

Joint press conference by Lakhdar Brahimi, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General, and Mr. Massoud Barzani, President of the Iraqi Governing Council – Baghdad, 14 April

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MR. BARZANI: *(Through interpreter)* In the name of God, the most merciful, the most compassionate, dear brothers and sisters, good afternoon. I would like to thank the secretary general for fulfilling our invitation and our request, the request of the Governing Council, by sending the special representative. We have among us today Brother Lakhdar Brahimi, a dear friend of ours. And for the few last days he spent with us, he engaged in many consultations with varied sections, and he exerted efforts that we thank him for. And I believe that he reached results, good results in his consultations with all the parties. And undoubtedly the United Nations will have an effective and important role, and we will need the technical assistance from the United Nations now and in the future.

I am going to allow Mr. Brahimi to address you and to present to you the results that he reached, and the remarks that he would like to express. And thank you very much.

MR. BRAHIMI: *(Through interpreter.)* In the name of Allah, may peace be upon you. I shall speak in English, but I think those who are not speaking in English could understand through the interpretation. But in terms of the questions, we will answer both in English and in Arabic, and even in Indonesian if you like.

(Without interpreter) It is a pleasure for me to be standing here before you with H.E. Massoud Barzani, the President of the Governing Council.

This visit of our team is taking place in particularly difficult security conditions. I would like to renew here the expression of my deep sorrow for the loss of life and the destruction that has befallen Fallujah, parts of Baghdad and other places up and down the country. The Secretary-General has expressed his anxiety and spoken to the U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell. We are hopeful that the ceasefire decreed in Fallujah and the talks engaged both in Fallujah and in the South will lead to peaceful resolutions.

Because of the security situation, then, our movements have been somewhat restricted. But we did manage to meet a large number of people representing various constituencies including members of the Governing Council, Ministers, political parties, trade unions, professional associations and other civil society organizations, women groups, academics, intellectuals and artists, etc.

We were planning to visit a number of cities, but we were able to go only to Mosul and we also hope to visit Basra during this trip.

I will then be going to New York to brief the Secretary-General and seek his guidance on the way forward. I also expect to meet the President and Members of the Security Council.

My recommendations to the Secretary-General will be finalized only after our return to Iraq and after we conduct more consultations, with more people in Baghdad and elsewhere in this country.

I can, however, share with you a few thoughts, a few preliminary observations and a few still very tentative ideas we are discussing:

1. We believe that the present security situation makes it more important and more urgent for the political process to continue and we expect all stakeholders to re-double their efforts to ensure this process is successfully completed.
2. Let me emphasise from the outset that in this political process in Iraq, the elections scheduled to take place in January 2005 are the most important milestone. There is no substitute for the legitimacy that comes from free and fair elections. Therefore, Iraq

will have a genuinely representative Government only after January 2005.

3. What the aim should be, at present, is to put in place a caretaker Government that will be in charge from 1st July 2004 until the elections in January 2005. We are confident that it will be possible to form such a Government in a timely manner, i.e. during the month of May 2004. We see it as a Government led by a Prime Minister and comprising Iraqi men and women known for their honesty, integrity and competence. There will also be a President to act as Head of State and two Vice-Presidents.
4. According to both the 15 November 2003 Agreement and the Transitional Administrative Law, the Governing Council, along with the CPA, will cease to exist on 30 June 2004. Some of its members are already assuming other responsibilities. Other members will no doubt be called upon to participate in various State institutions.
5. During our consultations, a very large number of our interlocutors suggested that a large National Conference should be convened. We see merit in this suggestion. It would serve the all-important aim of promoting national dialogue, consensus building and national reconciliation in Iraq. A preparatory Committee should be established soon to start the preparatory work and the Conference could take place soon after the restoration of sovereignty, in July 2004.
6. The National Conference would elect a Consultative Assembly to serve alongside the Government during the period leading to the elections of the National Assembly which, it is agreed, will take place in January 2005.
7. To return to the subject of elections, a U.N. electoral team has been in Baghdad for some time now. They are working diligently to help with the preparatory work for the January 2005 elections. They have visited some cities in the North and in the South. Like us, their movements are somewhat restricted at present by the prevailing security situation. But they remain confident that they can help out. But it is important and urgent that, on the Iraqi side, the necessary steps are taken, so that elections can take place at the appointed time in January 2005. Naturally, the security situation has to improve significantly for these elections to take place in an acceptable environment.
8. Last but not least, during our consultations, in February as well as at present, we heard of many grievances which need to be addressed. Detainees are held often without charge or trial. They should be either charged or released, and their families and lawyers must have access to them. The issue of former military personnel also needs attention. Furthermore, it is difficult to understand that thousands upon thousands of teachers, university professors, medical doctors and hospital staff, engineers and other professionals who are sorely needed, have been dismissed within the de-Baathification process, and far too many of those cases have yet to be reviewed.

