanted the marriage to take place before the beginning of November because we hate that month because a disaster happened in that month. We decided that Muhammad will travel to Baghdad on Sunday, 15OCT2000. Upon his arrival, he will manage things there and direct them accordingly.

On Monday, 9OCT2000, I went to the hospital for a heart checkup at eleven in the morning. They put me on a bicycle while checking my pressure and pulse during the exercise, and they increased the intensity every two minutes

and made the resistance harder. At any rate, after all these test and the heart monitoring, the professor told me there is nothing wrong with my organ but I have to exercise. He said that my symptoms are due to (stress) that I am under.

I left the hospital at twelve thirty and went to the lawyer to discuss the residency of the children. We received a residency card valid till June of 2001, and not till August as they should have been. I met him at three in the afternoon because he is outside of Geneva. I was unable to get satisfactory or answers from him. He told me he will consult a specialist in the field, and he will have an answer for me on Thursday, 19OCT2000.

I told him that I need a clear and satisfactory answer as this is an important matter to me. I gave him the letter I sent to the Residency Office on the morning of 9OCT, and I asked him to use his contacts and his eloquence to obtain an extension till 20JAN2001. He promised he will do that.

I returned to Geneva and was home by six o'clock. I felt down and asked 'Ali to come over to go for a walk. We took Rex with us, and we returned an hour later. He asked me about my meeting with the lawyer and the doctor, and I told him about what happened in both visits.

I had dinner with 'Ali; then, I went to bed at eleven o'clock.

On Tuesday, 10OCT2000, the day we visit Shajart al-Dur... we all went. It was three thirty.

Nur joined at four fifteen because she was at school till four. The adults entered first, and a few minutes later, Khawlah came in. We were closely watching her. We imagined how we used to gather around her while she slept in her bed. We sat around her, and we read the Quran that we brought with us from home. At five thirty, I asked Nur and Khawlah to leave after they finished reading al-Fatihah. After they left, I asked 'Ali to pull his mother from where she was. It looked like she was placed inside a picture frame with the bottom side open. He complied. I kissed her and spoke to her and told her that Hammudi will go to Baghdad to marry Isra' whom you asked for her hand. I had difficulty saying these words to her, and I felt as if I was suffocating. Before I could complete these words, I broke down crying. I was so hurt for her leaving us this early and before she had a chance to be happy about her children and see them getting married or see her grandchildren.

It is painful because we needed her badly. She left us so young, and she was so giving. She was kind, beautiful and vibrant.

I was hurt to see her in this shape. She could not see her son get married. We seek refuge in God. He is all knowing, and he will take down the tyrants.

Regardless of all the pain, I used to tell the mother of my children, then, now I tell my children that there is something they need to know.

The price for dignity is extremely high. Everything around us and everything we do is part of the price of dignity which we will never compromise regardless of how long it takes, the pressure inflicted upon and under any circumstances, with the grace of God. We returned to our home at six thirty, and I was emotionally devastated and could not enter the house. I went for a walk accompanied by 'Ali and returned an hour and fifteen minutes later.

Wednesday, 11OCT2000, there was nothing important to do, so I went to school to pick up the children, and I also went to the July hospital to get M.R.I

In the evening, we invited Mr. Ilyas Khuri and his wife to have dinner because he came out of the hospital. Mr. Ilyas did some things that I cannot forget. He helped with everything when Shajarat al-Dur was ill and during the time that catastrophe happened to us. He took care of many aspects and details which were difficult to deal with in this country. I also asked him to take care of certain things regarding Shajarat al-Dur, and he was welcoming and kind when ((family)) did not even care to ask during and after what God destined, rather they behaved as if they were people we merely knew and not even like friends. Without getting too upset, I can say they do not deserve what they have. I know they are having a tough life, but they were the seeker for that life and they asked for it. They are stubborn people.

Unfortunately, most people in third world countries dream of the power of the chair, and the high positions regardless of the how many problems these positions bring them.

The evening was pleasant and we exchanged some light conversation. Mr. Ilyas's wife, Ms. Wafa', is a quiet and kind woman. She participated in the conversation, but without getting too much involved. Not because she is incapable of having a conversation but because she is well mannered and she puts limit for herself, unlike the majority of Lebanese women and many Syrian women. Saja, Ali, and Mohammed were with us.

Saja was wonderful during the entire time, starting with her preparing the food, the house, being a gracious hostess all the way till she bid them farewell. This is not a strange thing. She was trained by her marvelous mother, Shajarat al-Dur, who was truly a lady.

Thursday, 12 OCT 2000: I do not like number 12, and I don't like November either. I lost an eye on 12 NOV.

At nine thirty, I went to the hospital because I had an appointment to check my stomach by (ultrasound) after I had a blood test that was requested by my heart doctor.

I returned home at 10:30.

While in the car, I called 'Ali and asked him to prepare breakfast because I have an appointment with the physical therapist at 11 o'clock. Saja left for art school at nine o'clock and came back at twelve noon; then, she went to pick up the children from school. She left again to her university at six PM and came back at ten PM.

I watched the news about Palestine on TV and read the papers. I learned that the United States' Secretary of State held a media conference in Washington during the visit of a North Korean delegate to the United States.

She said that she must start by offering her condolence to the family of the American Navy soldiers who were killed in the attack in Yemen. She also offered her condolence to the families of the Israeli soldiers who were killed during the events taking place between Israel and Palestine. She asked Yasser Arafat to put an end to what is currently happening, stating that no one is benefitting from what is going on. After that, she welcomed the delegate team and announced that President Clinton will visit North Korea in the future.

I read an article in al-Hayat newspaper by the well-known Arab writer, Mr. Idward Sa'id. Al-Hayat is published in London. On the contrary of what readers know about this writer, he was upset and nervous, and I found him using words he usually does not use and shows his frustration and anger against Yasser Arafat and the United States of America. I will mention parts of what he wrote about Yasser Arafat. ((During all that, Yasser Arafat and his dumb team that is built on tyranny and corruption and is supported by the Mossad and by the CIA continued to rely on the United States of America to be their middle man, regardless of the fact that former officials in the Israeli Lobby controlled the American Peace Team, etc.). He also said that they cannot see that Israeli is an occupying force and the Palestinian are fighting the occupation. They are not seizing Israel, as stated by the horrible Madeline Albright.

At the same time, America celebrates the triumph of the Serbians over Slobodan Milosevic, while Clinton and his team refuse to see the struggle of the Palestinians is the same struggle against tyranny.

He added, "I believe the Palestinian recent uprising is partly aimed at Yasser Arafat who lied to his people and gave them false promises. He circled himself with a group of corrupt officials who own the economy and who are aimlessly trying to negotiate with Israel without a clear plan or goal. It is known that Arafat spends 60% of the budget on his security team and bureaucracy. He only spends 2% on infrastructure. Three years ago, his accountant admitted that 400 million dollars disappeared". He stated in another passage, "It is stupid that Barak and Albright are holding Arafat accountable for what goes on. He is clearly incapable of handling the current situation. Instead of rejecting what was suggested recently, it is better for the Israeli supporters to realize that the Palestinian issue concerns an entire nation and not only a leader who lost the trust and who is too old now. They have to understand that there will be no peace in Palestine – Israel, unless it is between two equal parties and only after the military occupation is gone. Not a single Palestinian, even Arafat, will accept anything less than that."

What Mr. Edward Sa'id said is the best way to describe the anger and disgust felt by decent Arabs, regardless of their level of education and where they are in the Arab world or in foreign land. However, will the Arab leaders rise to the occasion?

Friday, 13OCT2000, I had two appointments. The first was for physical therapy to treat my foot at eleven o'clock, and the second was to discuss the results of the x-ray I took two days before and the specialist order at the Continental hospital ordered for me.

The specialist examined me and viewed the x-ray. He compared them to the x-ray I took two years before and did not find any development. I thanked God for that and returned home at four thirty...

After the two appointments, I read the papers and watched the news on TV. The most important news was about the events between the Palestinians and the Israelis and the visit by the Iranian Secretary of State to Iraq.

Based on my knowledge of how the two parties think and their goals, I concluded that the two sides are playing each other as I previous mentioned. It was also based on me knowing that they both lost trust in each other. Also, the aversion and hatred they have, one to the other. They have their own economic and political goals in the regional and internationally. At any rate, communications and meetings are beneficial to the party that is smarter than the other. The smart party will use these meetings as propaganda to their advantage regionally and internationally. Even though, the truth behind these relationships is clear to everyone. Everything is possible when it comes to politics and analysts and observers are watching the entire time.

Saturday, 14OCT2000, I did not leave the house. It was raining so I read the papers and watched the news on TV. The news focused on the uprising in the occupied land.

They mentioned the summit in Sharm a-Shaykh between Arafat and Barak and said that Mubarak, Clinton and the King of Jordan attended it. I noticed that the Egyptians and Americans are trying to make things appear as if they were complicated because Arafat did not yet agree to attend the meeting. They said there were conditions that the Israeli did not accept. This is the (honey coated) words of the Egyptians. A few people from the Palestinian authority said things that were not very clear and they called on the Palestinians and the Arab people stating that the people were not satisfied and if this summit does not accomplish its goals, and then the Palestinian authority will lose its support in front of the Palestinian masses and the Arabs, etc. In another word, the Palestinian authority is using the situation to their advantage and they are using the masses and their needs to accomplish their goals. It is clear that they have decided to attend regardless of what price they will pay.

In the evening, the TV announced that a Saudi flight was hijacked, and it landed in Baghdad International airport (Saddam's airport). Mr. Jalil Habbush, who is the Director of Intelligence and who was labeled as an Official from the Department of State, spoke to the media and journalist. What he said was logical and his performance was good. However, it was strange that two hours later, the Iraqi TV announced that the hijackers surrendered to the Iraqi authorities. The passengers were doing well, etc. I was surprised and I said to myself, "Why don't we use good scenarios to benefit from what is going on. They could've postponed the results for a few hours while keeping the passengers safe and comfortable."

I also said, "It is clear that we still have not learned how to play the game. We don't know how to use (circumstances)."

While watching TV with the children, we talked about Muhammad's marriage, and we were making plans and preparations. I reminded of him of a few basic things, and he knew well because he was born and brought up with these things. We talked about respecting the wife, the home and their relationship, and trying to understand the new partner so that he can give them what they need and to deal with them based on an open understanding to guide them to the right ways and for them to be integrated into the family and contribute for its stability.

Muhammad is a well-mannered young man who listens well, but sometimes he lacks organization and unable to identify priorities.

Sunday, 15OCT2000: nothing important. We spend the day and the previous night at home because it was still raining. We prepared Muhammad's things while talking about family issues and his trip to Baghdad and Jordan, etc.

I had breakfast with the children. No one said much. We were feeling sad that we will not be able to attend Muhammad's wedding. I tried to speak about different things as to not make things harder on the children especially Saja and 'Ali.

After that, we sat in the formal living room, and once again I repeated my advice to him and I emphasized the importance of a family and the attributes of his mother and the benefits of teaching that to his new wife. I told her to tell her that her mother was like the Wailing Wall to friends and family. They use to come to her to talk and consult her regarding their very personal and private matters.

She would receive them with open arms and she'd calm them down. They came to her because they were sure she keeps what they tell her about their personal life as confidential. Even while she was on her death bed they did not leave her. That is why it is important that his wife benefit from all these noble attributes as they are a great foundation for starting a life together.

I told 'Ali I will accompany him to Freiburg to make sure he is ok. He declined and said that there is no need to do that as he was worried about me taking the trip, etc. I told him that I insist to accompany him to make sure you are ok there. He was quiet, but when Muhammad went to a different room, he told me in a low voice, I don't want you to come with me because I don't want Hammudi to say that you went with me to Freiburg and did not accompany him to the airport. I told him, I don't want to go to the airport because I don't want anyone to see me. The airport is large and there are Jordanian flights which might have onboard Iraqis, Arabs and foreigners, and I don't want anyone to see me here, and I don't want people to know I am here. That is why I will say goodbye to Muhammad here; then, you will go with him. When you come back, we both will go together. He said, "OK."

During that time, Mr. Nasrallah announced that Hezbollah kidnapped an Israeli Colonel. The announcement came during the time the National Conference was taking place in Beirut. The attendees cheered on, and they stood and were clapping happily. Mr. Nasrallah appeared very happy, and he has every right to feel that way. He was hunting down the Israelis while Arafat was trying to abort the uprising by attending Sharm al-Shaykh conference, while at the same time using the Arab people and the Arab regimes.

He later disappointed everyone and went to Sharm al-Shaykh to shake hands with Barak. These hands killed more than one hundred young Palestinians. All that resulted from the Egyptian wanting a small win within the region and because Arafat was power hungry, etc.

I was happy to hear the news and valued Hezbollah and its leadership. They are true heroes. I said that Hezbollah will rule Lebanon in the near future. They are heroes, and they deserve a lot. They are better than those losers and agents. I am convinced of this, and I know legislative changes will take place in Lebanon when the time is right for Muslims, especially Shiites who truly deserve that.

At twelve thirty, I said good bye to Muhammad, and he said good bye to his siblings. Saja brought out water (jug) and she threw it on the car when it started moving. This is customary in our family when a member is travelling. Shajarat al-Dur believed that throwing water behind a traveler will make them come back safe and sound.

'Ali came back from the airport after he said good bye to his brother at two o'clock. We took 'Ali's bag that held his clothes and what he needed there and we left. We arrived at Freiburg at three thirty, and we went to the dorm division for students coming from areas outside of Freiburg. We stood at the information window as there was a young man speaking with the person working at the information desk. We realized he is also a student like 'Ali. The student got his key, took his bag and went towards the elevator. Then, it was our turn. 'Ali moved towards the window and started speaking with the person.

He provided him with his Tikkriti name that was registered in the computer system, and the employee checked his identity then gave him the key to room number twenty.

'Ali carried his bag, and we went to the first floor. He opened the door, and we entered the room. It was a nice size room according to European standards. It had a bed, a small closet, a bookshelf and a sink near the window. The bathrooms are located outside in the hallway, and they are shared by the students.

We placed his things where they belong without speaking. This is 'Ali's habit when he feels uncomfortable. He took this trait from me. I tried to speak with him, but his answers were brief. I forced him, and he told me if I want him to speak, then he will. I told him it is better for him to acclimate and this university will make him an eloquent man. This is a new phase that will prepare him for life, and he must get used to all the new things and be able to deal with anything no matter how harsh or surprising it is.

He did not say anything back; then, after we finished putting everything away, we went to the city center which was only a ten-minute walk away. We were looking for a place to buy sandwiches but there was almost no one in the city because it was a Sunday, and that is the norm for the Swiss. We found a Turkish store, and we sat down to have sandwiches and Coca-Cola. We left the store at four forty five, and I took 'Ali back to the dorm; then, I went back to Geneva. I arrived at seven fifteen, and the road was busy, which is normal because Sunday's people return back to the city, after they spend a day in the mountains or other places to relax after a long work week.

They work hard, and they have every right to get some rest on Saturday and Sunday.

When I got home, the girls were waiting. Saja said she was worried about me. I asked why, and she told me she called me a few times and I did not answer. I told her that the battery died and I did not take an extra battery with me. I sat down, but it was obvious that there was something important missing in the house. This is because 'Ali and Muhammad are away. Muhammad to get married and the latter has started his first step to face life on his own. They are nice, but they are different. I enjoy their company and love to spend time with them, especially with 'Ali because he is social, and he loves to talk and discuss things. Sometimes, he agrees and others he disagrees. I know I will lose a friend, but this is life. We should love with our minds first then with our hearts because if we don't, then we become selfish without even knowing it.

