

MID-EAST e-NEWS

An electronic journal of the Middle East, for those who want to be informed.

Issue No. 19 Amman

June 16th, 2004

<http://www.morethantourists.com>

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Welcome

This newsletter was begun in Amman, worked on – briefly – on the Eurotunnel train to London (smooth ride, no clackety-clack) and is being completed in Nottingham.

This month we see Muqtada Al Sadr moving from rebel to politician, after a half-hour visit with Sistani in Najaf. Ariel Sharon has been pushing his Gaza pullout plan, losing cabinet members from his own party in an attempt to keep the plan intact.

Next month's issue will come out about the same time as the handover of power to the Iraqis, and we are now beginning to see what that will look like. An outline of the new cabinet is included with this issue, as is a document that recounts an older conflict. Those of you that enjoyed the archaeological supplement last issue, will find Sennacherib's Prism to be another interesting archive.

N. Africa	Nigeria: State of emergency		Arab Summit in Tunisia		Nigeria: 3 die in Jega riots		Rebels capture town - Riots in Kinshasa		Congo: rebels agree to truce after month of fighting																		
	Nigeria: 5 die in Muslim reprisal																										
Sudan	Famine expected in Darfur		Peace treaty in S. delayed		Air strike kills 20 in Darfur																						
Cyprus & Turkey	Turkish Cypriots excluded from EU elections by South		N. Cyprus open to EU citizens		Kurds in E. kill soldier		G. Cypriot leader criticizes Kofi Annan																				
Iran	Demonstrations at British embassy		Threatens to restart uranium enrichment		Baradei: "No proof" of weapons intent																						
	Nuclear report delivered late																										
India/Pakistan	Kashmir bus bomb-33 Indian soldiers die		Car bombs outside US cultural center		Sunni cleric killed		Mosque bomb kills 20		10 police die in failed assassination																		
							Shiites riot over mosque bomb																				
Afghan.	Election workers attacked		28 Taleban killed in S.		US troops kill 6 Taleban		3 aid workers killed		Cave strike on Taleban																		
							Medecine Sans Frontieres pulls out																				
Saudi Arabia	German worker killed in Riyadh		22 western oil workers killed in Khobar siege		BBC man killed in Riyadh		US worker killed		US worker shot dead																		
Asia	Martial law lifted in Aceh		4 Aceh rebels killed		Buddhist beheaded in S. Thailand																						
Lebanon	Vandalism by Hariri opponents		Leb: Election in south		Army & Hizbollah supporters clash in election fever																						
Iraq	Abuse trial-jail for soldier		Ali shrine damaged		Alawi named as PM		Yawer interim president		Govt sworn in																		
	Wedding party error: 40 die		Karbala calmer, troops leave		Sadr aide seized		Najaf truce violations		Najaf Sadr truce																		
	Chalabi home searched		Sadr calls militias to leave holy cities		Kufa attacked, 32 militia killed nr mosque		Japanese journalist killed		Najaf skirmish																		
	2 days of fighting in Kufa kills 15+		22+ die in attacks		Sadr fighters attack pol.stn.		Ed.Min. killed		Dep.F.Min. killed																		
Jordan	Pr. Hamza weds		Q.Rania colonel																								
Israel	Barghouti convicted		UN resolution condemns Rafah raid - US abstains		Sharon revises pullout plan		Lapid criticizes 'Nazi-like' Gaza raids		Weaker Gaza plan discussed																		
	Army re-enters Rafah		Sharon fires 2 cabinet MPs who oppose his Gaza plan		Israeli air raids near Beirut		2 Pro-settler MPs resign		Sharon bribe charges dropped																		
Palestine	20 die in Op. Rainbow: Rafah raid, helicopters, tanks, 'dozers'		Rafah raid ends		Barghouti gets 5 life terms		2 disabled killed in Qalqilya, Kalandia																				
	9 killed in protest march																										
	8 more die in Rafah																										
May.	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	Ju	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	ne	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S

Abbreviations

Are you keeping up with the abbreviations proliferating across the Middle East? Confused over the difference between PUK and PKK? SPLA and SPA? CPA and IGC? Read on for an explanation of these and more.

