

## Refugee Review Tribunal

### AUSTRALIA

#### RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE

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**Country:** Iraq  
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Keywords: Iraq – Najaf – Security situation – Returnees from the West – Mehdi Army

This response was prepared by the Country Research Section of the Refugee Review Tribunal (RRT) after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the RRT within time constraints. This response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum.

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#### Questions

**1. I would like to get some up-to-date information on the security situation in and around Najaf, including information on insurgent activity.**

**Any available information in relation to the situation in Najaf in the following areas would also be appreciated:**

- 2. Attitudes towards returnees (from the west and from Iran) and**
- 3. The level of support for Moqtada al Sadr and Mehdi Army.**

#### RESPONSE

**1. I would like to get some up-to-date information on the security situation in and around Najaf, including information on insurgent activity.**

From January 2005 to present-day, Najaf has experienced intermittent attacks by alleged “insurgents” and/or “terrorists”. It has not seen a repeat of the intense fighting experienced between April and August 2004 when followers of Muqtada al-Sadr and multinational forces clashed in the holy city. However, there have been a number of serious bomb blasts and attacks carried out in and around Najaf in 2005.

In a May 2005 report by the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), author Anthony Cordesman highlights the following assessment of insurgent activity in the south from the NGO Coordinating Committee on Iraq:

Since the Shi'ite fighting with Sadr has ceased, the peak of insurgent activity in the south has declined. There have been relatively low levels of attack in the Karbala, Thi-Qar, Wassit, Missan, Muthanna, Najaf, and Qaddisyaa governorates.

Cordesman continues to discuss the insurgency in Iraq, including the strength and frequency of attacks since April 2004, with reference to Najaf as follows:

...At the same time, the Iraqi Government and US can scarcely claim that they are clearly moving towards victory. The problems in measuring the trends in the insurgency cited earlier are not new ones. The number of incidents declined somewhat immediately after the battle of Fallujah in 2004, but major insurgent attacks have occurred in Baghdad, Mosul, Karbala, and Najaf ...Some 68 Iraqis were killed in attacks in Karbala and Najaf a few days earlier, and some 175 wounded (Cordesman, A.H. 2005, 'Iraq's Evolving Insurgency', Centre for Strategic and International Studies website, 19 May [http://www.csis.org/features/050512\\_IraqInsurg.pdf](http://www.csis.org/features/050512_IraqInsurg.pdf) – Accessed 9 June 2005 – Attachment 1).

The most serious attack in Najaf since mid-2004 occurred in late December 2004. The details of the attacks – the first of which hit Karbala only two hours before Najaf – are provided in the following *Los Angeles Times* article:

In twin attacks targeting Iraq's major Shiite Muslim cities, car bombs in Najaf and Karbala killed at least 62 people Sunday and wounded 120, threatening to inflame sectarian anger as the nation prepares for next month's election.

...The attacks appeared to be the latest attempt by insurgents to provoke chaos and instability before the Jan. 30 election.

"We blame the extremists, fundamentalists and remnants of the old regime," said Mohammed Hussein Hakim, spokesman for and son of one of Najaf's leading Shiite clerics. "They are trying to bait a sectarian conflict and create a state of terror among the Iraqi people."

...The car bombs in Shiite-dominated southern Iraq struck within two hours of each other Sunday afternoon, both exploding near the cities' gold-domed shrines, which rank among the holiest sites in Islam.

The second and more deadly of Sunday's explosions struck in Najaf. The blast occurred at 3:30p.m. in a narrow street where dozens of clinics and doctors' offices are located, about 300 yards from the Imam Ali shrine. Among the victims were patients seeking treatment, including numerous women and children, witnesses said.

...The bombing broke a relative calm in Najaf after battles in August between U.S. troops and followers of radical cleric Muqtada Sadr.

American officials have been leading a \$200-million reconstruction program to rebuild the Old City, which was heavily damaged in the summertime fighting and suffered another devastating blow Sunday.

