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A FRIEND STOPPED BY | 02/16/2009 1:25 PM

'Iraq Is Alive Again,' Says Zainab Al-Suwaij

By Zainab Al-Suwaij

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*Editor's Note:
Zainab Al-Suwaij is the executive director of the American Islamic Congress.*

Two weeks ago, I drove up to Basra from Kuwait just before Iraq's nationwide municipal elections. The sea of candidate posters immediately caught my eye. Nearly every inch of public

wall space had been plastered with headshots of candidates representing dozens of parties. Beyond the mosaic of politicians' faces, however, I saw something just as inspiring: hundreds of laughing children played in a new park set up on the side of the main road.

My eye fixed on one little boy in particular, hanging precariously from the monkey bars. With my maternal instinct kicking in, I pulled over. "Be careful," I warned him. "That's dangerous." He was only six years old and smiled shyly. "But I haven't played like this in my whole life," he said. "Let me enjoy it."

I smiled, too, remembering that I hadn't seen anything quite like this either: a crowded children's park in Basra — and Iraq on the upswing.

For the first time since I participated in the failed 1991 intifada against Saddam Hussein, Iraq's prospects look greater than the dangers. The daily violence that battered the country has largely subsided. And the Iraqi mosaic, which was thought to have been broken beyond repair, has regenerated. Iraq is alive again.

Despite the many remaining challenges, there are telling indicators of the country's health: bustling economic activity, a functioning security force and a vibrant press. And here's something new for Iraq, as well as the rest of the

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Arab world: The country's politicians have been held accountable to their constituents.

It was this month's elections that, more than anything else, marked the rebirth of Iraq. The elections featured more than 14,000 candidates, many of them representing secular political parties. That Iraqis turned away from major religious political parties — one lost control of five provinces — suggests that we have entered a new era of Iraqi politics. Voters are more secure about their future, and Iraqis are showing their pragmatism by opting for competence and change and shunning religious parties that many analysts once expected to dominate the country for decades to come.

Several women work in my grandmother's home, assisting with cleaning and other domestic work. None of them can read or write, but all of them made a point to request time off to vote on Election Day. As they left to head home to their districts to vote, one of them observed: "My vote makes a difference. If the politicians I vote for do not do good work, I can vote them out. For the first time in my life, leaders are accountable to me."

The scene at many polling stations revealed how Iraqi women are becoming more comfortable dressing liberally in public. In the past, fundamentalist militias would harass and even kill women who didn't cover up or didn't wear their hijab modestly enough. Now the militias appear to have been defeated, and some Christian, Sabean and even secular Muslim women felt comfortable going to the polls without their heads covered.

Sunni turnout for the elections was massive, as high as 60 percent in some regions, and this fact alone shows that something transformative has happened in Iraq. The Sunni community is on board with the idea of a new Iraq, the rift has begun to heal — and now it's time for us Americans to reunify as well.

Iraq's success is a bipartisan issue. The blood spilt by Americans and Iraqis to make this happen was neither Republican nor Democrat. Now we owe it to them, and the future of our two countries, to reap the seeds they sowed. Now that elections are over in the U.S. and Iraq, our position has to look forward, not backward — not about vindicating past policies but recognizing where we are right now and where we should be going.

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Monet. Feel in love with his paintings in college.

— Laurie Deer



Do you or did you ever earn more money than your spouse/significant other? Did it make a difference in your relationship?

Yes and he hated it...we've been divorced over 20 yrs. CA

— C A Rose



Liz Smith: Rihanna – Dump Your Abuser, Now!



Hi, Robert. Why is there not pressure put on Muslim countries to take the Palestinian Arabs? Homeland Security here in the US will have huge problems with this. We bring them over, finance them and then when they are ready to go back...do we finance their trip back I'm having difficulty processing why Obama thinks this is a good idea. I will dedicate myself to research on this.

In other words, even though we have homeless and jobless Americans, we can give housing, stipends and jobs to displaced Palestinians? They hate Americans.

Buckle your seatbelts.

By **deber B** on 02/16/2009 3:17 pm

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How do you make out that Palestinians hate Americans aren't you painting them all with rather a broad brush?

By **caj p** on 02/16/2009 3:33 pm

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Robert, I mentioned I would do some research on this and when I did, I found the following article that your article is incorrect. I'm happy about that!!

Obama didn't OK Palestinian migration to U.S. Reports wrongly claim president allowing Gazans to flood America

Posted: February 15, 2009

5:49 pm Eastern

By Aaron Klein

© 2009 WorldNetDaily

TEL AVIV, Israel – Contrary to some news media reports, President Obama did not authorize Palestinian “refugees” to migrate to the U.S. as part of emergency assistance following Israel’s 22-day war against Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

On Jan. 30, Obama signed an order issuing an emergency contribution of \$20.3 million for “urgent relief efforts” in Gaza. He approved the aid, which was to come from the U.S. Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance Fund, one day after the U.N. launched a flash appeal for \$613 million to help Palestinians in the Hamas-controlled territory rebuild infrastructure following Israeli antiterrorism air raids.

Several media outlets wrongly reported Obama had approved the emergency migration of Gazans to the U.S. Canada Free Press, for example, released an article titled, “Obama opening floodgates by inviting Hamas to ‘migrate’ to the U.S.A.?”