IRAQ

IGC – The Interim Governing Council, has just announced its imminent resignation ahead of the June 30th handover of power.

CPA – The Coalition Provisional Authority is the administration (run by the US and other participants in the coalition) that is managing Iraqi institutions, and rebuilding the country's infrastructure.

KDP – The Kurdish Democratic Party (was the PKK) is led by Massoud Barzani.

PUK – Patriotic Union of Kurdistan is led by Jamal Talabani.

SUDAN

SPLA – the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army has been struggling to free itself from the Sudanese government's imposition of Islamic law in the south.

SLA – The Sudanese Liberation Army is based in the Darfur region, and has sprung up over the last year when the atrocities in the western region sparked a refugee crisis.

PALESTINE

PLO – A collection of Palestinian groups, some primarily political, some militaristic, and most also providing social services among the people they serve. Amongst the most radical are Hamas and Islamic Jihad (both religious-based groups growing in strength), and Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades. Fateh (Yasser Arafat's group) has been fragmenting lately, plagued by corruption and rivalry.

UNITED NATIONS

IAEA – The International Atomic Energy Agency, led by Mohammed Baradei, is currently trying to establish Iran's level of cooperation in nuclear inspections. Documents submitted by the Iranian authorities do not fully explain material and equipment observed by IAEA inspectors. Iran has been aggressively protesting its innocence of charges of developing nuclear weapons, but has not displayed the openness that it promises.

UNRWA – The United Nations Relief and Works Agency is led by Peter Hansen, and provides for the care of refugees worldwide. Of particular concern to the UNRWA these days is the increasing number of homeless in Gaza as a result of home demolitions. The UNRWA operates schools and medical facilities in the Gaza strip.

Iraq's New Cabinet

In issue 12 of *e-NEWS* we looked at the composition of the Iraqi Governing Council. We observed how its make-up reflected the variety of groups in Iraq.

In the last two weeks the Governing Council has chosen an interim President and Prime Minister, and on June 3rd a new cabinet was chosen that will lead Iraq towards its first elections since the removal of Saddam Hussein.

The Cabinet was chosen in large part by the new **Prime Minister, Iyad Alawi**. He is a Shiite, and his political backing is from the Iraqi National Accord. This is a secular party which, unusually, includes former Baathists, Sunnis and Shiites.

The new **President is Ghazi Al Yawer**. His post is largely ceremonial. He is from the Shammar tribe, which also includes some Shiite clans.

(The interim constitution calls for two vice-presidents, ensuring representation of the various groups)

Vice President – Ibrahim Al Jaafari, a Shiite Muslim from the Dawa Islamic party

Vice President – Rowsch Shaways, member of the KDP from Erbil.

Foreign Minister – Hoshyar Zebari, a Kurd and former member of the Peshmerga. He has already traveled widely promoting Iraq's 'new democracy'. (One of his deputies was assassinated on June 12th in Baghdad).

Deputy Prime Minister – Barham Saleh, a Kurd, member of the PUK.

Interior Minister – Falah Hassan, whose father defected under Saddam in the 1970s. The family is from Tikrit.

Finance Minister – Adil Abdel Mahdi, a member of the Shiite Supreme Council.

Oil Minister – Thamir Ghabban was first appointed to this position in 2003.

Justice Minister – Malik Dohan Al Hassan had been culture minister in the 1960s, was imprisoned under Saddam Hussein, and in 2003 had lodged early complaints about the treatment of prisoners in CPA jails.

Did you read about...

the four-year-old Iraqi child who was kidnapped in Baghdad? The police urged his family to pay the \$30,000 ransom demanded. Instead the father, Ali Al Obeidi, waited outside the house every night waiting for the kidnapers to deliver a lower ransom amount. When they left their note he opened fire on their car, capturing the ringleader, and obtaining information on where his son was being held. After his wife returned with the child, Ali demanded \$120,000 ransom for the original kidnapper. ("If he went to prison he would be free in 2 weeks, and then his tribe would be my enemy.")

