

Saad Eskander's Iraq diary

From November 2006 to July 2007, the British Library posted blogs by Dr Saad Eskander, the director of the Iraq National Library and Archive (INLA).

His diary caught the public imagination. It provided a vivid and powerful account of professional and academic life unthinkable to most users of the British Library – an institution very familiar to Dr Eskander while he was researching his PhD in London a few years ago.

This page carries links to all his diary entries, the latest news on Dr Eskander's achievements, and the progress of the Iraq National Library.

Much of it is good news, but the situation is still very challenging.

Introduction

The idea of writing a diary, let alone posting it on a public web-site, was not planned or even mine. I was extremely busy professionally and socially. My work was demanding in terms of time and energy, as the Iraq National Library and Archives (INLA) was in real need of considerable attention. It is well-known that the INLA emerged from the painful events of April 2003, as the most damaged institution throughout the country in terms of its cultural losses and material damages. Neither sufficient financial nor human resources were available to rebuild the INLA, let alone modernizing it .

The Iraqis could hardly cope with the continuous waves of days and night terrorist attacks, when the civil war erupted unexpectedly. I was certainly unprepared for such an intensity of senseless violence and its dire consequences on my staff. Tens of thousands of civilians were murdered mercilessly and many more were either displaced or fled the country. The extent of the destruction was enormous. It took its toll on everybody, even those who lived in remote small towns and villages.

The key question at the time was that, should I take my family and leave the country or stay and continue what I started? My brother and two sisters, who live in Europe, did not hide their feelings that I should take my family and leave as soon as possible. My beliefs and my heart wanted me to stay and carry on as usual. How can one seek safe refuge abroad, while leaving his staff prey to all types of hardships and sufferings? I thought it was wrong from a moral point of view. Moreover, it sharply went against my principles. Did not I come back voluntarily from London to Baghdad so that I could work with other Iraqis to build a better future? Thanks God, my wife was in favour of staying. Thus, she became a source of strength. All I needed was to strike a balance between the interests of my family with those of my institution. This proved to be extremely difficult to achieve. My family was always second to my work at the INLA.

It was during the height of the sectarian war and increasing religious-motivated terrorist campaigns that a close friend of mine, Patricia Sleaman, an Irish archivist and IT expert, suggested to me in one of her messages that I should think about documenting the daily life of my staff. She thought that it was imperative that her colleagues, archivists and librarians alike, around the world should know about the hardship and dangers that the INLA's staff encountered on a daily basis. At first, I showed little interest in her suggestion, as the diary would add more burdens on me physically and psychologically. Moreover, I am an out-spoken person. Certainly, writing the diary would draw unwanted attention to me from evil circles inside and outside the government.

With the passage of time and the growing sacrifices made by my staff, I felt that it was the time to inform our foreign colleagues, archivists and librarians alike, about the daily sufferings of their Iraqi colleagues. Therefore, I asked Patricia to post my diary on the web-site of the UK Archivists Society, as she had suggested earlier. A few weeks later, another close friend, Andy Stephenson, expressed the interest of the British Library in posting my diary on its website so that it could reach a lot of people around the globe.

Unintentionally, the diary emphasized one important point that archivists and librarians' daily tasks of providing free access to knowledge and always welcoming academics, researchers and students with open arms, are as important as those who fight for peace, justice and sanity. I do not still know what motivated many members of staff to work hard during the height of the civil war. Was it patriotism, a sense of duty or something else?

The reactions the diary created took me completely by surprise. From the very beginning, two contradictory feelings grew inside me, as soon as the diary was made public. On the one hand, I was truly happy about the moral support coming to my staff from abroad. This kind of support really mattered in terms of raising our morale and emphasizing the importance of our cultural works. On the other hand, I felt considerable guilty, as if I was making the most of my staff's suffering and readers' sympathetic reactions for personal aggrandizement. It was this factor which finally made me decide to stop the diary, after nine months.

The effect that the Diary had on me was tremendous. It made me work much harder to implement my reforms amid the prevailing chaos. The national crisis demanded a redefinition of the role of the INLA. My immediate objective was to turn it into a true national institution in terms of providing new services, shouldering new responsibilities, extending its cultural activities on a nation-wide basis and increasing its cultural and academic impacts.

The advances the INLA made during the civil war can be summarized as follows:

- ü Providing free of charge training opportunities to all minorities as well as cultural and academic institutions.

- ü Donating publications to all parts of the country while welcoming all types of publications, which emphasized Iraq's multi-culturalism, religious diversity and philosophic

- ü Accelerating the drive for removing all types of censored information.

- ü Adding thousands of much needed academic sources to INLA's collections, especially those which contain the latest theories in the fields of social sciences and encourage young researchers to approach old issues from different angles by using new theories and to question old explanations and understanding

- ü Going ahead with the process of democratizing INLA's administration by (1) freely electing heads of departments and their assistants according to certain criteria such as experience, qualifications, discipline and productivity and (2) taking decisions by vote at the INLA Council, where small and big issues were discussed frankly, including administrative, technical and financial ones (3) Transparency and fighting all types of malpractices and corruption (4) holding regular meetings and arranging discussions with readers regarding their academic and technical needs (e.g. purchasing certain publications which were in demand, and providing free access to the internet and photocopy and minimizing daily routines.

- ü INLA's role in implementing some of transitional transition requirements by: (1) ensuring free access to information to those who wanted to know the truth about what happened, how, why and when (2) providing political detainees and prisoners of conscious signed copies of official documents they need for compensation and rehabilitation purposes. This service was free of charge with no routine or bureaucratic procedures.

- ü Creating a new source of specialized information on culture and heritage through issuing electronic cultural journals.

- ü Consolidating the drive for cultural and academic diversity by emphasizing the culture of ethnic and religious minorities when rebuilding the library and archival collections. New bibliographies have been published for women and children.

- ü Holding cultural and academic meetings and seminars on regular basis which focus on sensitive and crucial issues such as human rights (including woman and child rights), preserving national cultural heritage, fight for democracy, sectarianism, music and religion, political and administrative corruption, role of NGOs.

- ü Holding special cultural exhibitions (book fair, fine art works) and organizing charity events and involvement in humanitarian projects)

- ü Providing the staff with training opportunities inside and outside Iraq

- ü Bringing in new technologies

- ü Continuing the process of Injecting new blood into INLA's human resources by hiring young female and male graduates regardless of their religious or ethnic background.

- ü Promoting gender equality in hiring new employees and granting real promotion opportunities.

ü Rejoining the international community of national libraries and archives to end decades of isolations.

ü Enforcing the implementation of old library and archival legislations, while working on replacing them with new progressive ones. The aim was to meet the cultural, academic and social needs of a society which is in transitional stage from dictatorship to democracy.

Saad Eskander

April 2015

Diary of Saad Eskander, Director of the Iraq National Library and Archive

10-16 November, 2006

After seven months of postponement, I decided to accept an Italian invitation to visit Rome (9-11 November). The Baghdad International Airport was closed for three days, as the government feared the reaction of the pro-Saddam elements in the wake of a decision made by a special Iraqi court to sentence the dictator to death. I was lucky that the Airport was reopened on Tuesday, 8 November. It took me seven hours to leave Baghdad. I arrived to Rome from Amman on 9 November.

Sunday, 10 November, 2006

I participated in a well-prepared seminar organized by the Italian NGO, Un Ponte Per, and the Public Libraries of Rome. The purpose of the Seminar was to look for ways to assist Iraq National Library and Archive (INLA). Apart from me, several Italian librarians and state officials attended the Seminar, including the Italian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs.

At the beginning of the Seminar, a 10-minute film was shown about the destruction of INLA in mid-April 2003, and the sincere efforts of the Italians to help with the process of its reconstruction. The President of Un Ponte Per and the representatives of several institutions, such as Florence's National Library and Rome's Public Library System, talked about the importance of protecting Iraq's cultural heritage and the ways in which Italy could help. The Italian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs talked about the willingness of her ministry to help with the reconstruction of INLA. I was given 40 minutes to talk about the state of culture and cultural institutions in Iraq in the last 35 years. At the end of the Seminar, I felt that my three-day visit was a success and not waste of time and efforts.

11 November, 2006

I left Rome to Amman, and the next day, I arrived to the Baghdad International Airport. It is well known that the highway, which links the Airport to the Baghdad City, is the most dangerous road in the world.

For a security reason, I asked the taxi driver to drop me at the first military checkpoint, which is by car 3 minutes away from the Airport. One must not trust anybody, especially the Airport taxi drivers. At the checkpoint, my driver was waiting for me with his car. The security police asked us

to leave the area immediately, as they were suspicious of abandoned car at the checkpoint. The highway was in a chaotic state, as everyone tried to leave the Airport area, including the policemen and the soldiers, who did not hesitate to point their guns at us, when our car slowed its speed in order to allow their cars to pass!!

I asked the driver to take me to my office straightaway. Minutes after we left the highway, two terrorists bombed a police checkpoint in the Al-Yarmook district, killing 60 people and injuring 90 others. My driver and I decided to take another route via the Al-Karradah district. Once again, just as we entered the Al-Karradah district, two car-bombs exploded killing and injuring a lot of civilians. I decided not to go to my office, as the other main routes were extremely dangerous. Indeed, on the same day and in the very busy Al-Sa'adun area, two more car-bombs exploded, killing and injuring many people. It was a very nice welcome and back to reality.

13 November, 2006

I received bad news, as soon as I arrived to my office. In my absent, INLA was bombed twice and snipers' bullets broke several windows. Fortunately, no body was hurt. My staff withheld these information from me, when I contacted them. They claimed that they did not want me to be worried and to spoil my visit.

I spent the rest of the week trying to advise a number of my employees what to do, as they got death threats. The Sunnis, who lived in Shi'i dominated district were given an ultimatum to abandon their homes and the Shi'is, who lived in a Sunni dominated district, had to leave their homes. So far, two of my employees were murdered, the first worked in the Computer Department, and the second was a guard. Three of our drivers, who worked with us by contract, were murdered and three others were injured.

19-22 November, 2006

Sunday, November 19, 2006

It was a very tense and noisy day.

I heard several explosions; some of them were not too far from my office. Exchange of fires and siren of ambulances followed the explosions. My staff got used to these daily events and make some funny jokes.

We did not have electricity before 9.30 a.m. I have been trying in vain to persuade the Ministry of Electricity to give us uninterrupted electricity supply between 8.30 a.m. and 3.00 p.m.

Monday, November 20, 2006

It was another tense day.

I could hear strong exchange of fires. It was just across the road. I learnt later that the convoy the Deputy Minister of Health, a die-hard Shi I fundamentalist, was ambushed by Sunni extremists in the Al-Fadhel area (just 250 meters away from our building) The American soldiers intervened in the ensuing battle, which lasted for one hour.

Two personal guards of the Deputy Minister were killed. Our guards took their position in and around our two buildings. My staff were instructed to stay away from the windows. Earlier, I warned my guards against taking part in any armed clash outside our building. I told them that the best way was not to draw any attention to ourselves.

Tuesday, November 20, 2006

It was by far the worst day of the year. As soon as my car arrived to the main building, I heard two big explosions. Sunni extremists

shelled the medical city and the Ministry of Health by mortars. Both buildings 200 meters are away from our institution. The Minister of Health is a Shi I extremist. His predecessor was the same. Both men replaced the senior and minor staff of the Ministry with their loyal Shi is. The Ministry of Health is now a Shi i stronghold, while the ministry of Higher Education is the stronghold of the Sunnis. The latter was attacked by Shi i extremists last week, and 100 of its Sunni employees were taken hostage. It is the war between these two extremist camps, which threatens our lives day and night.

My secretary, Um Haitham, was a little horrified, as the two bombs landed 70 meters away from her car. Like other people, she talked about the incident for two minutes and then resumed her daily tasks.

I heard another explosion 50 minutes later. The exchange of fire continued for one hour and thirty minutes.

Nadia, a librarian who works at the Computer Department, did not show up. I was told that her father was injured yesterday. He had a bullet removed from his leg. I met the head of the Bibliography Department, Nadhal, and her supervisor, Jamal, to talk about their works.

By 11.00 a.m. most of my Staff received their monthly salary. I toured some of the departments and talked to many of my staff. I am doing my best to keep their morale high.

At 11.00 a.m. I received devastating news. I was informed that Ali Salih was assassinated in front of his younger sister. Ali was a bright young man. I sent him to Florence in Italy to be trained as a web-designer. Upon returning, he and Nadia began to construct and run our official web-site. He was the symbol of the modernization and reform process of the National Library and Archive. I employed him in January 2004, like many other young librarians and archivists. I hoped that the new generation could lead the way.

It was a very sad day. All the people who knew Ali were weeping that day. All were depressed and morale was at its lowest. Amal, the head of the Computer Department where Ali used to work, could not control her sad feelings. When staff evacuated the building and went home, Amal was still in her office weeping silently. I was the last one to leave. But I had a strong feeling at the time that Amal was still alone in her office. So I decided to go to her. After 15 minutes talking, I was able to persuade her to go home. I did not hide from her my true feelings that I was extremely worried about the safety of the rest of my young staff.

Before leaving, I held a meeting with the heads of all departments. I suggested that for

security reasons we should divide the staff into three groups, each group would work only for two days and that the main Reading Rooms of the Archive and the Library should, as usual, remain open to serve our university students and researchers. All voted in favor of my suggestion. Some of my staff approached me, asking me to leave the country as soon as I could. They were very worried about me that I would be killed in vain.

I returned to my home very depressed; I hugged my 6 months old son and remembered that Ali left behind him two sons, 6 months old and 3 years old.

Wednesday 22 November 2006

Around 8.30a.m. I received a call from my deputy Kamil. He informed that his eldest son Ahmad was badly injured by a car-bomb, which fortunately did not explode.

Dec 2006

Diary for the Week 1-15 Dec

On Sunday, 10 Dec., the NLA was reopened, as we planned. Some of my staff were unable to turn up, as some roads were blocked by the army and American forces.

On Tuesday, I met the manager of a company that would renovate remaining parts of our building, including the Periodical Department and the open-shelf-collections room. We agreed to be in close contact to coordinate our works for security reasons. We both were concerned about the safety of our staff. He gave me the numbers of the cars of his company. In addition, we agreed to my suggestion that his employees would had their own ID, which they had to show to my security guards upon arrival and departing.

On Wednesday, I received more bad news. A terrorist group attacked the house of one of my staff. As a result, he and one of his sons (a university student) were injured, while the other son (a doctor) was murdered.

On the same day, I met Ali's brothers and talked about his pension, and how the LNA could support his wife and two sons. The brothers gave some of information about the assassination of their brother. They said that Ali was in his car, when another blocked his way, after he had taken his younger sister to her university. The assassins were 4 men, who ordered Ali to get out of his car. After leaving his car, Ali discovered the 4 men were armed with guns and that they intended on killing him. Ali was a brave person, and had well-built body. He attacked the 4 assassins, succeeding in bringing down two of them. Unfortunately, one the assassins shot hem in the leg. After Ali fell on the ground, the assassins fired at his head, chest and stomach. Ali left on the pavement bleeding until he died. The street, the scene of the crime, was very busy that morning. But no one dare to intervene. It is highly likely that the assassins are members of one the militias that penetrated the security forces.

Our main concern now is the snipers. There are two areas, which the snipers use to kill innocent people at random. The first area is the infamous Haifa Street, the strong hold of the Ba'athists and al-Qadda. The Haifa Street is located on the other side of the Tigris (1 km away from our building). The second area is al-Fadhal, which is only 1/2 km. away from our building. A number of innocent people, including women, were gunned down by

the snipers. The Republican Street, which separates our building from al-Fadhal, is no go area.

On Thursday, We, I and my driver, decided to change our route, as precautionary measure. As soon as we arrived to al-Sinak area ,we learnt that a group of terrorists had just kidnapped 40 people. The terrorists safely walked away, as the police and the guards of several government buildings refused to intervene.

Diary for the Week 16-21 Dec.

The security situation is deteriorating in our area and in the al-Haifa Street. From time to time, different armed groups attack civilians, houses and government buildings. Most of the roads leading to the NLA were blocked this week. I was told that a sniper killed a woman in the Republican Street.

My staff received their monthly salaries on Thursday, owing to the bravery of two of my employees, who work at the Accountancy Department. The two young women transferred the salaries (81 Millions Dinar = US\$60,000) from the Bank to our building in secret. It took them five days to complete the operation. The Bank is located in a dangerous area, where the terrorists can attack at any moment.

Diary for the Week 23-28 Dec.

It is another bad week for the NLA.

On Sunday, I learnt that Ahmed Salih, who was on leave, was murdered by a Death Squad in his own house. Ahmed came from a poor family. After his father's death, he raised his younger brothers and sisters. He worked very hard to educate them. I also learnt that Ahmed was engaged to a girl two weeks before his death.

On Monday, I received more bad news. The older brother of Maiadah, who works in the Periodical Department, was murdered by a group of terrorists.

I learnt that some sniper fired at a car in the Republican Street, killing the driver and all the passengers.

It was a Christmas period and the security situation was as bad as ever. We have four Christians in our institution. The first two, 'A' and 'B', work in the Archive, the third, 'C', in the Library, and the fourth, 'D', in my office. I gave them 5 day-break to celebrate Christmas. 'D' took just one day off. She continued to show up, even when the main roads were blocked. I advised her to cover her hair, when passing through dangerous areas (i.e. under the control of the militias and armed gangs). She said that she was wearing Hijab for some time to hide her identity (i.e. being Christian).

I had a meeting with my Minister on Tuesday. As usual, we talked about the security situation and the safety of the staff. As we were talking, the head of the Minister's office, Mahmud, entered the room. He informed the Minister that the security situation became worse around the Ministry of Culture; the terrorists murdered two people near the cinema (around 200 meters away from the Ministry). As I left the Ministry, I heard that some suspected cars were roaming the area. The Ministry moved to its old building four months ago. The old building is located in al-Haifa Street, which is known to be the strong hold of the Ba'athists and al-Qa'ada. Just after I arrived to my office, I learnt that some armed

groups blocked al-Haifa Street, and attacked a number of government buildings. The fighting between the armed groups and the guards of government building lasted for three hours.

The NLA will be closed between 28 Dec. 2006 and 7 January 2007. I hope my staff will enjoy their Eid al- Atdha holiday.

January 2007

Diary for the Period 1-6 January 2007

On the eve of the Eid, one of the Iraq National Library and Archive (INLA) guards received a death threat. I asked him to stay at the INLA and not go home until he finds another place. Baghdad was relatively quite during the Eid Holiday. There were some big explosions and terrorist attacks. The areas surrounding the INLA (i.e. Al-Fadhil and Haifa) were still bad in terms of security, even during the holiday. The snipers were very active. The areas were shelled by mortars. The people of Baghdad suffered from acute shortage of fuel and electricity. The Eid period was exceptionally very cold. Many poor people were unable to purchase fuel for heating from the black market. The fuel prices in the black market prices were 20 times higher than before. Ironically, the Minister of Oil went on pilgrimage, while the country was suffering from a fuel crisis.

On the Second Day of the Eid, We, my wife, my son and I, visited my sister and her family. On the same day, we visited my wife's parents. I spent the rest of my time with my close friends. We often talked about the worsening security situation and deadlock of the political process. We all were very pessimistic. I exchanged by phone Eid greetings with many of my staff and friends. I spent the last two days of the holiday in Kurdistan. It was not a nice trip. There were around 100 checkpoints between Baghdad and Sulaimaniya. I met there some of my friends. The day before my return (Saturday 6 January), the National Guards attacked the Haifa Street, killing and capturing a number of armed men, who were terrorizing the neighboring areas.

Diary for the Period 7-13 January 2007

On Sunday (7 Jan.), I returned to Baghdad. I learnt that most of the staff of Ministry of Culture did not dare to go to their offices, as the armed men returned to the Haifa Street.

Monday (8 Jan), it was the same old scenario: explosions, shelling and exchange of fires. The Republican Street is still a no-man-area. At 8.30 a.m., the head of the security personnel, Xxxxx, informed me that two days ago, his sister died of heart attack, immediately after some American soldiers stormed into her house. Now, Xxxxx has no choice but to look after his sister's two orphans. Two years ago, Xxxxx lost his younger son in an unfortunate accident.

One of the old librarians, Yyyyy, who suffers from heart problems, informed me that yesterday (Sunday 7 Jan.) a group of armed men stopped the car she was traveling in. The armed men asked all the passengers for their IDs. After reading her full name, they ordered her to get out of the car. Her full name clearly indicates that Yyyyy was Shi'i. Luckily, other Sunni passengers intervened and succeeded in persuading the armed men not to kidnap her. It was a terrifying moment for Yyyyy. She asked me to give her a

permission to stay at home for a few days.

I contacted the Ministry of Culture, and I learnt that the vast majority of its staff refused to show up. The Haifa Street, where the Ministry is located, is still a no go-area. They asked the Minister to relocate the Ministry or to go back to old building in al-Zaiyona district. Zzzzz, told me that a group of armed men stopped the car in which she was travelling, before reaching the end of the Shuhda Bridge, ordering the driver to go back. The Shuhda Bridge is the only safe route that we use to reach the Ministry of Culture.

On Tuesday, 9 January, the National Guards closed the Bab al-Mudham Bridge (15 meters away from INLA) There was no traffic. It was clear that the National Guards and the Americans would attack the infamous Haifa Street. They blocked most of the main roads and bridges. At 8.10 a.m., a light exchange of fire began, which soon developed. I tried to contact the Ministry of Culture. I was told that the staff of the Ministry decided to stay at home. I and other directors did not received any instruction from our Minister. My mother-in-Law contacted and asked me to leave the building. Her house is about 1 km. away from my office. She told me that there was a heavy bombardment and exchange of fire near her house and that she was worried that the fighting would spread towards INLA. I reassured her that the situation was not bad. But soon after, the exchange of fire intensified around the INLA. I asked the administration to inform all the drivers to bring their cars to the building so that we could evacuate the staff. During the evacuation, two US military planes appeared in the sky, making very big noise. They flew very low above the INLA. It took us around 30 minutes to evacuate all the staff. I asked a group of librarians and archivists to get in my car so that I could take them to a safe area close to their houses.

I informed everybody before the evacuation that because of the intensification of the fighting in the Haifa Street and the Fadhal area, the INLA would be closed until Saturday, 13 January. On Sunday, 14 January, I will consider whether to reopen the INLA. The Impact of the Sectarian Violence on the INLA's Staff (December 2006)

The Impact of the Sectarian Violence on the INLA's Staff (December 2006)

Number	Type of impact
4	Unlawful death (assassinations)
66	Unlawful death of relatives (Sons, Daughters, Brothers, Sisters, Cousins, Uncles, Aunts, Nephews).
2	Kidnapping
6	Kidnapping of relatives (Sons, Daughters, Brothers, Sisters, Cousins, Uncles, Aunts, Nephews).
58	Death Threat
51	Displacement
3	Plundering
3	Damage to houses
3	Other material losses

Note: Total Number of the INLA's staff is 464 (including 39 Guards).

Diary for the Period 14-21 January 2007

After the National Guards completed its military operation in Al-Haifa Street, we reopened the National Library and Archives (NLA) on Sunday. I left Baghdad to Kurdistan on an official duty. I was in constant contact with my office giving some direction. I was told that the level of violence was not high on Monday. Tuesday, 16 Jan, was a bloody day. As a result of some car bombs, booby-traps and mortars attack tens of innocent people were either killed or injured. The University of al-Mustanseriya was one of the main targets of the terrorist attacks. More than seventy students were killed and many more were injured. Ten of librarians and archivists still study at al-Mustanseriya, which is not too far from the NLA. Fortunately none of them was hurt, though the daughter of one of my staff was badly injured as a result of the explosion. The Waziriya road, where al-Mustanseriya is located, is usually very busy, as some of the other roads are closed. Many of my staff and I use the Waziriya road to go to the NLA. My older brother rang me from London on the same day. He was very worry about the second bomb which exploded near my house. I assured him that my wife and my son were safe.

Wednesday witnessed a lot of street fighting, as the armed groups re-imposed their control on the Haifa Street and the neighboring areas. A petrol station was shelled by mortars and the Department of Pension was also attacked. The Ministry of Culture was on the alert. I decided to close the NLA on Thursday. I think the closure was a good decision, especially when that day witnessed the explosion of ten car bombs in the heart of Baghdad. I returned to Baghdad on Friday 19 Jan.

Saturday 20 Jan. was the beginning of the Islamic New Year. I was informed the next day (Sunday 21, Jan) that Miss A, who works at the Accountancy Department, was forced along with her parents to leave their house in the Haifa Street. On the same day, a sniper killed one of her brothers, while injuring the other one.

Diary for the Period 22-31 January 2007

On Monday, 100 innocent people were slaughtered by two car bombs in Baghdad. Another librarian, who works at the Periodical Department, received a death threat. He has to leave his house and look for another one, as soon as he can; otherwise, he will be murdered. B, an account and part time student, was absent. I was informed later that day that her family was forced to leave their house in Al-Jihad area and looking for a house in another area. On Tuesday 23 Jan. the staff received their monthly salaries after two days delay.

Since the beginning of the winter season, my staff has never stopped complaining about the sharp rise in the prices of the heating fuel. The prices of the heating fuel are 40 times higher than they were in the autumn. Moreover, the whole country faces acute shortage of fuel.

At 11.30 a.m., intensive exchange of fire in the al-Fadhil area. Most of the roads were closed. Our guards were re-deployed. One window was smashed as a result of the explosions. I was informed on the same day that two of our technicians were kidnapped by unknown armed men in Al-Ghazaliya area. Fortunately, both were realised unharmed,

thought they were verbally abused. Mr. C, the head of the Restoration Laboratory, received a death threat. He and his family left their house. I visited the Restoration Laboratory. It was hit by 5 bullets. Two windows were broken as a result. One of the restorers told me that her brother was murdered ten days ago for sectarian reasons. Another restorer told me that his cousin, who lived in Mosul, in northern Iraq, was also murdered for sectarian reasons. I did not know about these two incidents. I discovered that a number of my staff do not inform the administration about their ordeals for fear of reprisals.

I received more bad news about Miss D, an accountant. Her father and brother were both injured after the terrorists opened fire on them. The reason for it D's father and brothers refused to leave their house, after they received a death threat.

For two days an expert was working very hard to restore our internet system. She failed in the end. She promised to return on Thursday to repair the damage.

The fighting broke out again in the Haifa Street and the Fadhel area. US helicopters were making a lot of noises between 11.45 a.m. and 13.00 p.m. They flew very low over our building. I asked my staff to evacuate the building very quickly.

Many roads and bridges were blocked on Wednesday, 24 Jan. The National Guards continued its blockade of the Haifa Street. Around 9.30 a.m. the fighting started again and intensified by the passage of time. US

Helicopters were in the sky, flying very low. A colleague of mine, who works as a director general in the Ministry of Culture, dropped in. He said that he was not able to go to his office, because all the roads were blocked. The fighting in the Haifa Street has forced the Ministry to close several times.

Around 12.00 US planes started to bomb the position of the terrorists in the Haifa Street. The heads of the departments asked if I should close the NLA. I told them that they should wait more and that we would evacuate the building in the right moment. In the meantime, I received a call from my friend Marco, who works with an Italian NGO, Un Ponte Per. This organization is based in Rome, and has played a notable part in the reconstruction of the NLA. Marco asked me if I and my staff were fine. I said that another member of staff was murdered; then I asked him if he heard the noise of the US helicopters, which were firing at the Haifa Street at the time. He said that he heard it very clearly and asked me if the staff were still working. I replied: "yes we are working under such conditions for weeks". The line went dead, before we could finish our conversation. At 13.00 I decided to evacuate the building. I thought a mortar bomb exploded in the opposite building, which now serves as the base for one of the National Guards' infantry brigades. I learnt later that the big explosion was caused by the shooting down of a US helicopter in the Haifa Street. After the evacuation, the fighting was intensified and that all the National Guards imposed a curfew on al-Bab al-Mudham area.

In the early morning of Thursday, 25 Jan. I heard a series of explosions. Some were very close to our street. On my way to the NLA, I saw a group of people gathered around an unknown body. It was covered with a piece of fabric.

I was informed around 9.30 a.m. that Mr. E, the supervisor of the Baghdad memory Project, lost his young son in a bomb blast. His son was a law student in his third year.

On Friday and Saturday, 26-27 Jan., I spent most of my time writing a new essay or with my close friends. Marco rang me from Rome to tell me that a conference would be held in the city of Florence on next Tuesday, and that he wanted me to address it. I agreed to talk about the impact of violence on my staff, the reconstruction of the NLA, and its future

projects.

Sunday, 28 Jan. was relatively quite in our area. There was no fighting in the Haifa Street. But the National Guards was still blocking most of the roads in the neighbouring areas. Most of the employees of the Ministry of Culture were unable to go to work. Other districts of Baghdad witnessed as usual more violence, e.g. car bombs, booby-traps, kidnapping and random killings. A friend of mine was kidnapped by unknown group. I met Ahmed's uncle in my office. I raised the pension issue, asking the uncle to provide me with all the necessary papers so that we could start the application for Ahmed's pension. The Uncle provided with some details concerning the night in which Ahmed was murdered. He told me that the killers ransacked the house.

Monday, 29 Jan., was also relatively quite day for NLA. Yet, the vast majority of the staff could come to work, because of military check-points and blockade that was imposed on several districts within Baghdad. A bomb exploded inside a car near the University of Mustanseriya, killing some innocent passengers and pedestrians.

Tuesday, 30 Jan, was a public holiday. It was the 10th of Muharram. Every year, the Shi'is commemorate this day. As expected, several districts in Baghdad were shelled by mortars and car bombs exploded killing innocent people.

Marco rang me around 12.00, asking me if I was ready to talk to the conference by phone for 15 minutes. Around 13.00 I addressed the conference, talking about the state of the NLA and the impact of the violence on its staff. I thanked the Italians for generosity in helping us safeguard our cultural heritage, in the period that followed the downfall of the Saddam regime.

On Wednesday, 31 Jan., a huge explosion shock our building. I hurriedly went to the second floor and saw a thick black smock rising from a car in al-Bab al-Mudham round-about (200 meters away from the NLA). I asked the security to prevent all members of staff from going outside the building, fearing that there might be another car-bomb. I learnt later that around 15 people were either killed or injured in the explosion. Among the victims were shoppers, passengers and drivers.

February 2007

Diary for the Period 1-14 February 2007

On Thursday, 1 Feb, a bomb exploded in al-Maidan area (200 meter away from the National Library and Archives), killing and injuring a number of civilians.

Saturday 3 Feb. was one of the bloodiest days in Baghdad. A big truck exploded in Al-Sadriya area, killing more than 150 and injuring 250 innocent people. One of my staff was badly injured, while another one was lost his cousin. Al-Sadriya is located between Al-Jamhoriya (Republican) and al-Kefah streets. A number of my staff live in the area, which is just 1 km. away from the National Library and Archives (NLA).

Sunday 4 Feb. was another bad day. Around 11.15 a big explosion shook our building. The terrorists hit the same area, which they attacked last week, i.e. Bab Al-Mughad round-about. Once more, a number of civilians were either killed or injured. My brother phoned

me from London five minutes after the explosion, as did my sister-in-law, who lives in Sweden. A number of friends and relatives also rang me to see if I was OK and that nobody was hurt. The National Guards and the Police cut off all the main roads. We had to wait until they gave us the green light to leave our building. On leaving, I saw the scene of the carnage - some cars were destroyed completely.

Monday, 5 Feb.

I went to the Ministry of Energy, hoping to persuade its officials to exclude the National Library and Archives from its Cut Programmes (i.e. 2-3 hour electricity each day). I had a brief meeting with the Deputy Director General of the Department of Electricity Distribution. I asked if she could provide the NLA 6 hours of electricity everyday. She told frankly that my request was out of question. Only the Council of Ministers could decide what institution could benefit from the Exemption Programme, e.g. hospitals. I understood from her that the NLA would have electricity 6 hour a day until mid-February, and after that date it would subject to the Cut Programme. So I had now to pressurise the Ministry of Culture to repair our generator. Around 12.00 I was told that one of Ms. K.'s brothers was murdered. K works at the Cataloguing Department

Shortly after getting home, a bomb went off in al-Mustabseriya road, which I and many of staff use daily. At 14.00, a group of heavily armed men attacked the area where I live, killing and injuring a lot of innocent people at random. The armed men used 12 cars in their attack. The Police and the National Guards made no move. I know one of the victims. He was a newly-graduated young man. In the afternoon, I and my close friends went by car to the centre of the city where we offered our condolences to the family of 7 young men, who were killed in the attack on al-Sadriya district. Later, I visited my cousin. He was hit by four bullets two weeks ago. It was a very gloomy day for me.

Tuesday, 6 Feb.

There was no explosion, shelling or exchange of fire. I looked at the list of the names of the absentees, and noticed that one name was clearly marked. One of our administrators told me that he marked the name of Ms. S, because her brother was murdered for sectarian reasons the day before. I asked my staff if they received any information about one the librarians, Mr. M, who had been missing since the al-Sadriya car-bomb attack. The answer was negative. Mr. M had a shop in al-Sadriya area. I asked his colleague, Ismail, who lives in the same area, to search for him.

I received a well-known actor in my office. The reason for his visit was that he wanted us to collaborate with him concerning the filming of several plays in our theatre. I promised him that he could use our theatre free of charge and that we would provide him with the necessary accessories. We both agreed that it was imperative to carry on our cultural activities and events during these difficult times. He promised to come at the end of the month to talk further about our future cooperation.

Wednesday, 7 Feb.

I went to the Ministry of Culture to attend the Ministerial Meeting. As all the nearby bridges and roads were closed, We (I, the driver and the guard), were forced to use the dangerous al-Jemhoriya road before crossing the al-Sinak Bridge. We needed to enter the al-Haifa

Street from the south, before we could reach the building of the Ministry of Culture. Apart from our car, there were only two cars in Al-Haifa Street. Very few people dared to walk in the area. I was searched by the guards of the Ministry, before we could enter the main building. The National Guards put some of its snipers at the top of the building to protect the ministry from any sudden attack, which might be carried out by some armed group that controlled the northern parts of al-Haifa Street. At 14.00, the meeting ended, and we left the building very quickly.

There was no news about Mr. M, and everybody was worried that he might have died in the al-Sadriya attack and that his body was buried under the rubble. Mr. Sa, whom I sent to al-Sadriya area, told me that he asked a lot of people if they saw Mr. M after the car-bomb attack. They all said that they did not see him.

The Black Thursday, 8 Feb.

I sent after Ismail, He told me that he still had no new information concerning the whereabouts of Mr. M. Soon after, I contacted my cousin, asking him to search the two lists of the names of the dead and the injured people in Al-Sadriya attack. After ten minutes he rang me back, informing me that he did not find his name in the two lists.

