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Sayyid Muhammad Muhammad-Sadiq Al-Sadr

There is a story behind the writing of this text which the author narrates in his Introduction to this book.

[Who is Sayyid Muhammad Muhammad-Sadiq al-Sadr?](#)

He is Sayyid Muhammad son of Sayyid Muhammad-Sadiq, son of Sayyid Muhammad Mehdi, son of Sayyid Isma'il, son of Sayyid Sadr ad-Din Muhammad, son of Sayyid Salih, son of Sayyid Muhammad, son of Sayyid Ibrahim Sharaf ad-Din; his genealogy reaches Imam Musa al-Kazim (as), one of the offspring of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (as) and Fatima al-Zahra (as), daughter of the Messenger of Allah (P).

His father, Sayyid Muhammad-Sadiq al-Sadr, is the cousin of Martyr Sayyid Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr who was executed together with his sister Bint al-Huda by Saddam Hussein al-Tikriti. Sayyid Muhammad al-Sadr was born in 1943 in Najaf al-Ashraf and started his studies at the hawza in 1954. In 1960, he joined the College of Fiqh (Islamic Juristic system) from which he graduated in 1964.

During that period, he married the daughter of his uncle Sayyid Muhammad Ja'fer al-Sadr by whom he was blessed with four sons: Mustafa, Mu'ammal, Murtada and Muqtada. He was tutored by the best scholars the most prominent among whom were: Sayyid Muhsin al-Hakim, Sayyid Abul-Qasim al Khoei, and Sayyid Martyr Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr.

He was awarded the Certificate of Ijtihad by the Martyr Sayyid Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr in 1977 when he was 37 years old. In the same year, he taught the stage of Al-Kharij at the hawza but, due to the political circumstances of the time, he could not continue to teach and was able in 1990 to do so.

He is the author of more than 26 books dealing with various topics relevant to Fiqh, creed, norms of conduct and Usool. The most significant of his works are: his encyclopedic work dealing with Imam al-Mehdi (as) (titled *Tarikh ma Ba 'd al-Zuhoor*, "Post Reappearance History"), those discussing human rights from an Islamic viewpoint, his own scientific dissertation titled *Minhaj al Salihin*, in the philosophy of manners, his shedding light on the revolution of Imam Husain (as), in addition to a complete course

study dealing with the science known as 'Ilm al-Usool.

After the demise of Ayatullah Sayyid Abul-Qasim al-Khoei in 1992, he became the recognized religious Authority-Referee and started in 1997 leading the Friday prayers which were attended by huge crowds of people estimated at tens of thousands. This figure includes those who prayed behind him or behind his representatives in Baghdad or throughout southern Iraq. He also set up court's ruling according to the Islamic Shari'a (legislative system) in all Iraqi towns so that people might refer to the sacred canons rather than to the Government's courts.

The Events that Led to His Assassination

Once he had started leading the Friday prayer sermons, he started resurrecting a number of concepts of Islamic awareness, urging the public to defy the Government and its authority. In fact, he himself started providing advice to the Government presented in the form of a challenge. Moreover, he always issued fatawa (edicts) mandating that it was prohibitive for a Faqih to follow taqiyya (safeguard) if doing so stemmed from his own personal fear rather than out of concern for Islam.

In his sermons, he always used to invite the Army to be aligned with the people, something which the Government interpreted as urging the Army to sympathize with the people, and not to obey the Government or to be confrontational towards the people. He also used to call upon the Government to grant the people freedom, wondering why it had to oppose the establishment of the Islamic ceremonies such as the holding of Friday prayer services, the visiting of the grave of Imam al-Husain (as), etc., stating that anyone who opposed them was an Imperialist and an enemy of Islam.

This was a clear reference to the Iraqi Government and to its enmity towards Islam and open compliance with the Imperialists; such was the gist of his sermon No. 35 which he delivered near the end of the month of Sha'ban of the past Hijri year (November 1998). He used to encourage people not to be afraid of the Government and to march en masse to visit the shrine of Imam al-Husain (as).

He brought an example from history when he recalled how al-Mutawakkil used to cut off the hand of anyone who visited the shrine of Imam al-Husain (as), so a man once went there to visit Imam al-Husain's shrine after both of his hands had already been cut off in his previous visits.

