

Civilians in An Occupied Land: The Iraqi Resistance Movement

Iraqi Resistance, American Dirty War, and the Remaking of the Middle East:
Part II

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[BRussels Tribunal and Global Research](#)

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [Crimes against Humanity](#), [US NATO War Agenda](#)

In-depth Report: [IRAQ REPORT](#)

Civilians in an occupied country have no obligation of loyalty towards the Occupying Power regardless of the motives of the invading forces.

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For PART I of this study see:

[2003-2013: Iraqi Resistance, America's "Dirty War" and the Remaking of the Middle East](#) By [Dirk Adriaensens](#), March 16, 2013

1. Eliminating the Iraqi Middle Class ^[1]

Running parallel with the massive corruption and destruction of Iraq's infrastructure, including electricity, potable water and sewage systems, merciless repression led to the mass forced displacement of the bulk of Iraq's educated middle class — the main engine of progress and development in modern states. Iraq's intellectual and technical class has been subject to a systematic and on-going campaign of intimidation, abduction, extortion, random killings and targeted assassinations. The decimation of professional ranks took place in the context of a generalized assault on Iraq's professional middle class, including doctors, engineers, lawyers, judges as well as political and religious leaders. Let's have a closer look.



More than 100 university professors have been abducted.^[2] The ministry has almost lost hope for the return of those who had been abducted and the violence targeting Iraqi universities has terrorized faculty members. Former Minister of Higher Education Abduldhayab al-Aujaili said that the rising violence has forced 'thousands' of Iraqi professors to flee the country. An estimated 331 schoolteachers were slain in the first four months of 2006, according to Human Rights Watch, and at least 2,000 Iraqi doctors have been killed and 250 kidnapped since the 2003 U.S. invasion, and 180 teachers were killed between February and November 2006, according to the Brookings Institute in Washington.^[3]

The International Medical Corps reports that populations of teachers in Baghdad have fallen by 80% and medical personnel seem to have left in disproportionate numbers. Roughly 40% of Iraq's middle class is believed to have fled by the end of 2006, the U.N. said.^[4] Most are fleeing systematic persecution and have no desire to return. Of the 34,000 medical doctors in Iraq, 18,000 have fled the country and 2,000 have been killed.^[5] Up to 75 % of Iraq's doctors, pharmacists and nurses have left their jobs since the U.S.-led invasion in 2003. More than half of those have emigrated, according to a Medact report of 16 Jan 2008.^[6]

The number of prominent Iraqi academics and professionals who fled the country are approaching 20,000. Of the 6700 Iraqi professors who have fled since 2003, the Los Angeles Times reported in October 2008 that only 150 of them had returned^[7].

The Iraqi minister of education said that 296 members of education staff were killed in 2005 alone.^[8] According to the UN office for humanitarian affairs 180 teachers have been killed since 2006 until March 2007, up to 100 have been kidnapped and over 3,250 have fled the country. The BRussells Tribunal's list of murdered Iraqi academics contains 464 names until 01 November 2011.^[9]

Hundreds of legal workers have left the country. At least 210 lawyers and judges killed since the US-led invasion in 2003, in addition to dozens injured in attacks against them.^[10] More than 250 oil ministry officials, including senior officials, engineers, experts and technicians have been assassinated since the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime in 2003, an Iraqi oil ministry spokesman said on 23 July 2006.^[11] Many of "Iraq's native oil professionals," who heroically patched up and held together a broken system in the years after the first Gulf War, have (along with so many other Iraqi professionals) fled the country. The Wall Street Journal in 2006 called this flight a 'petroleum exodus (...)' and said that now most of the [oil] engineers in Iraq are from Texas and Oklahoma.^[12]

Since 2007 bombings at Al Mustansiriya University in Baghdad have killed or maimed more than 335 students and staff members, according to a 19 Oct 2009 NYT article, and a 12-foot-high blast wall has been built around the campus.^[13]

The director of the United Nations University International Leadership Institute published a report on 27 April 2005 detailing that since the start of the war of 2003 some 84% of Iraq's higher education institutions have been burnt, looted or destroyed.^[14] Between March 2003 and October 2008, 31,598 violent attacks against educational institutions were reported in Iraq, according to the Iraqi Ministry of Education.^[15]

The effort to rebuild Iraq's infrastructure, including schools and higher education institutions, have been plagued by shoddy construction, corruption and diverting funds to "security". The rapidly deteriorating conditions and a complete failure to establish a functioning education system has produced a spiralling dropout rate of almost 50%.