While I was helping 'Ali set up his room, I told him that since I am a grown up, I love with my brain now, and that is the reason I pushed you to come to this university. I will bear being apart from you, and I will miss because I love you. But I love you with my brains first. This is how I can tell what is best for you and push it in that direction. If I loved you with my heart only, then things would've been different.

The evening was very quiet. Even though, the girls' company is sweet, especially Saja who I share with many important things, and she understands me well despite her age. She is a carbon copy of her mother.

She took after her in many things including her patience, wisdom, being responsible, kind and ready to sacrifice for her family. Saja prepared the meal, and it was delicious. She is a great cook. She learned from her mother many great things. She was her friend.

During that time, Muhammad called from Amman, and he spoke with his sister Saja who was sitting next to me. I was able to hear everything he said. He was crying and sobbing, and I was worried when he ended the call. I asked her what was going on. She told me that Muhammad called uncle's Watban's house in Amman because they went there to treat Yassmin. Muhammad said that her condition is bad, and doctors are saying that the latest tests show that the disease and the microbe are very difficult to treat. She also told me that Muhammad was so sad, and he remember mom when she was ill. He asked me to tell you the news somehow without adding to your pain and problems. Muhammad did not know that you were sitting next to me when he called.

I was sad for the same reasons Muhammad was. I know others do not feel the same way we do and they do not feel sad for us, but we cannot help it. It's our nature, and we are grateful for being humans. We don't regret or apologize for our nature. After that, I tried to call my brother Watban's son, Ahmad, but could not reach him. I decided to wait and call the next day.

I told Saja that I will call 'Ali to check on him, but she told me not to call because he called just before I got home. She said that he needs to get settled and depend on himself.

She said that he is at the movies now, so I dropped the subject. After that I realized she told me that so I don't call him. She was right. Frequent calls will make him feel as if he never left. He needs to focus on his school and be self-reliant.

Monday, 16OCT2000, I went to my physical therapy at ten thirty; then, I was back home by eleven thirty. I took Saja to the university to attend a lecture by the Pakistani Ambassador in the capitol, Bern. I returned to take Nur and Khawlah to the city, since they were off for the weekend. When I returned to the house, I read the papers; then, I wrote my remarks about today and about yesterday.

The Sharm al-Shaykh conference has started, and it was announced the President Clinton was going to stay till the noon the following day if that was beneficial.

All what Clinton said was:

A- Stop the violence.

B- Start a fact finding team, and he did not say there will be an investigation committee nor did he condemn the aggressor, etc.

C- Return to the negotiation table, as he puts it. All this is for the benefit of Israel and against the Palestinian cause. It will also create a state of confusion between the Arabs and the Palestinians, which will lead them to drift apart and maybe even kill each other.

The analysts expected the conference to fail, but I disagreed because I knew the Americans and the Egyptians will not accept that.

If the conference failed things will be turned upside down. It will make some Arab countries stronger and stricter during and after the Arab Summit, which will be held on the 21st of this month. If it fails some Arab leaders will benefit while others will have to kiss the shoes of the Americans and the Israelis.

The TV showed a conference for Shaykh Nasrallah describing the details of the kidnapping of the Israeli Colonel. The TV also showed some events and turmoil in the occupied land and showed images of injured people and martyrs.

Tuesday, 17OCT2000: That was the day to visit Shajarat al-Dur. After breakfast, I watched TV. There was a program on flights and flying. I liked it, and I used to watch it. At exactly 11:20 a ticker appeared on TV saying: Breaking News in red. The ticker stated that the Egyptian Media Minister, Safwat al-Sharif, stated the summit in Sharm al-Shaykh was a success. They were able to reach a solution that will protect the rights of the Palestinians.

Yesterday, I wrote in my diary that I disagreed with people who thought the summit will fail. I also wrote that the Americans and the Egyptians will not allow the summit to fail. I also mentioned my reasons briefly.

The weather was very nice today. Sunny, clear skies, and the temperature was the same as the temperature in Iraq in the beginning of March. I felt that I needed to go out for a walk.

I have mixed emotions on days like this. Sometimes I feel sad while other times I feel comfortable because I will go and see Shajarat al-Dur, but I soon feel sad again when I remember the shape she is in. I took Rex with me and walked towards the yard near our home. When I left the house, I felt the breeze and the air on my skin. I did not feel the air going in and out of my lungs because it was so fresh. This made me feel healthy and calm. It made me energized. Everything around me was beautiful. It was clean with no garbage or pollution. This is, unfortunately, not like our countries where you find dirt everywhere. Even the demeanor of people became tainted. This is an important issue just like our latest war "the Mother of all Battles". It is impossible to repair people when they are tainted, and it is also impossible for the president, Saddam Husain, to repair the character and the morals of the Iraqis no matter how much money or resources he has.

He always used force, even when it was not needed. His commands were never flexible. How will he act if he became powerless? Everyone knows he likes to use force and he enjoy his power.

In March 1993 and during an evening meeting with the president and brother Sab'awi and Watban in al-Rudwaniyyah, when he invited me for dinner because I was in Baghdad,

I remember we were talking about general things and my brother Sab'awi said to the president that Rukan Razuqi, who was the tribe and religious scholars' representative, has insulted or hit another person because he did not treat him well. The president replied that there is no problem because money can solve all the problems. He started telling us a story about a known pimp who lived in Baghdad. He said, "One day the pimp found writing on his house saying that he is a pimp, and his daughters saw what was written and they were very upset. He told them not to worry and the people who wrote these horrible things will come back to clean them up. The pimp went inside his house and got five and ten dinar bills (at the time there were no fifties or hundreds) and started to stick the bills to his walls until all the writing was covered up. He told the people who gathered around that they can take the money if they clean up what was written at that time people rushed in to clean his walls."

The President depends a lot on money to gain the love of people.

I passed by older men and women. They were calling their dogs or talking to themselves. There was no one there who would understand or record what I would say. I started to speak to myself in an audible voice.

I said, "I am probably the only person among them to be considered young and productive." Look at me; I am walking my dog like them, while I am supposed to be working like everyone my age. In reality, I was old like them, walking my dog on a Tuesday and not on a Friday or Saturday. These people cannot be less than seventy years old. I continued to speak to myself, and I assumed that these people had worked and produced. They worked and they accomplished a lot, and they need to rest. I probably worked as much as they did and accomplished the same as they did; however, I am still capable of producing and helping. I have gained experience and have read and travelled; alas, the dictatorship of the revolution does not care about qualification or experience once it suspects that the qualified person could be a threat, etc. I also said that my situation is due to several reasons, and if these reasons did not exist my situation would have been different. I would have had a role in building and developing, based on real goals and not imaginary, isolated from influential goals. I am not dumb, and I am not naive. I have realistic goals, and I am not power hungry. I care about public service and serving the people. I participate legitimately in the government and am not pressing, nor greedy, nor trying to be close on the president, like others. However, I was close to him because I was his aid, and I helped him accomplish his goals and defeat al-Bakr group. The president and I were once planning a meeting with the rest of the leadership, and we did not want 'Ali Hasan to know about for fear of him informing al-Bakr.

After we removed al-Bakr from power and from the party, I had an important hand in establishing Saddam's power and in helping him reach his goals. I think he believes that the people whom he aided and made out of nothing will be more malleable and more submissive to him (this is the mentality of the presidents who want it all and this is how they think). Those people whom he made were able to control the minds of the president's children when they were young. At this young age, they prefer someone who spoils them more than someone who would provide them with guidance. Husayn Kamil's had an easy mission, which was to brain wash these young ones. They compared him to me. I held them accountable, and I used to reprimand them when they mistreat others even the servants. Husayn Kamil used to bring them cars from Europe and America every few days, and he used to fly these cars in for them. They used to dislike Barrazan, and they liked Husayn and considered him a kind and loyal friend. These dummies brain washed the president's children. They did not look after the interest of these children or the president, but they were interested in what was best for them. Add to that, they damaged their way of thinking and their health, and they guided them to things that were not beneficial to their father. They wanted money, cars, night life and other things that are not wholesome.

Husayn Kamil used the mafia way, and he destroyed them physically, mentally, socially and emotionally. He succeeded in doing that, and his biggest success was with the president's eldest son. He pushed him against his father more than once. His current state is a result of what Husayn Kamil did.

Unfortunately, the president's children are the tools used to hurt their father when they should be his aid and help. They should work on attracting good people from Iraq and from outside of Iraq.

These are few things that were the cause to my current state. Honestly, I don't regret what I did, and I am not sorry for myself. If I can turn back time, I would do the same thing over again, and I will think the same way and behave as I did twenty years ago. Sometimes we do not know what is better for us. Maybe what they plotted by themselves or as a group while thinking of their own goals and needs might have been a blessing for me. By removing me from my official duties, my name and reputation were protected as I did not participate in any dirty games that started in the mid-eighties and still going on till now.

The worst period is from August 1990 till now; therefore, I believe if I was still playing a role there, I would have had countless problems that might have cost me my life, or it would have forced me to do something I don't agree of. It might have given my adversary a weapon to stab me in the back and to destroy my reputation and my image.

Here I have to mention that the biggest role and biggest comfort was the role of Shajarat al-Dur who calmed me down and reduced my stress. She always tried to tell me that there is nothing I should worry about and she tried to help me forget the unfair treatment I received.

Another reason was that I loved Shajarat al-Dur. Actually, I adored her. This was a reason for me to avoid anything that may upset her or hurt her in anyway. It is known that working in politics is filled with danger for sure. I used to push these thoughts aside whenever I start thinking about politics. She used to tell me, "Barazan, if you accept a government position in Baghdad we will drift apart." She also used to say, "This is not a threat but it is the truth. They want to insult you through the position they will give you which will change the way things are going in our lives."

For all these reasons, I don't have regrets. Actually, I am very happy, and I thank God for giving me the blessing and for making me a believer and for protecting me from anything that might hurt me or damage my reputation or my children's' reputation. I am happy and will not fight over a position, as a matter of fact, I congratulate them on their accomplishments. I will never be put in a place where I will be mistreated. This is why I refused the position the president offered me to fill in Baghdad.

I remember a similar thing that the Iranian president, Rafsanjani, said during our visit to Tehran in September 1990 and after the Iraqi army took over Kuwait. I remember I was in Geneva, and I was recalled to Baghdad. When I got there, Mr. Tariq 'Aziz, who was the Minister of State at that time, told me he will take a delegation and visit Tehran. He asked the president to make me part of the delegation because I was responsible for Iran-Iraq file.

Mr. Chalabi, the Minister of Petroleum, accompanied us along with other officials from the Ministries of State, Oil, and Transportation.

The Iranian president received the essential party members. The Director of the Party presented a comprehensive image of what is happening and the reasons that made Iraq occupy Kuwait and how ready Iraq is for war, etc.

He asked him if Iran would like to participate in the honor and to fight imperialism, etc. He said that Iraq is ready to give them a role in that fight.

The Iranian president was listening carefully, and when Mr. Tariq 'Aziz finished his statement, the Iranian president said in Arabic, "Give my regards to President Saddam Husein and tell him that we will not compete with him in Kuwait."

We returned to Baghdad without accomplishing anything. Mr. 'Isam al-Chalabi offered the Iranian to buy oil from us for a special price, and they told him they will think about it and get back with him. They did not buy even one liter. They buy a lot from different sources in the world. Their refineries are not enough to provide them with what they need.

On the second day after our arrival from visiting Tehran, I was visiting the Ministry of State to arrange for my trip to Geneva. It was about one o'clock in the afternoon when I received a call from Hamid Hammadi, the president's secretary. He asked me to go to the president's office. When I got there, I found several members of the leadership there including 'Izzat al-Duri, Mr. Taha al-Jazrawi, and Latif Nasim Jasim, who was the Media Minister then, and Sa'dun Hammadi, Mr. Tariq 'Azia and Mr. 'Isam al-Chalabi, who was the Minister of Petroleum, and others whom I don't remember. He asked

Hamid asked us to go to the meeting hall, so we went and we sat down. After a short while, the President arrived, and we learned that the meeting is for us to hear from the delegates the details about the visit to Iran.

Mr. Tariq 'Aziz started to explain the details about the visit, and then Mr. 'Isam al-Chalabi spoke. When they finished their presentation, I asked to speak, and the president allowed me. I told him that when we met the Iranian president and after the Minister of State explained to him the situation and what Iraq is doing, the Iranian President said, "Tell the President I said hello and we [the Iranian] will not compete with them [With Iraq] in Kuwait."

I told the President that I believe that we need to stop and analyze what he meant when he made that statement to understand his goals. No one commented, but the president addressed the Minister of Petroleum and the rest of the attendees and told them to announce the Iraq is willing to load ships that come to the Iraqi harbors with oil for free. This will make the ((undecided)) countries bring their ships and boats and load the free oil. The Americans will not be able to stop these people because it will be like the act of (Gog and Magog). He was walking around the room back and forth, and when he turned around our eyes met, and he understood what was going on inside of me. He smiled and said, "We will fly all our planes towards them." I recall that Mr. Tariq 'Aziz and others who did not understand what the president said and thought he is planning to order the Air Force to engage, etc., they all said this will be like an escalation from Iraq. He looked at me, and I smiled at him.

The President then said, “No, I don’t mean that. I meant we must use everything we can when we deal with them.”

Let’s return to our main topic: Today is Tuesday, 17OCT2000. This is the day we visit Shajarat al-Dur, Umm-Muhammad. As I mentioned before, Tuesdays are different than the rest of the week because it is a mix of sadness and regrets. Sometimes I forget and just feel happy that I will see Shajarat al-Dur. But I quickly feel the same sad mix because I realize that I will see her in her current condition, and I will speak to her but she will not answer me. Regardless, I feel comfortable when I speak with her and when I touch her face while looking at her. She looks like she is asleep. It reminds me of when she was in bed and I was helping her take her medicine or drink water.

I went with the children to see Shajarat al-Dur at four o’clock. We sat around her bed until five forty. I asked her why she has been asleep for such a long time. I told her she has been always full of energy, and she loved walking and breathing fresh air. She loved the bright sun and trees and gardens. I told her I went for a walk by myself; however, she was with me because everything that is beautiful reminds me of her, but she did not reply.

I took the children back to the house, but I did not enter. I went for a walk near the house for an hour. Then, I went inside the house.

Wednesday, 18OCT2000: I went to my physical therapy appointment, then went home. I did not leave the house after that.

Thursday, 19OCT2000: I took Nur and went to finish the paper work for the car, but there was a problem regarding the repair shop so we were unable to complete this task. The Swiss use an environmental code, which is different than the rest of the European countries. They use a special valve to reduce environmental pollution. Car owners are required to have this feature once a year to make sure it's functional.

This reminded me of the special annual inspection, which is required for renewing vehicle registration. The Department of Motor Vehicles wanted to make sure every part in the car is functional before renewing the registration and allow the owner the use of the car.

They would refuse to renew the registration if there was anything wrong with the car, such as the brake, lights, or even the wind-shield wipers. I feel sorry when I remember how Iraq was forty years ago and how it is now. The entire world is moving forward, and Iraq is the only country that is going backward. This is truly sad.

Friday, 20OCT2000: I had breakfast, then went to physical therapy. I came home and took Nur and Khawlah to the city. It was a beautiful day, and it was their last day off for this week. I went to pick them up at three thirty and took Saja with us to drop her off at her university.

While we were on our way, 'Ali called. He told me that he passed the admission test at the university. I was happy to hear that, and I congratulated him. I told him this is the benefit of being prepared. He agreed. I told him that, in the future, he must listen to me when I tell him something. He agreed.

Unfortunately, we are not destined to be happy for too long. After I hung up, I got a call from Mr. Ilyas Khuri. He said he did not want to disturb me, but he had to tell me something. I asked him what is going on. He said that the Residency Office called him and told him that they approved my request to extend my stay in Switzerland, but only for twenty days!