The Iraqi Government always asked him to laud it in his sermons. He not only refrained from doing so but also banned all his representatives from lauding the Government in their sermons. He also refused to criticize the Arab governments that did not support the Iraqi Government's policies during the latest incidents.

The relationship between him and the said Government, therefore, started to rapidly strain at the end of the month of Rajab of the past year (October 1998) when he ordered the people to visit the shrine of Imam al-Husain (as) during the middle of the month of Sha'ban (November 1998). The Government

tried to discourage him from doing so.

First, the governor of Najaf and the director of the security apparatus in Najaf contacted him in order to discourage him, but he refused to succumb to their pressure. This forced Saddam to send a delegation to meet him before the start of the said visit. Members of the delegation asked him to issue a statement saying that the circumstances did not permit such a march, but the Sayyid refused. He moreover issued a communiqué stating that "The Government bans such a visit, but the public have to undertake it."

On Shawwal 5, 1419 A.H. (February 3, 1999 A.D.), the Government tried to prohibit him from leading the Friday prayers at Kufa's Grand Mosque in the pretext of an ongoing construction work on site.

Muhammad Hamzah al-Zubaidi, member of the national leadership (of the Baath Party now ruling Iraq with an iron fist), and also the head of the army forces assigned for the central region of the country and who was in charge of a military force and backed by security men, tried to stop the Sayyid from holding the Friday sermon, but the throngs of people who numbered more than a hundred thousand were able to penetrate the siege laid around Kufa's Grand Mosque.

The Government failed to stop the Sayyid from ascending the pulpit to deliver a sermon wherein he encouraged the public to maintain such enthusiasm in upholding the Friday sermon. Muhammad al-Zubaidi was forced to retreat and was greatly disappointed, he and all the army corps and security men with him. The Iraqi Government was not satisfied with harassing him but went on to harass his representatives as well.

It even appointed five Imams for the mosques to conduct the Friday prayers in various regions. Those "Imams" were pro-Government. In his sermon delivered at the end of the month of Rajah (November 1998), the Sayyid announced the names of those five individuals, so the people stopped praying behind them, kicking some of them out of the mosques and replacing them with some of the representatives of the Sayyid.

This situation led sometimes to clashes between the worshipers and the security men, and a number of worshipers on various occasions were martyred. The same took place during the past month of Ramadan (January 1999) at the mosque of "The People's City" in Baghdad when the Government appointed one of its own Imams. 'Allama Shaikh Ali al-Ka'bi then declared that prayers were not valid for anyone who prayed behind an "Imam" appointed by the Government. People were enraged, and clashes took place leading to the martyrdom of a number of individuals.

Many were wounded. The Sayyid, therefore, issued a verdict ordering that prayers should not be performed behind an "Imam" appointed by Saddam to lead the prayers. Security agents demanded that Sayyid al-Sadr's representatives praise Saddam in their sermons, but these representatives have always refused to do so in obedience to the orders of al-Sadr himself. This led to several confrontations between them and such security agents in various regions of the country.

For example, Shaikh Aws al-Khafaji was arrested in front of the Nasiriyya Cooperative in the middle of

the month of Ramadan (January 1999). The worshipers kept waiting for him till they came to know of his arrest. It is then that Nasiriyya's Judge, who had been appointed by Sayyid al-Sadr, and whose name is 'allama (a scholarly title equivalent to Ph.D.) Shaikh As'ad al Nasiri publicly denounced the arrest of Shaikh al-Khafaji, and the people echoed his denunciations loudly and prayed behind him the noon prayers.

Then thousands of them, men and women, marched to Nasiriyya's Security Directorate, which is located at a distance of about 6 kilometers, shouting the whole time anti-Government slogans. They were routed by the security agents who first fired live ammunition in the air in order to scare and disperse them, but people showed no signs of fear at all but of defiance. As a matter of fact, they were now more enthused and insisted on reaching the building of the said Directorate no matter what.

It was then that they became the target of the Doshga missiles, yet they refused to disperse. Women shouted: "Shoot us in the chest, you oppressors!" Having finished their afternoon prayers, which they performed in front of the Directorate's building, they were approached by the security agents who arrested Shaikh al-Nasiri and succeeded in dispersing the crowd only after firing tear gas canisters at them. Then the security agents arrested all those who were manning al-Sadr's office in Nasiriyya including Sayyid Aqeel al-Mousawi and 'allama Ahmed Shamkhi, in addition to a number of those who performed the prayers there and then. Prayer services at the Nasiriyya Mosque came to a complete halt.

