

Arabic Transcript:

وره العشرين يوم مال الحرب، يوم 4-9 صارت اخر معركة صارت تقريبا 15 دقيقة بعيد عن بيتي. ومن الشباك مال البيت مالتنه كمنه نشوف الانفجارات والنيران والاحمر والاخضر والمعرف شنو والاصفر والالوان هاي كلها مال النار، زين؟ ونسمع صوت الانفجارات والبيت ينهز والشبابيك تنهز والاشياء، فضليته كاعدين اني واهلي بنفس الغرفة الي مابيهها شباك علمود لا يتكسر على راسنه زين؟ ووراها تقريبا ساعه سنه او سنه ونص الصبح، طلعه سمعنه الناس .. بقت بس خمس عوائل بشارعه، زين الناس كلها انهزمت لغير محافظات بالعراق، او سافرت خارج العراق بس احنه من العوائل الي ماعدنه احد بغير اماكن. فبيقيه، بس بيت جدي بجنوب العراق بس يعني همه همين مو محافظه آمنه. فطلعه بره وهمين صارت انفجارات ومعرف شنو فدخلنه جوه للبيت، ووره تقريبا نص ساعه او ساعه طلعه همينه رحنه للشارع العام وشفنه الدبابات الامريكيه دتفوت بالشوارع، دتتمشي بالشوارع، فبيقيه مامتأكدين لان منعرف شديصير، فسحبته الكهرباء من المولدة وشفنه بالتلفزيون انه الامريكان دينزلون تمثال صدام حسين، فعرفنه انه يعني خلصت، دخلوا الامريكان، و خلصت الحرب، وماعدنه حكومه وماعدنه جيش كلشي ماكو. لانه ماعدنه حكومه وماعدنه جيش، الناس، خصوصا العوائل الفقيره، طلعت راحت على البنائيات الحكوميه، على المدارس على الدوائر على الشوف شنو وبدت تبوك. اي شي يشوفوا كبالهم سواءا كرسي، ميز، تلفزيون، بنكه، قنقه، اي شي اي شي يشوفوا كدامهم اخذوا. وحركوا الاوراق والفايلات، ووره ما يخلصون سرقة يعني بوك بنايه كامله يحركوها كلها. ف ... ولمن تسألهم... احنه ابويه وامي اخذوني اني واخويه لبيت جدي مشي وطول ما جنه دنتمشي جنه دنتفرج على الي ديصير، فنسأل العالم انت ليش دتبوك هيجي، ليش دتحر ك البنايه، مو هاي وطنك، هاي بلادك، يكولون وصادم اخذ كل فلوسنه فهسه احنه دترجع فلوسنه، صدام ما انطانه اكل، ما انطانه غراض، ما انطانه اي شي، فاحنه دتبوك. وطبعا جانت مأساة. ووراها سموها .. سموهم لهذولي الناس الحواسم، لانه المعركة الاخيره الي جانت بالعراق، المفروض بين الجيش الامريكي والعراق جان اسمها الحواسم. فلهذا سموها، سموهم للناس الحواسم للي باكو، يعني مو خوش لقب. يعني مثلا من واحد يشتري سياره جديدة، ونشوفه نكوله هاي منين جبت الفلوس، انت حواسم؟ يعني مو خوش كلمة. فهاي صارت، صار يوم سقوط بغداد والحرب.

English Translation:

Zahraa: After the 20 days of war, on September 4, the last battle took a place 15 minutes away from my house. From the window of my house, we saw the explosions and the fire and the red, green and yellow colors of the fire. We heard the sound of explosions and the house was shaking and so were the windows. My family and I sat in the same room where there are no windows so that they did not break over our heads. At around 6:00 or 6:30 in the morning, we went out and we heard the people ... there were only five families [left] in our neighborhood, and all the other people escaped to other cities in Iraq and outside Iraq. We were one of the few families that did not have other places to go to, so we stayed. The only place was my grandfather's house in south, but it is also unsafe. So, we went outside and the bombing happened again, so we ran inside the house again, and after half an hour to an hour we went out to the main street and we saw the American tanks roaming around. We were still unsure about what is really happening, so we used the generator and we saw on TV that the Americans are pulling down Saddam's statue, so then we knew it was over, the Americans are in and the war is over. We didn't have a government nor an army and because of that, the people, and especially the poor families, went to the government buildings, schools and official buildings and started to loot them. Whatever they see in front of them, even if it was a chair, a table, a T.V, a fan, a couch ...

anything, they take it. They burned all the papers and the files and after they're done looting a building, they'd burn it down. When you ask them ... actually my mom and my dad took me and my brother to my grandfather's house walking ... and while we were walking we were seeing what is happening. So, we'd ask the people, why are you stealing? Why are you burning down the building? This is your land, your country...they say, "Oh Saddam took all of our money and now we're taking it back, Saddam didn't give us food or things ... he gave us nothing, that's why we're taking it now". It was a disaster of course. Later they called them *Hawasem*¹ because the last battle between the Americans and the Iraqis in Iraq was called *Hawasem*. So the people were named after that. It is not a nice word. So when one of those people gets a new car, we'd tell him, "Where did you get the money, are you *Hawasem*?" It's not a good word. So that was the day of the fall of Baghdad.

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¹ *Hawasem*: "final reckoning," "turning point," "moment of truth" – a phrase coined by Saddam Hussein to refer to his imminent battle with the American forces, and then used ironically to refer to the battle and the chaos that followed.