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**The Unheard Voices of Al-Intifadah Al-Shabaaniyah:
An Exploration of the 1991 Uprising and America's Betrayal Through the Testimonies of
Iraqi Participants Residing in America**

Zainab Alhussainy

Senior Honors Thesis

PS 4955

Supervisor: Professor Marinova

Wayne State University Irvin D. Honors College

Dedication

To my late mother, who was only a child during the days of the uprising. And to my late great grandfather, whose pivotal role in the uprising and fight for justice continues to inspire me every day.

I also dedicate this thesis to the memory of the thousands of martyrs who valiantly fought against an oppressive regime for justice, exhibiting unparalleled bravery and unwavering resilience. May their sacrifices never be forgotten and may their legacy continue to inspire future generations.

Acknowledgments

I extend my deepest appreciation to the Iraqi community for their continued support throughout my research journey. Their invaluable insights and feedback have been critical to the success of this thesis. I am also immensely grateful to my interviewees, who generously shared their stories and experiences with me. Without their participation, this thesis would not have been possible.

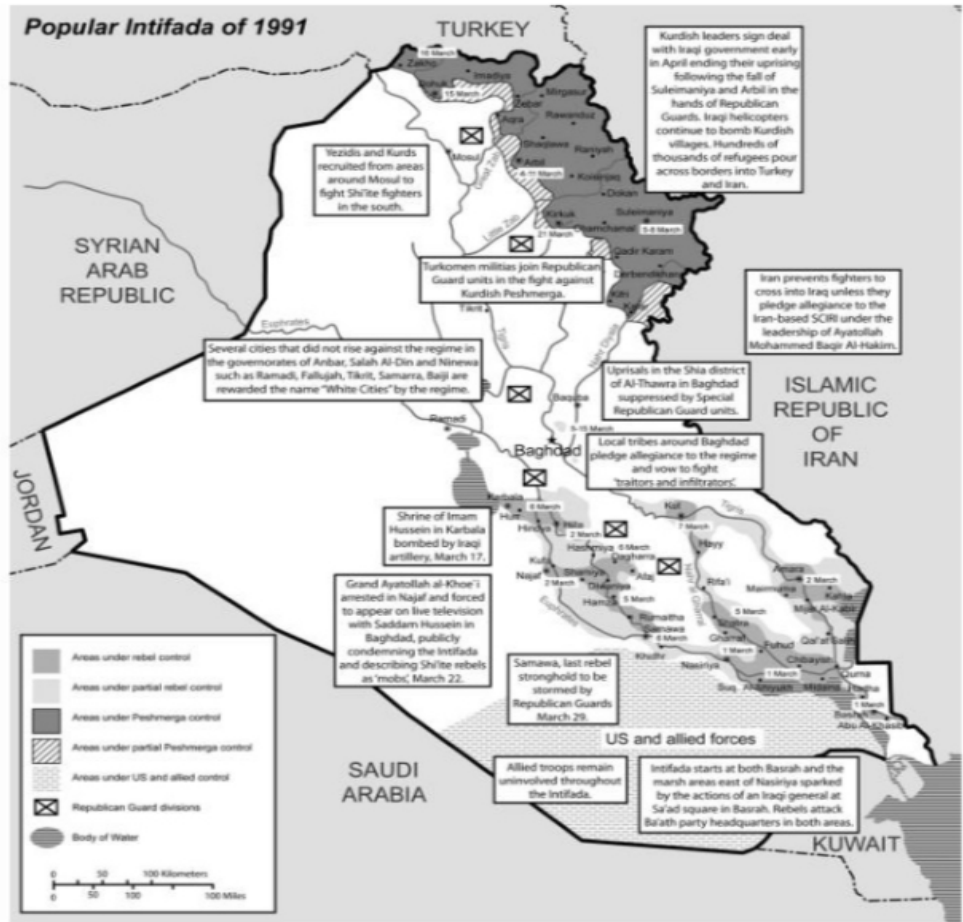
To my friends and family, thank you for your continued encouragement and support throughout my months of researching and writing. A special thanks to my grandfather, who spent countless hours providing me with resources and assisting with translations.

Finally, I would like to thank Professor Marinova for her guidance and expertise throughout my research process. Also, I would like to thank Wayne State University and the Irvin D. Reid Honors College for providing me with an outstanding academic environment and the resources necessary to complete this thesis.

Preface:

As an Iraqi American, I grew up hearing stories of the 1991 uprising in Iraq from members of the Iraqi community in Michigan. Despite its significance as one of the first uprisings against a dictator in the Middle East, this piece of history is often overlooked. In my thesis, I conduct in-depth research on the southern parts of Iraq and examine why and how people living under the tyranny of Saddam Hussein and the Ba'athist regime were able to come together and revolt. Using oral history, I interview mothers, young men, and children who lived through the uprising in various cities in Southern Iraq, learning about the torment they faced before, during, and after the uprising. Despite being repressed and violently restrained from organizing, the people of Southern Iraq were still able to revolt in a mass uprising. However, the lack of involvement from the United States was detrimental to the uprising and its participants, allowing Saddam's dictatorship to continue for another twelve years. The betrayal felt by many when the United States did not aid them in the uprising resulted in innocent lives lost, human rights being violated, and civilians left alone to stand against Saddam's tyranny. The brutal counterattack by Saddam's regime resulted in the death of 30,000-60,000 civilians in the South. Survivors of the uprising carry this history with them and suffer from PTSD, depression, and anxiety. My thesis aims to provide a better understanding and outlook of this uprising by hearing from these survivors.

MAP OF THE 1991 Uprising



¹ Marashi and Sammy Salama, *Iraq's armed forces: an analytical history* (London, Routledge, 2008) 183.

Methodology:

To conduct this thesis, a mixed-methods approach was used. Secondary sources were primarily used to gather historical context and information on America's role in Southern Iraq during the period of interest. Additionally, to capture the perspectives and experiences of individuals who lived through the events, oral history interviews were conducted with residents of various cities and provinces in southern Iraq. The importance of oral history lies in its ability to preserve personal narratives and lived experiences that may not be captured in written records or official documents. The interviews were primarily conducted in Arabic and were recorded, transcribed, and translated for analysis. By combining secondary sources with oral history interviews, this study aims to provide a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the events that took place in southern Iraq during the period of interest.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Saddam and the Ba'athist party's Rise to power:

The historical context for the 1991 uprising in Iraq can be traced back to the rise of Saddam Hussein to power. At the age of twenty, Hussein joined the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party (ABSP), a radical, anti-Western group dedicated to establishing a united Arab socialist state. In 1959, the party attempted to assassinate Iraqi leader General Abdul Karim Kassem, who had overthrown King Faisal II the previous year. Hussein participated in the failed operation and was sentenced to death. He later fled Iraq but returned when the Ba'athists seized power in 1968. Hussein was appointed deputy chairman of the Revolutionary Command Council and became President of Iraq in 1979 after the resignation of Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr.² Hussein's authoritarian rule was characterized by human rights abuses and suppression of dissent, which caused widespread suffering and discontent among the Iraqi people. The invasion of Iran in 1980 and the subsequent Iran-Iraq War drained Iraq's resources and damaged its economy, with little benefit to the Iraqi people. Similarly, Saddam's decision to invade Kuwait in 1990 led to a worldwide trade embargo and further economic hardship for Iraqis. Despite the crushing defeat in the Gulf War, Saddam continued to cling to power through a combination of repression and a cult of personality. The 1991 uprising was a response to this repression and to the regime's

² Sassoon, *Saddam Hussein's Ba'ath Party*, 16-31.

failure to address the needs and aspirations of the Iraqi people, which had been fueled by longstanding grievances.

The Religious Makeup of the Iraqi population:

Iraq is known for its religious and ethnic diversity despite being an overwhelmingly Muslim country. It is estimated that over 95% of the population is Muslim, with the majority adhering to either the Shia or Sunni branch of Islam. The Shia Muslims make up approximately 55-60% of the population, while Sunnis represent 35-40%. However, the Sunni population is further divided among various ethnic groups, including Arabs, Kurds, and Turkmen. The Christian population, which is relatively small, constitutes about 3% of the total population and is divided among different groups such as Chaldeans, Assyrians, and others.³ It is worth noting that Iraq is home to some of Shia Islam's most important institutions, clerics, and historically significant sites. The holy cities of Najaf and Karbala, located in Iraq, are particularly significant for Shia Muslims worldwide. Najaf is home to the shrine of Imam Ali, the first Shia Imam, while Karbala is the site of the martyrdom of Imam Hussein, the third Shia Imam. Additionally, other important Shia shrines and institutions are located in cities such as Kadhimiya, Samarra, and Baghdad. These sites hold immense spiritual and historical significance for Shia Muslims and have played a significant role in shaping the religious and cultural landscape of the region.

The Assassination of Prominent Shia Figures:

The assassination of Grand Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr and his sister Amina in 1980 was a significant event in Iraqi history. Ayatollah al-Sadr was a prominent Shiite cleric and a vocal critic of Saddam Hussein's regime. He advocated for the rights of the Iraqi people and called for an end to the dictatorship. Amina was also known as a civil rights activist and defender of women's rights.

In March 1980, Ayatollah al-Sadr and his sister Amina were arrested by Saddam Hussein's security forces. They were both executed on April 8th of 1980, along with several of

³ Smock, D. R. (2013). *Religious politics in Iraq*. United States Institute of Peace. <https://www.usip.org/publications/2003/05/religious-politics-iraq>

Ayatollah al-Sadr's supporters. The exact circumstances surrounding their deaths remain unclear, but it is widely believed that they were tortured and killed on the orders of Saddam Hussein.

The assassination of Ayatollah al-Sadr and his sister Amina was a clear attempt to silence dissent and suppress opposition to Saddam Hussein's regime. It sparked outrage among the Iraqi people, particularly the Shia community, and further solidified the regime's reputation for brutality and repression. The assassination of Ayatollah Mohammed Baqir al-Sadr and his sister Amina was seen as an attempt by Saddam Hussein to assert his authority and send a message to the Shia community in Iraq.⁴ Georges Sada, who was a general under the regime, described the assassination as a way for Saddam to demonstrate that no one, not even a respected figure like a grand ayatollah, could stand in his way.

Despite the violent suppression of opposition, Ayatollah al-Sadr's legacy has lived on. He is still revered by many Iraqis, particularly Shiites, as a symbol of resistance against oppression and tyranny. His teachings and philosophy continue to inspire those who seek to bring about change and democracy in Iraq.

The Uprising:

The uprising was named Al-Intifadah Al-Shabaaniyah after the Islamic month of Sha'ban when it began and quickly spread to 14 provinces in Iraq within a few days. The exact location of the uprising's origin is uncertain, with conflicting sources providing varying accounts. According to some sources, the rebellion started in the Sunni towns of Abu'l Khasib and Zubair, located about 60-70 kilometers south of Basra. This occurred on the last day of February 1991, just three days before the formal Iraqi surrender to General Schwarzkopf at Safwan. The rebellion quickly gained momentum and spread to other cities, including Basra on March 1, Suq al-Shuyukh on March 2, and Nasiriyah, Najaf, and Kufa on March 4. Karbala joined the rebellion on March 7, followed by Amara, Hilla, and Kut.⁵ However, other accounts believe that

⁴ Sada (2006), *Saddam's Secrets*, (76-77).