In the meantime, two of our librarians came to my office, asking for my permission to search for Mr. M. I emphatically rejected their idea, I warning them that it was too dangerous to go to al-Sadriya area, as armed men were seen in the area. I also told them that I was doing my best to find Mr. M. Unfortunately, the two librarians (a Sunni and a Shi'i) did not listen to my advice. They left the building without telling anybody about their intention. About one hour later, I saw Miss. B, weeping in front of my office. I asked her why she was weeping? She replied that al-Mujahdeen told her by phone that they kidnapped the Sunni librarian in al-Sadriya area. They asked her if the librarian was Sunni or Shi'i. She told them that she did not know his religious background, and she begged them to release him. Initially, I thought that the kidnappers were Shi'l, and therefore, I contacted a number of trusted people, such as my own cousin, to contact some Shi'l armed group that was active in al-Sadriya area. I also sent one of my Shi'l librarians to the area to see if he could secure the release of the kidnapped librarian. I know Al-Sadriya very well. I was born and finished my primary school in that area, and therefore I know a lot of local people. I thought it would be relatively easy for me to release the kidnapped librarian. I was totally wrong, as I discovered soon after. The local leader of the Shi'l group told me by phone that his men did not kidnap the Sunni librarian, and that his men were doing their best to find him. He told me that it was very possible that another armed Sunni group, which was also very active in the same area, kidnapped the librarian. I felt immediately that something was wrong. I immediately asked our security if they saw another librarian with the kidnapped librarian? They said yes. The NLA was in state of total chaos. Some female librarians were crying loudly. They thought that both librarians were killed. I asked my staff to go back to their work. Thirty minutes later, the kidnapped Sunni librarian returned to our building. My staff gathered around him very quickly; some were kissing him and other congratulating him about his release. I was not happy at all; I knew that the kidnapped Shi'l librarians was in a real danger. I asked the Sunni librarian to come to my office, and not to talk to anybody else. In my office, he disclose the story of their kidnapping. He said that he and his Shi'l colleague left the building without telling anybody about their destination, and that they were kidnapped a moment later by a group of Sunni armed men in al-Maidan (just 200 meters away from the NLA). He said that he was beaten up and hit several times on his head. He claimed that he was released, after the

kidnappers found out that he was Sunni. Then I asked him about the fate of his Shi'i colleague. He said that he was separated from him, immediately after the kidnapping, and that they were both taken to al-Fadhil area. I felt instantaneously that I had no enough time to save the life of my Shi'i librarian. I immediately contacted several people who had some influence in al-Fadhil area. I sent two female administrators to al-Fadhil, where they live, to see if they could persuade the kidnapers to release the Shi'i librarian. I sent another person to a well-know Sunni figure in the hope that he could intervene. One of librarians had the phone number of one our former drivers, who resigned from his job last year. He and his family and relatives live in al-Fadhil, where they had considerable influence among the locals. I told him please act very quickly to safe the kidnapped librarian. He told me that, as far as he knew, no one was kidnapped that morning. I replied that I was sure that my kidnapped librarian was in al-Fadhil, and that he should act very quickly before it was too late. He promised to do his best to secure the release of the kidnapped librarian or at least safe his life. The line went dead before we could finish our conversation. Deep in my heart I knew it was too late to safe the life of the kidnapped librarians. One hour later I learnt from several sources that my librarian was executed and that his body was dumped in an abandoned alley. We were all devastated. I thought the news might not be true. But I received a call from my assistant, which confirmed the fact that the librarian was executed soon after the kidnapping. The killers rang the family of the victim, telling them in cold blood that they murdered their son and that they should collect his body. I rang some people in the hope they could provide me with more information on the kidnapping incident.

In the evening, my brother rang me from London, asking if my family and I were all right. As always, I said we were fine. My brother was very optimistic about the New Security Plan for the City Baghdad, and that it would definitely succeed this time. I said that the new plan represented the last chance for us, and if it failed, it would be the end of the country and the escalation of the sectarian civil war on unprecedented level.

There was no more news on Friday morning. In the afternoon, I offered my condolence to the family of a young man, who was murdered for sectarian reasons two days ago. In fact, my friends and I spent most of our spare time visiting the families of the victims of the on-going sectarian violence.

At 19.20 in the evening, I received a call and was given new information. According to one of our guards, the

family of the kidnapped librarian took his body. None of the victim's possessions were taken, such as his watch, ring, mobile and money.

There was no new development on Saturday, 10 Feb. concerning both the murdered librarian and the missing librarians. I decided to set up a special committee to investigate the murder of the librarian.

I have come to realise that nowadays in Baghdad, the perfect human being would be one who can switch off all his senses. To be blind and deaf is not a curse anymore, but a blessing in disguise.

Sunday 11 Feb.

it was a very heavy traffic, as the national guards, the police and the US Army set up many checkpoints and closed a number of main roads.

At 9.00, the missing librarian showed up. He gave no reason or justification why he was

absent. Therefore, I decided to punish him according to our regulations.

I was informed that Mrs. M was not coming, as her daughter was killed by a wandering bullet. Her husband and two sons were kidnapped two weeks ago. They were released later, after their kidnappers had beaten them ruthlessly.

I held meeting with the staff of the Computer Department. We agreed to develop our website and to fill the gap which Ali's death created. They told me that they began to put our collection of foreign publications on line. So far, they completed the Arabic collections and the PhD and [MA] theses. The Computer Department published the new issue of al-Rawafid al-Thaqafiya, which is a monthly journal. It makes a short review of all the books which the NLA obtain each month. We send the journal to all universities and important cultural institutions free of charge. Our policy is that all services should be free, including photocopying.

Then I met with the heads of several departments. We talked about the killed librarian, the deteriorating security situation and how to implement the new contract for the transportation of our staff. The majority of us were not optimistic about the New Security Plan for Baghdad, given the fact all the past plans failed in a miserable way.

I received a call from the Reuters office in Baghdad, asking me to talk about the state of the NLA. I agreed to meet the Reuters' reporter on Tuesday morning.

Monday, 12 Feb.

In the past, it took me 4 minutes to get to my office by car. Nowadays, it takes my between 20 to 25 minutes to get to my office, because of heavy traffic caused by increasing numbers of checkpoints, block-roads and terrorist attacks. We needed to pass through 4 checkpoints to arrive at the NLA. Baghdad looks increasingly like a huge barracks.

As soon as I reached my office, I asked the members of the special committee to meet. The Committee asked the kidnapped librarian, the witnesses to give their testimony. At the end, the members of the committee came to conclusion that the Sunni librarian should not be blamed for the tragic death of the librarian. I endorsed the committee's findings.

At 12.28, a series of bomb explosions shock our building. From the window of office, I saw a mixture of thick black and grey smokes rising behind the building of the Ministry of Public Works and Municipality. I took some photos. As usual, my wife, my mother-in-law and friends called me as they thought that the explosions were close to our building. I reassured all of them that the centres of the explosions were not near the NLA. I was informed that my nephew and my brother-in-law, who both work in the commercial district (al-Shurjah), were safe. Two bombs went off in al-Shurjah, which is located to the south of the NLA (just 500 meters), other bombs exploded near al-Sadriya area. I learnt from my cousin that the car-bomb attack and the booby-trap bomb blast, were followed by mortar shelling. Once again, many innocent people either were killed or injured. The ambulances rushed to the damaged areas, while the Police and the National Guards blocked most of the roads, fearing from more bomb attacks. I decided to shorten our working-time, (i.e. from 8.00 to 13.00), as a precautionary measure.

Before leaving the building, I met Miss Ma., who lost her brother few weeks ago. She wept as soon as I offered her my condolences. She told me that her family decided to leave Baghdad permanently and live in Basra in the south. I promised to help as much as I could, and wished her good luck.

In the evening, as I expected, my brother called me from London, asking if everybody we knew was fine. I assured him that we all were OK. I always feel guilty about the pain and the anxiety that my presence in Baghdad causes insofar as my brother and sister are concerned. They both live abroad, and they beg me every time to go back to London.

Tuesday, 13 Feb.

The presence of the armed forces and the US army can be seen everywhere in Baghdad. The number of the military check-points are increasing daily. Road traffic became a real problem for us. There is also shortage of fuel. At 9.00 I was in the Reuters Office, where I was interviewed by one of its report[er]s. The questions were all revolved around the security situation and its impact on the staff and activities of the NLA. At 10.00, I left the Reuters Office and around 10.40 I reached my office. I learnt from the news that 88 people were killed and 155 were injured in yesterday terrorist attacks against the commercial district (al-Shurjah). The statistics are always inaccurate. The number of casualties is much huger than what the media gives. One should bear in mind that many of the injured people die later on because of the lack of medical care, good doctors and neglect.

In the evening I listen to the news bulletin. The commander of the Baghdad Security Plan revealed some aspects of his scheme to restore normality and stability to the Capital. Everything looks nice and wonderful on paper. I hope he succeeds in achieving his extremely difficult task.

Wednesday, 14 Feb.

the traffic was much heavier today than yesterday; US soldiers and Iraqi National Guards could be seen everywhere in the Capital. We passed through 5 checkpoints to get to the NLA. As soon as I arrived to my office, I rang the Minister Office to see if he was available to meet me. I was told that the minister would be waiting for me. It took me thirty minutes by car to get to the Ministry of Culture. In the past, it took just two minutes. The traffic was very heavy near the Ministry; so I decided to get out of the car and walk from the Iraqi Museum to the Ministry. The distance was just 200 meters. The problem was that the left side of the road was safe, while the right side was not. It is a surreal situation. My guard insisted to walk with me until I reached the Ministry. Inside the building, I saw the employees of the Directorate of Fine Arts on strike, demanding the government to replace their annual contracts with permanent posts and to move their directorate away from al-Haifa Street. In the evening, when watching the news bulletin, our minister appeared on the screen, telling the press that he supported unconditionally the first demand of the strikers, while rejecting the idea of leaving al-Haifa Street.

In my meeting with the Minister that morning, I informed him about the murder of the librarian and security situation in our area. He advised me to set-up an investigation committee to deal with the issue. I told him that I had already done so, and that we came to a conclusion that no one should be blamed for his death. He asked me to look after my staff and to take all necessary measures to protect the NLA and its employees. After leaving the Ministry, I found out that it was extremely difficult for me to return to my office, because of the heavy road traffic and that the National Guards blocked several main roads. So I decided to go home and finish all my paperwork. But I remained in constant contact with my office. I told my secretary that, as a precautionary measure, only male staff should come to work tomorrow. I was sure that my decision would make the men unhappy about this positive discrimination. After reaching home I discovered that I forgot

my newspapers in my office, so I went outside to borrow some newspapers from my close friends.

Diary for the Period 15-28 February 2007

Thursday 15 Feb.

my driver and my guard were not able to pick me up in the morning, as most of the roads and bridges were either jammed or closed by the National Guards. My driver and the guard both live in al-Jihad district, which is near the Baghdad International Airport. It takes them 40 to 50 minutes everyday to pick me up from my home.

I had to go to my office by a taxi, although I knew it was not wise to do so. I also knew that the driver, and the guard and my wife would not be happy to see me going to work by a taxi. Everybody here is afraid of kidnapping. I am certain that tens of people have been kidnapped daily since early 2006.

I got into a taxi, after five minutes waiting. I saw many checkpoints in my neighbourhood, a view that makes many people very happy in Baghdad. The taxi driver began to talk, expressing his deep resentment of the checkpoints, claiming that they badly affected people's life. He claimed that he was a former army officer, and that he his comrades killed hundreds of US soldiers in the western desert, where he was serving at the beginning of the Coalition Forces' invasion of Iraq. I was sure that not a single US soldier was killed in that part of Iraq, and that the US Army lost less than 40 soldiers during the invasion. He also claimed that the Americans injured him in his hip. At one checkpoint, the National Guards ordered us both to get out of the car. We were body searched. The car was searched too. The National Guards were uncharacteristically very polite. I got to the NLA after five minutes, as the driver used a dangerous shortcut (i.e. Bab al-Mudham Road, in which the ends of three dangerous streets meet: Sheikh Omer, al-Kifah and al-Jamhoriyah.)

I soon noticed that a US fighter was flying low above our building. I took one picture of the fighter, as it was manoeuvring in the sky. I stayed in my office until 12.00. I read all the e-mail and finished all my paperwork. Before leaving the NLA, I asked the rest of the staff to go home, before the National Guards close the remaining roads and bridges.

I was invited to attend a concert that will be held in al-Rashid Hotel (within the Green Zone) on Saturday afternoon.

Friday 16 Feb.

Since 2005, the government has banned the movement of all civilian vehicles between 11.00 and 15.00. It is precautionary measure designed to protect Shi'i prayers. Today, the most dangerous city in the whole world seems very peaceful. The National Guards began to break into some houses, arresting suspected people and confiscating their cars.

I received unconfirmed information concerning the murder of our librarian. From one source, I learnt that the librarian was married to a Sunni woman, and that he converted from Shi'ism to Sunnism soon after the wedding. He even adopted the surname of his wife, i.e. al-Dlami, which a Sunni region and a large tribal confederation. He was born in 1959, and had four children.

Now the Sunni tribe of the librarian's widow demand considerable financial compensations from the killers or they will take law into their own hand (i.e. killing the killers). The tribal chiefs have recognized the persons who killed the librarian. The compensation will be paid hopefully to the widow and her children.

Saturday, 17 Feb.

National Guards and the Special Units of the Ministry of Interior could be seen everywhere. It was a wonderful day, because I could not hear a bomb explosion for the first time since mid-2006. The statistics of the Ministry of Interior showed that the level of terrorist attacks and communal violence went down sharply by 80%.

But I was worried about my two weapons, a pistol and a Kalashnikov. The Commander of a Battalion, which has stationed in our area since last Tuesday, advised me not to carry weapons, if they are not authorised by the Ministries of Interior and Defence. The National Guards and the Police would confiscate my weapons even if they are authorised by the Ministry of Defence. For us, directors, it is vital to carry some weapon for self-defence purposes. So far, two of the Ministry of Culture's director generals were murdered. Several attempts were made on the lives of other directors general and deputy ministers of culture. In early 2005, my car was ambushed in the infamous Haifa Street. We, my guards and I, were very fortunate not to be killed. We went to the Street in search of one of our drivers, who had been kidnapped along with his car by an armed group. He was released later, after they beat him up and looted his belongings. My close friends and colleagues told me off for being too reckless.

In the evening, I told my driver and guard to bring their guns with them so that we could place them in my office along with my own guns.

Sunday, 18 Feb.

the morning time was quiet; no explosion nor exchange of fire. The road traffic was heavy. It took us three minutes to go the INLA. The check-points we passed through increased. Unfortunately, in the afternoon, a market and a checkpoint were attacked by three car bombs. As a result, one police officer and many children and women lost their lives. Despite this sad incident, people were still optimistic. Most members of the INLA's staff are happy to see the National Guards, the Special Units of the Police and the US Army on the street.

In my way to home, a National Guard stopped our car, asking if we carried arms with us. We said no. He affirmed that, if you had had arms, he would have confiscated them immediately, even if we had an official authorisation from the Ministry of Culture. I said that I was one step ahead of him, as I put all the guns in my office. He laughed and waved good by.

I learnt that day that the National Guards broke into al-Fadhel area, looking for and arresting suspected people. Some shops reopened in the area. The Bab I-Mudham roundabout looked busier than before.

19 Monday Feb.

the road traffic was getting worse, as the National Guards and Police Special Units increased the number of check-points. US armed vehicles were moving in the opposite

direction. US army setups temporary checkpoints, whereas Iraqi army builds permanent checkpoints.

I had meeting in the Ministry of Culture. I asked another DG to pick me up in his way to the Ministry. We tried to reach the Ministry via al-Shuhada Bridge. But the bridge was closed, like some other bridges. So, we were forced to use a long route. We needed to cross al-Sarafiya Bridge, and then pass through al-Haiffa Street. As we

drove, we noticed that four or five cars were in al-Haiffa Street. It seemed that most people were still afraid of being ambused by the armed men, even though the National Guards the Police Special Units have imposed their control on the Street completely. They setup several checkpoints, at which the drivers and their passengers were asked for their license and identity cards respectively, and sometime they would be ordered to get out in order to be body-searched.

We, my fellow director and I, were both members of some committee, set up by the Minister to redistribute the former employees of the Ministry of Information. The latter was dissolved by the Provisional Coalition Authority (CPA), as a part of its policy to dismantle the Old Iraqi State. We have a difficult task ahead of us, as we required studying the CV of 1400 people, before we could make a decision. We agreed that the best way was to ask each directorate to make a detailed list of its needs for new employees, so that we could send the right people to the right places (i.e. according to their qualifications and expertises). At the end of the meeting, we decided to meet again next week, if we the security situation permit.

Before going to work, I arranged to send my wife and son by my car to a special clinic in al-Karradah district, where my little son could be vaccinated. Around 9.30, one of our guards said that he heard that car bomb went off in al-Karradah. I was a bit worried, and so I quickly contacted my wife to see if she and my son were safe. She said that they were inside the clinic and that they were not aware of the car bomb attack. I learn from some TV the subtitles that a bomb which was planted in a public transport (a mini-bus) exploded in al-Karradah, killing and injuring 15 innocent people. From the TV news bulletin I learnt that two other bombs exploded in al-Za'faraniya district in Baghdad.

Some of the main newspapers and Hurrah TV subtitles made reference to my interview with one of the Reuters's reporters, in which I said that the most precious part of INLA's collections was looted by professional thieves. It is ironic that our national newspapers resort to foreign news agencies to make its readers aware of what happened to the INLA! An Iraqi Radio Reporter from al-Iraq al-Hur (Free Iraq), based in Prague and funded by the US government, contacted my office, hoping to interview me regarding my statement to the press.

Tuesday 20 Feb.

it was a quiet day at the INLA. Some US helicopter flew over our building. The INLA's accountants took all the necessary steps to ensure that the monthly salaries would be distributed on Wednesday. The Iraqi reporter again, and I informed him that I was ready to meet him. I was asked a series of question about the destruction of the INLA, and the extent of damage inflicted upon our library and archive collections. The Interview lasted just 5 minutes. Many Shi'i families, who had been forced to leave their house, returned to al-Fadhel area. This was a good sign that the security situation was under the control of the National Guards.

A suicidal attack in our street (Shar'a Falastin or Palestine Street) caused the death and the injury of several innocent people. The Prime Minister visited the Street few hours before the attack.

Wednesday 21 Feb.

the monthly salaries were distributed. There has been no rise in the salary this month too. The government promised last year that it would increase the salary of most of state employees, whose grades are between four and 10. The rise will be between 50% and 60%. Naturally, most of my staff, who are on low income, were truly disappointed. The prices of basic commodities and fuel are rising, while the salaries remained the same; and when the state rises the salaries, the merchants of the black market will increase immediately the prices of their commodities. There are no regulations whatsoever to protect the consumer or the poor, as if we are in the early stages of capitalism, where the state has no role to play in the wellbeing of its citizens.

I met the younger brother of late Raad, Mr. N. We discussed many issues concerning Raad, e.g. his murder, family and pension. As requested by N, I wrote an official letter to the local police station, asking for copies of its murder investigation. The local police station is just around the corner. The head of the INLA's security unit and Mr. N took the letter to the police station. Tuesday and Wednesday witnessed lapses in the security plan. There were more bomb attacks than the days before. These lapses were expected, giving the state of lawlessness that prevailed for many months.

It seems that the terrorist groups have changed some of their tactics, relying more and more on mortar shelling. For the first time, they have begun to use gas-bombs in their attacks against civilian targets. My staff, like rest of the population of Baghdad, have been increasingly alarmed by such sadistic attacks. So far, there have been two gas-bomb attacks in Baghdad and one just outside the Capital. The latter caused a mayhem; as more than

150 people were killed.

Thursday, 22 Feb.

I met Mr. N in the morning. He told me that his brother, Raad, was doing two jobs to support his own family. He enquired if the INLA could financially help his brother's family. I said that we already donated some money for the family and that I was more than happy to employ his son to work in my office, if he agreed. Mr. N approved of idea, seeing it as practical, for it will at least guarantee a stable income for the family. I advised him to prepare all the necessary official papers, so that we could apply for a 'martyr grant', which is paid by the government to the family of the murdered person. This grant applies only to civil servants and armed forces. The 'martyr grant' varies from ministry to ministry. The employees of the Ministries of Defence and Interior get the highest 'martyr grant', compared with other civilian ministries. Some Ministries pay an additional grant, if one of their employees is murdered by terrorists. Unfortunately, our Ministry pays the lowest 'martyr grant'. Therefore, we, in the INLA, do our best to donate as much money as we can to support the family of the murdered employee.

Around 10.30. Miss MA, who lost her older brother few weeks ago, asked to see me in my office. She described the devastating psychological and financial impact of the death of her brother on her parents and on his own wife and children. Her brother was the main

breadwinner, not only for his own family but also for his parents. Now, she has to provide for her parents and for her brother's family. She could not control her tears. I advised her to make her younger brother share the sudden heavy burden with her. Miss MA and the INLA's administrators were busy taking all the necessary procedures for her transfer from Baghdad to Basra in the south, where our Ministry has one Cultural House. She already moved her parents and her late brother's family of to the city of Basra.

Earlier, I met some of our technicians, asking them to speed up their renovation works, and to be prepared for the mid-April, when we will hold a photo exhibition in memory of the destruction of the INLA. I have been planning to invite some 'honest' politicians, 'real' intellectuals and 'committed' journalists for the opening of the exhibition, which will tell the story the fall and the rise of INLA.

Around 12.00, I held an emergency meeting with the INLA's special transport committee. The latter assesses offers from different contractors, and then submits its recommendations to me, before I make my final decision. Usually, I agree with the main recommendation of this committee and other committees. Every year in January, we put an advert in a national newspaper, inviting transport contractors to make their formal offers in sealed envelopes. The INLA's transport committee will subsequently assess all the submitted offers, before making its recommendations, especially on the one that will fulfil our conditions and meet our needs. This year in January, our advert failed to draw the attention of transport contractors, largely because of the deteriorating security situation. Therefore, we extended the old contract for just one month (i.e. February). In early February, we put a new advert in a national newspaper, hoping to attract more transport contractors. Unluckily, only three contractors made their formal offers. Three offers are the minimal number required by the law. We only know two of the contractors, the present one and the former one. We always prefer to work with the one we know, for obvious security reasons. The offers were all exceptionally high. The three contractors have doubled the sum, which we paid for the period Feb. 2006-Jan. 2007. The members of the committee and I are aware that the contractors were extremely greedy, trying to blackmail us, as we were running of time. The former contractor made a new offer; it was still 45% higher than last year. The offer was verbal. This means that I had to ask the staff to share partially the financial burden, i.e. to make up the difference. We consulted the INLA's staff, and they all agreed to pay a small amount of money. We thought that we at least succeeded in securing a deal with the former contractor. Unfortunately, the contractor changed his mind at the last minute, demanding more money. The members of transport committee and I agreed that we should not bow to the blackmail of the greedy contractors, and that we should wait until the end of March, in the hope that new offers will be made and that new contractors will compete with the current ones.

Friday, 23 Feb.

I read usually some of my e-mails on Friday morning. I came across an e-mail sent by a British lady to BL concerning my diary. She said that she was happy (or more accurately surprised) to learn that the person who was fixing the INLA's internet system was a *woman*. I thought I should send her an e-mail on Sunday, in which I will explain that *'the heads of the Acquisition, Bibliography, Library Cataloguing, Archival Categorization, Periodical, Documentary Library and the Personnel Departments are all women. In addition to that, the majority of the deputy-heads the library and archive departments are women. The person who manages the INLA's official web site is a woman. Sixty percent of the people, whom I sent abroad for training purposes, were women. Last but not least, the*

female staff of the INLA formed their own society in 2004, with the aim of defending their rights. The society has its own periodical, of which so far three issues were published. It was the idea of my staff to publish an annual bibliography for Iraqi women. Last year, we published one volume, and this year another volume will be published'.

Saturday, 24 Feb.

a booby-trap went off in al-Jamhoriyah Street. Fortunately, the damages were very limited. The National Guards and Coalition Forces closed one-half of the al-Jamhoriya Street permanently, as precautionary measure to protect the shoppers and the traders of the al-Shurjah. Despite the continuation of the bomb attacks, people feel much safer than in the past, i.e. before the implementation of the New Security Plan. The reason is that the number of kidnapping and assassination incidents has gone down sharply. People of Baghdad (including the INLA's staff) are afraid of kidnapping and assassination attempts much more than car-bomb attacks.

Another reporter contacted me in the evening, asking for an interview. I agreed to meet him in my office on Sunday morning. The strangest thing I have noticed here in Baghdad is that local journalists change my answers, as they want and according to the political orientation of the newspaper or journal, they work for! I had some unpleasant experiences in this respect. Once, a local newspaper mentioned in one of its headlines that the Director General of the INLA accused the American Occupation Forces of the destruction of his library! I have learnt a good lesson and so I insist now on reading the draft of the interview, before being published.

At 18.50, I received a call from a friend, who is the spokesperson of the Iraqi Writers Union. He mentioned that he knew a Shi'i cleric who got hold of historical documents, photographs and microfiches, which were looted from the INLA and that he wanted to hand them over to me in person. I asked my friend why the cleric did not return the looted items earlier? He replied that the cleric did not trust anybody in past, and that he waited for the right time to hand them over. Naturally, I was extremely glad to see the return of some of our looted collections to us. My friend gave my phone number to the cleric, who called two minutes later. We talked for 5 minutes and agreed to meet up early next week. I did thank him in advance for his efforts to return our looted items.

Sunday, 25 Feb.

it has been the worst day, since the beginning of the New Security Plan two weeks ago. A suicide attack against the Administration and Economic Faculty (University of al-Mustanseriyah) resulted in the killing and the injuring of more than 170 people. Most of the victims were young students. The suicide attacker was a woman!

In the morning, a big explosion shook our building. I was surprised to learn later that the explosion was caused by a detonated car in al-Karradah district, which is about 6 km away from the INLA!

I had a brief meeting with late Raad's son, Z. It was his first day working in my office. I asked my secretary to help him settle and explain to him the nature of his duties. Z seemed to be very sad and disorientated, as he lost his father unexpectedly just two weeks ago.

The Cleric rang me, and apologise for not being able to come to the INLA. I told him he

would be welcomed in my office at anytime.

I held a meeting with the heads of all the departments. The meeting lasted one hour, during which we discussed several issues, including, of course, the security situation, transport, the budget, the appointments of new staff, the annual report of each department and the commemoration of the destruction of the INLA in Mid April 2003. All the attendants supported the idea of holding a photograph exhibition. At the end of the meeting, we decided to form a number of committees to do certain tasks, such as making all the necessary arrangements for the proposed exhibition.

The crew of al-Hurrah Iraq (a US Satellite TV channel) arrived to the INLA. The TV reporter interviewed me separately for 20 minutes. The TV crew then toured the departments, interviewing some of the staff and the readers.

In the evening, the al-Hurrah Iraq showed my interview, in which I criticised successive Iraq governments and the political class for ignoring acute cultural problems that the country has been facing since the collapse of the former dictatorial regime. I stated that the state-run cultural institutions were desperately in need of radical transformation.

Monday, 26 Feb.

at 12.30, I met the Shi'i cleric, Said H. He used a police car to bring the documents, photos and microfilms. He was escorted by three police officers. I told him it was dangerous to use police cars, as they were an obvious target for the armed men. He said that he was forced to ask the police for their assistant, as he thought that our area was extremely dangerous, security speaking. In the course of our discussion, I was genially surprised by the young cleric's open-mindedness and liberal views. We talked freely about politics and culture. We both found out that we had similar views on many issues. He told me that he attended the last conference of the Iraqi Communist Party, as a guest and that he was proud of his communist friends. Then he asked his driver to bring all the documents, photos and microfiches so that he could hand them over to me. The documents, photos and microfiches were placed untidily in several bags and boxes. They covered the Monarchical Era (1921-1958). I thanked the young cleric for returning some of our missing collections. We exchanged phone numbers and promised to meet each other whenever we could. After the end of the meeting, which lasted one hour, I escorted the young cleric to the main gate.

At 19.53, al-Hurrah Iraq showed a 5-minute report on activities of the INLA. My staff and I talked about our efforts to modernise the INLA in the wake of its destruction in April 2003. I was happy about the positive impact that the report had on the viewers.

Tuesday, 27 Feb.

at last, we received some good news; the Council of Presidency and the Parliament have both approved of the 2007 Budget. It means that the INLA will be using its annual budget in the coming month, as all the restrictions imposed by the Ministry of Finance will be lifted.

I learnt today that the Minister sent an official letter to the Council of Ministers, in which he asked the Prime Minister's approval of keeping me in my post as the director general of the INLA! Three months ago, the Prime Minister sent a special team secretly to the Ministry of Culture, with the aim of examining the validity of the appointment of several director generals. Oddly enough, the team questioned the way in which I and two of my

colleagues were appointed in 2003, while the appointments of the remaining director generals, who took their post in 2005 and 2006, were considered as valid! The sending and the findings of the team were not accidental. Only the appointments of the secular and liberal oriented directors were considered as not fulfilling the criterion set by the Prime Minister: an official letter from the CPA (Coalition Provisional Authority), decree from the Governing Council, or a decision from the current prime minister or his predecessors. My official ministerial appointment was considered as unsatisfactory by the special team. Therefore, I had no choice but to ask two of the former Cultural Advisors of the CPA to testify in my favour, by sending an official letter to the Minister of Culture. The two advisors were flabbergasted by my request, as I worked with both of them in my capacity as the director general of the INLA. They immediately sent a letter to the Minister, confirming that the CPA had recognised my appointment as valid.

Wednesday, 28 Feb.

there are strong rumours that the Prime Minister will replace 10 of his ministers, including the minister of culture. The frequent changes in the governments had very negative effects on our works. Every new minister seeks to make radical changes in the ministry, according to his political affiliation and religious loyalty.

The Impact of the Sectarian Violence on the INLA's Staff (January-February 2007)

Number	Type of impact
1	Unlawful Death (assassinations)
2 [3? ed]	Unlawful Death of Relatives (one Daughter and one Brother, one Brother-in- Law).
2	Kidnapping
2	Death Threat
3	Displacement

March 2007

Diary for the Period 1-10 March, 2007

Thursday, 1 March

The internet system had been not working since Wednesday. Therefore, I was unable to read my e-mails. Sometimes, a few of the e-mails need urgent response from me. My inability to reply quickly puts me often in an awkward position. The deputy head of the

computer department contacted the engineers of the state-owned company to repair the internet system.

The engineers promised to restore the system within 24 hours. But, I was sure the engineers would not fix the problem. It usually takes them several days and sometimes several weeks to restore our internet system. Since the early days of 2007, I have been removing with the help of some young workers the Monarchical and Presidential Collections from its present location to my office. The Collections have some valuable books. The vast majority of the books were gifts sent to the heads of the State (i.e. the Kings or the Presidents) from 1921, (i.e. when the Iraqi State was established) and 2003 (i.e. when the Saddam Regime collapsed). A good friend of mine, who used to work as the CPA (Coalition Provisional Authority) adviser on libraries between mid-2003 and mid 2004, told me about the whereabouts of the Monarchical and Presidential Collections and the fact that they would be looted if one did not take an prompt action to safe them. I told him I was more than willing to safe these invaluable collections if he helped me. I needed his help, because the collections were kept in a garage within the former Presidential Complex. The latter was located in the Green Zone, which was (is still) heavily guarded. My friend had ID that enabled him and his companions to enter the Green Zone. The problem was that he had no authorization to take the collections let alone bring a big truck to the Green Zone, which we definitely needed to move the collections to the INLA. We were extremely lucky to be helped by someone who was influential in the CPA at the time. That person got us the much needed permission to take the collections and to bring a big truck to the Green Zone. My friend, the driver of the truck and I needed to pass through a series of US checkpoints. It took us two hours just to reach the garage from the main gate of the Green Zone. The collections were hidden in an abandoned office inside the garage, where I found thousands of secret files and records belong to the Presidential Place. They were guarded by one US army officer. As these secret files and records were highly sensitive for political reasons and extremely important historically speaking, I approached the officer, asking him why these secret files and records were kept untidily in the garage? He replied that they would be used by the future Iraqi Court when Saddam and his henchmen would be put on trial. Then I asked him if I could read some of them? He refused in a polite manner, explaining that his duty was to look after these secret files and records until the Iraqi government decide their future. After I ended my conversation with the US army officer, my friend and I began to put the Monarchical and Presidential Collections inside the truck. It took us one hour. As the truck was not able to carry more books, I put what remained of the books in my friend's car. It took us another 50 minutes to arrive to the INLA (Iraq National Library and Archives). We were very exhausting physically. Thick dust covered our clothe, faces, hairs and hands. My friend and I enjoyed a lot our little adventure, and were very glad that we saved important collections from looting.

I am keeping all the Monarchical and Presidential Collections in my office for security reason. My office is guarded day and night. I hope that one day, when peace and security prevail, I will be able to display these collections in public.

For a few months, we have been facing a big problem concerning the publication of our books, such as the national bibliography. Last year, it took the Directorate of Cultural Affairs (CA), which is a part of the Ministry of Culture, 7 to 8 months to publish just two of our books; and we found out that the books were poor technically speaking. The paper and the ink were of substandard quality. The costs of the two books were too high. Moreover, we wasted a lot of time and efforts unnecessarily. According to State's regulations, we cannot print our books and journals in private companies, unless state-

owned companies confirm formally that they cannot do the job for some reason. Therefore, I asked the Minister for his permission to allow the INLA to print its books through private companies. He refused, asking me to fine the CA according to the terms of the written agreement between the two parties. I informed the Minister that I had already done that. At the same time, I asserted that imposing fines would not solve our publication problem, and asked the Minister to consider his decision. In the last meeting of the Ministerial Council, the Minister wanted the two Directorates (the INLA & the CA) to reach a compromise that would be satisfactory for both sides. I reluctantly accepted the Minister's initiative, but I did not hide my resentment, emphasizing that any new agreement would not work, as the CA would not adhere to it. The time proved that I was right. The INLA has been trying in vain to reach agreement with the CA, since the last meeting of Ministerial Council. Therefore, I decided to send another letter to the Minister on Monday, asking his permission to allow the INLA print its books by private companies. It would cost much less and the quality would be much better. Everybody at the ministry of culture knows that the CA is the most corrupt, inefficient and disorganized directorate. I told the minister about what I thought of the CA and its staff.

In the evening, a Spanish journalist from El Pais newspaper contacted me. She interviewed me by phone. The interview was short, focused on the INLA.

Friday, 2 March

I spent the day writing. I miss my old time when I had an adequate amount of time to do some historical researches. I am planning to complete a 20-page research on the Kurdish Community in Baghdad by the end of this month.

Saturday, 3 March

I spent the day writing my little research. I spent some of my time thinking about the historical documents, microfilms and photos, which returned to us last week. I quickly reached a conclusion that the first cleric, who claimed to have saved our collections from looting in April 2003, did not give us back a portion of our collections, which moved to a Mosque in al-Sadr City. I also think that the second cleric, whom I met last week, knew about what the first cleric did, and decided to return the remaining documents, microfilms and photos to us. I do believe that the second cleric is an honest person, unlike the first one, whom I did not trust from the very beginning. I even told some of my American friends not to believe the claims of the first cleric about his heroic role in saving our collections from looting following the destruction of the INLA.

Sunday, 4 March

The road traffic was unbelievably heavy. It took me 55 minutes to arrive to the INLA. The checkpoints are being increased daily. The soldiers and the police officers search cars and passengers alike. Many of these checkpoints are placed in wrong locations. Sometimes, one car will be stopped and searched by several checkpoints in the same road! At present, ordinary people do not complain. But, I am pretty sure that they will express their resentment, as their movements are being increasingly restricted day by day. Our national

guards and police officers must reconsider the distributions of their checkpoints by analyzing the roads map of Baghdad. People are wasting valuable times in the heavy traffic. It is very difficult for a lot of civil servants, university student and teachers to go to their work. The disruption of our daily life is the main aim of the terrorists and the armed gangs, who wage their campaign of terror to destroy all types of normality of the people. Unfortunately, the rash actions of the national guards and the police, which cause daily chaos and confusion, play into the hands of the outlaws.

