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## Interview: Dr. R.A. Tikriti and Dr. M.A. Fala Al-Ravi

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# 'We will not change the government under threat of killing our children'

*Dr. R.A. Tikriti, the chairman of the Iraqi medical association, and his colleague, Dr. M.A. Fala Al-Ravi, led a delegation of Iraqi physicians to the tenth anniversary conference of the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW), held in Stockholm at the end of June. The interview was conducted by EIR correspondent Ulf Sandmark on June 29.*

**EIR:** What would you like to tell us about the situation in Iraq?

**Al-Ravi:** I must say, as a doctor, that the situation in Iraq is really difficult. I must say that politicians could not appreciate the consequences of war, but we as doctors do. Nobody will win from the war, except the war itself. This war—which has ended as a military conflict, but still is present as a psychological, economic, and health war that began on Aug. 2, 1990—leads to many problems. All these problems lead to one target, and that is the Iraqi people, mainly the children and the elderly.

The problem now is electricity; in Iraq we now use candles. We have no water purification stations and have to supply water to the people. We have a very damaged electric power grid. We have difficulties with the sewage system. More important is the low amount of food and drugs. We think that deaths from diseases like cholera, typhoid fever, jaundice, etc., are probably much more numerous than the number of deaths from the military conflict.

Help from many organizations can do something to fulfill urgent needs, to keep this 18 million population alive at a minimal level of human requirements for food and medicine. I think the only answer is to lift the embargo, the sanctions, on this population.

**EIR:** Can you make any historical comparison to this kind of war, where the civilian catastrophe comes afterwards?

**Al-Ravi:** That is very difficult for me. I haven't seen many countries, but I have heard and read about this. In wartime Germany, the military conflict destroyed many buildings, destroyed the electricity system, the water supply, but the sanctions being applied now against Iraq are the main prob-

lem. They are now punishing an 18-million-member society. There is nothing in history, as far as I know, comparable to what is happening to Iraq at the moment.

**EIR:** The U.N. Undersecretary's representative was in Iraq, Martii Ahtisaari, and he said in his report back to the U.N. that there was an "apocalyptic" situation there. Would you also characterize the situation as apocalyptic?

**Al-Ravi:** I think he is right to describe the situation as a massive catastrophe.

**EIR:** You made an appeal for aid in your speech here in Stockholm. Have you gotten any response?

**Al-Ravi:** Yes. But I still think that the only answer is to end the sanctions or the embargo of Iraq. As I said in my speech this morning, all the help amounts to 10% or less of the requirements of 18 million. We expect all sorts of diseases due to malnutrition, as a future for the Iraqi people. Dr. Takriti met the Japanese team. They offered help and apparently they tried to do many things and to help our society. Many American organizations ask if they can offer medical help, food, drugs, and they even say they can run a hospital. One of the organizations, a student organization from America, asked if they can help us by sending journals, because no doctor in the world believed that the Iraqi doctors and medical students haven't received any journals. Which journals? The *American Journal of Medicine*, *Lancet*, etc., because this cut-off of subscriptions is part of the sanctions, unfortunately.

**EIR:** So you have found some response here?

**Al-Ravi:** Yes, definitely.

**EIR:** Do you think there will also be a resolution? Will you be satisfied with the work on the resolution?

**Al-Ravi:** Yes. The American PSR [Physicians for Social Responsibility] has proposed this resolution and we agreed. The IPPNW studied the war and the effect of the sanctions on Iraq and how this led to many medical and health problems, and they asked to end the sanctions on this country.

This resolution will supposedly be passed tomorrow to ask WHO [World Health Organization] and the other humanitarian organizations for real practical steps to end the sanctions. [The resolution was passed—ed.]

**EIR:** So the embargo is the main issue?

**Al-Ravi:** I think so. Yes, at the moment.

**EIR:** Could you say something about the internal political effect of the sanctions? What is the aim of the sanctions?

**Al-Ravi:** I don't know. I'm not a politician. But I think it is very wrong to stop food, to stop medicine, to stop spare parts for 18 million people in order to change this system or this man. The system and the President, for example, in any country, should be changed by its own people. We don't think that America, for example, or the U.S.S.R., or any other force from outside the country, should press all the people in order to change the President. I think this is wrong.