Can you imagine the way those pigs are treating us? I cannot understand it. They have no excuse, and it is far from what they claim about the way they treat people with respect and decency.

I told him that I will meet with him so we can discuss this matter. After that, I called our Iraqi friend and told him about what happened. He was shocked and promised that he will call a friend of his in the State Department and will call me back on the following Tuesday.

What kind of nonsense is this? How long will it last?

We are like passengers in a hijacked plane. We don't know when, how, where they are going to land.

They wonder will they get killed or will someone come to their aid and rescue?

It is even worse, the captain of this flight is unsure of what is going on and how it is going to end.

I said, "I seek refuge in God. He is the all-knowing. He will take care of us."

At seven o'clock, I went to pick up Saja from the university. Her last class is exactly at nine PM.

I was there exactly at nine. I found her standing near the interior door of the building. She opened the car door and climbed into the car. I told her I am on time. I knew she is in class at nine, and it is now nine exactly. She answered, "It is not your fault, dad. The teacher finished five minutes early because so many students didn't finish their weekly assignments and today is Friday, so many are making plans to go out tonight."

We drove towards the house, and on our way I told Saja that I had two things to tell her. One is good and the other I think is not good. She asked me what was going on and asked me to start by telling her the bad news first. I said no, I will start with the good news first, and she said OK. I told her that 'Ali passed the admission class in his university, which means he does not need to spend a year to study the French language. She was happy to hear that and thanked God. She asked me if he was happy, and I told her he was and he feels great about this. She then asked me about the other news. I told her that the Residency Office called Mr. Ilyas Khuri and told him that they extended my request for 20 additional days only. She was quiet. Then, after a few minutes, she sighed and said that I must start working on this issue and not to waste time. I told her that I will meet Ilyas on Monday, and he will come with me to two of my doctors. Then, I will discuss this matter with him.

We arrived home, and dinner was ready because I had asked Nur and 'Isa to prepare the food. I sent Nur to the store to buy goat liver for Saja.

A test showed that Saja is suffering from Iron deficiency, and the doctor recommended liver and lentils, etc. These items are rich in iron.

Nur went to the store and did not find goat liver, but she found rabbit liver. The person working at the store told her that rabbit liver contains more iron than goat liver, so she bought it.

I asked her not to tell Saja about the rabbit liver because I was worried she will not eat it.

We had dinner and Saja ate the rabbit liver. She even said while eating it, "Dad, this liver is delicious."

I told her that it was the liver of a young goat.

The next day, while we were eating breakfast, Saja said that I fed her rabbit liver the previous night, and it was not goat liver like I told her. I told her that is not true and asked who said that.

She said that she knew because she saw the wrapping with details and price tag that Nur placed on the desk. It was for rabbit liver. We both laughed, and I asked her if she liked it, and she said yes. She also said poor bunny, so I told her God gave us permission to eat rabbits just like He gave us permission to eat goats, etc. She agreed.

Saturday: 21OCT2000: I ate breakfast; then, I watch the news to see the Arab summit. I listened to the speech by the King of Jordan who spoke about the Palestinian disaster and about the embargo on Iraq. He is just like his father. The apple does not fall far from the tree.

I also listened to the Saudi Crowned Prince, Prince 'Abdallah. It was like listening to a speech in a charity event asking for donations. The speech is aimed to make it seem as if Saudi Arabia is supporting the Palestinians by collecting and donating money for the cause.

He really did not make any serious suggestions. Then, I listened to the speech by the President of the Iraqi delegates, 'Izzat al-Duri, and it was very strong. He spoke about a detailed plan to resist the Israelis and said that this is the only way to perform jihad. The plan had a lot of political, economic, and military aspect. He did not mention the military in details. He only spoke about the general idea. I said to myself that the president wrote this speech, and he gave it to him to read. When he was done with his speech, he said that this is a message from Saddam Hussein to the Summit.

I noticed the Egyptian President and the others were not surprised to hear this. I believe they know how the president operates.

After that, 'Izzat said a short thank you to the Egyptian President for hosting the events, etc.

I noticed that Mr. Tariq 'Aziz looked upset, and he was leaning his head backward and resting on the chair. I know him well, and I don't need him to speak to understand what is going on with him.

I am sure he was saying to himself, this speech is not going to help and will make the situation worse. I personally thought the same, and I agreed with him.

I saw the Minister of State, al-Sahhaf, who I am unable to understand his facial expressions. Next to him, there was the Minister of Media, Hamman 'Abd-al-Khaliq (this man is clueless).

The Yemeni president made his speech with rhyming words, but it brought the spirit of comradery.

Hosni Mubarak thanked the Yemeni President for his speech and laughed because previously he attacked the Yemeni President when he said something against the Sharm al-Shaykh Summit, and Mubarak told him we don't need any showing off, etc.

After that, the Syrian President spoke. His speech resembled a lecture and did not sound like an appropriate speech for the occasion. He explained to the attendees what Strategic Determent means along with other things, and he also explained why peace was chosen, etc.

The Lebanese President spoke in his Lebanese dialect, and he spoke eloquently. He gave examples like the liberation of South Lebanon and added that Arabs can accomplish the same thing if they unite, etc.

I said to myself, "This is nice, but it needs to be away from the Syrian market."

After that, the Moroccan King said his speech, and it was in line with the Moroccan policy, then the Tunisian President, followed by the Somali President, then the Comoros [which I don't know where it is] then Djibouti.

The session was over for a break till the afternoon. I noticed that the speeches were long, and the ones that the speeches that came close to the truth always included the caveat that they don't want their words to be taken as instigation for war.

Saja and 'Ali went to buy some things that 'Ali needs for his school and his stay there. They returned and she was holding two (LUCE) flowers in her hand. She placed them in a small vase and placed the vase near her mother's picture. She said that her mother likes these kind of flowers.

In the evening, I noticed that Saja was feeling down. She was quiet and did not speak. I asked her, what was going on? And she replied nothing, and when I pressed her she told me that she remembered this day in 1998 when she was with her mother in New York.

That day, the Professor told her that her mom's condition is critical, and there is no hope for her. She added she remembers how she felt, and the Ambassador and the embassy did not care, and how she used to take a taxi at night and how her mother was feeling.

This caused me a lot of pain, and I remembered how we spent our weekends in the past when I took the children to south of France because their mother asked me to take them during their breaks there so that we don't stay in Geneva and dwell over our situation and the routine that we were so used to in our permanent residency.

I was always in contact with Saja when she was with her mother in New York. I did feel that she was not comfortable telling me what the doctors said about her mother's condition. I remember her telling about her mother and how the doctors used to promise her that she will improve and things will be ok, etc.

I also remembered when they went to buy gifts for mother's doctors.

I called Shajarat al-Dur twice. She was doing well and feeling normal, but after that when I asked Saja to let me speak with her mother, she used to tell me that her mother was asleep or that the doctor was speaking with her or that there were people visiting her.

In the beginning, I did not suspect anything, but later I learned that Saja did not want to tell me the truth.

Last time I spoke with Shajarat al-Dur, and only after I insisted that Saja let me speak with her, I found out she was not doing well. She was having difficulty speaking. I told her, "My love, I wish you well." She started to cry and told me that whatever God's will is will happen. She told me that I must take courage and that she did not like to see me in this state.

I told her, "You know how much I love you, and you know that there is nothing more important to me in this world." She said, "I know, but you have to be strong so life goes on." She then said, "Take care of the children."

This was the last time I spoke with her.

When she came back from New York, she was in critical condition, and I spoke very little with her regarding simple things as she was not doing well. She was almost in a coma. Sure enough, a day and a half later, when she arrived at a hospital in the suburb of Geneva (John Lee Hospital), she was in a coma.

Going back to the main topic: in the evening, Khawlah asked for ice cream, so I took her and Saja, and we went the city to get ice cream.

When we got home, we watched TV. It was showing the opening of the conference. Once the evening session was over, the Egyptian channel showed a short interview with Mr. Tariq 'Aziz. During the interview, he stated that the president wanted to attend the conference, but due to the well-known circumstances he was unable to. He also mentioned that the president wrote in his letter to President Hosni Mubarak that he wanted to be there because he enjoys Cairo. He spoke about how Iraq feels and the plan to liberate Palestine by performing jihad because all other methods were proven futile.

After that, we watched a movie on one of the European channels. It was about a man and woman who knew each other since childhood and grew up in the same location. The man was sixteen years old and the woman was eight years old when they first met. They used to play together when they were children.

After that, they fell in love and got married. Unfortunately, the story ended when the wife died when she was young. After she died, the man was in a state of depression, and he preserved the belongings of his wife. He kept everything where his wife left them. He also wrote her letters telling her how he feels and how much he loves her, and he placed the letters in glass bottle and threw the bottle in the sea. The waves carried the bottle to shore where a young and beautiful female reporter found it. The reporter published those letters because they were interesting and showed genuine feelings.

The reporter was curious and wanted to meet the man who wrote these letters, so she started searching for him. She found him on the beach near his home. He was building a yacht to name after his wife Catherine.

The relationship between the two started to develop, so he went to visit her as well. They went to dinner together, but he was hesitant about taking the relationship to a higher level, and he felt confused. He did not think he could marry her because he felt he could not love her as much as he loved his late wife.

The reporter knew his feelings, and she was a little jealous that he loved his wife that much and he preserved her things and her memory as if she is still living in his house.

The reporter told her friend that his late wife's belongings are still in the same condition and the same place as she left them, as if she is still there.

She said, "She has not gone." I watched the movie, and it made me sad. I felt it was the same story as my story with Shajarat al-Dur from the start to the present. The children were watching TV with me, and I am sure they were thinking the same.

What can we do? This is the will of God, and this is our destiny.

The movie ended when the man drowned. He finished building the yacht, and he went into the sea to test it.

I said to myself, this is a good ending. He is no longer suffering. He is luckier than me. He does not have kids that he needs to stay alive for them and to watch over them.

The actor was Kevin Costner (Kevin Cosner) whom I watched another movie for in 1993. It was the Body Guard (Body Gard) with (Huston).

Sunday 22OCT2000, after eating breakfast with the children, I took Rex and 'Ali for a walk in the country near our house. When we got back, I called Mr. Ilyas Khuri, and we agreed on a time to meet the next day, so that we can go to the doctor and talk about the extension the Swiss gave me, which is twenty days.

Muhammad called from Baghdad and said, "Dad, I finished all the preparation for the wedding, but Uncle Bara' al-Ahmad, who is one of our cousins just died, and I wanted to know what the etiquette is in this situation."

I told him to go to his uncle who is his father-in-law and speak with him. If they think it is okay, then move forward with your plan, and if they wanted to postpone, I think you should get married, but have the party at a later time.

He was with Mizr and 'Azzam, both are my cousins, but the latter was married to Thurayya. I spoke with them and asked how they were and how their families were, etc.

Mizr told me that I have been away for so long, and I agreed. I told him that I cannot help what is happening to me, and I have to stay.

We decided to go to the movie theater to watch a movie with Catherine Deneuve because I like her acting. She reminds of with Shajarat al-Dur. She is stylish, and she has a great taste and is very classy. When I watch her, I imagine Shajarat al-Dur standing in front of me with her beauty, her dignity and her confidence.

Saja knew all this because the media wrote about the movie. That was the reason she suggested we should go and see it.

However, she asked to postpone going to the movie theater because she was busy working on a paper, and she needs to work on it on over the weekend to get it done on time.

In the evening I sat down and told the children they can choose a TV show to watch. I was sick of hearing what the Arabs were saying, whether they were Palestinians or other Arabs. They repeat everything and they play with words at the expense of truth and principles.

The children wanted to watch a movie on a foreign channel. It was called (Dance with me). It was a light and cute movie. It made me forget for a brief moment my personal problems and the general problems with the world.

After the movie was done, I asked 'Ali to switch the channel to the Iraqi channel and he did. We saw an announcer reading a statement issued by the leadership of the National Party and the Revolution Council. The statement was long and harsh. It was describing the participants in the conference.

I said to myself, "the Palestinians were in the conference and the council did not issue these statements if the Palestinians did not approve of them. The Palestinians were shown on TV happy and satisfied with the decisions. Things got so escalated, and they will be understood differently. This will reflect badly on us. We need to be calm, etc."

The president' letter that was read by 'Izzat al-Duri in the opening session was enough. There is no reason to rush, especially when the delegates have not made it back to Baghdad.

It would have been better to wait until their arrival and meet with the leadership, to issue a balanced statement telling where Iraq stands during these harsh times.

I am sure others will say that Iraq is trying to look better than others. They will think we are trying to get out of facing our problems. This will make Iraq appear as if we are a group of users, when in fact we gave so much and we sacrificed a lot for Palestine.

I know who is behind this harsh stance. It is the president. He thinks that the Arab people will get excited, and they will overthrow their leaders.

Even though I hope they do, I don't agree with his way. I feel like his latest decisions are wrong.

I know the Arab masses will not act fast and their reaction will be limited and short. They will be subdued by Arafat and his tainted leadership.

They are not fighters. They are negotiators.

Leaders who want to live for the sole purpose of ruling are not good. They are incompetent.

Another thing, the ((revolution)) era, and I mean by that military coup, is over. The leaders turned the armies into a show of force and use them only to protect themselves, their homes, their parties, etc.

The president should have never expected this kind of outcome. He wants to be the only leader who will unite all Arabs, as Mishal 'Aflaq wanted.

Mishal 'Aflaq's idea is a dream. It is not practical. I knew that from the first day he announced his idea, and it caused problem among the people...

Time showed that this idea is not real and is not practical until all Arabs believed that it is nothing but a dream. Even Baathists who were working for entities controlled by the Baath party are not raising their voices and are not asking for change. They know this could get them killed.

For this reason, I mean the lack of democracy within the Baath party, things happened the way they did. This matter will end up disastrous. It will burn everything in its path.

It is unfortunate, that for some years now, the president's way of thinking resembles the way of thinking of a monk who is praying in a convent. I don't know the reason for this and can't tell if this situation is right.

Sometimes I wonder if the president's methods and thoughts are tactical and if we can use tactics in strategies.

Forming an alliance with religious parties or trying to ride their wave is a huge mistake because modern thinking and the way the Baath thinks are not in sync with religious thinking. This is the reason we find each side trying to use others to achieve certain goals.

I shared with the President many of my ideas regarding this issue, and I warned him against forming an alliance either internally or externally with religious wings.

Internally, it will upset the Shiites, since the religious side dealing with the regime is Sunnis. Externally, these religious parties have their own problems with all Arab regimes, including Saudi Arabia. They will interpret this as an alliance against them, which will not help us to get out of the situations we are in now.

When I told him that, he did not answer me. I know him well; when he does not answer it means he is not convinced of what he heard and does not want to share his strategy. Like I said before, I still believe this is a bad strategy, just like Mishal 'Aflaq's idea. It is even worse as this could cost the president a lot. These religious wings may overthrow him because they are fully aware he is using them to get out of the trouble he is in.

They have experience in that. They were used by other leaders in the past. They were used by King 'Abd-al-'Aziz. They were used by 'Abd-al-Nasir against Muhammad Najib after the revolution in 1952.

That is why they will not fall victim to the same thing again.

In my opinion, the only way to get out of the current problem is to form an alliance with the National Democratic forces to build and defend the country. They need to make big changes in their way of thinking and their strategies. After that, they need to burn the temporary constitution, and they need to throw it in the trash. After that, they need to disassemble the Revolutionary Council, which is considered to be worse than a military regime, etc.