⁵ Al-Jabbar, F. A. (1992). *Why the uprisings failed*. Middle East Report, (8)
<https://doi.org/10.2307/3012605>

the initial spark of the uprising can be traced back to Basra, Iraq's second-largest city and main port, where the first tank was withdrawn from Kuwait and positioned in the Saad neighborhood.⁶

On the first day of March, the soldiers operating the tank began firing at government buildings and Saddam's party headquarters. This event marked the most significant incident in Iraq at the time and served as the catalyst for the uprising that subsequently spread to other cities. In Basra, the rebels took control of all government buildings, including the prisons where Ba'athists and officials in Saddam's government were held. This uproar spread to 14 provinces across Iraq's southern region. In Najaf, news had spread about the events in Basra and that the uprising had begun, and it is estimated that the Uprising began on the third day of March in the holy city. In response, Saddam brought in his military to Najaf, which was seen as a threat due to its status as the main center for the Shia of Iraq. It was also home to many of the highest scholars followed by the Shia community. On March 11th of 1991 Hussein Kamel, who was the son-in-law of Saddam Hussein and the supervisor of the Republican Guard, led the attack against the holy cities of Najaf and Karbala. Some fighters were reportedly hesitant to continue fighting into downtown Karbala due to the respect they held for the holy shrines. It was during this time that Hussein Kamel launched an attack on the Dome of Imam Hussain to demonstrate his willingness to go to great lengths to retake the city. The shrines of Najaf and Karbala are not only religious sites but also symbols of faith, resistance, and unity for Shia Muslims. They are a source of inspiration and devotion, holding a deep emotional connection for millions of believers worldwide. This incident created significant unrest and had a profound impact on the region and its community.

By April 1, the 1991 uprising in the southern region of Iraq had been brutally suppressed, resulting in a tragic humanitarian crisis. The crackdown led to a mass exodus of approximately two million refugees fleeing the violence and seeking safety in neighboring countries. Tragically, the death toll from the uprising reached over 100,000,⁷ reflecting the sheer scale of the human cost of this devastating event. The aftermath of the uprising left behind a shattered community, with countless families mourning the loss of their loved ones and struggling to rebuild their lives

⁶ Al-Tabra'iyan, S. A., *Al-Inifadhah Al-Shabaaniya*. (Original work published in Arabic).

⁷ Eric Goldstein, *Endless torment: The 1991 uprising in Iraq and its aftermath* (New York 1992): Abbas Alnasrawi, 'Economic devastation, Underdevelopment and Outlook', in: Fran Hazelton (ed.) *Iraq since the Gulf war: prospects for democracy* (London 1994) 90.

amidst the devastation. The mass graves found in 2003 were a grim testament to the brutality of Saddam Hussein's rule, where tens of thousands of people were killed and buried in secret, often without proper identification or acknowledgement of their deaths. The revelation of these graves during the US-led invasion shook the nation and brought to light the magnitude of the human rights abuses that had occurred under the former regime. It also intensified the desire for accountability and justice for the victims and their families. As recently as 2022, the discovery of mass graves in Najaf, Iraq, has brought to light the continuing impact of past atrocities. In this instance, 15⁸ bodies were found in a mass grave, and the remains were traced back to the uprising.

America's involvement:

At the time, the United States was heavily involved in the region, having just led a successful coalition to oust Iraqi forces from Kuwait. However, despite calling on the Iraqi people to rise up against Hussein, the US government failed to provide any significant assistance to the rebels and betrayed their cause.

We see this call as noted by the Council on Foreign Relations that, on February 15, 1991, four weeks into Operation Desert Storm, President George H.W. Bush made a public address in which he encouraged the Iraqi military and the Iraqi people to take action against Saddam Hussein. According to the Council on Foreign Relations, Bush used identical language twice,⁹ first at the White House and then later at a Raytheon defense plant in Massachusetts, stating: "I call on the Iraqi military and the Iraqi people to take matters into their own hands and force Saddam Hussein, the dictator, to step aside." This message was widely broadcasted through international television and radio channels, allowing it to reach a broad audience in Iraq. Additionally, coalition aircraft dropped leaflets in Iraq, urging Iraqi soldiers and civilians to "fill the streets and alleys and bring down Saddam Hussein and his aides."

⁸ "Iraq Exhumes Remains of Saddam-Era Victims from Mass Grave." *Al Arabiya English*, 14 May 2022, english.alarabiya.net/News/middle-east/2022/05/14/Iraq-exhumes-remains-of-Saddam-era-victims-from-mass-grave.

⁹ Zenko, M. (2016). *Remembering the Iraqi uprising twenty-five years ago*. Council on Foreign Relations. <https://www.cfr.org/blog/remembering-iraqi-uprising-twenty-five-years-ago>

In a memoir jointly written by George HW Bush and his national security advisor Brent Scowcroft,¹⁰ Bush explained that the call for the Iraqi people to overthrow Saddam Hussein was made impulsively. In the next paragraph, Scowcroft described it as an impulsive ad lib and claimed that it was unfair to say that Bush encouraged the Iraqi people to rise against Saddam and then failed to come to their aid. He argued that they did not think it could be done by anyone outside the military and that they never attempted to incite the general population. He further stated, "It is a stretch to imagine that a routine speech given in Washington would have reached the Iraqi malcontents and motivated the subsequent actions of the Shiites and Kurds."

Peter W. Galbraith, a former staff member of the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, challenges Scowcroft's claims¹¹ in his book *The End of Iraq*. Galbraith asserts that while the Raytheon speech may have seemed routine, President George H.W. Bush's position as the leader of the United States during a time of war with Iraq made his call for Saddam's ouster anything but routine. The U.S. government even broadcast the call on government-run Voice of America and CIA-run clandestine radio stations that reached the Kurdish and Shiite populations in Iraq. Galbraith argues that the Kurds and Shiites took the president's words seriously and acted upon them. Galbraith suggests that the Bush administration's attempt to downplay their responsibility in the events that followed the call for a revolt is understandable given the outcome.

A plethora of sources attests to the US's failure to provide substantial aid during the 1991 Iraqi uprising. One such source is the testimony retired four-star general and former Democratic Presidential candidate Wesley Clark's speech¹² where he criticized the course of U.S. foreign policy in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks at the Commonwealth Club of California. During his speech, Clark recounted a conversation he had with Paul Wolfowitz in 1991, who at the time was the number three official at the Pentagon. Clark said, "I said to Paul, 'Mr. Secretary, you must be pretty happy with the performance of the troops in Desert Storm.' And he said, 'Yeah, but not really.' He said, 'Because the truth is we should have gotten rid of Saddam Hussein, and we didn't.' And this was just after the Shia uprising in March of '91, which

¹⁰ Bush, G., & Scowcroft, B. (2011). *A world transformed*.

¹¹ Galbraith, P. (2006), *The end of Iraq*, (44-45)

¹² YouTube. (2007). *Wes Clark - America's Foreign Policy "Coup."* YouTube. Retrieved May 12, 2023, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TY2DKzastu8&t=274s>.

we had **provoked** and then we kept our troops on the **sidelines and didn't intervene.**" To further demonstrate the lack of aid provided by the United States during the uprising in Iraq, Peter W. Galbraith's book *The End of Iraq* also provides compelling evidence. According to Galbraith, American troops in Iraq could have intervened and stopped the Republican Guards, which would have saved the lives of thousands of people. However, they were under strict orders not to intervene. Additionally, Galbraith includes an email from¹³ Patrick Lowe, an American soldier who witnessed the atrocities of the uprising. In the email, Lowe laments, "I should have not just sat there and watched. I should have fought for them. I should have done something, anything to stop the bloodbath. We are sworn to protect, and yet we sat, I sat and watched hundreds of thousands die in the most horrible ways possible." This direct quote highlights the devastating impact of the United States' lack of intervention during the uprising and the ethical questions it raises about the responsibility of those in power to protect innocent lives.

In his books *The Politics of Diplomacy*¹⁴ and *Work Hard, Study, and Keep Out of Politics*,¹⁵ James Baker III, who served as the United States Secretary of State under George H.W. Bush from 1989 to 1992, admits to the genuine concern of Saddam Hussein's neighbors and the Bush administration that Iraq might fragment in unpredictable ways if Saddam was removed from power. They feared that this would play into the hands of the clerics in Iran, who could export their brand of Islamic fundamentalism with the help of Iraq's Shiites, and quickly transform themselves into the dominant regional power. However, by not taking the time to understand the intention of the rebels, their genuine desire for freedom and democracy in Iraq, and the consequences of allowing Saddam to use tanks and helicopters to quell the uprising, the US and neighboring countries' assumptions inevitably led to another twelve years of tyranny and brutality for the people of Iraq under Saddam Hussein. Baker was struck by a letter he received from rebels in the North, in which a few lines read, "All Iraqis were waiting for freedom and democratic regime in Iraq. But the mistakes and wrong decisions that allowed the Iraqi regime to use tanks and helicopters caused this tragedy." A powerful statement highlighting the consequences of the US government's decisions.

¹³ Galbraith, P. (2006), *The end of Iraq*, (47-49).

¹⁴ James, B. A. & Defrank, T.M., (1995). *The Politics of Diplomacy: Revolution, War and Peace:1989-1992*. (431-438)

¹⁵ Baker, J. A., & Fiffer, S. (2008). "*Work hard, study-- and keep out of politics!*" (298-299)

The following interviews comprise the first set in this collection and are all from members of one family that come from Al-Shinafiyah located in the Diwaniyah Governorate. Through the experiences and perspectives of a father, a son, a daughter, and granddaughter, we gain insight into the impact of the uprising on different generations within the same family. Their stories offer a glimpse into the complex nature of life during this tumultuous period in Iraqi history.



¹⁶Map highlighting the significant locations during the Intifadah in Al-Shinafiyah

¹⁶ Map provided by the Ibn Sina high school in Shinafiyah, as cited in Taha, A. (2018). *The Intifadah in Shinafiyah: How a small village in Iraq revolted against Saddam Hussein in 1991*. Unpublished undergraduate thesis, Utrecht University. <https://studenttheses.uu.nl/handle/20.500.12932/31097>

The first perspective comes from the late Sayed Mehsin Hussein Alhussainy, also known as Abu Thyab,¹⁷ who passed away in 2018. His story is not an interview, but rather a written account he penned in 2008 about his experiences during the uprising. Abu Thyab was a prominent figure in the Iraqi community in America and his passing was a great loss to many.

Preceding the uprising, life in Al-Shinafiyah was marred by significant difficulties. Authorities considered the town to be one of the hideouts of insurgent groups opposing the government. Consequently, false accusations were leveled against faithful youth, leading to the execution of several individuals, including my cousin, Haider Sayed Mohammed, nephew, Ahmed Mahdi, and the son of Sayed¹⁸ Youssef al-Hakim, as well as Jawad Kazem Hamid and Kazem Thaaban who became martyrs. Our suffering was compounded as time progressed, with the months and years characterized by unrelenting hardship. I was prevented from opening my *mutheef*¹⁹ as well as being barred from managing our Husseiniya, that was constructed by my father in 1968.

The Ba'athist used to call us "the resentful ones." We were a well-known group to them, and we started to meet and gather every night in a certain place. I gathered the sons of the town, and we exchanged ideas and news, and we did not leave until we agreed to another meeting. Then the idea of the uprising began to take shape among us. The Allied forces (The U.S.) gathered in Saudi Arabia, and it became clear to us, based on what we knew about Saddam, his misguided thinking, his arrogance, and his high-handedness, that he would not leave Kuwait except in defeat. As a group, we procured some weapons and initiated our escape from the army in a manner that was both peculiar and exhilarating. The established structures of security and discipline appeared to falter, while the attention of the populace turned towards us, the collective identified by the Ba'athist regime as "the resentful ones."

¹⁷ In Arabic culture, "Abu" (أبو) means "father of" and is commonly used as a prefix before the name of one's eldest son.

¹⁸ The term 'Sayed' has an Arabic origin, meaning 'noble one.' In many countries, it is used as an honorific to signify one's descent from Prophet Muhammad, written in Arabic script as (سيد).

¹⁹ The *Mutheef* is a central feature of traditional Iraqi homes, reflecting the culture of hospitality and guest-hosting. It is a large room or chamber that serves as a communal space for receiving guests, but it is also used for various family activities such as weddings, funerals, and religious events.

One day, I was sitting in a cafe owned by Hajj²⁰ Turkie when the correspondent of the district manager approached me and sat next to me. He was a kind-hearted man committed to his religion. I followed the correspondent to his office where I met the police assistant, Hizal Al-Khazai. He greeted me warmly without hesitation. After drinking tea, the manager approached me and asked, "Abu Thyab, what do you think of this situation?" I asked him, "What situation are you referring to?" He replied, "There have been protests in Basra for three days, and the latest news is that Basra has fallen into the hands of the protesters." His words surprised me, and I answered unconsciously, "Has the uprising begun?" He laughed and said, "Do you call it an uprising?" I realized my mistake and corrected myself, not to blow my cover, and said, "The uprising against the Americans and their allies!" The manager and the police assistant laughed, and while we were talking, the security assistant arrived. He seemed uncomfortable with me, so the manager changed the subject to general topics.

