

Cleric issues call to arms as Iraq unravels

Muslim extremists are eyeing Baghdad

**Ammar Al Shamary
and Gilgamesh Nabeel**

Special for USA TODAY

BAGHDAD Iraq edged closer to the prospect of full-blown civil war Friday as a top Shiite Muslim cleric issued a call to arms against Muslim extremists who are continuing their military campaign to supplant the government.

In his sermon in Karbala, Sheikh Abdul Mahdi al-Karbalai urged citizens to resist the forces of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, an al-Qaeda splinter group that overran Mosul, the country's second-largest city, as well as other towns in the past week after encountering little resistance from Iraqi troops.

"Citizens who are able to bear arms and fight terrorists, defend their country and their people and their holy places, should volunteer and join the security forces to achieve this holy purpose," al-Karbalai said. "He who sacrifices for the cause of defending his country and his family and his honor will be a martyr."

In Baghdad, Iraqis were heeding the cleric's call. Former army officer Mohammed Saied, 45, was

waiting to enter a military recruitment center that has been swamped for the past two days with men eager to defend the capital from ISIL militants, who have vowed to take the city.

"All Iraqis must get ready to fight those criminals who have no agenda except killing the innocent," Saied said.

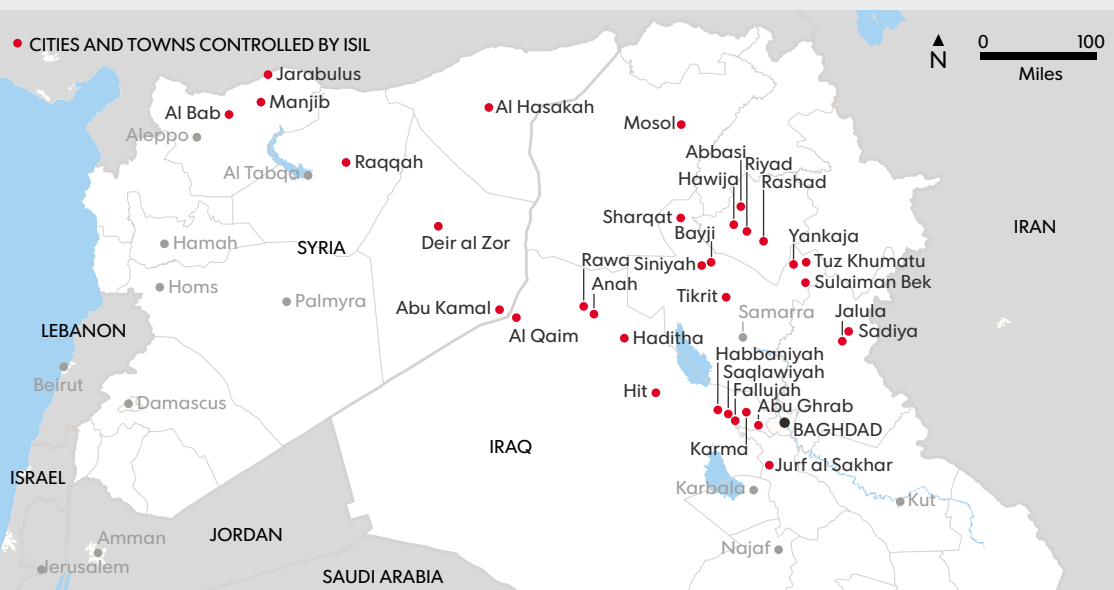
As the representative of Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, leader of Iraq's Shiites, al-Karbalai threatened, with his sermon, to further divide Iraq along sectarian lines. Many Sunni Iraqis believe embattled Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki has unduly favored his fellow Shiites, who make up the country's largest religious community.

The ISIL's goal is to establish a new Sunni country that would straddle the current border between Iraq and Syria, where ISIL forces are fighting President Bashar al-Assad in that country's civil war. The group was linked to al-Qaeda until internal disputes led to its separation this year.

