

Anglo-American Revenge in Iraq: Tariq Aziz, Twelfth Anniversary of a US Travesty of Justice

Tariq Aziz's Son: 24th April 2015, : "Time is not on Our Side."

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Vincent Nichols, Catholic Archbishop of Westminster, is spiritual leader of the four million Catholics of England and Wales. He was also elevated to Cardinal on 22nd February 2014, receiving the Cardinal's red hat from Pope Francis in Rome's St Peter's Basilica. He has been cited as a man: "not afraid to speak out when he feels compelled to do so."

He has indeed railed against "punitive" welfare cuts, calling them a "disgrace", he has spoken in defence of Catholic masses for gay, lesbian and transgender Catholics and has come under attack for defending Irish priests and nuns who had abused children in their care, saying it took courage to "face the facts from their past."

On Nichols' elevation, his predecessor as Archbishop of Westminster, Cormac Murphy-O'Connor commented that it gave him, perhaps, "better media space" and the chance: "to speak out on things that concern the church and society." (Guardian, 18th February 2014.)

The Archbishop has just returned from a visit to Erbil in northern Iraq and spoken and written on the plight of the Christians. (Mention of the cataclysmic plight of the vast majority of Iraqis of all faiths or none, is scant - to near invisible.)

Archbishops and Blair

Cormac Murphy-O'Connor - inexplicably - welcomed Tony Blair in to the Catholic Church in a ceremony at "The Cardinal's private residence, Archbishop's House" in spite of Blair's hand in the mistruths culminating in the Iraq assault, arguably fitting the definition of Nuremberg's "supreme international crime." The Archbishop, on welcoming Blair in to the Catholic Church declared he was "very glad" to do so. (BBC 22nd December 2007.)

One wonders whether he reflected on welcoming a man who had been involved in the destruction of the cradle of all he and his church's followers professed to believe? The three Abrahamic religions believed risen from Ur in southern Iraq, the Garden of Eden flourished at Qurnah, a little south, Saint Mathew is believed buried in the monastery named for him in Nineveh and belief has it that Jonah and some of the whale that swallowed him rested in his tomb in Mosul - now destroyed by ISIS.

In 2006, the year before Blair's conversion to Catholicism, the John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health Iraq mortality survey estimated excess deaths in the three years

since the invasion at 650,000. An unrepentant Blair said repeatedly before his conversion and since, that he had no regrets and would do the same again. The excess death toll now, between the twenty plus years of embargo and invasion, is estimated at three million. (1) Genocide.

Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, now 83, is retired, but Blair who has stated he prayed to God when deciding to join illegally invading and decimating Iraq is still seemingly as welcome in the Catholic church and Westminster Cathedral under Archbishop Nichols as his predecessor, where he even attended a mass officiated by the Pope in 2010.

A Unique Case, Will the Archbishop Speak Out?

On confirmation of Archbishop Nichols Cardinal status, he was designated titular Head of a church known for housing the icon of "Our Lady of Perpetual Help." Now there is something to live up to. There is perhaps a unique cause with which to start to "speak out on things that concern the church" - or should.

Former Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz, a courageous Iraqi Chaldean Christian nationalist, passionate in his love for his land, has been abandoned in Iraqi jails for twelve years. He did not flee ahead of the US and British tanks, or from the "Shock and Awe" of their radioactive bombardment, but to stayed in his country. He gave himself up to the American Command - on the condition his family could leave the country in safety.

Saddam Hussein's entire government could have left Iraq prior to the inevitable invasion and lived in comfort elsewhere, as the Kuwait government did in 1991 - indeed George W. Bush's regime confirmed that they offered Saddam Hussein forty eight hours to leave Iraq (2.) Iraq's Administration had vowed not abandon their country. None did.

Iraq in fact offered "unlimited access for 2,000" weapons inspectors with: "a pledge that US companies would be granted first priority in securing valuable Iraqi oil and mining concessions." America, however, it seems wanted both blood and oil.

Countless "9/11s" engulfed Iraq, yet the government remained visibly there until, given they had little to nil means of defence, all was lost.

In contrast, on 11th September 2001, George W. Bush was anything but visible. The "Commander in Chief", self appointed "Leader of the Free World" was whisked away from his kindergarten reading session in Florida and taken to a secret and secure place on a military base in Shreveport, Louisiana.

Tariq Aziz was held by the Americans until 2007 before being tried in a US arranged kangaroo court. In one session, ill, being taken there in his pyjamas. The savage, shameful, primitive face of the American fashioned "New Iraq" for all to see. Even the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights referred to "the independence (of the Court being) allegedly undermined by political interference" (3) an understatement of enormity.

The charges against Tariq Aziz have thousands of column inches devoted to them, few have been devoted to the outrage of his arraignment, imprisonment, treatment, plight and finally death sentence.

Revenge Not Justice

As his son, Ziad Aziz has said: "This is about revenge, not justice. They've implicated my father in everything, in every single case you can imagine. He has been apportioned blame for issues that never even fell within the realm of his responsibilities."

This statement would appear to be borne out by George W. Bush shortly after Aziz had given himself in to the occupiers. Bush expressed unshakable confidence that his forces would find banned weapons, implying that Tariq Aziz was key to their discovery. At a press conference in Crawford Texas with then Australian Prime Minister John Howard, he stated: "Tariq Aziz still doesn't know how to tell the truth, he didn't know how to tell the truth when in office and he doesn't know how to tell the truth as a captive." (AP 4th May 2003.) The lies of course had come from Washington and Whitehall.

Not to be forgotten is the meticulous near 12,000 pages of Iraq's accounting for what they did not have, delivered to the UN, in December 2002, as requested - and stolen by the US delegation at the UN.