The Obeidi tribe is one of Iraq's largest. Eventually the tribal leaders intervened, and a long tent was erected in the street – though not, this time, to celebrate a wedding. Tea and sweets were served, negotiations initiated, and the to-ing and fro-ing of heated debate began. Al Obeidi ultimately gave up the kidnapper in exchange for just an apology, saying "it's shameful for us to take any money that came about as a result of criminal activity." (The Times, 13/6/04)

The Islamic Interface (Indonesia)

In issue 18 of **e-NEWS** we looked at Thailand, and the recent upsurge in tension in the southern states. In this issue we look at Indonesia, the country with the largest Muslim population worldwide. Predominantly Muslim (87% of the 210 million) the country is characterized by its variety of ethnic groups, primarily Javanese, and its history as a colony of The Netherlands. Indonesia was granted statehood, reluctantly, in 1949, and some regions still fight for independence.

Tensions within Indonesia may appear ethnic-oriented due to the large number of people-groups within the large country, but they can often be seen to have other origins: the colonial practice of transferring groups from densely populated *Java* to other islands continued into the 1980s; since oil became a significant part of the economy, some regions object to the bulk of the profits going to Jakarta.

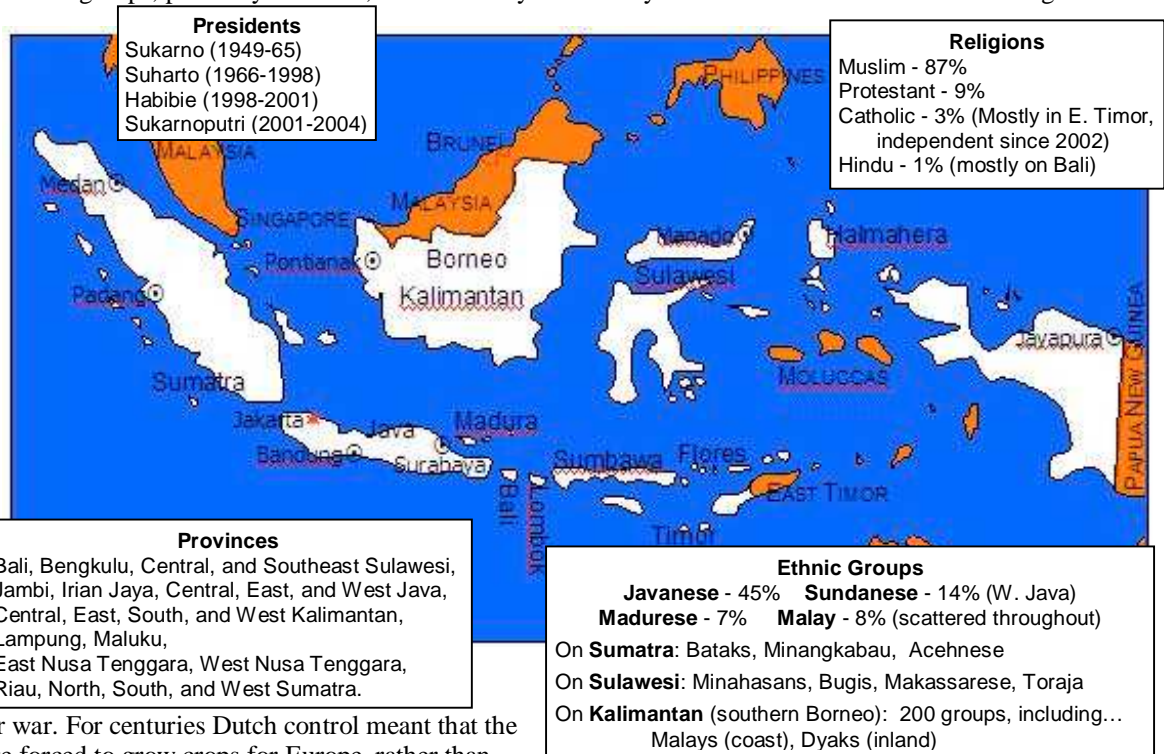
Attempts at independence by the peoples of *Aceh* were first crushed by the colonising Dutch in 1908, after a 30-year war. For centuries Dutch control meant that the people of the archipelago were forced to grow crops for Europe, rather than their staple diet. An Islamic independence movement (Sarekat Islam) began in 1912, but in the 1920s, such organizations were severely repressed. Also during the 1920s **Sukarno** founded the PNI, for total independence of Indonesia. He and **Hatta**, the Muslim leader, were exiled by the Dutch until the Japanese took control of the islands during WWII. After VJ day **Sukarno & Hatta** declared independence, which was supported by Britain. The Dutch, however, attacked the islands in 1947, taking control of most of Java and Sumatra, exiling **Sukarno** and **Hatta** once again, and it was not until 1949 that the Netherlands accepted Indonesian independence.

