# A Brief Biography in Memory of His Late Holiness Ayatullah al-Uzma Sayyid Abul-Qasim al-Khui

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Yasin T. Al-Jibouri

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Article

**Authors(s):**

Yasin T. Al-Jibouri [1]

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***In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful***
***"Surely we are Allah's, and to Him shall we surely return."*** (***Qur'an, 2:156***)

The Muslim world has lost one of its brightest stars when, at 3:13 pm on Saturday, Safar 8, 1413 (August 8, 1992), Ayatullah al-Uzma (Grand or Supreme Ayatullah, the highest theological degree in Shi'a Islam) Abul-Qasim al-Khu'i died at his Kufa home of heart failure. He was born on Rajab 15, 1317 A.H. (November 19, 1899) at Khu'i in Iranian Azerbaijan, heartland of many great Shi'a thinkers and sufis, ascetics. Even in his early childhood, al-Khu'i was versed in religious Persian and Arabic poetry and languages and in Turkish as well.

It was in 1330 A.H./1912 A.D. that al-Khu'i, who was then only thirteen years old, migrated to al-Najaf al-Ashraf, Iraq, in pursuit of knowledge. Even then, he was characterized by brilliance and a readiness to absorb knowledge and scholarship. In all stages of his study and research, progress and success were his companions.

## The Hawza

Ten centuries ago, a university-type *hawza* was founded by the most knowledgeable person then alive, namely Shaikh Muhammad ibn al-Hassan al-Toosi, may Allah have mercy on his soul. Al-Toosi was an intellectual giant, a genius by all standards, and a man who was able to absorb various types of knowledge and science. He was the undisputed authority in *fiqh*, the founder of the science of *hadith,* an innovative mentor of the science of *usool*, nay, the scholar of scholars in all branches of knowledge related to the science of biographies, *akhlaq*, and *ilm al kalam*. Thus did al-Toosi lay the foundation for the *hawza* which has been functioning since then, i.e. since 449 A.H.

Since that year, this blessed *hawza* has passed through three significant periods: The first extended from its year of establishment till early tenth century; the second period started from then and ended at the early twelfth century; the third period started from then and continued till our present time. During each of these periods, certain personalities rose to distinction and contributed to the development and improvement of the functions of this great university; here is their short list:

1) Those who were distinguished during the first period included the founder, Shaikh al-Toosi, his son al-Hassan ibn Muhammad ibn al-Hassan who is well known as Abu Ali al-Toosi, and Abul-Nasr

Muhammad ibn Abu Ali ibn Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn al-Hassan al-Toosi.

2) Scholars whose star shone during its second period were many; among them are: al-Muqaddas Ahmed ibn Muhammad al-Ardabili, then the lighthouse of knowledge Jamalud-Deen al-Hassan ibn Zaynul-Deen, the Second Martyr, then Shaikh Ahmed ibn Isma'eel al-Jazairi, author of *Ayat al Ahkam*, then both famous scholars Sayyid Muhammad Mahdi Bahr al-Uloom and Shaikh Ja'far Kashiful-Ghita.

3) Men of this period are innumerable, yet the most renown among them are: Sayyid Muhammad Mahdi Bahr al-Uloom, Shaikh Ja'far Kashiful-Ghita, Shaikh Muhammad Husain al-Najafi, author of *Al Jawahir*, Shaikh al-Ansari, author of *Al Makasib wal Rasaail*, Muhammad Kazim al-Khurasani, author of *Al Kifayah*, and Sayyid Muhammad Kazim al-Yazdi, author of *Al Urwah*. Less renown were scholars such as Mirza Hussain al-Naeeni, Shaikh Muhammad Hussain al-Isfahani, Shaikh Diyaud-Deen al-Iraqi, Sayyid Abul-Hassan al-Isfahani, and Sayyid Muhsin al-Tabatabai al-Hakim (the grand Ayatullah who preceded the late grand Ayatullah Abul-Qasim al-Khu'i).