**EIR:** Have you an opinion about the new world order that is being imposed now by Mr. Bush?

**Al-Ravi:** I don't know. But I would like to ask if this is a new democracy or not. It is not. I feel that it is a new dictatorship of the world, which is not good.

Bush is—I should talk as a doctor—he was very nervous when he talked about Iraq, and then after the war, his doctor discovered that he is thyroid-toxic, that he has thyroid disease. A patient with thyroid disease is probably very nervous, especially about making decisions. Thyroid conditions affect the decisions of some politicians.

**EIR:** Is there anything else you would like to say to the American audience, the international audience, about the situation now?

**Tikriti:** We doctors know the result of war; the politicians know they can sign a document, but they don't know what the result is after their signature: demolition, destruction, death, killing, suffering, starvation, and all these things.

I would like to add something about the embargo against Iraq, and the sanctions against Iraq. The main purpose of those sanctions and embargo is said to be to weaken the country, but not to kill that country, not to kill the children of that country, because that is inhuman. But when President Bush took his decision about sanctions or embargoes against Iraq, and then the Security Council agreed, they knew the criminal result of their position.

This is a crime, and not just their throwing more than 100,000 tons of bombs all over Iraq. It makes no difference that they say this was a "clean war"; it is the reverse, because many children were bombed. More than 25 hospitals were demolished. Many drug stores were bombed and burned.

When you deny food, when you deny drugs, you are increasing the death of old people and spreading disease. This is the direct result after the end of the war, apart from

the more than tens of thousands that were killed in the field—more than 30-40 thousand civilians were killed in their homes and hospitals! Believe me, I am president of the Iraqi medical doctors [association]. Many doctors were killed in the hospitals by bombing. So this is inhuman.

Why is Bush continuing these total sanctions, because the official U.N. 666 decision says there should be an exception for medicines, for drugs, for food, milk, all these things? Why do they need an embargo against everything? Everything is forbidden to go to Iraq.

Iraq is a small country. Iraq depends on importing about 70% of its needs, especially drugs. We have only one pharmaceutical factory, and produce not more than 10-15% of our requirements. And even here, we depend on the raw materials from other countries for production. Even this 10-15% is jeopardized, because the raw materials are stopped.

Much of our electricity, water supply, and telecommunications facilities were destroyed. Our sewer system depended upon electrical power. When they demolished the power plants, the sewer system stopped. In Baghdad and many cities, the sewer system disappeared. For that reason, many of the diseases which were eradicated in Iraq have now started to reappear, like typhoid, cholera, viral hepatitis, many diseases apart from enteritis, especially gastroenteritis, especially in children. Many of them are dying from dehydration, lack of fluids, lack of medicine, of antibiotics. Is this the goal of the Security Council, the U.N., or is it the will of Mr. Bush?

And as my colleague mentioned, such actions are not changing the government of Saddam Hussein. If we understand democracy, real democracy, if we want change, we are the ones that will make the change, but not by threatening us, killing our children, and killing our patients under the threat: Either change your government or we are going to starve you till you are dead.

**EIR:** Your friend in his speech considered this war as the dirtiest war. Do you agree with Dr. Al-Ravi?

**Tikriti:** It is a fact recognized by all nations, by all peace movements all over the world, that it was the dirtiest war. What do you think, when 30 countries sharing all the up-to-date weapons fight against a small country, with 18 million? And believe me, many countries didn't expect the bombings. Even I myself. Then they started at the critical timing at half past two, after midnight, when all the people were sleeping, 1,500 airplanes throwing tons of fire and bombs all over the big cities in Iraq. What do you expect? How many are buried under the ruin of this destruction? How many dying? And many of them dying because they have heart trouble, hypertension, diabetes?

When they bombed, many patients left their beds, took off their oxygen, their monitors, and then died on the street. What do you call this? Is this a clean war? Definitely it is a dirty war.