What will help a country to overcome its trouble is when everyone feels that that country is his and everyone is equal. They need to feel that their leader is a father to them and not like he is only representing a group of them or a specific party. They need to feel that he is a father and brother with a big heart and chest who is treating them all the same. They need to know that the only concern for that father is a better tomorrow for the country and for everyone in it.

In the evening, I went to pick Saja up from Art school. We came home at nine thirty, and I watched TV. The Iraqi channel and many other channels showed the (people) demonstrating in Baghdad.

Of course, people in Iraq and other countries that are ruled by one group stopped believing these demonstrations. Places where there is only one (ruling) entity, like Libya, Syria, Iraq, North Korea, Cuba and other places like these.

Demonstrations like this one take place because they are being forced by the police and by the (ruling) party. The channels also showed a picture and a statement by Mr. 'Ali Hasan, the Party representative in al-Karkh, calling for jihad. He was almost convulsing, and he appeared very upset. He used simple and stupid political words. He said that it is funny that all these people who attended the Summit are rulers of Arab countries because they lack the characteristics of leaders, kings, etc.

While watching, I felt that there was anger that I did not see before. And I began to notice matters closely. I have reached a phase of maturity and have never seen things like the current grief and anger in the Arab streets. The truth is, Arab people are incapable of making fundamental changes. They may be able to apply pressure on the leaders to make some changes only to absorb their anger. The decisions made in the Cairo conference were made for that reason.

We will see how these decisions will absorb the anger and dissatisfaction and how they will calm the up-rise in Palestine. The master of this tactic is Arafat and his team. They live to rule and they rule to gather more wealth to live an endless life of luxury.

I believe announcing jihad by someone who is incapable of performing jihad will not benefit the Palestinian cause.

It is even worse when the call for jihad comes from people who are not in the least qualified for that. Maybe it will lead to the end of the Arab issue. They are far away from jihad as heaven from earth. People know how they live, how they behave and how shamelessly they conduct themselves.

Anyone who calls for religious jihad must be a pious person. He must sacrifice himself, his money and his children for the cause before he asks others to do that. Not someone who did not sacrifice a single drop of blood in struggles and wars that lasted for decades.

Someone like Nasrallah can call for jihad. He gave his son, 'Abd-al-Hadi to the cause. He was only twenty three years old. He did not regret, he didn't feel sad and he didn't falter when his son died.

I say all this without taking sides because I have no relationship with Shaykh Nasrallah, and I have never even met him. I have my own views about religion, religious people and religious leaders.

I believe there should be separation between religion and politics. I will not approve of having a religious leader rule a country.

How does that apply to Mr. 'Ali Hasan or anyone like him?

Since 1985 Iraq has been at war. Mr. 'Ali Hasan did not sacrifice a single drop of blood in all these wars which is still going on till now. He did not, nor his family or his sub tribe. Everyone knows how he lives and how much he is concerned about collecting wealth. Everyone knows what he was like in the past and how he is now. They know the ways he used to get what he has now. It all started in the mid-eighties and it continued to this day.

The person who calls for jihad should live the same way as the people in that country are living. He must feel their pain and live their struggle. Not someone who lives in a safe tower, while the rest are suffering due to the current condition, which we all know who is responsible for them and who planned for them and who benefited from them.

It is not acceptable for a (play boy) to announce jihad. It is not possible this (play boy) within minutes turn into a pious man and act like a religious scholar. It is not possible for a murderer, a thief, or an adulterer to quickly change their ways and without any convincing reasons. This group of people should never rise to the same status as the people who are eligible to call for jihad.

A person who calls for jihad is a special person. People who are greedy and have no morals should not call for jihad. They use jihad as a tactic, and they try to ride the wave to get out of trouble. They are incapable of fully understanding what is going on until the end. They will hurt the cause, and they will lead the nation to a catastrophe without a doubt.

This call reminds of the call by General Amin al-Hafiz to liberate Palestine by asking normal people to start a war.

Of course, there are differences between the two calls. The first call has its goal, which I listed previously, and the second call resulted from simple mindedness and ignorance. Both calls are harmful, and both lead to catastrophe and will not win a battle and will not serve the cause.

Back to our topic: I ate dinner with Saja, and we spoke about the possibility of postponing Muhammad's wedding for the death of our cousin, Ba'a al-Ahmad. We agreed that the wedding will take place on 1DEC2000, so that the sad month of November will be over and to allow the customary forty days of mourning to pass. I told Saja, "Tell your brother what we decided and tell him to put up black banners on our homes and the main doors for our buildings to mark the second anniversary since your mother, Shajarat al-Dur, left. This way, he can still use the building for his wedding."

Monday, 23OCT2000: I met Mr. Ilyas Khuri to discuss my residency. The Swiss allowed me to stay till 9NOV2000. We agreed that I should obtain a report from my physician and to have another check up on 15DEC2000 so that he can see the development after treatment and to compare the results with the August test results. I gave him a template so that he can write a letter to the doctor. We also agreed to write a letter and include copies from the letters we previously requested from Saja's and Muhammad's universities showing that Muhammad still needs two years to finish his studies and Saja needs another year to get her bachelor's degree, and after that she is planning to study for her masters.

We also agreed that we will request a meeting with the Director of the Residency Office to deliver my documents and the children's documents as well.

Tuesday, 24OCT2000: The day to visit Shajarat al-Dur... Unfortunately, I could not go with the children to visit her because I have made an appointment with a lawyer who I met through the Iraqi friend, Runi. The lawyer was going to help me with the residency issue that the Swiss are hesitant to extend. He was also going to help with the children's residency. The lawyer called me on Monday evening and asked if he can meet me.

We decided to meet on Tuesday at five o'clock in the evening in Freiburg city, which is one hundred and fifty kilometers from Geneva. I had no choice but not to go see Shajarat al-Dur.

I went to see the lawyer and listened to his suggestions. I had already told him about my plan and strategy and that I wanted to submit a request with a medical report where the doctor writes that I need another test in December of this year. The lawyer disagreed with me and told me not to submit the report now. He said, for now it will be enough to send another letter thanking them for extending my stay and to ask them to extend it more because you are not able to finish what you mentioned already to them in your previous letter.

I called 'Ali and asked him to come to the repair shop where we took the car for repairs. It was only two kilometers from his university. I met with 'Ali and I asked him how he was doing and how school is going. He told me, "It is ok." He asked me to send him the car on Friday evening so that he can come to Geneva. I told him I will. I noticed he looked tired and he was pale, so I asked him what was wrong. He told me nothing is wrong. I said, "I see you look tired, why? Is the food bad or if he was having trouble sleeping." He answered, "No, everything is going well." He said he was busy all day from seven in the morning till he came to meet me here.

I told him, "It is good to be busy because you are learning, and you are arming yourself with knowledge and preparing yourself to face the world." I told him that this university and other universities like this one is what makes men able to serve their countries, their people, and themselves, as well. He answered, "God's willing."

I took the car from the repair shop and took 'Ali back to where he is staying in school, and I went back to Geneva. Rafi', the driver, took the embassy car which was also in the repair shop, and he followed me.

I made it home at a quarter past eight in the evening.

I asked Saja about her visit and the children's visit to their mother, and she told me they went and everything is still as is. She said she did not see any incense or any candles there. I told her that these things might not be allowed there.

Wednesday, 25OCT2000: After breakfast, I read the papers like I usually do. I didn't read anything new or different from what I have seen on the satellite channel.

I met with Ilyas Khuri and asked him to prepare the letter to the Director of the Residency Office. I told him what our Iraqi friend suggested about not sending a medical report this time and to only thank them for extending my residency as we requested in our previous letter and to tell them that I will not be able to complete everything I mentioned in my letter to them.

Therefore, I am requesting from them to extend my residency, as I have mentioned in my previous request.

Ilyas agreed to the idea and promised to prepare the letter so that I can mail it to them. Ilyas was going to Baghdad because he is a member in a committee that is part of the National Conference, and the director of this Committee is Mr. Tariq 'Aziz.

Muhammad called from Baghdad, and he asked about his siblings, 'Ali's school, how we are doing and he also asked about Rex. Muhammad said he was doing well and he just arrived to Baghdad from Tikrit after attending the funeral of cousin Bar'a al-Ahmad. I asked him about the funeral and how it went. He said his uncle Sab'awi was there the entire time, but his uncle Wataban was there once. He also told me that Ghazi's family is asking for a reasonable time to pass after the death of my uncle Bar'a before the wedding. I told him that we would like that, and we want to do things according to our respected traditions. I told him the story when his grandfather reprimanded me in the seventies when I fired my rifle to test it because Husayn al-Rashid, God bless his soul, has passed away a month or so before. I told him that Husayn al-Rashid was not a close relative, so it is best when his direct uncle pass then we must show respect and he agreed.

I told him that I think your wedding should be on 01DEC2000 which will be the fifth day of Ramadan and I told him I don't know if it is permissible to get married during Ramadan. He told me that uncle Watban said it is permissible as everything will happen after we break our fast. I told him very well, your uncle Watban is well versed in religion. He is like those who are calling for jihad. After that, he asked to speak with Saja.

In the evening, I watched an interview on Aljazeera in a program called Without Borders. It was an interview with Mr. 'Azmi Bishara who is a member in the Israeli Knesset. He was vibrant and well spoken. He understood what is going on, and he had a plan and a goal. He criticized the decisions that were made during the latest summit, and he explained his reasons. He also spoke of several matters and the benefits that they may have brought internally and externally if they were produced during that last summit. He described what was happening outside of Palestine as surge of emotions which resembles the situation in 1967. He said there is no plan or coordination between the countries and that the countries do not fully comprehend what is going on in Palestine, and they cannot understand the Israeli mentality.

I liked what he said and wished there were more like him in the other Palestinian sectors and in other Arab countries. He is well educated, and he is smart. He knows his limits and he knows what he wants. These traits are extremely important in a politician.

Saja asked me if the man was an Arab and I told her he was. She asked is he Palestinian and I told her he was. She said, "Dad, this man is very eloquent." I told her that I agree. She said, "Dad, I thought all Palestinians are like Arafat." I said, "No dear. There are well-educated people who have principles and convictions." She said, "What do you think of Arafat." I told her, "He is not educated, but he knows how to play the game." I said he does not have any principles and he is a cheap realist. This is what the Arab, Israelis and the entire world needs. Arafat could have been forgotten a long time ago just like Abu-Jihad has been forgotten.

Thursday, 26OCT2000: I did not do anything except pick the children up from school. I read the papers and watched the news on TV.

Friday, 27OCT2000: I went to physical therapy and came back home. I read the papers, then accompanied Saja into the city because she wanted to buy some things. 'Ali came from Freiburg. I welcomed him, and I asked him about his school, his friends and about life over there. He told me about his life, the students and the school. He said that the school and the teachers are way too hard. I noticed he looked tired, and he looked like he did not shower in at least two days. I asked him why he looked like a (Porcupine). He told me, "I don't shower daily like I did when I was living here."

He said, "The bathroom is public, and I am trying to get used to that." I assured him that he will, and I told him that I am still communicating with the school because we reserved a room with a private bathroom for him. I said we were late signing the contract, so they placed you on a waiting list. He said, "No problem. Ok."

I asked him to go to his room and take a shower and told him that I will tell uncle 'Isa to cook something for you. He told me that uncle 'Isa called him the day before and told him he will cook a roast for him.

I said ok. I am sure he cooked what he promised you.

I went with 'Ali to pick his siblings up from school and he asked if he can drive, and I told him I have no objections. But, he needs to bring his driver's license with him, and he did then we left. He was a calm driver and he enjoyed the drive.

I heard Rex cry loudly which made me think that there might be something happening to him. Perhaps someone is beating him, etc. I quickly realized that I still have my Middle Eastern mentality. Actually, it is even worse; I still have the (revolutionary) mentality. I forgot that if someone beats an animal here in Europe, they will be legally prosecuted. There are agencies for animal rights that receive tips from people in case of animal abuse. They have offices, and if they learn that someone is abusing a cat or a dog, these organizations have the right to remove the animal from its owner and place the animal in a safe place until they find someone else to take care of that animal.

I asked 'Isa to go and check on Rex. 'Isa came back and told me that there is nothing wrong with Rex. I asked him why is he crying, and he told me he is being loud because he just saw 'Ali and he is happy to see him.

I thought about 'Isa said and I told myself, this is something new to add to what I know about animals and their loyalty and how they care for their young ones. I have experience with animals, and I know they are attached to their kids and they feel sad if the young one dies. I once saw tear drops falling from a horse's eyes, when her child died. I thought it is cruel for humans to insult each other by saying he is like a dog or something of this sort. I think we believe animals don't have feelings or emotions, when in fact animals feel and in some cases they are more loyal than humans.

When 'Ali came in, Rex welcomed him and was so happy to see him. It showed how much he missed him when he was away from home.

Before dark, I took Rex for a walk near the house, and it was obvious he did not want to go with me. He was looking at 'Ali and tried to hide behind him.

'Ali did not accompany me because he asked for my permission to go and see his friends.

When Rex and I were walking, he tried to go back home, which is not what he usually does on walks. He is always happy on our walks because he gets to play with other animals.

When 'Ali came back home that evening after he met his friends, we sat to watch to TV. We talked about different things, and 'Ali told me that he read a book that he bought at a book store in Freiburg. He said once he started reading it he couldn't put it down until he finished it all. He also said the book is one hundred and twenty pages long, and he wanted me to read it. He also suggested me to ask someone to translate it for me. He said it is a very important book, so I asked him what the book is about, and he told me it is about dictatorship and how it is, etc. The title of the book is Animal Farm (Animal tarm) and the writer is George Orwell (George Orwok). It describes a farm owned by a man named John. This man owns all kinds of animals; however, John and the other farmers treat the animals very bad. Among the animals, there were two pigs, and as you know pigs procreate fast and because they were the majority they controlled the rest of the animals. The first pig was named Napoleon and the second pig was named Snowball. They formed an alliance, and they have the same way of thinking. They wanted to better their lives, and they wanted to improve their situation. Anyway, Napoleon and Snowball decided to start a revolution for the sake of the other animals.

But (Oldmajor), the revolution. They decide to build a shrine for him, and they put his head on that shrine. They also celebrated his memory and the revolution every year and decided not to work on Sundays and instead to hold a meeting to discuss what they were planning and decide what they want to change, etc. They also established a constitution describing seven important articles. Those articles are:

- 01 Anything that walks on two legs is an enemy.
- 02 Anything that walks on all four or has two wings is a friend.
- 03 Animals should not wear clothes.
- 04 Animals should not sleep in beds.
- 05 Animals should not drink alcohol.
- 06 An animal should not kill another animal.
- 07 All animals have equal rights and responsibilities, etc.

After that, they decided to go work on the farm to show the farmers that the animals can do the job on their own; however, the cows told them that no one milked since the previous day and for that reason they cannot perform their work. At that time, Napoleon asked some pigs to go milk the cows.

The pigs milked the cow, and some of them said they want to drink the milk. But, Napoleon told them they have to wait till after work then the milk will be divided amongst them.

They all went to work in the field, and after a while Napoleon told them that he is going back to their headquarters to do something. When he went back, he drank the milk. When the animals finished their work and went back, they did not find the milk. At that time, commotion happened and many of them were starting to guess what took place and finally the pigs were able to calm things down.

By then the way the animals thought had developed and they learned many things that they did not know in the past.

As we mentioned previously, Sunday was their meeting day. It was a day to discuss events and accomplishments. Normally, Napoleon and Snowball spoke about many things because they were the leaders. What everyone did not know is that Napoleon and Snowball were arguing. Snowball invented a mill like the mills found in Holland, and he started to draw and describe what the mills are like. Napoleon watched quietly, even though he did not like what was going on. After Snowball finished his presentation, Napoleon held the weekly Sunday meeting. Contrary to what he always did, he spoke very briefly and no one understood him. After that, Snowball started talking again about his mill and started describing it in detail and he spoke of its benefits, etc. When he was done Napoleon asked him, "Are you done", and Snowball replies, "Yes."