Violence since the U.S.-led invasion has driven thousands of students away, with enrolment

off by more than half at some universities in 2006 alone, officials said. Universities in other parts of the country are open, but have become deserted. (*Washington Post* 18/01/2007)

On 3 July 2011 it was reported that the Ministry of Health discovered that 17 people who practiced medicine in Iraqi hospitals had presented forged medical degrees during interviews for their employment. The doctors have been sacked but the incidence shows how easy it has become in Iraq to fake documents and university degrees.^[16] It was also recently reported that fake pharmacies plague Iraq^[17].

A recent rash of small fires inside the offices of various ministries and government buildings in Baghdad would normally have security forces on the lookout for an arsonist, or checking into the possibility of faulty electric wiring. However, in this case, the fires appear to have more to do with the work of the Iraqi parliament's Commission on Integrity (CoI), an independent body responsible for uncovering corruption at all levels of Iraqi government. On July 4 2011, a blaze started in the certificates office of the Ministry of Higher Education. In March 2011, the CoI announced that as many as 20,000 people currently employed by the state may have acquired their jobs on the basis of forged educational qualifications.

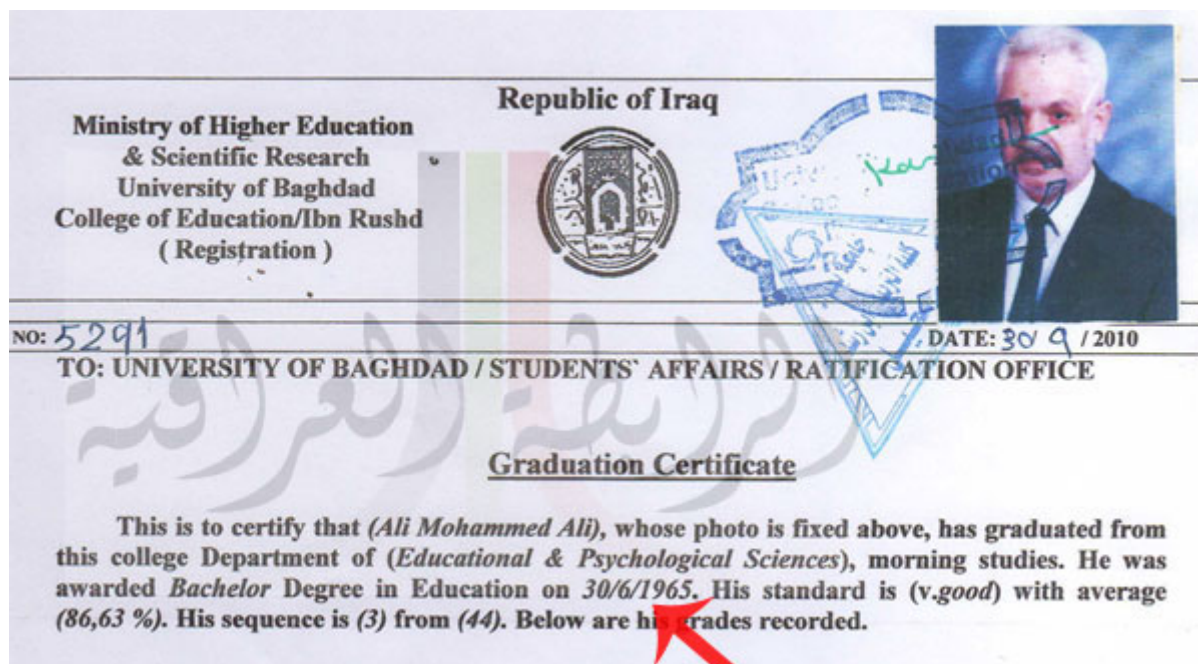
Additionally, the CoI reported, the forgeries do not appear confined to junior staff, but have also been used by high-ranking government members.^[18] Iraqi Newspaper Azzaman reported on 8 October 2011 that "More than 30,000 Iraqi civil servants, among them high-level officials, have obtained their jobs on fake certificates and degrees, according to the parliamentary commission on integrity and transparency."^[19]

