

10 Years Later, U.S. Legacy in Iraq: Death, Disease, Devastation, Displacement

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Global Research, March 26, 2013
[revcom.us](#)

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)
Theme: [Crimes against Humanity](#), [US NATO War Agenda](#)
In-depth Report: [IRAQ REPORT](#)

Ten years ago, on March 19-20, 2003, the U.S. invaded Iraq, overthrew the Saddam Hussein regime, and then occupied the country for the next eight and a half years. President George W. Bush said the U.S. went to war to liberate Iraq and “free its people.” This March 19, President Barack Obama issued a statement saluting the U.S. military for their service and giving “the Iraqi people an opportunity to forge their own future...”

What did this U.S. war mean for Iraqis? What does it mean for their future?

- Iraqis killed between March 2003 and December 31, 2011 (when U.S. military forces withdrew): at least 121,754.
- Iraqi deaths as a result of the war, directly and indirectly (due to the destruction and disruption of the war, including to water and power systems, to healthcare and food production): 655,000 according to a 2006 *Lancet* study; 1 million according to 2008 Opinion Research Business study; current estimate: 1.2 to 1.4 million.
- Iraqis injured: 4.2 million.
- Iraqis driven from their homes: 4.5 million.
- Number of U.S. military personnel killed through 2012: 4,486
- Investigations by the U.S. military, government, or media concerning the number of Iraqis killed, wounded, displaced or who died as a result of the war and occupation: None.
- Mentions of Iraqi suffering in Obama’s statement on the 10th anniversary of the invasion of Iraq: None.
- Iraqi women now widows: 2 million (with many forced into prostitution).
- Women’s legal status: worse than under Saddam Hussein. Iraq’s secular constitution has now been replaced with one based on reactionary Sharia law with separate, unequal laws for women.
Women’s rights advocates report “a spike in ‘honor killings, forced veiling, and a growing tolerance for beating women into subordination,” and that “violence against women has also been systematic ... orchestrated by some of the very forces that the U.S. boosted to power.”
- The U.S. used cluster bombs, white phosphorous, and depleted uranium against the Iraqi people—all weapons of mass destruction.
These weapons are suspected of causing cancer and birth defects. “From 2004 up to this day, we are seeing a rate of congenital malformations in the city of Fallujah that has surpassed even that in the wake of the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki that nuclear bombs were dropped on at the end of

World War II.” (*Democracy Now!*)

- November 2005, U.S. Marines murdered 24 unarmed Iraqi civilians in the city of Haditha and then blamed it on “insurgents.”
- 2006 in Ishaqi in central Iraq, “U.S. troops executed at least 10 Iraqi civilians, including a woman in her 70s and a 5-month-old infant, then called in an airstrike to destroy the evidence.” (McClatchy Newspapers)
- July 2007, a U.S. helicopter gunned down 11 civilians in Baghdad. Iraqi blogger Raed Jarrar wrote that “from an Iraqi perspective it just tells a story of an average day under the occupation.”
- The U.S. military tortured and sexually degraded and abused thousands of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib prison and other torture centers, stripping them naked and terrorizing and humiliating them with dogs. In 2008, more than 24,000 Iraqis were being held in U.S.-run prisons—most without charges.
- The U.S. organized Shi’ite death squads linked to the Malaki government responsible for murdering thousands of Sunnis and unleashing widespread religious sectarianism and ethnic cleansing during the 2006-2008 civil war. *The Nation* reported: “[At] its peak, more than 3,700 Iraqis died in a single month” and minorities were driven out of areas in which different ethnic and national groups had previously lived side by side.
- During this civil war, the U.S. turned prisoners over to the Iraqi regime knowing they would likely be raped, tortured, or murdered by the Iraqi police.
- Today torture, illegal detentions and executions are widely carried out by the Iraqi government the U.S. backs. Prisoners are regularly tortured and raped by Iraqi security forces, with “fingernails pulled out, hung upside down, beaten with pipes, kicked and beaten and insulted and spit upon.” (Al Jazeera)
- The invasion of Iraq was a war crime under U.S. and international law, violating the UN Charter, the Geneva Conventions, as well as U.S. law. And the U.S. carried out war crimes and crimes against humanity during its occupation of Iraq including the murder, torture, and illegal detention of thousands and thousands of Iraqi civilians.
- Number of U.S. officials or military commanders prosecuted for these crimes under Bush and Obama? Zero. (The highest ranking official punished was Lewis Libby, Vice President Dick Cheney’s chief of staff; Libby was convicted of harming the CIA by revealing the name of one of its operatives.)
- Investigations of the war’s toll on Iraqis: None.
- Reparations offered Iraqis for their suffering: None.

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