All these are ideas which will be submitted to the Secretary-General and further discussed both during the wide consultations scheduled to be organized by the Committee set up for this purpose by the Governing Council and by our own team. I believe that the political framework that I outlined for the setting up of the interim government, the organization of a national dialogue conference, combined with a number of confidence building measures addressing real concerns of the Iraqis, should, I hope, help this country to move forward towards recovery, peace and stability.

Thank you very much indeed.

Questions and Answers

QUESTION: David Rice (ph), ABC News. The June 30th date is being discussed as a hand-over in sovereignty, and I wonder, what does the word "sovereignty" mean to your ears in the context of Iraq. And will this interim government have a veto over U.S. military operations such as are taking place now in Fallujah?

MR. BRAHIMI: This is much too legalistic a question. I think "sovereignty" means for me the end of legal occupation. There will be a government that will be sovereign, that will exercise this sovereignty. Of course realities will have to be addressed. Sovereignty will be handed over, but the 150,000 soldiers that are here are not going to disappear on the 1st of July.

QUESTION: But to what extent will it be a handover of power, is what I'm asking.

MR. BRAHIMI: I beg your pardon?

QUESTION: To what extent will it be a handover of power, or will it merely be a handover of some symbolism?

MR. BRAHIMI: I think they will hand over power, since the CPA will be dissolved and Mr. Bremer will be gone.

QUESTION: Thank you. Jane Arraf, CNN. Ambassador Brahimi, regarding the violence in Fallujah and the potential for violence in Najaf, I'm wondering if there are any measures you feel would be helpful in Fallujah? And in Najaf whether you've heard anything in the last couple of days that would make you optimistic there could be a political settlement there.

MR. BRAHIMI: When you do the kind of work I do, you have got to be optimistic all the time. But I think I will -- this question can best be addressed by the president.

(President declines.)

MR. BRAHIMI continues: Sorry. I think in Fallujah I understand that there are some negotiations taking place between the Americans and representatives of the people of Fallujah.

This is something we welcome very, very much, and we hope that it will continue.

We hope that access to the hospitals will become open immediately, and that whatever needs are there -- there are a lot of people who want to send aid to the people of Fallujah. I think that should be helped to get there.

In the south, I know that there are contacts. I know that discussions are taking place. There again it is imperative that a political solution is found.

(Exchange in Arabic.)

MR. BRAHIMI (?): *(Through interpreter)* There's consultation between the CPA and the IGC. Sometimes we have some disagreements, and that's what happened lately.

QUESTION: Mr. Brahimi, Rajiv Chandrasekaran from the Washington Post. Could you elaborate a little bit more on the structure of the executive that you see taking over after June 30th? You said there would be a prime minister, a president and two vice presidents. A little bit more about the size of this -- and do you see this as sort of an expanded Governing Council or an entirely different entity? And the consultative body that would take shape after this large assembly or loya jirga type meeting, would that have any sort of a veto power or check-and-balance power over the executive? And also, were you able to meet with any representative of Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani? And the inability to travel to Najaf, how did that affect your work here? Thank you.

MR. BRAHIMI: This is enough questions for a long conference, which I am not going to deliver. You know, as I said, this is a sketch. I am absolutely confident that most Iraqi people want a simple formula for this interim period of just six or seven months. They want a government of competent, honest and independent people as far as possible. They want them led by a prime minister who can really preside over the work of the government. And there are a lot of people in Iraq that can answer to these qualifications. You need a head of state, and I think realities here are such that the head of state should have also with him two vice presidents.

The assembly that will -- the national conference that we are suggesting is again -- I think I rarely met a group of people without two thirds of them saying that this is the way to go. I think this is indispensable in a country where for 30 years people, were afraid to talk in front of their children, that they get together -- you know, people from the south meet people from the north, east, west. I think that in itself will achieve a lot for the good of Iraq.