As soon as I entered my office, I went directly to the internet to see if it was repaired. I was surprised to find the internet was working. It was the first time in which the repair of the internet system took just four days. Usually, it takes three to five weeks. The reason for the delays are corruption. Corruption is a widespread phenomenon in all the government departments and institutions, including our ministry. None of the three successive ministers of culture tried seriously to remove the corrupt elements or to put an end to all types of corrupt practices. Corruption is the main threat to our society and people; it is far more dangerous than terrorism. Widespread corruption has been hindering my efforts to modernize the INLA, since my appointment in December 2003. I have been forced to put my ideas into action behind the back of those who are above me. Without resorting to unconventional methods and tactics, it would have been impossible for me to reconstruct the INLA. No minister or any influential person encouraged or assisted me to breathe life into the INLA. I was lucky to have very good friends in many countries, including, Italy, Czech Republic, Britain, America, Holland. These friends worked very hard to help me reopen all the departments of the Library and the Archive. Publications, restoration and micrographic laboratories, computers, printers, internet system, furniture and many things were sent from abroad. My staff and I will never ever forget those people who stood by us. It is very sad for the Iraqis to see that all the countries, especially the Arab ones, which we did help in the past, did not even contact us. The destruction of the INLA is a lesson for us, although it is a very harsh one.

At 9.10, I met the head of the Department of Accountancy. To solve the issue of the transport, he proposed to replace the existing cars with bigger ones. This would help us reduce considerably the cost of the transport service. I thought it was a good idea. So I asked him to contact the contractors immediately, and to inform me about the outcomes as soon as he could.

At 10.00, I met Miss Th., who works as the head of IT and Library at the School of Administration. The School is just 500 meter away from our building. Miss Th., who came to my office without a prior notice, asked if we would take part in her School's book fair, which will be held on 22 March. I said yes, and asked her if her library received any of our publications. She said no. She was surprised to learn that we managed to publish all the issues of the National Bibliography, as there was a huge gap between the years 1997 and 2003. I asked some librarians from the department of Exchange and Acquisition to join the meeting. At the end of the meeting, we agreed to send copies of all our publications and some of our surplus books and journals to the School. We agreed also to take part in the book-fair, where we will display some of our rare books, which we recovered after the looting of April 2003.

I received Mr. F, who took his family to a neighboring country in November 2006, after he received a death threat. His house was looted and confiscated by one of the Militias. His family stayed behind, and he returned alone. I was extremely glad to see him, he is an asset in my office. Saddam executed his father in the late 1960s. We talked for several minutes about the changes that took place in his absence. I proposed that he should head the department of public relations, which needed someone to bring life in it. He agreed in

principle. We decided to meet again tomorrow concerning the redefining of the activities and tasks of the department of public relations.

Our young workers began to move all the extra copies of our collections from the book stacks to the basement of the building where they would be kept until we distribute them among academic and local libraries in Baghdad and in the rest of the country. Following my appointment, I noticed that the INLA had several copies of the same book. Sometime, we had ten copies of the same book! I proposed that we should keep only three copies of each book (the finest copies of course), and remove the remaining copies from the library stacks. To do so, I needed the approval of the former minister of culture. The new minister ordered the formation of a committee whose task would be the distribution of the extra copies. I was not happy with what the minister proposed, as I knew that the extra copies would be giving to the wrong people. So, I shelved the idea of distributing the extra copies, and I am waiting for the right time to implement my idea.

A Journalist from Washington Post contacted me to see if I would be available to meet him tomorrow. I said to him that he could come around 9.00-9.30.

Before leaving my office, I read an article on the INLA published in the Guardian on 28 February. The writer was generous in praising our efforts to keep the INLA open for our readers.

I received an important email from our the representative of the Library of Congress. I was asked to sign a Memorandum of Understanding that will establish the principles on which the LC and the INLA can cooperate. The INLA will benefit from the LC's World Digital Library. The LC's officials, whom I met last year, kindly agreed to provide us with the necessary equipment and to train some of our staff. I highly value this project, as a number of countries from the Third World have been able to enter the world of digital library.

In the evening, I read the national newspapers. In the second page of al-Mutamar newspaper, I came across a little statement I made a few days ago, in which I demanded the government to separate the INLA from the Ministry of Culture and to link it directly to either the Council of Ministers or the Presidency. I also demanded that the INLA's director had to be granted extensive financial and administrative responsibilities so that he or she could carry out a series of fundamental changes in the fields of organization, legislations and personnel. I know my little statement will make some people unhappy. It is my dream to make the INLA independent of the ministry of culture. Our subjection to that ministry is the main reason why we cannot go forward as fast as I like. I cannot appoint any librarian or archivist without first getting the approval of the minister, and this proved difficult to obtain on many occasions. For instance, In November last year, I sent a letter to the Minister asking his approval of the appointment of 9 young graduates, whom I needed to fill certain gaps in some departments, such as the administration, computer and cataloging. The Minister refused to give his approval. I sent another letter to him two weeks ago, emphasizing that my institution needs new blood in order to make real progress; but he refuses to answer it. This is just one of many problems I face. The Prime Minister told the media that he will replace a number of his ministers. I have no choice but to wait and see.

Monday, 5 March

(This day will be always remembered, as the day when books were assassinated by the forces of darkness, hatred and fanaticism.)

The traffic was predictably very heavy. My car was searched at a checkpoint. The police officers were polite.

Miss. M. came to my office to say good byes. She has already moved to Basra, after the murder of her brother. I asked her not to be sad, as I was certain she would come back to us some time in the future.

At 9.00 someone from the Washington Post office rang me, informing me that the reporter would be a bit late. Therefore, I decided to meet the staff of the English Collections, as I planned earlier. The English Collection section is in the last floor, which much more damaged than other floors. The smoke caused by the fires of mid-April 2003, dust, high temperature, the breakdown of the ventilation system and most importantly the shortage of electricity supplies took their toll on the library collections. We have around 66,300 English books in various subjects. The oldest book goes back to 1845. Twelve librarians work in the English collection section, and all of them speak English. The inventorying work has started in September 2005 when three librarians undertook to make new cataloguing cards replace the missing ones during the mid-April fires in 2003. They had also to classify, catalogue, correct past mistakes and clean hundreds of other books. It has been a very difficult task, as the books storage area had no air conditioning system for several months. The old conditioning system had been removed during the Saddam Rule for unknown reasons! The frequent power cuts, especially in the summer, make it very difficult to work inside the books storage area. However, my staff went on doing their task, even when the temperature rose to 48 centigrade. During the meeting, they complained about the power cuts, temperature and the dust. They asked me to provide them with good gloves, pens and white inks. Towards the end of the meeting, the head of the security of the building informed me that two people (one foreigner and one Iraqi) were waiting for me. I told him to take both men immediately to my office, and that I would meet them in 5 minutes.

I introduced myself to the Washington Post reporter and his Iraqi colleague, before the interview. I was asked various questions about culture in general and INLA in particular. We talked frankly about the security situation and impact on the INLA and its staff, etc.

As we were talking, a huge explosion shook the INLA's building around 11.35. We, the three of us, ran to the nearest window, and we saw a big and thick grey smoke rising from the direction of al-Mutanabi Street, which is less than 500 meter away from the INLA. I learnt later that the explosion was a result of a car bomb attack. Tens of thousands of papers were flying high, as if the sky was raining books, tears and blood. The view was surreal. Some of the papers were burning in the sky. Many burning pieces of papers fell on the INLA's building. Al-Mutanabi Street is named after one of the greatest Arab poets, who lived in Iraq in the middle ages. The Street is one of well-known areas of Baghdad and where many publishing houses, printing companies and bookstores have their main offices and storages. Its old cafes are the most favorite place for the impoverished intellectuals, who get their inspirations and ideas from this very old quarter of Baghdad. The Street is also famous for its Friday's book market, where secondhand, new and rear books are sold and purchased. The INLA purchases about 95% of new publications from al-Mutanabi Street. I also buy my own books from the same street. It was extremely sad to learn that a number of the publishers and book sellers, whom we knew very well, were among the dead, including Mr. Adnan, who was supposed to deliver a consignment of new publications to the INLA. According to an early estimation, more than 30 people were killed and 100 more injured. Four brothers were killed in their office.

Immediately after the explosion, I ordered the guards to prevent all my staff from leaving the building, as there was a possibility of another bomb attack. My staff and I were

watching the movement of a number civilian and military ambulances, carrying killed and injured people. It was a heartbreaking view.

Almost ten minutes after the explosion, the Washington Post's reporter and his Iraqi colleague left the building. Their destination was unsurprisingly al-Mutanabi Street, the site of the massacre. Before the end of the meeting, we agreed to meet again next morning to continue the interview. After I arrived to my home, my wife told me that a big bomb blast shook our house at 11.30 and that dust and smoke covered our neighborhood. Fortunately, no one was hurt.

At 18.10, I was the guest of a Spanish radio that broadcasts to Spain and Latin America. I answered by phone series of questions about the INLA, its staff and the security challenges. The interview lasted 15 minutes.

Almost one hour later, the Reuters reporter in Baghdad rang me, asking me some question about the al- Mutanabi Street's car bomb attack, its history and cultural importance.

I watched the night news bulletin. The car bomb attack against Al-Mutanabia shocked all Iraqis regardless of their religious and ethnic background. The President, the Prime Minister and some other high-rank officials condemned the attack. Our political leaders are the best when it comes to the 'extremely difficult' task of issuing condemnation statements, while the annihilation of our culture and intellectual class goes on before their very eyes everyday.

At 20.25, my brother rang from London, asking me if everybody was fine. I reassured him that we all were fine. Then, as usual, we talked about politics, our friends and families.

Tuesday, 6 March

It was one of bloodiest days, as hundreds of civilians were either killed or injured by a series of car bomb and suicide attacks.

The war between the Minister of Culture and his Deputy became public, when the latter published an article in the main national newspaper, al-Sabah, viciously attacking the Minister, accusing him of being a terrorist, a killer and a sectarian! It has been for some time that Ministry of Culture was literally divided into two groups: the first group is Sunni dominated, led by the Minister, and based in the new building in the al-Haifa Street, and the second group is Shi'i dominated, led by the Deputy Minister of Culture, and based in the former building in al-Zaiyonah district. This Cultural Sectarian War has completely paralyzed the Ministry of Culture. It has affected me too, even though I have stayed away from this sectarian nonsense from the very beginning, focusing on doing my tasks. I hope that the Prime Minister will intervene decisively in the matter before it is too late by removing all those people who have been involved in this sectarian cultural war.

At 10.00 I had a meeting with the staff of the Restoration Laboratory. Ten people work at the Laboratory, two men and eight young women. The Czech government provided us with all the necessary equipment and trainings, which enabled us to set up a modern restoration laboratory for the first time in the INLA's history. So far, six people (4 women and 2 men) have been trained in Czech Republic, Italy and Iraq. I hope that the INLA's restorers will enter an advanced training course this year. One of our original plans was that our trained staff would train other people from different cultural and educational institutions.

I began the meeting by explaining my plans to develop the Lab., such as providing its staff

with more training and tools. My friend Rene Teijgeler, who served as a cultural adviser to Ministry of Culture during the CPA's period, informed me that the Dutch Blue Shield was willing to fund a project to purchase some tools and other necessary items for the INLA's Restoration Lab. I prepared a list before sending it to Rene. The head of the Lab, who is a practiced archivist, asked me to increase the number of his assistants, as there were many restoration works to be done. Last year, he held several training courses for our young archivists and for the archivists of the Ministry of Interior. He and his deputy, Miss Na, always busy doing some experiments to find new solution for problems they face during their restoration works. They are the most creative people among the INLA's staff. They teach their Iraqi colleagues what they learnt from foreign experts. It was great news to hear all the staff enjoyed their daily works at the Lab. At the end of the meeting, I suggested that we should make a documentary film of the process of restoring some of our damaged documents and records, so that it can be used in future training programmes. I also suggested that the Lab's staff should write down the number, the type, the extent of damages of each item they would restore and how much time it would take them to do the job. My personal assistant wrote down the main points of the meeting.

The Washington Post reporter and his Iraqi colleague came to the meeting, 15 minutes before it ended. After the meeting, I introduced both of them to the head of the Lab, who answered some of their questions. The Washington Post reporter wanted to take some direct notes on the INLA's daily works. The reporter, his Iraqi companion, my personal assistant and I went to the Computer Department, where I would have another meeting with its staff.

Last year, 25 people worked in the Computer Department. Now, only 16 people work in the Department. Three women are on maternity leave, one went abroad and three left the INLA for security reasons. So far, the Department lost two of its young staff. Both men were married and had BA in computer science. Apart from two people all the staff of the Department are young. The head of Department, Miss Am, is a library graduate. She is loved and respected by her staff. She treats her colleagues kindly, as if they are member of her own family.

The INLA lost its four old computers during the Mid-April 2003 fires and lootings. There was no computer department in the INLA, when I was appointed. Just three weeks after my appointment, I purchased four computers behind the back of the Minister of Culture. He was given a promise by some country that his ministry would provide with hundreds of computers. But he did not get a single computer even after a year and a half. I did not want to wait to setup the computer department, which I viewed as essential step for the process of modernizing the INLA. At present, the INLA has more than 130 computers, including some laptops. All the departments use computers in doing their tasks.

I began the meeting by asking series of questions about their works. I was told that the Arabic collections can be searched on the internet. For our on-line-catalogue we have been using *Winisis* System, which we upgraded from an old system, named *cdisis*. We have been using the same system for our English collections. Using modern systems are extremely expensive and require computers with special specifications.

The Computers and the Catalog Departments issue jointly a monthly publication, called *Rawafid Thaqafiyah*. It reviews all the publications and thesis that the INLA get hold of. We send this publication free of charge to all universities throughout Iraq and to other important cultural and educational institutions.

The staff of the Computer Department is busy with typing three volumes of the Baghdad Memory Project. I asked Miss Na to improve the INLA's website. I know that I am asking

too much of her, as she the only web- designer we have, following the tragic death of the other web-designer, Ali, late last years. I asked Miss Na to train four of her colleagues, so that they can share the burden of running the web-site with her. I also asked the head of the department to renew her efforts to train those librarians and archivists who do not know how to use a computer. Last year, more than 7 computer training courses were held in the Department of Computers. The security situation and power cuts prevented the Department from its plan to train 30 people from different departments.

Halfway through the meeting, the power was cut. The meeting ended at 12.35. Thirty minutes later, the reporter and his colleague left the building, after we said our good byes.

Wednesday, 7 March

There was no heavy traffic. I arrived to my office around 8.00. The fighting between the National Guards and a group of armed men in al-Haifa Street began at 6.00 and lasted until 8.15. I heard sporadic exchanges of fire for a few minutes. National guards arrested 36 armed men, after searching the area house by house. The National Guards was also able to defuse a detonated car in Bab Al-mudham near the INLA.

Our technicians began to repair a number of windows, which had been broken as a result of Monday's car attacks against al-Mutanabi Street. At last, I was able to sign an important Memorandum between the Library of Congress and the INLA. The memorandum establishes the principle of cooperation between the two institutions on the World Digital Library project. The memorandum will be supplemented by a technical agreement that decides what equipment and training will be needed to implement the project. I am pinning my hopes on this project to scan a huge portion of our collections of invaluable historical newspapers and journals, before we lose them forever. The colour of the papers changed into dark yellow and became extremely fragile. In other words, these collections are on the brink of total destruction. This state of affair is result of several factors, notably neglect of the former directors, the inexperience of the staff, the negative effects of the mid-April Fires, and the power cuts that have prevented us from providing the right temperature and humidity in the storage areas.

Before leaving my office, three members of the INLA's Woman Society "al-Ferdos" invited me to their party, which they decided to hold on Thursday to celebrate Woman Day. Celebrating Woman Day every year has become part of the INLA's traditions, since my appointment in 2003. Al-Ferdos Society was founded two years ago by a group of female librarians and archivists to defend their rights and to have a strong voice in the administration of the INLA. It is a new experiment, which has helped to raise the confidence and morale of my female staff in a country where male values are totally dominating all aspects of life.

At 15.00, I took my wife and son to my in-laws. She wanted to spend some days with her parents. I stayed from 40 minutes and then left to see my friends. The day before, my wife prepared several meals for me, and told me what to eat on what day!

After the night news bulletin, the Deputy Minister appeared in a cultural programme, in which he renewed his attack on the Minister of Culture.

Thursday, 8 March

The traffic was light today. The reason is that the government have restricted movements

of private cars, i.e. one day for cars that have odd numbers and one day for cars that have double numbers.

As I expected, I received a call from the Minister's secretary concerning my press statement, in which I called the government to separate the INLA from the Ministry of Culture. I told the Secretary that I would tell the Minister what I said exactly to the media, when came back from his foreign visit. I believe the Minister and office are making an unreasonable connection between the statement I made and the article written by Deputy Minister in which he attacked the Minister.

At 10.00, Al-Ferdos society's members gathered in one the main rooms to celebrate the Woman Day. The spokesperson of the Society read out the programme of the party, and then invited me to make a short speech, a thing that I always hate to do. In my speech, I pointed out that *"we should all be proud of the fact that the INLA is the only government institution in Iraq, where its female staff were able to form their own society"*, and *"we must not forget our five colleagues who died recently"*. At the end of my short speech, I undertook to support the Society's efforts financially and morally by donating some money to the Society and by sending an official appreciation letter to all of its members in recognition of their crucial role in the resurrection of the INLA. Cakes, chocolates and Pepsi-cola were distributed in a very friendly and happy atmosphere.

At 11.00, I left the INLA. My destination was al-Mutanabi, the scene of the last carnage, where Iraq intellectuals decided to get together in honor of all those who died in the car bomb attack. There were eleven people from the INLA in my company. We took with us two cameras to document this unprecedented event. Amidst the ruins and destruction caused by the car bomb attack a group of very angry and sad Iraqi intellectuals stood. There were TV cameras, reporters and journalists. The spokesman of the Iraqi Writers Union, and a number of poets, novelists and writers either made short speeches or recited some sad but powerful pomes. It was very heartbreaking occasion. I was glad that I was not the Minister of Culture! Everybody was angry about the ineffectiveness and carelessness of the Ministry of Culture. The intellectuals became furious when unexpectedly the Director of the Cultural Affairs made a speech on behalf of the Minister of Culture. He was unwelcome and uninvited guest. The audience interrupted his speech more than once. No one was willing to pay attention. Unlike my fellow director, I was well received by the intellectuals, as I was known for my blunt criticism of negative cultural policies adopted by successive federal governments and shortsightedness of the political class. Two of my companions filmed the destroyed area, while I took some photos. It is undoubtedly imperative to document this event for its historical values. It is the day, when both people and their books were massacred concurrently.

Immediately after the end of the gathering, some workers found the body of an old man under the wreckage of a destroyed bookstore.

At 18.25, my wife rang me from her parents' house. She told me off for going to al-Mutanabi, as she considered it to be a very dangerous place. It did not take me long to discover how much my wife was suffering from an illness called double standard, as she did not hesitate herself to go for shopping in al-Shurjah (the main commercial district), which is not too far from al-Mutanabi. The former is widely considered the most dangerous place in the country. It has been the terrorists' most favorite target, even in comparison with the Green Zone, which is the seat of government, parliament and the most important embassies.

Friday, 9 March

I spent the day alone in my home, writing and reading.

The National Guards defused two bomb cars in al-Shurjah area. My wife's parents live in a very old area called Suq al-Ghazil, which 200 meters away from al-Shurjah. In the afternoon, I went to see one of my close friends. We discussed the crisis inside the Ministry of Culture. It has been virtually divided into parts, Sunni and Shi'i, while the head of government has turned a blind eye on the crisis. My friend prepared a draft for a new legislation for the Ministry of Culture. It was a good one, and asked me if I could read it and make some suggestions. The old-fashioned elements, who are mostly ex-Ba'athists, did not like the draft. I advised my friend to postpone the submission of the draft, and wait for the right time, i.e. reshuffling of the Cabinet.

Saturday, 10 March

Three bombs exploded in my neighborhood. Two bombs went off at 7.30. They violently shook my flat, as I was watching some TV programme. At 13.20, another bomb exploded in my neighborhood. It shook my flat. I spent the whole day writing and reading in my room.

Diary for the Period 11-20 March, 2007

Sunday, 11 March

I held two meetings. The first meeting was with the staff of the library reading room and the book stacks, and the second meeting with the staff of the Planning Department. Three people work in the library reading room, and we need to employ three more people. The readers can use two photocopiers. We do not charge for such a service. But, for financial reasons, we limited the photocopying service to 20 pages. If we have two or three copies of the same book, we will allow the reader to photocopy as much pages as he wants outside the INLA. Outside photocopying will also be under our direct supervision. Around 20 people work in the book storage area, including those who serve INLA's readers. We use traditional methods in serving our readers, i.e. from searching the catalogue cards to providing the reader publications he orders. Next week, our readers will be able to use on-line-catalogue for the first time to search for publications they look for. I hope that some time in the future I can computerize the whole reader service. Mrs. E. is supervisor of the library reading room, is a library graduate. She is a very hard working librarian.

In the first meeting, we all discussed ways to improve our services and to speed up the process of cleaning up the book stacks; this has proved to be an extremely difficult task, because of shortage of cleaners and equipment. I promised to remove these two hurdles as soon as I could. I highly appreciate the hard work of my staff, who serves the readers under unhealthy conditions. We can still smell the smolder and soot caused by the fires of mid-April 2003. A number of my librarians and archivists, who work in the storage areas, have suffered from allergies.

Six people work in the Department of Planning. All are females, including Miss. Z, who is the boss. I asked them to present different types of statistics about INLA's personnel. The obtained data will be analyzed with the aim of developing our human resources in terms of

quality and quantity.

Ten minutes after arrival to the flat, I heard a big blast. I learnt that a suicide terrorists attacked a group of people near the university of al-Mustanseriya. As a result, 18 innocent civilians were either killed or injured.

Monday, 12 March

It was a very chaotic scene near the INLA. The US Army and National Guards closed Al-Jemhoriyah Street in the morning. One of the National Guards began to fire towards the sky, hoping to disperse people and cars alike. I had no choice but to get off in Bab al-Mudham round about and to walk to my office. Few Minutes later, two US helicopters flew over the INLA, and then landed in an empty space inside the headquarter of the First Infantry Brigade (about 100 meter away from my office). The two helicopters flew away few moments later. My staff was forced to walk from the Bab al-Mudham roundabout to the building via al-Jamhoriya Street. I was angry about the ill-advised action taken by the National Guards and the police officers, which endangered my staff's lives. Therefore, I sent a letter to the Commander of the First Infantry Brigade and to the Chief of the local police station. In the letter, I criticized their unwise action, and questioned the rationale behind closing two important roads that put the lives of INLA's staff into real danger. I explained that by closing the two roads they would make it extremely difficult for us to keep the INLA open. I ended the latter with this question: '**Who will be protected by the closure of the two roads: people or yourselves?**' The closing of the roads has been one of the most difficult problems I have faced since 2005, when the First Infantry Brigade turned the former Ministry of Defense's buildings into its headquarters. The first action taken by the commander of the Brigade was to close the *Maidan Road* completely without consulting or even informing the directly affected parties, such as the INLA. This meant that the INLA's cars would have no access to enter the building through the front gate. The Commander took his action unnecessarily, because the several buildings occupied by his Brigade were 300 meters away from the *Maimdan Road*. Moreover, his soldiers put up a 150-meter long concrete barrier to shield themselves and their buildings. As we have no concrete barriers to protect our building, our

staff was exposed to dangers directly. I tried in vain to persuade the Commander to reopen the Road. At the end, I decided to take the initiative by turning the pavement, which separates the INLA's fence from the *Maimdan Road*, into a temporary road. This would enable our cars to enter the building through main gate. The INLA's guards worked hard to remove all the barriers from the pavement. Thus, I reopened a new temporary road, which was soon used not only by us but also by other institutions.

Unfortunately, the National Guards and the Police station closed the temporary road last Wednesday (7 March). At once, I sent the head of the INLA's guards to the officers of the First Brigade in the hope that he could persuade them to reopen the temporary road. The military intelligent officer promised to raise the issue with his superiors. On Monday, 12 March, he sent a message to me that the temporary road would remain closed until further notice and that the Police and the National Guards would only allow my car to use the temporary road. I refused their offer.

We have not been using the rear gate for almost a year. Turning the rear gate into the main point of entry and exit means that INLA's car must use the extremely dangerous Al-Jamhoriyah Street. The corridor between the rear gate and Al-Jamhoriyah Street is only 70 meters. My guards are highly suspicious of the behaviors of the people, whose workplaces

are located on both sides of the corridor. They sided overtly with armed groups in some of their clashes with the National Guards and the police.

At 9.30, once again the internet system stopped working.

I had a meeting with some of the staff of the Personnel and Administration Department. I put forward some proposals to make the department more dynamic and creative, which would involve the replacement of its head and one administrator. These changes will come into effect within the space of two days.

My deputy rang me in the afternoon that one of the transport contractor accepted in principle last offer, i.e. 113 millions Dinnar.



Tuesday, 13 March

It was a great news to find out that the internet was working properly again, and I began to read all Monday's e- mails.

I met an official from the PM's office. We discussed some issues concerning the reconstruction and the modernization of the INLA. I raised the important issue of the archives of the repressive institutions of the former regime. I criticize d the government for doing almost nothing to protect the cultural heritage of the country. The official promised to pass my views to his superior.

The transport contractor did not show up to submit his official offer; after doing that, we both must sign an agreement, which will also require the approval of the Minister. It is a

long bureaucratic process.

At 10.00, the meeting of the heads of departments was held. At the beginning, my Deputy talked in a great length about our efforts to secure a deal with one of the transport contractors. The following issues were also raised: power-cuts, the renovation works of some parts of the building, the air-conditioning system, the transport of the staff, purchasing more furniture, creating a new computer programme for the Legal Deposit Department, the needs of the archive's reading room and stacks, the accessibility of the new publications to the library readers. In the meeting, I redefined and expanded the responsibilities of the heads of all the departments, while asking them to submit work progress reports to my office on a weekly basis. I also asked some of the heads of the departments to resume the holding of the fortnightly meeting with their own staff, like the rest of their colleagues, and that they should send short reports of their departmental meetings to my office. I promised to attend some of the departmental meetings, as I did last year. The meeting lasted one hour and 30 minutes. Mr. K, an Iraqi journalist who works for the American radio station, NPR (National Public Radio), was waiting for me in my office. He explained that Ms. L sent him, to arrange an interview with me. Ms. L is an American radio reporter; I first met her more than two years ago, when she was covering the story of the INLA's destruction. We agreed that Ms. L and her crew would come to my office on in the early morning of Wednesday, if that was possible.

US helicopters were flying very low above our building between 11.10-11.30, making a lot of noises.

My colleague, the Director-General of the Directorate of Kurdish Culture (KC), informed that he would go to Kurdistan for 10 days and that I should act as the acting director general of his institution in his absence. I had no choice but to agree, since he had to leave on Wednesday. I worked twice before as the acting director general of the KC. I know most of its staff. The KC's small building is about 2/5 km away from the INLA.

Wednesday, 14 March

The police officers allowed some cars to use the temporary road. I sent the head of the INLA's guards to them, informing them that all the INLA's car would use the temporary road from Wednesday onwards.

Mr. K. from the American radio crew, rang me, saying that would arrive soon by two cars. I was given the descriptions of the two cars, which I quickly passed to the INLA's guards at the rear gate. Twenty minutes later, the guards informed my office that they opened the gate for the two cars without searching them. At around 9.25, the American radio reporter and her crew arrived to my office. One of her aims was to see how much the INLA progressed during the last two years and how we managed to work under unfavorable security conditions. After the interview, Ms. L and her crew toured the INLA's departments, interviewing some of my staff. After one hour and three minutes, they left through the front gate, after our guards made sure that the temporary road was safe and open.

Thursday, 15 March

It was a very chaotic day. US tanks closed part of al-Mustanseriyah road, which is one of the busiest roads in Baghdad. My driver carried out a long maneuver to get me to my

office at 8.20.

I had a meeting with the staff of the English Archival collections, the Arabic Archival collections and the Catalogue Cards. All these sections are parts of the Archive's Catalogue and Classification Department. Three female archivists work in the Catalogue Cards Section, whose main task is to check all completed files and records, before making catalogue cards, which will be used by our readers. They also send the completed files and records to the Micrographic Laboratory. The latter copies them onto microfiche and film rolls. I asked the staff to priorities their tasks by dispatching the historically important files and records to the Micrographic Laboratory, and returning the insignificant ones to their original storage. Seven young women work in the English Archival Collections Section. Two of them have been on leave. Five of them have BA in English language, while the other two have BA in combined Spanish-English languages. I employed all the seven in the INLA in order to work in the newly formed Section of the English Archival Collections. I need to employ at least three more people to work in the section, as our English collections are huge. I have divided the people who work in the INLA's Arabic Archival Collections into two teams. The first team includes eleven people, who are all women. Only two of them their age is above thirty years. Only three of them are librarians. We discussed ways to improve and speed up the process of registering, classifying and cataloguing Arabic files and records. It is true that old habits die hard, when I found out that the head of the Archive's Catalogue and Classification Department dose not pass her and knowledge and experiences to her own young staff, contrary to my instructions. I have warned her that she had to change her attitudes, otherwise she would be released from her responsibilities and would not be promoted. I blamed her for not holding regular departmental meetings with her own staff. I gave ten days to change work conditions radically. My assistant wrote down all the points and comments made during my meeting. I always use his notes for future reference.

I left my office at 12.00, heading to the Directorate of Kurdish Culture, where I should serve as the acting director. I visited two departments, before meeting the heads of the Administration and Financial Departments. We discussed their works and problems, which were not much different from ours. I put my signature to some official papers. After I finished all the paper work, I was not able to leave the building because of very heavy exchange of fires just across the road. The National Guards and the Police closed the nearby roads. Drivers and their passengers quickly left their cars, and hid themselves in some alleys. Everything went back to normality 15 minutes later. I left the building, heading to my home. The exchange of fires and the temporary closure of some roads caused heavy traffic. Before leaving, I told staff of the Directorate of Kurdish Culture that I would visit them on Monday, and that they could ask me to come, whenever they would need me. In the afternoon, I went to the Faily Kurdish Club, where I work as a unpaid member of its general board. I met some friends and went home right away.

Friday, 16 March

I stayed home, spending my time in either writing or reading.

Saturday, 17 March

I learnt that the snipers returned to al-Fadhel area, and that they began to attack innocent people. US helicopters opened fire on the snipers.

Sunday, 18 March

The traffic was unbearable. Most roads were closed. The situation was instable in al-Fadhel, as people and cars avoided the area. Al-Fadhel was shelled by mortar, I think, in retaliation for the returning of the snipers to that area.

I was informed as soon as I arrived that the son of one of the librarians was kidnapped by unknown group. Armed men murdered two people in al-Shurjah. The INLA had electricity for just two hours and 15 minutes.

I received a letter from the Ministry of Electricity stating that it was sorry for not being able to provide the INLA with 6 hours electricity per-day, i.e. 8.30-14.30. The Ministry of Electricity made up a unconvincing justification, that the INLA shares its electricity with some residential areas! I was not surprised by the letter or by the lies it contained.

I instructed the administration to take all the necessary measures to hold new an internal election. It would enable librarians and archivists to select three people who will represent them in the INLA's Managerial Council, whose members consists of the heads of all departments. The age of candidates must be under 30 and two of them must be female. The election consists of two stages. In the first stage, every ten librarians and archivists elect one representative, who will go to the second stage. In the second stage, the elected people in the first stage will elect in their turn three people for the Managerial Council. The latter is responsible for all important decision-making and implementation, including planning and budget. So far, five elections have been held since 2004. In 2006, we were not able to hold any election because of the security situation. This election is a little different from past elections. In the past, the librarians and archivists elected their representatives directly. In other words, librarians and archivists voted according to the system of direct democracy. As the number of the INLA grew, it became difficult to implement direct democracy. Therefore, I resorted to indirect democracy, whereby librarians and archivists can select their three representatives through two stages.

A bomb exploded near al-Mustanseriyah University.

At last some good news were on TV - the man who masterminded car bomb attacks in Baghdad was arrested in our district. He was a young Palestinian and one of the most influential leaders of al-Qa'ada.

Monday, 19 March

The snipers attacked a number of civilians from their positions in al-Fadhel. The INLA had electricity for only 40 minutes. Power-cuts began to effect our work, especially in the Computer and Micrographic Departments. I raised the issue of repairing the Generator with the engineer of the Ministry of Culture. She told me that she was doing her best to have it repaired, but some people in the Ministry were hindering the paperwork for unknown reason. Corruption and restricted regulations have prevented me from repairing the generator since mid-2006.

Around 10.50, I supervised the first phase of the election for the Managerial Council, in which 26 librarians and archivists participated. They elected three young women for the second stage.

I was surprised to receive an appreciation letter from the Minister of Culture for proving my patriotism during Al-Mutanabi gathering last week!!

I received unconfirmed information from Mrs. Ni., the head of the Catalogue Department of the Library, that yesterday the US Army arrested Mr. J., who was one of her librarians. No one knew the true reason or the circumstances. I decided to wait until Tuesday, hoping that I would receive more detailed information concerning the arrest of the librarian. During the last few weeks, several members of the INLA's staff had their homes searched by the US army and the National Guards, especially those who live in the so-called 'hot areas' of Baghdad, such as al-A'dhamiyah, al-Ghazaliyah and al-Jame'ah.

Around 12.20, because of a bomb explosion a number of people were either killed or injured inside a well-known Mosque in al-Shurjah. Some people thought it was suicide attack while others thought it was a bomb planted in one of the Mosque corners.

Tuesday, 20 March

We had no electricity at all. Several departments were unable to work, such as the Micrographic Laboratory, Restoration Laboratory and the Computer Department. I sent one of my staff to the local electricity distribution station. He was told that the reason for the power-cut was that the main cable was severed for unknown reasons and the repairmen would restore the power in a few days. Last year, because of a similar incident, the INLA did not have electricity for more than 4 weeks. The repairmen will not work unless they get an order from their engineers; the engineers will not issue order until they receive in advance some payment; the repairmen will not execute the orders properly until they get their share from the payment. It is a vicious circle. The same fact applies to all other public services, such as telephone and water. Corruption has been the main problem since the early 1990's. It has now become far more dangerous than terrorism.

As Wednesday is the Kurdish New Year and a public holiday, the staff received their monthly salaries on Tuesday.

Around 10.30, I supervised the second phase of the election for the Managerial Council, in which 19 librarians and archivists participated. Two people were elected for the next stage, a young woman and a young man. I had a brief meeting with the staff of the Computer Department to discuss some issues, including the new salary system, which will be applied next month. The new system will raise the salary of all those people whose grades are between 4 and 10 by 60 to 45 percent.

Mr. Q gave more information concerning the arrested librarian. He informed me that a group of armed men wearing the National Guards' uniform went to Mr. J.'s house at 20.00. After they checked his ID card, they ordered him to go with them. He was allowed to change his clothing. Now, Mr. J.'s family is worried. His wife and brother are not sure that the armed men were National Guards. One has no choice but to wait. Usually, members of organized crimes contact the family of the victim after a few days, asking for a big ransom, whereas the religious extremists will sometimes ring the family of the victim, informing it about his fate. I decided to wait until next Sunday, before I send an official letter to the Ministry of Defense to ask about the fate of my librarian.