The security assistant greeted me by saying, "Good day, Sayed Mehsin, you are here!" I replied, "I have come to the manager's office to obtain a book from the Agricultural Reform Directorate in the province, which would allow me to bring harvesters for the ongoing crop season." The district manager responded, "Please come back tomorrow for the book, sir." Sensing that it was time for me to leave, the security assistant made an unexpected request, saying "Sayed Abu Thyab, we would like to visit you at your place for coffee. Abu Sultan, who is responsible for the team, along with the security assistant and the police assistant, would that be possible?" I responded, "You are always welcome in my home. Whenever you wish to come, I am ready to receive you." After bidding them farewell, I left with the realization that the officials were being unusually friendly to me, and I suspected that there was an ulterior motive. I had to gather my men and tell them that the uprising had been going on in Basra for three days and was about to fall into the hands of the rebels.

The next night, the group of high-ranking Ba'athist officials, including the district manager, the local police assistant, the security assistant, team leader Kazim Munhel, and Sayed Nour, the responsible person for agricultural association visited me at my home. After they settled in, the district manager shared some shocking news, saying that Basra and Nasiriyah had

²⁰ Hajj is an honorific title given to Muslims who have completed the pilgrimage to Mecca, which is one of the Five Pillars of Islam and a religious obligation for able-bodied Muslims who can afford it. The title "Hajj" is usually used as a prefix to a person's name.

fallen into the hands of the protesters, and the situation in Al-Shinafiyah district was unstable, with many fugitives. They expressed their appreciation for my standing among the people of the province and the need to establish security in the district. They believed that I could help calm the situation if there were any movements.

The officials then revealed that they wanted to entrust me with a secret from the government, the party's division headquarters, and the security department, which would elevate my status with the government once the situation had calmed down. They acknowledged my rationality and concern for the people of the province, and they were keen to work with me to bring peace and stability to the region. I replied: "I am one of the people of Al-Shinafiyah, not the head of the people of Al-Shinafiyah. There are people who are older than me and have more influence on the people of the province. We all cooperate to calm the situation, both authorities and residents." The officials agreed with me and then offered to provide me with weapons the following day. I politely declined their offer, reiterating that I was not in a position of authority and did not wish to take on any responsibility beyond being a member of the community. However, they continued to insist that I visit the headquarters in the morning, and I agreed, expressing my hope that everything would go smoothly and that we would succeed in our efforts. At that point, they left, and the young men who had fled the army and were hiding around the house in the orchard came out. When they left, we gathered and analyzed the news and what they meant by their words. The result we reached was that the uprising was indeed underway and had reached the Samawah province. Therefore, we had to prepare for it and share roles on how to control the government headquarters, the party's division, and the security department.

They warned me not to go to the headquarters in the morning for fear of being arrested, but I insisted on going. In the morning, I went to the headquarters and found all the officials present, who handed over the weapons to the people. I received four rifles and an ammunition box, which I distributed among my group. Our joy was indescribable, as we, the "resentful ones" as they called us, now had a say in the council, and they seek our advice. It became a race against time and we spent that night on edge, assigning roles. Each of us knew their place and how to control the government building, the division headquarters, and the security department. By morning, we received news that the province of Najaf had fallen to the rebels, who had taken control of all government centers and party headquarters. In such a critical situation, I had no

choice but to quickly send someone to Al-Hamza to see the situation firsthand and return to us with the utmost speed. Before we could receive news from Al-Hamza, I sent my son Thyab to Najaf to see the situation up close and bring us a fatwa from Ayatollah al-Khoei.

I was sitting waiting in the tailor's shop with my group and their hands on their hearts, fearing that the opportunity would slip away. Once news came to us, I gave them the signal to go to the weapons storage place. At my command, Muhalhil, Khushush, Fahim Thaaban, and Abbas Shamkhi hurriedly ran towards the house of Sayed Aziz where the weapons were kept. As people saw the men running and me rushing behind them, they started rushing after me and asked, "Abu Thyab, what's going on?" I didn't respond much and just said, "God willing, everything will be fine." Then one of them, named Hamza stopped me and asked, "They say the uprising started through the village of Al-Gharb, is that true?" I said, "I don't know." He said, "I'll go close my shop." "Close it," I said.

When people saw him closing his shop, panic began in the street, and people started closing their shops. When my group arrived, they were fully prepared. We left, including Aziz al-Sayed Sahib, Ali al-Sayed Amer, Mahlhal, Nour al-Sayed Sahib, Ali Hamoudi, Abbas Shamkhi, and Khushkush al-Khuzae. I said to Ali al-Sayed Thamer, "Be careful." He replied, "In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful, there is no guardian but Ali." We ran to the government building, and I fired towards the palace, as did my group. When we got close, I saw the street filled with people running with us and chanting, "Down with the criminal Saddam and the Ba'athist regime." In moments, we controlled the building, and there was no resistance to mention. The security directorate and the customs police station were also under our control. My father's Husseiniya was the base for the rebels, and from there, four control points were set up at the entrances to the district. We calmed the situation down and guarded the government departments, schools, and court. The hospital worked normally, but we provided strict security for it, fearing that people might disturb doctors and nurses. Some items were wrongfully stolen from the district director's house, and when I found out, I went there myself to retrieve them safely and returned them to the director's house along with two guards. I also brought him a bag of flour, a bag of rice, and five milk cartons.

Two days after the uprising began, a message was received from the committee formed by Islamic scholar Sayed al-Khoei, may God have mercy on him, requesting a force to go to

Najaf with its center at the Kufa Mosque to receive the army. I led a group of 280 fighters to Najaf, and as we gathered, my sons and relatives were the first to board the cars heading there, taking all the remaining young men under the age of twenty-five. This prompted me to address them through the loudspeaker, telling them that we were going to fight, and we didn't know whether we would return or become martyrs. We would be fighting against an army equipped with heavy weapons, including tanks, artillery, and helicopters. I told them, "Whoever is afraid for himself or his son, let him stay and not go to Najaf with us." As the cars moved towards Najaf, women cheered and men shouted, showing their support. When we arrived in Kufa, we found the heroic people of Rumaytha in front of us, led by the late Major Hamid and the war officer deputy, Abdul Ali Abbadi al-Thalami. First Lieutenant Abbas Abu Derb and First Lieutenant Abbas Hassan were also with us, and we gathered at Masjid Alkufa to coordinate among ourselves. We were forced to divide the fighters, with some stationed north of the Sahla Mosque and the other group stationed in the Kiri Sa'ada river. In the morning, six fighters, including myself, went to meet with Sayed al-Khoei, may God have mercy on him.

We entered and found the late Sayed Jaafar Bahr al-Ulum and three officers and four clerics. The late Mohammad Taqi al-Khoei greeted us and we sat down. I had previous knowledge of Sayed Bahr Al-Ulum, and when we asked about Sayed al-Khoei, we were informed that he was sick and could not meet anyone, and Sayed Bahr Al-Ulum had delegated authority for him. As I was the oldest among us, I spoke to Sayed Jaafar and said, "Our leader, we are 600 fighters from Al-Rumaytha and Al-Shinafiyah at the request of the committee formed by Sayed al-Khoei to defend Najaf and Al-Kufa." He was reading the Quran and holding a gun between his legs, and he said, "As far as I know, the people of Al-Rumaytha and Al-Shinafiya are brothers and one tribe. Do you have officers with you?" I said, "Yes, we have three military officers with us." He replied, "My dear leader, you coordinate among yourselves, and we will pray for your victory." After that, we left and returned to Masjid Alkufa where we made it our base. Each of us joined his group. Abbas Abu Derb and I were in the Al-Sahla Mosque sector with 270 fighters, and Raed Hamid and Lieutenant Abbas were in Kiri Sa'ada with the rest of the rebels. There were skirmishes between us and the army, and four fighters were wounded over four days. On the fifth night, Raed Hamid suggested that we launch an attack on the advancing tank convoy towards Al-Sahla. We prepared 120 fighters who I selected from those whom I

relied on. Deputy Lieutenant Abdul Ali al-Dhalami was leading us. Before we set off, I checked on the fighters, got to know them, recorded their names, and encouraged them.

A young man under the age of 20 came to me and said, "Sir, please let me join you." I asked him, "Who are you, and are you from Al-Rumaytha?" He replied, "No, I am from Al-Kufa, and my name is Ali Mohammed Al-Jubouri." Out of caution and uncertainty, I told him, "You are from Kufa, and you cannot come with us." He replied, "My dear leader, if you see anything suspicious about me, kill me..." Some fighters came to me and said, "He is just one man, what harm can he do? Let him come, and we will keep a close eye on him." So, I then allowed him to join us. While waiting for the sun to set, I saw someone wearing a black robe and carrying a sack. So, I called out to him, "Who is this holding a sack?" He replied, "I'm Turki Kazim Al-Aradi!" I asked him, "Where is your weapon?" He replied, "I don't have one, my brother and I have only one rifle, and this sack is my weapon!" Knowing that he needed a weapon, I told him, "Turki, you can go back!" He said, "No, by God, I won't go back! I see the enemy one kilometer away, and I came here to achieve martyrdom. If I don't get martyred, then I'll carry our wounded or martyrs on my back and fight with their weapons. How can I go back, uncle?" His bravery moved me, and I began to weep.

When darkness fell, we began to prepare and sneak into the enemy's camp. At exactly 3 a.m., our surprise attack began with rocket launchers. We burned three tanks and disabled one, while the fifth one fled with fire burning inside. At 5 a.m., the fighters returned to the pre-agreed gathering place, and we rejoiced in this victory, thanking and praising Allah. After that, I ordered them to disperse and regroup at the river north of the Sahla Mosque. When I checked on the fighters, I found four missing, including my son Muhallil, Ahmed Talib, Abdelkhalik Huwainni, and Ali the young man from Kufa. So I stayed with a senior sheikh from the fighters to wait for the four missing people. At 9 a.m., Muhallil and Ahmed returned and I sent them to their rear positions. One hour later, Ali, the young man from Kufa came with Abdelkhalik, who was wounded in the leg. I was touched by this brave sight, knowing that the day before, I wanted to kick him out and suspected him of being a spy. So, I apologized to him and accepted him, saying, 'Please forgive me son, because Saddam made us doubt even the closest people to us. Please forgive me.'

