

PRESS CONFERENCE:

Dr. Tahseen al-Sheikhly, Civilian Spokesman, Operation Fardh Al-Qanoon

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REPORTERS:

REPORTERS 1-12

***REP1 = REPORTER 1**

***INT = INTERPRETER**

DR AL-SHEIKHLY:

[Speaks in Arabic.]

INT:

I'm very happy today to meet you and I apologize, Admiral Driscoll had other commitments and we were hoping that he could attend as well. But he...as I've said that he has a commitment. But I'm going to do the press conference today alone. And this press conference has to do with the civilian side of Operation Fardh Al-Qanoon and the reconstruction. And we will focus today mainly on the recent two campaigns in Shola and Sadr City.

The reconstruction is going on in all places in Baghdad and this is what we have committed to do. But it's no distinguishing between one place and another, but due to the special interest that...or case of Sadr City and allocations in addition to what allocations that were allocated...the money that were allocated for it which is \$1 million for Sadr City and \$50 million for Shola neighborhood. And a committee was assigned to carry on...out several projects. And I...and you should know the details of those projects. In the health sector...we have to mention several facts regarding the health sector in Sadr City. There is Al Rashad Hospital, which includes the one...two...1,200 beds, Al Imam Hospital, and Al Zawahari Hospital, in addition to 19 health centers and 1 blood bank and also medicine, blanks, and.... Most of those hospitals and health centers were damaged. That's why the committee decided to rehabilitate those damaged areas due to the military operations with \$645...\$[6]54 million and the other phase will be \$1 billion for the second phase. And rehabilitating the Fatima Zawahari Hospital will demand \$47...\$74 million. And also the medicine storages also will take \$75 million. Also there is a new...or dinars. And the special...the dentistry center with 2 billion Iraqi dinars. All those projects are continuing, and we have started those projects. On the educational level and...to give you an idea, we have 294 elementary

schools. We have a shortage in the buildings. We have 67 schools for the intermediate level. And those...we need 20 buildings for the intermediate level. And we have 24 high schools. And we still need four buildings for the high schools. And we have four professional houses. And we have four institutes that occupy two buildings. That's why the total of schools is 408 schools in the area and 130 or [134] buildings that we should provide for those schools...additional buildings to be provided and built inside the area. That's why we have started, according to the plan, to build 11 new schools in Sadr City. And we decided to rehabilitate several schools and equip 400 schools with a computer lab. And each lab contains 2...25 computers and the schools should...and each school should also be equipped with a generator. And 51 schools were rehabilitated by the Ministry of Reconstruction and Housing, and the Ministry of Education asked to build six other schools in Al Shola neighborhood. And the Shola neighborhood needs also services. Of course the coalition forces also are doing reconstruction. There is ten schools were rehabilitated in Sadr City and 6 in Jamilah neighborhood. The project that the Amanat Baghdad conducted...or part of that has been conducted by Amanat Baghdad. And the most important point is that those projects could have a positive outcome to the citizens. We...they established 20 parking places and gardens with a cost of 146 million dinars,

rehabilitating markets in the area, building a playground, also playing...another playground inside the city, and rehabilitating sectors four...fully, that is. That includes pavement. And the committee also decided that there will be a project for the small loans...to provide small loans so that we could eliminate unemployment. And we have allocated \$10 million to start distributing and giving the small loans for those who want to initiate their small businesses in Sadr City. Also, the Ministry of Reconstruction and Housing suggested a project to rehabilitate the fronts on the houses of those damaged houses in Sadr City. And we allocated \$10 million for this project. The Ministry of Transportation decided to establish a new garage or a station...bus station and also to rehabilitating another bus station, in addition to building two offices for the Iraqi airlines in Sadr City. And also building...establishing 79 [unintelligible] that work for those...to serve the people. The Ministry of Electricity will establish 100 streetlights that work on the solar system and the bids have started coming. And in the coming future, the project will start. The Ministry of Electricity is working on the power system which was damaged, and we have removed most of the damaged power stations and lines. We have allocated 75 million dinars for the power system in Sadr City. And also there are some projects to employ the...and provide job opportunities for the citizens in Sadr