As I strongly believe that the main ethnic groups, the Arabs and the Kurds, must share each other's national celebrations, I decided to give all my staff one day off on next Thursday. In this manner they will have four days break (i.e. from Wednesday to Saturday). Needless to say, everybody was over the moon by my decision and I became the most loved director, at least for a few minutes!

Before leaving the INLA to go to the Directorate of Kurdish Culture, three representatives

of INLA's *al-Ferdos* woman society gave me a nice present on the occasion of the Kurdish New Year. I thanked them very much for their nice gesture.

I spent one hour in the Directorate of Kurdish Culture, signing papers and reading the mails, before leaving to go to my home.

In the evening, I spent some time, answering a number of messages which I received from some of my staff and friends, congratulating me on the Kurdish New Year.

Diary for the Period 21-31 March

Wednesday, 21 March

I was not in the mood to celebrate the Kurdish new-year, Nawrooz (NewDay). Since I was a child I have celebrated with my brother and sisters the Kurdish new-year. The celebration was a symbol of defiance to the former dictatorial regimes. After the downfall of the Saddam Regime, Kurdish New Year has become a national public holiday to be celebrated by all Iraqis, regardless of their ethnic and religious background. I decided to rest at home, as I had not been well since Sunday, when I had a lot of pain in my throat. The pain spread now to my left ear.

At exactly 13.00, a big bomb explosion shook my flat violently. It opened the door and the windows. I ran to the roof to see where the bomb exploded. I thought it was very close to my friend's house. Therefore, I rang quickly. He told me that the centre of the explosion was near the Ministry of Finance, which was only 150 meters from his own house. His family was fine, but all houses' windows were smashed.

Thursday, 22 March

On my way to the Iraq National Library & Archives (INLA), I saw the devastating impact of Wednesday's car bomb explosion. One of the High-Way's sub-routes was extensively damaged and collapsed. The lower half of the Ministry of Finance's huge building was also damaged. Most of its façade collapsed and all the windows were smashed.

There were only our guards and staff of the company were in the INLA's building.

I stayed in my office for a few hours, reading the mails. The staff of the Directorate of Kurdish Culture sent their papers to my office. I read their mails and signed some papers. I asked my driver and the guard to come to my flat between 7.45 and 8.00 to take me to the office of the BBC Radio-World Service, where I will be interviewed about the Iraqi culture.

At 16.00 I was interviewed for 30 minutes by a presenter from the BBC to talk about the INLA and cultural issues.

Friday, 23 March

As planned, my driver and the guard came to my flat at 7.50. We left the flat at 8.30, heading to the BBC Radio's office at the heart of Baghdad. There was a few cars on the roads. I asked my driver and the guard to go home, immediately after I got off near the

BBC's office. I always ask the driver and the guard to leave immediately any sensitive area, where I will get off, and never wait for me.

There was an Iraq man working for the BBC waiting for me. Thirty minutes later, I was on the air, answering a series of questions about the looting of the Iraqi Museum and the INLA, how much of the looted items were recovered and the importance of the collections of these institutions for Iraq as a country. The BBC's people were warm and hospitable.

Saturday, 24 March

A group of armed men ambushed a military convoy in al-Jamhuriyah Street on Friday noon. The incident signaled the return of the armed men to al-Fadhel and aggravated the security situation in the areas surrounding the INLA. The National Guards attacked the position of the armed men in al-Fadhel area, destroying, in the meantime, a long Wall (2 meter-high and 400 meter-long) that separated al-Jemhoriyah Street from al-Fadhel area. According to a report sent by the head of the INLA's guards, the fighting was near the INLA and our guards were in a state of alert for a few hours.

Saturday witnessed the resumption of the fighting between the National Guards and the armed men at 10.00. This time the US forces took part in the fighting that lasted for more than two hours. At 16.00, the fighting restarted and lasted until mid-night. Our guards were deployed within the INLA's premises. I always warn our guards against taking part in any fighting.

Sunday, 25 March

The traffic was heavy. It took us a long time to arrive to the INLA. The internet was not working. I sent after Mr. Q concerning the issue of the arrested librarian. The story of his arrest has changed for the third time. The family of the arrested librarian thinks now that he has been held by the Ministry of Interior. I set up a special committee, consisting of five members under my direct supervision. The Committee's sole task is to select 60 people from the staff of the dissolved Ministry of Information. I will go through the selected names to see if we need their services in light of their qualifications and experiences.

I held a meeting with the Department of Maintenance and Service, which had more 20 electricians, carpenters, gardeners, plumbers and mechanics. We talked about several issues, especially the on going renovation and interior decoration of the INLA's building. As the INLA has a small annual budget, I decided to form a new department for maintenance in 2005 by employing some experienced technicians in several fields. I have been providing the staff of the new Department with the basic tools. They executed several important projects, such as providing fresh and sterilized water, restoring national electricity, bring ing back telephone lines, repairing smashed windows, fixing the air-conditioning system, and cleaning and planting the gardens. In this manner, we have been able to save tens of millions of Dinars.

Several bullets hit the rear façade of the building. One bullet made two holes: one in the exterior window and the second in the interior window of the English collections room.

Miss, S, our point of contact with the Ministry of Culture, was weeping when she entered my office. The flat that she shares with her sister's family was damaged extensively in Saturday's car bomb attack, which killed 30 people, mostly police officers. Her nephew and niece were slightly injured. The staff decided to collect some money to help her.

At 9.30, sporadic heavy exchanges of fire in and around al-Fadhel area. I asked the guards to be vigilant and to prevent the staff from leaving the building. I asked the staff to stay away from the windows.

The third phase of elections took place.

Five librarians were elected to the INLA's Council of the representatives. At around 11.40, I met the Associated Press's reporter and photographer in my office. The interview lasted one hour and thirty minutes. The photographer took some pictures while touring some of the INLA's departments. Some sporadic heavy exchanges of fire interrupted the interview. At 13.10, both the reporter and the photographer left the building amid heavy exchanges of fire in al-Fadhel area. Most roads were closed. The only open road was jammed, as expected. Before leaving, the reporter said that he would send a cameraman to film the INLA building and departments. I arrived to my flat very exhausted. I got a report from the head of our guards, mentioning that the fighting broke out again in al-Fadhel area at 16.00. This was followed by sporadic exchanges of fire.

Monday, 26 March

The internet was not working. One of the Department of Computer's staff contacted the engineer, who promised to fix the problem on Wednesday. I inspected the library's new reading room, which has been renovated since January. Almost 80% of the work has been completed. I am happy with the renovation work that has been done so far. I hope that I can open the new reading room in mid or late April. At 10.30, I had a meeting with the staff of the National Archive, including the departments of Restoration, Documentary Library, Reading Room. To discuss and implement a new plan for the process of selecting, declassifying and filming the documents and records.

At 11.00, the fourth phase of elections took place, in which the staff of the departments of Inspection, Restoration, Exchange and Administration participated. It resulted in the election of six people for the INLA's Council of Representatives. I was asked by the Ministry of Culture to nominate five of my female staff so that they would be awarded in a special meeting that would be held in the Milia-Mansur Hotel on Thursday. It was extremely difficult for me to select the five women, as I have a lot of very hard working female librarians and archivists. At the end, I nominated five women, including four outstanding members of al-Ferdus Society. I went to the Acquisition Department, where I met its head, Miss. Ha. She and the Mrs Ja. and Da. are entrusted with the task of purchasing new publications for the INLA. As usual, I checked all the new purchased publications, making some observations.

The fighting broke out again and soon spread to Bab al-Mudham, just as the INLA's staff left the building. The roundabout and the streets were being shelled by mortars, while armed men open fires on the pedestrians. The entire INLA's staff caught in the crossfire. One of my librarians, who is partially disabled, lost his balance and fell on his head on the pavement. He was bleeding, unable to stand on his feet. As the fighting abated, some people came to his rescue. In the afternoon, a number of civilians were killed, as a result of suicide attack in al- Rosafi Roundabout, which is 50 meters away from al-Mutanabi Street.

I got another report from the head of INLA's guards. It said that the fighting broke out again in al-Fadhel area at 16.30 and lasted 18.30. The security situation was unstable until midnight.

Tuesday, 27 March

Sporadic exchanges of fire in al-Jamhoriyah Street and al-Fadhel area began at 8.30.

The Associated Press's camera crew began to film life inside the INLA as soon as they arrived. I was not able to attend a special gathering organized by the Ministry of Culture in the National Theatre in memory of al- Mutanabi's victims, as I was belatedly informed about it. Our Ministry is extremely disorganized. The Ministry's public relations are in a state of chaos. Its activities clearly lack coordination, and creativity. It is always passive in its reactions to important events, such as the tragedy of al-Mutanabi Street. Intellectuals and

the educated class in general criticize the Ministry publicly and daily. The Ministry "*lives in a valley and culture and intellectuals live in another valley*".

At 9.30, another phase of the elections took place. Four archivists (3 female and one male) were elected for the Council of Representatives by their colleagues. I was informed by my secretary that on Monday morning Miss. Kh was kidnapped near the town of Shahraban (al-Muqdadiah). Shahraban is one of the hottest areas within the dangerous province of al-Diyalah. Luckily, she was released on the same day. We got the information directly from her niece. Miss. Kh is the INLA's oldest librarian. She is almost 63 years old, and has BA in library Science. She will retire in July 2007. She lives alone in her flat in al-Waziriyah (just 1 km away from the INLA). Her sister died last year.

The Associated Press's reporter arrived later. We talked for 35 minutes before he and his camera crew left the building. At 11.30, the exchange of fire intensified, as US helicopters began to fly over our area. Thirty minutes later, US Jet fighters joined in, making a lot of noise. Our staff did not pay attention to what was going on in al- Jamhoriyah and al-Fadhel, as they got used to it. My mother-in-Law called me to see if I was OK. She was worried about me even though her house is just 600 meters away from the centre of the fighting.

The helicopters and the fighters were flying low, when the INLA's staff left the building, heading home. Some friends contacted me concerning my interview with the American TV Station, PBS. I do not usually inform the Ministry of Culture of my interviews. Some Ministers force their directors not to talk to journalists, especially foreign journalists. Some others demand their directors to get special permissions from them, before talking to the media. One of my colleagues, who left Iraq permanently a few months ago, after being threatened and given hard time by his superior, informed me that he had to ask his Minister for a permission before he could talk to the media, and that the Minister used to send one of his own men to director's office to monitor him when talking to journalists. The head of our guards sent me his report, mentioning that the fighting broke out again in the areas surrounding the INLA's building. The fighting between the National Guards and the armed groups lasted until 23.00. It was followed by sporadic exchanges of fire.

Wednesday, 28 March

On my way to the office, I picked up the internet engineer. She worked for about three hours and thirty minutes to repair the internet system. At the end, she failed to restore the internet service, but she promised to come back on Sunday to try and fix it. The situation was intense, security speaking. There were sporadic exchanges of fire just across the road. I was surprised to learn that Miss Kh showed up to work. At once, I decided to see

her in her office just to make sure if she was fine. She told me the whole kidnapping story. She was kidnapped along with 3 men, including the driver, and 6 women. The kidnappers searched and then looted the passengers, men and women. Miss. KH said that 950.000 Dinars (US\$650) was taken from her handbag. The kidnappers beat up the driver and his male passengers, before releasing the women. They hijacked the car and took the three men with them to the surrounding hills. Miss Kh has always been a very strong lady, liberated and extremely big headed. She prefers to work alone in her tiny office. She talks only to a number of people, especially old librarians and archivists, she has worked with them for long years. Every time we see each other, we start the conversation with the same words and in the same manner. She says: *Mister, do you have a minute* . I reply: *good morning to you too, KH*. She says: *sorry I forgot to greet you !* I reply: *it does not matter, as long as you are not angry*. Then, she will complain about her deteriorating health in general and her failing eyesight, in particular. She receives medical treatment regularly. However, she never says that her conditions have improved! She ends the conversation with the same old question: *why do not you leave and return to Europe ?* I give her the same answer: *how can I abandon nice people like you?*

I held meeting with the new head of the Public Relations. We discussed several issues, including strengthening INLA's relations with important NGO's, such as the Iraqi Writers Union, Iraqi Journalists Union, and increasing our cultural activities. We decided to make some radical changes, such as increasing the staff of the Department. We decided that I would hold a meeting with all the staff of the Department some time next week, with the aim of redefining their tasks and roles. I sent a collection of rare books and the latest books, which I have been keeping in my office, to the College of Administration in order to be displayed at its Special Book- Exhibition/Fair. I also sent two experienced librarians to represent the INLA in the Exhibition/Fair. Our neighborhood has become a main target for mortar attacks, since the Americans turned a local police station into a military base for them. In early evening, the neighborhood was hit several times. The security situation improved to some extent in al-Jamhoriyah Street and al-Dadhel.

Thursday, 29 March

Usually on Thursdays, the traffic will not be heavy. This Thursday was not an exception. There were sporadic exchanges of fire. US planes were flying low in the area.

The INLA's nominated five women went to the Melia-Mansur Hotel, where the Ministry threw a party for all nominated women from its directorates. The Minister is expected to award the nominated women. Only God knows why the Ministry of Culture celebrated the Woman Day 19 days late!! I was not able to go, as I had prior arrangements. Our five ladies were not happy at all that I was not going with them to the Party. The Associated Press photographer accompanied me during my visit to several departments, including the Restoration, Computer, Cataloguing and Micrographic Departments.

A new issue of the INLA's monthly publication *Rawafid Thaqafiyah* was printed. It will be sent to different cultural and educational institutions. The members of the Special Committee submitted their report to me. I carefully read the report. I decided to accept all the 58 people whom the Committee selected to work in the INLA.

I learnt after I returned home that the neighborhood was shelled by mortars. As a result, one of the Ministry of Culture's mini-buses was hit directly. Its driver and the passengers were sent to the nearest hospital.

Friday, 30 March

I was alone in the flat, as my wife took our son with her to visit her parents. I spent most of the day writing and reading. My secretary rang me at 9.30, informing me that her son was arrested by a US army unit based in al- Karradah. Her son was arrested with some of his close friends on Thursday night. Fifty minutes later, she called me to say that her son and his friends were all released without a charge. My sister called me from Sweden. She wanted to make sure that everybody was OK.

At 20.00, a friend of mine rang me, saying that Ib., who is one of my closest friends, disappeared without a sign. He left his sister's house at 11.00, and did not come back. My other friends and I tried to call him on his two cell phones. The first phone was switched off, whereas the second one was not. but no one answered our calls on the second cell phone. At 20.45, I found out that the second cell phone was switched off.

Saturday, 31 March

From 8.00, one of my friends and I began to search for our missing friend. We went from one area to another and from one police station to another, until we found him. We were quiet relief to see him alive, although he was arrested by the police. Clearly, it was a question of a mistaken identity. I was extremely exhausted when going home, and I slept quite early.

April 2007

Diary for the Period 1-10 April 2007

Sunday, 1 April

We had no internet. The electricity returned at 9.00. The security situation was not bad, although US apache helicopters were flying low above the area. I employed another driver, who lives near my home. This will enable me to move about easily.

On behalf of her Christian colleagues, Miss. S wrote me a note, reminding me of the coming of Easter. Accordingly, I decided to grant the INLA's Christians 5 days off to celebrate that important occasion.

I had a brief meeting with the staff of the Computer Department. We agreed to develop the INLA's web-site, and change the name of the Department to Information Technology. The old name was incorrect; we inherited it

from the previous regime. The staff of the IT Department has already begun to train the INLA's librarians and Archivists on how to use the internet, and simple and more developed computer programmes, such as web- designing. The training programme will continue until the end of this year.

At 10.00, the Minister of Culture rang me, saying that someone in Amman-Jordan was in possession of a collection of INLA's historical documents. He asked to me do something

about them. The documents date back to various historical periods, covering the sensitive issue of Iraq's borders with its neighbors. Iraq had (and still has) border disputes with Iraq, Kuwait, Arabia and Jordan. Professional thieves, who looted the INLA during the chaos of mid-April 2003, smuggled these important documents abroad. I tried in vain to draw the attention of the central government to this issue. But, no one was willing to listen. The Minister said that the professional thief put a price for the collection, which was 50,000 US Dollar. I informed the Minister that I could do nothing about it, as I had neither the required money nor the real power to deal with such issues. I told him that I tried in vain to persuade successive Iraqi cabinets to help with the issues of the looted Iraqi documents. I wanted the archive legislation to be changed and I also asked to be given real political backing and wide powers to deal with urgent issues. The Minister was surprised by my answer. I told him that I was not personally surprised by the whole issue, and that he should be surprised by the indifferent attitudes of Iraqi government, of which he was a member. But, I told him that I would not stop my efforts to make the government listen to me by one way or another.

I met some of the INLA's women who were honored by the Ministry of Culture last week. They told me that the Minister of Culture praised the role of Iraqi woman in society at the beginning of his speech, then he began to blame her for the outbreak of several historical wars!! They told me that everybody was unpleasantly surprised and even shocked by the Minister's speech. All the women who participated in the event did not hide their resentment. Personally, I was not surprised. Nowadays, we have female members of parliament who vehemently oppose the idea of equality between men and women.

Monday, 2 April

The internet service was not restored. I had a long meeting with the staff of the Baghdad Project. We exchange our views concerning some urgent issues, such as finding a permanent fully furnished room for its staff, publishing three bibliographic volumes of the project this year, if that is possible technically and financially, and increasing the staff of the project. I informed them the construction Company did not fulfill its promise to complete at the end of last month the renovation of the large room, which they will share with the Periodical Department. The allocation of an appropriate place for the staff of the Project is a matter of time. But I need to find some money to provide it with the necessary furniture. The staff raised an important issue of their annual rise in their salary, which the Ministry of Culture has refused to grant them since 2005. I promised to look into the matter and do what I can. The supervisor of the project, Mr. Sa, informed me that his colleague, Mr. X, had found his kidnapped son, who received an extensive medical care in a hospital. The kidnapped son was tortured and shot in the leg. The leg is seriously damaged and might be severed.

I received a security report from the head of the INLA's guards, in which he mentioned that armed men assassinated a technician working at the local telephone office of Bab al-Mudham, which is just down the road. This means that the internet system would not be restored this week at least, as the engineers would not dare to go to that office, where they could fix the problem. A car bomb attack took place in the Bab al-Mudhem roundabout at 15.00. It was followed by sporadic exchanges of fire.

Between 8.30 and 10.00, US helicopters were flying very low above our building. US Jet fighters soon joined them.

Tuesday, 3 April

The Minister's secretary rang my office. He informed me that the Minister wanted to know my views on the issue of cultural cooperation between Iraq and the US insofar as the INLA was concerned. I told him that he would receive a letter from me in which I would explain our views and priorities.

I held a joint meeting with the staff of the two departments of Bibliography and Acquisition. Seven people work in the Bibliography Department. Only two of them have BA in library science. The head of the Department Miss. N has 20 years of experience. Six people work in the Acquisition Department. Only the head of the

department, Miss. H. has a BA in library science. She has 25 years of experience. At the meeting we discussed a number of issues, including the need to employ more library science graduates, purchasing new publications, holding a special preliminary course in library science for the staff of the Baghdad Project and the publication of new annual national and theses bibliographies. The head of the Acquisition Department complained about last year's small budget for the purchase of new publications. I informed her that this year the budget for purchasing new publications is much less than last year. It is less 7.000 US dollars!! This means that we cannot buy more than 700 books.

I explained some of the difficulties that I face when trying to employ young graduates. The current Minister of Culture refused to give me the permission to employ a number of young people; some of them have BA in library science. The current Minister has restricted the little powers my colleagues and I used to have. When I demanded the Minister to give his general directors much more administrative and financial powers to run their institutions according to their plans and priorities, no one of my colleagues backed me. Then I asked the Minister to grant me the powers I demanded. He said that he could not grant such powers because it would have negative effect on other directors! One cannot imagine that the director of National Library and archive cannot spend more than 70 US dollars if he wants to reward his staff when rendering important services. He cannot purchase publications, furniture or equipment if the price exceeds 1.500 US dollars. He has to get the Ministerial approval. It takes a long time to get such a approval, because of some dreadful bureaucratic procedures and most importantly widespread corruption. The Ministry of Culture did not give me any role to play in the two projects that I have presented last year, (i.e. constructing a 3-storey building for the archival collections and a 3-storey building for the Library of Pioneers). The two projects already received the approval of the Ministry of Planning, and the necessary funds from Ministry of Finance. If the funds are not spent in 2007, the INLA will lose them for ever! Minister's advisers have cancelled three agreements made with some local construction companies concerning the two projects. I have no right to say why they cancelled the agreement or to question their decisions. It is extremely vital that the INLA becomes independent of the Ministry of Culture. Although I know that this goal cannot be achieved easily, and that I could be a scapegoat at the end, I have no choice but to press for the separation of the INLA from the Ministry of Culture.

In the evening, our guards found a body of unknown person in the temporary road near the INLA's front gate. Soon after the Police and ambulances arrived and took the body to the morgue. The latter located in the Medical City (300 meters away from the INLA). If the relatives do not show up to claim the body, it would be buried hastily in a public cemetery by some local municipality. Daily, a number of bodies of known people are buried in this shocking way. The dead person was someone; he could be a brother, son, father or husband of *someone*; a human being without a face or a name. It is extremely sad to die

as a total stranger in your own town and among your own people, or to be considered as just a number to be added to those who already died. Death in such a manner turns a human into a *thing*.

Wednesday, 4 April

The traffic was heavy. It took us some time to arrive to the INLA. The security situation was good, although US helicopters were sporadically flying low above the INLA's building I sent the letter to Minister in which I asked him to raise the issue of those Iraqi documents and records, which the Coalition Forces seized during the 2003 War. The Minister's secretary rang me asking for more information and the level of cooperation. I told him that the INLA signed an important cooperation protocol with the Library of Congress, which hopefully would be followed by a bilateral agreement.

The Council of Heads of Departments held its regular meeting. One person was absent due to the fact that the National Guards and the US army blockaded the area where she live. In the meeting we covered several subjects. I talked in details about the reorganization of the INLA's structure by establishing a second council for the representatives of all the INLA's librarians. In this manner, the INLA will be administrated by two councils, both of which will be responsible for decision-making. The structural changes require new legislations for the INLA. I have introduced some structural changes without waiting for the INLA to be changed by our idle parliamentarians. My plan is to make the politicians accept the changes as de facto. I also reemphasized the fact that both councils have the right to ask the director general to resign, if he or she was unable to carry out his duties. The staff of each department can replace its head in consultation with the director general and the two councils.

I also talked briefly about the recent reorganization of the Administration and Public Relations Departments,

which was a necessary step to invigorate them. The head of the Periodical Department informed the Council of the security difficulties that her staff face daily in collecting newspapers and journals or acquiring the missing issues of each newspaper or journal. The head of the archival storage asked to reorganize the collections and to train his staff. We agreed to hold a joint meeting among the three interconnected departments (i.e. Classification and Catalog, Micrographic and Storage) to introduce some changes. The Head of the Administration Department put forward a number of good suggestions, which were accepted by his colleagues. Towards the end of the meeting, Mr. Sa. the new head of the Public Relations Department, informed the council that the son of Mr. X, had died in hospital three days ago. The doctors were unable to save his life, as his wounds were extremely bad. I could see in Sa's eyes, when reporting the death of his colleague's son, his pain caused by the death of his own son, who was killed by a car bomb a few weeks ago. We all were very sad and silent. But, all agreed with me that the best practical response to death and terror was to continue our daily work and improve our cultural services.

I left the INLA at 12.10. I needed to go to the nearest internet café to see my e-mails. I usually do not like to go to internet cafes for security reasons. But, sometimes I have no choice but to use them, especially when the INLA's internet system is not working. The internet café that I prefer to use, was 200 meters away from my home. As I was reading my e-mails, huge explosions shook the areas. I went outside in a hurry, and I saw a big thick smoke rising very quickly. I hastily rang my new driver to see if he was fine, as the

explosion was near his house. He told me that prior to the car bomb attack near house, the US military base was shelled by mortars. No one knew the number of casualties. My wife rang me to see if I was ok.

Thursday, 5 April

Two explosions occurred in our neighborhood in the early morning. They were a result of mortar attack against the US military base.

At 10.00, I had a meeting with the staff of the Archive inspection team. We discussed a number of urgent issues, such as: the difficulties that the INLA's inspectors face when applying the 1983 archive legislation; the security situation and its negative effects on the activities of the INLA's inspectors, when visiting the archives of various government departments in Baghdad and in the provinces; INLA's inability to get hold of the archives of the former regime's civilian and security institutions; the pressing need to train the inspectors, especially the new ones, on how to do their tasks; the need to increase the number of inspectors; the need to change the existing archive legislations; and the necessity of educating civil servants insofar as the archive legislation, the importance of documents and records.

I asked the team to provide me with the names of all ministries that refuse to cooperate with the INLA, and the ones that facilitate our task in applying the archive legislations. I found out that since late 2006, new ministries have begun to facilitate the task of INLA's inspection team. This encouraging development came about after I asked the Council of Ministers to force all government departments to cooperate with the INLA. Having said that, there is still a few ministries, which have not contacted us yet for one reason or another. The INLA's inspectors discovered during their frequent visits that most of the new civil servants they came across were ignorant insofar as the necessity of applying archive legislations and the importance of organizing their documents and records. We have been facing an extremely huge task insofar as the issue of modernizing the structure and the roles of the National Archive, recovering the INLA's looted collections of documents, records, maps, rare books and photos, forcing government and non-government institutions to respect current archive legislations, and last but not least, changing archive legislations fundamentally. There is no awareness whatsoever even among the political class about the importance of archives to the political and legal systems, and most importantly to the current political process. Since late 2003, I have been trying very hard to raise, what can be termed as "archival awareness" among the politicians, the journalists and the ordinary people through the mass media and direct contact.

During the meeting, I shed light on the fact that I was unable to send the INLA's inspectors to the provinces for security and financial reasons. Concerning the issue of increasing the skills and experiences of the INLA's archivists, I informed the inspectors on how the UNESCO's bureaucrats wasted the necessary fund that we desperately needed to hold a training course abroad in cooperation with two outstanding British experts, who were willing to teach and guide our archivists. Retraining and re-qualifying our archivists are unquestionably a first priority for the INLA.

I also inform the inspectors briefly of some of my plans, including my contact with the office of the Prime

Minister, in the hope I can get the necessary political backing to speed up the process of introducing new archival legislations and to secure an executive order that would force all government and non-government institutions to work closely with the INLA. I also

mentioned that I was trying to get the Prime Minister's office involved directly in the issue of the fate of the archives of the former regime's repressive institutions. I am also trying to get the members of the Culture Committee inside the Parliament to get involved in my campaign to add one short sentence to the new constitution, which will defiantly make historical documents, records, maps and rare books invaluable parts of Iraq's national cultural heritage. This will provide us with the legal means to protect all types of archival items and most importantly to recover the looted ones.

I left my office at 11.45, heading to the Faily Kurds' Sport Club, where the elections were supposed to be held for the new Administrative Board. I have put my name for the post of Deputy President. Some TV channels and journalists were present to cover the elections. But, everybody was unpleasantly surprised by the sudden decision made by the Minister of Youth and Sport to postpone the elections. He issued his stupid order verbal and his reckless action violated Iraqi laws. We contacted directly the officials of the Ministry of Youth and Sport, protesting against the Minister's ill considered interference. They apologized and promised to facilitate the holding of the elections sometime next week. What one can expect from a minister who is a die-hard fundamentalist!

Friday, 6 April

I spent my most of my time reading, writing and socializing with my friends.

At 11.00, a fellow director invited me to participate in a special meeting to celebrate the life and the works of a well-known Iraqi poet. There would be also a book-fair to mark the occasion. He hoped that the INLA would take part in the fair. I promised to participate if the security situation was not bad in Hilla, the centre of Babylon's Province (one hour and 20 minutes by car).

My wife and I watched a TV report about our area, which is considered to be a centre for commercial activities. The report highlighted that life returned to the area, and that all shops and supermarkets reopened. My wife said to me "I am in no doubt that our neighborhood will be attacked by bombs tomorrow because of this report". I agreed with her.

According to the security report sent by the head of the INLA's guards, the period between 23.30 and 1.00, witnessed sporadic exchanges of fire near the local Bab al-Mudham police station and the Ministry of Public Works and Municipalities.

Saturday, 7 April

I spent my time reading, writing and socializing with my friends. At 10.00, Mr. H, who works in my office, wanted to see me urgently. I agreed to meet him, after he finished his half-term exam in the morning. He is currently a university student, studying English language. Like some of his colleagues, I encouraged him to complete his higher education, promising to grant him the necessary time and breathing space. I met H at 11.50, and found out that he wanted my advice concerning a very personal matter. I was quiet relieved, as I expect the worse these days, e.g. kidnapping or murder of a member of his family.

At 12.20, I entered the local internet café to read my e-mail. Ten minutes later, two successive explosions shook the internet café. Everybody went outside to see what happened. I learnt that two bombs exploded in our area, killing and injuring some innocent shoppers. My wife rang me. She was worried about me. Upon returning home, she told me

"do you remember what I said on Thursday night?". I said yes, off course.

The internet technician rang me concerning the repairing of the INLA's internet system. We agreed that I would pick her up on my way to the INLA at 7.30.

Sunday, 8 April

I picked up the internet technician at 7.40 on my way to my office. She started to work as soon as she arrived to the INLA. At the end she was not able to fix the problem, without the help of the technicians of the local telephone office of Bab al-Mudham, who were all absent! They refused to go to work in protest against the death threat they receive daily. She promised to return with one of her fellow technicians before the end of the week.

I had a long meeting with the staff of the Periodical Department. Seventeen people work in the Department. Only four of them have BA in Library Science and Archives. The collectors of newspapers and journals informed me about some of the difficulties they encounter, when doing their tasks. The Department has two collectors, who go daily to Baghdad's Distribution Centre to bring newspapers and journals to the INLA, where they will be registered, classified and cataloged. The task of the INLA's collectors is not as easy as it looks. The Distribution Centre has been attacked by bombs several times. Its staff regularly receives death threats from armed men, who did not hesitate to murder a number of newspapers and journals' agents. To avoid terrorist attacks, the Distribution Centre, which is run by the Union of Distributors, has been forced to change its location on several occasions. Their first location was in Bab al-Mudhad just down the road. Currently, it located in a public space in the Mustanseriyah district, just opposite the main building of the Mustanseriyah University. Mustanseriyah has been one of the most dangerous districts of Baghdad. Our collectors do not use INLA's cars when going to the Distribution Centre, as this will make them a target for terrorist attacks. Instead, they use their own private cars or sometimes taxis. They mentioned that were lucky to escape death several times last year. Checkpoints and road blockades are another factor, which have made it very difficult for the INLA's collectors to do their daily task.

One of the problems the staff of the Periodical Department encounter is the gaps in their collections of newspapers and journals. The deterioration of the security situation and the laziness of the agents of some newspapers and journals or sometimes their refusal to cooperate with the INLA's collectors have prevented the Department's staff from collecting all the issues. I emphasised that the problem had two aspects. The first aspect was legal. It means that the Department of Legal Deposit must make all publishers and printing companies obey Iraqi legislation concerning the INLA's legal rights to collect and preserve all types of news publications, including newspapers and journals. The second aspect is the INLA's weak relations with a number of newspapers' editors. Our public relations must be improved, and be used to raise public awareness regarding the necessity of sending copies to the INLA from cultural and historical points of view. I suggested that the INLA should hold a public meeting with the editors and the representatives of all newspapers and journals with the aim of raising awareness about the cultural and historical significance of archiving all Iraqi periodicals for all the concerned parties. We need to explain to the new editors and publishers the terms of the current Legal Deposit Law. In the meantime, I suggested that the INLA should form a joint committee, consisting of the heads of the Departments of Periodical, Legal Deposit and Public Relations. The main task of the Committee is to coordinate the efforts of these departments insofar as the question of filling the gaps in the INLA's periodical collections.

It has become apparent that it is vital for us to scan or to film all of the INLA's valuable collections of newspapers and journals, before it is too late. I reminded the attendants about the Digital Library project and how the Library of Congress would provide us with the necessary scanners and training, which would enable us make copies of our collections. The on-going binding and rebinding process, which has been begun since 2005, played a notable part in slowing down the pace of aging of the INLA's periodical collections.

The Head of the Department, Miss. Sa, asked for more financial support so that her staff could do their job adequately, such as having more prepaid phone cards for communicating with journals and newspapers' editors. She also asked to have a direct access to the internet, and that her department should be provided with specific furniture.

The INLA's staff was not sure about coming to work tomorrow. April 9th marks the fall of the Saddam regime. Successive Iraqi government declared April 9th a public holiday, so that people celebrate the end of a long dark chapter of Iraq's history. This year, the Council of Ministers was not sure what to do. Pan-Arab nationalists, Ba'athists, Shi'i hard-liners and Sunni extremists have opposed the idea of making April 9th a public holiday, claiming that it was the City of Baghdad, which fell on that day! Muqtada al-Sadr even asked his supporters to go on demonstration, to demand the immediate end of foreign occupation. The Kurds, liberals, and moderate left want April 9th to remain a public holiday, as it signals the advent of a new era. In Iraqi Kurdistan, the regional government declared April 9th as a public holiday, asking people to celebrate. The Council of Ministers made a mess of the issue, as it wanted to steer a middle course between the two arguments. On the one hand, it said that Monday April 9th was not public holiday, asking civil servants to go to work. On the other hand, it banned the movement of all cars and motor bikes, except those belong to the Ministries of Defense and Interior! We all were confused by the announcements of the Council of Ministers. How can we go to work, if we cannot use private and public transport? Some of my staff, including my secretary asked me what to do about tomorrow. We joked about the government's silly announcements. I said, "do not worry about tomorrow, I

am certain that the government will make sure that you go to work by helicopters or preferably by fighter jets". The state of widespread confusion forced the Council of Ministers to declare in the evening that April 9th would be a public holiday. I am sure that the majority of Iraqis were relieved.

Monday, 9 April

I stayed at home, doing the usual things, i.e. reading and writing.

According to the security report I received from the head of the INLA's guard, at 10.00, a bomb exploded near Bab al-Mudham. Few minutes later, the local Bab al-Mudham police stations was shelled by mortar. It was followed by sporadic exchanges of fires.

Tuesday, 10 April

It was a cloudy and gloomy day. I did not know why I felt depressed.

My mother-in-law rang me at 7.40, while I was on my way to the INLA. She asked me to avoid Bab al- Mydham area, as the fighting broke again between some armed menwho positioned themselves in between the houses in al-Fadhel, and the National Guards, who were controlling al-Jamhoriyah Steet. The fighting slowed down the traffic. When I arrived

to my office, it was a full-scale war. Apache helicopters and later US fighter jets flew over the area. I had an appointment at 10.00 inside the green zone. I took with me one guard, and two archivists who wanted to go to the Ministry of Culture for an interview. The archivists got off near the Ministry, whereas we went directly to an empty space close to the Green Zone. I walked for five minutes, and the sky began to rain. I joined a long queue at the first checkpoint. It took me thirty minutes to enter the Green Zone, after passing through four checkpoints at least. I was soaking wet. Yet, the hot weather dried my clothes very quickly just before I met the people I wanted to see. After one hour, I returned to the place where the driver and the guard were waiting for me. They told me that the fighting was intensified in al-Fadhel area, and that we should not go back to the INLA for security reasons. I disagreed and therefore I asked the driver to take me back straightaway to my office.