The list is concluded by men of genius such as Abul-Qasim al-Moosawi al-Khu'i, may Allah be pleased with him, during whose period the *hawza* became like a bee-hive, full of energy and productivity and scholarly competition. Some scholars have described this particular period as the period of the Renaissance of the *hawza*, while others refer to it as the period of the perfection of scholarship due to the large number of those who proved their genius and due to the huge public demand from Arab and non-Arab seekers of knowledge to study there.

## Mentors of Al-Khu'i

If we were to research the fountainheads that nurtured the intellect of the late al-Khu'i, we will come across a list of the finest among all contemporary scholars such as Shaikh Fath-Allah who is better known as *Shaikh al-Sharee'a* al-Isfahani, Shaikh Mahdi al-Mazandarani, Shaikh Diyaud-Deen al-Iraqi, Shaikh Muhammad Hussain al-Kampani al-Isfahani, Shaikh Muhammad Hussain al-Naeeni, Shaikh Muhammad Jawad al-Balaghi, and others. All of these men were considered as pioneers in the fields of their specialization. The impact of these men on shaping the mind of the late al-Khu'i is best described by al-Khu'i himself who has said,

"I have learned from each one of them a complete course in the science of *usool*, and digested a number of books in the science of *fiqh*, for many years. I used to provide a critique of the research relevant of each one of them before a number of scholars who specialized in that branch of knowledge, and my audience included a good number of very highly respected scholars. Al-Naeeni, may Allah have mercy on his soul, was the last mentor I used to accompany more frequently than anyone else."

If you read *Al Bayan fee Tafseer al Qur'an*, you will most likely think it was written by al-Balaghi, may Allah rest his soul in piece, but worded by al-Khu'i!

## Al-Khu'i as Mentor

The above covers the stage of the life of al-Khu'i when he was a student. This chapter deals with his being a professor who taught the most significant stages of theological studies in Islam, namely the stages of *al sutooh* and *al kharij*, which may be compared to the M.A. and Ph.D. respectively.

Al-Khu'i, may Allah be pleased with him, colored both stages with his own hue and stamped them with his own stamp; thus, a new generation of scholars graduated from his school; nay! A whole new generation of scholars graduated from his school as masters of the sciences of *fiqh, usool, hadith, ilm al rijal, tafseer, and ilm al kalam*. Roughly translated, these sciences may be said to be the sciences of jurisprudence, basics of jurisprudence, traditions, biographies, exegesis, interpretation of the Holy Qur'an, and theological philosophy, respectively.

Al-Khu'i had his own style in teaching and tutoring. Those who graduated from his courses describe his method of teaching as immaculately minute, stunningly easy and clear, amazingly logical. They say that there is neither undue complexity nor ambiguity in his style, and this can be said about all the courses he taught.

How was his style in discussing and debating? The answer to this question is provided by one of his students: the struggling scientist, the pioneer and the shining star Shaikh Muhammad Jawad Maghniyyah who has said the following in this regard:

"He [al-Khu'i] was like the sun that sends its rays everywhere, all the time. He was my professor and the professor of all other scholars at al-Najaf al-Ashraf, and the pivot round which the motion of scholarship revolved, and to whom the *hawza* is indebted for appreciation and loyalty... His was the golden age during which stars such as al-Shaikh al-Ansari and al-Shaikh al-Khurasani and their disciples shone...

He remained [at the *hawza*] for more than seventy years learning, teaching, writing, helping scholars graduate, debating newcomers as well as alumni... His style in discussing and debating is that of Socrates: He deliberately feigns his lack of knowledge and pretends to accept the argument of the other party, then he confronts him with doubts and assails him with questions.

He pretends to seek benefit and guidance from his opponent, just as a student or an inquirer may do, so much so that when the poor debater innocently and with naïveté provides an answer, he sharply assails him, pouncing down on him like an eagle and dragging him to show him the facts that support his own argument and from which the opponent cannot rescue himself. He then causes his opponent to unknowingly contradict himself, forcing him to admit his error and ignorance."

