

# **MULTI-NATIONAL DIVISION – BAGHDAD**

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## **Hurriyah's senior Sunni sheik praises reconciliation efforts**

By Spc. Dustin Roberts  
2nd HBCT PAO, 1st Inf. Div., MND-B

**BAGHDAD** – A senior Sunni Sheik publicly encouraged by the returns of internally displaced persons wants the people of Iraq to know about it.

Leaders with the 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad visited with Sheik Maqmoud al- Falahi at the offices outside the Um al- Qura Mosque Jan. 11.

Lt. Col. Christopher Beckert, a native of Madison, Conn., deputy commander, 2nd HBCT, Katherine Carroll, a native of Nashville, Tenn., Vanderbilt University professor serving with the Human Terrain Team, 2nd HBCT, and Maj. Kone Faulkner, a native of New York, public affairs officer, 2nd HBCT, met with Maqmoud to talk about returning IDPs who moved away from the Hurriyah neighborhood of northwest Baghdad eight months ago due to sectarian violence, and about releasing detainees from Iraqi jails as steps toward overall improvement in the area are being made.

Thousands of IDPs have returned to Hurriyah and other neighborhoods in northwest Baghdad since September 2008.

“The American Forces moved in strongly and exclusively to control Hurriyah and I see a great future for the people there,” said Maqmoud. “Hurriyah is very successful business-wise now and it is now safe for more people to return.”

Maqmoud added that with more returnees in Hurriyah, the better the local economy will be due to more business.

“A lot of IDPs will be more than happy to return as the security gets better,” he said. “Bringing these people back is key to solving some of Hurriyah’s problems.”

The leaders also assessed how released innocent detainees have improved the people’s view of the ISF and Coalition Forces.

“I want to give a message to the world that we are grateful for the Americans working with us to release the detainees,” Maqmoud said. “They need to know that balance is being restored in the neighborhood.”

Beckert agreed that bringing Arabic media to detainee release events would be a good way to show the Iraqi people how ISF and Coalition Forces have come together to separate the criminal elements from innocent citizens.

“After talking with the Iraqi Army we think there will be many detainees released every week,” said Beckert. “We would like to focus the Arabic media on these events.”

Beckert invited Maqmoud to attend a “media roundtable” with the brigade in the near future, proposing he could be a key speaker and interviewee for Arabic media in a press-conference style environment.

Beckert said that about 80 percent of the detainees released are because influential people, such as Maqmoud, give credibility to the detainee release program.

“After we receive names of detainees it takes about two weeks to shuffle through them,” Beckert told Maqmoud. “After approval it can take up to 90 days to release them.”

When the meeting was finished Maqmoud thanked the Soldiers for meeting with him to discuss relocation of displaced citizens, the release of detainees and getting the word out that order is being restored in Hurriyah.

“Democracy has been brought here and the Iraqi Security Forces have been trained well,” Maqmoud said. “With better security and better services to the people, Hurriyah is getting better every day.”

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#### **Discuss 1.**

BAGHDAD – Lt. Col. Christopher Beckert, a native of Madison, Conn., deputy commanding officer, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, discusses with Sheik Maqmoud al- Falahi at the Um al- Qura Mosque in the Ghazaliya district of northwest Baghdad Jan. 12.

The meeting was to speak about the progress of displaced people, who left Hurriyah due to sectarian violence in early 2008, returning to their homes in Hurriyah.

(U.S. Army photo by Spc. Dustin Roberts, 2nd HBCT PAO, 1st Inf. Div., MND-B)



## **Discuss 2.**

BAGHDAD – Lt. Col. Christopher Beckert, a native of Madison, Conn., deputy commanding officer, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, discusses with Sheik Maqmour al- Falahi at the Um al- Qura Mosque in the Ghazaliya district of northwest Baghdad Jan. 12.

The meeting was to speak about the progress of displaced people, who left Hurriyah due to sectarian violence in early 2008, returning to their homes in Hurriyah.

(U.S. Army photo by Spc. Dustin Roberts, 2nd HBCT PAO, 1st Inf. Div., MND-B)



### **Discuss 3.**

BAGHDAD – Maj. Kone Faulkner, a native of New York City, Public Affairs Officer, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, discusses with Sheik Maqmoud al- Falahi at the Um al-Qura Mosque in the Ghazaliya district of northwest Baghdad Jan. 12. The meeting was to speak about the progress of displaced people, who left Hurriyah due to sectarian violence in early 2008, returning to their homes in Hurriyah. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Dustin Roberts, 2nd HBCT PAO, 1st Inf. Div., MND-B)



**Maqmour.**

BAGHDAD – Sheik Maqmour al- Falahi, the senior Sunni sheik in Hurriyah, speaks with leaders with the 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad at the Um al- Qura Mosque in the Ghazaliya district of northwest Baghdad Jan. 12. The meeting was to speak about the progress of displaced people, who left Hurriyah due to sectarian violence in early 2008, returning to their homes in Hurriyah.

(U.S. Army photo by Spc. Dustin Roberts, 2nd HBCT PAO, 1st Inf. Div., MND-B)