

THE EUROPEAN-ATLANTIC GROUP

Monday 30th January 2012

Reception and Dinner-Debate

7.30 pm for 8.15 pm to 10.45 pm

MITHAL AL-ALUSI

Founding Member of the Iraqi Nation Party and recently an Iraqi MP

IRAQ IN CRISIS?

The Caledonian Club

9A, Halkin Street, off the North East Corner of Belgrave Square, SW1X 7DR

Chairman of Meeting: The Rt. Hon. The Lord Hamilton of Epsom

Opening Discussion: The Rt. Hon. The Lord Kilclooney of Armagh

Vice-Chair, British – Iraq All-Party Parliamentary Group

Vote of Thanks: Sir Michael Burton KCVO CMG

Given the recent withdrawal of the United States military from Iraq and with the prevailing uncertainties in that country, it is opportune that Mr Al-Alusi together with members of a high level delegation will address the Group.

Mr Al-Alusi is from a highly prominent Iraqi Sunni family. His father was a renowned scholar and Baghdad University professor of Classical Arabic literature. While studying in 1976 in Cairo Mr Al-Alusi was sentenced to death in absentia for trying to undermine Saddam Hussein. Aligned with many opponents in the Ba'ath Party, he escaped to Syria where he worked for better conditions for refugees like himself. On completion of a short prison sentence for refusing to join the Syrian Ba'ath Party, he sought political asylum in Germany. In 2002 he was involved in the takeover of the Iraqi Embassy in Berlin in protest against tyranny in his country. This led to the purported discovery of incriminating evidence of inappropriate ties between the German and Iraqi governments: demonstrators including Mr Al-Alusi were convicted of hostage-taking by a German court and sentenced to three years in prison, subsequently reduced to house arrest. He returned to Iraq in October 2003 and joined the Iraqi National Congress.

After the invasion of Iraq, Mr Al-Alusi was appointed General Director of Culture and Media at the Higher National Commission for De-Baathification. However, following a visit to Israel, he was expelled from the National Congress and sacked from the Commission for *having contacts with an enemy state* – a crime under a 1969 Baathist law.

In October 2004 Mr Al-Alusi founded the Democratic Party of the Iraqi Nation: a liberal, secular and democratic party which subsequently became the Iraqi Nation Party and which put up a number of candidates in the January 2005 elections. In the December elections that year, his party went into coalition with a number of smaller parties which led to Mr Al-Alusi taking a seat. A secularist politician, his party supports closer ties with a number of western states including the USA, the UK, Israel and Turkey. It stresses the importance of human rights and freedom of speech, religion and civil liberties.

In February 2005 he escaped an assassination attempt in which his two sons, Ayman and Jamal, together with a bodyguard lost their lives. Following a second visit to Israel in September 2008 where he addressed a conference on counter-terrorism, the National Assembly of Iraq voted to remove his parliamentary immunities and to ban him from travelling abroad – on appeal; this was overturned by the Supreme Federal Court. Although Mr Al-Alusi stood at the 2010 Iraqi parliamentary elections, he was unsuccessful: claiming that the elections were rigged against liberals like him. This led to a recount in Baghdad which was ordered by the Supreme Court. The result was ratified and he lost his seat.

A well known critic of the growing influence of outside governments on Iraqi affairs, Mr Al-Alusi appears on a regular basis on both international and local media. He enjoys a loyal following who respect his integrity and currently he plays an important role as an honest broker between the various political parties: a role which gives him a bird's eye view of the current critical juncture in Iraq's fledgling democracy.

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