And there you are going to have a consultative assembly. You don't need the legislative assembly for such a short period. And you are going to use this also to identify people that are going to participate in the preparation of elections. It is really a multi-purpose exercise. I think you had about five other questions. Perhaps we could leave them to later on.

QUESTION: *(Through interpreter)* **Ibrahim Hariri (ph).** I would like to read a paragraph from the Daily Telegraph. The paragraph says: (In English.) "Senior British commanders have condemned American military tactics in Iraq as heavy-handed and disproportionate. One senior officer said that America's aggressive methods were causing friction among allied commanders and that there was a growing sense of unease and frustration among the British high commanders. The officer, speaking on condition of anonymity, said part of the problem -- okay? -- was that American troops viewed Iraqis as untermenschen."

MR. BRAHIMI: As what?

QUESTION: "Untermenschen - the Nazi expression of sub-humans." Okay. This is a British commander. *(Through translator)* This is a question for both Lakhdar Brahimi and Mr. Masoud Barzani: Do you believe that this is the reality? And if that is the reality, what are the measures that you are going to be taking to stop what's happening? And, Lakhdar Brahimi, is this agreeable to the Conventions of Geneva that manage the relations between the occupants and the occupied?

MR. BRAHIMI: *(Through interpreter)* The Secretary-General has said in at least two statements that it is necessary, under the current circumstances, and in view of what is going on in Iraq today, to abide by these conventions. But what a British officer -- I cannot comment on that -- you should ask a British person. But I believe that what we have heard in Iraq from everybody, and from lots of Americans themselves, that there is no military solution to the problems at stake and that the use of force, especially of excessive use of force, makes matters worse and do not solve the problems. That is why the Secretary-General and lots of people have appealed for the use of political means and dialogue. asked for the use or to resort to politics, to dialogue. And as I said earlier in my statement, we are looking forward that these discussions that are taking place in Fallujah will continue, and the situation in the south would be dealt with peacefully.

MR. BARZANI: *(Through interpreter)* I do not know to what level one can be certain of the truth of such a statement by a British officer. But the picture must be clear that those terrorists who are coming in to obstruct the march of the Iraqis towards democracy, we do not want to use force against innocent civilians, and no one should look at Iraqis as if Iraqis do not deserve respect. We do not accept this from any state or any person dealing with this.

QUESTION: *(Through interpreter)* Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, there are some necessary measures that need to be taken on the Iraqi side to organize the elections. The simplest thing is to have a series of laws that need to be enacted so we can organize elections, elections law and other laws -- a national committee, presided by a judge for example, a known judge that's respected throughout the country, to supervise the operation of the election. We need a legal framework and then we have to have committees in each one of the governorates, and even in every village so that we can hold these elections.

MR. BRAHIMI: *(Through interpreter)* At the very least, a number of laws should be enacted in order to conduct elections; the electoral law, the law on political parties and other laws. And a National Committee chaired, for example, by a judge well known and respected in the country, to supervise the electoral process. The legal framework should be completed and there are committees that must be formed in each governorate and in fact, later, in every village, in order to hold elections. It is very easy to prepare these laws, it can be done with the existing capabilities. I don't think any Iraqis will object to an electoral law. All of this needs to be done before the June 30th date if you want elections to be held in January 2005.

QUESTION: *(Through interpreter)* **BBC Arabic.** First question to Lakhdar Brahimi. You spoke about your frustration about the situation in Iraq, and then there are statements that the

U.N. will not be sending any other delegations because of the security situation. The question is to Mr. Brahimi. The Iraqi citizen and the Arab citizen and all citizens of the world, they ask you, What is your role? What have you done for a whole year since the occupation of Iraq? What have you presented? We, as journalists, we are required to provide answers for the people. Provide us with some clarity as to what you have done.

The second question is to Mr. Massoud Barzani. There is talk and rumors that the coalition forces will not transfer authority and sovereignty to the Iraqis, and there are some people from the Pentagon and the White House have stated so, and others are saying that it will be delayed for a couple of months.

MR. BRAHIMI: *(Through interpreter)* The U.N. has not given much, except, allow me to remind you, a number of our colleagues were killed last August. The U.N. goes everywhere in such conditions as a result of decisions and resolutions taken by the Security Council. The only resolution adopted by the Security Council defines a very modest role for the U.N. Now there is a request, a definite request from the Governing Council and from the occupation forces, and we have responded immediately to come and help organize elections and to help in the formation of a new government.