A variety of sources indicate that fake diplomas and educational certificates have been trading at anywhere from \$1,500 and \$7,000. Officials at Iraq's ministry of higher education have been singled out for blame, the ministry having also licensed a string of shadowy universities in recent years.^[20] There are around nineteen thousand fake functional degrees, at the ministries of interior and defense alone, the Chairman of Security and Defense Committee of House, Hassan Sinead revealed on 21 June 2011.^[21] Corruption, grade buying and fraudulent degrees are rampant in Iraq today, posing a serious threat to the country's development.^[22]

On the early morning of 31 July 2011, a group of unknown armed men assassinated the Director-General of Administration in Iraq's Ministry of Higher Education & Scientific Research—Dawood Salman Rahim and his son, Hassanein—as they drove in their car in west Baghdad's Ghazaliya district.^[23] Dr Rahim told his friends that he might get killed because he refused a request of Ali Al-Adeeb, the high education minister, to equate the Shia Hawza religion certificates with the Scientific PhD certificates. Dr Rahim asked the minister to give him a written authorisation to do so. The minister threatened him to force his collaboration in this issue. Security officers of the Ministry raided his house two days before his assassination, and took his car registration certificate, and his rationing ticket. He was assassinated by silencer gun two days after the raid.

Recently it became known that even Ali Al-Adeeb's diploma has been forged. His diploma certificate was issued on 30-09-2010, after his appointment as minister, and it shows that

he had graduated from the College of Education/Baghdad University on 30-06-1965, meaning he was 19 years old, (he was born in 1946) and this is impossible in Iraq.



The President of Tikrit University resigned on 14 October 2011 because of the sacking of 300 university lecturers by Ali Al-Adeeb. The President of the University stated that they were all some of the best lecturers. It is estimated that the Minister of Higher Education has discharged some 1.200 lecturers since he became a Minister. Ali Al-Adeeb also wanted to impose Islamic law in Iraqi universities through the imposition of sectarianism and the veil and the separation of the sexes, leading to discontent in university circles.

Although Iraqi academics continue to face threats, Abduldhayab al-Aujaili, Iraq's previous Minister of Higher Education, said on 29 September 2010 that the security situation in his country has improved considerably, and asked Iraqi academics to please consider returning home^[24]. Prof. Saad Naji Jawad who served Baghdad University for over 31 years—and lived in Iraq through the Iraq-Iran war, the inhuman sanctions, and six years of occupation—challenges this view:

“In the past four months, a dozen people working in the ministry itself, under the direct administration of the minister or in his own office, were either murdered by killers using silencer pistols or were disabled by bombs stuck to their cars. Could the minister tell us what he did to find the murderers who committed these crimes? What protection did he provide for these employees to prevent their brutal liquidation? I am only mentioning the most recent incidents, in which I lost two of my very good friends and colleagues. I do not need to remind the minister that a few years ago, an entire department in his ministry was attacked and 150 employees were abducted by people wearing police and army uniforms and driving government cars. He could not save a single person. They were all murdered, cut to pieces, and thrown in the streets in closed boxes. In that incident I also lost two of my colleagues.”^[25]

To this date, there has been no systematic investigation of this phenomenon of terrorization of the professional middle class by the occupation authorities. Not a single arrest has been reported. This is consistent with the occupation powers' more general role in the

decapitation of Iraqi society. Bremer's de-Ba'athification policy has not only removed professional leadership cadres in the political, economic and military spheres, but also the educational and cultural spheres, with alarming consequences. According to documents of the Iraqi Resistance 169,000 members of the formerly ruling Baath Party have been killed. Thousands more left the country. The end result of the purge of Baathists has been the almost complete and quite deliberate deconstruction of Iraq's human capital.