City from the Ministry of Electricity and Ministry of Trade and through their projects. There was a project for the illiteracy and eliminating illiteracy with cooperation with the international association. And this will be conducted and implemented inside this...the city. And five kindergartens will also be built in Sadr City in...on sports. There are seven teams inside the city and there are projects to develop those teams like Al-Husayni project, which received allocations of 150 million dinars to rehabilitate their building or its building. [Unintelligible] were those...and several teams and each of them will have allocations from 50 to 100 million dinars. In Shola neighborhood, there are also activities for the committee. On the sports, in...there are four teams or clubs. [Unintelligible] or Al Shola Club and also those clubs in...were allocated and the committee allocated money to it. And also they ...and they built playgrounds. The Ministry of Health and what they've done building two health clinics in Al-Duwanim area, also equipping the Al Shola Hospital with good medical equipments. We also rehabilitating the buildings and several hospitals...or in the hospital. The projects of Amanat Baghdad in Shola neighborhood, they started implementing a project for the water system and also another project for the sewage system. Also forming another ...station in Al Najem area, rebuilding five markets, and rehabilitating three public markets, building a[n] industrial

compound, and three pedestrian small bridges, pavements for several neighborhoods, and also paving the streets near the Sukh Al Nasr market. And 10 million dinars were allocated for this. And also building a new market and a garage or a bus station. On the education level in Shola neighborhood and the projects are equipment for the schools in Shola neighborhood that are...and we have 88 schools with 600 million dinars. And we are going to rebuild new nine houses or, sorry, schools and additional six schools as well. The Ministry of Transportation decided to establish and build a new bus station in Shola neighborhood near Al Shaab Bridge and also another big parking lot for the vehicles and rehabilitate and provide all equipment for the transportation in the city. Those are the projects that I would like to talk about today and also the allocations that I've mentioned that they were set by Prime Minister Maliki to raise this living standards in Sadr City and Shola neighborhood. Part of those projects have begun, and some of them are still waiting for the legal procedures and the bids, and we have started launching those projects. And we think those projects will have a good economic and social outcome for those two places to the level that it will achieve a good thing to the citizens of those two places. And at the same time, we think that all the places in Baghdad do need similar services, but to begin with those two places and those places that have never witnessed any services is a

good thing. And gradually we will move on to other areas in Baghdad which is part of the reconstruction in Baghdad. And I hope we take...and we'll take the questions now.

REP1: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: [Unintelligible]. German Newspaper. There are several ministries that decided and also proposed several projects. Are there any security problems that those projects are facing and is there a timetable for those projects and also to rebuild the damaged areas?

DR. AL-SHEIKHLY: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: Well, the security challenges are every time and you can find them at any place and...but we have surpassed this. And it is part of our life but the determination to implement those projects and to determine that this year is a year of reconstruction so the ministries, when they conduct and plan for those projects whether in Baghdad or outside the...the City of Baghdad, they depend on the general budget. We're talking now about the budget that was set which is the additional budget that was set for those two places. Those projects has nothing to do with the ministries and we have coordinated with other ministries so that there will be no overlap between this...those projects and other projects. And the minister of

immigration and displaced...and the minister of reconstruction, they are in charge of the reconstruction for those two places and they are contacting the governor of Baghdad and other representative for the ministries so that they could conduct this and implement those projects.

REP 2

[Not heard on the audio]

DR AL-SHEIKHLY:

[Speaks in Arabic.]

INT:

Those are projects and not services. We often talked about oil. I haven't talked about the sewage system and the water projects. Thank you for this question. Well, what I've talked about today is in a briefing about the projects that will be implemented. We have the services...or providing services includes several things, like cleaning the...removing the trashes and also providing fuel for the people and also, at the same time, following up the food rations and guarantee that the food rations get to the people. And also, we have projects for the sewage system in Sadr City. And this is all falls under the services. And when I didn't mention those things, doesn't mean that we are not doing them. We mentioned those things in previous press conference. And today we talked about the projects and...because the people were asking us about the money and what we will do with the allocated money. And this has been done with

the officials inside the city. Meeting their needs was the most important thing. We went and we had a questionnaire about the needs and what important thing that the people...and the citizens need. The educational level, the health services, those were not looking for a building or establishing a building only, but also to provide good services inside the building whether it was a school, a clinic, or a hospital. That's why in most of the activities we, like, in health sector and et cetera, so we focused that we could rehabilitate the hospitals so that the hospitals could provide the best medical services and also rehabilitate the schools so that they could be a good environment for the students. And if we could provide a generator in each and every school and this will also help the educational level. And 400 generators will be distributed on 400 schools. And if you provide a computer lab for every school, and this will decrease the gap of education. When we rehabilitate the school so that it will be ready, this means that we are raising the standards and the environment that the students are using in the schools. And hospitals also the same thing. You know, electricity and power is an important thing and we've talked about the solar system and the streetlights. And the purpose behind those...and this is...those are the projects. And other projects of services like cleaning and sewage system are still going on. I don't think that there won't be any kind of effort unless there is a sustainment and

someone who will take care of those projects and run them in the future. You know that sustainment is important by the services that run those places like playgrounds, clinics, hospitals, and will be run in a really good way that will benefit the people.