The Security Council has been asked, within the next two months, to define the role of the United Nations after sovereignty is restored, in consultation with the government of Iraq. We speak always about the security situation as an obstacle. It is -- of course it is an obstacle, and this is not an exaggeration or fear.

As I said to people earlier, when I was in Lebanon, I walked around everywhere, [many of our staff were killed] in places such as these. But in [over] 50 years of the UN, there was no entity that considered the United Nations a target. No one said, "If I see someone from the UN, I will kill him." In Lebanon, no one said that. There was random killing, and we accepted it and we walked around under fire. But here, there are those who say, "If I see someone from the U.N., I will kill him." What do you want us to do about that? Not to care? Or, should we say that there should be a minimum level of security so that we can achieve our mission? The people who are coming over here to help, those who will come to help in the elections, what will they do if they are confined to the Green Zone and other areas? They have to go out. They have to visit hospitals, schools, polling stations -- I don't know how many they will need, I think there will be at least 30,000 polling stations. If the U.N. is to play its role properly, it should go and visit each one of those places -- or at least thousands of them.

MR. BARZANI: *(Not translated)*

QUESTION: *(Through interpreter)* **Sami Hassan (ph), El Ahalam (ph) satellite station.** I have two questions, one for Lakhdar Brahimi and one for the president of the IGC.

Mr. Brahimi, do you deal with the interim government that will take over on the 30th of June as a legitimate representative government of the Iraqi people?

The question for President Barzani: Would the sovereignty be complete on the 30th of June, or will it be lacking some because Powell has said that sovereignty is not going to be a complete sovereignty, and he has already -- Bremer has already started appointing some people, like the security national advisor?

MR. BRAHIMI: *(Through interpreter)* Certainly the United Nations will deal with the interim government that will, insha Allah [God willing], be established after the 30th of June as a legitimate government of this country.

MR. BARZANI: *(Through interpreter)* We hope that the sovereignty will not be incomplete. That doesn't mean that on the 30th of June, all -- that doesn't mean that all the forces will leave Iraq for sure. We're going to have agreements between the interim government, agreements to define the relationship between the interim government and the coalition.

Mr. Bremer is the civilian administrator, according to the U.N. security decision 1483. And, for your information, Mr. Bremer, before he appointed the national security advisor, he talked to me, and he consulted with many other members of the Governing Council. So that was not

the way as if the ambassador ignores completely the Governing Council. And we have people in the members that would not take it from Bremer or anybody else to be dealt with like that.

QUESTION: Dr. Brahimi, I'm **Carol Rosenberg with the Miami Herald**. You said the security situation would have to improve considerably for there to be able to be elections. Has there been any point since August, or even before then, that the security situation was acceptable? I guess my question is: What is the bare minimum, sir?

MR. BRAHIMI: And again the short answer is that I don't know. Definitely with the security situation that is prevailing -- that has been prevailing for the last few days -- I don't think you will find anybody who would tell you that elections can be held in such an atmosphere.

But I think that there were moments when you had security. And it is hoped that once sovereignty is restored, if, as I hope will be the case, you will have a government that will enjoy the respect of the people of Iraq, and their support, if the conference I am talking about is carefully selected to be truly representative of the people of Iraq and that they all get together here, I think that will go a long way towards helping create the situation that will be conducive to organizing reasonably [free] and fair elections.

QUESTION: *(Through interpreter)* **Azaman International**. Peace be upon you. Mr.

Lakdhar Brahimi, we have a question. You have said that the date of the 30th of June is going to be respected for the transfer of powers. Are there going to be any resolutions from the United Nations? Can you promise the people of Iraq that such a resolution will be taken?

MR. BRAHIMI: *(Through interpreter)* Resolutions are issued by the Security Council. The Security Council is comprised of 15 independent member states. It is these member states that will decide to adopt a resolution or not. What I can say now -- and this is a personal opinion -- my personal opinion, yes, I believe - I think, I am sure that the Security Council will issue a resolution that would bless the end of the occupation and the transfer of power and restoration of sovereignty to the people of Iraq, and that would extend all good wishes to the people of Iraq. But, as I said, I am not the one who makes that decision.

QUESTION: **Jonathan Steele from the Guardian**. Mr. Brahimi, you've --

MR. BRAHIMI: Where are you sitting?