The Iraq War has also suffered the heaviest death toll for the media since World War II. At least 341 Iraqi and 30 non-Iraqi media professionals have died under US occupation until 01

November 2011^[26]. Free expression and media freedom are absent because of legislative measures, other restrictive barriers, and a climate making Iraq one of the world's most dangerous countries for journalists. Assailants bomb their bureaus and kill them. Media workers also have to contend with "emboldened Iraqi and Kurdish security forces and their respective image-conscious central and regional political leaders." As a result, they're harassed, intimidated, threatened, arrested, physically assaulted and killed by security forces attached to government institutions and political parties. Moreover, senior politicians often sue journalists and their publications for unflattering articles or whatever else they

dislike.^[27] On 20 March 2008, Reporters Without Borders reported that hundreds of journalists were forced into exile since the start of US-led invasion. The message is clear: don't report about the daily atrocities taking place in Iraq, don't dig deeper into the dark dungeons of the dirty war, don't criticize our policy, or we'll harass, torture and kill you. The British watchdog Medialens mentioned that a study of deaths in Guatemala from 1960 to 1996 found that numbers of murders reported by the media actually decreased as violence increased, coinciding with the killing of journalists.^[28]

2. On Sectarianism

Arabs make up 80% of the Iraqi population, and 95% of those are Muslims. Since the independence of Iraq in 1920 until 2003, Iraq never had any sectarian conflict, unlike Lebanon or other countries that have sectarian difficulties. Of the different prime ministers who took office between 1920 and 2003, 8 were Shia and 4 were Kurds. Out of 18 military chiefs of staff, 8 were Kurds. As for the Baath party itself, the majority of the members were Shia. Out of 55 people on the wanted list that the occupying authority published, 31 were Shia.

"Although the Shias had been underrepresented in government posts in the period of the monarchy, they made substantial progress in the educational, business, and legal fields. Their advancement in other areas, such as the opposition parties, was such that in the years from 1952 to 1963, before the Baath Party came to power, Shias held the majority of party leadership posts. Observers believed that in the late 1980s Shias were represented at all levels of the party roughly in proportion to government estimates of their numbers in the population. For example, of the eight top Iraqi leaders who in early 1988 sat with Hussein on the Revolutionary Command Council-Iraq's highest governing body- three were Arab Shias (of whom one had served as Minister of Interior), three were Arab Sunnis, one was an Arab Christian, and one a Kurd. On the Regional Command Council-the ruling body of the party-Shias actually predominated. During the war, a number of highly competent Shia officers have been promoted to corps commanders. The general who turned back the initial Iranian invasions of Iraq in 1982 was a Shia."^[29]

Iraq commentator Reidar Visser refers to the “selective de-Ba’athification” process being pursued in Iraq, given that historically, he notes, the Shias and Sunnis alike co-operated with the old regime in their millions.

“More fundamentally, the question of “selective de-Ba’athification” comes on the agenda here in a big way. It is a historical fact that Shiites and Sunnis alike cooperated with the old regime in their millions, and it was for example Shiite tribes that cracked down on the “Shiite” rebellion in the south in 1991. Nonetheless, the exiles who returned to Iraq after 2003 have tried to impose an artificial narrative in which the legacy of pragmatic cooperation with the Baathist regime is not dealt with in a systematic and neutral fashion as such; instead one singles out political opponents (often Sunnis) as “Baathists” and silently co-opt political friends (especially if they happen to be Shiites) without mentioning their Baathist ties at all. The result is a hypocritical and sectarian approach to the whole question of de-Ba’athification that will create a new Iraq on shaky foundations. (For example, the Sadrists have been in the lead in the aggressive de-Ba’athification campaign, yet it is well known that many Sadrists in fact had Baathist ties in the past.)”^[30]

So what the occupying authority was practicing in Iraq was something new: Ethnic cleansing, a divide and rule strategy. They started supporting Shia against Sunnis, and Sunnis against Shia, and now they are harvesting what they have planted. “Through the constant insistence of American war propaganda, Saddam is now representative of all Sunni Arabs (never mind that most of his government were Shia).” the Iraqi blogger Riverbend wrote in 2006.^[31]

Craig Murray, former British Ambassador to Uzbekistan, wrote in October of 2006:

“The evidence that the US directly contributed to the creation of the current civil war in Iraq by its own secretive security strategy is compelling. Historically of course this is nothing new — divide and rule is a strategy for colonial powers that has stood the test of time. Indeed, it was used in the previous British occupation of Iraq around 85 years ago.”^[32]

3. To Exist is to Resist

Iraqis are a very proud people. My first visit to Iraq was in July 1992, leading a delegation invited by the General Federation of Iraqi Women. It was one year after operation Desert Storm that had “bombed Iraq back into the Stone Age”, as US Commander Gen. Schwartzkopf put it. During the “Desert Storm” bombing campaign in 1991, power plants and power lines were for 91% destroyed: 95 power stations and all power lines of 400,000 and 135,000 volts. The oil supply had totally stopped: the oil fields of Kirkuk in the north and Rumaila in the south, refineries, pumping stations, oil terminals for export in Um Qasr and Fao: all eliminated. Iraqis were able to restore electricity within 6 months. The reconstruction campaign following the end of hostilities in March 1991 was an achievement of staggering proportions. It was a miracle of organisation and solidarity, taking into account that Iraq was submitted to the harshest sanction in the history of mankind. The reconstruction campaign showed the defiance of the Iraqi people for the attempts to enslave them. All these reconstruction efforts were exhibited in a large old Ottoman building on the banks of the Tigris. It was called the “Museum of Resistance”. Spread over two floors, models were displayed showing the destruction and reconstruction of bridges, mosques,

schools, factories, refineries, telecommunication centers etc. All this had been done in one year. Baghdad had electricity then, despite the sanctions, while now, after 8 years of liberation, Iraq's capital, home to more than six million people, hardly gets one hour of non-interrupted electricity supplies every 24 hours.^[33]

All the achievements of the reconstruction campaign after 1991 have been erased from the history books.

In a French-Iraqi cultural centre in Baghdad was a poster on the wall: "Plutôt mourir debout que vivre à genoux", that can be translated as "It's better to die on ones feet than to live on ones knees". It is a quote by Emiliano Zapata who was a leading figure in the Mexican Revolution, which broke out in 1910. Iraqis were proud that they could keep their independence, even if the effects of the UN imposed embargo were devastating. Then I realised that no foreign power could succeed in peacefully occupying the country for a long period. Before the Iraq war, at a meeting of the Arab League, Secretary General Amr Moussa famously said that a U.S. war on Iraq would 'open the gates of hell'. And so it happened. The US invaders were not greeted with flowers in 2003. The regular Iraqi army was quickly disbanded by the occupying Forces. The resistance against the invasion and foreign occupation began shortly after the 2003 invasion of Iraq, when the officers of the Iraqi Army melted into the population and started a guerrilla war. From at least 2004, and as of May 2007, the insurgency primarily targeted Coalition armies and later also the Iraqi security forces, seen as collaborators with the coalition. During this period, only 10% of significant attacks have targeted Iraqi civilians^[34]. According to a February-March 2007 poll, 51% of the Iraqi population approve of the attacks on Coalition forces^[35]. The same poll indicated that over 90% of Arab Sunnis in Iraq approve of the attacks. The same poll revealed that the number of Iraqis who say their own life is going well has dipped from 71 % in November 2005 to 39 % in 2007. About three-fourths of Iraqis reported feelings of anger, depression and difficulty concentrating. Only 18 % of Iraqis had confidence in U.S. and coalition troops, and 86 % were concerned that someone in their household will be a victim of violence.

Civilians in an occupied country have no obligation of loyalty towards the Occupying Power regardless of the motives of the invading forces. The only obligations they have relate to their civilian status: civilians are protected by applicable human rights law as well as by Geneva Convention IV relating to civilians and the provisions relating to civilians in Protocol Additional I. A civilian who takes up arms against the Occupying Power loses rights as a civilian, but takes on the rights and obligations of combatant forces. This is the situation of the classic *levee en masse*: the Geneva Conventions recognize the combatant status of persons who spontaneously take up arms on the approach of the enemy.