About two hours before the attack in Najaf, a car bomb struck near a bus station in Karbala. Thirteen were killed and 30 injured, officials said. The explosion ignited a row of minibuses and left a 5-foot crater in the asphalt.

Both cities had been targeted before. On Wednesday, a senior Shiite cleric narrowly escaped assassination in Karbala when a bomb exploded as he was traveling to evening prayers at the Imam Hussein shrine, killing at least seven people and wounding dozens. In March, bombers killed about 85 celebrants during a religious gathering in the city (Sanders, E. 2005, 'The Conflict in Iraq', *Los Angeles Times*, 20 December – Attachment 2).

Najaf remained relatively calm during the January 2005 elections, especially compared to the rest of the country. Information suggests that this was due to the wide support for the elections in Najaf from influential Shi'ite clerics and residents, and was seen as "an opportunity for a celebration of reclaimed rights for Iraq's Shi'ites and for individual

religious parties to compete in the provincial race” (Cambanis, T. 2005, ‘For Shi’ite Najaf, a new direction’, *The Boston Globe* online, 31 January [http://www.boston.com/news/world/middleeast/articles/2005/01/31/for\\_shiite\\_najaf\\_a\\_new\\_direction/](http://www.boston.com/news/world/middleeast/articles/2005/01/31/for_shiite_najaf_a_new_direction/) – Accessed 21 June 2005 – Attachment 3).

On 2 March 2005, *BBC Monitoring Middle East* reported clashes between the Najaf police and security forces over control of the city. The clashes allegedly erupted as a result of local council election results and subsequent political dissension between local parties. The following extract from the *BBC* report – originally sourced from Baghdad newspaper *Al-Ufuq* – provides the following assessment:

The forces of the Al-Najaf security chief, Abd-al-Al al-Kufi, have imposed their control over most of the police stations in Al-Najaf, confiscating their weapons and vehicles. Yesterday, [28 February], they imposed a tight siege around the headquarters of the Al-Najaf police directorate and the house of the Al-Najaf police chief general, Ghalib al-Jaza’iri.

...Two days ago, clashes between the police and security forces erupted for the control of the city. This came in the wake of the results of the Al-Najaf local council election in which the Al-Wafa to Al-Najaf electoral list led by Al-Najaf Governor Adnan al-Zurfi obtained a small number of votes while the electoral list of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq [SCIRI] surpassed other lists by obtaining 18 seats.

Negotiations between Al-Zurfi and SCIRI’s command members regarding the nomination of the next governor failed and this resulted in further tension and stubbornness. If the growing tension between the two parties is not settled, the security situation in the governorate will witness further deterioration and decline.

A source at the Al-Najaf facilities protection force said that the Badr Organization drew up a list comprising 1,000 of its members who will be appointed in his force to replace the impure elements and those who are not loyal to the organization, as the source said.

Although the Interior Ministry in Baghdad has appointed Police General Abd-al-Shahid Abd-al-Razzaq to succeed him, Al-Jaza’iri insists that he is still the Al-Najaf police chief. What adds to the confusion is that the anger of Al-Jaza’iri is not directed towards Abd-al-Razzaq, but only towards Al-Kufi, because he believes that his competitor, Al-Najaf Governor Adnan al-Zurfi, appointed Al-Kufi to be responsible for the entire security portfolio in the governorate (‘Security and police forces clash in Iraq’s Al-Najaf’ 2005, *BBC Monitoring Middle East*, source: *Al-Ufuq*, Baghdad, 2 March – Attachment 4).