At that moment, Napoleon called in nine vicious dogs that were very aggressive and very strong. He took these dogs from their mothers when they were new born puppies, and no one knew anything about them. He put them in a secret place and trained them to only obey his commands. He brain washed them, and he trained them to be ruthless killers. He commanded the dogs to kill Snowball and they did.

Before all that, the farmers tried to revolt and take their land back, but Snowball stopped them and killed many of them. He was able to put an end to their revolution. After that he invented the mill and completed their design. Mistakenly, Napoleon thought he does not need Snowball anymore so he killed him.

When Snowball ended the farmer's revolution, Napoleon gave him a medal and honored him in front of all the animals. He used to speak very highly of him.

After Snowball was killed, Napoleon asked his group to make it known to everyone that Snowball was a coward and he did not the fighters, and it was Napoleon who cared about their common cause was the one who ended the farmer's revolution. He also asked his group to tell others that the mills were invented by Napoleon and not by Snowball. Snowball was only working on the minor details.

The meetings did not take place on every Sunday and became sporadic, and Napoleon started to distance himself from the rest and asked his secretary to convey his orders to the group, etc.

Later, the pigs forged the constitution, and they started living in homes, after they changed the article about their living arrangements and they added to the article so that they did not cover them. They also added an article about beer and started drinking, and then they added that they are not allowed to drink a lot.

There was shortage of food, and the animals starved and they suffered from the cold. All the animals started to become weak except for the pigs and the dogs because they controlled everything.

One day, Napoleon called the animals for a public conference, and he threatened by saying he will kill anyone who does not attend. He told them that if they don't obey him. He claimed that he found incriminating documents stating that Snowball supported the farmers against the animals (spy).

After he was done talking, the dogs brought three pigs and claimed they worked with Snowball and they worked with the farmers against the animals, so Napoleon ordered them killed and they were killed.

After that, he started killing all those who participated in the revolution and started to make decisions on his own. He started putting his name on every project. He also changed the constitution and made the pigs higher than everyone else.

After all this, things started to get worse. The animals were hungry and cold, while the pigs were living extremely well.

The pigs dressed in nice expensive clothes and held canes to beat the other animals. This is how dictatorship starts.

I did not comment on what 'Ali just told me.

Saturday, 28OCT2000: I ate a late breakfast with the children then read the papers. After that, Nur took Khawlah to the city to buy some items for the house and for 'Ali to use in school and his dorm in Freiburg. After that I went for a walk with 'Ali and we took Rex with us.

'Ali spoke about Jifara and his methods and way of thinking, which are different than Castro. He said that he believes that was the reason Jifara left his position and military rank in Cuba and went to Poland where he was later killed.

Jifara stated that the revolution in Cuba must establish a strategic relationship with China and not with the Soviet Union. He believed that the Soviet Union was going in the wrong direction and it will collapse; however, China will continue to improve.

He also wanted Cuba to have an open dialogue with the United States of America and should not cut ties with the US.

He shared his ideas with Castro, but Castro did not accept them and insisted to have a relationship with the Soviet Union. And he severed ties with America.

'Ali said that he agrees with Jifara's views, and they were proven to be right. It was also proven that Castro was a dictator who did not care about anything except himself.

I asked, "'Ali, where did you find out all this?" He told me that he bought a book written in English of about five hundred pages, and he is almost done reading it.

I told him that I agree with him, and I know that Castro is a selfish dictator who does not care about anything except himself and his power. He pretends to have values, and he hides behind that just like the rest of dictators.

He told me that he bought two more books. One is about Lenin, and the other is about De Gaulle. He said he wants to read them to find out what kind of leaders they were. I encouraged him to do that.

I am very happy to learn all this, but I was worried because I did not know if he understands how things are in the region, especially in our country. I doubted he knew how much I suffered. I wonder how things will be for him. I said to myself, God willing, everything will improve by the time 'Ali is ready for a practical life in his country, but I doubted that. There are no indicators that things are improving; on the contrary, the opposite is true. However, hope is the backbone of life along with work and dedication.

Since we cannot work in this field, as I have been clearly marginalized by a direct and firm decree, there is nothing left except to hold onto the small sliver of hope. We have faith that God can guide whomever he choose and can change events to the right path which will be beneficial to the majority if not for all.

Sunday, 29OCT2000: Nothing out of the ordinary.... 'Ali went to his school in Freiburg at six in the evening. I said good bye to him, and he said, "Dad, I want you to think about transferring me to the Geneva university next year." I said, "God willing go to your school now and I will work on this task."

I called him at eight PM and was happy he made it safe there. I asked what he was doing, and he told me that he is trying to rearrange some paperwork and add them to a file in preparation for his day tomorrow. I was pleased and we said good night.

Monday, 30OCT2000: I read the paper, as I usually do every day. I had two appointments; the first was at Paulio hospital to discuss the lab tests and the x-rays, etc. with the specialist, and the second was at three thirty in Continental hospital.

After that, I went home. Then, at five thirty, I went to bring Nur home from school.

Tuesday, 31OCT2000: The day we visit Shajarat al-Dur.

I read the papers, and at exactly two o'clock in the afternoon, I went to pick Saja up from her university. And I sent Rafi' to Freiburg to get 'Ali because Wednesday was a day off for Canton Freiburg. I told Rafi', "When you get to Geneva, tell 'Ali to get ready. After that, go to the school and get Nur; then, meet us where Umm-Muhammad is".

Before we left the house, 'Ali was home. I conveyed to 'Ali what I told Rafi' to do, and 'Ali told me that Rafi' already told him.

Saja and I went to the school to pick Khawlah up then we headed to Shajarat al-Dur.

We made it there a few minutes before four o'clock, so we had to wait. At exactly four o'clock, an employee opened the door for us and we went in. While we were going up the stairs, Saja asked him about the Quran, the candles, and the incense because they were not there when we visited last time. He told her that they were possibly put somewhere in the room when the cleaning lady was cleaning the room.

We got to the room, and another employee opened the door for us. Our eyes were fixed on Shajarat al-Dur as she slept.

The man started looking for the items we asked about while we sat around Shajarat al-Dur's bed reciting al-Fatiha to bless her. The employee was very polite and very kind. I asked him about the condition [of Shajarat al-Dur] and he said everything was stable, and there is nothing to worry about.

I thanked him for the care and for taking care of her as she is our top priority. He replied, "No reason to thank me. It is my duty."

His reply made me think of the mentality in Iraq and in the third world in general. People there expect to be thanked and honored when they do their job. Here, they say there is no need to thank me because they are doing their job! There is a big difference between the two societies. When will we think like that, and when will we perform like them?

Here, they do their best at work without even knowing who they are working to help. They were raised to do that. They don't care to know who the person they are helping is, and they don't try to use that person for their own benefit or financial gain.

I said to myself, "Unfortunately, we will not see this in Iraq, but maybe our grandchildren will. It is important that we find the way that will lead us to be like them."

At six in the evening we were back home. When we got there, I took 'Ali for walk around the house.

I asked him why he cut his hair so short, especially when it is winter. He replied, "Dad, I don't like washing my hair there. I don't like the shared bathroom. I went to the barber and asked him to cut my hair short so that I don't have to wash it many times during the week."

I asked about his school and if he is having any difficulties and his reply was, "Praise God." I knew when he said that it meant that things are going well.

I asked him about the students, and he told me he does not have any involvement with them that is worth mentioning. He said after classes and dinner, he goes to his room to review his studies and sleep. The next day is the same thing.

I told him that was good. Having close relationship with the students might lead to problems. They will want to know who you are and who your family is, etc. We don't want to tell people we just met who were are. This might create problems for you with the students. However, it is best to wait till you get to know them well before they know your personal information. This way, they will not be apprehensive when dealing with you.

We went home at seven o'clock, and we sat in front of the TV. Saja, Nur and Khawlah were in the study.

I spoke with 'Ali and we watched the news. We saw the President with the Ministers on an Iraqi channel. He was speaking about the Palestinian up-rise and about the Arab world. He said that the people in the Arab world are doing well in their fight against weak regimes, and the up-rise will continue. He also said that Arafat will put an end to what is going on because he has always been a fighter.

The president made the last statement in a challenging way. He was hoping Arafat will feel the pressure and do something.

In my opinion, he is a hopeless case, and the up-rise will be over in a few days not weeks. And Arafat will be the one who ends it. The president called him a (revolutionist); however, I don't think Arafat was a revolutionist at all. He was a product of his environment, and he had his own agenda. Arafat's goals are the same goals of any tyrant who is power hungry. Tyrants convince themselves that they need all the power no matter what that cost. They toy with the blood and spirits of children and young men. They brain wash them. They use their tainted cabinets and supporters to achieve what they want.

The future will prove what I am saying and what I am writing here.

Wednesday, 01NOV2000, I read the papers, and I had a dentist appointment at two PM. I took 'Ali with me since he was home because it was a day off in Freiburg. Every canton has different days off.

'Ali stayed in the car because we parked in a space designated for the building's residents, and he was afraid someone will call the police, which is a common practice here. People call the police to report wrong doing committed by others. In Switzerland, there is a special security system where the citizens cooperate with the security system and the sanitation department.

By the way, while I was working as the Iraqi ambassador in Geneva, the Lebanese ambassador and his wife, whom we knew well, told us a funny story. The ambassador said, while his nieces and nephews were visiting Geneva, they took his car to go to Luzon city. On the way to Luzon, they stopped to eat sandwiches, and they left the wrappers and the boxes, etc. where they fell. Three days later, there was a knock on the ambassador's house door, and there was a man holding a beautiful wrapped box. And he dropped the box off at the house.

When the ambassador and his wife came home, they were given the box by one of their employees, and when they opened it, they found everything that his nieces and nephews left behind. They also found a nice note asking them to cooperate with the sanitation department and how to protect the environment, etc. This is how the system is here in Switzerland.

I made it to the dentist office, and a beautiful woman took me to the waiting room. I looked around me and thought this dentist office is prettier than many residential homes. Every corner of the room was tastefully decorated. There were nice pieces of furniture that complimented each other, beautiful vases with vibrant colors, and a coffee table with political and beauty magazines, etc.

Ten minutes later, the dentist came out, and we greeted each other. I have known him for thirteen years, since Muhammad had his accident, and I visited his office to fix Muhammad's teeth. He is an excellent doctor, and he is well known in and outside of Switzerland. He took me to the examination room, and I looked at the equipment in that room. I have not seen any of the equipment in any dental office in Iraq. I go to the best dentists there, and I also frequent (the elite) hospitals there such as Ibn-Sina's hospital, which is considered the best and where the President gets his treatment, etc.

I asked myself, "Why don't they have the same equipment there?" I realized the reason is that the officials there are not aware of what is new their field. It is not because of the embargo. The president does not refuse any of their requests, especially when they ask for things they need for their practice. He sends them to attend conferences and courses overseas, etc.

My friends Fa'iq al-Safi, a dentist working in Ibn-Sina's hospital, and my other friend Mazin al-'Askar, a doctor who works at the same hospital, told me a lot about teeth implants and how they went to Germany to learn about implants. They later said implants were proven not be effective, and they were not used in Europe and in America. Then, they started using the old method (bridges), etc. I believe they attended courses that are not legitimate.

They go to second-rate schools that are not highly regarded in these countries. They use the aid of a broker who gets a cut just for enrolling them in these schools.

My treatment started, and the dentist did not apply a numbing agent, nor did he cause me any pain, unlike what happens to me in Iraq. He put a new filling and fixed some other things. And I was not in pain, and I did not feel any discomfort. His assistant was a young woman not more than thirty years old. She looked fresher than a rose, and when she came close to me to wipe my mouth, I could smell the sweet smell of amber. I kept wishing that she would come close to my face again.

The dental assistances over there [in Iraq] have to cover their heads. I don't know why. Could it be hypocrisy, since they know they have the power in the office to provide help to anyone or to deny the help to anyone they want? Or is it because they claim to be pious? Maybe the reason is they are covering a flaw under that cover? Maybe their hair is not clean and they don't have the ability or time to take care of it?

Some of them wear long baggy clothes, maybe to cover their obesity. Why did all this happen?

These girls used to look and act differently. What happened?

Everyone knows what happened, but they will not dare to speak of it. I am sure the day will come when people will be able to speak their minds.

I always wondered why the regime is not addressing the negatives. This will allow them to contain the issues and will be beneficial in so many areas. People will not remain muzzled forever.

God help us. If the regime gets weaker or if it falls, people will then start talking. This will be a tragedy.

When I got home, I ate a light lunch with 'Ali. We stayed at home.

Saja came home from the university, and we sat in the formal living room.

At six o'clock, 'Ali left to go to Freiburg because he had classes the next day.

I had dinner at nine o'clock, then Saja and I went for a walk around the house. The weather was nice, and we came back home an hour later. Then, we went to our bedrooms and slept.

Thursday, 02NOV2000: Today is Muhammad's and Nur's birthday. God blessed us with them on the same day, but different years. Muhammad was born on 02NOV1972 and Nur was born on 2NOV1983, the year my brother Saddam sold me cheap thinking he found a replacement for me. The replacement was Husayn Kamil, a person known for his bad reputation.

The last birthday party we had for them was on 02NOV1997, when beloved Shajarat al-Dur was with us. She was brilliant, and she invoked comfort and security and beauty in all around her.

By sheer luck, the day before, I asked for the video tape that we recorded that day. I watched the party that I mentioned earlier.

She looked great, even though she fell ill a year earlier. She was diagnosed on 12NOV1996 when she was in Baghdad with Khawlah, Nur and Muhammad.

We both agreed that she should go to Baghdad to stop the dirty rumors. It was said that Barazan is trying to take over, etc. I used to laugh at what people were saying; unfortunately, the president started believing this stupidity. He thought that he is the envy of everyone because he is the president and thought that many will try to take his power away from him.

I said it before and I say it again, Iraq is almost drained in the eyes of anyone who respect this country or themselves. We all know about the sadness and the hardship all over there. It is impossible to fix what has been broken, especially the morals and beliefs. Of course, what I am saying here does not make sense to those who only care about power.

That was the reason that Shajarat al-Dur and I agreed that she should go with some of our children to Iraq. To show a sign to those people and say indirectly that if Barazan was really working to take over, he would not send his wife and some of his children to live under the control of the regime.

They went at the end of August 1996. The children were enrolled in the International school there. Regretfully, she fell ill on 12NOV1996, and she underwent a mastectomy surgery, so we had no choice but to bring her back to Switzerland for treatment.

Even though she was suffering from this serious ailment, she looked extremely beautiful during the last party she attended with us. She was vibrant, and her spirit so was high that no one could have suspected her illness. She was braver than most men.

She was vibrant and beautiful till the very last minute. It was a waste that she was not for this world from her childhood. The older she got, she became wiser, more beautiful, and she was always ready to sacrifice for others.

She had special attributes that you cannot find in most women.

One day before she got sick, I told her that I am wondering where and when you think they will start to clone people. She said, "Why?" I told her because I want to clone her. She laughed and said, "I am not so special." I told myself, "She is so humble."

She really does not know how great she is. She can rule an entire country because she is clever, ethical, wise and generous. I am sure if the president's wife had half Shajarat al-Dur's attributes, she would have saved him a great deal of problems, and she would have made him loved by everyone in the east and everyone in the west."

Anyway, I spoke with Saja and asked her if we can have a small celebration today. I know Shajarat al-Dur would not want us to live a sad life. She wanted us to live our lives. As I previously mentioned in this memoir, she asked me to continue living our lives and to watch over our children.