This rule is augmented by the principle of self-determination: under the law of self-determination, a people have the right to resist, with force if necessary, an alien or foreign occupier. The fact that some of the people resisting the U.S./British occupation of Iraq were not part of the pre-invasion Iraqi armed forces is not relevant, as persons who were civilians can take up arms as insurgents against any occupier. As protected combatants they have the right to take up arms against the Occupying Power and cannot be criminally charged except for acts that violate the laws and customs of war. The reason for this rule is obvious: were civilians who spontaneously take up arms and organize themselves into defense forces to be considered "terrorists" instead of combatants, this would mean that persons under attack from a foreign or oppressive force would not be able to fight back and resist without

being considered terrorist.

The U.S. administration has generally succeeded in its political rhetoric on the issue: practically no U.S. politicians and very few scholars in NGOs in the U.S. have challenged the false labelling of the Iraq resistance as “terrorist.”^[36]

To illustrate the change in discourse from “resistance” to “terrorist” in recent wars here is an example. Colombian Father Camilo Torres Restrepo was ordained a Roman Catholic priest in 1954, and continued to study for some years at the Catholic University of Leuven (Louvain) in Belgium, the town where I was born. When he returned to Colombia, he increasingly felt obliged to actively support the cause of the poor. Camilo Torres believed that in order to secure justice for the people, Christians had a duty to use not only non-violent but also violent action, when confronted with the violence of state actors. He was a co-founder of the Sociology Faculty of the National University of Colombia in 1960. His involvement in several student and political movements during the time won him a large following. Camilo Torres was persecuted and went into hiding (leaving his job as an academic) by joining the guerrillas in Colombia. He was killed on 15 February 1966 when the ELN ambushed a Colombian Military patrol. After his death, Camilo Torres was made an official martyr of the ELN.

He is perhaps best known for the quote: “If Jesus were alive today, He would be a guerrillero.”

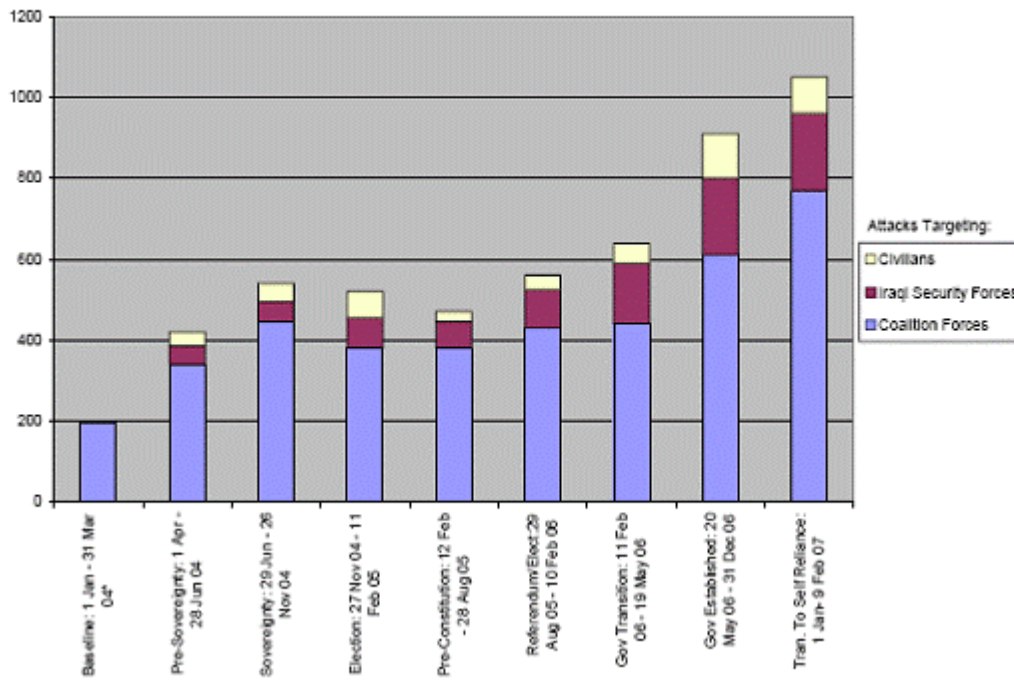
After his death, a university residence in Leuven was named after him.

Today, according to mainstream discourse, freedom fighters in Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Palestine, are no longer called “resistance”, they are now terrorists. No Western university institution will be named after former Iraqi students when they decide to help their people to free themselves from the US crusaders. Anti-war movements nowadays have difficulties to support the resistances in Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Palestine, while the imperialist attitude and extreme use of violence of the US Armed Forces and the resistance against attacks on national sovereignty have remained the same, from Vietnam to Afghanistan, from El Salvador to Iraq.

The graph below shows that 75% of the recorded attacks, (here based on the quarterly reviews to congress only) was directed at the occupation forces directly, and further 17% at the Iraqi government forces. The remaining, 8% was directed at unspecified civilian targets. It is these incidents that are covered by the media.

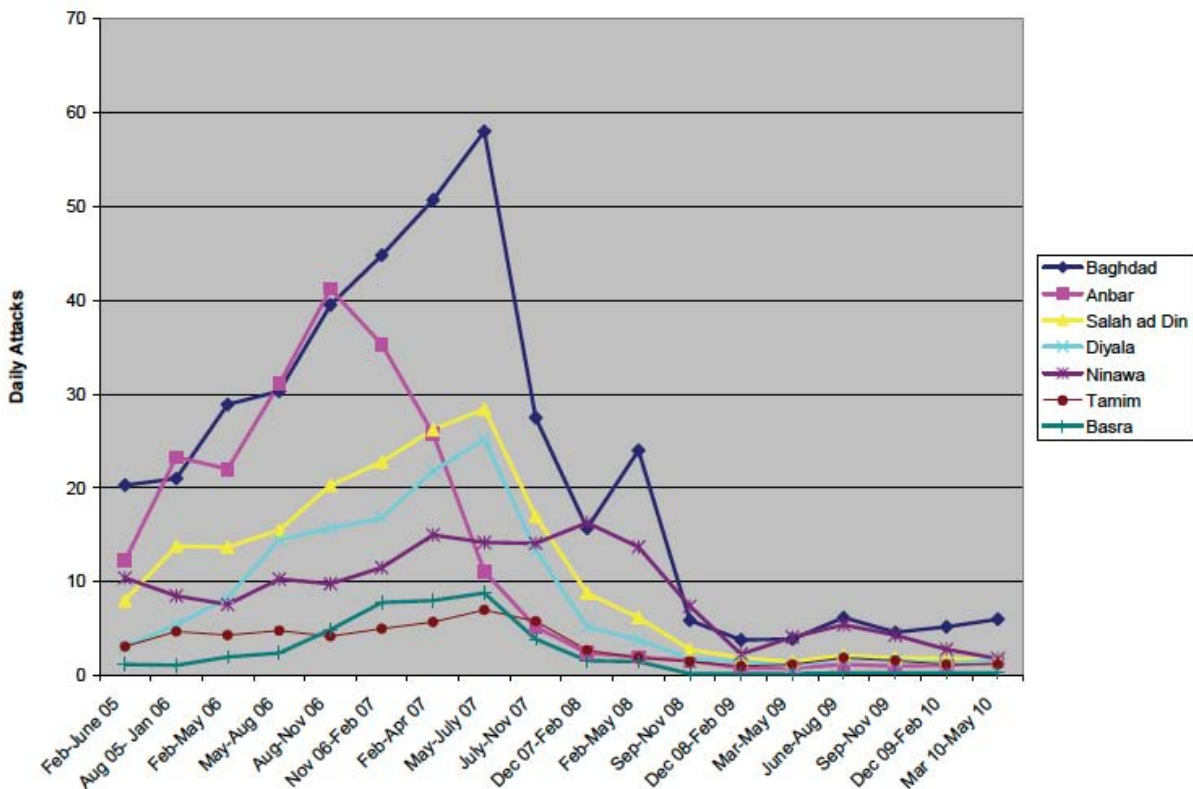
The official Iraqi government security forces numbers had been steadily rising and in March 2007 stood at about 330 000. In March 2011, the number reached 670.000. They often used to act as forward or guard units for the occupation forces. Further: the attacks on “civilians” could be aimed at government officials, translators, at the contractors (mercenaries) who operate in civilian clothes and are often based in civilian areas. The official US estimates were 100,000 private contractors in Iraq in 2007. Other civilian targets could have been the Facility Protection Forces, whose number was estimated by the government at 150 000, or at real civilians, who happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. Word on the Iraqi street is that attacks on real civilians are the work of occupation agents, a version of events that is at least as credible as the mainstream story of mad fanatics attacking each other^[37].