Experts believe the Iraqi army's poor showing reflects how its Shiite officers are reluctant to fight determined Sunni fighters in Mosul, Tikrit and other Sunni-dominated cities.

ISLAMIC MILITANTS GAINING IN IRAQ

Iraqi military forces have not been able to prevent the al-Qaeda inspired Sunni militant group ISIL from taking control of major Iraqi cities.



Source: Institute for the Study of War; American Enterprise Institute; London Telegraph (telegraph.co.uk); state.gov
ANNE R. CAREY, DENNY GAINER, KEVIN KEPPLER AND JERRY MOSEMAK, USA TODAY

"ISIL has built up a head of momentum. Then, as it approaches other towns or cities, the security forces there panic, knowing that they are not well-equipped to fight or repulse the

militants," said Matthew Henman, manager of IHS Jane's Terrorism and Insurgency Centre in London.

That pattern continued as the extremists captured Jalula and

Sadiyah, two towns on the border with Iran, about 70 miles north of Baghdad. Upon entering the city, the fighters portrayed themselves as liberators protecting residents from the central government.

Men make gains in custody decisions

▶ CONTINUED FROM 1B

ware, Missouri and Maine — have taken steps to be more gender-equal in their decision-making, no state is considered "a beacon of being father-friendly," according to Cordell & Cordell.

"Custody decisions vary not only state to state, but even greatly within a state and within a county from judge to judge," says Jennifer Paine, an attorney in Ann Arbor, Mich.

WHY THE SHIFT?

One reason for the interest in fathers getting their due, suggests Alan Boudreau, who teaches at Northern Illinois University's College of Law in DeKalb, Ill., is that many of today's lawyers and judges come from homes where divorce played out.

"They were children of divorce at a time when the presumption was very much (that) the mother would stay in the marital home and have pretty much full-time custody of the kids, and the father would have visitation and maybe some overnight," Boudreau says. "I think those kids — when divorcing — want a different experience for their kids than they had."

The recession accelerated this trend, he says.

"You've seen more households that had two working parents, and if a parent was out of work, it happened to be the father, and he was therefore taking over more of the parenting duties," Boudreau



Kory Borde, 44, and his son Cole, 11, grill chicken and hot dogs for dinner on their back deck.

says. "This has changed, in many ways, men's relationships to their children, and that has been reflected in some of the growth of firms catering to men and fathers' rights."

But not all attorneys think these niche firms have the right idea. Katharine Maddox, a family law attorney in Vienna, Va., represents "both sexes but slightly more men," she says. And she worries that this men's mind-set "promotes the gender war and can promote more conflict in the divorce and custody arena when you're focusing on gender."

"Whether I represent a man or a woman, I'm going to ask, 'Have you been involved in schooling? Have you taken the child to doctor's appointments? Do you volunteer in school?'" Maddox says. "I do think men overall face an uphill battle. I don't think it's equal, nor do I think it's right or fair. But when you're presenting your case to a judge or trying to negotiate a settlement, you have to focus on the parenting as opposed to the gender."

"Fathers have very strong emotional and even physical connections with their children."

Author Paul Raeburn

Data support these changing perceptions:

▶ A Pew Research Center study found that almost 2 million fathers in 2012 reported being a "stay-at-home" dad, up from 1.1 million in 1989. Although 23% of stay-at-home fathers in 2012 said they were home because they couldn't find work, the sharpest increase in the reasons for being home was among fathers who were caring for their family. In 1989, only 5% of stay-at-home fathers said they were home for that reason; in 2012, it was 21%.

▶ Changes in custody are shown in a new study based on court records in Wisconsin, published online last month in the

journal *Demography*. Researchers reviewed all divorce records involving minors from 1986 to 2008, totaling 9,873 cases. In that period, mothers receiving sole custody dropped from 80% to 42%, while instances of equal shared custody increased from 5% to 27% and unequal shared custody rose from 3% to 18%. An additional 9% are fathers with sole custody, and the remaining 4% is split custody with multiple-child families and different arrangements for each child.