REP3: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: Dr. Sheikhly, how much the government allocated to compensate the tradesmen in Jamilah? And will there be any centers to present the applications for the compensations?

DR AL-SHEIKHLY: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: Well, let's be honest about this...compensations that the Iraqi law and Iraqi justice has certain standards in giving the compensations and those things should be legal. And if we give the compensations, those things should be some good reasons. So the committee, to solve this problem, decided to change the name from the compensations committee to a support committee so those money...this money will be given to the people to help them to surpass this crisis that they are living and also changing the name of the committee. We have a full list of the peoples and tradesmen.

REP4: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: The people in Sadr City, in particular, suffer from two points from several years.

DR AL-SHEIKHLY: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: Only two things?

REP4: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: Efficiency and integrity. So what are the mechanisms that you've adopted for those two points and for the people who will run those projects?

DR AL-SHEIKHLY: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: Well, integrity and efficiency is a good thing. When we talk about efficiency...when you talk about the people who carry out the projects, we are adopting certain standards. And Amanat Baghdad, for instance, has a good standard for the people that work for them. The issue of integrity is that we have a trust and a confident...we are confident about the...all Iraqis and that all Iraqis.... And I would like to say that to all the societies, not only in Sadr City. So this is a problem in...not only in Sadr City. We have to provide services and projects. And I think that through depending on Iraqis and the private sector also and its contribution will be a good thing. But

there will be a law to follow up for those who violate those projects.
And I think that there are some legal procedures and laws.

REP5: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: Tahi Newspaper. Two questions. One, do the city councils supervise the...those projects?

DR AL-SHEIKHLY: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: We have a committee that supervise those projects, but there is a good coordination and cooperation by the...with another field committee that are...the committee are representatives from the city. So we have the mayor in Sadr City and the city...the chief of city council. That's why you can see that the people in Sadr City are the same who are representatives for the committee. And we also have a follow-up committee that checks about the projects. And that's why you can see that it's a coordination between all sides. And also, there is checking by several people from the people in....

REP5: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: The second question. Do you think that those projects will contribute in providing security to the people?

DR AL-SHEIKHLY:

[Speaks in Arabic.]

INT:

Well, providing security to the people is a psychological thing. When you find that...or when you see that there is a confidence between the government and when you see that the government could provide security and provide a good environment to provide the services to the people so the security...and the citizen will feel secured; when he sees all those things and when he sees the...how the government is responsible for the...for providing those services. And those things could lead to security.

REP6:

[Asks question in Arabic.]

INT:

Question from Radio Sawa. We know that Sadr City is suffering from the...a bad infrastructure. There are no water and the sewer system is bad. Why don't you just...why do you focus on education and not infrastructure? Because those things...the education could be just a secondary problem.

DR AL-SHEIKHLY:

[Speaks in Arabic.]

INT:

Well, the infrastructure is part of Baghdad and the plan of Amanat Baghdad regarding the sewage system and the water distribution system is large. And they have a large project. And we have

finished 60% of the water system and sewer system rehabilitation in Baghdad. Those are one of the major projects for the Government of Iraq. But what I've talked about today is the additional allocations of money for those two places. When we focus on the health sector and the educational sector, that doesn't mean that the ...those...the Ministry of Health and Education could also provide other services and additional budgets. And I think that the...this summer vacation is a good time to rehabilitate the schools. And we also have to provide services to the hospitals and also providing streetlights. So all those things that may not support the infrastructure...may not serve the infrastructure but also they could support the infrastructure. And those things are secondary, but they support the infrastructure.

REP7: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: What you have mentioned is really a good thing. But we see during...through the local agencies and media in the Arabic reflects the...something else through the complaints of Sadr City, because they say that the services are not getting to them. And I would like to say that after conducting those projects, we would like to see a tour for the media for those places so that we could also depict for the right picture.