Also, the New Media Journal featured a piece by author Paul L. Williams with the screaming headline, “Pres. Obama invites

I think Rihanna threw the first punch. It is not excuse for what Chris did but would explain why he wasn't arrested. Legally, it was self defense for Chris. They both need to learn anger ma



— **Rain in Minneapolis**



Re: Rihanna--a woman hits a man? The man leaves the room/situation. Period. You bet there is no excuse.

— **Liz Smith**

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Hamas terrorists to America.”

An e-mail containing an article titled, “Obama Decrees: Massive Immigration of Hamas Refugees from Gaza To U.S.” has been circulating with the byline of CNN’s Lou Dobbs. However, WND has learned Dobbs did not pen any such piece. The article was simply posted on the reporter’s website forum and later falsely attributed to him.

WND received a number of e-mail requests from readers asking the news organization to investigate the stories.

(Story continues below)

Michael Hammer, a spokesperson for the National Security Council, confirmed to WND Obama did not authorize the migration of any Palestinians to the U.S. A State Department spokesman provided the same comment.

Officials from both Hamas and the Palestinian Authority told WND they are not aware of any plans to bring Gazans to the U.S. Perhaps the text of Obama’s executive order left the matter open for interpretation.

The order stated the money was to be used for the “purpose of meeting unexpected and urgent refugee and migration needs.”

It continued, however, by stipulating the funds were to be used for “distributing emergency food assistance, providing medical assistance and temporary shelter, creating temporary employment, and restoring access to electricity and potable water.”

The authorization includes \$13.5 million for the U.N. Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, \$6 million to the International Committee of the Red Cross and \$800,000 to the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

By **deber B** on 02/16/2009 3:54 pm

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Deber,

That was an email that I recieved. I did not check it out further. Glad to here that he is not bringing them in.

By **Robert Thompson** on 02/16/2009 4:15 pm

[e-mail alert](#)



deber: *President Obama did not authorize Palestinian “refugees” to migrate to the U.S....*

So happy you found this correction.

By **Marjorie C.** on 02/16/2009 4:35 pm

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Hello deber B



I do not know if you will welcome a post from me out here on the left coast, but I am going to stop and comment anyway. I have total respect that you took the time to research false information and to correct the record. Whether misinformation is posted carelessly, or maliciously, whether it accrues to the right or the left, it is always harmful, and in some cases dangerous. Obviously I am not alone when I say that I sincerely appreciate your diligence.

I also read your post on another thread about your mega-successful approach to child-rearing. While I did not respond at that time, I want to weigh in now. When parents instill fine values in their children, raise those young ones to be such grounded happy productive citizens, they win, you win, I win, AMERICA wins. Quality parenting is a high form of patriotism in my opinion. Puts all that political stuff in perspective. Kudos!

By ~ **countrywoman** ~ on 02/16/2009 11:46 pm

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deber: *...when they are ready to go back...*

Do you really think any of them will go back? I think they're here to stay, along with the Guantanamo releases.

I'm having difficulty processing why Obama thinks this is a good idea.

Something tells me, he doesn't care.

By **Marjorie C.** on 02/16/2009 4:30 pm

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Marjorie C, Robert and I found out it was false. I posted another article which stated that article was incorrect. Thank the Lord!

By **deber B** on 02/16/2009 4:33 pm

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Freepeers have landed with their deranged views, spewed from the propagandists, and only somewhat true.

All he did was what he promised when running, and that was to overturn Bush Executive Orders that sought to override International Law and the US Constitution. You'll get to learn more when the Bush Hearings begin, hopefully on Capital Hill and for war crimes in the Hague.

Your paranoia spin would be amusing if it weren't so incredibly ignorant.

Yes, I am seeing a pattern, a pattern of undoing the disastrous and illegal 'Bush Doctrine' and replacing it with the US Constitution and International Law.

Freepier nation is missing one of it's regressives...back to the flock little man.

By **Wow Trop de classe** on 02/16/2009 5:17 pm

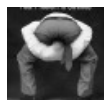
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Leahy has already announced that the bush investigation will begin...and they will.

By **Wow Trop de classe** on 02/16/2009 7:16 pm

[e-mail alert](#)



Ha Ha, nobody listens to that old fool. I guess you haven't gotten the memo about his senility.

By **Steve Douglass** on 02/16/2009 9:31 pm

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I love seeing this. My nephew who spent two tours in Iraq is thrilled!

.....

By **S.J. Morgan** on 02/16/2009 1:47 pm

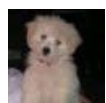
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This Iraqis thing is so successful that the "drive by liberal media" don't even report on it. You and I know if things was having a problem they would be all over it.

By **Lori F.** on 02/16/2009 2:53 pm

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Lori, so true...it's not reported by any of the networks...but you wait....in a few months they will start reporting great success in Iraq, and guess who will be getting the credit?

By **Libra Lady** on 02/16/2009 8:58 pm

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Healthy children at play is always a sign of a safe neighborhood. If we can keep that from disintegrating again, we'll be doing a good thing.

By **Ms. Dee** on 02/16/2009 1:50 pm

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