On my way, I saw an inflated body on the top of an old car. The body was too big to be contained by the coffin; almost half of the body was outside it. It was a depressing view. Such bodies usually belong to missing or kidnapped people. In most cases, the body of a murdered person will be dumped in an abandoned area or thrown in a river. This will make it difficult to find the body of the kidnapped person.

When I arrived to the INLA, everybody was working as usual; but our guards took their positions around the building. I was given detailed information about the security situation. There were heavy exchanges of fires and some mortar shelling. US helicopters and fighter jets were in the sky. The helicopters opened fire at the positions of the armed men in al-Fadhel. US tanks and armed vehicles took part in the fighting. According to an unconfirmed report, one helicopter was shot down.

I had three visitors waiting for me in my office; two engineers from the Ministry of Culture and the construction contractor, who is in charge of the last phase of the INLA's renovation project. We talked briefly about corruption and rigid bureaucracy inside the Ministry of Culture, and how they have been slowing the pace of renovating process of the INLA. They asked me to talk directly to the Ministry in order to speed up the necessary paper works. I told them flatly that there was no point in contacting the Minister, as his advisers make all the decisions for him. He avoids his responsibilities. I promised to contact the advisers to see what they could do. Deep in my heart, I knew that the advisers would ignore my requests, as they did in the past. After the end of the meeting, the fighting intensified and began to spread to other areas, such the industrial district of al-Sheikh Umar and al-Kasrah district. The former is located to east of al-Fadhel, whereas the latter to north of it. I asked the INLA's staff to evacuate the building at once. By 12.40, everybody left the INLA, except the guards. Only one road was open for us to use, after sudden fighting broke out in al-Kasrah (1 km away from the INLA). The roads were jammed, and hundreds of people, specially university students, were trying to leave Bab al-Mudham as quickly as they could. Police officers and the National Guards could be seen everywhere. It was a chaotic situation. The fighting lasted more than 8 hours. It ended around 16.00.

One hour after I arrived to my home, my mother-in-law popped in. She gave me more details about the current fighting in al-Fadhel and al-Jamhoriyah Street, which began in the early morning.

According to one of the main TV news channels, two National Guards were killed, whereas 15 armed men were

killed and many others were captured. The US helicopter was not shot down, but it was slightly damaged.

Diary for the Period 11-30 April 2007

Wednesday, 11 April

The security situation was still a little tense, and our guards remained vigilant, reporting directly to me every positive or negative development.

We had neither electricity nor internet the whole day. I contacted the Ministry, hoping that its bureaucrats would speed up the process of repairing our generator. I was promised that it would be repaired very soon.

My new driver informed me that last night at 23.30 his house was shelled by mortar. His family was extremely lucky, because the bomb landed in the garden. There were some material losses, as a number of windows and doors were damaged.

After arriving to my office, I wanted to know the well-being of some of the INLA's staff, who live in al-Fadhel, Sheikh-Omar and al-Jamhoriya. Mrs. Md told me that her children were alone in the home during the fighting, as she and her husband were unable to return to their home. They stayed in the INLA until 17.00. After the fighting came to an abrupt end, the National Guards gave the couple the green light to go back to their tiny house. She could not control her tears, when telling me how her children wept of joy, once they saw their parents at the door. There was some bad news; a rocket hit the flat of Mrs. Fa. She is an archivist and lived in Sheikh Omar. She and her family were very lucky to escape death. However, they have become homeless temporarily, as the flat was considerably damaged. She asked for a few days off. Her colleagues in Al-Ferdos Society began to collect some money for her, to help with the repairing of the flat.

I had a meeting with the staff of the Archive Reader Service and the Documentary Library Department. Eight employees work at the Department. It has two 16 mm Readers, two 35 mm Readers and two 16&35 mm Readers. Four brand-new Readers were sent by the Czech government as part of its assistance programme of the INLA. This enabled us to reopen the Archive's main Reading Room. Since the eighties, the Archive's readers have been using microfilm and microfiche copies of our documents, instead of the original. The priority now is to increase the number of the Readers and to bring new Reader-Printers, so that the readers can print out the documents and the records they need. I promised to provide the Documentary Library with a new photocopier and an A4 scanner as soon as I could. The Library also needs a number of cabinets for what remained of the INLA's collections of maps and photos. The INLA lost 98% of maps and photos, and all their cabinets in mid-April 2003.

Besides the need for more and new equipments, we discussed some other issues, notably my Oral History Project. I do believe that the period 1968-2003 cannot be fully understood, without studying it from 'below'. Scholars and the educated class in general have not fully realized the importance of documenting and archiving Oral History for understanding the recent past. I hope that I will be able to have the necessary support to realize my own project to document the thoughts and feelings of all former Iraqi soldiers regardless of their religion and ethnic background. These soldiers can alone tell the true story of the wars they took part in, notably the Kurdish War (1968-1991) the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988), the First Gulf War (1991) and Second Gulf War (2003). I hope I can get hold of photos of these soldiers and copies of the letters they sent to their own families. I hope I will be able to record my interviews and conversation with hundreds of these soldiers, including those who became prisoners of war. No one can comprehend Iraq's tragic history during the rule

of the brutal dictator, Saddam Hussein, more than ordinary soldiers, who just took orders from their superiors.

CNN's camera crew arrived unexpectedly to my office. They asked my permission to do some filming, in the hope that they could document the story of the destruction and rebuilding of the INLA. I told them that they would not be able to achieve their task properly, as there was no electricity in the building. I advised them to contact me first to see if the power returned or not. I said the same thing to the head of the CNN Office in Baghdad.

As soon as I returned home, our neighborhood was hit by several bombs; one of which hit a primary school. It injured a number of children.

At 13.00, I went to the Faily Club, where elections for the new General Board would be held. The Club is a small one. It was first established in the 1950s, when it was founded by some Faily Kurds. As part of their anti-

Kurdish policy, the Baathists and other extreme pan-Arabists closed the Club in February 1963. The Club was re-opened immediately after the fall of the Saddam regime. The most positive aspect of the New Iraq is that many issues can be dealt with through free elections. The elections of sport clubs have been held under the direct supervision of the Ministry of Sport and Youth's representatives. The elections of the Faily Club lasted three hours, at the end of which I won the post of the Deputy-President.

The head of the CNN Office rang me during the elections, wondering if his team could come back to the INLA next day; I informed him that the electricity did not return to the INLA yet, and that I did not know, if the INLA would have electricity tomorrow morning or not.

Thursday, 12 April

It was a chaotic day, as a huge explosion shook Baghdad at 7.15. The most famous bridge in the City, al- Sarrafiyah, was destroyed, as a result of a bomb attack. Some cars fell in the Tigris River, causing the death of some innocent people. The British built the Bridge in the mid-twentieth century. It is just 1 km away from the INLA. It had three different names. People who came from the outlying provinces called it the "Train Bridge" , the Baghdadis called it the " Iron Bridge" , as it was made of a bundle of bars and rails. The local people of the Sarrafiyah named it after their district. Everybody in Baghdad was sad and bewildered by the destruction of the Iron Bridge, as it was a symbol of the City. They could not find a convincing explanation for the targeting of their favourite bridge.

A few hours after the destruction of the Bridge, a suicide bomber attacked the cafeteria of the Iraq Parliament, killing at least eight people, including one Member of Parliament. This was the worst-ever breach of security in the heavily guarded Green Zone, where the Parliament is located. Ordinary people did not pay serious attention to the attack against Parliament, unlike their strong reaction to the attack against the famous Iron Bridge. I told Reuters that "blowing up Baghdad's bridges had been a military strategy to conquer and defend the city since ancient times...(but the last attacks on the Baghdad's bridges have a new motive)... Destroying the Sarafiyah Bridge is an attempt to break Iraq's unity and to polarise our society... It is a message that Baghdad will soon become two Baghdads –one for the Shi'is and one for the Sunnis". The electricity returned at 8.30, but there was still no internet. A number of the INLA's telephone lines were dead too for unknown reasons. I read and signed a heap of official papers. I asked my secretary to ring the Minister's office

to make an appointment for me on Sunday or Monday, i.e. after he returns from his endless foreign trips. I asked the Head of the Administration Department to provide me with a copy of all the issues which the Ministry has not dealt with since 2006, such as the employment of a group of young people, the approaching deadline for the implementation of the Archive Storage and the Library of Pioneers Projects, the removal of unwanted furniture and the repair of the generator.

If we do not begin the two above mentioned projects before June, the INLA will lose the funds. It is widespread corruption and deliberate actions of certain elements within the Ministry of Culture which have been responsible for the delay of the two projects, especially the first one, which was supposed to begin in mid-2006. The Ministry of Finance has made it clear that, if the Ministry of Culture did not use the funds of the two projects in the first half of 2007, it would withdraw them permanently. I am truly worried about the implementation of my two projects, which I view them as essential parts of my efforts to modernize the INLA. I put a lot of time and efforts just to persuade the uninterested bureaucrats of the Ministry to accept the two projects. The INLA's technicians informed me that the last series of bomb explosions in the area broke the glass of several windows in the theatre and in the main building.

The security report of the head of the guards mentioned that some armed group attacked the National Guards' checkpoints near the INLA. Light guns, mortars and rockets were used in the attack. The fighting lasted a few hours.

Friday, 13 April

Three bombs exploded consecutively in our neighborhood at 6.40. I was awake, as I was waiting for the return of power so that I could use the computer. The power lasted one hour, from 7.00 to 8.00. I charged my computer's half-empty battery. I spent my either writing or reading.

Saturday, 14 April

I spent the first half of the day at home, doing some reading and writing.

At 14.30, I went to the internet café. As soon as I began to read my e-mails, a big explosion shook the place. Like other internet users, I went outside to see what happened. The explosion was just down the road. Seven or eight minutes later, and after I returned to the internet café, another bomb exploded in the same place. The National Guards and the Police quickly closed one part of Palestine Street (from the University of al- Mustanseriyah to the Bab al-Mudham Cross-Road).

In the last three years, Iraq in General and Baghdad in particular witnessed different types of wars. We had 'War on Hospitals', 'War on Schools', 'War on Universities' and 'War on Mosques' - the list can go on. These 'Wars' represent different phases of communal violence and the changes in the tactics of terrorist groups and Sunni and Shi'i militias. Now, we have entered a new phase: 'War of Bridges'. Another bridge, al-Chadriyah, was attacked. Attacking bridges represent serious political and social threats to the people of Baghdad. It will accelerate the dismemberment of the city and the division of its people along sectarian lines.

The security situation was bad near the INLA, as there were some sporadic armed clashes between unknown armed men and the National Guards.

Sunday, 15 April

The traffic was extremely heavy. It was a direct result of the latest attacks on the bridges. It was a chaotic day. People are very angry, and seriously worried about further bomb attacks against Baghdad's bridges. Such attacks have slowed down the pace of social and economic activities in Baghdad. People want the government to respond to the new challenge in a much more decisive manner.

I went to the Ministry of Culture to meet the Minister and to speed up the processing of some of our important papers. I talked to the Minister about several important issues, including the two important projects, i.e. the construction of five-storey storage for the National Archive and the Library of Pioneers. I explained to him in detail that the deadline for the implementation of the two projects was approaching and that we would lose the funds forever. Instead of taking direct action, he asked me to write a memorandum on the issue. This means that we will lose a few weeks because of bureaucracy and neglect. I wanted the Minister to interfere decisively in the issue. But he was reluctant to do so. Therefore, I went to the office of the Minister's Adviser, who is his right-hand man. The adviser promised me that he had already taken steps to speed up the process of bidding for the two projects. I told him that I had to have a supervising role in the two projects. He agreed reluctantly. But, I do believe that he would not allow me to play meaningful part in these projects.

Removing the waste and the debris from the INLA and providing transportation service for the INLA's staff were among the issues, which I discussed with the Minister. I needed his approval to remove the debris and to provide my staff with the necessary transport service. As I expected, the Minister did not take direct action, asking me to approach the Legal Department in the hope that it could study the two issues. The atmosphere of the meeting changed suddenly when I talked about the necessity of increasing my administrative and financial powers. The Minister is pro-centralism, and from his actions one can tell that he believes in authoritarian values and methods. Unlike him, I am a strong advocate of decentralization and liberalization of decision making and implementation. He wants people to be led, whereas I want people to take the lead. He was not happy about my contact with the Prime Minister's Office, even though I told him that it was the staff of that office who contacted me. The Minister lost his 'cool' when I asked him to honor his promise regarding the employment of a number of young people, who work in the INLA on a temporary basis. The Minister wanted me to give him all the vacancies, or at least to take the most important ones. I refused his demand, and I said it was unfair of him to interfere in my affairs. The Minister wanted to appoint people according to their political orientations and religious background, while I sought to appoint people according to their qualifications, experience and age. The ensuing argument reflects a typical clash of two systems of thinking; the first is traditional and represents the old Iraq, whereas the second is modern that must represent the new Iraq. I left the Minister unhappy, determined not to bow to pressure. I went straight to the Legal Department, Inspector General's office and the Adviser's office respectively. The results of my reluctant visit to the Ministry of Culture were mixed; on the one hand, the visit soured my relations with the Minister; on the other hand, I made sure that the two projects would begin before the deadline. I left the Ministry at 12.45 and arrived home at 14.00. The traffic was unbelievably heavy. The bridges were jammed. Installing new checkpoints at both sides of every bridge slowed

Monday, 16 April

Mr. W. told me that his father, a university lecturer, wanted to go abroad. The father was worried that some terrorist groups might target him. Mr. W. and his small family still live in his parents' home. He is his parents' only child. The father wants his son to leave Iraq with him. Mr. W. asked me to grant him an unpaid leave for 12 months. I told him that it was not in my power any more to grant him a long time off. The Minister refuses to grant paid and unpaid leave, if they exceed one month. He has restricted the powers of his director generals.

The Council of the Heads of Departments held its regular meeting. Several issues were discussed, including the security situation, the installation of camera system inside and outside the building, the powers that will be given to the Council of Representatives, the INLA's plans to deal with power shortages, the setting up of an internal radio station and the purchase of more furniture and equipment, which a number of departments desperately need.

Tuesday, 17 April

The security situation was not bad in our area. The National Guards and their armed vehicles and tanks could be seen all over the area, including the Bab al-Mudham Roundabout, the Bridge and al-Jamhoriyah Street. The traffic became increasingly heavy.

The broadcaster and the camera crew of the German TV, ARD, arrived to the INLA at nine o'clock. They interviewed a number of the INLA's staff, including me. The questions were revolved around the destruction of the INLA and our efforts to rebuild it. The TV crew toured the building. They left the building around 11.00. At the time, two US helicopters were flying low above our building before they landed in the courtyard of the opposite building.

The Head of the Public Relations and one radio expert came to my office to discuss the internal radio project for the INLA. I asked some questions about the financial cost of the project. At the end, we decided to go ahead with the project, as it will be quite useful for security reasons. The internal radio will enable the INLA's administrators and me to talk directly to the staff in case of emergency (i.e. bomb attacks). It will help us evacuate the building in a controlled and speedy manner. As we discussed the usefulness of the project, I did not know why it brought back to my mind George Orwell's novel, 1984. I told my colleagues jokingly that the Radio could potentially turn me into another Big Brother. Modern history shows that seizing radio stations was one of the first actions that the military establishment would take to impose its dictatorial rule in Third World countries, including Iraq.

The Head of the Personnel Department informed about some of the difficulties that our staff have been facing since the destruction of the Iron Bridge last Thursday. It has become increasingly difficult for a number of our staff to come to work on time. It takes some of them two hours to arrive to the INLA, and two to three hours to return to their homes. I had no magic solution to this protracted problem. The bureaucrats of the Ministry of Culture refused to give their approval of the draft contract with the new transport contractor, saying that it violated the instructions of the General Board of Scrutiny. We told them that the security situation made it impossible for us to stick to one or two of these instructions, such as the specified number of contractors who should submit their offers. The fact that no contractor is willing to wait more than a few days, has complicated the

bidding process. The bureaucrats ordered us to put a third advert for the transport auction in three national newspapers. This means that the INLA's staff will have no transport service for at least two months. The INLA's staff were angry about the attitudes of the Ministry's bureaucrats, when I disclosed the whole the transport story.

My new driver invited me and my wife to his wedding. I gave him 12 days off, beginning on Wednesday.

Wednesday, 18 April

It was by far the worst and the bloodiest day in Baghdad, since the implementation of the New Security Plan.

On my way to the INLA, I saw a big hole in the middle of Bab al-Mudham Road. It seemed that in the early morning, some terrorists placed a quantity of explosives inside one of the Road's manholes. Inserting explosives in roads' manholes has become the terrorists' favorite tactic to attack civilian and military vehicles.

It was apparent that the security situation was tense in and around Bab al-Mudham area. It was the same old

scenario. It began with some sporadic exchanges of fire. Unfortunately, the terrorists have returned once again to al-Fadhel and al-Jamhoriyah. They even attacked the National Guards, killing two of them.

At 12.30, a blast shook the INLA's building. It was al-Fadhel again. The National Guards and police officers closed quickly a number of roads. One road was left open, so that civilians could use. The traffic became heavier, as the time passed by.

It took me some time to reach my home. Immediately after I had my lunch with my wife at 14.30, a huge blast shook the flat and opened its windows and doors. I went to the roof to see what happened. I saw a thick black smoke rising from the direction of al-Qanat Bridge. It was near the house of my new driver; therefore, I rang him to see if he and his family were OK.

Fortunately, the car bomb exploded three hundreds meters away from his house, and no one from his family was hurt.

At 15.00, as I was in my way to the Faily Cub, where I supposed to meet some of my friends, I heard a huge explosion. Some child thought the explosion was a result of a mortar attack. He was shouting and looking towards his friend "This mortar shelling has nice resonance; does not it?" Sadly, this was not the case, as I saw a huge black mushroom in the distance. After arriving to the Club and meeting my friends, I learnt that a car bomb attack caused mayhem in al-Sadriyah area. There were some unconfirmed reports that some chemical substances were used in the attack. This might explains the high number of casualties.

Each one of us began to call his friends and relatives to see be sure they were fine. I called my mother-in-law, as her house is only 200 meters was away from the centre of the blast. She assured me that none of her family was hurt. Unfortunately, one of my friends discovered by phone that her nephew and her brother-in-law lost their lives in the car bomb attack. Later, I learnt that my wife's cousin also lost his life. He was in his late thirties, married with children.

The number of the casualties began to rise very quickly. According to the most

conservative estimate, at least 230 people lost their lives and many more were injured. I am certain that many of the injured people will die soon because of lack of good medical care. The victims were mostly poor people - Kurds and Shi'is. It was very sad day for everybody. I knew some of the victims. A sudden sand storm hit Baghdad immediately after the car- bomb attack, as if the nature was protesting loudly against what happened in Baghdad on that bloody day.

In the evening, my brother, his wife and my nephew (7 years old) talked to us by phone. They were worried about the al-Sadriyah's market attack. I informed them about the death of some people they knew.

I received a new security report from the head of the INLA's guards. According to the report, two rockets exploded just outside the INLA's fence at 18.30. The incident was followed by another blast in the nearby Jamhoriyah Street. At 19.00, the fighting between an armed group and the National Guards began once again in Bab al-Mudham. Soon later, armed men opened their fire extensively at the al-Mudham's local police station. The police officers reacted recklessly by opening their fire randomly in different directions. At least, one police officer was injured in the incident. At 22.30, aided by the US Army, the National Guards began to search the area around the INLA, including al-Muradyiah Mosque (10 meters away from the INLA's theatre). The Mosque is used by Sunni prayers. The INLA was not searched.

Thursday, 19 April

Surprisingly, the traffic was not heavy. It seemed that people were afraid to go outside and preferred to stay at home in the light of yesterday's criminal attacks against innocent civilians. The day witnessed sporadic exchanges of fire in Bab al-Mudhem area. I sent the head of the Department of Inspection, my driver and a guard to some place. They informed me, after returning to my office, that the National Guards fired at my car, because it was in front of their convoy! They were lucky that no one was injured. The most frightening thing in Baghdad nowadays is when some amateurish soldiers begin to fire randomly as soon as they lose their nerve. Many innocent people were killed in such incidents pointlessly.

I had another meeting with the staff of the Personnel Department. The department has been reorganized to reduce bureaucracy; more responsibilities have been delegated to junior administrators; and computers have been used increasingly to speed up daily tasks. One of the staff suggested that the Department should hold a special course for the heads of all departments so that they increase their administrative experience. I thought that the suggestion was a very good one, as many of my senior staff had little experience about administrative

aspects of their tasks and responsibilities.

Since Sunday, three different courses of training have been held on a daily basis to teach junior staff (especially library and archive workers) library science, archiving, restoration, computer applications and programmes. These training courses will continue until the end of the year.

At 16.20, I went to the wedding party of my driver, although I was not in the mood. I felt it was my duty to go to the party, where I congratulated the driver and his father. I left the party two hours later. At home, my brother rang me from London asking me if my wife, my son and I needed something that he could bring with him. My wife asked him to bring

some baby-food, whereas I asked him to bring three specific books.

Friday, 20 April

In the morning, I recalled the events of the passing week. There was no doubt in my own mind that the Sunni Minister of Culture has begun his counter-attack against his critics, including his Shi'i Deputy. He deprived his deputy from all his powers. He has started to appear frequently on national TV. He has also recruited a number of ex-Baathist, Arab nationalists and Sunni journalists, who have launched a propaganda campaign in his favor by praising his cultural role and support of Iraqi intellectuals! Mistrust and hostility characterize the relations between the Ministry of Culture, the intellectuals and cultural organizations. Moreover, each party suffers from fragmentation and lack of direction. They all forget the fact that "actions speak louder than words". The state of fragmentation has weakened secular culture to large extent, while granting fanatic alien values an unprecedented opportunity to fill the cultural vacuum caused by the fall of the former dictatorial regime.

I spent most of the day's hours writing and reading.

In the afternoon and immediately after the end of curfew hours, my friends and I visited the houses of two of al- Sadriyah's victims to offer our condolences. I also visited the scene of the carnage, where more than 30 vehicles were totally destroyed, including 12 minibuses. People failed to find the bodies of most of the victims. I discovered later that two of my relatives were among the dead.

In the evening, I packed my clothes and other stuff in preparation for my tomorrow's trip to Sulaimaniya.

According to the INLA's daily security report, at 20.30, there were some sporadic armed clashes in Bab al- Mudham area. They lasted for 30 minutes.

Saturday, 21 April

At 7.10, my friend, his friend and I went by car to Sulaimaniya. It took us almost six hours to arrive to Sulaimaniya. The main road between Baghdad and Kirkuk was extremely busy. It is the safest route for thousands of small cars, mini-buses and lorries. Tens of police and military checkpoints punctuate the main road. In the middle-of-no-where, we saw some smoking rising from a burnt lorry. It seemed that some terrorists attacked the vehicle few hours earlier. We had our breakfast in Qara-Hanjir, a small Kurdish town, just outside Kirkuk. My brother left Erbil heading to Sulaimaniya at 10.00. We were both of us on the phone talking to each other. He was also accompanied by one of his close friends. I met my brother in a hotel, where I had earlier made a reservation for two rooms. In the evening, one of our friends, who live in Sulaimaniya, invited all of us to a special dinner in my brother's honor.

According to the INLA's security report, at 19.30, armed groups began to attack the National Guards from their positions in al-Fadhel and al-Jamhoriyah. At 23.00, armed men opened fire extensively at the Bab al-Mudham Police Station. Later, Coalition Forces began a search campaign in the Bab al-Mudham area.

Sunday, 22 April

Around 9.40, my secretary, Um Haitham called me. She informed me in a very anxious voice that the INLA was hit by a rocket. The first rocket hit a house close to the INLA. The second rocket hit the INLA's fence, as some of the staff were looking through the windows at the first explosion. Luckily, none of the staff was hurt. The damages were as follows:

- One part of the fence was demolished - More than 100 rear windows were smashed - Some pieces of furniture were destroyed, especially in the restoration laboratory
- The generator was damaged - A number of the ventilations were damaged - Curtains were torn

I asked my staff by phone to evacuate the building immediately and to close the INLA temporarily until the security situation improved. I also directed the technicians to repair the windows as soon as they could and to shut the damaged part of the fence immediately. I was afraid that some opportunist looters could enter the building through the demolished part of the INLA's fence.

I was on the phone for most of the time, talking to a number of my staff. I learnt that the fighting broke out that day in al-Fadhel area, and it intensified gradually.

Monday, 23 April

I was informed that the fighting died out in al-Fadhel area. Therefore, I asked my staff to go to work on Tuesday. I decided to return to Baghdad with my brother, who has not seen Baghdad for more than 22 years.

In the noon, my brother and I visited a newly established research institute in Sulaimaniya. The headquarter of the institution is located on the top of a well-planted high hill, overlooking the City of Sulaimaniya. The institute will be turned into a huge complex, as soon as the construction project will finish. The centre will have its own a satellite TV station, radio, journal, daily newspaper, seminar rooms, archive and library. I met the director, whom I knew for many years. He is very well-known and respected personality throughout Kurdistan. He talked briefly about the institution and its aims. At the end of our conversation, he asked me to leave my job in the dangerous city of Baghdad and work with him immediately in the peaceful city of Sulaimaniya. Although the offer was tempting, I said to him that I would leave Baghdad, only if I was sacked from my job. He asked me to take more time and think about the offer. My brother was closely listening to my conversation with the director. He could not believe his ears when he heard me rejecting the job offer. Afterwards, my brother tried in vain to persuade me to accept the offered job. All I promised was to cooperate closely the director of the institute.

I learnt later that a car-bomb exploded in Beirut Roundabout, near my home. A number of people were either killed or injured, and some structural damage inflicted upon nearby buildings.

Tuesday, 24 April

I hired a taxi, which took my brother and I directly to my home. The last part of the main road became dangerous, as a strong sand storm hit the provinces of Diyala, Salah al-Din and Baghdad. My brother was speechless when he saw the prevailing chaotic conditions as soon as he entered his beloved city, Baghdad. He could not imagine how we could live

under such unthinkable conditions. The reality on the ground made my brother change his views regarding everyday life in Baghdad. He begged me and my wife to leave Baghdad immediately. To reassure him, I told him that I would wait until the end of the year. If the security situation got worse, I would think of leaving Baghdad.

Relatives and close friends contacted my brother by phone. Everybody was happy that my brother was in Baghdad.

In the evening, my wife told me that on Monday, a sniper terrorized our neighborhood. My wife, her mother and my son were walking on the street, when the sniper began to fire at random. People ran for cover, shouting and screaming; my wife and her mother took refuge in a nearby photo shop.

The day also witnessed a similar incident in al-Sadriyah, as another sniper opened fire at by-passers indiscriminately. The sniper took his position in one of al-Fadhel's buildings. According to the INLA's daily security report, there were sporadic exchanges of fire first in Bab al-Mudham at 21.30, and then in al-Jamhoriya and al-Fadhel at 23.30.

Wednesday, 25 April

I had breakfast with my brother at 6.40. During our conversation, he told me that he had not seen a single US soldier, since he entered Iraq on Friday. He spoke too soon, as a few minutes later, more than 30 US Hummers appeared in our neighborhood. US Hummers, two helicopters and many soldiers were supporting the efforts of

the Iraqi National Guards to search all the houses in our neighborhood. There were also more than 40 Iraqi armed vehicles and police cars in the area. Several roads were blocked. I asked my brother to look through the window. He did not believe his eyes, when he saw tens of US Hummers and Iraqi armed vehicles blockading our neighborhood. I left my home to work, as soon as the National Guards began to search the houses. My brother stayed at home with my wife and my sister. The latter came to our home in the early morning to see my brother. She had not seen him since 1984. My wife rang me later, informing me that the National Guards, who were accompanied by US soldiers, searched our flat. The National Guards and US soldiers behaved politely.

I was in my office at 8.00. I read all the security reports for the days 21-24 April. I assessed the damages. I discovered many stray bullets had hit different parts of the building, including some windows. The situation was surprisingly calm in the area. My staff told me that they did not understand the reasons why, every time I leave Baghdad, the INLA would be subjected to direct rocket attack! I began to doubt myself!

The head of the INLA's technicians informed me that the Ministry of Culture expressed its willingness to help us financially to repair all the damages inflicted upon our building.

The Head of the Periodical Department showed me an article in al-Safeer newspaper, dated 22 April, in which the journalist distorted what I said to the Washington Post reporter regarding my anti-sectarian policy. The journalists accused me of asking every reader and visitor to the INLA about his or her religious background and political orientation, before they could enter the building! I directed the Head of the Periodical Department to contact the Chief Editor. The latter will have two choices either to apologize publicly to me through his own newspaper or I will take him to the court. I think some narrow-minded people from the INLA, who do not like my policies, are behind the publication of the article. Ministers encourage the culture of rumors to weaken undesirable directors. Our Minister has made it public that his office is open for anyone who works in the Ministry of Culture and its

directorates. His action will, intentionally or unintentionally, encourage corrupt elements to sabotage any modernization effort. The former Minister adopted a similar policy, which had disastrous consequences on the Ministry. The Minister's statement has been made at a time when many director- generals have found it extremely difficulty to see him, even when it is very urgent!

According to the INLA's daily security report, some armed men clashed with the security forces in Bab al- Mudham area at 15.00. The clashes lasted for 90 minutes. At 20.30, the fighting broke out again between both sides. It lasted for 4 hours.

A friend of mine and my cousin took my brother with them to see some of Baghdad's old neighborhoods, including al-Sadriyah and Bab al-Sheikh, where our family used to live in the seventies. My brother met some of his old friends, whom he had not seen for more than two decades. He visited the famous local market, al- Sadriyah, and al-Ghafeqiyah school, where we both completed our primary education. During his tour of the area, a sniper began to open fire on people from his position in al-Fadhel. Like other people, my brother ran for cover.

Thursday, 26 April

There were some light exchanges of fire. The Head of the Financial Department came to my office, informing that his young cousin had died as a result of bomb explosion. I granted him the rest of the day off.

In the afternoon, a small bomb exploded in al-Sadriyah. My brother did not want to stay in Baghdad, as the security situation was getting worse. It was untypical of him not to question my suggestion to leave to Sulaimaniya next day!

According to the INLA's daily security report, at 20.00, there were some sporadic exchanges of fire in bab al- Mudham and al-Fadhel area. They lasted for 4 hours.

Friday, 27 April

My brother, my cousin and I left Baghdad by car, heading to Sulaimaniya. It was raining all the day long. The rain followed a minor sand storm that hit Baghdad and the provinces of Diyalah and Salah-Din. The journey lasted 5 hours and 30 minutes.

Saturday, 28 April

In Sulaimaniya, we met a number of people. In the morning, I went with my brother and cousin to a publishing Centre. One of my books is being translated into Kurdish. It was first published in Arabic by the same Centre. In the afternoon, I visited an important cultural center, Binkai Zhin. Its director and I agreed to cooperate by exchanging publications and unpublished documents. The director gave me a number of his Centre publications, as a gift. We also agreed that the Centre will re-publish my last book and the draft of my new book. In the evening, I met a representative of the newly established local think-tank institute. We agreed to cooperate in the future.

My cousin and I said my good-bys to my brother, before we returned to our hotel.

Sunday, 29 April

At 7.20, we left Sulaimaniya to Baghdad by car. It was a fine day. The weather was mild. But, the dust appeared as soon as our car approached Baghdad. There were long lines of cars at each check point. It was chaotic as the National Guards have no experience on how to deal with heavy traffics. Our car was stopped several times by Police Officers and the National Guards. Sometimes, we were ordered to show our IDs and sometimes, we were asked about our destination. Police Officers and the National Guards do not hide their anger if they see the drivers or their passengers using cell phones. Anyone who uses a cell phone at the check-point will be told off and his car will be searched.

We arrived to Baghdad at 12.50. Our neighborhood was again in a state of chaos. There were exchanges of fire, the sounds of huge explosions and roads blockades.

In the evening my secretary told me that one of her brothers-in-law's son was killed in al-Kerbala's car bomb attack. Around 240 people were either killed or injured in that barbaric attack, which took place in an open market.

According to the INLA's daily security report, armed clashes took place in Bab al-Mudham near the Ministry of Public Works and Municipality, as soon as the INLA's staff left the building. Fortunately, none of our staff was hurt. In the evening, al-Fadhel witnessed some serious armed clashes, which lasted for more than 5 hours (20.00-1.00).

Monday, 30 April

It was another chaotic day. Around 4.30, several mortar shells landed in Bab al-Mudhem, near the Ministry of Health. US Apache helicopters flew low above the area. My new driver showed up. He just came back from his honeymoon. He was thinner than before. He lost just 5 kilograms. I thought this was a good sign! The Bab al- Mudhem was quiet when I went to my office. The internet was not working. Electricity power came at 8.30. Soon after, I heard some light exchanges of fire. At 10.00, I had a meeting with the member of the INLA's Promotion Committee to discuss the prospect of promoting a number of librarians and archivists. At the end of the meeting, we agreed to promote 12 of our staff in the near future. Luckily, the promotions will not require the approval of the Minister of Culture. But, they will require the approval of the Ministry of Culture.

At 11.15, I met the representative of the Arab League of Historians to discuss the terms of a proposed cooperation agreement between the League and the INLA. I asked him to make some minor modifications before I could sign the agreement. We agreed to meet on next Wednesday.

One of our guards informed me that the National Guards wanted to close the temporary road permanently. I asked the head of our security personnel to talk to the National Guards' commander to see if we could reach an agreement concerning the passage of the INLA's cars. It seems that the National Guards will not mind that the INLA's cars use the temporary road, provided that we show them our IDs.

My personal guard, informed me that his family was looking for a new house. Sunni extremists had given him and his family an ultimatum to leave their house; otherwise they would be murdered.

I was given some good news. The arrested library worker was released the day before. He had been held by the Ministry of Interior for a few weeks. He was mistreated, and unable to come to work. Therefore, I granted him one-month paid leave.

Before I leave my office, one of our guards approached me, saying that there were some rumors about

explosives placed under the Bab al-Mudhem Bridge. The two-storey al-Dorah Bridge was also shelled by mortars. Targeting Baghdad's bridges has paralyzed the Capital. It has extremely restricted the movement of people and cars. Long vehicles were forced by the government to use only two bridges, al-Muthana and al-Dorah. Both bridges are located in very hot areas. This restriction has created another fuel crisis. Long lines of cars can be seen near all the petrol stations. The incompetent officials of the Ministry of Oil have blamed the New Security Plan for the new fuel crisis. In the past, they blamed the Ministry of Electricity for any fuel crisis. People have begun to complain loudly. They have very little or no electricity, fuel and security. They cannot meet their basic needs, as vital commodities have become more expensive than before. People, politicians, civil servants, police officers and national guards cannot hide their growing pessimism.

May 2007

Diary for the Period 1-15 May 2007

Tuesday, 1 May

The INLA was closed on Labor Day. I spent most of time at home, reading and writing. Some Iraqi research centre based in Beirut has republished one of my old books without informing me. Now, its representative in Iraq wants to contact me so that he can send me some copies of the book!

Wednesday, 2 May

We had no electricity, internet or telephone lines. As in the past, I was forced to go to an internet café to read my e-mails.