# Teaching the Al-Kharij Stage

In order to demonstrate the extent of contribution of his late holiness al-Khu'i, consider the following facts:

* Shaikh Murtada al-Ansari founded and polished the science of *usool* more than a century and a half ago;

* Shaikh Murtada al-Ansari continued learning then teaching this science for more than twenty five years;

* Al-Mirza Habib al-Rashti dedicated thirty years of his life to the study of this science alone;

* Shaikh al-Akhoond al-Khurasani continued his studies of this science for more or less than twenty years;

* Al-Mirza al-Naeeni continued studying this science for twenty-five years and a few months;

* Shaikh Diyaud-Deen al-Iraqi dedicated more than thirty years of his life to the study of this science;

* Shaikh al-Kampani Muhammad Hussain al-Isfahani was distinguished by the fact that he spent thirty years of his life studying only this science;

* Al-Sayyid Abul-Qasim al-Khu'i passed the stage of *usool* and continued teaching the much more advanced stage of *al kharij* for more than fifty years...! The number of his graduates is estimated at tens of thousands...

In order to form an idea about what this stage involves, let us ask its professor himself about it, for surely his answer is more precise than that of anyone else. He, may Allah be pleased with him, says:

"I have taught extensively, delivering numerous lectures in *fiqh*, *usool*, and *tafsir*, nurturing a large number of highly respected students at the *hawza* of al-Najaf al-Ashraf. I delivered my lectures in the stage of *al kharij* for two complete courses utilizing the scholarly achievements of his holiness al-Shaikh al-Ansari, the greatest mentor, may Allah be pleased with him, and I taught a number of other books as well. Then I taught two complete courses related to the Book of *Salat* (prayers).

On Rabi' al-Awwal 27, 1377 A.H. I started teaching *Al Urwah al Wuthqa* by the *faqih* of the school of thought al-Sayyid Muhammad Kazim al-Tabatabai al-Yazdi, starting with the Book of *Tahara* (cleanliness), after having taught *ijtihad* and *taqleed*.

I continued, by the Grace of Allah, doing so for a good while till I reached the Book of *Ijarah* which I started teaching on Rabi' al-Thani 26, 1400 A.H., finishing it in the month of Safar of the year 1401 A.H. I delivered my lectures in the science of *usool*, in the stage of *al kharij* for six complete courses,

concluding them with the research on *al didd*. During the past few years, I have been teaching the exegesis of the Holy Qur'an till circumstances beyond my control forced me to terminate them..."

Books written by al-Khu'i and already published have already numbered ninety, not counting his numerous manuscripts. The topics his writings have covered include Islamic law, religious biographies, philosophy and commentary of the Holy Qur'an. His best known books of guidance are being used today throughout the Shi'a world, and they have been reprinted numerous times, and every Shi'a country in the world boasts eminent scholars who were his students.

This figure demonstrates the power of his overflowing pen despite his numerous responsibilities as the spiritual leader of two hundred million Shi'a Muslims worldwide and the person responsible for their guidance in matters related to both secular and theological problems. It is truly a task that distracts one from reading, let alone writing.

## Najaf's Hawza under His Supervision

The monumental achievement of his late holiness Abul-Qasim al-Khu'i is his development and improvement of Najaf's theological school known as *al hawza al ilmiyya*, the inclusive school of knowledge and scholarship over which he presided in 1970 after being elected successor to the late Ayatullah al-Uzma Sayyid Muhsin al-Tabatabai al-Hakim.

He is described by his students as a compassionate father, a man who believed in moderation and who led a most austere life in strict adherence to the tenets of the Islamic faith. Al-Khu'i had attained the coveted title of "Ayatullah" when he was in his early thirties. The *hawza* at al-Najaf al-Ashraf has been for the past ten centuries attracting students from all over the world. The main topics taught at the *hawza* are: philosophy, theology, and jurisprudence, and the number of its students and teachers during its hay days reached 10,000.

It contains several libraries where ancient and rare manuscripts are treasured and guarded as one would guard a gold mine. In Najaf in general and around the premises of the *hawza* in particular, bookstores outnumber grocery stores. The *hawza* also accommodates facilities for the use of manuscript copiers.

Learning at it is a full-time career, and students actually live and learn at the same place where they are offered very modest accommodations. There were dark periods when this great center of learning was fought and its teachers hunted. To be exact, that was the period when Iraq was placed by strong foreign nations under the British mandate.

The British, who claim to be the most civilized people in the world and the champions of learning, chased Muslim theologians because of the latter's opposition to their presence in Iraq. One teacher recollects how he and other fellow teachers during that dark period of persecution by the British had nothing to eat all day long, so, they would wait till the dark to go out to the streets looking for the skins of watermelons

whereby they could sustain themselves.

## Some of His Renown Students

It is no exaggeration to indicate here that 70% of Shi'a scholars worldwide are either graduates of al-Khu'i's *hawza* or students of such graduates, and each one of them is like a bright star. Only Allah knows the exact numbers of those taught directly by al-Khu'i or by his students, but we would like here to indicate some of the most renown scholars who were students of Imam al-Khu'i and who are very well known throughout the Islamic world:

1) the great Islamic philosopher, theologian and economist Martyr Ayatullah Sayyid Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr,

2) Ayatullah Sayyid Ali Beheshti,

3) the authority-referee, scholar and philosopher Hujjatul-Islam Shaikh Muhammad Taqi al-Ja'fari,

4) the scholar Hujjatul-Islam Shaikh Muhammad Mahdi Shamsud-Deen,

5) Ayatullah Sayyid Taqi al-Qummi,

6) Ayatullah Sayyid Ali al-Sistani,

7) Ayatullah Sayyid Muhammad al-Roohani,

8) the scholar Hujjatul-Islam Shaikh Muhammad Asif al-Muhsini,

9) the scholar Hujjatul-Islam Sayyid Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah,

10) Ayatullah Shaikh Hussein al-Waheed,

11) the scholar Hujjatul-Islam Sayyid Muhyi al-Deen al-Ghuraifi,

12) the scholar Hujjatul-Islam Shaikh Muhammad Ishaq al-Fayyad,

13) the scholar Hujjatul-Islam Sayyid Ali Mekki,

14) the scholar, authority-referee, Martyr Sayyid Abdel-Sahib al-Hakim,

to name only a few.

## A Great Administrator

Imam al-Khu'i kept in touch with his followers worldwide through a very well organized and centralized network of representatives. The latter have been charged with duties such as: making sure that the

social, educational, theological, cultural and even financial problems of their respective communities are properly addressed and solved.

He proved his administrative genius in handling the financial aspect of running such a huge and intricate network of charitable trusts overseen and supervised by the Khu'i Foundation which has been building schools and religious and cultural centers wherever there is a sizeable following community.

During the Afghani struggle against the Russians, Ayatullah al-Uzma al-Khu'i organized aid for Afghani war victims. When natural disasters hit Bangladesh, India, Kashmir (chopped off into Pakistani and Indian slices), and Iran, al-Khu'i issued orders to spend generously on the victims of these disasters regardless of their schools of Muslim law.

Moreover, he was credited with the task of establishing projects to dig wells and irrigation canals for the believers who live in isolated villages in East Africa and the Indo-Pakistani subcontinent, for undertaking numerous housing projects, schools and both mobile and permanent clinics, all funded by voluntary contributions from the Shi'a faithful under his supervision and administrative guidance.

## Institutes He Established

Since he took charge of Najaf's *hawza*, al-Khu'i became the caretaker of all Shi'a charitable institutions, mosques and *husayniyyas*, theological *hawzas*, etc. all over the world. Among the most significant of such institutes which he ordered to be founded, and which he supervised through his representatives, are the following:

1) in India, where there are an estimated forty million followers of his (according to his representative there Sayyid Muhammad al-Moosawi), he established the Educational Charitable Complex in Bombay which is regarded as the largest educational and theological project in the world, and it includes various departments each one of which specializes in a particular activity, and it is comprised of elementary and secondary (high) schools, various accredited colleges, a large hospital and a huge mosque, in addition to spending on attendants of theological centers in other parts of India such as Ali Poor, Nibras and Hyderabad;

2) *Madeenat al-'Ilm*, the city of knowledge, at the holy city of Qum, Islamic Republic of Iran, which is the largest theological institute in Shi'a world and where more than three thousand students are studying theology, and it includes dormitories for 500 married students, in addition to theological centers at Mashhad and Khurasan, spending, according to his representative in India Sayyid Muhammad al-Moosawi, more than one million Iranian *toomans* a month as grants to students of theology there;

3) Al-Khu'i's *Mabarrah* in Beirut, Lebanon, which provides cultural and social services for a large number of orphan children who have lost their families during the catastrophes to which Lebanon has been subjected, and it is a five building complex housing an orphanage, a vocational school and an institute,

and it surely is a monument of what true charity can accomplish;

4) Ayatullah al-Khu'i's School and Library of Mashhad, Islamic Republic of Iran, the building of which is a masterpiece of a marriage between traditional and modern architecture;

5) Dar al-'Ilm School at Najaf al-Ashraf, Iraq, from which highly qualified jurists and *mujtahids* have been graduating, and which has accommodated more than 200 students of the higher level of theological studies, in addition to dormitories and a library, and it has been demolished by the filthy hands of Saddam Hussein's troops as part of a plan to demolish schools and mosques in Najaf, the holiest city for the Shi'as of the world;

6) numerous other theological studies styled after Najaf's *hawza* located in Thailand, Bangladesh (in West Bengal), India, Pakistan and other countries;

7) Imam al-Khu'i's Library at Najaf al-Ashraf, Iraq, which contains 25,000 books and 6,000 rare hand-written manuscripts, and it was established by his late holiness for the benefit of researchers, critics, and scholars of theology, and it used to publish and internationally distribute quality Islamic literature, but its press has been confiscated by the oppressive authority of Saddam Hussein's regime;

8) offices in Karachi and Islamabad, Pakistan, to disseminate religious education and the translation and distribution of quality Islamic literature; and

9) an office in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, for the publication and distribution of religious literature.

## Al-Khu'i Foundation

In addition to all the projects enumerated above, his late holiness had ordered the establishment of an international charity to look after the followers of our creed in all corners of the earth and to establish a high quality cultural and social system; therefore, Imam al-Khu'i Benevolent Foundation was founded and first headquartered in Najaf al-Ashraf in 1988 with branches in Europe (including one in London, U.K.) and the Middle East.

The London branch office had been established by a select committee of nine highly respected dignitaries who formed its Central Committee. Those nine founding members were: 1) Sayyid Muhammad Taqi al-Khu'i (son of the late Imam al-Khu'i), 2) Shaikh Muhsin Ali al-Najafi, 3) Shaikh Yousuf Nafsi, 4) Sayyid Muhammad al-Moosawi (of Bombay, India) 5) Sayyid Fadil al-Meelani, 6) Sayyid Majeed al-Khu'i (son of the late Imam al-Khu'i), 7) Shaikh Hajj Kazim Abdel-Hussein, 8) Sayyid Muhammad Ali al-Shahristani, and 9) al-Hajj Mustafa Kawkal.

After the Rajab 1412 (March 1991) *Intifada* (uprising) of the people of Iraq against the tyranny of Saddam Hussein, the Najaf headquarters were transferred to London, U.K., where the said Committee was charged with overseeing the activities of all branch offices of al-Khu'i Foundation in India, Pakistan,

U.S.A., Canada and Kuwait.