Then we withdrew to our rear positions. On the evening of this day, the late Major Hamid was martyred, may God have mercy on him. His loss was irreplaceable, and we were deeply saddened by it. We began to run short on food supplies and divided five fruits among each person, and a convoy of the battalion's equipment with six soldiers carrying their weapons and notebooks, was captured by us. The army intensified its aerial surveillance of us, hoping to take advantage of our lack of anti-aircraft resistance. Tanks also advanced towards our positions. Our ammunition was running low, and there were many injuries among us. Sayed Nasser was wounded, Abdullah al-Khuzae was injured, and Jassim Mohammed Jawad and the hero Ali from Kufa were martyred. Additionally, five fighters from Al-Rumaytha were martyred. After this, we decided to withdraw and returned to Al-Shinafiyah on the evening of March 12th 1991. My son Iskandar had also just arrived in Al-Shinafiyah from Baghdad, having walked there on foot. We rested for one day, and those who did not participate in the first campaign urged me to prepare for a second campaign after we obtained weapons, equipment, and food supplies. We prepared three camps, each accommodating forty fighters, including my sons Muhalhil and Iskandar, my nephew Mohammad Sayed Mahmoud, Ammar Sayed Karim, Sayed Tahir Musa, Ali Hamoud, and a group from the Bani A'rith tribe, including the sons of Dihim. They went through the path of Shamiya, but I did not participate in this campaign. The army intercepted them with tanks and helicopters. And so, our fighters used their long-range rifles to advance and attack the army from a kilometer away. However, the helicopters dropped paratroopers behind the fighters, encircling them from the front and back, capturing some of the fighters. These included my dear son Iskandar, Ammar Sayed Karim, Mohammad Sayed Mahmoud, the son of Abbas Mahdi, and the son of Aboud Albu Nasar. Two days after this painful incident, I decided to go and check the location of the battle, hoping to find some of them wounded or killed. Muhalhil and I went and before we reached the confrontation site, we spotted the army advancing towards the location we were heading with its tanks, helicopters, and a convoy of vehicles carrying soldiers who were firing at anything that moved or did not move, including the villages, bridges, schools, poultry farms, and grain stores. When we saw the situation, we returned to Al-Shinafiyah. When we arrived after midnight, we found the army occupying the area, and everyone was fleeing or detained, including many of our fighters and others. We went to the Ayyash tribe and received news of our fighters and learned where they were. We then gathered and our numbers grew. People avoided passing by our hideouts because anyone who

got too close to us was investigated by our fighters as we were now extremely guarded. We entered the province at night and roamed the streets, hoping to encounter a military patrol or one of the infiltrators. We attacked the houses of the party members, but they were empty. When I entered my own house, I found part of it destroyed by grenades, my son Muhalhil's car was burned, all our belongings were looted, as well as fifteen palm trees from our orchard were uprooted. We stayed in this position for a month, raiding the province every other day. Our location was difficult to reach. Tanks or cars could not reach us, only planes. One day in Ramadan, a group of us went hunting, and when we returned we found Sayed Hadi and Sayed Aziz sitting, and after greeting us and drinking coffee with them, Sayed Hadi told me that I must leave this place, he went on to say "the government knows your whereabouts and they will attack you, especially since you are wanted. Everything is recorded in your name, and there are many witnesses against you, only the district manager defended you. We cannot allow you and your group to stay here in this large gathering. If you do not surrender yourself, they will arrest your family and all your women. You must leave this place quickly, we came to warn you." When they left, all the fighters gathered and then decided to flee to Saudi Arabia. Here, I must mention the kindness of the Al-Ayyash family towards us. They opened their homes to provided us with food and bedding, and slaughtered sheep for us. I would like to mention first, Mohammed al-Hajil and the sons of Arwaq Alwan, Sayed Karim Aqrab, Abdulkazim al-Nimah, and Dari al-Khudair al-Khafaji for their high manners, ethics, generosity, and Arab chivalry. They challenged the oppressive authority by sheltering and respecting us and raising our morale.

After that, the journey of suffering began. We gathered women from Al-Rumaytha and Al-Diwaniyah and migrated to Saudi Arabia. It was a difficult journey and an unwanted migration. We stayed for three years in Rafha Desert, and then we went to America, which was the final destination.

This next interview is from the perspective of Mehsin's daughter, Sara Alhussainy, who arrived in America in 1993 and is currently 53 years old.

Prior to the uprising as a college student, I lived in a state of fear and anxiety. The societal atmosphere was one of pervasive surveillance and suppression of free speech. The nation was plagued by insecurity and instability, with the constant threat of conflict hanging over us.

The period prior to the uprising was characterized by a pervasive sense of unease and dread. While I did not actively participate in the uprising, I wholeheartedly supported it and my family's involvement. The uprising represented a collective effort towards securing a brighter future, one in which future generations would not be subjected to the same fear and insecurity that we endured.

As women, our role in the uprising was limited, and we primarily stayed at home to care for the children. Nevertheless, we were steadfast in our support for the cause and remained vigilant in safeguarding the well-being of our families. Reports of the outbreak of unrest in Basra were beginning to circulate. My father, who had assumed a leadership role within our community, regularly held clandestine meetings at our residence, during which he consulted with constituents on their course of action. My father displayed a remarkable demeanor of calmness and consideration, carefully verifying the validity of the news and ensuring the uprising was in accordance with religious principles. To this end, my elder brother was dispatched to consult with religious scholars and ascertain the permissibility of the uprising from a religious perspective. Upon his return, the verdict was positive, with the scholars affirming that the struggle against tyranny was not only permissible, but also a moral obligation. Before my brother could come back with the news, shops had closed down and the uprising had started due to the fear of losing the opportunity to revolt. We had no intention of starting the uprising that afternoon but we all collectively knew it was time to begin. Within a short span of two hours, our group successfully secured control of the local government building. The women in the community were acutely apprehensive for the safety of their loved ones, as they were aware of Saddam's reputation for ruthlessness. This was life or death for us.

The following day, reports reached us of escalating conflict in other cities in the South, prompting the men in our community to depart to offer support. During this period, I had limited interaction with my father, who was consumed by the responsibilities of leadership. I remember the sounds of the army's approach filled the air, causing our home to shake with the noise of missiles. Sleep was a scarce commodity during those tumultuous weeks. As the noises grew louder, it became apparent that the army was closing in on us. Our family, being particularly vulnerable due to my father's role as a leader, was forced to find refuge elsewhere. The night before our departure, the absence of my brother Iskandar became apparent to us. He and my

other brother Muhalhil had been dispatched to another city to participate in the uprising, but they had become separated in the aftermath of a military assault on the rebels. Muhalhil returned home after several days of strenuous travel but was unable to provide any information about the whereabouts of Iskandar. This caused a state of alarm within our household, prompting my father and Muhalhil to return to the city to search for him. Despite their efforts, they were unable to locate Iskandar and information gathered from local residents led them to assume that he had been arrested by the army and incarcerated. At this point in time the women and children were separated from the men, and I was left in a state of uncertainty, not knowing the fate of my father and brothers. Whether they were alive or dead I was clueless.

During the conclusion of the two-week period, a former neighbor approached us, bearing a message from my father. To alleviate our suspicion, my father had given the messenger his watch and a letter as proof of his authenticity. We were instructed to leave our place of refuge and were transported to the outskirts of Iraq, where we spent the night in a tent near a river. The following day, we boarded a small and leaky boat, which we navigated through the darkness. It was a moment of despair and hopelessness, and in this moment, we collectively broke down in tears. The brave men who fought so hard were now in tears, leaving behind our cherished homeland. I recall this period as particularly challenging for my parents, as they were departing while having no information regarding the status of their son, whether he was alive or deceased. Our journey eventually brought us to Rafha, located at the border between Saudi Arabia and Iraq, where we became refugees.

At the outset, there was a sense of optimism among the Iraqi people when it became apparent that the United States would be involved in the effort to overthrow Saddam Hussein. However, this optimism was short-lived as it became clear that the US was not providing adequate support to the uprising. This resulted in a feeling of betrayal among the Iraqi people and a breakdown of trust between them and the US government. Subsequently, when some of the Iraqi people were placed in the US as refugees, they faced a difficult adjustment period. Despite the safety and security provided by the US, we still longed to return to Iraq and continued to protest in the US to advocate for the safety of our loved ones back home. This sense of loss and longing persisted for many years, especially among those who lost family members in the fight for justice. One such individual was my mother who continued to wear black clothing for over

20 years to symbolize her grief over the loss of my brother Iskandar who was never found and eventually labeled as a martyr of the uprising. The aftermath of the uprising has had a lasting impact on us all. I witnessed my parents endure the bereavement of my brother until their passing. Despite losing my brother in the struggle, I still take pride in the stance taken by my father and brothers during the uprising. Their fight for justice and liberty was not only courageous but also served as a source of inspiration for the generations to come.

This next interview comes from the perspective of Mehsin's granddaughter Nora Alhussainy, who was only a 7-year-old child during the uprising. Nora arrived in America in the year 1993 and is now 37 years old.

As a young individual during the period of the uprising, a multitude of events remain ingrained in my recollection. Preceding the onset of the uprising, I was only a first grader and during this time, I distinctly remember there was a significant prevalence of poverty in the region. The populace was afflicted with destitution, so much so that procuring even a single egg for breakfast was a challenge. The allocation of resources had become considerably more strained. Meat, in particular, was a scarce commodity. As a child, I was able to discern that our food options were not optimal, and it was evident that this caused immense stress among adults who were responsible for feeding their families. The reality of not being able to provide adequate nutrition for their children was a cause for concern for many.

As I recall, just before the uprising occurred, the women and children of our household were compelled to vacate the premises due to my grandfather's frequent visitors who were actively involved in the secret planning of the uprising. My grandfather thought it would be safest for us to stay in the home of my maternal grandmother, an elderly woman with minimal involvement in the ongoing activities. During our stay at my grandmother's home, we continued to endure the scarcity of food accompanied by a notable decrease in social interactions such as conversations, laughter, and entertainment through television, among others. This transition to a state of deprivation was unsettling for a child like me, as I was unable to fully comprehend the situation, although the palpable absence of joy and positive interactions was evident. I vividly recall the particular night of which my family experienced the sudden and panicked departure from my grandmother's home. The incident occurred late in the evening, shortly after the call to prayer had been announced, and just as the sun had set, leaving the sky slightly darkened. At that

moment, my grandfather arrived and urgently asked my mother to gather us children and leave the house immediately. The Ba'athist regime was now targeting my grandfather, and anyone related to him for his role in the uprising. My mother was concerned about gathering necessary items such as clothes and food however, my grandfather insisted that we had to depart immediately without taking any possessions besides the clothes on our backs. As we hurriedly made our exit, my mother, in a state of panic, was unable to locate her shoes and left the house barefoot. I distinctly recall my mother's sister frantically chasing after her with a pair of slippers, as this became their hurried farewell. This was a distressing and abrupt farewell that left a lasting impression on me.

We spent that harrowing night walking and continued to walk until sunrise, arriving at a new location each time. During the day, we slept in different places and homes, only to resume our journey once the sun began to set. This arduous routine persisted until we arrived in Rumaytha. There, we endured difficult conditions, including a scarcity of basic necessities such as water for daily showers and food. In fact, we were often only able to consume one small meal per day, which consisted of just three spoonfuls of rice. The scarcity was so severe that us children would often cry after each meal due to the insufficiency of the food. It was a distressing time, and I recall that we were not the only family to experience such dire circumstances.

From there we began our journey to Saudi Arabia. Along the way, we passed through various villages, and my grandfather would leave us at the outskirts of each village, instructing my grandmother to locate a particular home and spend the day there, while he searched for the next place for us to stay. At times, people were too afraid to open their doors to us, as sheltering us could put their own lives, families, and homes at risk. I distinctly remember one such incident where we had to spend a day filled with anxiety and fear outside a man's home as he was reluctant to allow us inside. Eventually, he relented and allowed us to stay in a room that he used to house his animals and all we had to eat were a few dates. This experience remains etched in my memory as the last home we stayed in before reaching the borders of Iraq.

Upon reaching the border, my uncle Muhalil received us with his long truck and drove us to the refugee camps, where I was eventually reunited with my father. Initially, we lived in tents and subsisted on canned food. The authorities kept transferring us to different camps, presumably to provide better living conditions. The first tents were made of light fabric, which

allowed rainwater to seep through, among other issues. Subsequently, a better camp was set up with thicker and larger tents, to which we relocated. However, there were instances where conflicts arose, forcing us to vacate our tents. One such instance resulted in the complete burning of our tent and camp. In another incident, it was reported that a few Ba'athists were killing random individuals in the camp, necessitating the United Nations and Saudi authorities to establish new camps for us. Eventually, a school was established for us, which was held in trailers, and a bus was provided to transport us to the school. The teachers were qualified Iraqi teachers who volunteered to teach us.

The United Nations began posting monthly notices indicating the countries that had accepted refugees. My uncle was the first to be accepted into America, followed by my grandfather, grandmother, and aunt after a few months. Several months later, my family was also accepted, and we made our way from Saudi Arabia to New York and eventually settled in a small apartment in Saint Louis, Missouri. We were six children sharing a room, living in a poor area with limited job opportunities and little support. Initially, we received assistance for the first two months, which involved guidance on things like grocery shopping and acquiring a driver's license. However, after three months, we were left to our own devices. During this period, the Iraqi community had already begun building a sense of camaraderie by living in close proximity to each other. Our neighbors were Iraqis, and we helped each other by taking turns taking the children to school and bringing them back, watching out for each other, and taking care of each other's sick family members. Some of us even shared cars, as not every family could afford one.

My family eventually moved to Michigan. However, the transition was not easy. Initially, we resided in a low-income neighborhood in Detroit. Eventually, we moved to Dearborn, where there was a sizable Middle Eastern population. Nevertheless, there was always an underlying sentiment among the adults in my family that our stay in America was temporary. Conversations often revolved around the belief that Saddam Hussein's regime would eventually be overthrown, and we would be able to return to Iraq. We monitored the news carefully, hoping for any indication that the situation in our homeland was improving. This idea of returning to Iraq influenced many aspects of our lives, from whether or not to purchase a home, to how much clothing or furniture to acquire with the possibility of going back home was always in mind. My family was hesitant to invest too much in something they may eventually have to sell if we got

the chance to move back. This belief that we would eventually return to Iraq persisted throughout the first five years of our time in the United States and was a constant topic of conversation among our family and community.

During our time in the United States, my family was not only focused on building a new life, but also advocating for change in Iraq. Coming from a place where speaking out could be life-threatening, my parents and others in our community took advantage of the freedom of speech and expression in America. They were passionate and committed to their cause and participated in protests and demonstrations whenever there was a chance to make their voices heard. Despite the joy felt by many at the news of Saddam's capture and execution, there was also a deep sense of guilt and grief for those who had lost loved ones. The celebrations were bittersweet, as my family and others were reminded of the lives that could have been saved had things been different. Many of the older generation, who had sons, grandsons, brothers, and neighbors who had died, were particularly affected. While the younger generation may have seen it as a celebration, the older generation cried tears of sadness and loss.

My grandfather in particular, was deeply affected by the loss of his son and often prayed in tears and guilt. Even on his last days, he was weighed down by the depression that came with being away from his home country and not having his son with him. However, I believe he was also proud of what he and his fellow advocates had accomplished, knowing that they had made a difference in some way.

The final interview in this collection comes from the perspective of Mehsin's eldest son and the father of Nora, Thyab Albusaid. He arrived in America in 1993 and is now 66 years old.

Life in Iraq before the uprising was marked by severe difficulties imposed by the government on its citizens, making it a barely livable situation. The citizens faced scarcity of basic necessities and loss of livelihood opportunities. The country witnessed massive loss of young lives due to the 8-year war with Iran, and further to the Kuwait war. The soldiers who thought they would get a respite after the Iran-Iraq war were disappointed, as they were once again called to serve in the war with Kuwait. All this was done to showcase Saddam Hussein's power and authority, at the cost of lives and resources. The regime of Saddam Hussein was characterized by oppressive measures aimed at controlling and suppressing the people of Iraq.

The situation was akin to that of Hitler, with widespread imprisonment and starvation of the citizens. This led to the loss of countless young lives, including friends and cousins from my own family. Given these circumstances, I felt compelled to participate in the 1991 uprising against the regime. Having served in the army for 10 years, I experienced the effects of government oppression and sought to resist it, along with my fellow Iraqi citizens. The opportunity to build a life and establish oneself was taken away from me and many others, which made the uprising a necessary step in the quest for freedom and justice. Because the uprising was a popular movement that expressed the aspirations of the Iraqi people to escape injustice and oppression and dream of living a free life like other nations, the peoples of the world sympathized with it. For example, there were Egyptians living in Iraq who participated in this popular movement. My late friend Ahmed Abdul Aziz Musa made a significant effort and assisted with all his energy to ensure the success of the April uprising. He participated in night patrols, maintained security in the city of Shinafiyah, and provided many humanitarian services to the people. After the uprising was suppressed, he migrated to Saudi Arabia and lived in the Rafha camp for five years, continuing to assist the camp residents. Then he migrated to the United States and lived amongst the Iraqi immigrant community in the city of Dearborn, working diligently to help the needy in Iraq and Egypt until his passing in 2021. May God have mercy on him. He was loyal to his friends and loved humanitarian work.

Personally, I was one of 250 people detained in a center in the city of Amara, in a force called the Compensation Force. We were all professionals, engineers, and technicians serving in the army. We were placed in a fortified building that was like a prison, where we were only allowed to leave once a day, and we were only provided with lunch once a day, which was a simple meal of date and water. When the revolution started in Basra and reached Amara, the military forces collapsed, and the forces began losing control. The officers allowed the soldiers to withdraw in an unorganized manner wherever they wanted. The unit commander told us, "You are free to go wherever you find your families and your homes, and I am no longer responsible for you." As everyone started returning to their hometowns, the journey was indeed challenging due to airstrikes targeting even civilian vehicles. I went to Al-Kut and witnessed the uprising's beginnings there before proceeding to Baghdad. My stay in Baghdad was harrowing, as the city faced intense bombardment throughout the night. However, I managed to find a car and made my way to the city of Najaf. Upon arriving in Najaf at night, I discovered that there was ongoing

shelling between security forces and the revolutionaries. Despite the difficulties, I sought refuge in one of my relatives' houses and found shelter there.

When I reached Al-Shinafiya, I noticed that people were still uncertain about the uprising, and the atmosphere remained calm. One morning, during the first week of March, I was wandering the city streets when my friend, Saeed al-Tahir al-Dahi, approached me and asked what I thought about the situation. He suggested that we join the others and initiate the uprising in our city. I replied that I had been contemplating the same question and suggested that we seek the opinion of prominent figures in the city. We decided to visit Jumma Jabbar al-Abassi, who has since passed away, to discuss the matter with him. He was a martyr in the uprising and advised us to seek the opinion of Ja'far Taha al-Shaibani. We went to Ja'far Taha al-Shaibani, who was also martyred during the uprising, and he expressed his support. However, they all agreed that we should also seek my father's opinion. Following the gathering at my father's house, it was evident that everyone present agreed to launch the uprising. Among the attendees were Sayed Abbas Almiran, a security officer of the province, and Captain Al-Khazali, the police chief. Both expressed their cooperation and support for our cause. It was unanimously decided that I should travel to the city of Najaf to obtain a copy of the fatwa issued by the late Grand Ayatollah Abu al-Qasim al-Khoei, who held the highest religious authority at the time. Although I couldn't personally meet him, I received the fatwa from his committee.

Upon returning to Al-Shinafiya, I discovered that the uprising had already begun. The people of the city had taken control of the security forces, Ba'ath Party centers, Ba'ath organization, and all other city institutions. They initiated the formation of a security system and an administrative structure to govern the affairs of the city and its people. The Husseiniya (Shia Islamic center) of my late grandfather, Husseiniyat Al-Hasan al-Askari, played a crucial role in these gatherings and administrative formations. It served as a central hub for the volunteers who were being mobilized and transported to the city of Najaf to defend it. This became possible after the US forces granted permission to the Iraqi forces to use heavy artillery, surface-to-surface missiles, and aircraft. The people of the city started to flock to Najaf in large processions. Around 500 individuals from Al-Shafafiya city and approximately 500 people from Al-Rumaytha city gathered at Masjid Al-Kufa, which served as their headquarters and a defended location. As the days of the uprising unfolded, a group of young people from Al-Shafafiya

sacrificed their lives in Najaf or on their way to defend the city. Among them was my brother Iskandar, who was martyred while defending Najaf during his second attempt to reach there. He was part of a group of seven individuals, including relatives and close family friends that were martyred.

Unfortunately, despite our determination, the uprising eventually collapsed due to the overwhelming use of heavy weaponry, airstrikes, and tanks by the Iraqi forces, which we couldn't effectively counter with our limited basic weapons. Consequently, we had no choice but to flee our city, facing immense suffering and numerous obstacles from both Saudi Arabia and the coalition forces in our attempt to enter Saudi territory. Millions of people sought refuge in Saudi Arabia, but the majority were rejected. Approximately 50,000 refugees found themselves settling in the desert region along the Saudi-Iraqi border. Eventually, they were relocated to another camp near the city of Rafha, not far from the Iraqi border. People lived there for years, and some remained until the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime.

In my case, along with my family, we sought refuge in the United States and settled there. Numerous young men from Al-Shafafiya city lost their lives defending the uprising against Saddam's regime. Rafha camp presented challenging circumstances for the families with children who sought refuge there. The harsh desert climate and frequent severe storms posed a constant threat, as tents would be uprooted, endangering the safety of the families and causing distress among the children. Our stay in Rafha lasted for a duration of two years. Moreover, within the camp, there were instances of unrest directed towards the Saudi regime forces due to their disrespectful behavior, lack of ethical conduct, and inhumane treatment towards the residents of Rafha.

I feel the uprising was well-organized and had a popular structure, with careful adherence to the directives of the highest religious authority, the late Ayatollah Abu al-Qasim al-Khoei. The aim was to preserve the system, maintain security, respect human rights, and even refrain from mistreating the criminal Ba'athists, with the intention of bringing them to trial through a fair court once stability and calmness were achieved. The role of the coalition forces and the US forces initially encouraged the popular uprising, which motivated the uprising forces and their organizations to have enthusiasm and a strong reaction to continue this uprising. However, this did not last as the US forces and the coalition forces abandoned the uprising and allowed the

Iraqi forces, as we mentioned before, to use heavy weapons. This made the people, the owners of the uprising, and the people involved in the uprising disappointed with this unwelcome, inhumane, and dishonest action when they promised to support the uprising and protect it from heavy weapons used by the regime forces. In my perspective, the actions of the coalition forces represent an unethical and inhumane position. Following our resettlement in America and the dispersal of Iraqis to various countries and cities around the world, their commitment to their homeland remained unwavering. Notably, there were organizations, including one based in Michigan, USA, that actively organized frequent public demonstrations at influential centers such as the United Nations headquarters, major country embassies, and other significant locations within the city. In the city of Michigan, a vibrant scene of activism emerged, with organizations hosting seminars, debates, and television interviews to expose the injustices inflicted by Saddam's regime and champion the rights of the Iraqi people. Among the influential figures in these endeavors was my father, Sayed Mehsin al-Sayed Hussein al-Imgoter Alhussainy. He assumed a prominent role as a leader of the uprising in Diwaniyah province and later in Michigan, where his opinions held weight and resonated with the audience. Actively engaged, he took part in numerous conferences and gatherings, often convened at the esteemed Karbala Islamic Educational center. Supporting these efforts, Sheikh Hisham al-Hussainy, the center's Imam and guide, played a pivotal role in amplifying the voices of the uprising worldwide, leveraging Arab and international media, newspapers, and diverse meetings and organizations. Another remarkable contribution came in the form of Radio Karbala, a vital platform that gave voice to Iraqis. Through this radio station, the oppressive regime of Saddam was exposed, shedding light on its policies and the atrocities it committed, effectively raising global awareness about the hardships endured by the Iraqi people. The visionary founders of this media outlet, Mr. Ghaleb al-Yasiri and Mr. Shareef al-Shami, together with a dedicated team, played an instrumental role in fortifying this influential voice. The men within the community rallied behind the radio station, offering their unwavering support.

As the people and participants of the uprising settled in the city, they embarked on the journey of rebuilding their lives and contemplating their families' future. Actively engaging with the American society, they wholeheartedly embraced various aspects of life, such as construction, organization, work, and diverse fields of endeavor. In doing so, they became integral contributors to the growth and development of their new home, Michigan.

This way of life persisted until Saddam's regime fell, and even afterward, the uprising participants maintained a strong connection with the Iraqi people. We actively engaged in large gatherings in America, aiming to shed light on Iraq's situation and advocate for the establishment of an independent and inclusive government that represented all sects and ethnicities. Our unwavering stance was for democracy, demanding fair and impartial elections, devoid of manipulation or external interference. We yearned for an independent nation and rejected being under American guardianship or coalition supervision. Our vision was a sovereign state with an independent and democratic government, ensuring elections that were transparent and free from external influence. I hold dear the memory of my brothers, friends, and relatives who selflessly sacrificed themselves for the cause. They were honorable martyrs who gave their lives in the pursuit of a free and dignified existence for the Iraqi people, akin to other nations. May Allah have mercy on all the martyrs of Iraq and bless those who supported and contributed to the uprising. Iraq, with the grace of God, is making slow but steady progress. We aspire to a better and more capable government that can effectively serve the Iraqi people in the future.

The following collection of interviews presents individual perspectives and experiences of individuals from various provinces and cities in Southern Iraq:

The following interview pertains to the testimony of a woman, referred to as Um Haider, who comes from the city of Samawa in Southern Iraq. Having migrated to America in 1992, Um Haider is 67 years of age at present.

Before the uprising, I recall the population living under a constant state of fear, characterized by self-censorship, religious repression, and a pervasive sense of uncertainty about the future. Despite not personally participating in the uprising, my son Hussein, who was a high-achieving student in high school with a particular talent for physics and a curious nature, decided to join the protesters. Tragically, he was killed by the Ba'athist regime in a brutal manner, as he was shot in the leg and then executed with a shot to the head while lying on the ground at the front steps of our home. The loss of Hussein, who had so much potential and promise, serves as a poignant reminder of the toll that political violence can take on individuals and communities. At the time of the uprising, I was staying at a relative's residence and preparing to return home. Unfortunately, I was unaware of the outbreak of protests and had sent my son Hussein on various errands. As the sound of gunfire echoed through the city, I realized that the population of Samawa had risen in revolt and was unable to leave the house for the entire day. The following day, upon my return home, I received the devastating news of my son's untimely death. To my dismay, I learned that his body had already been washed, following Islamic burial traditions.

I had no time to properly grieve the loss of my son, as I found out the Ba'athist regime had launched a house-to-house search for me, going to homes and asking for the 'mother of the martyr.' I became a target and had no choice but to abandon my home and everything I had behind. Fearing for the safety of myself and my other children, I made the difficult decision to flee to Basra, where we were eventually transported by the American military to a refugee camp in Saudi Arabia. This traumatic experience serves as a testament to the difficult choices that individuals and families were forced to make during this tumultuous period.

The loss of my son Hussein has left a profound and lasting impact on my life, even thirty years after the fact. I continue to mourn his death by wearing black clothing as a symbol of my grief. The image of Hussein is never far from my mind, and moments of solace are often

followed by a wave of guilt because how can I have a sense of relief that my son was robbed of in his youth. In my visit back to Iraq it became knowledge to me that the perpetrators responsible for his killing are reportedly alive and well and have gone unpunished of their crimes. Information like this serves to amplify the emotions of grief and anger that I experience. Despite this, I find comfort in the fact that Hussein's memory continues to live on in my household.

I believe that the betrayal by the United States was a significant contributing factor to the failure of the uprising. Despite this sense of betrayal, I remain somewhat grateful to the United States for their role in removing Saddam Hussein from power and providing refuge for me and my family. My departure from Iraq was permanent, with the understanding that any future visits would only be "visits."

The next interview is from the perspective of Dhafer Ali Alatabi, who is from the province of Nasriyah. Dhafer arrived in America in 1994 and is now 61 years old.

Prior to the uprising, expressing dissatisfaction with the government was a daunting prospect as individuals were filled with fear. Despite being seventy-five years old, my father staunchly refused to comply with the Ba'athist regime, resulting in his imprisonment for three months during which he was subject to severe torture and abuse. In addition to the pervasive climate of fear, daily sustenance posed a significant challenge, with the average family being able to afford meat only once a month. This was the reality of life prior to the uprising, characterized by a constant struggle to survive. We anxiously awaited any opportunity to participate in the overthrow of the regime. The motivation to act was fueled by the collapse of the army, which was systematically dismantled by Saddam Hussein through his participation in senseless wars. The uprising was a form of retribution, seeking revenge for the dismantling of our army, the execution and torture of our people in prisons, and the dictator's efforts to subjugate us through ruthless means. Religious freedom was non-existent, and the simple act of praying in a mosque resulted in my expulsion from school, necessitating a transfer to a new institution. Those who chose to pray in a mosque were subject to harassment, while individuals who grew beards were met with violence and often killed. The reasons behind these oppressive measures remained unclear, leaving individuals like myself to question why they had to endure such difficult circumstances.

On the morning of March 1st, 1991, at approximately nine or ten o'clock, word of an uprising in the Al-Fuhud subdistrict reached the town of Souq Al Shouyukh, resulting in the convening of men in the city center to confirm the accuracy of the information. The city center building where the gathering occurred was located in close proximity to the Euphrates River, while another group of individuals congregated at the Hosseiniya Rasheed al-Ajmi, an Islamic center situated on Lutfi Street. Upon the confirmation of the news, the streets of Souk Alshuyukh were filled with people chanting "Allahu Akbar" (God is Greatest) as they proceeded towards the security department building. Unfortunately, the building was set ablaze, an outcome that was not intended. The group then proceeded towards the home of Ba'athist official Abdulhussein Hafith, which was located in close proximity to the city center of Souk Alshouyukh. From the rooftop of his residence, Abdel Hussein Hafith opened fire with a machine gun upon the unarmed protesters, who numbered in the thousands. A man that stood close to me became the first martyr of the uprising in the town of Souk Alshouyukh, he goes by the name Sayed Harbi. He was carried into a pick-up truck and rushed to the hospital but sadly did not make it in time.

During the afternoon, the Intifadah witnessed the participation of various tribes, with notable contributions from the chiefs of certain tribes, including Hisham Thahir al-Aijayl and Kadhim Alraysan from the Alhacham tribe, Thyab Jarallah Alharbi, and the chief of the Niwashi tribe. It is noteworthy that the town of Souk Alshouyukh was brimming with multiple tribes who actively took part in the uprising, with the exception of the Al-Ahasaiya tribe, who subscribed to the Ba'athist ideology. Upon the commencement of noon prayers, the rebels successfully gained control of Souk Al-Shuyoukh. As the afternoon progressed, the tribes dispersed and concentrated at various locations. A group of the rebels departed towards the center of the Nasiriyah province, which was situated around 30 kilometers (about 18.64 mi) north of Souk Al-Shuyukh, carrying arms. However, they encountered American forces during their journey, who impeded their attempt to capture Nasiriyah and confiscated their weaponry.

On the second day of the uprising, there was a noticeable effort towards organizing the movement. The availability of hospitals provided necessary medical assistance, and the rebels ensured the protection of the bank, where no financial assets were unlawfully taken. Over time, the populace grew in number and acquired weaponry. The authorities who had previously obstructed passage realized that the situation was beyond their control and subsequently

unblocked the roads. As a result, we proceeded towards the core of Nasiriyah where we encountered the army, resulting in their defeat and the downfall of the governance in Nassriyah. Sadly, many individuals lost their lives during this period of unrest, including Mohamed Muttar Aldakheel, who bravely endured three gunshot wounds to the heart. As the rebellion persisted, I bore witness to the demise of close companions, such as my dear friend Haydar Alsinead, along with several others whose names elude me at present. The uprising persisted through various battles until its culmination on the 21st of March. The uprising had commenced in Souk Al-Shuyukh and it also ended there. On the aforementioned date, news arrived that the army, armed with artillery, was advancing towards Al-Shuyukh. True enough, shelling and mortar bombs were unleashed near the city. Some individuals decided to remain within the city to offer protection, while others opted to confront the army. The army arrived with an extensive arsenal of weapons including tanks, guns, and heavy weaponry. The American military granted permission for the use of aircraft against us. I personally witnessed one of our hospitals being targeted by the aircraft strike.

During this period, individuals began to recognize the potential hazards of remaining in their current location, prompting the majority of families to flee towards Basra, which was under the control of American forces. Personally, I had undertaken a three-day journey on foot to arrive in Basra, accompanied by a friend. Upon our arrival, we discovered that our families had already reached the city before us. We resided in the city of Safwan, under American protection, for roughly a month and ten days. The lodgings provided varied, with some being accommodated in hotels, while others resorted to living in their vehicles or tents, with meals being supplied as well. Eventually, the authorities began transporting individuals in groups via aircraft to the refugee camps located in Rafha, Saudi Arabia. Upon our arrival at the refugee camp in Saudi Arabia, we were subjected to a registration process, during which we were photographed and required to provide our names. We were subsequently assigned to tents, which I shared with my cousin, sister, and their respective families. However, we experienced an ideological difference with the Saudis, and their treatment of us was based on ideological considerations, leading to a sense of apprehension and insecurity during our prolonged stay at the camp. Ultimately, I remained in Rafha until May 27, 1994, when I departed for the United States. Upon my arrival to America at the age of approximately 32 or 33, I first settled in St. Louis, Missouri for a year before eventually moving to Michigan. In America, I experienced a sense of humanity and

freedom. This included freedom of expression, movement, and belief. Despite earning income through work, over half of it was allocated towards supporting my family, relatives, friends, and communities in Iraq who were in need of financial assistance. Additionally, I participated in demonstrations at various locations, including the United Nations, White House, and Iraqi Embassy in Washington, D.C., to bring attention to the oppressive regime in Iraq. Even though leaving my homeland was not by choice, it did not sever my connection to my people who were living under the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein. Through financial support and voicing their grievances, we continued to support them. Every person with ties to their home country desires to return, especially if they were forced out. My hope was for Saddam Hussein to be taken down so that I could return and help rebuild the lives of my family who had stayed there. However, as years passed and Saddam Hussein remained in power, I adapted to life in America. I got married, purchased a house, and had children who were growing up in America. Their language and culture were rooted in this country, making it their home. Though I longed to return to Iraq, doing so would mean taking my children away from their home. Nonetheless, I made efforts to teach them about Iraqi culture and civilization, taking them on trips to Iraq to visit family, religious sites, and learn about the history of the region.

From an analytical standpoint, it is important to consider the motivations behind America's involvement in the 1991 uprising. As a nation, America is known to prioritize actions that serve its best interests. At some point, America viewed the uprising as similar to the Iranian Islamic revolution and considered it a potential threat to their national security. However, such an assumption was misguided, given that Iraq is a nation with a unique and distinct culture that differs greatly from Iran. Although the people involved in the uprising were predominantly Shiite and shared religious affiliations, their political ideologies were diverse and varied. Due to such misconceptions, America changed its stance and began to support Saddam Hussein instead. I also find it noteworthy to mention that the leaflets encouraging the uprising against Saddam Hussein were dropped after the uprising had already begun in the city, based on my recollection. It is essential to recognize that the people involved in the uprising were already determined to revolt against Saddam, regardless of external encouragement. Following the historical events of the uprising, I harbor a strong opposition to any form of foreign intervention, be it American, Saudi, Iranian, or Turkish. As an individual of Iraqi-American origin, I disapprove of any American politician who attempts to impose their views on the political landscape of Iraq. My

fervent desire is to witness the development of balanced and equitable relations between Iraq and the United States, marked by cordiality and mutual respect between the respective governments.

The following interview is with Ali Almuna, who was a 19-year-old resident of Najaf during the uprising and immigrated to the United States in 1994. He is currently 53 years old.

I can attest to the fact that life in Iraq prior to the uprising was nothing short of terrifying. The overwhelming majority of us lived in constant fear of Saddam Hussein and the oppressive Ba'athist regime. Hunger, unemployment, and executions were a daily reality for many of us. The sanctions imposed on the country by the international community only served to exacerbate our suffering, as they seemed to punish the Iraqi people rather than the government. It was a difficult and trying time for all of us, and the memories of that period still haunt many of us to this day. The decision to participate in the uprising was, for me, a pivotal one as it essentially entailed deciding on the trajectory of my life. The Iraqi people had reached a tipping point and could no longer endure the oppressive circumstances that had characterized our existence for far too long. Having been subjected to two wars, enduring sanctions for years, and having no say in the affairs of our own country, the sense of frustration and anger had become overwhelming. The desire for freedom and a better future was palpable, and enough was finally enough.

In the aftermath of the Kuwait War, I, like many other military personnel, returned to my hometown of Najaf, Iraq. When the uprising began, news of the protests breaking out in various provinces reached us through messengers due to the absence of modern communication technology. In Najaf, there was a marked lack of planning or organization as individuals took to the streets spontaneously to participate in the demonstrations. Despite possessing a Kalashnikov, I never found the need to use it. Instead, I worked as an ambulance driver, providing medical assistance to the wounded in the city. Unfortunately, two of my close friends lost their lives during this tumultuous period.