For that reason, we will have a small celebration, even though her absence is filling our hearts with sadness and pain.

We bought a gift for Nur, a purse from Louis Vuitton. Shajarat al-Dur did the same thing for the other girls when they reached Nur's age.

When Saja told Nur we are planning a small party for her, Nur refused and started crying; however, Saja was able to calm her down and she told her that her mother and father want this. She also told her that her mother wants their lives to continue. Saja said the celebration will not be like the previous parties we had because Shajarat al-Dur is with God, and Muhammad and Thurayya are in Baghdad.

Thurayya did not attend our previous gatherings. She had her own way of thinking.

'Ali was also in Freiburg attending school, and there was no one in the house except Saja, Nur, Khawlah and myself.

We bought a cake and candles, and we celebrated at eight PM. We all felt awkward, and I felt lonely. I gave Nur her gift, two gold bracelets that used to be her mother's and the bag. I told her these bracelets are of special value to her because they were her mother's. She really appreciated the bracelets. Her eyes glistened with tears, and I felt so sad and started crying.

We called Muhammad in Baghdad, and he was alone. He declined his aunts and uncles invitation to celebrate his birthday, so they sent him flowers and a cake. I wished him a happy Birthday then Saja and his other sisters spoke with him.

After they finished their call, I asked Saja about what they talked about. She told me he was crying, and he felt the same way we all do. I replied, "This is our life and this is the will of God."

Friday 03NOV2000: I went to pick 'Ali up from Freiburg because it was the last day of the week. I arrived at twelve noon, and it was raining. Ali's face was better than

'Ali looked healthier and in better spirit than the previous times.

I met with Mr. Runi, our Iraqi friend, who I asked to find out what the lawyer would say about the children residency in case the Swiss decide to do something.

He gave me a general opinion and it sounded like things would be ok.

We returned to Geneva and were home at two thirty in the afternoon.

I asked 'Isa about Saja and he told me he dropped her off in the city to do some shopping. I asked him to go back and bring her home.

Despite this, I decided to go and pick Saja up. I also picked up Nur and Khawlah. We sat in front of the TV and ate dinner.

'Ali wanted to go to the city to meet with his friends. He said he would ride the bus there, but I told him not to because I would give him a ride. He refused but I insisted and told him that he could take the bus back at eleven o'clock. I also reminded him not to miss that bus because it was the last bus and I was tired so I would be asleep before then. He said, "OK."

Saturday, 4NOV2000: I woke up at nine thirty before the children because I went to bed the night before at ten PM. I ate breakfast, then the children woke up and ate their breakfast. I wrote a letter to Sahir al-Qaysi, an Engnieer, and a Ph.D graduate Saher al-Qaisi,

the designer of Shajarat al-Dur's memorial. I told him that I don't have a lot of hope to get additional information on how the memorial should look, and I gave some suggestions and told him to come up with a design (a copy of the message is attached).

After that, I went with the children and Rex for a walk near the house. Then we came back and did not do anything else.

Sunday, 5NOV2000: The weather was very nice and the temperature was comfortable. It reminded me of the weather during the month of March in Iraq. When the sun was shining, we used to sit on a balcony which was sheltered from the Northern wind. We enjoyed sitting there. We used to cook on an open fire.

'Ali went to Freiburg because his school week started the next day, Monday. I asked Rafi' to drive him to the dorm in Freiburg.

Monday, 6NOV2000: I read the newspaper and there was nothing important in it that I had not heard before. I was surprised from what I observed in the news on TV. The one thing that I did not know touching Iraq was that the newspaper Sharq Al Awsat published a subject that was translated

and originally published in the Sunday Telegraph. The article claimed that the President's son, 'Uday, tortured three players in the Iraqi league because they did not perform to his satisfaction.

Saja was sitting with me in the formal living room since she did not have school until the afternoon. I told her that there was an article about the president's son ordering three players to be tortured. I handed her the paper to read the English article and told her it might be false news. I was sure no one would want to refute this type of news. Unfortunately, this type of news was starting to catch up with this boy.

Saja said, "You are right, dad." I said to her that in Lebanon they say that a person who avoids rumors and no one can contradict that his body is "dressed".

I went to the market to buy a device to measure the heat and humidity because I wanted to place it in Shajarat al-Dur's room to know the exact temperature and humidity there. That way I could tell the Engineering firm that I had contracted to design the memorial for Shajarat al-Dur. The temperature and humidity levels were an important factor for the project. It was actually the most important point. Even though the specialist in the center where she [Shajarat al-Dur] was provided us with the information, I wanted to personally check the levels.

Saja had go to her university and wanted me to give her a ride but I told her to take the car.

She said, "I don't mind but I want you to go out and not stay at home." I told her, "I don't need to go out and I prefer to stay at home." She said, "OK".

Saja came back home around five in the afternoon. I asked her to look for an (agenda) that I recorded my daily dairy in a few years ago. I recorded our life events since her mother fell ill and until I left Geneva on 01DEC1998.

She looked for the agenda and she found two notebooks. While she was looking she found a few other things including a letter she wrote to the President from Amman when she was going to Geneva in 1994 and never returned. The letter contained all the details that led to her decision to never go back. She was travelling to see us but for the reasons she listed for the President she decided not to go back.

She informed him of her decision and sent her letter with Madir Khayrallah (her maternal uncle) who the President tasked with accompanying Saja to Amman.

Her uncle watched over Saja until she made it to her flight.

When she read the letter, she said, "Dad, this letter is very harsh." I told her, "Do you regret mentioning these things in your letter? Were these things that you mentioned true?"

She answered, "Of course, they are true. This is only a sample of what happened which I will not tolerate because of who I am, how I was brought up and what I have learned from you.

As for whether I regret it or not, my answer is definitely not. I believed then as I do now that I had to clear these matters and to direct things in the right direction.”

I answered, “That is good. The most important thing is not to regret something we do or say because regret does not help.”

Nur brought Khawlah from school.

I sent a letter to the Residency Office stating the same thing I said before and asked to extend my residency till 15JAN2001. After I sent the letter, Saja told me she wanted me to stay because they were used to having me with them. I told her, “Dear, I want to stay with you. That is why I am sending the request to extend my residency; but I will go to Baghdad in January of next year after I spend New Year’s Eve with you.” I told her, “The details and the plans for your mother’s memorial require me to be in Baghdad as no one can make any decisions in this matter except for me.” She said, “OK, Dad.”

After that, I went to the movie theater with Saja around six PM. Because there was no place to park, we walked instead of took the car there. We took a side street that was parallel to Rue de Rhone, which was the most important street in Geneva because

all fashion boutiques, banks and jewelry shops were located on this street. The street we took was called Rue de Marché. When we walked in the street it, I thought the lights there looked like a crystal chandelier. The stores started to put out Christmas and New Year's decorations.

When I saw the lights and felt the chilly breeze mixed with the light rain, I felt as if it was my first time witnessing this. It was like the first time I had this feeling because it had been three years since I went to these places. It also reminded me, as if I had forgotten, of the days we used to go out for walks or go shopping with Shajarat al-Dur. A sweet memory. This made me feel sad and the feeling lasted halfway through the movie.

The movie was more of a drama than romance or any other genre.

I told Saja the movie was different than I expected. I told her that I expected to see the brilliant and vibrant Catherine Deneuve who always reminded me of her mother; however, I found Catherine Deneuve to be a factory worker who was making pots and pans.

She felt close to another worker who came from Czechoslovakia after a personal painful experience to go through an even worse experience in the United States of America.

I expected to see Catherine Deneuve wearing a suit by Yve Saint Laurent or Dior or wearing jewelry by Van Clif, but this I did not expect. After all, it was my first time into the city in more than three years.

I unintentionally tried to stop life which was reflected on my life and my way of thinking and movements. Since the time Shajarat al-Dur became ill, especially the time when she was gone from our lives, I did not go to any place we used to go together and I also did not attend any celebration.

Even Muhammad's wedding was on hold from that time till now but I felt that this matter had been put on hold for far too long. The longer it was postponed the worse it was for him. Therefore, I brought the subject up for discussion and we decided he should go to Baghdad and get married. It was his right to get married while he is still young and strong, to have a family and to build a home. Postponing this would have negative effects on his life as it was best to get married at a certain age rather than get married at an older age. Before all this

I am sure Shajarat al-Dur would have not accepted anything contrary to that. Her only wish was for us to continue living. We will follow these orders. May God grant us success.

I forgot to mention that after Saja and I left the movie theater, she asked me, “Dad, we don’t have movie theaters like this one in Baghdad. Don’t you think movies are important as they send a message to people? Did you see how people acted in the theater? They were quiet and organized even though no one was watching them. This theater was cared for as if it was private property, not like it was a public place used by everyone. “

I said, “Iraq used to be like this. There were movie theaters as clean and well-kept as this one, and there were restaurants and clubs just like the ones we have here. They were clean and the food was great but in the late seventies when the government decided to take control of everything the society there became for men only. The members of the revolution and the party decided to stop going out with their families to public places and they decided for some no good reason to go out alone.

After that, they started moving to the farm areas and living in secret homes and they used an entourage that created chaos on the streets. The majority of people who did not want trouble also stopped going out to public places for that reason as well as many other reasons.

Services in Iraq struggled until it became none existing. Another thing that affected the morale of the citizens and structure in the realm of services, other issues, and anything related to the infrastructure was when they decided to build skyscrapers from the top floor to the bottom which is not logical. This is against science and logic. That is why you will notice that all buildings made of brick are collapsing on the heads of the first floor tenants. The high point of this damage for these people and the ones on other floors that collapse as a result of this kind of thinking was in January 1991 when the war with America and its alliance erupted.

These bricks almost did away with everything to include all the decision makers; however, for international and regional reasons they did not and left the decision makers for the purpose of keeping the Iraqi unity even if it was only on paper and not in reality.

However, if they continue using the same way and the same mentality (building) they will destroy themselves and no one else.

The last collapse that happened in January of 1991 destroyed a lot and left nothing of value to destroy. People were nervous and they could not afford to have the same or similar thing happen again.

The general consensus among Iraqis, its organizations, and within the Arab region and the world is different now. It will be difficult to let the same thing happen. If a mistake happens like in the August 1990 event, then it will be the end.

I truly fear a mistake will happen that will allow others to accomplish what they could not in the past. Iraqi decision makers are still thinking the same way and pushing what they want through military action by having weapons that are considered illegal internationally.

The other thing which will expedite the errors is how the Iraqi decision makers are always acting upon what is happening in Palestine and trying to gain popularity that way.

They put too much emphasis on what the civilians and the Arab nation can do, which will bring them frustration. If during a moment of anger they decide to pursue a decision that is not based on strong foundation as they usually do, no one will be happy with the results.

The determination of the Iraqi leadership to own strategic weapons especially now is beyond words for more than one reason. I believe the leadership is getting old and there is no time to repair what was destroyed of the economy or to provide investment capital for the economy. The other reason, which is more important, is the main decision maker [TC: Saddam]. Since he was a young man, he refused to set goals for planning or the economy. He also refused to have the military forces support the economy. He insisted on accomplishing everything by using force and not planning and economy.

That is why he spent all of what he had on the military, the security forces and the police to protect the regime and prevent it from falling.

Having said that, I hope I am wrong; however, what I said is not an analysis or an imagination. It is the truth.

Tuesday, 07NOV2000: Today is Shajarat al-Dur's visit. Saja and I went to the girl's school and we took Khawlah like we usually do. Nur was supposed to meet with us after she finished school at four fifteen PM. We arrived to the center at five minutes till four. At exactly four o'clock, an employee opened the door for us. We went in and as usual we went to Shajarat al-Dur's room.

We all looked in her direction and she was in deep sleep. We recited al-Fatiha, then sat around her reading the Quran for more than an hour. After that, I got up and went to look at her and give her a kiss.

We left her at five thirty and it took us twenty minutes to get home. As usual, during our trip back not a single one of us said a word. When we got home I could not go for a walk because it was raining. I sat in the formal living room quietly. I was thinking about everything I saw and read. I thought of the power of the Almighty God and I thought of what I read in the holy Quran.

What is mentioned in the noble Quran is very deep and very eloquent. Every time I read it I feel it is like the first time I read it.

I said to myself, "May God bless you with the honor to be in heaven, Umm-Muhammad. You were kind to me when we were together. Even now, you are still kind to me because I was reading the Quran and I started to deeply think about the verses I was reading which made realize many things that I was not aware of.

Even now when you are with your creator you are still good to me. You are good to me in so many marvelous ways. You are marvelous, brilliant and creative even when while you are on a journey to your second life.

You made me calm. You made me recite and read the Quran and really think of what I was reading. This was different from previous times. While I was sitting beside your bed, watching you, and seeing how calm you looked made me think of how powerful the Almighty God is and made me comprehend the words of God.

For those and other countless reasons I want to say that I was unable to repay you while you were with me. There were many harsh reasons including the ones inflicted upon us by our blood relatives who were inexperienced and who made bad decision when they dealt with their personal problems that they should have dealt with separate and away from the sword they hold and the power they had for more than twenty years. They used that sword for a long time and they cut into people and their lives until it all became small pieces thrown to the wind.

Instead of dealing with family feud away from the power, they made that same power deal with personal problems, which created cracks in the foundation of the family that would need special power to heal.

For the sake of power and based on personal fears, and while I was going through a tough time that even the wickedest person would sympathize with, I was transferred from Geneva to Baghdad while my wife was on her death bed.

Imagine, what it would have been like if I was the ambassador to Israel. Would I have been treated the same way I was treated? I am sure I would have not; however, the decision was made by my brother whom I helped since the age of thirteen until he reached his goal and became a president. He later sold me really cheap because of Husayn Kamil who repaid him in a unique way to prove how loyal Husayn Kamil's family is and what background they come from.

My brother ordered my transfer without any regards to my situation because he was worried that I was in Europe and that I was in the light, especially after it became clear that ideas were crystallizing and shining after I reached a stage of political maturity.

At the same time, he knew who I was and it was impossible for me to join the other forces against him; however, he always ignored and distanced people he was sure were decent and pious.

This was after spending ten years in one of the most important place regionally and internationally, Geneva, which was the refuge and the meeting point for all politicians.

Of course, the main reason we were not allowed to live a happy life and enjoy our relationship was the jealousy of family members and the way they twisted things to make us look bad. It was done in mean and unbearable ways. All this made our lives unstable and forced us to come up with ways to prevent them from hurting us more. After they were unable to inflict more harm on us, things calmed down, we came to Switzerland, and left everything for them. We were dreaming that we would have a good life and we will help each other forget the pain and the injustice we endured, but six months later, I was forced to deal with (havoc) what the word means which was the Iraq – Iran File. When the first meeting between Iraq and Iran took place here in Geneva, I met Mr. Sayrus Nasri, the Iranian Ambassador in Geneva, after I had already met Mr. Mala'iki, the Iranian Ambassador in Bern who I met through Shaykh Jabir al-Ahmad when he was the Kuwaiti Ambassador in Geneva. Before I was able to leave this (havoc), the day of (al-Nida's al-Aghar) and after that, the Mother of all Battles took place, which made people start distancing themselves from us as if we were outcasts or suffered from a contagious disease after they used to be friendly with us and we received invitations from them.

When they saw us at an event or some place they tried to ignore us or pretend they did not see us to avoid speaking with us. Can you imagine how stressful it was and how tough it was to coexist with them?

Even the children at school were subjected to a lot of emotional pressure from the students and from the teachers as well. Everyone called them the children of the dictator's brother, which caused them a great deal of pain. I had to write a letter to the school and explain how bad the situation was and the importance of leaving the children out of politics...etc.