Sukarno's successor, President **Suharto**, was presented for election unopposed every five years, but after the 1998 'election' riots broke out and he stepped down, to be replaced by Bucharuddin **Habibie**. Under his administration some troops were withdrawn from *Aceh*, and steps were taken that would eventually lead to independence for *East Timor*. The Free Aceh Movement (GAM, formed in the 1970s) continued to fight for independence however. The Acehnese are primarily Muslim, and in 2002, in hopes of appeasing the separatists, the government agreed to allow the introduction of Sharia law in the region. When parliament voted in 2002 to remove **Habibie** from the presidency for corruption a peace treaty was agreed with the new president, Megawati **Sukarnoputri** (the daughter of Pres. **Sukarno**) in December of that year. This treaty had promised autonomy and free elections, but neither side fulfilled their promises. Violence prompted the imposition of Martial Law in May of 2003. This was lifted last month (May 2004), but problems still continue.

During the 1950s *Kalimantan* (the Indonesian portion of the island of Borneo) received a large number of Muslim settlers from the island of *Madura*. Today this is producing ethnic conflict since the indigenous Dayaks feel that the government favors the Madurese. In 2001 about 100,000 Madurese fled violence in Sampit, central Kalimantan, that had caused the deaths of 500 Madurese.

In the *Moluccas* (famed as the *Spice Islands*) militant Islam arrived in 2000, in the form of the group Laskar Jihad, from *Java*. Local government reorganization had meant that selection of village headmen favored Muslims, and Muslim settlers took over trade previously controlled by Christians. (In Jordan I was reminded this week that many Muslims will avoid using a store owned by a Christian, even if there is very little choice.) The island of *Ambon* is primarily Christian, as is the northern section of *Sulawesi*. In May of this year clashes between Muslims and Christians in *Ambon* left 36 dead. The independence movement of the *Moluccas* is led by Alex Manuputty, who is of Christian origin. He is currently in the US where he fled last year, having been charged in connection with the flying of banned separatist flags.

(Long-time readers of **e-NEWS** know that frequently 'Christian' has primarily a cultural connotation, but should remember that this includes Christian traditions, practices and beliefs which western 'believers' also hold in common.)