DR AL-SHEIKHLY:

[Speaks in Arabic.]

INT:

Well, there is a media plan which starts on Tuesday. And you are invited and everyone is invited at the National Security Center at 2:00 PM. And this is an invitation for the campaign that there will be some field tours every 15 days to give you some idea about the projects. And I believe in...that media is the best side that could watch everything that the government is doing. And it's the fourth authority in the country and it also...the media stands as the best vision. That's why I believe in the power of media and to provide reality to the people. But also, I also believe in the role of the media and in succeeding this campaign. And this plan starts two days from now on Tuesday. And the...will be a large conference with the Ministry of Immigration and Displaced [Persons] and the governor of Baghdad also. And after that we will make tours and field tours for the media. And I will be with you or...and any other official also will be with you. And I think we did two other tours once. And I do believe strongly that...I strongly believe in the role of media.

REP8:

[Asks question in Arabic.]

INT:

Doctor, some gas stations in Baghdad...or there is a crisis for the gas stations and some of them have been closed.

DR AL-SHEIKHLY:

[Speaks in Arabic.]

INT:

Those are procedures. Some people complained from the presence of...or there is a mixture of water within the fuel. And those gas stations need some rehabilitation. And a chance that more than one gas station suffered from the same problem – that is, mixing water with the fuel. And I think the Ministry of Oil is just rehabilitating and that's why those gas stations have been closed.

REP9:

[Asks question in Arabic.]

INT:

Could you tell us the amount of money allocated for the two cities?

DR AL-SHEIKHLY:

\$100 million for Sadr City and \$50 million in Shola neighborhood.

REP9:

[Asks question in Arabic and then laughs.]

INT:

So those are the same amount of money?

DR AL-SHEIKHLY:

[Speaks in Arabic.]

INT:

Yes.

DR AL-SHEIKHLY:

[Continues speaking briefly in Arabic without translation and then laughs.] Gina.

REP10: Gina Chon. The Wall Street Journal. Given the attack last week at the local government meeting that killed Americans and Iraqis, what is your assessment of the strength or weakness now of the Mahdi Army and the possibility that they could come back or that they are rebuilding in some ways? And there's been some clashes in the south as well. So just what are your thoughts now of how strong or weak they are after the fighting in the past?

DR AL-SHEIKHLY: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: Well, I think that the press conference is only about the civilian side. But also, to answer the question, yes, there is a security side and effect and there is...we don't think that security has been achieved 100%. There should...there is actually some operations here and there. But today, we are talking about the civilian side, that is, disbursing the money on the projects that could provide the people humanitarian security. Thank you.

REP11: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: Dr. Sheikhly, regarding the hot zones. Yes-...there were allocations for those places and until now...and there are few projects conducted in those hot zones. And until....

DR AL-SHEIKHLY:

[Speaks in Arabic.]

INT:

As you know, those hot zones are actually now safer. Yes, there are some projects and we are following up with those projects in several places. Those places were not or did not receive further allocations. But they had priority in setting the projects according to the ministries. We are following up with the governor...the provincial governor and with the Amanat Baghdad regarding the projects. Also, we will have a press conference regarding the places that used to be hot zones and we will make a tour for the media – not only for those two places, but also for the hot zones that used to be hot zones in the past – so that you could see that there are projects in those places.

REP12:

[Asks question in Arabic.]

INT:

And the...during this reconstruction which is ongoing, is there any new plan to eliminate the armed aspects in those places?

DR AL-SHEIKHLY:

[Speaks in Arabic.]

INT:

Operation Fardh Al-Qanoon is still ongoing on the military and the civilian side. Those who work on the security services, the police and the Army, are conducting their missions continuously. And

their main job is not only to achieve security, but also to maintain security. Our job is not only achieving security, but also to maintain the security. And maintaining security is much more difficult than achieving it. That's why this is a still...those people are still working day and night so that they could provide services on the security level – not only to achieve, but also to maintain the security. As for the civilian side, as I've said, Operation Fardh Al-Qanoon is a pack of operations and activities on the civilian and the military level. And two...and the two things are being conducted in the same way, and those depend on exerting all efforts to achieve those goals. As we have achieved goals on the security level, we have also to achieve the goals on the civilian side and provide services to the people. Thank you.

If you don't have any further questions, I thank you today for coming.