



# The Role of Haaj Qasem Soleimani and **Abu Mahdi Al-Muhandis** in Saving Iraq from ISIS

Excerpts from the Memoires of Nouri al-Maliki, the former Prime Minister of Iraq

When Al-Hashd al-Sha'bi (Popular Mobilization Forces) was formed and when ISIS emerged and occupied Mosul and Al-Anbar provinces - of course, Al-Anbar was not fully occupied and only some parts of it had come under their occupation - America forces were present in Iraq with all their helicopters, cannons, tanks, arms and ammunition, and the so-called set up to fight terrorism. This was when their stand towards us became absolutely clear. They refused to equip our forces and they refused to

supply us with helicopters and tanks. They even stopped giving us Hummer vehicles and refused to provide us with the equipment required to fight terrorism; while they (the terrorists) were equipped when certain special arms. We could not even get the arms and the equipment we had paid them for. For example, instead of giving us M1 Abrams tanks, they would give us such tanks the range of the bullets of which was only 600 meters. This was the stand of Americans towards us.

They removed all their support and stopped everything and instead began to provide support to terrorist groups affiliated with ISIS. We were stuck and did not know who to turn to. We sent different commissions to Poland and Bulgaria and bought arms and equipment from them. But would not give us the arms we needed on purchase and while we were engaged in a confrontation with ISIS they were just wanting to start the arms they had sold us. On the other hand, ISIS had emerged much more

equipped than our forces. We had tanks but it was not a war of tanks.

ISIS forces had managed to get their hands on parts of our arms in Mosul but most of those arms had fallen into the hands of Kurds. The same was the case in Kirkuk. However, even though Kurds had taken those arms when ISIS forces headed towards them the Kurds could not confront them. It was when the Islamic Republic and our forces simultaneously entered the scene. Americans had a strongly negative stand and we were severely under pressure. I realized that I had no option but to go to Russia and meet with Putin. I asked him to give us arms and advanced fighter planes like Mig-29 and Mig-35 and other required arms and the Russians equipped us very quickly.

But the one who really helped us and met our need for weapons was Haaj Qasem (may God bless his soul). We would reach an agreement about the type of weapons and the next day they would arrive in Iraq. We were not given them for free, we paid for them. But the difference was that even though we bought weaponry from other countries, we would not get them in time and in bulk. It was only Haaj Qasem who would supply us from the Iranian Army and Revolutionary Guards Corps whenever we were in need and it was what he did that saved the situation. He provided us with the required weaponry and equipment and at the same time help us with his military experience and strategies as well as the equipment that he and his commanders

would provide us with. Besides, there were some military experts that accompanied our forces and Al-Hashd al-Sha'bi forces.

We bought many different weapons, equipment, devices, and drones that were used during the war, and Iran attended to our needs. We even found ourselves in urgent need of Sukhoi warplanes and asked Haaj Qasem to sell us Iranian Sukhoi warplanes and we were sold 8 Iranian Sukhoi warplanes with the help of which we could stop many sabotage activities of ISIS.

With the help of Haaj Qasem and Abu Mahdi (may their souls be blessed) we could draw plans and strategies. Abu Mahdi undertook to clear the roads from ISIS force and ensure the safety of the road leading to Samarra. It was a very challenging and dangerous task because the Samarra road was controlled by hardliners. I must say that it was not only ISIS we were fighting with. There were also some local tribes, which were being used by ISIS. As a matter of fact, ISIS took advantage of the existing situation and instigated these tribes.

The tribal rebels were the same Sunni tribal sheikhs and political figures who claimed they did not know ISIS. In fact, our people were fighting us, and that too in a sectarian movement. Some of them told me: In 1991, you launched an intifada against us, and we will launch an intifada against you in 2014.

Haaj Abu Mahdi (may God bless his soul) reopened this road with great difficulty because all the cities on the road to Samarra were

under the control of these tribal forces and many battles took place on this road. Abu Mahdi had to open another way through gardens and orchards and pass the tanks through them; the tanks that were able to reach Samarra and besiege the bands that controlled the road.

In this way, the road was opened and traffic began to flow through it. Then, with the support and planning of Haaj Abu Mahdi and Haaj Qasem, we went to Amerli, which was under siege for 90 days. The Al-Hash al-Sha'bi groups went to Amerli and managed to drive away the hardline tribal forces who had this city under their siege. The Amerli inhabitants are Shiite Turkmens, and the inhabitants of the surrounding villages were all Sunni extremists, known for their extremist history. We finally managed to break the siege of Amerli and make normal life return to the people of this town. In short, it was through direct help and support provided by Haaj Qasem and Haaj Abu Mahdi that we could make something important happen and get rid of ISIS.

**Source: Jahanmard Periodical, February 2020**



**Source: Islamic World Peace Forum**