Finally and before the blessed Mother of all Battles was over, the will of God that no one can stop took place.

As I said before, I cannot repay you and I cannot do what you did for me. You are one of a kind. You supported me, you were faithful to me and while you are close to God and away from me, I still want you to know that your values and your noble principles will live in my heart and will be my guiding beacon and lead me to the right path."

Wednesday, 8NOV2000: Nothing new. It was a normal day and I did not do much except bringing the children home from school, reading the newspaper, and following the American election news, which may make Iraqi

politicians and analysts think that the United States of America is starting to collapse and a civil war is going to erupt. This is because the election results were not announced on the day it was supposed to be announced. Most of the politicians in Iraq, with the exception for a few, do not know what they should know about America, its constitution, and its social harmony.

America is like a beautiful painting that every color in it complements the other. They think that having many races and colors and everything that composes the United States of America are points of weakness when in reality it is the opposite. This image of intricate work is considered the strength of the infrastructure of the social, political and even economic points there. All these colors work together within the legal limit offered by the American constitution, which offers safety and security for everyone and all the important establishments there.

Even the Arabs and Muslims are calling for rights to be given to their brothers in Palestine and in Chechnya.

As for the United States of America, they work on what is beneficial to the country and its reputation. The politicians and Analysts in Iraq do not have this concept. It's not they don't care about the country or what is going on in it, but they have numb minds just like the ones who came before them.

For a while I began to doubt that the United States would want to get rid of these politicians who affected Iraqi politics. The reason is that the pattern of their thinking and type of actions the American interests use in the region. The opposite are those which expel America and attack their interests in the area.

At the end of December 1992, I was in Baghdad. The President invited me to the house he shared with his wife. They were living at the home President al-Bakr built for them when the current President was his Vice President. The palace that the President's family currently resides in is called al-Qadisyyah palace. It was built in the early eighties by a German company and was designed by the office owned by Tabtan Mawadah al-'Alaq and Amal al-Tabqalji. This is actually Amal's husband's last name. Her surname is al-Qurah al-Ghuli.

When the President invited me to his house, there were also others there: his wife, their older son, Husayn Kamil and Saddam as well as his daughters. They did not sit with us for too long. This was the first time for me to meet my niece, Ala', the daughter of Husayn al-Zaban. Ala' was taken care of by the President and she lived with his youngest daughter, Hala, because she was left alone after her sisters married the sons of Kamil Hasan.

This loneliness affected her behavior and she started to become violent and vicious as if she were a man. This of course needed to be addressed as she comes from a prominent family with principles and values.

When I reached the interior door, I knocked. When the door opened I found a small dark girl who looked as if she was blue and not dark. I thought she was one of the girls who worked in the place. I casually greeted her but she answered in a way that made it apparent that she knew me personally. I asked her, who are you and she said that she was the daughter of Husayn al-Zaban and of course I greeted her again since she is related and I kissed her and told her to convey my regards to her family.

During this visit, the President asked Husayn Kamil about the al-Mu'aliq [hanging] bridge because the President was always interested in construction as if it was the only way to remedy what happened in early 1991. He was especially interested in the bridge because he knew how much the people in Baghdad were attached to it. Husayn answered him and told him, "Sir, we will open the bridge on time." The President asked him, "Which time are you referring to," and Husayn replied, "On the eleventh month of the year." He meant the eleventh month of 1992. The President then asked him, "Are you sure?" Husayn answered, "Yes, yes sir as I am informed about the smallest details."

The President did not reply but 'Uday said, "It is hard to say that the work on the bridge will be completed by that time", and he said that Bab al-Sharqi bridge or what some people call al-Tahrir or al-Ahrar bridge will be completed before the hanging bridge.

Husayn angrily answered, "I will behead myself if Bab al-Sharqi bridge is complete before the hanging bridge."

The President laughed.

I did not pay attention to this conversation at that time but after Husayn al-Kamil (resigned) I found out that this conversation was the beginning of the friction between them when al-Tahrir Bridge was open. Other altercations and events that took place between the President's son and Husayn Kamil leaked to the media.

Anyway, during this visit we talked about our relationship with America and I told them that America was continuing to pressure Iraq because the war did not accomplish the goal, which was to change the political agenda in Iraq; therefore, it was hard to guess. I also told them that decision makers would not deal with Iraq before the end of the third month next year.

The President asked me about the reason and I told him that America would be busy with the election starting now; and they don't have time to deal with this file. I also said that the Republicans and the Democrats would avoid this issue because they were worried that the other party would use that against them.

The President said, "When is this election?" I told him, "In November of this year."

I noticed that the others did not even know when the elections would start in the United States of America.

Anyone should question why a President of a country in the condition of war with the United States of America does not know the time of the election there, who the candidates are, and how the outcome would affect the fight between himself and America.

I believe I can guess the reasons. First, there aren't any political establishments to follow and analyze the intelligence and present the analysis to the President or even the State Department, the Intelligence or the Foreign Policy Office within the Party are not doing that.

At the same time, the President does not ask them to do that, he does not reprimand them when they don't do these types of reports, and does not encourage them when they attempt to do them.

Second and most importantly, the President does not consider foreign matters as he is focused on the interior. He does not believe in diplomacy. There is a State Department but the reason for that is because having one is customary all over the world, not to pave the way or to strengthen relationships.

Since 1968, relationships were handled by the center and during all this time not a single ambassador was called to organize a visit by the President, his Vice President, or his Prime Minister.

However, this was done during the monarchy era even though the country was still new and was weak at that time.

As for the others, why didn't they know that and other things? It is because they were absent minded. I am not only referring to people who were there but I am referring to the national staff.

One day, 'Abd-al-Salam Muhammad Sa'id, the Minister of Health visited Geneva. He was an engineer, not a doctor. He was there to attend the International Health Conference which was held every year. During one of our meetings, I asked him if he reads the newspapers. He answered, "No." I asked him, "Do you follow the news on the radio?" and he said, "No." I asked him, "Why, when you are the Minister of Health and you attend the meetings for the Council of Ministers? You are required to give your opinion on matters....etc." He said, "First, the Council of Ministers does not care about political issues and we do not discuss them. The other reason is that the newspapers, the radio and the other media outlets have an effect on us, which is why we don't read or listen to them."

When I heard what he said, I felt that half of me was dead. I said, "You are a Minister and not just an ordinary person. You must know what your enemy is saying about you." He replied, "No, No! It is best to avoid hearing that."

This is an example of what Iraq was. A Minister who feared how the media will affect him.

I am not saying that he feared the media. He was afraid of saying the wrong thing if he repeated what he heard on the news. He might say that he heard Voice of America said such and such and believed that might be enough to lose his head. I don't doubt this.

In the middle of 1994, Mr. Tariq 'Aziz asked me to meet him in Vienna because he was going to be there to meet with the official from the Atomic Energy Commission and other Austrian officials.

I went there and we met the official from the Atomic Agency and the Austrian Secretary of State. One day during our visit we were all sitting in his hotel room and I asked him about what I had noticed about his cautiousness and not leaving the hotel without the protection of his security team which were with him. I said, "That is more caution than needed." He said, "No, Abu-Muhammad, being careful is a must because of the enemies of Iraq are following people who can influence others by reason and logic." He also stated that people like 'ali Hasan and Husayn Kamil were not pursued because they served the interests of America and others. He told me to be careful and said that the most wanted by America now are Tariq 'Aziz, Barazan al-Tikriti and people like them.

When I heard that I knew it was the truth.

The years also proved what Tariq 'Aziz said. People who do not have the correct understanding regarding world politics and the United States are the majority in Iraq; however they are members of the political decision makers either directly or indirectly. They are too busy with their own benefits and gains, and not because they don't have the resources, access to research, or because they don't have satellites. They use these satellites to watch pornographic and horror movies, crime and fashion shows. They have tastes for such.

This is the reason, and there is no other reason, that we don't forget that there is another group that has imagination and knowledge, but does not speak when there is reason to fear the first group. The first group uses different types of mental terrorism in different ways in order to keep the second group in their place and there is nothing left to them, but to keep to themselves until the president changes. This is what is going on in Iraq. If you want to be promoted there, then you have to be a hypocrite, a user, and you have to be either dumb or pretend to be dumb. You also must have many weak points whether they are social, political or financial.

The weaker you are the longer you stay in the position. They don't want people who are mentally, socially, or economically fit and they don't want a person with a good wife or well-mannered children. They want cowards who don't ask questions nor object to any decisions. They want them to blindly follow orders and who don't have any effects on anyone, even their own wives.

One time, while speaking with me about the dumb, limited, and shallow leadership that we have in the party and the country, Mr. Tariq 'Aziz said, "One time we were invited by the President to sit in a meeting and before we entered the room where the President was, Lieutenant Mazban Khidr Hadi said, "Abu-Ziyad, you are always talking about a specific scenario. What is the scenario you are talking about?"

Mr. Tariq 'Aziz was so upset when he heard that. How can someone in a position like this not know the meaning of scenario? He was forced to explain in simple terms what he meant. So, he said, "I will explain things to you in a way that you will be able to understand." He said, "Imagine a young man from the same street or the same neighborhood where you live comes up to you and says, "Sir, you are very kind and honorable, and I would love to have the honor to ask for your daughter's hand in marriage.""

Of course, you will answer him in a calm way and if you knew him or you knew of his family then you will reply, 'The honor is ours. Please bring your family so we can get to know them.'

However, if that same person came to you with the same goal and said, "Sir, I want to marry your daughter so that I can sleep with her (fuck her)", of course you will get angry, you will hit him and kick him out.

Of course, what he did in the first case got him what he wanted but not in the second case because he did not use the right scenario which led you to hit him and kick him out. This is the meaning of a Scenario. Imagine this when you sit with the President to decide the fate of people or when you are trying to solve their problems.

Thursday, 9NOV2000: Nothing worth mention. I stayed at home and did not leave at all during the day. The children were in their schools and universities.

Friday, 10NOV2000: I stayed home from Wednesday evening until now. After the children came home from school, I went for walk and took Khawlah with me and of course we took Rex, the family friend, with us.

Rex loves to go outside and he feels very happy when we go out and take him with us. He knows we are leaving the house when he sees us putting out jackets on. He looks happy and excited which creates a sense of commotion and we are afraid he will break something in the house. We also try to sneak out of the house, we hide his leash under our clothes so he does not see it and gets too excited.

We took Rex and Khawlah kept trying to put the leash on him because our neighbors have cats and we fear he may hurt one of their cats which will create a huge problem for us. The cats are always afraid of Rex. The neighbors think that the dog terrorizes their cats and they refuse to understand our view which is the simple fact that cats and dogs don't get along.

Khawlah was struggling to put the leash around his neck which made me signal him that I will hit him so that Khawlah can get a hold of his collar and put the leash on him. When Khawlah saw this, she thought I will hit the dog and she started screaming, "No, No dad. Don't hit him. The neighbors will call the police on you. This will cause a (problem)." I told her that I was only trying to scare him so that she can put the leash on him and I said to myself, "Where are we in comparison to this?"

The majority of people there publicly beat their children and no one says anything to them. As for animals, the government in the mid-seventies gave money to any person who brings them a cat or a dog. The TV showed how these cats and dogs were thrown in the fire to get rid of them. The Ministry of Agriculture did that when the late Nafiz Jalal al-Kurdi was the minister and he was later killed in a car accident.

A while ago we planned a trip to France during Christmas and New Year's break but we were not sure if the Swiss will extend my stay so we planned another trip just in case.

The first possibility was for them to extend my stay and we would use two cars, one of them a station wagon that we would rent so that Rex could ride in the back which would be big enough for him and one bag and the second car we would put the rest of the bags that will have our belongings that we will need during our vacation.

The second possibility was in case the Swiss did not extend my stay and in that case, the children would go together in one car and I would return to Baghdad. Of course, one car was not enough for their bags and Rex so I suggested we leave Rex in Geneva.

That created a huge uproar, (We can't do this dad) and some said we will stay in Geneva and we will not go to France...etc.

I told them to give me a chance and I would formulate a better idea. You are rushing into decisions and not letting me think so they said, "OK, Dad. Finish your thoughts."

I told them that I think we should call the directory and see if there was a kennel where Rex can stay until we came back. Of course this would cost us but there is a price for everything. They said, "Great idea, even though we prefer to take him with us".

Saja called and explained the situation and got a phone number. She was told to call this number and explain what she just told them and she would get the needed help.

Saja called the number and they told her that they can take Rex but they needed the following information: his health record, weight, breed, the food he eats, his temper, whether he had a temper, depressed, or ill, whether he was on medication and why, would we like them to come over to feed, provide attention, take him for walks and they also have an employee that could answer phone messages or would we want them to provide housing for him. The employee also told her that they had the best hospital that was equipped with the latest technology and they also had an operating room for the animals.

She also told her that they have a psychiatrist and they also have an emergency service we can call any time if we have an emergency with our dog.

Saja came back and started to explain what the employee in the kennel told her. I did not say anything but I said to myself, "True, there is a huge difference between us and the West. It is leaps and bounds. We have to improve the way we think and the way we deal with each other. We should never call each other dog or son of a dog thinking that this is an insult. The dogs in the west are thousands times more respected and they have more freedom than humans who are living there.'

No use of saying all this as no one will listen.

This story reminded me of a movie that was played on Aljazeera yesterday. It was about the people and children in Iraq and what happened to them after they were exposed to the uranium that the American used during the last war. The program was called "Top Secret" and was presented by Yusri Fudah. It had a really strong effect on me and I forced myself to watch it till the end because the footage was disturbing and scary beyond words. No one can watch this without feeling that their heart is breaking.

I said this was the (value) of people there and this was the value of dogs here. When will people in our country have half the value of dogs in the west? No one can tell.

It is as if we are in a hijacked plan and no one knows where it is going or what is happening inside the mind of the hijacker.

Saturday, 11NOV2000: Even though the weather was very nice and the sun was shining and the temperature was moderate, I felt sad and very depressed for no reasons but two. The first thing was that this kind of weather reminded me of the old days which unfortunately did not last. It reminded me of when I used to go for walks with the beloved Shajarat al-Dur in the city, by the lake and in the beautiful fields. The other reason was that this was the day before Shajarat al-Dur disappeared from our lives. This was the feeling that I had when I lost my right eye.

I tried to lighten the mood which was pressing on my chest by taking Khawlah and Rex for a walk near the house. We returned about an hour later but we did not talk about anything the entire time we walked.

Sunday, 12NOV2000: I woke up at seven thirty which was not my normal time and stayed in bed till nine thirty.

After that, I got out of bed and ate breakfast but my breakfast was also different than what I normally do.

Some of the children were fasting for their mother. Even though it was not dark or rainy, I felt that darkness enveloped everything.

I got dressed and sat in the formal living room to read the Quran. The children stayed and I asked 'Ali to put on an audio recording of the Quran and he did.

This atmosphere reminded me of what happened two years ago, when God ordered what was happening to us. This made me play my life since I got here until this unfortunate and terrible event.

I remembered everything and throughout my memory she looked stunning and felt like she was my true love. Our love made us overcome a lot of harsh circumstances and strengthened our relationship and kept us moving forward.

Shajarat al-Dur used to tell me when bad events or treatments started to affect my mood, that this was their goals and not to let them get to me. She used to say that I needed to keep moving forward and not look behind me. She told me to tread and invest my free time to my benefit and to increase my knowledge and my friends and to never stop growing.

In the evening, 'Ali went to his dorm to start school the next day and I stayed with the three girls.

I asked Saja to bring me the tape of her birthday so we can watch it. We record the birthdays of each child since they were born.