QUESTION: Here.

MR. BRAHIMI: Ah, yes.

QUESTION: You've criticized the detention of people without charge or trial. Do you think that if there is a sovereign government of Iraq on July the 1st, they should take custody of these people out of the hands of the United States?

And may I also ask, Mr. Barzani, Mr. Brahimi has suggested that the Governing Council cease its activity and existence by June the 30th. Do you and the rest of the Governing Council agree with your death on that day?

MR. BRAHIMI: You know, what I said is that this -- I mean, this problem should be resolved now. You know, the first of July is three long months -- almost three long months away. So I think what I am saying is that this should be addressed now, not after the first of July.

What happens, you know, how the Iraqi government and what will be then the former occupying powers, organize their relations is not up to me to say.

MR. BARZANI: *(Through interpreter)* If you think that our lives began the day the Governing Council was established, yes, we deserve death. But our life of struggle began before the Council and will continue after the Council.

QUESTION: *(Through interpreter)* **This is Beder (ph) from Ashur (ph) Television, an Iraqi television station**. Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, this government that the authority will be transferred to, was it elected, and who will be members of this government? Will there be people from the coalition, or is it going to be an Iraqi government? And what's the role of the U.N. in that?

MR. BRAHIMI: *(Through interpreter)* First, it will be an Iraqi government, one hundred

percent. Second, the role of the U.N. is what the Governing Council requested, to help. That is why we have been consulting with the Governing Council and also with the CPA, because we should not forget that the country is under occupation, and the occupying power is ruling the country, and the goal is to end the occupation.

The Iraqi government will be formed through these consultations. This government will not be fully representative of the people of Iraq, the government that will be fully representative of the people of Iraq will be elected by the people of Iraq in January 2005. But what is hoped and what is possible, in my view, is that this transitional government will be comprised of members who are acceptable to the people of Iraq because they are competent and sincere Iraqis who will be serving their country and not their own interests.

QUESTION: *(In Kurdish.)*

INTERPRETER: The language is in Kurdish and cannot be interpreted by this interpreter. *(Exchange in Kurdish.)*

MR. BRAHIMI: *(Through interpreter)* My wish is to visit Kurdistan, even without elections! Of course there were preparations for a visit at the invitation of my dear brothers, Massoud Barzani, President of the Council, and Mr. Jalal Talabani, but I was unable to go.

MR. BARZANI: *(Through interpreter)* The invitation is open to Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, and certainly, Kurdistan will welcome him very warmly, and we hope to see him over there soon.

QUESTION: Mr. Brahimi, **John Burns of the New York Times.** You have spoken today frequently of the need to build confidence. That confidence presumably will also have to be built between the United Nations and the United States, which will lead the security forces which by any definition it seems will have to maintain security in this country after June the 30th. I think that many Americans listening to what you've said might have noted that you spoke critically a number of times, or implicitly critically, of American military actions. You said nothing -- at least nothing I heard -- about actions that have been taken by other parties to this conflict that have caused civilian casualties, including in August last year an attack on your organization that killed, as I recall, 23 people, including the chief United Nations representative.

So my question is, first, in general, is there anything you would like to add to what you said about violence here that would perhaps build confidence on both sides of this issue and perhaps give confidence to Iraqis themselves who have been victims of actions from both sides? And a technical question: What preparations are you making for the security for United Nations personnel here if not from the United States military?

MR. BRAHIMI: I think I didn't criticize the United States in connection with this violence. What I have said is that I expressed I think sorrow to the loss of life, without specifying any side. And I thought you would have understood from that that I don't condone killing of innocent Iraqis by anybody. So if you misunderstood that, please stand corrected.

To a specific question, I said that the secretary general -- and this is also a statement of fact -- has called on all parties to respect the Geneva Conventions.

On the building of confidence between the United States and the United Nations, the United States is the most important, the most influential, most powerful member of the United Nations, and we talk to them all the time. We talk to them in New York; we talk to them in Washington; we talk to them here.

I think that we disagree from time to time. We disagree, meaning the Secretariat. Now, the United States disagrees also with other members of the United Nations, and I am sure you don't need to be reminded that some of those disagreements took place in relations to Iraq not very long ago.

We -- in the Secretariat, we are reasonably satisfied with the kind of relationship we have with the Americans, as we have with all our members. And we know that we will be working with them here. We are actually working with them here, and we will continue to do so. We hope that we will be working with more and more member states for the benefit of the people

of Iraq.