CUSTODY OUTSIDE OF MARRIAGE

Author Paul Raeburn of New York City says one goal of his new book, *Do Fathers Matter? What Science Is Telling Us About the Parent We've Overlooked*, is to update old thinking with fresh facts.

"The new science of fatherhood shows that fathers have very strong emotional and even physical connections with their children that are very important for their children's healthy developments and even for lowering

their risk of disease and obesity and for supporting their mental health," he says.

For fathers such as Kirk Hamilton, 30, of Broken Arrow, Okla., who had not married the mother of his two older daughters, now 8 and 3, not having to deal with a divorce simplified the process.

"It made it a little easier, because when you're married, you have to divide assets and the house, and it would have prolonged the litigation and made it more expensive had we been married," says Hamilton, a senior claims adjuster who is now married with an infant daughter.

Cordell says cohabiting fathers have "no defined rights at the outset. They have to take an offensive step."

"Unlike a husband, they have to bring an action in court to be able to establish rights. Once they do take that step, the court is very open-minded and doesn't consider that person a second-class father just because they were not part of a marriage," he says.

Kory Borde's divorce was final in 2006. He didn't use a men's law firm. But Borde, 44, of Ashburn, Va., says a major concern when he and his first wife separated nine years ago was not to relinquish the involved father role he had played for his two sons, now 11 and 13. "I wanted to maintain the normalcy in their lives as best as possible," he says.

Maria Cognetti of Camp Hill, Pa., president of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers, started practicing law 36 years ago. "Moms were staying at home, and in the court's eye, that made them the better parent," she says.

"Now, what you're seeing is the court is very much open to a request for a 50-50 — true shared custody," Cognetti says. "Are they just automatically granting it? No, and neither should they be. What fits one set of facts and one set of children doesn't fit another."

IN BRIEF

CHINA ARRESTS LAWYER WHO FOUGHT LABOR CAMPS

A year ago, civil rights lawyer Pu Zhiqiang was earning accolades in the Chinese media for his work pushing for the abolition of labor camps. On Friday, Pu made headlines again — but this time for being arrested by Beijing police on charges that fellow activists say are trumped up in an attempt to silence the vocal government critic.

The dramatic turnaround highlights the thin line that activist lawyers often find themselves having to walk if they seek to drum up public support for causes that embarrass the ruling Communist Party.

AFGHANS TO VOTE FOR NEW LEADER AMID ATTACK FEARS

Afghans choose a new president Saturday in a runoff election between two candidates who both promise to improve ties with the West, combat corruption and guide the nation with a steadier hand than outgoing leader Hamid Karzai.

CELEBRATION FOR BUDDHA



Afghans of Buddha's birthday in Seoul, Korea. (AP Photo/Young-Joon Ahn)

ital, Kabul.

UKRAINIAN TROOPS DRIVE REBELS OUT OF MARIUPOLE

Ukrainian troops attacked pro-Russia separatists Friday in the southern port of Mariupol, appar-

ently driving them out of buildings they had occupied in the city.

About 100 soldiers emerged triumphantly from the previously rebel-occupied buildings, shouting the name of their battalion and singing the Ukrainian national anthem. They also destroyed an armored vehicle and a heavy truck used by the separatists.

100,000 CELEBRATE AT GAY PRIDE PARADE IN TEL AVIV

Shirtless Israeli men, colorfully dressed drag queens and others partied Friday through central Tel Aviv as tens of thousands of people took part in the city's annual gay pride parade, the largest event of its kind in the Middle East.

Tel Aviv is one of the few places in the Middle East where gays feel free to walk hand in hand and kiss in public. The city has emerged as one of the world's most gay-friendly travel destinations in recent years, in sharp contrast with the rest of the region.

From wire reports

Corrections & Clarifications



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