Saja brought the tape and the player and after watching for three hours, I was reminded of the closeness I shared with Shajarat al-Dur and how great our family life was that I believe is not enjoyed by anyone else from our family or friends. We used to celebrate family events by ourselves and we gave each other and the children attention.

Nur does not speak much and was tentatively watching the recording. She made one single comment, she said, "After I watched the movie, I see all of us children calling mom and sometimes we all called her all at once, Mom...mom...mom! How loud we were!" Saja answered from where she was sitting and said, "May God help her."

I saw images of Shajarat al-Dur from almost the start of the recording. I kept saying to myself, "Isn't it horrible that someone as wonderful and beautiful as her disappears that fast from our lives when she was at the peak of her maturity and while she was a true giver to her family and everyone." How unfortunate!

While I was watching the recording I remembered how fast things were going. I couldn't believe that had I spent twenty seven years with her already. I always felt that we met only a few months ago and she was the one who made me feel that way. She was creative and ethical and always renewed things in herself and around her. She is a true legend.

This has been my opinion for a long time and not just recently or as a result of my state of sadness or for my longing.

I remembered when I sat next to her while she laid in her hospital bed holding and kiss her hand and her beautiful face. I remember that at exactly five minutes till three in the afternoon on Friday 12NOV1998 when she started to have slow shallow breaths until she stopped breathing where I thought that was it and everything is over. I did not want to let go so I quickly called the nurse and asked her to check Shajarat al-Dur's heart and she did.

She said, "It is all over." (FINISHED). I was alone in the room with Shajarat al-Dur because Saja went to see the a doctor at the same hospital because she was complaining of a stomachache so I told her to call and see a doctor for a check; even though, I knew she felt like that because of what is happening in our lives in addition to her exhaustion in New York as she was accompanying her mother.

Add to that the time difference between Europe and America, which was why she went to see the doctor.

Muhammad went home to change because he and Saja take turns staying with their mother overnight.

I closed her eyes and recited al-Fatihah and broke down crying. A few minutes later, Saja came in and saw me and she realized what happened and started to cry.

A few minutes later, I told myself that this is not the time to cry. It is a time to work and to work quickly for that matter. I called Muhammd and asked him to bring his mother's clothes which I picked out myself for this specific time, even though I was hoping that it will not come to that. Muhammad understood what was happening and he was back in the hospital in less than an hour. I told him to ask the driver to bring 'Ali to the hospital and 'Ali was in the hospital the same time his brother was.

I told Muhammad to ask the hospital staff to find out if they can bring a woman who can help us perform ablution on his mother. He left and came back and said since it is almost five o'clock and today is the last day of the week, they suggested that we should wait till Monday. I told him "No, I will do it myself for your mother. Postponing this is not possible because I have already contracted a medical center that specializes in embalming and preserving bodies, and I must call them when the inevitable happens."

This was the reason that I called Mr. Ilyas Khuri, may God reward him, and asked him to call the center for me, as I used to take him with me during my meeting with them to discuss the details.

I told Muhammad, "You should recite the Quran, and Saja you will pour water for us and I will do the washing," and we did.

After that, we got her dressed. I chose her best clothes, even though all her clothes were beautiful and elegant because she was an elegant woman but I thought she would like what I chose since she used to wear them often during important events. They were by Hermes.

Mr. Ilyas called me, then came to the hospital. He said the center will send a motorcade on Monday morning and said that it was not important to keep her in an air-conditioned room in the hospital.

We asked the hospital if they have a room like that and they said they did.

At seven thirty we took Shajarat al-Dur to that room which was clean with soft lights and flowers in every corner. It was very romantic and comforting. All four of us stood around the bed and recited al-Fatihah. Afterwards, we went home.

Obviously, there is no reason to describe how we felt going home. On the way, we started to think of the best way and easiest way to tell the younger daughters about what happened.

I asked Muhammad and Saja to speak with them and to gradually break the news to them. We had to take them with us on Monday when we take their mother to the embalming center.

Muhammad and Saja spent Friday evening and all of Saturday and Sunday breaking the news to the girls.

Here, I have to stop and mention that the new delegates did not visit me in the hospital and did not come to the hospital on Monday, even though, they knew what was going on. They came to the mosque when she was transported there a few days later, that was on () to perform the deceased prayers for her. I asked them to leave but Mr. Sa'd 'Awn was kind and insisted to stay and recited the Quran and the rest also insisted to attend al-Fatihah and apologized and made some stupid excuses for not being there. Their excuses are as stupid as they are. In the end, I let them stay.

The news reached the Arab and Swiss media before I get a chance to announce it. There was a lady for the Emirates in the room next to Shajarat al-Dur's room. It seemed that she was from a prominent family because the Emirati embassy was very concerned about her and all the delegates were visiting her, and we also saw that the embassy's cars were always in the hospital. She was the one who told the Ambassador and he called our house where Mr. 'Isa who works for us answered his call.

After that the French and the Emarati media published the news. Strange that Babel news announced the news as announced by another news agency and mentioned the name of the agency which published the news. They said that Mrs. Barazan al-Tikriti went through, etc.

Can anyone with an ounce of dignity believe this? Alas, it is easy to imagine and answer this question once you know the mentality of people who subscribe this type of school of thought.

I remembered all these things clearly. I did not stop crying or feeling sorry for what I had lost since the morning. I will never be able to replace her. I seek refuge in God and I hope he rewards us in the hereafter and I hope Shajarat al-Dur will live in heaven.

I remembered that a year ago, the party I held in al-Rashid hotel in Baghdad as a remembrance of Shajarat al-Dur and invited over fifteen hundred people from all sects and groups in Iraq. They were University Professors, Doctors, Engineers, Judges, Merchants, and Politicians from former delegates of the Baath Party and from previous parties that are no longer active after al-Baath party took over.

This was the first time this type of invitation was made since Arabs and especially Muslims don't like holding such events for women which I mentioned in my speech during the event.

For this reason and many other social and political reasons and reasons that stemmed from jealousy there was a commotion in and outside of Iraq once the news became public a few days after it actually happened. The Iraqi government blocked foreign news and the local news claimed they did not show the event because it was a personal event. True, it was a personal occasion with nothing official about it and that was exactly what I wanted. I just wondered why the media was not allowed to cover it if they wanted and for whose benefit it was blocked.

The other thing that made me wonder was how come some officials whom I have a personal relationship with were not allowed to attend. For example, Mr. Tariq 'Aziz who kindly sent his family and they apologized on his behalf to me, Taha Ma'ruf who I have a personal relationship with since the seventies and who I helped to become a Vice President by convincing the President, Abu-'Uday, of how capable he is, the Minister of Religious Affairs since this was a religious event, the Minister of Agriculture and about twenty or more officials. They claimed that they could not attend because they were in a meeting with the President.

Even though, the event was on a Friday evening and it is known the President does not officially work on Fridays and there wasn't anything out of the ordinary locally or overseas happening to warrant a meeting on a Friday. It is known that the President takes a day off on Friday to socialize and meet his friends.

I know this film but I didn't let anyone know how I was feeling. Some of our friends and acquaintances who are still not corrupted said that the timing of the meeting on that day and for no reason is suspicious. They said there was no mention in the media about this meeting and it is intended to prevent the officials from attending the event.

I tried to convince them that this is not true but I failed. Later, I learned that the majority of those who were called by the President for the meeting stayed in their offices until late at night as they were waiting for the meeting which was later postponed. Some people (first line leaders) went to meet the President but it was an ordinary visit. They had dinner which included Kabab, tikka chicken, fish...etc. After dinner they smoked Cuban cigars.

As for the Presidents' sons (my nephews) they did not attend. This was expected as their parents did not teach them what is right and of course because of Husayn Kamil's influence when he was the so called guardian of the President's family during the Correction Movement at the end of 1983.

That was the time the President replaced me with Husayn Kamil who also repaid him well and the relationship was damaged.

At the best of times, their relationship was worthless. They also don't attend any social, political or educational events of values. They only attend other types of events that are known to all Iraqis near and far, events such as the ones hosted by Mazin al-Zahhawi with the Arminian talilor, Harut and their likes.

For that, I did not expect them to attend but I did not want people to say that I was the one who was unfriendly which I am sure they will use to their advantage and say that I did not invite them...etc. For that reason, I sent them invitations as my friend Muhammad 'Abd-al-'Aziz al-Duri, who I consult with regarding some personal issues, suggested that I should invite them and to send invitation cards to all of them as well as the mother but I did not.

I was surprised when I saw the representative of the Crowned Prince, Qusay, who told me that his highness will not be able to attend another funeral. When I asked him who died, he said that it was the grandmother of Qusay's wife, Umm-Mustafa, and her husband is 'Abd-al-Rashid. She was more than eighty years old.

I quickly replied and I said, "Oh no, poor boy, he has an excuse. He should be there. Yes, indeed".

Can you believe these blind and dumb people? Even when they try to make excuses, they cannot come up with a convincing one. As a matter of fact, a year ago during a meeting with the President and the tribal leaders, Qusay himself had a case against Mahir 'Abd-al-Rashid who is the grandfather of Qusay's children. Now, he is not attending because this man's wife died?

During the hearing, Qusay read a file containing information and listing what Mahir said about the government, the officials, and 'Ali Hasan who was a driver and now he is a Brigadier General.

In the end, Mahir was put in jail for two months.

"This is the extent of what Qusay knows about family values and family ties and respect because he was raised by Hussein Kamil", as his father said on one occasion. For that reason, he did not attend his paternal aunt's memorial who is also his paternal uncle's wife. The uncle who helped him many times and made him what he is and that aunt who made him proud wherever she went and who was loved by everyone.

The values instilled in Qusay by Husayn Kamil did not include good manners or behaviors. As a matter of fact, it was contradictory to all that. Husayn taught him that we are not his uncle and we are not related to him. He told him that we are from Majid's family who disowned his father and caused his father a lot of harm.

He told him that Husayn Kamil and his brothers Yasir and Ahmad are his cousins and not Muhammad. Qusay's mother also told him that 'Adnan Khayrallah was his only cousin not the rest of Khayrallah's children.

Years proved who the Majid's family was and who Husayn Kamil, his principles, and his devotion was. It also showed who the others were, and how deep their ethics and fidelity at the times when they were the preferred companions and the others were those who had to show their devotion, because without our loyalty, Abu-'Uday would have never made it and became what he was today.

What's coming was greater because Husayn Kamil was a time bomb among the family. I made that clear to the President and I told him in front of the family while we were gathered and he was telling us that he would marry his daughter to Husayn Kamil.

Now, Husayn Kamil implanted ten time bombs and left them behind him. He left five children; the oldest is seventeen years old and his brother left four children behind who are reminded daily by their mothers that their grandfather and their uncles are the ones who killed their fathers.

You can imagine what will happen in the next few years. 'Ali Hasan will also settle all accounts with the President's children once the President is not around. 'Ali did not do what he did against Husayn Kamil when he killed more than twenty five people of Majid's family if he was not afraid of the wrath of Abu-'Uday, the President. He was not convinced at first and delayed the entire time and would have not moved a muscle, as a matter of fact, he delayed doing anything until the President sent him his eldest telling him that he must finish this task right away.

The reason 'Ali delayed finishing the matter from five in the morning until six in the evening is the thought that the President would feel sorry for Husayn and he would order the attackers to stop as what has already happened was enough. When Umm-Husayn went to speak with 'Izzat al-Duri and asked him to implore with the President and they also hoped that the President's wife and his children may ask him to have mercy on Husayn and to forgive him; however, this did not change anything and did not help in anyway. They did not know how angry the President was as a result of the low acts committed by Husayn Kamil.

This situation reminds me of what happened between al-Barmkah and the Abbasid king when a person transgressed on the king. This made the king very upset in a way never known before. Yahya al-Barmaki, the leader of the Barmkah, gathered his people and told them that the king would kill the person who made him upset and if he did that without our help then whatever happened after that would be a strike against us and the king would be after us. He told them that the first strike against the perpetrator should come from their swords. Everyone believed what he said and they went and killed the man and brought his head back to the king. Of course, they wanted to protect themselves and show their allegiance and their interest in preserving the Abbasid power. This was the same reason why 'Ali Hasan killed Husayn Kamil, his brothers, some of the women there and their children as in the story of what took place in the story of the Barmkah and the man who offended the Abbasid kind, Harun al-Rashid.

As for what Umm-Qusay used to say, 'Adnan was the only maternal uncle to her children, resulting from this story that she cannot mention.

Let's return to the (made up stories) they invented to prevent some of the invitees from attending and the reasons behind that. The reason is because they knew the invitees are coming from all over Iraq and they present a large number of people in different fields including medical, legal, engineering, commerce and many other fields from the Iraqi society.

In other words, the invitees were the Crème de la Crème of Iraq. They felt threatened and they could have not asked me to not hold the event since there was no reason not to hold it. Additionally, they did not want to make things worse with me and they could not stop people from attending for fear that people would talk and the news would reach Iraq and outside of Iraq which would not be beneficial to them. The only thing they could do was to stop the officials from attending. That was the only thing they were capable of doing at that time.

They thought that if the officials were to attend along with representatives of all Iraqi social sectors might be considered as their pledge of allegiance (to me) as they thought that I had my eye on that old rickety chair they were sitting on. Since the beginning, I never thought of the chair and if I did, things would have probably been different - at least during the last few years.

I felt a different pain from the pain I felt last year. Pain mixed with deep sadness and desperation as I lost hope that Shajarat al-Dur would ever return to use. I think I was living and hoping that a miracle would bring her back or because I was in denial of what was happening.

When I think back, I realize that there should have been no hopes for a miracle to bring her back. The time for miracles was over and I found that dealing with reality and accepting what was going on was even harder for me. After a while, I started to reflect on my way of thinking and my life.

I have been staying home for almost two years. I am either in Geneva or in Baghdad and I don't feel bored no matter how long I stay at home. I feel that this is not normal and I started to feel short tempered and less patient than I used to be in the past.

I started to get angry and upset and I felt that my health is not what it used to be. I checked with the doctors but they could not find any physical reasons for the way I was feeling. They told me that I am under a lot of psychological stress.

I feel that Shajarat al-Dur is like a mirage now. When I feel I am getting closer to where she is, I realize she is still far.

How am I going to get over this is beyond me. Everything in and outside the house reminds me of her and of how our lives were.

Last night, the children and I were watching the recording of Saja's birthday party and I went to get a glass of water from kitchen. While I was in the kitchen, I heard Shajarat al-Dur's voice and my heart skipped a few beats. I felt she was there then I realized that what I heard was in the recording and she was not here.

Monday, 13NOV2000, I read the papers even though I did not feel well as a result of what happened yesterday which was still affecting me till now. There was nothing out of the ordinary on the news, except for a program on a Lebanese channel that last three hours. It was an interview with Rafiq al-Hariri who I never met before and never seen interview with him either.

I used to think that al-Hariri was rich and had strong and vast financial, political, and commercial contacts. I was not aware of how smart he was until I watched this interview. I used to say that he must be educated, smart and straight forward or he would have been unable to preserve his relationship with King Fahd Bin-‘Abd-al-‘Aziz and his relationship with Jacques Chirac and others.

Yesterday I realized that he was extremely smart and without knowing I started to feel that I would like to meet him.

From the first time he became the Prime Minister, I knew that Lebanon and other countries that are economically ruined would not be saved except by a man who was a successful business man before he became a politician because this man would utilize his connections to serve his country and his experience will help in that field. This man would be used to having money [not money hungry] and he would not eat his country out of house and home.

Yesterday, I found out that Mr. Rafiq al-Hariri was a very smart and eloquent man. In other words, I found him to be a political guru who is extremely smart and who can speak the language of politicians with all what that entails including plotting, planning, conveying and tactical organization to get to what they want quickly and quietly.