Kuwaitis who suffered untold atrocities at the bloody hands of Saddam Hussein after he had invaded their country secretly received huge sums of money from the late ayatullah who instructed his representatives there to help all families that suffered from the invasion regardless of their sect. No other Muslim organization in the world helped Kuwaitis who were trapped inside the country, or who lost their means of income because of the execution of their bread earners, as they were helped by al-Khu'i...

His benevolence also reached all families that suffered from the Iraq-Iran war, and his assistance to them infuriated Saddam's government and led the latter to once confiscate his entire funds at al-Rafidain Bank in Baghdad. The Deputy Director of the now London Headquarters is also Director of the al-Khu'i Foundation in New York which supervises cultural and theological studies of the Medina school and the Khu'i Center.

He is Mawlana Hujjatul-Islam Shaikh Fadil al-Sahlani who has been representing al-Khu'i in the U.S. and Canada since 1990. In addition to all the above, his late holiness also sponsored and funded the activities of students of theology in Syria, Turkey, Palestine and the African continent.

In Canada, he fairly recently established an Islamic school and center at Montreal. During the war between Afghani heroes and Communist *kafir* forces, the deceased Imam provided all support he could to the Mujahidin, and he even permitted the distribution of collected religious taxes to Afghani Mujahidin.

## His Asceticism

Ayatullah al-Uzma al-Khu'i was the embodiment of asceticism, scholarship, and renunciation of worldly riches. His son Sayyid Abdel-Majeed al-Khu'i narrates anecdotes about the simple life his holy father used to lead.

He says that his father never deducted his own share of the religious taxes his representatives were collecting on his behalf; instead, he used to spend on his family, relatives and friends from whatever gifts handed to him by some of his followers. "My father," says Sayyid Abdel-Majeed al-Khu'i, "never bought himself a new outfit except after the one he wears is totally worn out.

Some of those who were very close to him criticized him for wearing such shabby clothes, telling him that it did not fit his status as the supreme leader of the faithful to dress like that. His answer to them was that as long as the outfit he was wearing was clean, there was nothing wrong with its being old. Some even suggested to him to give his worn-out clothes to others and replace them with new ones." He was also passionate about seeking knowledge and sharing it with others.

When his health deteriorated prior to his demise, and he was hospitalized, his medical team advised him to do something to entertain himself. He told them that reading always made him relaxed while lecturing was the only entertainment he had ever known. He used to wake up before sunrise, make *tahajjud*,

perform his morning prayers, then eat his breakfast with his family.

His breakfast most often was no more than a piece of bread, some domestic cheese, and a tiny cup of tea, and he never ate by himself. Instead, he insisted on eating with other members of his family or those who helped them at home, or with his guests. Before midnight, he used to read a book, then listen to world news, tuning to local, Arab or international stations. He was often seen the next morning with blackness around his eyes. The sage could not sleep because of hearing some disturbing news about what was happening to the Muslims in this country or that.

## The Imam At Home

His son, Sayyid Abdel-Majeed al-Khu'i, says the following about his father, "My father was always smiling when he was with us. He always arbitrated between his sons whenever there was a dispute, and he was quite witty. If he saw one looking forlorn or happily excited, he would ask him about the reason, and every evening he would distribute candy for the children in addition to whatever other gifts he had received that day from the admiring faithful."

Despite his extremely lofty status, he never hesitated to help his family in domestic chores, including kitchen chores. He never opened the mail coming to any of his family members. One of his sons told him once that nobody in the house had any secret to hide from him, and that it was perfectly alright with them if he opened their mail, but he insisted never to do so.

He always instructed members of his family to deliver funds for highly esteemed but impoverished families without doing so publicly, telling them to help those whom the ignorant ones mistake as wealthy because of their abstention from begging for help.

## Imam's Demise

After the failure of the *Intifada* of March 1991, the Grand Ayatullah was briefly imprisoned then forced to appear on television with the Butcher of Baghdad Saddam Hussein who always kept pressuring him to issue *fatawa*, religious verdicts, supportive of Saddam and his government, something which he never did despite all the persecution to which he, his representatives and family members were subjected.