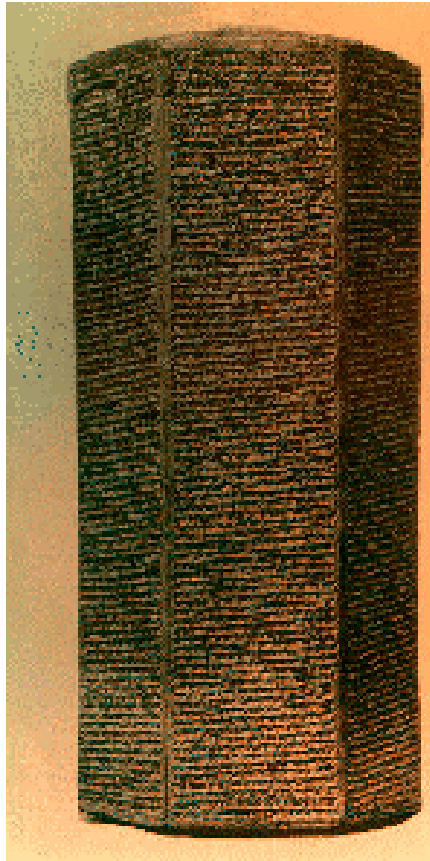
Sennacherib's Prism

The Kingdoms of Israel and Judah saw their ends at the hands of the Assyrians and Babylonians in 722 BC and 587 BC. About ten years after the exile of the kingdom of Israel by Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, his successor, Sennacherib invaded the southern kingdom of Judah, during Hezekiah's reign. The Bible records this invasion in 2 Kings 18-19 and 2 Chronicles 32.

King Sennacherib of Assyria's own views about his siege of Jerusalem may be read on this hexagonal clay prism, inscribed with the details of his eight campaigns. It is also known as the 'Taylor Prism', was discovered in Nineveh, and stands 15in/375mm high.

Sennacherib's Prism

But as for Hezekiah, the Jew who did not bow in submission to my yoke, forty six of his strong walled towns and innumerable smaller villages in their neighborhood I besieged and conquered by stamping down earth ramps and then by bringing up battering rams, by the assault of foot soldiers, by breaches, tunneling and sapper operations. I made to come out from them 200,150 people, young and old, male and female, innumerable horses, mules, donkeys camels, large and small cattle, and counted them as the spoils of war. He himself shut up like a caged bird within Jerusalem his royal city. I put watch-posts strictly around it and turned back to his disaster any who went out of its city gate. His towns which I had despoiled I cut off from his land, giving them to Mitinti, king of Ashdod, Padi, king of Ekron, and Sillibel, king of Gaza and so reduced his land. Moreover, I fixed upon him an increase in the amount to be given as *katre*- presents for my lordship, in addition to the former tribute, to be given annually. As for Hezekiah, the awful splendour of my lordship overwhelmed him, and the irregular and regular troops which he had brought in to strengthen Jerusalem, his royal city and had obtained for his protection, together with 30 talents of gold, 300 talents of silver, precious stones, antimony, large blocks of red stone, ivory (inlaid) couches, ivory arm-chairs, elephant hide, elephant tusks, ebony wood, box-wood, all kinds of valuable treasures, as well as his daughters, concubines, male and female musicians he sent me later to Nineveh, my lordly city. He sent a personal messenger to deliver the tribute and make a slavish obeisance.



2 Kings 18:13-16

In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah's reign, Sennacherib king of Assyria attacked all the fortified cities of Judah and captured them. So Hezekiah king of Judah sent this message to the king of Assyria at Lachish: "I have done wrong. Withdraw from me, and I will pay whatever you demand of me." the king of Assyria exacted from Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. So Hezekiah gave him all the silver that was found in the temple of the Lord and in the treasuries of the royal palace.

At this time Hezekiah king of Judah stripped off the gold with which he had covered the doors and doorposts of the temple of the Lord, and gave it to the king of Assyria.

Chronicles 32:10-21

¹⁰Later, ... Sennacherib...sent his officers to Jerusalem with this message for Hezekiah king of Judah...

This is what Sennacherib king of Assyria says: On what are you basing your confidence, that you remain in Jerusalem under siege? When Hezekiah says, 'The

Lord our God will save us from the hand of the king of Assyria.' he is misleading you, to let you die of your hunger and thirst.

¹³Do you not know what I and my fathers have done to all the peoples of the other lands? Were the gods of those nations ever able to deliver their land from my hand?... How then can your god deliver you from my hand?

²⁰King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz cried out to heaven in prayer about this. And the Lord sent an angel, who annihilated all the fighting men and the leaders and officers in the camp of the Assyrian king. So he withdrew to his own land in disgrace. And when he went into the temple of his god, some of his sons cut him down with the sword.