
IRAQI VICE-PRESIDENT: MURDER ACCUSATIONS 'ARE ALL FABRICATED'

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Rudaw, February 06, 2012 ERBIL, Iraqi Kurdistan -- Tariq al-Hashimi, Iraqs vice-president, fled to the Kurdistan Region six weeks ago after an Iraqi court issued an arrest warrant against him for his alleged involvement in terrorism. In an interview with Rudaw, Hashimi denied the charges brought against him and his bodyguards by Prime Minister Nuri Al-Maliki, saying can prove his innocence in a fair trial. The Sunni leader said the current crisis threatens the countrys political system. Rudaw: Its said that Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki has suspected you of supporting terrorism for years. Why do you think he has made this public now? Tariq al-Hashimi: I hope we are part of the solution, not the problem. I have personally become the target of prejudice and a grudge that is perhaps unprecedented. Over the past few years, the work I have done in the government or for the political process has been aimed at implementing my duties in serving this country. I have not violated the law or the constitution. Those who have worked with me -- whether during the times that I have held official posts or otherwise -- I have not allowed them to violate the constitution or the law. Therefore, the accusations are all fabricated. The confessions have been taken by force and the future will show how my bodyguards have been treated and investigated. □□ have personally become the target of prejudice and a grudge that is perhaps unprecedented. A Rudaw: Are you sure you can prove your innocence in a court of law? Tariq al-Hashimi: I can defend myself and my bodyguards. According to what I have heard, one of my bodyguards, Major Ahmed Shawqi, had bought a car and sold it later. The car was later used in a suicide car bomb in Madayin area. I didnt know about it at that time but knew that he was a car dealer before he started working with me. Thats all I have heard and frankly I wouldnt expect him to be involved in any illegal acts. Regarding myself, I can defend myself anytime in a fair trial. I hope my guards are also provided that opportunity, and justice according to the law. I am optimistic that whenever there is proper justice, then I will go before a court and defend myself. Because there is a lawsuit, I am not evading responsibility. All I have asked for is a fair trial. That kind of trial cannot be provided under the current circumstances in Baghdad. Therefore, I have asked the trial to be transferred to another place, based on Article 55 of Iraqs Penal Code. This is a normal procedure and has to do with protecting my life and will also provide the chance for the facts to be discovered. I have been deprived of this legal right and they wont allow for the trial to be transferred to Kirkuk. Rudaw: Do you feel that your presence in the Kurdistan Region has put the Kurdish authorities in a tough position? Tariq al-Hashimi: I am now a guest of the leadership and all citizens of this (Kurdistan) Region. If they feel Tariq al-Hashimis presence has embarrassed them, then Gods land is immense and I have not really forced them (to have me here). I came here based on a demand from President Jalal Talabani. I am still holding the vice-presidents post and have not resigned. I have not been also removed from my position by Parliament. So, I am still a government employee. The president has asked me to stay in Kurdistan and Mr. Massoud Barzani, the president of the Kurdistan Region, has said □□□□ al-Hashimi is our guest. I have been staying in Kurdistan based on this. Whenever the people of this region no longer want to host me, then Gods land is vast. I

