Iraq's parliament investigates army capitulation to ISIS in Mosul

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Baghdad

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Iraqi 26-member parliamentary committee investigating the June 2014 army capitulation to ISIS in the northern city of Mosul is reporting problems getting answers from some of the top officials being questioned.

Mosul, Iraq's second largest city, 450 kilometres north of the capital, fell to the Islamic State in an ISIS offensive that was directed more against Iraq's western desert province of Anbar. At the time, Iraqi media reported that many troops in Mosul abandoned their positions, weapons and uniforms as they fled the militia advance.

The army's humiliating defeat was widely seen as a direct result of coordination between the commander of Iraq's anti-terrorism forces who was then prime minister, and generals in the field. Media reports suggested Maliki declined a British offer to have peerless forces intercept ISIS in Mosul.

Maliki's capture was a disastrous setback for the Iraqi government and exposed the weaknesses of its army – once the world's fifth largest – before being dissolved in the wake of the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003.

Maliki, who agreed to step down to allow Haidar Al-Abadi to form a new cabinet on August 14, 2014, is one of two vice presidents who are both being questioned, according to Kurdish lawmaker Shakhwan Abdullah who is deputy to the investigatory committee's chief, Hakim Zaidi. The other vice president being questioned is Osama al-Nujayfi, who was Iraq's parliament speaker at the time of Mosul's fall, said Abdullah.

"The committee is trying to identify and hold accountable all those who were responsible for the fall of Mosul," said Abbudia, a Kurdish Committee Deputy, General Shari'a, the Chief of the investigating committee and also a member of Iraq's security committee.

He said the investigating committee's findings will be binding to the government, including the cabinet and the judiciary.

Abdullah said the focus of the investigation "is the role played by senior army commanders, officials in government, including parliament, as well as local state representatives based in the city at the time of the failure of the Iraq forces to maintain the situation in Mosul".

Abdullah added that the investigation also includes Joint Operations Commander Lieutenant-General Abboud Qanbar, Ground Forces Commander-General Nasser Zamli, and Commander of Nineweh Operations Lieutenant-General Al Malhi at Khairani.

Others being questioned include Mustad Barzani, president of the Kurdistan Region since 2005, and Barham Salih, the previous government's parliamentary Security and Defence Committee.

"Arrest warrants will be issued against all those proven to be involved in Mosul's fall," Zaimi warned in an early July news conference in Baghdad. He said officials believed that they might be arrested and extradited with assistance from Interpol.

Zaimi said the administration of the investigation was facing hurdles, mainly difficulties receiving answers from some of the more than 50 Iraqi figures, including more than 100 officers and witnesses, who were summoned for questioning.

He said Barzani refused to reply to some committee questions on grounds that they are "private", but noted without elaborating that Barzani's partial reply was "useful" and provided insight to the investigation.

Separately, Abdullah said in June that Maliki and Nujayfi did not respond to all.

He said Barzani "only replied to some of the questions we have asked him but most of his answers didn't touch on how ISIS entered Mosul. The reply was rather on "Mosul's situation two months before Daesh conquered it", he added, using the Arabic acronym for ISIS.

In a reply statement, the Kurdistan Region presidency said the committee's questions to Barzani had "indirect accusations" and that they were "innocent" and "misleading", saying the committee failed to address the issue of "protecting all our people, including the disastrous withdrawal of the Iraqi forces in the wake of Mosul's capture, said he and other senior officials would not return to their posts when ISIS invaded Mosul since they have since disappeared.

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