In the city of Kut, security authorities prohibited 'allama Sayyid Kazim al-'Aani from leading the Friday prayer services because he refused to pray for the Government. People then courageously faced the security authorities with their shouts and denunciations. They also shouted slogans against the security agents themselves and insisted on performing the prayer rites which were, indeed, performed despite the nose of Saddam's feared security apparatus .

In Baghdad, an attempt was made to prohibit Shaikh Mu'ayyad al Khazraji from leading the prayer service because he refused to laud and pray for the ruling autocratic authority. In Ur, a Baghdad suburb, when the authority tried to prohibit the holding of Friday prayer service, closing the gate of the mosque there, the worshipers were engaged in a fist fight with the security agents who surrounded the mosque with their armored vehicles. Nine worshipers were martyred there.

In Amara, Shaikh Sayyid Hasan al-Muhammadawi and allama Judge Shaikh Nadem al-Sa'idi were arrested, but the violent reaction of their respective tribes forced the despotic authority to release them. When allama Sayyid Ali al-Shawki was prohibited from leading the prayer service at the Husainiyya in Al-Sha'ab Town in the month of Sha'ban (December 1998), people kept performing their prayers in the street for several weeks.

The authority kept blocking all alleys leading to the mosque trying to stop the worshipers from reaching the service site by dispersing its agents throughout the streets and the alleys leading to the mosque and even cutting the electric power. But the people brought their own portable electric generators as well as

voice amplifiers. At the beginning of the month of Shawwal (February 1999), the ruling authority conducted a new wave of arrests.

Following the arrest of Aws al-Khafaji and of Shaikh As'ad al Nasiri, Shaikh al-Zubaidi was arrested, too, in front of the Nahrawan Mosque, and Shaikh Tahsin al-'Abudi was arrested in front of the Abu Ghraib Cooperative. Sayyid al-Sadr, therefore, announced in his Sermon No. 44, which he delivered in Shawwal (February 1999), that if the ruling authority did not release those arrested, he would issue an order to the Imams who led the Friday prayer services to speak up and to be mobilized against the Government.

The Government sent an envoy to the Sayyid to ask him to reconsider his threat, but he refused and remained adamant. Saddam Hussein contacted him in person and reiterated the same request, but al-Sadr again refused. Al-Sadr, therefore, was placed under house arrest and was forbidden from leading the Friday prayer service on Thul-Qi'da 3, 1419 A.H. (February 19, 1999).

But he defied the order of staying at home and went out to visit the shrine of Imam Ali (as) escorted by his sons, Mustafa and Mu'ammal, and also by his son-in-law. They were intercepted by an Oldsmobile car and were shot by machine guns used by the army. Both his sons and son-in-law threw themselves on him to protect him, hence they were instantly killed. He, too, was shot and seriously wounded. He was transported to a hospital as he kept bleeding. The hospital was vacated from all doctors and the Sayyid was left there to bleed to death, may the Almighty be pleased with him.

Then the Government buried him secretly in the presence of a very few members of his family at the dawn of February 20, 1999 without giving him any traditional Islamic burial service. Then the Iraqi Radio announced the news that the Sayyid had died in the eve of Thursday, not of Friday (as was the case), in order to give the impression that he was not buried in a hurry.

Why al-Sadr was thus assassinated? Saddam Hussein's Government's Habitual Lies

The Iraqi Government accused "foreign hands" to be responsible for the assassination of this martyr in a desperate attempt to contain the reaction of the angry crowds for its having committed such a heinous crime.

All what we have mentioned clearly and without a hint of doubt underscores the fact that the killer is none other than Saddam Hussein al-Tikriti himself, and that none else benefits from such a crime besides him, nor is there anyone who has the guts to kill him other than Saddam Hussein who has killed even the husbands of his own daughters not because they threatened him but simply because they held different views.

So, what would you say about someone who did, indeed, threaten him, someone who publicly stated

from the pulpit during the Friday congregational prayer service that he (Saddam) was an enemy of Islam and of Muslims and a lackey of the imperialists?

Did the Martyred Sayyid Expect to be killed?