really do not want my presence here to cause the smallest embarrassment to the leadership and people of Kurdistan. Rudaw: Some people say Prime Minister Maliki has wasted a lot of money on fake projects. Is that true and how much is the amount? [REDACTED] is the real factor behind instability in Iraq and has been a reason behind the failure of most reconstruction projects, A Tariq al-Hashimi: I dont know about that precisely. Answering such a question requires evidence and data. But I can say that there is a great deal of corruption in government institutions. The evidence for that is the poverty from which the Iraqi people suffer. Thirty-six percent of Iraqis are below the poverty line. I think the reports by Transparency International and the United Nations about the extent of financial and administrative corruption in Iraq are obvious for all to see. This phenomenon of corruption is the real factor behind instability in Iraq and has been a reason behind the failure of most reconstruction projects * If we only talk about the billions of dollars that have been allocated for national reconciliation, nobody knows how its spent and who has the power to spend it. That is why the details of the budget have not been presented to Parliament in the past years. This is a sad irony and has not happened in the Iraqi history. When a government proposes a budget, then it has to present the spending from the previous years. But this is not happening in Iraq and so nobody knows how the money is being spent. Rudaw: One of your bodyguards has confessed that he killed Judge Najem Talabani based on an order from you. Did you really play a role in the assassination of that national figure? Tariq al-Hashimi: I swear to God this is the first time that I am hearing that name. He might have been a respected national figure but I have really never heard that name. Its unfortunate that the Kurdish people lost such a figure -- as you say he was a patriotic person. But what did he have to do with me so I would want to order his assassination? Or I have been accused of assassinating an official in the Iraqi Islamic Party while I myself was the secretary-general of the party. Or what good does it do to me to send a car bomb to blow up in Ramadi while I defend the people of Al-Anbar province? I have lost three brothers and hundreds of members of the Iraqi Islamic Party to Al-Qaeda and terrorism when the Iraqi Islamic Party was fighting against terrorism alongside with the Awakening Council forces. So the accusations are all cheap and the goal is to erode the confidence between Tariq al-Hashimi and the Kurdish brothers who are hosting me under the current volatile circumstances. Rudaw: Do you feel the Kurdish position has changed since the confession by your guards regarding Najem Talabanis assassination? Tariq al-Hashimi: Not at all. I havent seen any changes because both brothers President Talabani and President Barzani are sure of my innocence. They know that Hashimi is a man of peace and it is impossible for him to do those kinds of things or violate the constitution or laws, especially if that violation is so big that it will greatly harm the people of Iraq whether Kurds, Arabs or Turkmen. [REDACTED] statements made by Turkish officials came from their realization that stability is necessary for Iraq. A Rudaw: What do you think the Turkish position is about you going before a court? Tariq al-Hashimi: Turkey has said that it is a domestic issue and they dont want to intervene. But Turkey knows Hashimi very well and they wont believe those lies. They know that over the course of the past few years, the Sunnis have looked for solutions to all of Iraqs problems. Besides, they are not part of this crisis and I have not asked Turkey to intervene. The statements made by Turkish officials came from their realization that stability is necessary for Iraq. Rudaw: What do you think of Iraqs future? Do you think the Kurdistan Region will stay within Iraq to the end? Tariq al-Hashimi: The current crisis in Iraq is totally political and is quite severe. Unfortunately, my political rival pushed the situation to this edge. He has brought the country to a dangerous turning point and so we should expect worse days ahead if we all dont work together to resolve the crisis. Failure to find an appropriate solution might threaten Iraqs current political situation and we should prepare ourselves for such likelihood. This crisis is not like the previous crises. As president Massoud Barzani said, this is a huge crisis of the kind that Iraq has not seen

since 2003. Therefore, I pray that God will help Mam Jalal (President Talabani) succeed in his efforts to find a proper solution in a near future. Rudaw: It is said that Talabani's project regarding the borders of the Kirkuk province have been talked about in the past and you were against it. Why have you been against Kurdish demands to that degree? Tariq al-Hashimi: I have only heard that in the media. When has a project been proposed that Tariq al-Hashimi has refused? If I have a particular vision, it does not mean that I am against the demands of my own people. I am not against the Kurdish people. We may differ on a particular issue but our goals are not different. I have not been an impediment to anything that has had to do with the aspirations and demands of the Kurdish people. I have been asked this question several times, so I demand evidence about it. I feel the Kurdish media is doing an injustice to Tariq al-Hashimi when it comes to these issues, because this media did not commend Hashimi when I went on a trip in 2008 and had to change my trip because of an operation by the Turkish military which was about to enter the Kurdistan Region's territory. My dear brother Massoud Barzani asked me to go to Turkey and resolve the crisis. I went there and convinced Turkish officials not to launch the land incursion and returned home happily. This should have been talked about in the Kurdish media but they did not. [] do you think was behind allocating the 17 percent of Iraq's budget for the Kurdistan Region? It was Tariq al-Hashimi. And when, in 2008, a memorandum of understanding was signed between the Islamic Party and the two main parties of the Kurdistan Region, despite my close relationship with Turkey, I did not hesitate to condemn the Turkish shelling of the border areas (in the Kurdistan Region) during a press conference. Turkish officials even criticized me because of that position and said your position was even stronger than the Kurdish leaders. This is the truth about my positions and I have never been against the interests of any of the Iraqi components. I have always tried to be a moderate away from chauvinism and hostility toward any side * In terms of encouraging Arab and Turkish investment in Kurdistan, I have taken it on myself to do that without anybody asking me to do so. In all my visits to the Gulf countries when I talk about investing in Iraq, I dedicate some of my words to Kurdistan because the people of Kurdistan have been through a lot of oppression and tyranny in the past and deserve to be compensated. Also, whom do you think was behind allocating the 17 percent of Iraq's budget for the Kurdistan Region? It was Tariq al-Hashimi who, when there were efforts three years ago to reduce that share, sent a letter to the Parliament Speaker asking that the 17 percent share remain unchanged until there is a population census. This is one of those unknown things that I'd like the people of Kurdistan to learn about for the first time. Rudaw: Some people say your political career is over regardless of whether you can prove your innocence in court. What do you say about that? Tariq al-Hashimi: No, I think it is an exaggeration and what spiteful people say should not be taken seriously. This kind of statement doesn't do Iraq any good. Why should the Iraqi people be deprived of the service that Tariq al-Hashimi has offered in the past years? I do not want to compliment myself, but I have done whatever I could and have faced difficulties doing this. These kinds of statements will disappoint all those people who want to follow Hashimi's path and speak with frankness.

Kaynak/Source: