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## Guest Editorial

### Failure Is Not An Option in Iraq Rev. Ken Joseph

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The contrast could not have been more dramatic - the previous day advisors to the Baker Commission held a dire meeting saying things such as 'Iran has done more than anyone else in helping Iraq's current government' and essentially a message of failure and hopelessness with one panelist saying 'there is nothing the US can do to influence the course of events in Iraq.'

What a breath of fresh air was Tariq al-Hashimi, the Vice-President of Iraq. His message? 'Stay the course - Iraq is going to make it.'

Opening his address with a quote from Thomas Jefferson 'All men are created equal' he went on to recite much of the famed address.

Listening to the Baker Commission and the legion of naysayer's in Washington who seem to take joy and glee in failure in Iraq, the Vice President could not have been more different.

'If the United States pulls out of Iraq there will be a massacre and chaos.' he said, answering one of the most debated questions simply and easily. 'Of course all Iraqis want to be on their own but any timetables must be clearly linked with progress in managing our affairs.'

Saying as clear as he could without mentioning Iran and Syria by name he said 'we all know which of our neighbors and other countries are behind all this trouble and working to make things fail'

His theme? 'I am an Iraqi' he proudly said. 'This whole Shia, Sunni, Kurd, Assyrian debate is something that is not part of our history - it just began following the Liberation - in fact there has never been divisions like that - it is not a sect against sect situation, it is something being set up by those from outside.'

In a blatant rebuke to the Baker Commission and as Senator John McCain phrased it 'the recipe for failure' in Iraq', the Vice President was upbeat, hopeful and had a plan.

The main problem, according to Hashimi was the decision to fire the army. This triggered a series of unfortunate events that according to the Vice President allowed outside forces to use the opportunity.

'Please don't forget that 90% of the Army was Shiite - this whole Shia/Sunni battle is a myth.' he continued. 'Somehow the US received wrong and outdated information on Iraq and assumed this serious divide which in fact did not exist - we all marry together, live together and nobody knew who was Sunni, Shia Assyrian, Kurd etc.'

'This wrong information formed the basis for the wrong decision that Government should be divided into the various sects. This has created ministries in the Government that simply work for their particular group going so far as to touch even the Hospitals where often if you are not of the proper sect they will not treat you and in fact kill you if you if they find out you are from another group.' he said.

Reform

'We too have dreams of peace and freedom and democracy.' Hashimi forcefully challenged. 'What we need is very simple - we need to reform the governmental structure in the way any normal government should be set up. The division according to the mistaken idea of sects is wrong.' Answering questions about the Assyrian Christians, 10% of the population who have recently applied for one Province in Northern Iraq under the Iraqi Constitution, he had a message of hope too.

'The Assyrian Christians have a future in Iraq. They are our brothers and as fellow Iraqis we need them and call on them to help rebuild our institutions and move forward. There is nothing for them to fear. We are behind them and will help them.'

Hinting at the urgent need for a new set of 'fair' elections to properly set up representative bodies, the Vice-President went on to outline a plan forward - dramatically in contrast to the Baker Commission including reforming the army and security forces so they were not based on sects, reforming the various ministries so they were not controlled by various sects and reforming the judicial system so that crime is punished. 'Iraq is free' he said

'The terrorists from neighboring countries will not win. The Iraqi people will with your support and success in our country is

achievable. We cannot give in.

Failure in Iraq would have consequences not just in our country but in the whole region and the world.'

Was the Baker Commission and the stunned United States Institute for Peace which organized the speech listening?

If it comes to a choice between believing Iraqis who have a stake in the future and those who have a stake in failure the choice is clear.

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*Rev. Ken Joseph Jr. was born and raised in Tokyo, Japan, where his parents met following the call of General Douglas McArthur for 10,000 young Americans to come and help rebuild postwar Japan. An Assyrian, his grandparents escaped Northern Iraq during the Assyrian Holocaust of 1917 and came to the United States and settled in Chicago.*

*Ken graduated from the Christian Academy in Japan and Biola University in La Mirada, California, with degrees in Intercultural Communications and Mass Communications, returning to Japan in 1987. A Christian minister, Rev. Ken Joseph Jr. currently serves as a pastor in Tokyo Japan, is founder and director of The Japan Helpline, a worldwide 24-hour emergency hotline and relief assistance organization, and is founder and director of the Japan-based Keikyo Institute, which studies the historical roots of Christianity in Asia. He is currently ministering in Baghdad, Iraq.*

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