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Iraqi Shiite Wants to Limit Sunni Patrols

By [DAMIEN CAVE](#)

BAGHDAD — The leader of [Iraq](#)'s largest Shiite political party said Friday that the neighborhood patrols credited with calming many Sunni areas must submit to government authority and include a broader sectarian mix.

The comments by the political leader, Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, head of the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, reflected growing resistance among many Shiites to the neighborhood groups, also known as Awakening Councils, which are almost exclusively Sunni and have American support. Their ranks have grown this year to 65,000 to 80,000 members, with a large portion in Baghdad.

Mr. Hakim said they should be limited to Iraq's worst areas and should act only as auxiliaries to Iraqi government security forces.

“We appreciate the role of the armed forces, the Awakening Councils, tribes and popular committees in tracking down terrorism and criminals,” he said, in a speech at his Baghdad compound, where thousands had gathered for Id al-Adha, the Feast of Sacrifice. “But at the same time we emphasize that these awakenings must be an arm of the Iraqi government and not a substitute for it.”

In mixed areas, the groups should include a proportionate number of members from each sect, Mr. Hakim said. And, he added, the councils' role should be temporary.

“Weapons should only be in the hands of the government,” he said.

Mr. Hakim's views are becoming more pronounced among Shiite leaders, who worry that the Awakening movement has been infiltrated by insurgents, and could stir up Shiite militias.

What began two years ago with an alliance between the Americans and tribes in Anbar Province, an almost exclusively Sunni area, has since become a sprawling national juggernaut.

The Americans expect to hire more volunteers, for a total of as many as 100,000, not including the 23,000 Awakening members in Anbar Province who have been hired onto the local police force.

The growth has been fueled partly by success: Anbar has gone from one of Iraq's most dangerous areas to one of its safest. Money is also a factor: Most of the groups' members are paid an average of \$300 a month by the Americans, and reconstruction contracts have flowed toward those groups that recruit large numbers of volunteers.

But so far, the government has resisted American pressure to integrate the Awakening members into Iraq's security forces. Particularly in mixed neighborhoods in Baghdad, only a small portion have been hired.

Mr. Hakim, conspicuously perhaps, did not mention finding slots for Awakening members at police academies, nor did he offer a plan for what to do with members if the groups disband.

Many American commanders fear that if the groups are not managed correctly, the security improvements of the past few months could be lost.

Those gains were put into context on Friday by a report from [Unicef](#). The report, titled “Little Respite for Iraq’s Children in 2007,” declared that around two million Iraqi children suffered this year from a variety of humanitarian ills, including poor nutrition, disease and interrupted education.

Roughly 60 percent of children nationwide lacked reliable access to safe drinking water, the report said. Hundreds of children were killed or injured by the country’s sectarian violence while an average of 25,000 children per month were displaced.

In a press release from its office in Amman, Jordan, Unicef also asked for donations, identifying the current lull in violence as an opportunity to deliver more services.

In Baghdad, Australia’s new prime minister, [Kevin Rudd](#), arrived for an unannounced visit with Prime Minister [Nuri Kamal al-Maliki](#).

And near a police station in Latifiya, south of Baghdad, in an area known as the Sunni Triangle, a suicide car bomber killed at least five people, according to an Interior Ministry official. Eight others were wounded.

Karim Hilmi and Mudhafer al-Husaini contributed reporting from Baghdad, and Iraqi employees of The New York Times from Hilla.

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