People have been stunned by the arrest of the commander of the battalion, who was responsible for the security of al-Jamhoriyah, al-Fadhel, al-Shurjah and al-Sadriyah. According to some confirmed information, the commander had been collaborating with the armed men in al-Fadhel for months. He facilitated their movements and facilitated their car bomb attacks. This can only explain why it was extremely easy for the armed men to attack at any time they wanted. The arrest of the commander led to some significant security development. The level of violence and bomb attacks has gone down sharply. The people of al-Fadhel, a Sunni dominated area, made peace with the people of Qanbar Ali, a Shi'i dominated area. The Baghdad Municipality and other state-run organizations have begun to provide basic services to the above mentioned areas. The security of the INLA and its staff has been directly affected by the events that occurred in neighboring areas. I hope this last 'modus vivendi' between local Sunnis and local Shi'is will last for the benefit of both sides. In the past, the peace between both sides did not last more than two or three weeks.

I was appalled when I learnt that the Minister of Culture sent a letter to the Council of Minister, in which he asked the Prime Minister to fund 'his' Qushla project, as means to reconstruct al-Mutanabi Street. The Minister's project is largely based on my project to culturally and institutionally develop al-Mutanabi Street. I sent my project to the former Minister of Culture two years ago. The latter approved of my project; and consequently formed a special committee to implement it. I was member of that committee. The current Minister showed no interest to implement my Qushla project. All of a sudden, he wants to implement it in his name. I sent a protest letter and a copy of my project to the Minister. This is not the first time my ideas and my projects are being hijacked.

In the morning, a group of gangsters stole the monthly salaries of the Ministry of Culture's General Directorate of Music Arts. The incident took place at the heart of the city, soon after the accountants of the Directorate left the Bank in al-Sadoon Street. It is a big scandal for the Ministry of Culture, as it occurred in an extremely busy Street, where there were several military and police check-points. The Presidency has ordered the Ministry of Culture to set up an investigation committee. One of my close friends has been selected to be member of the committee.

I met the Ministry of Culture's main engineer, who has been supervising the INLA's renovation projects since 2005. We discussed several issues including the reconstruction of the destroyed fence, the replacement of the rear gate and the broken windows and the use of barbed wire. The project will cost 50 Million Dinars (about 39.00 US dollars). We agreed that the new fence (100 meters long) would be as high as 230 cm and that 100 cm of barbed wire would be added to the fence. The project will be implemented next week, if the security situation permits.

It was great news to learn that the beddings for the Library of Pioneer's project have begun. The beddings for the Archive Storage will also begin in the near future. It was a combination of pressure and diplomacy that made the bureaucrats at the Ministry of Culture speed up the necessary paper works for the two projects.

The traffic has become lighter than before in the western part of Baghdad (i.e. al-Rusafah). The security problem has been very acute in the eastern part of Baghdad (i.e. al-Karkh). The Tigris River has become the natural boundary that separates the relatively stable areas from the instable areas. Around 5% of the staff were unable to come to work, as the National Guards, the Police and US army blocked several roads in al-Karkh, including al-Jihad, al-Qadesiyah and al-Jame'ah.

The body of a young man was found near my home. He was shot several times. The local people fear the return of the assassins and kidnappers to our neighborhood. Last year, many people in our neighborhood were either kidnapped or murdered.

In the evening, I called my sister to see if she and her family were fine. The security situation has been deteriorating rapidly in her area, al-Jihad, which is one of hottest areas in Baghdad. Shi'i and Sunni extremists waged relentless sectarian campaigns to purge their neighborhood of undesirable elements. The area is regularly shelled by mortars. My sister and her married sons want to move out of the area. They have found it very difficult to rent a house in other safe areas. Their movements are very restricted.

Thursday, 3 May

We had no electricity, internet or telephone lines. The security situation was fine. The number of check-points has been reduced to some extent, and therefore the traffic was not

heavy. In March, 306 people visited the INLA. The number rose to 381 in the following month, even though the security situation was much worse in April than in March! I expect that the number will go up again this month, if the security situation stays calm.

I also called my guard to see if he was OK. He told me that he and his parents moved temporarily to another area, al-Resalah. Their new house is small and has no electricity. They are thinking of moving out as soon as they can.

I was informed that the husband of one of our staff was kidnapped by an unknown group of armed men the night before. The kidnappers were civilians, and did not show their IDs.

The regular meeting of the INLA's Council of Heads of Department was held at 10.15. We talked about a number of issues, including:

1. the security situation in Baghdad in general and in our area in particular, and its negative effects on the staff
 2. the security measure that should be taken as soon as our two main projects (i.e. the Library of Pioneers and the Archive Storage) will be implemented
 3. the reconstruction of the destroyed fence and the replacement of the old rear gate.
 4. the expansion of internal training courses
- I left my office at 13.00 heading to the nearest internet café to see my e-mails.

Friday, 4 May

It was a hot day. We had little electricity. I stayed at home, doing the usual things, i.e. writing and reading.

Saturday, 5 May

It was another hot day. In the morning, I went to the local internet café. I spent the rest of the day at doing the usual things, i.e. writing and reading.

Sunday, 6 May

It was a quiet day, as there were no explosions or even the sound of a single bullet. The traffic was running smoothly. It seems that the security situation has improved in a-Rusafah to extent since the beginning of May. I hope it will stay like that. The security situation was still bad in al-Karkh part of Baghdad, as US military units and Iraq National Guards isolated a number of Sunni dominated areas from the rest of the city. Some mixed neighborhoods witnessed street fighting. A number of the INLA's staff was unable to show up.

Water was added to the list of 'nos'. So, we had no electricity, water, telephone lines, or internet. O Lord do not add oxygen to the list! What has made the situation worse is the fact that there is a growing fuel crisis. No electricity means no fuel for cars and power generators. It was really a very hot day. The air-conditioners were not working, as there was no power. The Ministry's lazy and corrupt bureaucrats have not yet repaired our generator. The INLA's staff did not hide their resentment. They did not even have cold water to drink.

At 10.00, the first regular meeting of the second council of representatives of librarians and

archivists was held. The second council has 22 members. Four were absent. There were 15 female and three male; and all were young. Two issues were resolved in the meeting; the first was defining the role of the new council and the second was the elections of three members to join the first council of heads of departments. The representatives decided to have a monitoring role, i.e. to keep an eye on the works and activities of the first council. Three young ladies were elected in secret ballot to join the first council, and three others were elected as their reserves.

At 12.00, I asked my exhausted staff to go home early.

We had one hour of national electricity. So I had to rely on my own resources. But, there was no fuel in the black-market. I had only 20 litres of petrol in my home. This quantity is not sufficient to keep my small flat cold for more than three days. The time has arrived for applying austerity measures. We - my wife, my son and I - began to sleep on the roof at night. We use our smaller generator whenever our son wants to sleep. We will use the bigger generator for two or three hours in the mid-day, when the sun-heat hits the highest point. In the meantime, I have begun to search for fuel in the black market.

In the evening, my brother, who is still in Sulaimaniya, begged me again to leave Baghdad and live in Kurdistan.

Monday, 7 May

The INLA still had no electricity or water. After consulting a number of my staff, I decided to close the INLA at 11.00. It was made clear that the INLA would not be reopen unless electricity and water services were restored by the government. What is the point in keeping the INLA open, while its readers cannot use the library and archive reading rooms because of the lack of electricity? My staff found it extremely difficult to do their daily tasks because the building was very hot.

Tuesday, 8 May

The INLA was still closed. Electricity and water services have not returned yet.

Wednesday, 9 May

At last, water and electricity returned to the building. The INLA's staff began their usual work. Readers and visitors showed up.

I took my wife and my son to the INLA. She wanted to see her colleagues, before visiting the Medical City for a usual check up. Some of my staff did not waste this opportunity to take their revenge on me. They made some sarcastic comments and remarks: "thanks to God the Son does not look like him", "he is a beautiful, calm, and happy child just like his mother" etc.

I did not attend the meeting of the Council of Ministry of Culture. I am unhappy about the attitudes of the Minister, who refuses continually to give his approval to anything I suggest or say. Therefore, I decided not to attend any Ministerial meeting, unless the Minister changes his attitudes. I was told that Ministry was not happy about my absence, and he kept asking everybody about me. He knew very well that I never missed the Council of Ministry. I learnt later that the Minister started the meeting by issuing overt threats to the

director generals, because they refuse to listen to him!

I discussed with Am, the head of the IT Department, and her assistant, Miss. Na, the reopening of the INLA's official web-site. The later has been closed for 5 weeks, as we failed to renew the subscription. Miss. Na, who runs our web-site, informed me that she contacted the Ministry of Communication concerning the issue of hosting our web-site. The main problem which we have been facing for weeks is that the staff of the local Bab al-Mudham's Communication Office, who are mostly Shi'i, refuse to go to work, as they received direct death threat from Sunni extremists who are active in a-Fadhel and al-Jamhoriyah. The Office is just down the road. I learnt that another female staff of the Communication Office was assassinated by Sunni extremists. So far, the Communication Office has lost three of its staff for sectarian reasons. The technicians of the Ministry of Communication said that without having direct access to the local Communication Office, they cannot fix the INLA's internet problem or host its web-site. We have tried in vain to persuade the Ministry of Communication to send one or two of technicians to the local Communication Office so that we could fix the internet problem and our inoperative telephone lines. We need a miracle to persuade the staff of the local office to work for just two hours, which will enable us restore our telephone lines and the internet system.

For most of the night, US helicopters were flying very low, making huge noises. It turned out later that US soldiers and Iraqi National Guards were involved in a military operation in al-Sadr City.

Thursday, May 10

At 2.00, a big explosion woke me and my wife up. We could clearly hear a number of explosions and exchanges of fires. It lasted until 6.00. At 7.30, my mother-in-law called us, saying that the armed men returned to al-Fadhel and al-Jamhoriyah and that the fighting broke out again. She advised me to avoid Bab al-Mudham, when going to my office. Accordingly, I asked my driver change our route in order to avoid Bab al-Mudham. Near Bab-Mudham, I saw a number of Iraqi armed vehicles, US Hummers and soldiers. They blocked al- Jamhoriya Street. The fighting was still going on, when I arrived to the INLA. At 8.30, my mother-in-law called again, wondering if I was fine. Most of the fighting was near her house. She was forced to stay at home, as snipers showed their ugly face again. They began to fire indiscriminately at people, who disappeared quickly from al-Sadryiah, al-Jamhoriya and al-Kifah Streets. One man was hit in the leg by a sniper's bullet.

The Secretary of the Minister of Culture talked to me by phone, asking if I was able to travel to Algeria on Friday (11 May)! The aim was to represent Iraq in the joint Latin America-Arab Library Project. The meeting was supposed to be held on Saturday 12 May. It was a short notice from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Its lazy bureaucrats, who are mostly ex-Ba'athists, deliberately handle the official papers of other ministries in a very protracted manner. Then at the last minute, they send the papers to the concerned ministries, whose officials often find it extremely difficult to take the required measures. I was not in a position to travel, as my service passport application was not processed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' bureaucrats. The Secretary gave the phone to the Minister, who tried in vain to persuade me to go to Amman by using my normal passport, and then obtain a visa from the Algerian Embassy. If I go by a normal passport, the Jordanian airport authorities will give me a hard time, like other Iraqi passengers. We are not popular anymore in Jordan. Moreover, Friday is a holiday in Amman, as in Baghdad. Therefore, it will be very difficult to obtain a visa. The Minister said that he would contact the Algerian

Embassy to facilitate the visa procedure. I said that it was too late to purchase two tickets: Baghdad-Amman and Amman-Algeria. The Minister was not happy that I was not even willing to think more about the trip. At the end of conversation, he asked me why I missed the Ministerial meeting yesterday. I told him that I was able to come. But, he knew deep down that my absence was a kind of protest.

People outside Iraq mistakenly think that the de-Ba'athification process has removed all Ba'athists from Iraqi ministries. This is not the case. The Ba'athists still dominate state bureaucracy. They often slow down the pace of change, trying to make life very difficult for the supporters of the New Iraq. The Ministry of Culture is not an exception.

At 10.00, the Administrative Board of al-Ferdus Woman Society and the female representatives of the Second Council held a joint meeting to discuss several issues. The participants agreed on the enlargement of the Society's membership, the publication of a new monthly journal, the preparation for a new elections to be held on 27 May and the establishment of links and contacts with other woman organizations in Baghdad. I put forward a suggestion that the Society should take the responsibility for running the nursery and cafeteria.

By 13.00, the fighting stopped temporarily. This enable the INLA's staff to leave the building safely. Our car approached the end of al-Kifah Street, which was the scene of the fighting. One Iraqi armed vehicle parked in the al-Kifah-Bab al-Mudham cross road. Its occupants were busy talking to each other.

It was a very hot day. Earlier, my nephew had purchased some fuel for me from the black market and so I could switch on the generator as soon as I got home. I kept the air relatively cool in the flat for four hours.

Friday, 11 May

I heard two huge blasts in the early morning. I stayed at home the whole day. It was a dusty day caused by strong winds. My brother rang from Erbil to say good bye. He was going to fly to London in the afternoon.

The War of Bridges has been resumed. Three important bridges were destroyed or badly damaged by successive car bomb attacks. These bridges link Baghdad to some provinces. It seems that terrorist groups seek to cut off Baghdad from the rest of the country, after they succeeded in restricting movements between the parts of Baghdad City, i.e. al-Rusafah and al-Karkh.

According to the INLA's security report, there were exchanges of fire behind our building.

Saturday, 12 May

I heard a new wave of very big blasts in the early morning but, there was no smoke on the horizon. It was another dusty and windy day.

I spent most of the day, reading and writing. My brother called me from London to inform me that he had arrived safely. In high-noon, I went to the nearby internet café to see my e-mails.

It was confirmed that the sniper who had terrorized the local people in al-Sadriyah and al-Kefah Street was killed by US soldiers and Iraqi National Guards. The sniper was an Afghani fundamentalist. People were very happy to see the body of the dead sniper. The

body was taken away to some unknown area.

Sunday, 13 May

As soon as I arrived to the INLA and before I go to my office, the head of security told me that the former head of Public Relations Department, Mr. Ja., was in intensive care, suffering from acute heart problem. Mr Ja. is one of the oldest member of my staff. He always enjoys himself, and refuse to listen to his doctor's advice. He eats and drinks a lot. On several occasions, I advised him to stick to a nutrition regime that would improve his health conditions. He used to say to me that "I will not change my life style, even if it means that I will die today".

My Deputy and a number of my staff decided to go to the Medical City where Mr. Ja. is hospitalized. Before heading to the Medical City, I asked my deputy to inform Mr. Ja's family that we would be there if they needed any help. Three hours later, the group returned from the hospital, saying that the doctors allowed only my deputy to see Mr. Ja. They told me that Mr. Ja. wept when he saw my deputy, and therefore the doctors decided to end the visit quickly. We still do not know, if Mr. Ja.'s health will improve. Everybody is praying for him.

At 8.30, the electricity returned. We are truly lucky to have electricity for six hours every day, since last week, as the rest of Baghdad either do not have electricity at all or just for one hour. The officials of the two Ministries of Electricity and Oil accuse each other of the current acute electricity shortages.

At 9.00, I left the building and went to the Ministry of Culture. I was summoned up by the Inspector General. I was told by staff of the Inspector General's office that someone from the INLA complained to the Public Integrity Commission accusing me of violating government instructions and current Iraqi regulation when promoting The INLA's member of staff and increasing their monthly salaries. I talked to Inspector General herself for thirty minutes, during which I explained my own system to promote librarians, archivists and administrators. I admitted that I never stuck to the current regulations and instructions, because they were very outdated, and had to be replace with new ones. She agreed with them that my system of promotion is right and logical and make much sense than the current one. But, she told me that she had restricted orders from her superiors to interrogate me. But, so far, she refused to form a special committee to interrogate me, as she knows me very well. She wanted to reach a compromise that will not weaken my position. According to her solution, all I should do is to agree to go back to the old system; in return, the case against me would be closed or

dropped. I told her that I would never change my system. If I retreat from my position, it means that a large number of my staff will be demoted and their salaries would be cut down sharply. I am not willing to do so, whatever the consequences. She told me that it was very likely that the Public Integrity Commission will take me to court and in the meantime I will be suspended. I told her that I was quiet aware of this. Towards the end of the meeting, I suggested to her that she should arrange a meeting between me and the representative of the Public Integrity Commission in the Green Zone, where all the fat cats work and live. She agreed to the idea. Before leaving her office, the Inspector General asked me, what if the Public Integrity Commission forced me to go back to the old ways; I told her I would definitely resign from post. I made it clear that as long as I was the director general of the INLA, no one of my staff would be demoted or his or her salary goes down. If I abandon the way in which I employ new librarians and archivists and promote my staff,

I will not be able to modernize the INLA.

When I finally left the Ministry of Culture, I was really glad to discover that the staff of the Inspector General's office in general, and the Inspector in particular, sympathized with me and fully understood my motives behind applying a new promotion system. They all do not want me to be harmed or weakened.

Upon arrival to the INLA I asked all the heads of departments to meet me at once. In the meeting, I gave them all the details about my conversation with the Inspector General and her staff.

In the noon, a suicide bomber attacked a group of civilians in al-Sadriyah, killing 13 people and injuring many others. The attack was very close to my wife's parents. Therefore, I quickly rang my brother-in-law, to see if his family was safe. Fortunately none of them was hurt.

At 16.50, Na., the nephew of Mr. Jab, rang me, asking me if I had any idea about his uncle, who did not return to home. I tried to reassure Na. and promised to contact all the people his uncle work with. Ja. is the head of the Micrographic Department. He is one of the INLA's oldest employees, and has BA in Chemistry. He has a very big heart. In the very early stages of Iraq-Iran War, his older brother was killed in the front. Therefore, he decided to bring up his brother's two orphans, a girl and a boy. He does regret for a moment the fact that he did not get married in order to dedicate his entire life for his niece and nephew, who both graduated from university recently.

I made several calls. I first contacted Miss. Aw, his assistant. She informed me that she had no information about Jab. I asked to contact her colleagues to see if they had useful information. During one of calls, a nearby building belonging to the Ministry of Interior was shelled by mortar. As a result, a number of cars were burnt. I saw through my flat window a huge black smoke rising rapidly in the sky. I quickly rang one of my friends who lives near the explosion area. He assured me that he and his son were fine.

I did not know why I was not able to prevent my tears from falling, when I learnt that Jab. did not return to his home. I like and respect Jab. very much. He is one of the people I always admired for his honesty, bravery and dedication. He is a very hard working person, who never complains about anything. He inspires people around him, though he does not like to socialize very much.

I was quiet relief when Na. rang me at 17.30, saying that his uncle returned home safely. I decided that, as a revenge, I will make Jab.'s life a living hell for one day, when I see him on Monday.

Monday, 14 May

It was one of those bad days. Mr. Mo. came to my office as soon as I entered my office. He asked for my help to release his older son, who was arrested by the police near his house in the hot district of al-A'dhamiyah. Unfortunately, I was not able to help him a lot. I talked to one of my friends. He has a friend, who works as a police officer at the local A'dhamiyah Police Station. The officer could help us know the charges against Mo's son.

Mr. G. submitted a memorandum, in which he asked me to accept his retirement. He is one of the five Christians, who work in the INLA. The true reason behind his retirement is the death threat he received from some fundamentalists. Because of their threat, he left his house in the hot district of al-Dorah. Like many Christians, he wants to leave Baghdad

either to Syria or to Kurdistan. The latter has become a safe heaven for member of all religious minorities, who were forced to leave their towns and villages.

I received more bad news; Mr. H., who was kidnapped and tortured, before being released a few weeks ago, received a death threat. His house was burnt and his family forced to move to another area. A few days before,

his brother was also murdered by some terrorists for sectarian reasons. When I met him, he told me that he received another death threat after he moved to the new area. He does know what to do.

Mr. Ha. informed that one of our library workers' wife was in a very critical condition. She suffers from acute heart problems. I gave him one month paid leave to look after his wife in the hospital.

Doctors prevented some of my staff from seeing Ja., who was still in the intensive care unit.

Mr. Mu. came to visit me in my office at 10.30. He is a low-rank official at the Ministry of Public Works and Municipalities, whose main task is to supervise all central and local libraries throughout Iraq, apart from the autonomous region of Kurdistan. The fact that Mu. is low-rank shows how much the previous Saddam regime and the new regime pay very little attention to the importance of central and local libraries in people's lives. There are 122 central and local libraries in Iraq, apart from Kurdistan. These libraries have been suffering from neglect for almost 20 years. Some libraries were looted. After April 2003, newly appointed governors of provinces have showed no interest whatsoever in repairing these central and local libraries, let alone modernising them. Most of these governors are members of religious parties, who are staunch opponents of secular culture and secularism, which libraries, in their eyes, stand for. Certain political religious parties occupied some central and local libraries, and a number of provincial governors seized or cut down the budget of libraries. Generally speaking, almost all central and libraries have no library furniture, computers, photocopiers or other necessary equipment. Their book collections are extremely poor. They purchase very few books every year. Their buildings are often very old, and in desperate need for repairing. Now, the Mosque's religious libraries are attracting young and old people alike. Libraries in the provinces have been becoming things of the past. Neither the central government nor local governments show real interest in helping the dying network of libraries. This is not pure coincidence. The inaction of these governments is deliberate.

In 2005, I met the governor of Baghdad and the Head of Great Baghdad Council separately. I tried in vain to make these two backward fundamentalists pay real attention to the deplorable state of all local and central libraries within the province of Baghdad. They, like other like minded politicians and civil servants, do not want secular libraries to compete with the Mosques and other religious centres. I placed before them some suggestions to modernise Baghdad's libraries. But, they did not even bother to give their answer.

In 2004, I had a meeting with the Danish delegation to the UNESCO in Paris. The Danish stated that their Ministry of Foreign Affairs is interested in the construction of two or three modern libraries in some Iraqi provinces: the first in the south (Basrah), the second in Baghdad and the third in the north (Musol or Erbil). The number of these libraries would be increased gradually to form a Iraq-wide network. I and my assistant sent a detailed library project to the Danish government, through the UNESCO. According to our project, the new libraries should play social, educational and cultural role among the local community. The

project was endorsed by the Iraqi Ministry of Culture and by UNESCO officials. It was translated into English. The Danish government was more than willing to translate the project into reality. The then Deputy Minister of Culture, the Director of Heritage and I selected an historic building in the City of Basrah to house the first library. Unfortunately, the project did not see the light because of some unexpected political factor (the anti-Danish uproar caused by the Anti-Prophet Muhammad's drawings of some inconsiderate Danish caricaturists) and the unfriendly attitudes of the Iraqi General Director of Cultural Relations. The latter was Shi'i fundamentalist, who deliberately refused to cooperate with the Danish side.

It was my son's first birthday. The day before, my wife asked me to buy a cake from well known confectioner to mark the occasion. The confectioner is located in the well-known al-Sakhrah Cross-Road, which has been one of the terrorists' favourite targets. It was attacked by car bombs many times. A number of shops and restaurants were forced to close down permanently. I left my office with my driver at 12.50, heading to the Palestine Street, hoping to buy the cake before I go home. Just seconds before we arrived to al-Sakhrah Cross-Road, a detonated car exploded, killing and injuring many innocent people, who were mostly shoppers. I saw black smoke rising from the car. The National Guards and the Police offices closed some of the roads. We were forced to change our direction to get home. My wife and my mother-in-law- were waiting anxiously for me, as they knew that I was in the area. The center of the blast is less then 400 meters away from my home.

Tuesday, 15 May

As soon as I arrived to my office, I was informed that Jaw.'s health was improving steadily but slowly. He was removed from the intensive care unit and taken to another room. I met his son and daughter, who confirmed the

news.

There were some sporadic exchanges of fires very close to the INLA. It lasted for few minutes. Ni., the head of the Catalogue Department informed that the house of one of her librarians, Am., was burnt down yesterday during heavy clashes between US soldiers and armed men in al-A'dhamiyah district. Ni. and Am are neighbours.

The INLA decided to support financially Am, Jaw, H., and Al. At 11.00, al-Nahrain TV camera crew arrived to the building. The crew wanted to make a documentary film. A number of departments were visited and some of the INLA's staff was interviewed including me.

Nine of the INLA's archivists completed their two-week intensive restoration course. Around 12.50, a terrorist sniper opened his fire randomly at people in Bab al-Mudham and al-Jamhoriyah, injuring two people. Our guards made sure that all our staff could avoid Bab al-Mudham and al-Jamhoriyah, when leaving the INLA. We, my driver and I, changed our route because of the sniper.

Diary for the Period 16-31 May 2007

Wednesday, 16 May

There were widespread rumors about a suicide bomber who wanted to attack some

targets in the Bab al- Mudham area. The INLA's guards were alerted about the possibility of bomb attack. I decided not to tell our staff about these rumours.

I received Mr. Mu. in my office. He told me that his was able to see his detained son in the al-A'dhamiyah local police station. He then showed an e-mail that he received from one of the underground armed groups a few months ago. The group pledged to kill him for being a collaborator. He left his family and home, immediately after he received the death threat. No civil or military authority can protect people from death threats. People have been left to their own devices to deal with such threats. Some rich people hire guards or leave the country permanently, while some others will abandon their houses. The well-off families will move to a new neighborhood within Baghdad, whereas the badly-off families will live in poor camps in the provinces. Internal displacements have dire social, economic, educational and psychological consequences for the affected people.

Six library workers completed one-week computer training. The next course will begin soon.

I was selected to head the National Culture Committee (NCC), whose main task will be coordination with UNESCO officials insofar as the safeguard of Iraq's cultural heritage. The Committee has six members. My plan is to enlarge the Committee to include two other members. The previous Committee, which was headed by the current Deputy Minister of Culture, never met during one year of its existence! It was very nice to learn that the Ministry of Culture had officially invited construction companies to submit tenders concerning my five- store archive storage project. The slowness of the Ministry in taking the necessary steps had made me very anxious of losing the funds of the project permanently.

Thursday, 17 May

The armed men returned once again to al-Fadhil and began to terrorise innocent people. There were sporadic exchanges of fires near the INLA.

The Minister sent three people to my office. They had a ministerial order to me to appoint them in the INLA. The Minister issued his order against my wishes, as I wanted to appoint a number of our temporary staff, who have been working in the INLA since early 2005. I refused to meet or talk to the three men, ordering them to go back to the Minister's office. I sent a memorandum promptly to the Minister, stating that I would not accept his three men, before he gave his approval of the appointment of my candidates. I am sure my action will anger the Minister. He has been unable for some time to cover his resentment of my stubbornness. He knows very well that I am not willing to change the system according to which the INLA has been administered since my appointment in late 2003. I think he will work hard to sack me or at least to transfer me to an unimportant post. In either case, he will need to secure an official endorsement from the Council of Ministers and the Prime Minister.

The library worker, Mr. Am, whose house was burnt on Tuesday, came to my office. He was naturally very sad

and angry. He showed me some photos of his totally destroyed house. There were no doors or windows. The roofs and the walls were in terrible conditions. All the furniture, clothes and domestic appliances were reduced to rubble. He burst into tears, as soon as he began to show me the photos. As the INLA's financial assistance was not sufficient, I decided to send a memorandum to the Minister of Culture, asking him to support Am.

financially. But, based on my past experience, I am not sure that our Minister will be generous enough to help this victim of violence.

At 10.00, I attended the second regular meeting of the Representatives Council. A number of unresolved issues were raised, including the appointment of new staff and transportation of the INLA's staff. I blamed the Minister for the first issue, and the bureaucracy for the second one.

It is a miracle to rain in Baghdad in mid-May. It rained heavily and quickly toned down the heat. The weather became suddenly much milder than the day before. People welcomed the rain and the moderate weather, as they had very little electricity to keep their houses cold.

Friday, 18 May

I spent most of my time reading and writing in the morning. In the mid-day, I went to see a member of the investigation committee, which I chair. The committee was set up by the Minister of Culture to study the reasons why the project of constructing some annexes to the National Theatre was not implemented. So far, two director-generals have been blamed for the unnecessary delay. Afterwards, I went to the nearest internet café.

According to the INLA's daily security report, there was some fighting behind our building in al-Jamhoriyah Street. The fighting last almost two hours (19.50-21-50).

Saturday, 19 May

I spent most of my time at home, either reading or writing. In the afternoon, I went to the nearest hairdresser's shop to have my hair cut. At the shop, people talked about how Iraqi security forces and the US army arrested many civilians in our neighborhood.

Sunday, 20 May

I took my wife and my son with me to the INLA. She wanted to visit the nearby Medical City for another check up. Later, my driver took my wife and son to my mother-in-law's home.

After a few months waiting, the Minister agreed to change the old carpet of the INLA's main theatre with a new one. The cost will be covered by the INLA's reconstruction funds. US apache helicopters were making a lot of noises in the area. They landed in the courtyard of the opposite building (the headquarter of the National Guards' brigade).

I have decided not to accept my nomination as the Chairman of the NCC. In a memorandum to the Minister of Culture, I asked him to nominate another person. I think the Minister will not be happy about my memorandum.

A reporter from the French news agency contacted me. He wanted to make a documentary film about the destruction and the reconstruction of the INLA.

I had a meeting with the heads of the Archive departments. We discussed the best methods to speed up the daily inputs, including registration, classification, translation, cataloging, microfilming and automated cataloging.

I discussed with the Department of IT the idea of replacing our current telephone lines

internet system with a new satellite internet system. The first system has proved to be unworkable, owing to the deteriorating security situation in our area and to widespread corruption. The second system is much more reliable, although it is more expensive and slower than the first system. We all agreed to end our current contract with the Ministry of Communication, and to negotiate a new contract with the new internet service provider, i.e. the General Directorate of Electronic System, which is part of the Ministry of Industry. The Italians purchased for us a complete satellite internet system (including the dish and the receiver) three years ago, and this will reduce significantly the cost of installing the new internet system.

A booby-trap exploded as a group of our staff were on the way to their houses. They were forced to walk for

hours under the heat of the Sun, after the driver refused to take them to enter their neighborhood. Mr. Aa was entrusted with the task of contacting and negotiating the terms of a new internet contract with the General Directorate of Electronic System. I contacted the Ministry of Communication concerning the termination of the current internet contract. It was agreed that the Ministry would pay us some financial compensation, as it failed to stick to the terms of the contract.

Two big blasts shook my flat at 14.55. It seemed they were a result of a mortar attack. A sniper badly injured a police officer in our neighborhood. Snipers' attacks present another serious security challenge to the government and people alike.

A friend of mine rang in the afternoon, saying that I was selected as one of 4 candidates to work at the Iraqi Delegation at UNESCO in Paris. I was surprised by the news. It seems that the Minister nominated me for the post behind my back. Is he trying to get rid of me in a civil manner?

The electricity problem has become acute and bearable. Some residential areas have one hour electricity per- day, and some others have no electricity at all. During the last two weeks, we had just six hours of electricity at home.

Monday, 21 May

For some time now, the staff of the Archive and book storage departments expressed their resentment for the delay in installing new air-conditioners. The weather is really hot, and it will get much hotter in early June. I explained to them that the Minister has not signed the necessary papers yet. These papers have been waiting the Minister's signature for weeks.

Mrs. X, who works at the reception desk, took two days off. Her brother was badly injured in a bomb attack.

After I encouraged them to take the initiative, the INLA's temporary staff sent a signed petition to the Minister of Culture, asking him to accept their appointment on permanent basis. I wanted them to corner the Minister, who talks too much about justice and equal opportunity in every aspect of life!

Tuesday, 22 May

The INLA did not have electricity until 10.30. As soon as the electricity returned, life returned to many departments, as the staff became very busy.

As the Minister increased the financial power of the director generals from 100.000 Dinnar

to 200.000, I raised quickly the monthly salary of some of the library and archive workers by 50%.

One of the DHL offices in Baghdad contacted me, informing me that the shipment of books donated by the British Library and libraries of some British universities, arrived to Baghdad via its International Airport. I agreed with the DHL's officials to collect the shipment from their office inside Palestine-Meridian Hotel on Wednesday.

Mr. Aa talked to the technicians of the General Directorate of Electronic System. The latter expressed their willingness to reduce the annual subscription to the INLA and to install the new internet system free of charge. Ama was given a detailed list of various types of internet services and their annual subscription. Ama asked the technicians about the cost of hosting the INLA's web-site.

Snipers positioned themselves in al-Fadheh began to terrorize innocent civilians in al-Sadriyah and al-Kifah for hours. Two people were badly injured, including a man who was hit in one of his eyes.

Wednesday, 23 May

At 6.30, a huge blast shook our neighborhood, while we were asleep. I arrived to my office at 7.55. Electricity returned at 8.35. I heard some explosions in the distance.

Around 9.40, I sent my car and three of my staff to the DHL's office at Palestine-Meridian Hotel. I was a bit worried about them, as the Hotel and the surrounding buildings come regularly under terrorists' attacks. One hour later, my people returned to the building with 13 sealed boxes full of donated publications. They will fill a gap in our social sciences collections of books.

Am, the head of the IT, Aa and I decided together what type of internet service that the INLA will need to carry on its daily activities. The Head of the Financial Departments asserted that we had sufficient money to pay the annual subscription of the new internet system (from mid-2007 to mid-2008).

The bodies of three wrestlers were found in our street. The wrestlers were kidnapped the day before. They were all Sunnis, who lived in the Sunni dominated al-Adhamiyah. It is likely that it was some extreme Shi'i group kidnapped and later killed the three innocent Sunnis. The communal violence is responsible for the killing and disappearance of tens of Iraqi sportsmen, including the President of the Iraqi Olympic Committee, Ahmad Hijjiyah. Among the victims were well-known coaches, martial art experts, boxers, footballers and sport club administrators.

During the night, the fighting between the American soldiers and the National Guards, on the one side, and the Sunni extremists, on the other side, was renewed in al-Fadhel.

Thursday, 24 May

It was a very hot day. The traffic was heavy. We changed our routes twice in order to avoid some military check-points. The area surrounding the INLA has been fortified by the National Guards. Their armed vehicles and car patrols can be seen everywhere. But experience shows that all these security measures can not make Bab-Mudham safer. Sunni extremists can attack at any place at any time.

The Council of the Heads of Department held its regular meeting. I informed my

colleagues that last year the Ministry of Culture was one of the two ministries that failed to spend more than 1% of the funds allocated for its cultural projects. I did not hide from them my fears that this year, the INLA might lose seven and a half billions Dinnars allocated for its two vital projects: the Library of Pioneers and the Archive Stores. I pointed the figure at corrupted elements inside the Ministry of Culture, who seek to prevent or at least slow down the reconstruction process of damaged cultural institutions. They want to force us to go back to the old Iraq. Concerning the problematic issue of transportation, we all voted in favor of purchasing 11 mini-buses, if the current transportation biddings fail. A number of our staff have volunteered to drive the mini-buses, even though it will be dangerous to do so. We cannot purchase more than 11 mini-buses this year, owing to the fact that the INLA has a small budget. It means that I will spend almost one half of the INLA's budget on purchasing the cars. If the experiment succeeds, and I hope it will succeed, we will purchase more mini-buses next year. In this way, we can put an end to the transportation issue, once and for all. The bad news is that I will need the Minister's approval, before I can purchase the mini-buses.

Before the meeting, one of my library workers approached me, asking if I would grant her one month paid leave, before she submitted a memorandum. After I asked her about the reason, she told me that she suffered from some heart problem. She needs to go abroad to have an operation on her heart, as most Iraqi heart surgeons left the country for fear of kidnapping and killing. So, we have not only political, security, electricity, water and economic crises, but also acute medical crisis. We have not enough good medicine, hospitals and experienced doctors. Only the well-off people can go abroad to receive good medical treatment. The poor has always been paying much heavier price than the others, since the outbreak of the Iraq-Iran War in 1980. The night was as hot as the day. The sky was soon clouded. This what made the situation far worse. The temperature exceeded 42 centigrade. We did have national electricity for two days. We could not take frequent showers, as we have been suffering from water shortages for some time now. I was not able to use my generator for more than four hours, as I had little fuel to cool my very hot flat. The prices of fuel have gone up sharply in the black market, as our '*beloved hero*', the Minister of Oil, failed to put an end to the ongoing fuel crisis. Like all Baghdadis, we escaped to the roof, trying to have some fresh air; but there was not any. High temperature and humidity prevented my son and my wife from sleeping. They slept finally at 4.00, after the weather got a bit cooler.

According to the INLA's Daily security report, there was some sporadic exchanges of fires in behind the building, in al-Fadhel and al-Jamhoriya Street.

Friday, 25 May

The national electricity returned at 4.45. it lasted until 5.55. We were all very exhausted in the morning. I was not able to do my usual things, (i.e. reading and writing), as the weather remained as hot and as humid as yesterday.

We had national electricity for another hour (between 19.00 and 20.00). We celebrated the return of the electricity; as if we had Christmas! My two air-conditioners can only operate on the national electricity. They managed to keep the flat cool for one hour and thirty minutes. In the meantime, I recharged my laptop's battery, while reviewing the draft of 20-page article, which I had managed to complete last week. I was also lucky for receiving only two calls during the day. I receive and make a lot of calls every single day.

Saturday, 26 May

I spent the first half of the day reading and writing. In the afternoon I met some of my friends and I went to my wife's doctor to make an appointment for her. I took the necessary steps for my overdue visit to Sulamaniya (Kurdistan) in the coming mid-week. I will try to sign a cultural agreement with the director of the Zhin Institute. The main aims of the agreement are to exchange publications and to plan and execute joint cultural projects.

According to the INLA's Daily security report, in the evening, there were sporadic exchanges of fires and explosions in Bab al-Mudham.

Sunday, 27 May

The traffic was heavy. The security situation was alarming in Bab al-Mudham, Al-Fadhel and in other neighboring areas. The fighting between the National Guards and Sunni extremists was already under way, when I arrived to my office. The fighting was sporadic, and got heavier as time passed by.

A secretary from the Minister's office called me at 9.00, informing me that I should go with my fellow directors to the Green Zone on Tuesday morning in order to meet the Vice-President of the Republic. The Secretary did not know the reason for the meeting with the Vice-President, when I asked her. I think that the Vice-President seeks to strengthen the position of the Minister of Culture in the forthcoming cabinet reshuffle. The Minister is not only member of the Vice-President's Islamic Party, but also his nephew! I decided not to go to the meeting, and to stay away, as always, from sectarian and party politics.

At 10.00, the election for a new Executive Committee for the al-Ferdus Woman Society began. The election lasted two hours, at the end of which 11 members were elected as member of the Committee by secret ballot. Three others were elected as reserves. The echo of fired bullets and blasts did not prevent the members of the Woman Society from going ahead with the elections. Everybody was happy with the result of the election, except the men, who were extremely jealous of their female colleagues. Some men pledged to form a Man Society.

As soon as the election ended, Sunni extremists hijacked a mini-bus full of passengers to al-Fadhel, before they executed them one by one. The driver and his passengers were all Shi'i. The National Guards tried in vain to stop the massacre. The fighting between the two sides (the National Guards and the Sunni extremists) spread to Bab al-Mudham. People ran for cover. Our staff left the building after the fighting broke out. A sniper terrorized civilians in Bab al-Mudham. A man was badly injured. The fighting broke out again in the afternoon in the same areas. The National Guards asked the INLA's to stay inside the building. The fighting ended at 23.00.

At 24.00, a sand storm hit Baghdad. The temperature was at its highest. Like many other people, we, my wife, son and I found it very difficult to sleep. I stayed awake until the morning.

Monday, 28 May

The situation was very tense in Bab al-Mudham and the neighbouring areas, especially in al-Fadhel and al-Jamhoriya. At 4.00, Sunni extremists attacked the local Bab al-Mudham Police Station.

Soon after I arrived, the fighting renewed between Sunni extremists and the National Guards. It intensified as time passed by. There were widespread rumors that terrorists would attack all the roads leading to Bab al- Mudham. I felt deep down that something bad would happen; therefore I asked my staff to evacuate the building as soon as they could. It took them ten minutes to leave the INLA. I made sure that every body went home safely before I left the building.

We were truly lucky. Almost 20 minutes later, a suicide bomber attacked a busy restaurant in Bab al-Mudham. Seconds later, a bomb exploded in the same restaurant. The attack was near the temporary road and just 50

meters away from the INLA. There was a report of another bomb that exploded near Adllah Khanom Mosque (300 meters to north of the INLA). Needless to say, tens of innocent civilians were either killed or injured, as a result of these terrorist attacks. According to local sources, the two attacks were direct reactions to the death of al-Qa'dah's commander in al-Fadhel during the fighting between Sunni extremists and the National Guards.

It was another bloody day. A huge car bomb attack shook al-kefah Street. The target was the shrine of a Holy Sunni Sufi Imam, Sheikh Abdul Qadir. More than 120 civilians were either killed or injured in the attack. The attack was carried out by al-Qa'dah's men.

The fighting in Bab al-Mudham, al-fadhel and al-jamhoriyah broke out again after the two bomb attacks. It lasted until 15.00.

Tuesday, 29 May

At 7.00, Miss. Ms, who works at the Restoration Laboratory, rang me, saying that her younger brother was badly injured in a car bomb attack, which took place in al-Jamilah district yesterday after noon. She requested me to grant her a few days off to look after her brother. I informed her colleagues about her situation, after I arrived to my office at 8.10.

The situation was still very tense in Bab al-Mudham. There were sporadic exchanges of fires in al-Fhadel and al-jamhoriyah. There were widespread rumors that the Sunni extremists would continue their bomb attacks against the Shi'is in Bab al-Mudham to avenge the death of the Qa'dah commander. I decided to go to Sulaimaniya with my nephew to do some work.

Wednesday, 30 May

At 6.10, my nephew and I left Baghdad to Sulaimaniya. I asked him to drive very fast in order to avoid the heavy traffic on the main road caused by long lines of long vehicles. It was a nice day and relatively mild by our standards (i.e. 41 centigrade) I kept in contact with my office's staff. I was assured that the situation was calm. We arrived to Sulaimaniya around 13.30. On the evening my sister called us from Baghdad saying that three mortars landed in near her house. The mortars damaged three nearby houses. It was a miracle that no one was hurt.

Thursday, 31 May

I visited a friend of mine and paid a visit to Zhen cultural institute. The director had earlier asked my permission to publish my new book, and I agreed. I took the draft of the book

with me and gave it to the director. We decided to republish an old journal, which had been published in Kurdish by the British occupation authorities during the First World War. The INLA is the only place where one can find the original copies of the Journal. We have only two copies missing from the collection.

We also agreed to meet on Saturday to discuss some possible projects between the INLA and his institute. In mid-day I contacted my office again to see if everything was OK. I was assured again that the security situation was not bad.

June 2007

Diary for the Period 1-15 June 2007

Statistics for the Impact of Sectarian Violence on the INLA's Staff (May 2007)

- ≡ 2 displacements and death threats of staff
- ≡ 3 extensive damage to personal properties (one house was destroyed totally)
- ≡ 1 unlawful death of relatives (brother)
- ≡ 1 disappearance of relatives (brother)
- ≡ 1 detention of relatives (son and brother)

The INLA's Visitors Figure

- ≡ March - 296 visitors
- ≡ April - 381 visitors
- ≡ May - 354 visitors

Friday, 1 June

I was still in Sulaimaniyah.

According to the INLA's daily security report, in mid-night, Sunni extremists shelled the surrounding areas, including the Ministry of Public Works and Municipality. The attack was followed by some heavy exchanges of fire between Sunni extremists and the National Guards. In the early morning, Shi'i militias attacked al- Fadhel by mortars.

Saturday, 2 June

My wife rang me, saying that her doctor told her that she had to go directly to the Clinic, whenever she felt any pain in her abdomen, and that she had to undergo a cesarean operation before Friday 8 June. Thursday was given as the deadline. She told me that she would wait for me to return to Baghdad.

We learnt that a group of terrorists blew up an important bridge on the main road between Kirkuk and Baghdad. As there was no alternative bridge or road, I was forced to stay in Sulaimaniya for two days, hoping that the Iraqi Army would repair the bridge or provide an alternative road.

I informed my office that because of the destruction of the bridge my return would be postponed for two days. I was informed that the security situation was calm.

Sunday, 3 June

After learning from the news that there was a heavy fighting and shelling in Bab al-Mudham, al-Fadhel and al- Jamhoriyah, I contacted my Secretary . She gave some details about the deteriorating security situation. Al- Fadhel was shelled by rockets and mortars. As a result, many civilians were either killed or injured. Several old houses were also destroyed. Untypical of her, my secretary did not hide her fears. I told her to inform my deputy that he should not hesitate to evacuate our staff from the building, if he saw that as a necessary measure.

I was assured that the security situation was improving.

Monday, 4 June

I was in constant contact with my office.

I called my wife several times to see if she and the baby were OK.

According to the INLA's daily security report, at 11.00, a suicide terrorist carried out a car bomb attack in Bab al-Mudham. The attacker was driving an ambulance. Fortunately, no one was killed or injured; only three cars were badly damaged. The incident was followed by another bomb attack in the same area at 15.45.

Sunni extremists hijacked a mini-bus from Bab al-Mudham. They took the mini-bus to their strong-hold in al- Fadhel. The extremists had begun to execute seven passengers. The National Guards broke into Fadhel and succeeded in rescuing the rest of the passengers.

Tuesday, 5 June

At 6.00, I left the very peaceful city of Sulaimaniyah by car. Our car was thoroughly and frequently searched by tens of military and police check-points set on the main road. I saw the destroyed bridge. Hundreds of vehicles

of different sizes and shapes were waiting near the bridge. It was a chaotic situation. One lorry overturned and blocked the way. Everybody wanted to use an old sub-way, which military found. The sub-way was, in fact, part of a very old road built by the British. We waited under the Sun for one hour, before the military allowed us to use the sub-way.

We arrived to Baghdad at 11.00. The journey was really exhausting, and therefore I was

not able to go to my office. One can feel the unbearable heat of the Sun as soon as one approaches Baghdad. The temperature in Baghdad is much higher than in Sulaimaniyah.

I learnt that, at 11.05, a group of US soldiers, who were on patrol, entered the INLA's building. They were met by my Deputy . The Americans asked politely if they could setup one or two military points inside the INLA. The Deputy informed the Americans that they could setup their military points outside the building, if they wanted to protect the area. The US soldiers left the INLA immediately. During the night, sporadic exchanges of fires and rocket blasts were heard in Bab al-Mudham.

Iraqi intelligence services discovered a huge bomb factory, when searching the industrial area of Sheikh Umar (1 km away from the INLA). Hundreds of bombs, rockets and rocket-launchers were found. It is likely that some of the factory's bombs and rockets hit the INLA. I am sure that there are other bomb factories in the same industrial area.

Wednesday, 6 June

As soon as I arrived to my office, I studied the terms of the internet agreement between the INLA and the Ministry of Industry. The annual internet subscription is around US\$8.000. The internet service is reliable.

I phoned my sister, asking her to come to my flat so that she could accompany my wife to the Clinic. She told me that her neighborhood was encircled by snipers who kill anybody who tries to leave his house. A number of her neighbors were killed by snipers' bullets.

Thursday, 7 June

It was a very difficult day. My wife could not sleep, as she felt some severe pains in her abdomen. My son also found it very difficult to sleep for unknown reason. I was awake for most of the night. Neither my wife nor I was aware of the seriousness of her conditions.

My sister arrived. She had to avoid the main road and walk for a long distance between the houses in order to avoid the snipers, who were very active in her neighborhood. Soon, my sister, my mother-in-law, my nephew and his wife took my wife directly to the Clinic.

My guard took me by car to the INLA, where I faced another problem. The high temperature began to affect badly our microfilm cameras and other equipment. The head of the Microfilm Department asked me to relocate his equipment; otherwise he and his team would no be able to do their daily task. After consulting some members of the staff, I decided to relocate several departments and units. The Microfilm cameras would be relocated in one of the archive classification and catalog rooms, which has good air-conditioners. The English archival collection would be relocated in the Personnel Department's room. The latter would go to the second floor to occupy the IT training room. The Conference Room would be used temporarily as IT training room. These changes were necessary, if we wanted to carry on the filming our archival collections. Some of the staff was not happy about the relocation, even though I explained at length the reasons.

A construction company has begun to repair the destroyed parts of the INLA's fence, which will be one meter higher than before, for security reasons. The same company will also repair all the damaged windows. The repair works will last one month at most.

At 12.00, my nephew called me, saying that my wife was still in the queue, waiting for her operation. They had waiting for the operation since 8.30.

One of the guards came to my office, informing me that all the INLA's guards received direct death threat from Sunni extremists, who were active in al-Fadhel. The extremists accused our guards of being members of al- Mahdi army. The claim is totally unfounded. The INLA's guards are a mixture of Sunnis and Shi'is, Arabs and Kurds. They have never taken part in any fighting. I advised my guards to avoid al-Jamhoriya and al-Fadhel, when coming or leaving the INLA.

I called my nephew. He told me that my wife was still waiting for her operation.

At 12.30, I decided to go the Clinic, after I finished all my paper works. It was a very hot day. The air- conditioning unit in our Daewoo car was not working. I was sweating heavily. I arrived to the Clinic around 13.15. My wife was still waiting for her operation. I was not able to see her before the operation. Five minutes later , I was told that my wife was inside the operation room. At 13.35, my second child was born. It was a daughter. At 14.00, my wife was taken to her private room, where I, my sister and my mother-in-law were waiting anxiously. Thirty minutes later, my wife's doctor came to the room. She informed us that the lives of my wife and my daughter were in real danger, as the stitches of my wife's first operation were ripped. Both were very lucky to survive. My wife was a bit careless, as she did not take seriously her doctor's advice. My daughter's weight was 4 Kilograms, when she was born. She seemed to be healthy. I named her 'Hanas'. It is a Kurdish name, and means 'Soul'.

Friends and relatives poured into the Clinic to see my wife and Hanas.

As there will be a curfew on Friday, I took some necessary steps to discharge my wife from the Clinic before 11.00. The curfew lasts 4 hours (from 11.00 to 15.00).

I asked my nephew to purchase a new generator for me, so that we could use after my wife and daughter arrive to the flat. The old generator was not working anymore. We headed home at 16.40. My wife, my son, my new- born daughter, my sister and my mother-in-law spent the night in the Clinic. But, nobody was able to sleep. The pains prevented my wife from sleeping; my son found it very difficult to sleep without being held by one of his parents.

As soon as I arrived to the flat, friends and relatives began to call me. They congratulated me on the birth of my second child.

At midnight, just before I went to my bed, I did not believe my eyes when I saw the reflections of fires on the door of the setting room. The air-conditioner was on fire for unknown reasons. I put out the fire hastily, after the flat was engulfed in smoke. I opened quickly all the doors and the windows to get rid of all the unpleasant smell and smoke. I was lucky to see the fire before I went to my bed; otherwise, the whole flat would have been destroyed. Luckily, the damages were limited. I was extremely exhausted when I slept.

According to the INLA's daily security report, there were sporadic light exchanges of fires in Bab al-Mudham during the night.

Friday, 8 June

At 9.00, my nephew and I went by car to the Clinic, to bring my wife and our two children home. We were all back in the flat by 11.00. I was stayed at home for the rest of the day.

Saturday, 9 June

At 10.00, my nephew and I went again by car to the Clinic, to complete some paper works concerning the birth of Hanas.

At 11.50, I went to the nearest internet café to see my e-mails. Just as I was crossing the main road, a huge blast shook our neighborhood. The blast was a result of a bomb, which went off in our street (about 200 away from my flat). At once, my wife rang me; as she very anxious about me. I assured her that the bomb exploded at the other end of our street.

Friends and relatives came to visit us, to congratulate my wife and me about the new baby.

Sunday, 10 June

The traffic was heavy. It took us some time to arrive to the INLA.

I had one hour meeting with the staff of Public Relations Department. A number of issues were discussed to improve staff's cultural activities. I promised to provide the Department with a new brand computer, a photocopier, TV set and Satellite system.

The statistics of the INLA's Department of Planning show that the deteriorating security situation has forced

eleven people in the INLA to take early retirements. I am sure that many others of my staff will follow suit, as soon as the new Pension Law comes into force.

Monday, 11 June

We had no electricity during the working hours. We all were sweating heavily because of the heat. Hot weather and long history of political instability and violence may explain why Iraqis are very short tempered people.

I met the manager of the construction company, who told me that he brought with him 14 air-conditioners of different sizes. I gave the company's technician a list of places where they could install the new air- conditioners. The manager told me that his company's bid for the construction of the Pioneer Library was successful and that he would begin the construction as soon as all the papers works were completed. It was a great news for us. At last, after several years delay, our project will implemented.

After reading their recommendations, I decided to disband the special committee, whose main task was to define the grade and salary of the newly reinstated employees. The latter had been allegedly sacked or forced to resign for political reasons. A new committee was instantly formed, whose members would first meet on Tuesday.

At 10.30, I met a well know Iraqi scholar in my office. He lost his sight three years ago. He was a very traditionalist in his views on culture. He sought to hold a special exhibition for the books he wrote at the Directorate of Fine Arts. He asked me to borrow his books from our collections. I said that he could borrow the books and could hold another exhibition at the INLA. He accepted my suggestion. He wanted to meet our Minister to fund the publication of a new book. I tried in vain to arrange a meeting for him with the Minister.

According to the INLA's security report, a group of armed men kidnapped a civilian near building. Coalition forces were deployed in the area in the wake of the incident.

Tuesday, 12 June

We could not sleep during the night, as US Apache helicopters were flying very low above our neighborhood. The helicopters made unbearable noises and polluted the air. The night was very hot and humid.

I arrived to my office at 8.15. At 8.30 the electricity returned, after the technicians of the Ministry of Electricity repaired the damages. I learnt that two technicians of the Bab al-Mudham Electricity Distribution Office were killed in the last bomb attacks near the INLA. Our technicians used to work closely with the two murdered technicians.

I talked to Mr. M. About his detained son. He told me that he had no new information, apart from the fact that his son was held in the basement of the Ministry of Interior.

At 1.00, I supervised the meeting of the INLA's special committee. It took us one hour and thirty minutes to identify the grade and salary of the newly reinstated employees.

Before leaving the INLA, I was stopped by Miss S, from the Financial Department. She told me that her husband was arrested by the Ministry of Interior's special security force and that she did not know what to do. I encouraged her to hire a good lawyer, who could track down her husband; otherwise he would disappear without a trace. Hiring a lawyer, who has contacts, is very expensive.

Wednesday, 13 June

Once again, US Apache helicopters were flying very low in our neighborhood during the night, and we found it very difficult to sleep.

After arriving to the INLA, I went to visit the nearby Mosque. I suspected that the Imam of the Mosque was using INLA's telephone lines illegally. I was accompanied by the INLA's telephone technician, and one guard soon joined us. The Imam was not in the Mosque. I told a young man, who lives with his own family in the Mosque, that I needed to inspect our telephone lines to why they were not working. As I expected, the lines were slashed on the roof of the Mosque, and I also discovered that the Imam linked a telephone set to our lines. So, the God-fearing Imam has been making calls free of charge at our expenses for months!! Before I leave the Mosque, I left a small message to the Imam with the young man.....

I seized the opportunity to tour the beautiful Mosque. The renovation of the Mosque has not been completed. The beautiful Mosque is totally deserted. In the past, Sunni prayers used to come to the Mosque daily. Because of the communal violence in Bab al-Mudham and in neighboring areas, Sunni and Shi'i Mosques have become a main target for the extremists. Immediately after I left the Mosque, I inspected the work of the demolished part of the fence. Our guards were extremely worried about the fence for security reasons. I met the manager of the construction company; I asked him to speed up the repairing works, explaining to him that armed men could easily enter the building through the demolished fence. The manager promised to rebuild the fence as quickly as he could.

Soon after, I met the Ministry of Culture's air-conditioning engineer. We talked about the distribution of the air- conditioners, while we were touring the building. We agreed to modify the old plan so that it could meet our needs.

At 11.40, as I was talking to the head of the Public Relations, the head of the Administration Department entered my office hurriedly. He informed me in quiet voice that a group of terrorists blew up the two minarets of the Holy al-Askari Mosque in Samara.

The same Mosque, who contains the tombs of two outstanding Shi'i Imams, had been attacked last year. The first attack intensified communal violence in an unprecedented way. Hundreds of innocent Shi'is and Sunnis had been killed. Tens of Mosques were attacked and burnt, and thousands of families were forced to leave their homes. Based on past experience, I decided to close the INLA immediately. I asked my staff to evacuate the building as soon as they could. By 12.00, the building was completely empty. I advised some of my Sunni staff to avoid Shi'i dominated areas, when returning to their homes. The INLA will not reopen its doors, before relative normality is surly reestablished. There were unconfirmed reports that Shi'i inhabitants of al-Sadr City went to the street to protest against the new attack on the two holy shrines, and that the American soldiers and tanks entered the City to execute a military operation. Thus, the situation in Baghdad became vey tense and alarming in a short space of time.

Soon after, the government decided to impose indefinite curfew, which began at 18.00. It was a right decision. I hope that there would be no further blood-shed.

The streets were totally empty, when I left home to see a friend who lived just down the road. Baghdad seemed an abandoned and forgotten city. But, at least there was no sound of car bomb attacks or shelling.

According to the INLA's security report, National Guards and security police were deployed throughout Bab al- Mudham. The area witnesses sporadic light exchange of fire. At 19.30, al-Fadhel was shelled by mortars by Shi'i extremists.

Thursday, 14 June

The curfew continued. The streets were still empty. People stayed inside. I had some time to do my usual reading and writing. I was not able to read or write at home, after Hanas' birth. We, my wife and I, have started to get used to look after the two little children. It is a difficult task, giving the shortages of electricity, water and fuel as well as the high temperature of our long summer. My sister and my mother-in-law are doing their best to help us.

At 14.00, mortar attacks were launched from our neighborhood. We did not know who was behind the attack or what area was the target of the attack.

During the night, US Apache helicopters were, as a usual, flying very low.

According to the INLA's security report, the situation was tense in Bab al-Mudham. But there was no fighting or shelling.

Friday, 15 June

The government decided to lengthen the curfew period. People were disappointed by the government's decision. The prices of foodstuff went up sharply. Before long, most shops and local markets were forced to close. The curfew enriches the rich and impoverishes the poor. At 12.00, I went outside to buy some bread. Luckily, two bakers were open. The internet café was close.

US Apache helicopters were flying very low during the night (Doing what? God knows). Apart from the noises of the helicopters, some blasts disturb the tranquility of the night.

There were some confirmed reports that a number of Sunni Mosques were attacked by Shi'i extremists in retaliation to the destruction of the two minarets. Fortunately, there was

no casualties.

Diary for the Period 16-30 June 2007

Saturday, 16 June

It was another a curfew day. We always expect the unexpected; but not this. At 2.00, some criminals set fire to a large generator and several tanks full of gas. Soon, the pavements and the asphalt of the road were burning. The fire was rising in the sky, and the ensuing thick smoke covered all the nearby houses. The generator and the fuel tanks were located opposite my flat (just 20 meters away from the top of the building, where my family and I were sleeping). The fire threatened our lives and those of our neighbors. Quickly, I held my son, while my wife held our girl. We both went down stairs hurriedly to the flat. I closed all the windows and doors. The heat of the fire was unbearable. Luckily, the fire fighters came to our rescue. It took them five minutes to put out the fire, which lasted 30 minutes. The damages caused by the fire were quite extensive.







Sunday, 17 June

The situation was very calm. No single bullet was fired. It was a very hot day. The INLA had no electricity between 8.00 and 10.00. I was told that the technicians of the Ministry of Electricity were doing some repairing work in the nearby local distribution station. I postponed the regular meeting of the INLA's Council, as a number of heads of departments were unable to come to work.

The spokesman of the Coalition Forces did not exaggerate when stating that only 40% Baghdad was under the direct control of Iraqi armed forces. Sunni extremists and Ba'athists are in control of several important districts, including al-Amriyah, al-Jamah and al-Khadra, whereas Shi'i militias control several districts, such as al- Baya'a, Sha'ab and Hi al-A'mel.





Monday, 18 June

It was another quiet day. I did not believe it; for the second day running, I did not hear the sound of a single bullet in Bab al-Mudham. There were neither US helicopters in the sky, nor snipers on top of nearby high buildings, ready to kill innocent by-passers for no reason. It was a miracle. It was another hot day.

At 8.10, I inspected the repairing works on the fence. The progress was good. Everybody was complaining again about the acute shortages in electricity supply and the fuel. For the first time, there was no fuel even in the local black market. This is another achievement, which our Minister of Oil should be proud of.

The head of the Periodicals Department, two of our technicians and I talked about the issue of providing the Department with new furniture. I suggested that, instead of purchasing ready-made desks and lockers from the local market, we should ask a local furniture company to make these items according to the specifications that we would provide. The idea was accepted, and we entrusted one of our technicians to contact a local furniture company to know how much it would cost us to provide the Periodical Department with all the necessary furniture.

I received a memorandum from the head of the INLA's guards, in which he mentioned the name of the eleven guards, who protected the building during the curfew period and stayed inside the building for four days. At once, I decided to grant the eleven guards good financial rewards.

At 11.00, the regular meeting of the Council of Heads of Departments was held. A number of issues were discussed, and we all agreed on minimizing bureaucratic practices, boosting productivity, maintaining a high level of coordination between various departments and increase the number of training courses in library science, archive and IT. I explained to my colleagues that our plans for this year and the coming year would depend largely on the way in which the PM would reshuffle his cabinet. If he selects capable technocrats for ministerial posts, the INLA would certainly benefit.

Tuesday, 19 June

There was no heavy traffic. It took us seven minutes to arrive to the INLA. The acute fuel crisis has forced a lot of people to abandon their cars and use public transport instead. Again, there was no fuel in the black market. A friend gave me 20 litres of fuel. It was a nice gift. But, I had to economize, when using my generator at home.

We made history today, as an Iraqi web-site (www.linksnut.com) was given the first legal deposit number. We are planning to ask all Iraqi web-sites to do the same on a voluntary basis. It has been part of my plan to modify the old legal deposit legislation in a such way that the INLA will be able to grant serial numbers to Iraqi web- sites. The Head of the Legal Deposit Department was hesitant about granting web-sites legal deposit numbers. He thought my action was premature, while I thought it was important to lead the way, instead of waiting for some inept bureaucrats to decide whether the INLA should grant Iraqi web-

sites legal deposit numbers.

I had a thirty - minute meeting with the staff of the archive Inspection Department. We discussed the ways in which the INLA could force all Iraqi ministries and other state independent bodies and institutions to cooperate with our inspectors concerning the fate of their documents and records. I was briefed by the Head of the Department about some of the difficulties he and his team encounter, when visiting the archives of Iraqi ministries and other state independent bodies and institutions. The Ministries of Finance, Interior, Oil, Health, Water Resources and Justice, and the Central Bank, the Financial Inspection Board, the High Court Council have been very cooperative, whereas the Ministries of Defense, Education, Planning, Youth and Sport, Agriculture, Human Rights (!), Commerce, Culture (!), have refused to apply the law by cooperating with our inspectors. We have been waiting for the Ministries of Women Affairs, Work and Social Affairs, Communications, Electricity, Environment, Industry to form their own archive committees, and invite a representative from the INLA to attend their meetings. Other ministries, including the Ministries of Higher Education, Transport, Tourism and Antiquities, Science and Technology, Migration and Immigration, need to work and cooperate more with the INLA's inspectors. I am planning to send a detailed memorandum to the PM's Office via the Ministry of Culture, in which I will show the extent to which his ministers have observed Iraq's archive legislations. If the PM does not take action, I will resort to the media.

It is very ironic that the Ministry of Human Rights, which should be in theory very interested in protecting documents and records to do its basic tasks, refuses even to answer our official letters and memoranda. I personally visited the Ministry of Human Rights in 2005, and explained at length the importance of protecting state documents and records and our willingness to sign a bilateral cooperation and coordination agreement insofar as the archives of the former regimes was concerned. The Ministry of Human Rights' high-ranking officials were deaf to my proposal. Unfortunately, a group of these inept and irresponsible officials were sent to Germany to examine the way in which the Federal government dealt with the files and documents of East Germany's security apparatus, following the unification of German. They have done nothing, since their return to Baghdad two years ago. The new Minister of Human Rights is much worse than the first one. I do not know why some people demand or accept jobs they cannot do? The worse thing is that they will keep their privileges and high salaries, after leaving their posts. The principal political leaders of the country consider the issue of candidacy for ministerial posts as an best way to reward their submissive supporters.

At the end of the meeting, I instructed the inspectors to contact directly a number of state bodies and independent agencies, such as the High Federal Court, the National Intelligence Department, the Public Integrity Commission, the Cassation Court, Baghdad Municipality, the Iraqi Academy, Christian and other Religions Endowment Department, and Bait al-Hikmah. We need to wage a nation-wide campaign to make state employees, high-rank and low-rank alike, aware of the many-side significance of documents and records, which represent the historical memory of any nation.

I was disappointed and angry, after I read a memorandum written by a group of the INLA's staff, who said that, a man, who claimed to have contacts inside the Industrial Bank, disappeared after he blackmailed them financially. The man told 21 of the INLA's librarians and archivists that they would not be able to obtain a loan from the Industrial Bank, if every one of them did not pay him 100.000 dinars in advance. He claimed that he would share the bounty with the Bank's manager, who would get 80%, while he would take 20%. I quickly summoned the 21 librarians and archivists. At the beginning I reproved them for being so naïve and that their action violated the current laws and Islamic instructions.

Then, I asked them why they were willing to pay a man, whom they did not even know before! They claimed that they needed the loan to meet some of their pressing needs (to pay for operations, to repair damaged houses, to purchase domestic devices and cloths etc.). After getting all the details, I decided to pay the manger of the Industrial Bank a visit. I asked one of the

accountants to make an appointment with the Manager after 13.00. The head of the Financial Department was not happy about me going to the Bank. He told me that Bank was located in a dangerous area, i.e. al-Sink, near al-Khilani Round-about. For months, the area has been witnessing car bombs and suicide attacks greater than ever. I did know why I listened to my colleague's advice, and cancelled the appointment. Soon after arrived to my home, I learned from the national TV subtitles that a huge car bomb exploded at al-Khilani Round-about, killing and injuring more than 250 people. One part of al-Khilani Mosque was destroyed. The Mosque, which overlooks the Round-about, is just 200 meters away from al-Kailani Mosque. The latter had been attacked by a huge car bomb last month. Al-Khilani is the shrine of some holy Shi'i man, whereas the Kailani contains the shrine of a holy Sunni man. The two attacks were carried out by Sunni extremists closely linked to al-Qa'da. They used one ton of explosives used in the first attack, and a half ton of explosives in the second attack.

According to the INLA's security report, al-Fadhel was shelled by mortars in mid-night. No one knew the extent of the inflicted damages.

Wednesday, 20 June

The honey-moon period came to an abrupt end, as a roadside bomb exploded in Bab al-Mudham Roundabout at 8.20, killing and injuring a number of innocent civilians. Before long, a black thick smoke dominated the sky. Most of my staff did not even bother to look at the rising smoke through the windows. In the past, my staff used to talk about the bombings and killings at length. You could get the best political analysis and interpretations for free. Nowadays, the staff talks about such incidents for a few seconds, and some of them never talk. I discovered that we, the Iraqis, are the only human beings in this plant who do not bother to lower their heads or cover their ears with their hands, when a bomb explodes or is about to explode! Most people do not look towards the sky when helicopters fly very low.

I was in my office, signing some papers, when the blast shook the INLA violently. We were fortunate that none of the staff was hurt in the bomb blast, even though the majority of the INLA's cars pass through the Bab al- Mudham roundabout, before entering the building.

Around 9.30, the CNN team arrived to the INLA. The team consisted of two cameramen, a reporter and an assistant. The cameramen filmed the Archive and the Library, including the storage of collections, and the main reading rooms. A number of the INLA's staff were interviewed. I was asked various questions about the challenges that the INLA and its staff encountered on a daily basis, our efforts to keep the INLA open for university students and private scholars, and our hopes for the future. At 13.00, the CNN team left the INLA.

Thursday, 21 June

In the early morning, mortars landed on Bab al-Mudham. We had no information concerning human casualties or material damages The INLA had electricity for just two hours. It was very hot and humid inside the building.

At 8.30, the INLA's staff began to receive their monthly salaries from the Financial Department. I signed a new contract with the Ministry of Industry, which will hopefully provide the INLA with 24-hour internet access via a satellite system. The contract will last for 10 months, and it will be renewed if the internet service is of high quality.

At 9.10, I left my office with a driver and a guard to the CNN's office, which is located close to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Green Zone. The traffic was very heavy. The National Guards' two checkpoints at the beginning and the end of the Bab al-Mudham Bridge were causing chaos. It took us 40 minutes to reach our destination. I was interviewed for twenty five minutes by Ms. Hala Gorani. At 11.10, I left the CNN's office, heading to the INLA. There was no electricity, when I returned to the INLA. All the INLA's staff received their salaries.

One hour after I arrived to my home, two bomb blasts shook our flat. The centres of the two blasts were not that far.

Friday, 22 June

I stayed home during the first half of the day. I was either helping my wife or writing and reading. At last, I found a suitable house for my family, after months of searching for a new place. The house has one

reception room, three bed-rooms, two bath rooms and a tiny garden. To be hospitable, the house needs a lot of repairing works, including, plumbing, decoration and cleaning. In Iraq, the landlord is not responsible for the maintenance of his or her house, before and after it is rented. The tenant has to repair the house as soon as he or she rents the place.

Saturday, 23 June

I hired three people to do all the repairing works. I worked with the repairmen the whole day.

Sunday, 24 June

It was a bad day from the very beginning. The INLA had electricity only for one hour and thirty minutes.

I met one of the Ministry of Culture's technicians, who was assigned the task of repairing our generator. Initially, I refused his suggestion to repair the damaged parts of our generator, instead of replacing them, such as the motor. He said we need first the approval of the Minister and then we need to ask official local companies to make their offers, before we can repair our generator. Although the process will take weeks, decided to repair the generator by replacing the damaged parts. The suggestion of the technician means that we will waste the 39.000.000 dinars allocated for the repair of the generator.

The head of the security informed me that a sniper fired at the car of his assistant, Mrs. Sl., as she was inside her family car in al-Dhamiyah district. She was taken to a nearby hospital to be treated from some injuries caused by the smash of the car's windscreen. Miss, Mh, who works on the English archival collections, rang her colleagues informing them that she would not able to come to work, because her younger brother was hit a by a bullet. Both Mrs. Sl and Miss Mh live in the same district, al-Adhamiyah.