The martyred Sayyid did not at all rule out the possibility that Saddam Hussein would assassinate him. All indications clearly point out to the fact that he was fully aware of becoming a victim of Saddam Hussein's bloody regime especially in the light of the fact that he met his authority with defiance and courage.

The martyred Sayyid used to wear the burial shrouds whenever he led a Friday congregational prayer service, and he used to utter statements such as, "If Sayyid al-Sadr (meaning himself) dies, you should continue upholding the Friday prayers." He believed that it was prohibited for a scholar to resort to taqiyya (extreme precaution) if he feared only for his own life but it would be alright if he feared for the Islamic creed.

He, therefore, never knew fear whenever he delivered a sermon, and he utilized the Friday pulpit to acquaint people with Islam and to fight oppression. But when the Government prohibited him from leading the prayers, he realized that the ruling authority wanted to pull that card away, too. He urged people to continue to uphold this obligatory Islamic rite even if the price for confronting the Government would be high, training the public to do so by his own wearing the burial shrouds whenever he led the Friday prayer services.

And so it happened; the ruling authority assassinated him, thus unveiling its true face and animosity towards Islam and Muslims, especially those who promote the creed, belying its claim that it was the guardian of the religion or the protector of the people. His martyrdom became a reason for igniting Islamic sentiments among the public and served to acquaint the people with what Islam really is and with the meaning of martyrdom.

The escalation did not leave the oppressive ruling authority any option except to select one of two alternatives: either to let him have his way, and in this case the people's awareness would increase and so will their knowledge of Islam, and it is only natural, given the implications of such awareness, that the people will be more and more angry with the Government and the confrontation and defiance will intensify.

Facing such a reality, the oppressive ruling authority would only be more isolated from the public, more so than at the present time and people would sooner or later rebel against it when the circumstances are conducive. The other alternative was to silence him by putting an end to the Friday prayer services which he was leading and whereby he was able to get his message across to the largest possible segment of the society.

It is for this reason that the Government opted to achieve this goal. The Sayyid himself had to face two very difficult options: either to safeguard his life by relinquishing his attempts to get his message across to the people, especially after he was placed under house arrest, or to defy the authority and thus risk his life and would, through his Jihad and martyrdom, become a supreme example and a true Islamic role model for all those who face oppression, even if it cost him his life.

The Timing of the Assassination

The Iraqi Government chose both internal and external timing for this assassination. Externally, two major events were out there: the confrontation [which never materialized, as expected] between the Serbs and NATO forces because of the Kosovo problem, in addition to the arrest of Abdullah Ocalan.

During such period, Iraq was not in the forefront. Rather, Iraq was then enjoying a great deal of support from Arab and Muslim countries because of the American and British bombers constantly violating its air space and strafing its north and south [in the false pretext of "protecting" the Kurds and the Shi'ites, a very well publicized lie].

As for the internal situation, the Sayyid did not bind himself by the Government's order to stay at home. The ruling authority, therefore, opted to assassinate him during the furthest time distance from one Friday prayer service to another in order to minimize the possibility of any popular confrontation with the Government. His assassination, hence, took place in the eve of a Friday at about 7:30 pm on Thul-Qi'da 3, 1419 A.H./February 19, 1999 A.D.

The ruling authority prepared all means necessary to quell any uprising in its infancy: it dug up trenches around and inside the city of Najaf. Even Qusayy, Saddam's son, was present with the forces called "Saddam's Suicide Defenders" on the same day when the Sayyid was assassinated. All communications with the city of Najaf was cut off, be they telephones or highways. Security agents had already been stationed in all the regions where the ruling authority expected some movement or an uprising.

Despite all of these measures, large scale confrontations did, indeed, take place, and scores of people were martyred in Baghdad and in cities in southern Iraq. But the brutal methods employed by the Iraqi Government in confronting dissenters, its killing unarmed people, may on the surface enable such Government to put things under control, but the fire remains under the ashes, and the souls remain animated with the fire of zeal, waiting for the opportunity to explode, to rise up, and to bring about the anticipated change.

Surely every night brings after it a morning; every sunset is succeeded by sunrise. Falsehood will sooner or later be defeated. Oppression rules for a while, but the ultimate triumph is for what is right, and only what is right.

All Praise is due to the Lord of the World.

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