As to our security here, we are also talking to our Iraqi brothers. We are talking to the Americans. We are talking to a lot of other countries on how best to ensure our security now and in the future. For the moment, there are just a few of us; but later on, if we are going to do the so-called vital role that everybody speaks of, there will be a lot of us here. And it is always the host government -- in this case the government of Iraq, with the support of those who are supporting it, that will have to provide the security. We are discussing all these issues.

QUESTION: *(Through interpreter)* To Mr. Barzani. What are the procedures that the Governing Council will provide for those who were injured in the cities of Fallujah and Najaf? Who will compensate the State for the damage to its properties?

MR. BARZANI: *(Through interpreter)* Let us stop the fighting now, stop the bloodshed, then we can talk about that.

QUESTION: Hamza Hashim (ph) from Al Ferat (ph) International. The TAL?, or the temporary interim constitution, something that the people of Iraq will depend on, such as also as well -- (inaudible.) Are there any studies that will delve into this? This is a question for Mr. Brahimi.

MR. BRAHIMI: *(Through interpreter)* First of all, we had no role in drafting this law. I will make one or two comments.

This law is called the Transitional Administrative Law, I do not think anyone called it a constitution. Secondly, it is clear that it is temporary. Thirdly, there is agreement in this law that elections will be held for a National Assembly and that this National Assembly will have two functions: a legislative function alongside the government, as is the case in all countries, and a constitutional function. This Assembly will produce the constitution which will govern the country in the future, insha Allah.

And there is a general legal principle, and that is that the elected body, especially if it is entrusted with drafting the constitution, should not have its hands tied by anything, but should be independent. It should be able to draft the constitution with unfettered freedom.

But in the Iraq of today, the Iraq which wants to unite all segments of society, there is no doubt that this Assembly will strive to draft a constitution that satisfies all its citizens and will succeed in doing so. There is no constitution anywhere in the world that is ratified by a majority of 51 per cent [only]. The constitution requires the approval of the overwhelming majority of the people because it will govern them for a long time. Common law is enacted with a slight majority because if the majority changes, the law might be changed if need be. But a constitution should not be changed every day, should not be changed every four years.

QUESTION: *(Through interpreter)* One has seen the absence of the U.N. during the occupation of Iraq for one year. How long did the -- since when did the U.N. work in normal circumstances? We're accustomed to seeing the U.N. work and perform under strenuous conditions. We have not seen the U.N. stand by the Iraqi people. What is your opinion in the criticism of the situation on the part of the Americans? Is it thinkable that they would cordon off the whole city and kill the population because of a crime against four civilians?

MR. BRAHIMI: *(Through interpreter)* I believe that you forgot something in this issue. The desecration of the bodies of those who were killed, and those scenes were broadcast on television screens around the world. This is denounced primarily by Iraqis, and is not acceptable to Muslims above all. This is a fact that must be mentioned.

But collective punishments are certainly not acceptable at all -- and the siege of a city is not acceptable. But -- and this is what we have said here and else where. When you talk about the U.N., there is some misunderstanding. The U.N. has worked in Kurdistan, and works in Kurdistan province, because it has freedom of movement.

As I told you, we come here at the invitation of the country or in accordance with a resolution of the Security Council or both. When we were asked to come, we came. Even when we were not asked, we came nevertheless, and some of us were killed. We are ready to play a role that

continues, and we recognize that we are capable of giving more than we are giving now. But once again, my brother, if there is not a minimum of security, how can you bring people from outside? And would you accept that they put themselves in harm's way? And, as I told the New York Times reporter, we are talking to our brothers in Iraq, with foreign countries, to allow the U.N. to play a greater and bigger role than it is playing now.

QUESTION: Anne Garrels from National Public Radio. Have you been able to speak to Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani and get any clarification from him on his views about your proposals, since his views were one of the reasons why this crisis over the transition emerged?

MR. BRAHIMI: I haven't been able to speak to Ayatollah Sistani himself, but we are in touch with his office regularly.

QUESTION: And could you -- sir, could you be more specific, please, about their response, and if you feel that they are satisfied with the proposals you have offered?

MR. BRAHIMI: You know, our proposals have been made public only now. So you know we'll wait. I am sure you will hear from them.

QUESTION: (Off mike) I mean, you brought -- you discussed proposals with him. I would imagine -- or with his aides -- you would have some sense as to how they would react?