The following reports from various news sources, appearing in chronological order, highlight insurgent activity and security breaches in and around Najaf from March 2005 to present-day:

- On 1 March 2005, *BBC News* reported that 125 people had been killed when a car bomb exploded in the Shi’a town of Hilla, approximately 50km north of Najaf. The blast reportedly “wounded at least 130 others. The bombing happened as people queued for government jobs in the Shia town ... A claim of responsibility was made on an Islamist website by a group calling itself the al-Qaeda Organisation for Holy War in Iraq” (‘Iraqi town protests at bomb blast’ 2005, *BBC News*, 1 March [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle\\_east/4308529.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/4308529.stm) – Accessed 7 June 2005 – Attachment 5).
- On 28 March 2005, *BBC News* published an unconfirmed report of a suicide bomber “striking a crowd of Shia pilgrims in Iraq, killing at least seven people and injuring

others. Reports say the attack occurred on a road near Hilla as thousands of Shia travelled to Karbala for the Arbain mourning ceremony” (‘Fresh attacks target Iraqi Shia’ 2005, *BBC News* online, 28 March [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/4387117.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4387117.stm) – Accessed 17 June 2005 – Attachment 6).

- On 9 April 2005, *The San Diego Union-Tribune* published a report describing a bomb explosion near a bus station in Najaf which injured “four civilians” (Castaneda, A. 2005, ‘Troops gird for demonstrations today’, *The San Diego Union-Tribune*, SignOnSanDiego.com website, 9 April [http://www.signonsandiego.com/uniontrib/20050409/news\\_1n9iraq.html](http://www.signonsandiego.com/uniontrib/20050409/news_1n9iraq.html) – Accessed 6 June 2005 – Attachment 7).
- BBC’s monitoring of Iraqi newspapers dated 11 April 2005 highlighted various security concerns in and around Najaf. *Al-Furat* published a report “citing a statement by an armed group posted on a website yesterday, 10 April, claiming that it kidnapped and killed Al-Najaf Police Chief General Basim Muhammad Kazim”. *Al-Manarah* newspaper reported that the “Al-Diwaniyah police checkpoints arrested a gang that was selling hashish and as well as a gang of looters”, approximately 50km east of Najaf. Also in Al-Diwaniyah, *Al-Zaman* newspaper published a report describing accusations of corruption between governorate officials “in the implementation of reconstruction projects in the governorate” (‘Iraqi press highlights 11 Apr 05’ 2005, *BBC Monitoring Middle East*, 12 April – Attachment 8).
- On 10 May 2005, *BBC Monitoring Middle East* reported that *Al-Ufuq* newspaper ran a story describing the arrest of “7 persons suspected of being involved in armed operations” in Najaf Governorate. *Al-Bayan* newspaper reported the kidnapping of “seven young men in Al-Latifayah, who were part of a funeral procession headed towards Al-Najaf” (‘Iraqi press highlights 10 May 05’ 2005, *BBC Monitoring Middle East*, 10 May – Attachment 9).
- On 25 May 2005, *Aljazeera* reported that hundreds of people demonstrated in the streets of Najaf in response to Hareth al-Dari, a leading Sunni cleric, accusing “the Shia Badr Organisation had killed 14 Sunnis, including three clerics”. Demonstrators loyal to the Badr Organisation condemned the accusation and Shia leaders have allegedly denied Dhari’s allegations and government leaders have threatened legal action against him” (‘Four killed in Iraq attacks’ 2005, *Aljazeera.net* website, 25 May <http://english.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/350F0632-0811-4DA5-88F4-9BECACB0EF8D.htm> – Accessed 20 June 2005 – Attachment 10).
- On 30 May 2005, *BBC News* reported that “at least 27 people have been killed in a dual suicide bomb attack in the mainly Shia town of Hilla”. The two bombs were allegedly only a minute apart and were detonated by the suicide bombers as they “mingled with a crowd of policemen”. An Interior Ministry source stated that there were 27 people killed and 128 wounded (‘Iraq bombers hit security forces’ 2005, *BBC News*, 30 May [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle\\_east/4592763.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/4592763.stm) – Accessed 7 June 2005 – Attachment 11).
- BBC’s monitoring of Iraqi newspapers dated 4 June 2005 revealed that *Al-Furat* newspaper published a report “citing an official within the National Accord Movement in Al-Najaf saying that the movement’s chairman was injured in an attack on his car by

unidentified gunmen”. In addition, *Al-Mashriq* newspaper reported that an official source at the Transportation Ministry confirmed that “the Al-Najaf Airport is ready to receive the first passenger flight carrying Iranian pilgrims” (‘Iraqi press highlights 4 Jun 05’ 2005, *BBC Monitoring Middle East*, 5 June Attachment 12).