There was a palpable expectation among the Iraqi people that the US government would provide assistance during the uprising. The promise of aid filled the air with hope, but as events unfolded, it became increasingly clear that those promises would not be fulfilled. I observed US jets flying overhead while Saddam's helicopters were firing upon us. Despite promises of support and assistance from the US government, they did nothing to intervene or aid us during these

attacks. This sense of betrayal left us with the impression that we had been misled. I recall watching George Bush on television, expressing his support for the Iraqi people to overthrow the regime. However, in the streets of Najaf, the people chanted slogans such as "There is no guardian but Ali" and "We want a Jaafari leader," reflecting a desire for leadership with a Shia Islamic background. In my view, the US government's reluctance to provide meaningful support during the uprising was due, in part, to their fear that Iraq would become another Iran, with a Shia Islamic theocracy coming to power. This apprehension likely contributed to the US government's perceived betrayal of the Iraqi people during the uprising.

During my personal experience of the uprising, there was a profound sense of optimism and hope that the oppressive regime of Saddam Hussein would finally come to an end, and that our country would be granted the freedom we had yearned for. However, this sense of hope was quickly replaced with trauma, as the uprising was tragically suppressed, and the aftermath of the rebellion resulted in great suffering and hardship for many. In the aftermath, I had to undertake a difficult journey of reconstruction and resettlement, which posed significant challenges, especially regarding employment and family formation.

Despite the difficulties, the aspiration for a revitalized Iraq persisted, and I personally longed to return to my homeland. However, the current circumstances were not yet conducive for such a return. I believe that the possibility of terminating Saddam Hussein's regime may have existed if the American government had fulfilled its promises to assist in overthrowing him. The failure to support the Iraqi people during the 1991 uprising had profound consequences, and recognizing this mistake is a necessary step towards rectifying the past. The events of the 1991 uprising still feel vivid in my memory, and the loss of youth during that time took away new energy and vitality, making it challenging to recover and move forward.

The next interview covers Sayed Ahmed Almusawi's experiences in the province of Basra. Sayed Ahmed arrived in America in the year 1997.

The period before the 1991 uprising was characterized by hardship, with citizens lacking access to basic amenities like electricity and water. Additionally, market shelves were bare due to economic sanctions, resulting in widespread hunger. Even the prospect of seeking medical attention offered no respite, as medical supplies were severely limited. The deprivation was also

felt by children, who were denied access to simple pleasures like candy. The cumulative effect of these conditions led many to question the purpose of their existence, particularly as the nation had only just emerged from an eight-year war before becoming embroiled in a conflict with Kuwait. Consequently, the populace reached a point of exhaustion and sought retribution for the injustices they had endured under the regime. Prior to the uprising, civilians in Iraq often faced harassment and abuse from military personnel and police officers. As an individual who experienced such mistreatment firsthand, I can attest to its severity. On one occasion, prior to the invasion of Kuwait, I was at a market when police officers entered and demanded to see our identification. My friend had forgotten his ID, and he asked me to vouch for him as his neighbor. The police officers requested that I retrieve his ID from his house, and I complied. However, upon arriving at the police station, the officer seized my wallet and began searching through it. He found a small piece of paper with a religious supplication printed on it and immediately accused me of affiliation with the Islamic Dawa Party. I explained that I was a student and knew nothing of this party, but the officer persisted in asking where the supplication was printed. In reality, it was printed by my friend's sister, who was a secretary at a factory where I worked. However, I could not reveal this information as it would have endangered her life. The police officers proceeded to physically abuse me, slapping and yelling at me in an attempt to extract information. Fortunately, a relative of mine who had good relations with the police was able to persuade them not to arrest me, and after two hours of senseless fear and questioning, I was eventually released. It was such experiences that motivated me to actively participate in the revolution against the oppressive regime. The stifling atmosphere of fear and apprehension in which we lived was akin to that of a prison. Under Saddam's dictatorship, we were subjected to continuous harassment and victimization by the state security apparatus. Criticizing the government or discussing politics was strictly forbidden, and even speaking in front of children had to be done with caution to avoid any repercussions. The fear of retribution extended not only to the individual but also to their families, who could face persistent harassment as a result of their loved one's actions. These factors ultimately propelled me to join the ranks of the revolutionaries.

The onset of the uprising was marked by spontaneous demonstrations, which elicited a response from the opposing group in the form of weapons. As a defensive measure, rebels responded with the limited availability of lightweight weapons. I distinctly recall that during the

initial hours of the uprising, a friend of mine reversed his vehicle into a street mural of Saddam Hussein, causing the mural to fall into the river. This seemingly minor action provided momentary relief to my friend. I also remember an instance where a close acquaintance of mine had their residence demolished by the army, utilizing armored vehicles. Notably, the house was occupied solely by women. In Abu Alkhaseeb, the army and republic guard were in control during daylight hours, while we, the rebels, rested. However, come nighttime, we took control. This struggle claimed the lives of numerous individuals, including a dear friend of mine, Ahmed Saleh Zaalán, who was a student at Basra University's College of Education. Another individual, Amjad Altamimi, who was a soldier and also our neighbor, suffered the same fate.

As a result of the precarious situation, we were unable to access our homes, and consequently, we resorted to utilizing children as conduits to transmit information to our families. This further illustrates the extent of the turmoil that was experienced during the uprising. They would bring news of the army's presence in certain areas, allowing us to navigate our movements accordingly. At times, we would venture through orchards during the night to evade danger. As the uprising progressed, we received information that individuals were being exiled to Saudi Arabia. As the situation worsened, we made the difficult decision to embark on a journey towards the destination where individuals were being sent to Saudi Arabia. We had to avoid main roads and instead traverse through the orchards, making the journey challenging and dangerous. At some points, we had to resort to disguising ourselves in military clothing to blend in with our surroundings and evade detection.

On this initial day of our journey, we embarked on foot and arrived at the city center of Basra, where security personnel intercepted us, interrogating us on our identities and origins. The official inquired directly with me, to which I responded by identifying myself as a member of the military stationed at Nasriyah. Despite this, the official directed a stream of profanity towards me and ordered me into a waiting vehicle, warning me not to look back. A group of soldiers joined me in the car, which also accommodated two elderly women. Each of us paid the driver a substantial amount of 10 dinars, which was significant at that time. Along the way, we encountered several checkpoints, including the one at Zubair Bridge, where we narrowly evaded scrutiny by authorities searching for rebels. We eventually arrived at Tel Al Laham, where we encountered the American military, who were facilitating transport to Saudi Arabia. Although

they granted passage to all of us, they refused entry to the two elderly women, insisting that they return. One of the women wept at the prospect of separation from her son, expressing her concern for his children and her own solitary state. It was heart wrenching to watch.

As time went on, the possibility of being transported to Saudi Arabia became uncertain. Despite repeated promises from the American military that we would depart "tomorrow," we remained stranded. Our apprehension grew until one day we refused the food offered to us, demanding an explanation for the prolonged delay. We questioned whether they were planning to hand us over to the regime, as their assurances of transportation had yet to come to fruition. They explained that the rainfall had left the desert in a muddy condition, making it difficult for planes to land. Three days later, we were finally transported by plane to Hafr al Batin in Saudi Arabia, where we resided for three months before being relocated to Al Artawiyah. In 1992, we were relocated again, this time to the Rafha refugee camps, where I remained until my departure to America in 1997.

The conduct of the American government during the Intifadah amounted to a betrayal of our trust. While the Gulf War had established a prohibition on the regime flying aircraft or launching missiles, the American government allowed the regime to defy this prohibition, effectively permitting them to engage in such activities without consequences. We witnessed planes flying and missiles being launched, actions that were expressly forbidden during the war. Had the American government not enabled this behavior, it is likely that the regime would have fallen, liberating us from Saddam's brutal regime and sparing us the tragedies that we endured as Iraqi civilians, such as the discovery of mass graves. Unfortunately, the American government's actions led to an additional twelve years of oppression and the deaths of millions. The United States was initially a vocal proponent of regime change in Iraq, but this support quickly evaporated once our intifadah began. It is important to note, that other external actors, such as Saudi Arabia, expressed a preference for maintaining the existing regime rather than risking the establishment of a Shia regime. This was fueled by the fear that our movement would replicate the situation in Iran.

During my time in America, communicating with my family in Iraq was difficult due to the regime's monitoring of phone calls and mail. My family's safety was a constant concern, and our phone conversations were often brief and secretive, with symbolic language used to convey

messages. Writing letters was also risky, and one of my letters ended up getting my older brother in trouble. An official questioned him on my whereabouts, and out of fear, he answered that he did not know whether I was alive or dead and that I had been missing since the Gulf War. The official brought out a letter I had written to them while in the Rafha refugee camp. My brother denied having seen the letter before, and the official let him off but warned that any news of my whereabouts must be reported by him.

Despite the difficulties, our support for the intifadah continued from America through the Karbala Islamic Center, led by Sheikh Hisham Alhussainy. We organized events on the anniversary of the intifada to remember its martyrs and fighters, and we protested the regime in front of the Iraqi embassy in Washington, D.C. whenever significant events occurred in Iraq. Our efforts to communicate the grievances of our people to the world gained traction, and Saddam's tyrannical regime became known worldwide as oppressors.

The regime's harassment of my family continued even after I left Iraq. In 1999, my fisherman brother was arrested and interrogated by naval forces, who accused him of exchanging information with me that I was then giving to Iran. My brother had denied any contact with me since 1991 and confirmed that I was in America. The police attempted to extract a bribe, demanding \$150 for his release. He told them that it would take months to collect such an amount and that he didn't have the money. They persisted, telling him that it was not their problem. After being jailed for three days, he eventually had to ask our father to request his wife to sell a piece of her gold to pay the bribe. I only learned about these events after the execution of Saddam.

I respectfully reject any foreign intervention that could harm Iraq, given its historical context. Our people have suffered from the impact of foreign interference in the past, and we are wary of such interventions in the future. We do not seek to meddle in the affairs of others, nor do we desire any interference in our own affairs. If countries are willing to support the reconstruction of our country, such aid would be appreciated. However, any attempts to exploit our natural resources or hinder our efforts to rebuild would not be acceptable. We must be allowed to rebuild our country without undue interference, and I believe this sentiment is shared by many.

The next interviewee is Sayed Ghaleb Alyasiri, hailing from the city of Al Diwaniyah. He arrived in the United States in 1994 and is currently 60 years old.

In the past, Iraq was characterized by a restrictive environment that limited the civil liberties and rights of its inhabitants. The prevalence of wars, prisons, and detention centers underscored the oppressive nature of the regime, which was intent on suppressing all political opposition. Political forces that sought to challenge the status quo were forced to seek refuge abroad or in neighboring countries, as they were not permitted to exercise their right to oppose within the country. The situation within Iraq was fraught with tension, marked by the repression and abuse of freedoms. Additionally, the regime's hostile actions toward neighboring countries led to Iraq's involvement in multiple wars that proved to be futile, resulting in the loss of many lives and human resources, and the creation of numerous widows and orphans. Notably, the uprising that occurred after the Iraq-Iran war and the Kuwait invasion was a manifestation of the populace's desire for change after years of subjugation under the Ba'athist regime. The impetus behind my decision to participate was predicated on the prevalent state of repression and terrorism to which the majority of individuals had been subjected under the regime, as evidenced by incidents of bullying, incarceration, and detention facilities. I was motivated to join in, recognizing the collective mobilization of individuals who sought to reject the Ba'ath regime and Saddam's regime in a concerted effort to effect change. My aspiration was to secure a life that was free from the destabilizing impact of wars, prisons, and detention facilities, and as a member of the local community, I was keen to take part in this movement for change. As a resident of Albda'ir city in the Diwaniya governorate, I observed the unwavering support of Islamic scholars towards the uprising, which was viewed as a positive and transformative movement. Through numerous statements, the scholars sought to prioritize the preservation of human life and minimize the loss of young individuals, martyrs, and victims in the face of an oppressive regime. The regime had mobilized its vast army to further its own interests, including the subjugation of the populace. As such, I had the privilege to join my fellow citizens in the city of Albda'ir, located in the Diwaniya governorate, to demonstrate our opposition to injustice and persecution. Our aim was to establish a safe country with civil liberties, where the people would have a voice in decision-making through democratic elections. At that time, we were able to gain control of our region, and fourteen other governorates were under the control of the people's movement. It

fills me with great pride to have been a part of the uprising and to stand in solidarity with my fellow Iraqis who shared the same aspirations for freedom and justice.