Because of refusing to cooperate with the dictatorial government of Saddam Hussein, he was put under house arrest till his death. Saddam also exiled, jailed, or assassinated many of the gifted students, representatives and distinguished followers of al-Khu'i and ordered the destruction of their mosques and libraries particularly those in Najaf and Kerbala.

As if the Iraqi government predicted the death of al-Khu'i, it cut off all telephone connections with his Kufa residence in the morning of Saturday, August 8, 1992 and with the houses of those who were close to him. Having performed the afternoon prayers that day, the health of his late holiness suddenly

deteriorated and a severe chest swelling was visible.

Doctors in the medical team charged with supervising his health conditions was called in, but they could not tend to him early enough. He informed his family and those in his presence that last night he felt that it was the last night he was spending with his family. He asked for water to perform his ablution, and as soon as he finished his ablution his soul passed away to its Maker exactly at 3:13 pm.

Throngs of the believers started pouring into Kufa, surrounding his residence, and it was not long before the whole country came to know about the sad news. Military units of Saddam's "Special Forces" moved quickly to close all highways leading to both Najaf and Kufa as well as other cities in Iraq's central regions, then they moved to disperse the thronging crowds in the pretext of making preparations for the Grand Ayatullah's funeral the next morning.

Curfew was enforced in the cities of Najaf, Kufa and other central cities, and heavily armed police and military units started patrolling the streets. Armed forces stationed at Baghdad and in central and southern Iraqi cities were all placed under maximum alert in anticipation of a popular reaction to the sad news and to the ambiguous way it happened and was handled by the Iraqi government.

Patrol vehicles were visible throughout the streets of al-Thawarah, al-Shu'lah and al-Kazimiyyah, all of which are major Shi'a towns in metropolitan Baghdad. Iraq's radio and television stations suspended their usual programs to announce the sad news of the demise of the great leader, informing the public that his funeral services were scheduled for Sunday morning.

At midnight on Saturday, however, the family of the deceased was ordered to bury the Imam before sunrise. Local government authorities prohibited the public in Najaf and Kufa from taking part in his funeral services, angering the faithful in Iraq and the world. His body was washed Saturday evening at his Kufa house in the presence of a handful of his family members, and the funeral prayers were conducted by his eminence Ayatullah Ali al-Sistani, one of his closest aides and a member of his four-member juristic *Shura* (Consultative) Committee. (The other three members have been: Ayatullah Shaikh Murtada al-Burujardi, Ayatullah Shaikh Ali Azghar al-Ahmadi, and, of course, Ayatullah al-Uzma al-Khu'i himself.)

A three-day mourning period was announced by the government which prohibited the family of the deceased dignitary from holding the traditional Fatiha *majlis*, while the Ministry of Awqaf (Islamic Trusts) declared that it would conduct such *majalis* for his soul. Telephone connections between the cities of Kufa and Najaf and the rest of the world were by now cut off, too, till Sunday evening.

The hypocritical news media of the Butcher of Baghdad Saddam Hussein was busy circulating lies about the demise of Imam al-Khu'i, claiming that he had received a great funeral service wherein the people and representatives of the Iraqi government participated, that his corpse was carried around all religious sites in the area, and even calling him "the martyr of the nation and the country."

Baghdad's official newspaper *Al-Jumhuriyyah* called him “the martyr of Islam and the nation,” publishing his photograph on its front page. International news agencies, on the other hand, published photographs of his coffin escorted by no more than six persons.

Shortly before his death, the greatest scholar and leader al-Khu’i expressed no concern about anything in this vanishing life more than the possibility of the loss of his precious manuscripts the writing of which had exhausted so many years of his life...

Surely the Islamic world will find it very hard to compensate for the loss of such a man, nay, a legendary institute and a lighthouse of knowledge and scholarship...

*Inna Lillah wa Inna Ilyahi Raji'oon.*

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