- BBC’s monitoring of Iraqi newspapers dated 11 June 2005 revealed that *Al-Zaman* newspaper published a report which described the “arrest of one of the most dangerous terrorists in Al-Najaf, who confessed that he had committed several terrorist acts in Basra and Dhi Qar”. *Al-Mada* newspaper published a report “quoting Iraqi Tourism Minister Hashim al-Hashimi announcing that Iraq and Iran have agreed to postpone the visits of the Iranian pilgrims to Iraq, until the security situation improves” (‘Iraqi press highlights 11 June 05’ 2005, *BBC Monitoring Middle East*, 11 June Attachment 13).
- On 12 June 2005, *The New York Times* reported a bomb explosion “in the vast Shiite cemetery in Najaf, killing two Iraqis, including an 8-year-old girl, and wounding three others” (Wong, E. 2005, ‘Dozens Reported Dead In Attacks Around Iraq’, *The New York Times*, 12 June – Attachment 14).
- On 19 June 2005, *Aljazeera* reported that the head of Babil province’s anti-corruption unit “was wounded in an assassination attempt as he travelled from Hilla to Najaf” (‘Police targeted in Baghdad cafe bomb’ 2005, *Aljazeera.net* website, 19 June <http://english.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/9EDD434D-D87C-4F36-94D7-A1212BCD769C.htm> – Accessed 20 June 2005 – Attachment 15).

**Any available information in relation to the situation in Najaf in the following areas would also be appreciated:**

## **2. Attitudes towards returnees (from the west and from Iran) and**

Little information was found in the sources consulted explicitly detailing the attitudes towards returnees in Najaf. The information that does exist is mainly speculative as a result of very little monitoring of returnees once they have entered Iraq and the restrictions placed on Non-Government Organisations (NGO) due to the precarious security situation. This is indicated by recent advice from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on 15 June 2005 in response to a request for clarification of their August 2004 advice regarding the alleged detention of returnees upon arrival in Iraq:

This statement was based on accounts communicated to UNHCR of returnees being detained upon arrival in Iraq. It speaks for itself in terms of numbers of cases. Given the restrictions of movement for national UNHCR staff after the August 2003 attack on the UN building in Baghdad, UNHCR has not been able to independently verify that returnees were indeed detained upon return and, if so, where and when and for what reasons. Nonetheless, as the statement indicates, there have been reports of this occurring. By way of example only, a serious incident was reported in September 2003 when an Arab returnee, registered in Queta, Pakistan, was alleged to have been detained and tortured by security members for ten days in Kirkuk (DIMIA Country Information Service 2005, *IRAQ: Detention of returnees to Iraq*, (sourced from UNHCR advice of 15 June 2005), 16 June – Attachment 16)

On 14 March 2005, Gianluca Rocco of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) provided the following advice in relation to returnees in a Sydney seminar for The Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA):

...I will try to go through different arguments looking at the perspective of the returnees and the possibility of return. Although the situation in Iraq is very difficult, and it's very difficult even to find relevant information on these issues, I will try to give you at least a general picture. It is important to understand that nowadays in Iraq it's not possible to generalise about returns. It's not possible to find general rules return is always individualised, and in the case of Iraq it is even more, I think. Within Iraq, it makes a difference if the person comes back in one place or twenty kilometres away.

...Returnees are concerned not because they are returning to Iraq but because they might be perceived as people who made money abroad. As an example, I have been told by people that a couple of doctors that were returning to Baghdad were followed by criminal gangs for the first days to see if they really have money or not, and after that they decided to drop their job as doctors and to start to work as taxi drivers to show the people that they don't have money. They didn't have a problem with criminals and kidnapping. This is an individual case, but the general picture I think is that criminals/kidnappers will not target you as a returnee, but you might become a target if you are rich or if you show you have money.