I met the late Ali's sister in my office. [Ali Salih was assassinated in front of his younger sister on 20 November 2006. He worked in INLA's Computer Department. Dr Eskander describes him as "... a bright young man. I sent him to Florence in Italy to be trained as a web-designer. Upon returning, he and Nadia began to construct and run our official web-site. He was the symbol of the modernization and reform process of the National Library and Archive. I employed him in January 2004, like many other young librarians and archivists. I hoped that the new generation could lead the way".] She informed that the bureaucrats at Ministry refused to give her the state's martyr grant (around 3 millions dinners). The Minister ordered all the directorates to pay the martyr grants from their own budget, even though the government has established such a special fund in all ministries to assist the families of those who killed while were on duty. There are widespread rumors that our minister wasted the entire Ministry's martyr fund during his never-ending foreign visits! Minister's irresponsible attitudes and behavior mean that the families of the INLA's three staff, who were killed while they were on duty, will not be able to have the martyr grant in the foreseeable future. These families have been waiting for months for the grants to be paid to them. I reassured them, if the Minister insisted on not paying the grants from the special fund, I would take all the necessary measures (lawful or not lawful) to pay them the grant from our budget before the end of the year. Unfortunately, this is the best I can do at the time being.

At 12.45, I asked my staff to evacuate the building. As we were leaving the INLA, the Ministry of Interior's Order Force opened fire in Bab al-Mudham. The Force's recruits wanted to pass through Bab al-Mudham as quickly as possible. To overcome the heavy traffic, they resorted to their guns. People ran for cover, thinking that a serious fighting broke out between Sunni extremists, on the one hand, and the National Guards and the Police, on the other hand. Fortunately, no one was hurt.

It is a common phenomenon nowadays in Baghdad that the convoys of high-rank military and civilian officials resort to their guns to open the way for their vehicles. Their irresponsible actions explain much of the chaotic situation, we encounter every single day.

I informed the Ministry that none of the INLA's staff would participate in Iraq's Cultural Week that would be held in Algeria on Wednesday. I protested against the arbitrary way in which the Minister selected unqualified, ignorant low-rank bureaucrats to represent the Ministry of Culture. The Ministry of Culture's delegation will be headed by someone who has a diploma in Tourism and knows nothing about culture. The Minister has wiped out all signs of democracy, we used to have when making important cultural decisions. He has monopolized all powers and never consulted his director-generals, and surrounded himself by corrupt and short-sighted advisers, who know nothing about culture.

In an interview with al-A'alam, a Shi'i newspaper, the Deputy Minister of Culture mentioned that he still had no power or role to play, because the Minister of Culture, a Sunni politician, refused to implement the decision of the Primer Minister. The latter considered the Minister's decision to deprive his Deputy of all his powers as illegal. The Deputy criticized the Minister's actions, and held him responsible for the failure of the Ministry of Culture in doing expected tasks, and for having no plans or strategy. I do believe the INLA is the only alive part of a body called the Ministry of Culture.

Monday, 25 June

The situation was quiet relatively.

A big blast shook the building. We did not know the centre of the blast. It turned later that

the blast was caused by a suicide bomb attack in one of the halls of the famous al-Mansoor Melia Hotel (2 km away from the INLA). It killed a number of people, including some journalists, Sheikhs and officials.

The Ministry's technician explained to me that there was no enough money to replace the damaged part of the INLA's generator. The only option I had was to agree on repairing the damaged parts, instead of replacing them.

Some official from the Ministry of Culture contacted me to nominate a representative from the INLA to join the Iraqi Delegation that would travel to Algeria, where Iraq's Cultural Week would be held. For the second time, I refused to nominate our representative.

The Council of INLA's representatives met at 11.00. They did not notify me deliberately. They wanted first to talk among themselves and decide what issues they would raise, when they would meet me. I was thrilled by the decision of the Council, because this will deepen the root of democracy inside the INLA. The Representatives discussed ways in which the welfare of the staff would be improved, and studied the idea of establishing a cooperative association, which would enable the INLA's staff to purchase goods and services in installments directly from some wholesale companies. Increasing the number of training courses in various fields was also discussed. After the end of the meeting, the Council sent a memorandum to me informing me about the issues that its members liked to raise with me.

According to the INLA's security report, at 16.00, unknown sniper opened fire at people in Bab al-Mudham. The National Guards and Police patrols responded by opening their fires randomly. At 17.00, US military patrol searched the area surrounding the INLA's building.

Tuesday, 26 June

It was another hot day. There was no electricity, when I arrived to my office. At 8.35, the electricity returned. Soon, the staff disappeared from the corridors, and went straight to their departments and offices. By 9.00 everybody was busy.

Another bureaucrat from the Ministry of Culture contacted me, asking me to reconsider my decision not to participate in the Iraq Cultural Week in Algeria. I said that my decision was final and that, as a matter of principle, I would never allow the INLA to take part in any activity that would damage Iraq's image in a foreign country. My Secretary found it very difficult to understand why I rejected the invitation.

At 9.30, I was the guest of the Council of INLA's representatives. The meeting lasted 40 minutes, during which I answered all questions and discussed a number of issues. We agreed that 1- the Council and al-Fardus Society should work closely together to establish the proposed cooperative association, 2- increase and improve the training courses within the INLA, 3- the INLA would continue its attempts to improve the well-being of its members, especially the needy ones. At the end of the meeting I thanked the Representatives for inviting me and for excluding me from their last formal meeting, and I hoped that the Council of Heads of Departments would do the same.

Immediately after the end of the meeting, I met Mrs. SI, who wanted to explain to me how she was extremely lucky the day before, when a sniper targeted her car. I saw a number of small wounds on her face. She suffers from some pains in her right eye and could barely see. She explained that several tiny pieces of glasses entered her eyes, after the sniper's bullet smashed the windscreen of her husband's car. She was sitting at the front beside her husband, who was driving the family car. Her children were in the back seats.

It was not one of the Minister's good days. Al-Baiynah, a Shi'i newspaper, showed on its front page a copy of a Ministerial Order, in which the Minister of Culture named eight of his own bodyguards to participate in al- Mada Cultural Week in Erbil, the Capital of Iraqi Kurdistan. Only two director-generals were given a permission to participate! The newspaper forgot to mention the fact that the bodyguards did not actually participate in the meetings of the Cultural Week! No one knows where the bodyguards went. Yet, the Ministry covered their expenses from its pitiable budget.

According to the day-news of several Iraqi TV channels, four of the bodyguards of the Minister of Culture were detained by the Court, after security police stormed his house. Another warrant was issued for the arrest of the Minister himself, who has been accused of master-minding the assassination of the two sons of Mr. Thabit al- Alosi, who is a member of parliament and the leader of al-Ummah (Nation) Party. He is a liberal politician, who extremely opposes both Ba'athist and fundamentalist groups.

There were conflicted reports concerning the whereabouts of the Minister. Some sources claimed that the Minister hid himself inside the house of the Vice-President inside the Green Zone. Some other sources claimed that the Americans smuggled the Minister to Turkey. The Americans stated that they would not interfere in the matter, viewing it as an internal Iraqi matter. At 20.00, some Iraqi TV channels claimed that Iraqi security police had already arrested the Minister of Culture at dawn. Several friends and a number of my staff rang me about the arrest of the Minister. They considered what happened as good news for the Ministry and for the country!!

Issuing a warrant for the arrest of our Minister is a big scandal without any doubt. It will have far reaching effects on both the current political process and on the Ministry of Culture. I hope the new development will be the beginning of a new process to eliminate corrupt elements from our Ministry. The Minister knew that one of his corrupt director-general was in prison before April 2003. He had been found guilty of embezzling public funds. Three weeks ago, the Public Integrity Commission sent an official memorandum to the Minister, asking to take the necessary steps to get rid of his corrupt director-general. But the Minister chose to ignore the Commission's memorandum; instead, he tried to grant the director-general a full pension.

Wednesday, 27 June

I was informed that the brothers of two of my staff were kidnapped separately on the same day.

At the INLA, everybody was talking about the warrant for the arrest of the Minister. Different interpretations were given. Some of my staff considered the whole issue as a political game, while others supported the Court's decision. An acute political crisis has developed because of the affair. Sunni politicians and representatives demand the government to withdraw the warrant for the arrest of Minister and to settle the case out of court, while their rivals do not want the Minister to escape justice.

Finally, we solved the internet problem. The newly-installed satellite system began to function. The new system is slow. But it is more reliable than the old one.

At 11.00, a US patrol unit began to inspect the area surrounding the INLA. The head of the unit asked our guards about the name of their institution and who was responsible for its protection; then he asked the INLA's guards to show their IDs. The patrol unit left the area.

Thursday, 28 June

According to the INLA's security report, in the early morning between 4.00 and 5.00, mortars landed on al- Fadhel and al-Maidan. The mortars attacks were followed by heavy exchanges of fire. It seems that Shi'i extremists sought to force their Sunni counterparts to abandon the ceasefire, which has been declared a few weeks ago.

I was told that the kidnapped brother of Ad was released unharmed.

Mr. Su, who works at the reception called his colleagues, saying that his own son was kidnapped the day before.

We had more good news. I discovered by accident that the INLA's web-site has been reopened. It seems that our Italian friends renewed the annual subscription of the web-site. I promptly, informed the IT Department about the reopening of the web-site. Everyone was exited.

The Head of the Administration Department came late to work. He informed that the reason for him being late was the fact that the main roads were blocked as a result of a suicide car bomb attack that took place in al- Bayia' Bus Station, killing and injuring tens of innocent civilians. Tens of mini-buses were completely burnt and destroyed in the attack.

At 10.05, mortars landed on the nearby al-Shurja. As a result, a number of civilians were either killed or injured.

Before departing, I informed the staff that the INLA would be closed next week in order to treat our library and archive collections with disinfectant, parasitoid and insecticide. Several teams were formed to supervise the operation. They would facilitate the task of a group of specialists, who would come to the INLA on Sunday.

According to the INLA's security report, at 16.00, a group of armed men, who were using two civilian cars, opened fire at people randomly in al-Bab al-Mudham. The security forces tried to intercept the two cars. In the ensuing fighting, all sorts of light and semi-heavy weapons were used. The fighting lasted nearly an hour.

Friday, 29 June

According to the INLA's security report, at 12.00, al-Fadhel was shelled by mortars. Extreme Shi'i groups were behind the attack.

Saturday, 30 June

I stayed at home for most of the day, doing some repairing works and helping my wife to put the furniture and other appliances in order.

July 2007

Diary for 1-31 July 2007

Statistics for the Impact of Sectarian Violence on the INLA's Staff (June 2007)

- ≡ 6 displacements and death threats of staff
- ≡ 1 brother was injured
- ≡ 3 kidnapping of relatives (2 brothers and 1 son)
- ≡ 1 disappearance of relatives (a brother)

Number of the INLA's Visitors

1-30 June: 447

1-31 July: 503

Sunday, 1 July - Thursday 5 July

(All the INLA's departments were closed, except Legal Deposit. The work began on Sunday morning, as all book and archival collections were subjected to disinfectant, parasitoid and insecticide treatment. The INLA's teams supervised the whole operation and facilitated the task of the specialists).

According to the INLA's daily security report, on Tuesday 3 July at 11.00 some armed men executed two civilians near the rear gate of the INLA's building. Five hours later, the armed men murdered another civilian in the same area.

On Wednesday 4 July, I was in the Green Zone, attending some ceremony. The ceremony lasted almost three hours, at the end of which Shi'i extremists shelled the Green Zone. We were unable to leave the Green Zone,

because all exit points were closed. Forty minutes later, we were given the green light to leave the area.

According to the INLA's daily security report, several mortars landed on the areas surrounding the INLA between 1.00 and 4.00. Between 14.45 and 16.00, fierce fighting broke out between Sunni extremists and Iraqi security forces in al-Fadhel and al-Maidan, near the INLA. Light and semi heavy weapons were used in the fighting. Several explosions were also heard in the night.

Friday, 6 July

I stayed at home. It was a good opportunity to examine the statistics that were provided by the staff of the Planning Department concerning the INLA's workforce. Several positive signs can be identified, when making a comparison between the years 2003, 2004, 2005 and 2006.

	2003	2004	2005	2006
Work Force	95	127	272	383
Female		75	146	208
Male		52	126	175

(INLA's Guards were excluded from this statistics)

BA and Diploma in Library Science and Archive

2003	2004	2005	2006
19	22	34	46

BA and Diploma

2003	2004	2005	2006
?	66	78	149

According to the INLA's daily security report, another round of fighting took place between Sunni extremists and the security forces in al-Fadhel. The fighting began at 23.00 and ended at 7.00 the next day.

Saturday, 7 July

I decided to go to the INLA to inspect the building and the guards. The guards were all present. The cleaners were working.

I met the manager of the construction company responsible for the repairing of the INLA's building. He informed me that he and his foreman had received death threats from some people in al-Fadhel, the strong-hold of Sunni extremists. Both men are Shi'is. The manager was forced to change his daily movements and not to use the INLA's rear gate. The foreman asked the manager for some days off. We discussed the problems created by the disappearance of the Minister of Culture. All projects are stopped, including our two important projects, the Library of Pioneers and the Archive Storage. If the PM does not interfere we would lose the funds allocated to the two projects. The Ministry of Finance has been pressurizing us for some times. Its tactless bureaucrats seek to take the funds away from us. We are in a big trouble.

Sunday, 8 July

In the early morning, a strong sand storm hit Baghdad As a result, temperatures went up, and became increasingly difficult to breath. My wife and I took the two children downstairs. We closed all the windows and doors to prevent the dust from entering the house. I switched on my small generator so that I could cool a room where the children were sleeping.

From the very beginning, it was a very intense day security speaking. Yesterday's PM's criticism of al-Sadr movement and al-Mahdi Army caused uproar among the most ignorant of society. The Sadr's supporters, including his militia, al-Mahdi Army, wanted to exercise their political and military muscle by making Baghdad ungovernable. They began to

express their protest in a violent manner by blocking the roads, encircling many districts and preventing the movement of ordinary people. Armed men and gangsters were seen in many Shi'i dominated districts, such as al-Bai'a, Bud-Sheer and Sh'ala. A considerable number of my staff was unable to come to work. The eastern part of Baghdad was literally paralyzed. The al-Sadr's supporters spread a rumor that

the government imposed a curfew. The rumor reached the INLA.

A stray bullet smashed a small window at the Acquisition Department. The Head of the Department had to clean her desk and chair from broken glasses before she could begin her work.

In my office, I met three officials from the Shi'i Endowment Department. They were accompanied by the Head of the Inspection Department. We discussed some issues, including the setting up of a joint committee with the aim of reorganizing the archival collections of the Shi'i Endowment Department, exchange of documents and records, training and coordination. The Shi'i and Sunni Endowments Departments were parts of the same ministry (i.e. the Ministry of Endowment and Religious Affairs) before the fall of the former regime. The relations between the two departments are not good. They refuse to cooperate with each other concerning the old endowment papers, which are in the possession of the Sunni Endowment Department. To overcome the differences and reach a common understanding between the two departments regarding endowment issues, I suggested that representatives from both sides would be invited to a special meeting which would be organized by the INLA. Shi'i representatives accepted the suggestion.

After the meeting, I entrusted someone I know to contact the Sunni Endowment Department concerning the proposed meeting. I know how difficult it is to reach a compromise or a solution satisfactory to all concerned parties. The harmful interferences of politicians and militias have considerably complicated every simple issue. Because of such interferences, it has become dangerous to intervene in sensitive religious issues, such as the one between the Shi'i and Sunni Endowment Departments.

At 12.30, the security situation became much worse than in the morning. Shi'i militias and al-Sadr's supporters made life very difficult for everybody. I asked my staff to leave their work and go back to their homes, before it was too late. I was the last one to leave the building. The roads were empty and a strong sense of anxiety could be seen everywhere.

At 13.30, a new round of fighting broke out between Sunni extremists and the security forces in al-Fadhel near the INLA. Light and semi-heavy weapons were used in the fighting, which lasted for one hour and thirty minutes.

Monday, 9 July

According to the INLA's security report, a mortar landed on al-Fadhel at 1.30. No casualties were reported. At 8.00, another mortar landed on our area, immediately after I arrived to my office.

At 9.00, I met a representative from al-Rafedian TV channel to discuss some joint cultural ventures. The INLA's representative had initial talks with al-Rafedian's representatives concerning the production of a series of programmes that would focus on Baghdad 's culture and history during the Twentieth Century. These programmes will be primarily based on the INLA's Baghdad Memory Project. Both sides agreed in principle that the INLA will provide the venue and the necessary information, facts and records, while al-Rafedian will be responsible for all technical and financial aspects of the project. It has

already been agreed that the first programme would focus on Baghdad 's traditional music (al-Maqam) and that it would be filmed in my office. INLA's principal goal behind the project is to increase Baghdadi people's awareness of the importance of protecting the cultural heritage of their historical city in its various forms. I do hope that the project will be translated into reality. My only concern is the security situation.

Tuesday, 10 July

We had some problem with the new internet system for a few days. Access to the internet is slow and breaks off very often. Internet experts fixed all the problems.

At 10.40, we heard three successive bomb explosions in the distance. At 11.35, there were some sporadic exchanges of fire in our area.

I talked to the Head of the Public Relations Department about the INLA's joint project with al-Rafedian TV channel. I asked him to write a detailed report about the project.

According to the INLA's daily security report, at 16.00, fighting broke out near the destroyed bridge al-Sarafiya (the Iron Bridge). The heavy exchanges of fire lasted until 20.00.

Wednesday, 11 July

The traffic was extremely heavy. I needed to go the Green Zone. It took me thirty minutes to cross al-Sinak Bridge. It was a quiet day. No violence was reported in our area. I was constant contact with my office.

One of the national newspaper revealed that the Minister of Culture issued a ministerial memorandum in which he granted his own bodyguards financial rewards. The ironic thing is that the memorandum was signed ten days after the Minister went into hiding!!

Thursday, 12 July

There were widespread rumors that the runaway Minister would be in his office today.

I had a short meeting with the staff of the Micrographic Department. I advised the Head of the Department to increase his staff so that he could raise the level of productivity. A few days ago, he presented me with a report that detailed the efforts of his staff between 1 January and 30 June.

Month	No. of Filmed Documents	No. of Used Films	No. of Copied Films
January	3,563	5 films (35, 5 meters)	4
February	8,567	7 films =	8
March	8,980	6 films =	6

April	12,452	9 films =	4
May	11,236	8 films	-
June	15,860	10 films =	2
Total	60,658	45	24

There are a number of factors that impede the efforts of the staff of the Micrographic Department, notably power cuts and bad security situation. Frequent power cuts are responsible for wasting a lot of hard work notable material losses. In May, the deteriorated security situation forced the INLA to close its doors for several days.

We can easily boost productivity, if we acquire a big generator and increase the number of cameras.

Friday, 13 July

I stayed at home writing and reading. I watched the Iraqi National football team playing with its Australian counter-part in the qualification stages of Asian Nations Tournament. All Iraqis, regardless of their ethnic and religious background, support the Iraqi National football team. Many Iraqis strongly believe that their national football team is the only factor that unites the country following the fall of Saddam's regime in April 2003. One cannot fail to see how much Iraqis are delighted when their national team wins. Immediately after the match, in which Iraq defeated Australia 3-1, people left their house to celebrate the victory on the main streets.

Saturday, 14 July

I stayed at home writing and reading.

According to the INLA's daily security report, bomb exploded in Haifa Street at 24.00. It was followed by mortar which landed on al-Fadhel.

Sunday, 15 July

At 7.40, I was informed that the National Guards closed the temporary road, and that I should use the rear gate to enter the building. The scene was very chaotic, when I arrived to Bab al-Mudham. The National Guards and police officers closed several roads and the Bab al-Mudham Bridge . Closing the roads was precautionary measure taken by the National Guards, after they turned their base (i.e. the former headquarter of the Ministry of Defense) into a temporary centre for recruiting young Iraqis for the Army. Young graduates and unemployed

men have no choice but to join the Army.

I instructed the INLA's guards to be very vigilant, as the new recruitment centre, which is just across the street, might be attacked by terrorists. Tens of recruitment centres inside and outside Baghdad were attacked by car bombs and by suicide bombers. Fortunately, the day witnessed no incident, apart from sporadic exchanges of fire around 11.00.

My nephew informed me that he, his wife and my sister left their house in the early morning, after the mortars landed on their road. Snipers (mostly Sunni extremists) began to target innocent people. My sister would stay temporarily with her daughter.

I had a brief meeting with al-Rafdain TV's director, who would film the first episode of our joint cultural programme in my office on Thursday 19 July. He would discuss the details with the Head of the Public Relations Department.

Monday, 16 July

According to the INLA's daily security report, a huge blast shook the building at 1.00.

I had an interview with al-Faiha' TV channel, which seeks to make a documentary film about the destruction and the reconstruction of the INLA. Al-Faiha' is a liberal-oriented channel.

The internet system was not working properly. So, we contacted the state run-company to fix the problem.

We found out that we were unable to open the new reading room, as we planned, because the air-conditioning system had not been installed. According to the manager of the construction company which is responsible for the renovation of the INLA, the air-conditioning units would be imported soon via Amman-Jordan; but he gave no guarantee.

At 13.00, a group of Sunni extremists attacked National Guards and civilians in al-Jamhoriya street. Thirty minutes later, the extremists attacked the nearby Ministry of Public Works and Municipality and a National Guards' patrol. Mortars and light weapons were used in the attack. Some of the mortars landed on empty space behind the INLA's building. The Sunni extremists were sniping at the local Bab al-Mudham Police Station and the nearby Multi-National Forces station. They positioned themselves on top of one of the high buildings, which surround the INLA. Soon, tanks and armed vehicles were used by the National Guards and the Multi- National Forces, who took their position in the area surrounding the INLA. Later on, US Apache helicopters joined the fighting, which lasted until 15.30.

Ironically, one of the Sunni main Newspapers distorted the facts about the day's events, claiming that it was the guards of the Ministry of Public Works and Municipality and the National Guards who attacked the residents of al-Fadhel, killing and injuring a number of innocent people. The Newspaper said nothing about the Baathists and al-Qaeda's armed men who have been attacking and terrorizing innocent civilians for many months. The President of the Newspaper's Administrative Board is the Vice-President of the Republic!

Tuesday, 17 July

Seventeenth of July has been a very depressing day for me, since 2004. On this very day, my own cousin lost his life in a car bomb attack. He left behind a widow and four children.

I was a bit unwell. I caught flu from my wife but, of course, she denied it. The internet system was not working properly.

It was another recruitment day for young Iraqis to join the army. Therefore, the National Guards blocked most of the roads and Bab al-Mudham Bridge in the early morning. We were forced again to use al-Jamhoriya Street, where the snipers are active. National Guards' presence leads usually to chaos on the roads. They intervene in everything,

including the traffic. Their only expertise is the use of guns, not in professional manner for most of the time. They open fire without a reason. They seem very nervous and treat civilians badly.

One of our employees had an operation. She needed some blood before the operation. Her blood group was O+. Luckily, the INLA's telephone operator, who had the same blood group, agreed to accompany her to the hospital for a blood transfusion.

There were widespread rumors that the Minister would return to his office.

A library worker approached me before I leave, informing that her family received a death threat from some Shi'i militia, and as precautionary measure, she decided to go to Syria for one month, and if the situation did improve in her neighborhood (i.e. al-Dorah), she would extend her time off for another year. She asked me to grant one-month unpaid time off. I gave her two weeks' paid leave and two weeks' unpaid leave. She kept crying while we were talking in a very hot corridor.

Wednesday, 18 July,

It was a quiet day. Most of the bombs attacks took place away from the INLA, though sporadic exchanges of fire could be heard during the morning.

The internet system was not working properly for the third day running. My health was deteriorating; I felt a lot of pain in my throat, left ear, eyes and head.

Thursday, 19 July

Around 80% of the INLA's staff received their monthly salaries. The rest of the staff would receive their salaries on Sunday. The reason for this was that the deteriorated security situation prevented our accountants from entering the Bank to withdraw the remaining salaries. Some members of the staff were not happy about the delay.

The first programme of our joint cultural project with al-Rafedain TV was recorded at the INLA. The programme focused on traditional Baghdadi music, known as al-Maqam.

I was very exhausted by midday, as I was very ill. I told nobody about my deteriorating health including my wife. My secretary advised me to rest at home. So I left my office a bit early.

I knew that there was a large military build up in Bab al-Mudham. Iraqi Army and US patrols were camping the area. Soon, US Apache helicopters joined in by flying very low above Bab al-Mudham and the surrounding areas. The heavy military presence lasted until 15.30.

Friday, 20 July

My brother called me from London. He just wanted to make sure that my family and I were fine. He conveyed to me best wishes from my friends, who live in London. I asked him to do the same. I informed him that my sister and her family were forced to leave their house in al-Jehad district, because of the spiralling sectarian violence in their neighborhood.

I spent most of the day resting. My health was as bad as the day before. My wife asked me to see a doctor, when she noticed I was coughing a lot. I told her I would be alright. I thought I had flu. It usually takes four days to beat it. But this one did not seem to go away.

Saturday, 21 July

My health was not good.

Most Iraqis stayed at home hoping to watch the football match between the national teams of Iraq and Vietnam. Iraq won the match and was through to the semi-final. People were extremely happy; old and young celebrated the victory outdoors.

Sunday, 22 July

My health was worse than the day before. I was forced to stay at home. Thus, for the first time since my appointment in 2003, some illness has prevented me from going to my office. A number of my staff called me, just to make sure that I was fine.

At 17.05, five mortars landed on our area. They shook the house violently. I asked my wife to come downstairs for safety reasons.

According to the INLA's security report, at 15.30, a bomb exploded near Bab al-Mudham. The night witnessed

air attacks on nearby areas.

Monday, 23 July

According to the INLA's security report, at 3.30 al-Haifa Street was the scene of armed clashed between the army and an armed group. The fighting did not last long.

A bomb exploded just before we arrived to Bab al-Mudham. The scene was chaotic. The National Guards were nervous and uneasy. When our car was trying to enter the temporarily road, my driver and a road policeman began to argue with each other. While I was trying to calm the situation, the National Guards began to open fire at random and then physically assaulted two of my staff. As I was trying in vain to explain to the National Guards it was just a simple misunderstanding between two men and that there was no need to use guns or open fire, they pointed their guns at me, and even began to shoot at close range. They tried to frighten me, and prevent me from helping two of our staff who were viciously attacked by the unruly National Guards. Our two men were taken handcuffed to the nearby building and were both were tortured by the National Guards. I asked the INLA's Council to meet with a view to discuss the National Guards' attack on me and on a number of our staff. At the end of the meeting, we agreed to issue a statement, in which we condemned the behaviour of the National Guards, demanded the Minister of Defense to set-up an investigation committee and to apology in person. Although we were warned that it was extremely dangerous to criticize the National Guards in public, we decided to send copies of our statements to all Iraqi newspapers. We contacted the Ministry of Culture, inviting its spokesman to issue a statement.

Tuesday, 24 July

Although I was very ill, I went to my office to complete my paperwork. I headed the first meeting of a Ministerial Committee that was established to investigate the way in which the Ministry of Culture implemented its internet project. The meeting lasted three hours, at the end of which I was totally exhausted.

I was informed that the editors of most newspapers were afraid of mentioning the Monday incident. They did not want to annoy the military establishment. The unruly National Guards have turned themselves increasingly into true thugs. They can beat up and extort anybody at any place and at anytime.

Wednesday, 25 July

I discovered that al-Zamman was the only newspaper that mentioned the Monday incident and quoted our statement. Al-Faiha' TV channel mentioned the incident in its news bulletin. I did not give up, and I invited two Iraqi TV channels to my office where I made another statement in which I condemned the brutal actions of the National Guards and held the Minister of Defense the responsibility for what had happened on Monday.

Soon after the interview, I went directly to my home, as I was still unwell.

In the afternoon, like rest of my countrymen, I watched the football match between Iraq and South Korea. Iraq won the match and was thus through to the final for the first time in its history. There were widespread celebrations on the streets. Unfortunately, as a result of two car bombs attacks, more than 150 people were either killed or injured. Most the victims were children and young men, who died while celebrating the victory of Iraq 's football national team. The forces of darkness of terror are trying now to assassinate our laughs and smiles.

Thursday, 26 July

It was exceptionally hot day.

Al-Sabah newspaper published my article in which I called upon the Prime Minister to help the INLA with it's a huge task to recover the archival collections of the former regime's repressive institutions. I also called for the formation of a national committee to deal with the issue from historical and human rights point of view. If the government does pay attention to my article, I will publish another article in which I will name all the political parties, organizations, ministries and politicians who violated Iraqi archival legislation.

Friday, 27 July

I stayed at home doing nothing, except resting. But, my health did not improve.

According to INLA's daily security report, a number of mortars landed near our building around 16.00. Fortunately, no one was hurt. At 23.00, the army clashed with some armed men. The sporadic exchanges of fire lasted until 4.00 the next day.

Saturday, 28 July

I was very ill and weak. I was not able to eat or to drink easily. Therefore, I asked a close friend of mine to accompany me when visiting a nearby clinic. The specialist diagnosed my illness, and handed me a long list of medicine which I had to take during day.

Sunday, 29 July

There were some big explosions near Bab al-Mudham in the early morning.

It was another hot day. People were all talking about the big football match between Iraq 's national team and its Saudi counterpart. It was the final. Iraqis, men and women, old and young, wanted no less than victory. I was optimistic that we would win. Victory and winning the Asian National Cup would boost our people morale. Iraqis, regardless of their race, religious and age, were crying of joy every time our national team beats another country. Deep down in my heart I knew people' dreams would come true.

I went to the Green Zone with a close friend of mine. I was not well enough to go but I had an interview which had to be made. My Secretary, contacted me, asking why I did not show up. I told her that would be at my office as soon as I complete my paperwork. It took us a long time to leave the Green Zone. So I was not able to go to my office. As there was no electricity or water, the INLA's staff decided to go home at 12.00, after taking permission from my office. My driver was waiting for me, when I left the Green Zone. I was not in good health at all. My colleague decided to wait for his car. The main roads were half-empty; as people went straight to their homes to watch the match of their lives. To prevent further terrorist attacks on innocent civilians in case Iraq wins the Asian Cup, the government imposed a partial curfew on all vehicles. I was exhausted when arriving to my home. At 16.00, I tuned on the TV. The football match started at 16.30. There was nobody outside. All people were inside their houses watching their national team playing the arch enemy Saudi Arabia . From the start the Iraqis dominated the match. Iraq scored the only goal of the match 20 minutes before the end. People poured into the streets celebrating the victory. People ignored the curfew; they just wanted to be happy to dance to run to scream to be free of shackles, notably bombs. Iraq as a whole was celebrating; Kurds and Arabs, Sunnis and Shi'is, Muslims and Christians. Football united a nation at a time when worthless politicians failed to unite even their own communities, which they claim to represent.

Monday, 30 July

It was another hot day. I was not in good health. We had no electricity, water or internet. Yet, everybody was smiling, because Iraq 's national football team won the Asian Nations' Cup the day before. Some of the staff was busying distributing sweets and refreshment among their colleagues. We made an 8-meter long banner in which the INLA's staff said thank you to the Iraq National Team. But, it was not a happy day for everybody; Miss. E, who works at the British Archival collections, phoned her colleagues, saying that her younger brother died in his bed in front of her yesterday night. He was not even sick. Her mother was still in hospitable suffering from various illnesses. The bad news did not stop there. A ruthless sniper injured the daughter of Mr. A, who is our creative carpenter. She was shot in the back in a very critical area. Doctors were hesitant about removing the bullet from her back. Everybody was involving in helping our dear carpenter with money. The INLA's administration would help him with the cost of the operation.

I offered my condolences to the head of the INLA's security personnel concerning the death of his nephew on Wednesday. The nephew was killed during a car bomb, while he was celebrating with his friends the victory of the National Team.

I was informed that another library worker was forced to leave her house in al-Saidiyah district, after her family received a death threat.

There were rumors that the Ministry of Finance was thinking about freezing the annual budgets of the Ministry of Culture and the General Directorates. The reasons were

unknown. I informed my colleagues, if the Ministry of Finance decided to freeze our budget, we would go on strike indefinitely.

As the hot weather was unbearable I asked my staff to go home. No one was able to work under such severe conditions.

Tuesday, 31 July

It was another hot day. We were lucky, as electricity returned at 8.30. Most districts of Baghdad had no electricity, including the area where I live.

The receptionist, who lost his son a few months ago, came to my office. He explained that he received another death threat, and that he had to look for another house for his family. He needed some time off. I was informed that one of our receptionists, who was 59 years old, died of some illness.

Mrs. E, from the Administration Department, told me that a Shi'i militia came to her house, demanding that one of her sons had to join the militia. Mrs. and husband are both Sunnis. She asked me to help her. I told her she could bring her son with her to the INLA, where he could help the staff of the binding unit. She agreed to the idea.

I toured the rooms of the Micrographic Department. I was surprised to learn that in spite of having no electricity and the closure of the INLA for several days, the staff of the department was able to shoot more than 17 thousands documents. It has been the highest figure since early 2007.

Statistics for the Impact of Sectarian violence on the INLA's Staff, July 2007

- ≡ 6 threats and displacement of Staff
- ≡ 3 damages to property (one burnt-down house burnt and two hijacked long vehicles)
- ≡ 2 unlawful arrest and torture by the National guards
- ≡ 1 unlawful death of close relative

Last Note

There will be no Diary any more. The real reason is that I feel guilty about writing it. For sometime now, I have felt deep-down that I have been exploiting the tragedies and sacrifices of my staff, especially those who lost their lives. I discovered that by writing the diary I put a very heavy moral burden on my shoulders; as if I have been emotionally blackmailing the readers. I do strongly believe that I have no right to do so. I seize this opportunity to apologize sincerely to everybody.

But I would like to thank a lot of people who sent their messages of support, which my staff and I truly appreciate.

I would also like to express my gratefulness to the British Library, Britain's Society of Archivists and the Spanish newspaper *El País* for publishing the Diary on their websites.

* * *

June 26, 2015

February 26, 2015, was my last day at the INLA. The new minister of culture made unintelligent changes, as a result of which I was transferred to the Ma'moun Publishing and Translation House. Many of my staff, especially the young ones, sought to organize a protest against the minister. I asked them not to do so, as I feared that they would be severely punished by the ignorant minister.

Al-Ma'moun directorate general was on the edge of collapsing, due to long years of ill-management and widespread corruption. What anger me even more is that the former incompetent and corrupt director of al-Ma'moun took my place at the INLA. The minister took his decision without consulting his advisors, his two under-secretaries or the director generals. For months, he refused to hold any regular meeting with the staff of the ministry. In theory, the Council of the Ministry is the highest decision making body. To make matter worse, the minister posted his decision on the face-book, before informing the director generals. Posting the decision on the face-book was extremely childish and immoral action.

Unfortunately, I was the only director who publically denounced the minister's actions and his arbitrary decision for having no legal basis. The minister needed the approval of the Council of Ministers in writing before making any changes at director generals' level. I was the only director who demanded the minister to justify his decision at an official meeting. He refused. He was truly afraid of any confrontation which would definitely embarrass him. Consequently, I refused to attend any official meeting that would not discuss the issue of the changes. Few days later, I asked the Council of Ministers in writing to accept my retirement request. One month later, the Council reluctantly granted me its official approval.

Before leaving the INLA, I toured all departments one by one to thank and say good-byes to all of my staff. It was very heart-breaking to see my staff in tears. The event was witnessed by the well-known journalist, Jane Arraf, and the crewmen of al-Jazirra TV channel, who came earlier to interview me regarding ISIS' destruction of libraries in Mosul. I spent 11 years and three months at the INLA. I have many happy memories and many more sad ones. My staff achieved the impossible under extremely difficult conditions and I am truly proud that I was part of it.

Dr. Saad Eskander.

Original Saad Eskander INLA's blog posts:

<http://www.webarchive.org.uk/wayback/archive/20100427123118/http://www.bl.uk/iraqdiary.html>

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