MR. BRAHIMI: I would rather not go further into this at the moment.

QUESTION: Thank you.

QUESTION: (Through interpreter) Hulud Azari (ph) from Abnel Balad (ph). According to the November agreement in 2003, that both the Governing Council and the CPA will stop, cease work, and you said that 150,000 soldiers, they will not disappear. Does that mean they will remain inside Iraqi cities, and which is known the people of Iraq do not accept to stay?

MR. BRAHIMI: This is not my business at the moment. I cannot comment on it.

QUESTION: (Through interpreter) Mahra Rapor (ph). Mr. Brahimi, Mahra Rapor (ph), El Ken (ph) newspaper. Mr. Brahimi, two months ago we have sent you to the U.N. -- we sent you a memorandum from a university, an academic level. Have you received it? We sent you 15 days ago -- we sent you to the office of the U.N. in Baghdad. This is my question. Did you receive such memo? How about the academic union would form a government, an academic government? There are many students and professors who would do that.

MR. BRAHIMI: I did not receive those papers, and I will be very happy to receive them from you now. Thank you.

QUESTION: (Through interpreter) (Inaudible.) Mr. Brahimi, do you believe that there is enough time? How long? How much of time to the 31st of December? Is the time sufficient to complete the process for elections? And what is the next step in providing security by the U.N. in Iraq?

MR. BRAHIMI: (Through interpreter) I understood you to say that the constitution would be completed before 31 December. No, sir. The constitution will be completed by the National Assembly, which will be elected in January 2005. Secondly, we are consulting with large elements of the Iraqi society, and also with the committee that was formed by the Governing Council too, which will prepare for widespread consultations, which in our view will form the government which we are talking about. These consultations will also lead to the establishment of a preparatory committee for the national conference, and that committee will begin preparing for the conference.

QUESTION: (Through interpreter) Mr. Brahimi, most of the notables of the Sunni cities that are inside the Sunni Triangle that have seen a lot of violence since the fall of the regime, the notables believe the cause of the resistance and the insurgency, that's because of the sidelining of their role in the government. And have you met tribal leaders and what has happened in those meetings?

MR. BRAHIMI: (Through interpreter) I have met notables and tribal leaders... and I do not recall that they described themselves as Sunni or Shi'a. The injustices suffered by the people are different from one place to another, and I have said that we have some problems that need

to be treated quickly, such as the issue of the detainees and that of the professionals and the intellectuals that were sidelined, regardless of their sectarian or religious affiliations.

I imagine that if we could deal with these issues, if the government I talked about could be formed, and if preparations were to begin to organize the conference I talked about, so that Iraqi citizens can meet each other in a sovereign state, many of the problems could be solved.

QUESTION: *(Through interpreter)* Thank you, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, and you are a dear guest, a welcome guest in Iraq. As a journalist, I know that you are a seasoned politician. My question: How can you assess the situation, the current situation in Iraq? And the U.N. will give sovereignty to the Iraqis on the 30th of June?

MR. BRAHIMI: *(Through interpreter)* It's not the United Nations that took away sovereignty from the Iraqis. I believe, as President Mr. Barzani said a few moments ago, the nations occupying Iraq have confirmed, on a daily basis, that they will not change their minds about handing over sovereignty to the Iraqis on the 30th of June. We work on this basis, and we extend our best wishes to the people of Iraq. The situation in Iraq is not good, but there is hope. All of us are hopeful that there will be improvement.

QUESTION: *(Off mike)* -- **Public Radio.** The prime minister, the president and the vice president -- who will choose them? Do they have to come from the Governing Council? And is there any -- do they have to be Shi'a, Sunni? Is there any balance there in terms of -- and if they don't come from the Governing Council, how do you pick from 27 million Iraqis?

MR. BRAHIMI: I'm sure that you know the answer to all those questions except the first one. Not necessarily from the Governing Council, in my vision. And I think that the agreement that exists between us and the Governing Council and the CPA is that all this will result from these consultations that we are taking with a large number of people in this country.

MR. BARZANI: *(Through interpreter)* Once again I would like to thank Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi for his efforts, his great efforts that he exerted during this last period. And I would like to assure him of our utmost cooperation to restore sovereignty and to overcome this crisis. And I am sure that Iraq will regain its well-being, and we will build a federal, democratic Iraq