...There are not enough houses for the resident population, so of course there are no houses for the people that are returning, returning from abroad including Iran and the other neighboring [sic] countries, where the vast majority of the Iraqis escaped during Saddam's regime. What happens when people return to their houses? In certain cases their house was kept by relatives, friends or neighbours and given back to the returnee. It happened in the past that the person (other than relatives, friends or neighbours) occupying the house simply leaves the house to the returnee. In other cases the returnee had to call the police and to file a property claim to re-gain his/her house. (DIMIA Country Information Service 2005, *Transcript of Sydney Seminar with Andrew Vincent and Gianluca Rocco – Part 1*, 14 March – Attachment 17).

In Part 2 of the seminar, Mr Rocco continues to specifically discuss the situation for returnees from Iran as follows:

The vast majority of the people that are returning from Iran are returning to the south of the country. Now, generally speaking I would say that if people return to their place of origin it's much more easy for them to reintegrate since people know each other and help each other. Now, there is a problem in these returns, especially for the children. The children don't speak the Iraqi language, they speak Farsi and they have problems integrating into school. School lessons are of course in a different language and there are no efforts, at the moment, from the Shi'a side nor from the government side to start schools in a different language for the returnees. On the other way we have information that, apart from the language, there were no problems for children to enrol in the school when returning from Iran or from other countries (DIMIA Country Information Service 2005, *Transcript of Sydney Seminar with Andrew Vincent and Gianluca Rocco – Part 2*, 14 March – Attachment 18).

The following article from *The Age* newspaper highlights the plight of two sets of brothers following their return to Najaf. They were all reportedly returnees from Australia. The information is conveyed to *The Age* by Riad al-Hujaj – the son of assassinated Iraqi Governing Council leader, Izzedin Salim – following a visit to Iraq for his father's funeral:

**Among returnees he met were two brothers who returned to Iraq three months ago, moving back to Najaf. Within three days, they were threatened by masked, armed men who interrogated them about Australia, he said [Researcher emphasis].**

“They were looking for Australian IDs or Australian money in their pockets,” he said. “I think the intention behind it was to assert pressure on the Australian Government, similar to the Korean who was abducted, to the American who was abducted.”

Mr Hujaj met the brothers in Iran, to which they fled after being threatened again. Another former TPV holder, Adel, returned with his family but the insecurity also drove him to flee to Iran, Mr Hujaj said. His own elder brother, Yassin, 34, returned three months ago to rejoin his wife and children but constant threats prompted him to seek refuge in Iran (Jackson, A. 2004, ‘Returning Iraqis flee for their lives once again’, *The Age*, 25 June <http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2004/06/24/1088046222405.html?from=storylhs#> – Accessed 19 April 2005 – Attachment 19).

As the following two recent articles emphasise, the overwhelming issues that returnees are confronted with are deteriorating living conditions, lack of housing and difficulty obtaining identification documents. Both articles address the situation in the south for voluntary returnees from Iran. However, attitudes towards returnees by the community is not addressed (‘IRAQ: Focus on returnees from Iran’ 2004, source: IRIN News, 29 November <http://www.irinnews.org/print.asp?ReportID=44386> – Accessed 15 June 2005 – Attachment 20; ‘IRAQ: Growing frustration among returnees’ 2005, *Reuters AlertNet*, source: IRIN News, 7 June <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/IRIN/0b795966b29db9d146afbb6406e16147.htm> – Accessed 16 June 2005 – Attachment 21).

### 3. The level of support for Muqtada al Sadr and Mehdi Army.

According to the sources consulted, Muqtada al-Sadr and his militia force, the Mahdi Army (aka Mehdi Army or Jaish-i-Mahdi), have a strong support base in Najaf. However, at times the level of support has abated, such as after the fierce fighting between April and August 2004 which resulted in widespread destruction in the city. Al-Sadr’s main opposition to gaining stronger support in Najaf is The Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) and its militia force, the Badr Organisation. Information from the sources consulted suggests that SCIRI also maintain a strong support base in Najaf and have established a heavy security and political presence.

A January 2005 report by The International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT) provides a thorough analysis of al-Sadr and the Mahdi Army’s strength primarily in the south. The pertinent extracts follow in detail:

In Baghdad’s Sadr City, Muqtada Sadr’s Mahdi militia has assumed the role of “morality police.” **The Sadr movement is also influential in Najaf and Kufa [Researcher emphasis]**, and the Mahdi militia has repeatedly been involved in open hostilities with US forces.

...Sadr also has strong support in Basra and other majority Shiite towns, including Kut, Nasiriya, Karbala, and Kufa, where he regularly preaches. **In some Shiite areas, such as Najaf, his popularity declined after his stand against the coalition provoked clashes with US forces in the city [Researcher emphasis]**. [75] His popularity in the wider Shiite community is more limited, as mainstream Shiites see him as a young upstart who has endangered holy places for his own gain.

...The militia claims to operate in Basra and in Sadr City in Baghdad, as well as in Shiite minority cities Baquba and Kirkuk. **Although the Mahdi Army had little local support in the holy city of Najaf, it took over the city in April 2004, after the Americans attempted to arrest or kill Sadr [Researcher emphasis]** (Shahar, Y. 2005, ‘Iraq – Primary Threats to

Reconstruction, Part 2', The International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT) website, 12 January [http://www.ict.org.il/articles/articles\\_frame.htm](http://www.ict.org.il/articles/articles_frame.htm) – Accessed 7 June 2005 – Attachment 22).

The following article by the *Washington Post* indicates that al-Sadr's political strength is greatest in the poorer provinces of the south; but not in Najaf itself where SCIRI received the strongest support:

But while Islamic parties fared well as a group, their votes were scattered among various factions, and only one -- a party of independents in Wasit province said to be backed by Moqtada Sadr -- won an absolute majority. Seats will be allocated on each local council in proportion to each party's votes.

The Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, a formerly exiled Shiite group, fared far better than factions of the Dawa party, a Shiite movement with deep roots in Iraq. The Supreme Council was victorious in the provinces of Najaf, Karbala, Qadisiyah and Muthana. It received its strongest support in Najaf, with 37 percent of the vote, and in Karbala, with 34 percent.

The Sadr faction, known as the Islamic Virtue Party, performed best in some of the poorest provinces, where the ministry of Sadr's father was influential in the 1990s. It won the largest number of votes in Theqar province and finished second in Muthana. Another group backed by Sadr won in Maysan province ('Islamic Parties Carry Iraq Local Vote' 2005, *Washington Post*, 12 February <http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A16292-2005Feb11?language=printer> – Accessed 9 June 2005 – Attachment 23).

As the following article suggests, the town of Kufa – a few miles from Najaf – is a Sadr stronghold where regular prayers are held by members of al-Sadr's movement:

The Friday prayers at the Kufa mosque, the shrine a few miles from Najaf where Sadr's father preached in the 1990s and where his son built his movement after the U.S. invasion, are akin to street theater. Religion is less pronounced than politics, and politics helps to rally the thousands of men who gather each week in the open-air courtyard.

"Long live Sadr!" the men chant as they file through the arched brick entrance. "Moqtada is the bridge to heaven!"

The prayers led by members of Sadr's movement have long drawn some of the largest crowds in post-invasion Iraq -- in Baghdad and Kufa. The numbers seem to have dwindled little, if at all, over the past year ('An Old U.S. Foe Rises Again in Iraq', *Washington Post*, 8 April <http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A35586-2005Apr7?language=printer> – Accessed 5 May 2005 – Attachment 24).

A May 2005 article by *Aljazeera* states that al-Sadr is likely to increase existing tensions with US forces after he "called on Muslims to paint US and Israeli flags at the entrance to mosques for worshippers to walk on, in protest against the alleged desecration of the Quran at the US detention camp in Guantanamo Bay". In a display of fervent support, the article states that "Iraqis at several Shia mosques in Baghdad and the city of Najaf started painting the flags on Thursday" ('Mosul raid leaves several dead' 2005, *Aljazeera.net* website, 19 May <http://english.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/DD7EBBE7-37F2-4AB4-A3A4-FC52D7A5B0B6.htm> – Accessed 20 June 2005 – Attachment 25).

On 7 June 2005, *The Associated Press* published an article following a rare interview with al-Sadr in Najaf. The relevant extract follows in detail:



But despite the support he enjoys, al-Sadr told the Associated Press in a rare interview he would steer clear of Iraqi politics as long as U.S. troops remain in the country, and warned the current government legitimizes the occupation instead of preparing for its end.

“As long as the occupier is here, I will not interfere in the political process,” he said, adjusting himself on a brown cushion lying on the floor of a long hallway. “I would like to condemn and denounce the last Iraqi government’s decision to legalize the occupation. Legalizing the occupation is rejected from any angle.”

Holed up for nearly a year in his maroon-colored home in one of this Shiite holy city’s upscale neighborhoods, the 32-year-old seminary student has used deft diplomacy and backstage maneuvering to quietly but methodically build a power base across the country.

On a hot Sunday in dusty Najaf, at least 200 men lined up to be searched inside a tent before being admitted into the small house with a rose garden and courtyard with a date palm – modest for a man of his standing. No weapons were in sight (Abdul-Zahra, Q. 2005, ‘While U.S. troops in, Sadr’s out’, *The Associated Press*, Concord Monitor Online website, 7 June <http://www.cmonitor.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20050607/REPOSITORY/506070354/1013/NEWS03> – Accessed 8 June 2005 – Attachment 26).

In relation to al-Sadr’s support in parliament, a May 2005 article by *Agence France Presse* highlights that although al-Sadr is not interested in entering politics himself, he has strategically placed supporters in key positions. The pertinent extract follows in detail:

Although his movement did not run in the January 30 elections -- the country’s first multi-party polls in half a century -- Sadr is thought to have around 20 supporters in parliament who were elected on other lists.

Three ran in the polls on the pro-Sadr National Independent Cadres and Elites list, while the huge Shiite alliance also has about 17 of his sympathisers, according to experts and officials.

Despite his official absence from the National Assembly, Sadr also managed to place one of his men on the parliamentary committee tasked with drafting the country’s permanent constitution (‘Moqtada Sadr: Iraqi rebel leader turned peacemaker’ 2005, *Agence France Presse*, 24 May – Attachment 27).

## List of Sources Consulted

### Internet Sources:

Google search engine

UNHCR      *REFWORLD*      UNHCR Refugee Information Online

### Databases:

Public	<i>FACTIVA</i>	Reuters Business Briefing
DIMIA	<i>BACIS</i>	Country Information
	<i>REFINFO</i>	IRBDC Research Responses (Canada)
RRT	<i>ISYS</i>	RRT Country Research database, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, US Department of State <i>Country Reports on Human Rights Practices</i> .
RRT Library	<i>FIRST</i>	RRT Library Catalogue

## List of Attachments

1. Cordesman, A.H. 2005, 'Iraq's Evolving Insurgency', Centre for Strategic and International Studies website, 19 May.  
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2. Sanders, E. 2005, 'The Conflict in Iraq', *Los Angeles Times*, 20 December. (FACTIVA)
3. Cambanis, T. 2005, 'For Shi'ite Najaf, a new direction', *The Boston Globe* online, 31 January.  
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4. 'Security and police forces clash in Iraq's Al-Najaf' 2005, *BBC Monitoring Middle East*, source: Al-Ufuq, Baghdad, 2 March. (FACTIVA)
5. 'Iraqi town protests at bomb blast' 2005, *BBC News* online, 1 March.  
([http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle\\_east/4308529.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/4308529.stm) – Accessed 7 June 2005)
6. 'Fresh attacks target Iraqi Shia' 2005, *BBC News* online, 28 March.  
([http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/4387117.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4387117.stm) – Accessed 17 June 2005)
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