I recall the Iranian governments pursuit of the "export of revolution" policy during the late 1970s. I also remember the fear that this concept instilled in Gulf states, particularly the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia. At the time, the American government and Gulf states perceived the situation in Iraq as an extension of the Iranian revolution, and feared an Iraqi-Iranian alliance against them, which could threaten their control over Iraq. To safeguard their interests, these governments aimed to maintain their systems and control the security of the Gulf region. I believe that for this reason the United States changed its stance towards the uprising. In fact, I recall that the regime was even allowed to use aircraft after an air embargo, which permitted Iraqi aircraft to fly in certain regions causing great harm to the participants of the uprising. I distinctly remember this event occurring on the specific date of March 14th, 1991, while I was in our city in the Diwaniyah governorate. I can attest that our city faced both ground and air attacks, during which seven helicopters were hit hard and met with resistance from the people of the uprising, including myself. Unfortunately, we lost more during the air attacks, as eight individuals were martyred, and many were left wounded. Despite these losses, I am grateful that the enthusiasm of the youth and our unwavering faith enabled us to defeat the confrontational forces, forcing them to retreat. It was a relief that they were unable to reach Diwaniya or occupy a road to Diwaniya Municipality.

As a citizen of Iraq, I felt deeply disappointed and betrayed by the United States' actions. It seemed that international and regional interests were given priority over the well-being of the Iraqi people. The double standards displayed by major democratic countries, who often talk about human rights, civil liberties, freedom of expression, and freedom of the press, were evident. However, when it came to preserving their own interests and controlling the security of the region, these countries neglected their duty to serve the people of Iraq and help them overthrow the oppressive Saddam regime. This situation was a clear example of how interests often prevailed over the rights of people. As Iraqis, we were dissatisfied with this state of affairs. History shows that Iraqis were overwhelmed by this situation, and even today, the effects are still felt. Politics can sometimes have negative consequences and overlook the rights of communities, including their right to life, freedom, and civil liberties. It was not a good impression of the

American positions at that time because they prioritized the interests of the Gulf states over the interests of the entire Iraqi population, which numbered around 30 million people. We were living under an authoritarian, aggressive, and violent dictatorship that suppressed all freedoms, and we felt that the Americans' slogans and allegations were false. We believed that they did not stand up for our grievances as besieged peoples, suffering from a blockade on food and medicine. Unfortunately, we found no one to stand with us at that time, and our position was one of deep upset and disappointment at the United States' betrayal.

During a certain period, we resided in camps within Iraqi territory under the protection of American and French forces. Subsequently, after more than a month, our younger generations were relocated to Artawiya camps, while families and other young individuals were moved to Rafha camps in Saudi Arabia. A significant number of people, around thirty thousand, congregated in Rafha, while a substantial number also gathered in Artawiya. The United Nations arrived and registered Rafha camp attendees on refugee lists. Countries also attended the camp as part of asylum lists and assimilated a considerable number of individuals seeking political or humanitarian asylum, settling in various locations such as Germany, Canada, the Scandinavian countries, Australia, and America.

By the grace of God, we were fortunate enough to be relocated to the United States. Initially, we experienced a sense of security, stability, and liberty, which our families and children enjoyed. Despite our relocation to America or other countries, the Intifadah did not come to an end. Instead, it heralded a new chapter in the uprising, where we now had access to various means and liberties. Consequently, we established religious centers and collaborated with media outlets, enabling us to organize peaceful demonstrations in Washington, New York, and London, all in the spirit of the popular uprising. We implored the international community and the American government to intervene effectively and rescue the Iraqi people from their predicament. Here in America, we felt safe, secure, and free, surrounded by our families and children. We were spared from the dark times in Iraq, including prisons and detention facilities. Following the fall of the Intifadah, the regime crushed the rebels and perpetrated mass graves, resulting in the deaths of thousands of our families and fellow citizens. Consequently, we had no option but to flee Iraq. Thankfully, we were given the opportunity to escape, and now had a vast area to operate in America, where we could demand peaceful demonstrations.

Despite living in America, we did not forget the struggles of our people back home we actively engaged in protesting against and denouncing the actions of a dictator who we believed to be an unjust murderer and suppressor of freedoms in Iraq. Through our actions, we aimed to expose the reality of events in Iraq and compel the international community to stand with our people. We organized conferences and marches to bring attention to the violence and injustices being perpetrated in Iraq, including the suffering of children who lacked necessities such as food, medicine, and milk. These efforts were significant for the rebels who sought safety outside of Iraq, but their work was far from over. Our community established Islamic newspapers, radio stations, and centers, and played active roles in the creation of numerous Husayniyat (Islamic centers), institutions, and civil society organizations. His Eminence Sheikh Hisham played an active role in the activities of the Karbala Islamic Center, which has served as the primary platform for addressing the oppressive Saddam Ba'athist regime. The center has organized numerous seminars and meetings with American personalities and delegations and has also facilitated the planning and execution of demonstrations and marches in various locations, including Dearborn, Greater Detroit, New York, and Washington. In response to political events in Iraq, such as the killing of the second martyr Muhammad Sadeq Al-Sadr, individuals from Detroit and other states came together to form a movement that traveled to Washington to request the protection of their religious symbols, leaders, scholars, and references, as well as to urge the U.S. government to take effective action against the oppressive regime. These actions were taken in Detroit due to the community's ability to exercise their freedom and their continued remembrance of the injustices, bullying, dominance, and aggression occurring in Iraq. I was not content with merely residing in America and distancing myself from the suffering of my people. As such, I took a bold step and established a radio station **Karbala Station** in 1998 alongside members of my community. I used my own name, despite the potential danger to myself and my family in Iraq. Unfortunately, my family, including my brothers and my uncle Hassan Abu Maher (may he rest in peace), were subjected to increased harassment and arrests as a result of this. My older brother Hashim reports being called to the Security Department by the Commissioner of Security once or twice a week, adding to their fear.

The next interview is with Ayad Alfatlawi, who is originally from Almishkhab, a district located in the Najaf governorate. He arrived in America in 1995 and is currently 71 years old.

Prior to the uprising, my life was characterized by repression, deprivation, fear, anxiety, and uncertainty due to the oppressive regime. There were no freedoms, stability or security, as one could go to bed at night and wake up under arrest. My personal motive for joining the uprising was the oppression of Saddam's regime. We had been involved in meaningless wars, and as civilians, we were left with no dignity, with death, executions and arrests as common occurrences. Therefore, the uprising presented an opportunity for us to fight back against the regime and seek a better future for ourselves and our fellow citizens.

Following the Kuwait War, my city experienced a notable relaxation in security measures, and we were not as afraid as before. This shift in the security environment encouraged many young people to attack the Ba'ath Party and Saddam Authority headquarters. Initially, I refrained from participating in these uprisings. However, my decision changed when Sayed Jafar Bahr al-Uloom, a religious scholar, called for people to defend Najaf, a city that housed the holy shrine of Imam Ali and numerous religious scholars. To protect ourselves, we carried Kalashnikov guns while in Najaf. Despite the bombings that rained down on us, we did not experience any fear. It is noteworthy that before the intifadah, we were passive and fearful of Saddam's regime. However, in the uprising, we were unafraid and defiant, knowing that if we were to die, we would do so as honorable martyrs. The courage displayed during those tumultuous times is best exemplified by the actions of Sayed Mohammed al-Sayed Obaidiya. When the army closed in on us, the religious scholars advised us to withdraw, but he refused, declaring, "I will put my chair here and sit and wait for them" at the gate of the mosque. His fearlessness in the face of danger ultimately led to his martyrdom. In the subsequent days, we encountered numerous challenges and encountered perilous situations. At times, we were certain that our lives were drawing to a close. By the seventh day, we began to lose track of time and anticipated an imminent death sentence. To mitigate the risks, we organized a system where the elder men took turns on night duty, commencing from midnight until dawn, out of concern that the younger men might doze off while on lookout duty. Some of us volunteered to stay awake with the elder men from sunset until midnight. The perils we faced escalated with each passing day.

Eventually, my family and I sought refuge at the Rafha refugee camp. Although we were provided with food at the refugee camps, we lacked the sense of security and psychological comfort that we desperately needed. At any given day, the Saudi government could have forced us out of their country, leaving us with no choice but to return to the oppressive rule of Saddam Hussein. I vividly remember a Saudi official once threatening us, indicating that we could be thrown out at the border. I stayed in the camp for a total of four years, until 1994, when I finally left for America in January of 1995. Our work did not stop after the intifadah, and we continued to support our fellow countrymen back home from America. We were able to expose Saddam and his true nature. We went out in protests and carried pictures of Saddam, calling him a terrorist. I remember a sign that was held during Bush's visit to Dearborn in 2003 that said, 'Saddam and Bin Laden are the same, only they have different names.' Our expectation during the intifadah was that the U.S. government would persist in their support of the overthrow of the Saddam regime. We were hopeful that this would be the case, and that the regime would crumble under the pressure. Unfortunately, this did not happen, and we were left with no other option but to become unwilling refugees.

CONCLUDING ANALYSIS

Through the analysis of the interviews, several common themes and perspectives emerged. First, participants expressed a common sentiment that America played a significant role in the uprising and its ultimate failure. Many attributed America's change in stance and failure to provide aid towards the end of the uprising as a major contributing factor to the uprising's demise. This perspective is particularly relevant to the overall argument of the thesis, which posits that America's betrayal of the Iraqi people led to Saddam's rule for another 12 years of destruction. The participants' perspective on America's role in the uprising is significant as it sheds light on the larger theme of external influence in Iraqi politics. Many interviewees expressed frustration with the United States and its perceived abandonment of the Iraqi people, rooted in a long history of US involvement in Iraq that has had far-reaching consequences for the country and its people. Additionally, the participants' accounts of the pre-uprising climate in Iraq provide insight into the experiences of ordinary citizens living under Saddam Hussein's regime. The regime's use of arbitrary arrest, torture, and execution as methods of control created an

atmosphere of terror that affected all levels of society. Furthermore, the economic difficulties faced by Iraqis contributed to a sense of hopelessness and despair, leaving many feeling powerless to effect change.

The participants' desire to return to Iraq after coming to America highlights a complex relationship between the diaspora and their homeland. On the one hand, their nostalgia and longing for Iraq suggest a deep emotional attachment to their cultural heritage and the place where they grew up. On the other hand, the difficulties and dangers that they experienced in Iraq also cannot be ignored, leading some to express reservations about the possibility of returning. Moreover, the participants' desire to contribute to the rebuilding of Iraq speaks to a sense of responsibility and ownership towards their homeland, as well as a hope for a better future. However, the uncertain political and security situation in Iraq remains a significant challenge that must be faced in order to achieve lasting peace and stability. Therefore, their desire to return is tempered by a recognition of the complex and challenging realities that must be addressed.

Delving into the stories of those who participated in the uprising was both enlightening and emotionally profound. The emotional and psychological toll the uprising took on its participants became evident during the interviews, and it was clear that the event had left a lasting impact on their lives. During the interviews, it was apparent that recounting the events of the uprising was emotionally challenging for the participants. Tears welled up in their eyes, and there were moments when they needed to pause before continuing to speak. The memories associated with the uprising were still vivid and emotionally charged, even after several decades. Witnessing some interviewees close their eyes while recollecting memories of the uprising was a poignant experience. It seemed like they were transported back in time, reliving the events with remarkable clarity. These moments of introspection showcased the enduring impact the uprising had on their lives and how those memories had become deeply ingrained in their minds. It was evident that the struggle for justice had become more than just a historical event for them; it had become a defining part of their identity and purpose.