Aziz has said his responsibility for he or his departmental colleagues escorting UN weapons inspectors round Iraq was largely futile: "I was trying to prove a negative."

Tareq Aziz will be seventy nine on April 28th. This is written on the 12th anniversary of his incarceration, 24th April.

Situation Critical And The Wedding Ring

Indomitable though he is, his health was poor, even before the invasion. In 2010 he was taken to an American hospital with a blood clot. He also suffers other serious conditions. The Vatican and several European governments have called for his release, but it is a stance which seems not to have been pursued with any measure of vigour with the Iraqi government or the US Embassy in Iraq.

Earlier this month his wife, Violet, visited him, now moved from Baghdad to the notorious maximum security prison in Al-Nasiryah in southern Iraq, from where stories of torture and ill treatment abound. Ziad Aziz writes of his plight:

"I would like to write to you and hopefully through you to the rest of the world, to raise attention about my father's condition.

"My mother went to visit him this week in Al-Nasiryah prison where he had been transferred since August of last year. The guard brought him and his prison mates to the interview area in shackles, chains around their ankles and wrists.

"But she felt worse when she started talking to him. He was incoherent, and could barely form a sentence, and he couldn't remember his own grandchildren, he asked her about my other son, I have only one son - his namesake, Tariq.

"He has not received any medical attention, he still depends on us to bring all his medicine to him when my mother visits him. The situation there is so bad that they don't even provide food for the inmates, let alone medical care.

"At the end, my father gave my mother his wedding ring, telling her that he feels that the end is near, he said he didn't want it to be stolen. This ring hasn't

left his finger for fifty years, all the time he was married. I cannot tell you how devastated my mother felt at that moment, as am I and the whole family.

“I cannot emphasize enough how dire my father’s condition is, we desperately need to raise attention to his, and his colleagues, conditions. I am afraid that the worse will happen very soon, as does he apparently.

“We would like your help to raise attention to his condition, and hopefully we can secure his release so he can spend his last days with his family.”

An Anniversary And a Second Letter

Today, a further letter arrived:

“I write to you to update you on my father’s situation and kindly remind you of the urgency of his health condition, and through you to all who you think can help us with our cause.

“There are rumours that they moved my father and a few of the other prisoners back to Baghdad. We don’t know whether it is true or not, and we have no way of confirming it.

“He is still has not had any medical attention whatsoever. The prison officials asked us to wire them money in order to provide food and medicine for my father, we have no way of knowing if he is eating or taking the right dose of his medicine - or if he is taking any medicine at all.

“Time is not on our side, I can’t stress enough the urgency of the situation and the need to for an immediate intervention. It has been 12 years today since the Americans took him and since I last saw my father, I don’t know if there is another year to wait. We need to intensify our campaign to deliver this message to all our friends, allies, and the international community, and bring more pressure on the Iraqi government.

“We appreciate all the help we can get and we are very grateful to you for all your efforts.

“Thank you very much

Ziad Tariq Aziz.”

Back in 2010 I wrote: ‘The silence of the Pope, Archbishops, the [Foreign Office](#) (despite Foreign Secretary William Hague claiming to put human rights firmly at the centre of his policies) has been woeful. All have been approached by anti-death-penalty campaigners, including many eminent people. None has even replied to correspondence. Tariq Aziz is a symbol of the “democracy” brought to the new Iraq. His trial was condemned by [Human Rights Watch](#) - which had called for it consistently - as “fundamentally flawed” and they said that the “court should overturn the verdict”. ‘ (4)

Letters have again, today, been sent to the relevant bodies at the UN, the EU, to the Pope, the Archbishop of Canterbury - and to Cardinal and Archbishop of Westminster Vincent Nichol.

Last year George W. Bush and Tony Blair were “unanimously” found guilty of “crimes against peace” by a distinguished legal panel at the War Crimes Tribunal in Malaysia. (5)

“The evidence showed that the drums of wars were being beaten long before the invasion. The accused in their own memoirs have admitted their own intention to invade Iraq regardless of international law”, they concluded. They were found guilty on the same grounds in 2011 and guilty of war crimes in 2012. Weighty files of evidence have been lodged with the International Criminal Court at The Hague.

Perhaps, at this eleventh hour, Vincent Nichols might finally feel “compelled” to “speak out” for his Chaldean Catholic brother-in-the-church, Tariq Aziz, in some measure of atonement for welcoming an accused war criminal mired in the blood of three million Iraqis, innumerable Afghans and people of the Balkans. As he said, it takes “courage to face the facts from the past.”

Notes:

1. <http://www.catholicnews.com/data/stories/cns/0707328.htm>
 2. <http://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/unworthy-victims-western-wars-have-killed-four-million-muslims-1990-39149394>
 3. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/northamerica/usa/1446152/Saddam-offered-Bush-a-huge-oil-deal-to-avert-war.html>
 - 4 [https://spdb.ohchr.org/hrdb/22nd/public_-_UA_Irak_28.06.12_\(1.2012\).pdf](https://spdb.ohchr.org/hrdb/22nd/public_-_UA_Irak_28.06.12_(1.2012).pdf)
 5. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/dec/29/aziz-faces-execution-in-iraq>
 6. <http://themillenniumreport.com/2014/07/first-george-w-bush-tony-blair-found-guilty-of-war-crimes-in-malaysia-then-malaysia-airliner-missile-strike-was-it-mh-17-or-mh-370/>
- See also: <http://www.globalresearch.ca/iraq-tariq-aziz-they-killed-our-country-we-are-all-victims-of-britain-and-america/28619>

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