AVERAGE WEEKLY ATTACKS BY TIME PERIOD: 1 JANUARY 2004 – 9 FEBRUARY 2007⁴¹



The figure below^[38] gives the geographic distribution of the resistance attacks by Province. The frequent clashes in most southern provinces seem not included. This may indicate that the figures used refer only to resistance actions. It must be noted that the 800 km supply route from Kuwait to Baghdad through several southern provinces is the most heavily protected one in the world, with massive funds paid to contractors, 'tribes' and local militias.

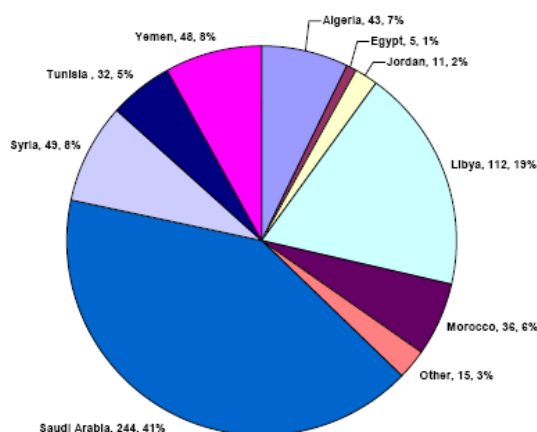
NUMBER OF DAILY INSURGENT ATTACKS IN IRAQ BY PROVINCE, FEBRUARY 2005-PRESENT



It is important to note that car bombs and other suicide attacks never consisted of more than a tiny fraction of all attacks. And 90% of the suicide bomb attacks carried out in Iraq are done by foreign nationals, affiliated with Al Qaeda, and not by the resistance, as the following graph shows.^[39] If we believe the mainstream media, The US and Iraqi military are fighting this organisation because it is responsible for the major bulk of attacks against the military and the bombing attacks against the civilian population. But Military officials told the New York Times that of the roughly 24,500 prisoners in U.S. detention facilities in Iraq (nearly all of whom are Sunni), just 1,800 claim allegiance to al-Qaeda in Iraq^[40]. Moreover, the composition of inmates does not support the assumption that large numbers of foreign terrorists, long believed to be the leaders and most hard-core elements of AQI, are operating inside Iraq. In August 2007, American forces held in custody 280 foreign nationals—slightly more than 1% of total inmates^[41].

The State Department’s Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR) estimated that AQI’s membership was in a range of “more than 1,000.” Compared with the military’s estimate for the total size of the resistance—between 20,000 and 30,000 full-time fighters—this figure puts AQI forces at around 5%. When compared with Iraqi intelligence’s much larger estimates of the insurgency—200,000 fighters—INR’s estimate would put AQI forces at less than 1%.

Malcolm Nance, the author of *The Terrorists of Iraq* and a twenty-year intelligence veteran and Arabic speaker who has worked with military and intelligence units tracking al-Qaeda inside Iraq believes AQI includes about 850 full-time fighters, comprising 2% to 5% of the Sunni insurgency. “Al-Qaeda in Iraq is a microscopic terrorist organization” according to Nance.^[42] According to General Buchanan, there are 800 to 1,000 people in Al Qaeda’s Iraq network, “from terrorists involved in operations to media to finance to fighters.” A document released by the military in July 2010 said Al Qaeda had about 200 “hard core” fighters in Iraq.^[43]



NOTE ON THIS GRAPH: Figures obtained from a computer confiscated in a raid by coalition forces in October 2007 in Sinjar, Iraq, on the border with Syria. Of the nearly 700 records of foreign fighters found, 595 included the nation of origin. All are believed to be affiliated with Al-Qaeda and to have entered Iraq through Syria between August 2006 and August 2007. Based on these findings, U.S. officials estimate that 90% of the suicide bombings carried out in Iraq are done so by foreign nationals. This is up from previous estimates of 75%.⁴⁶

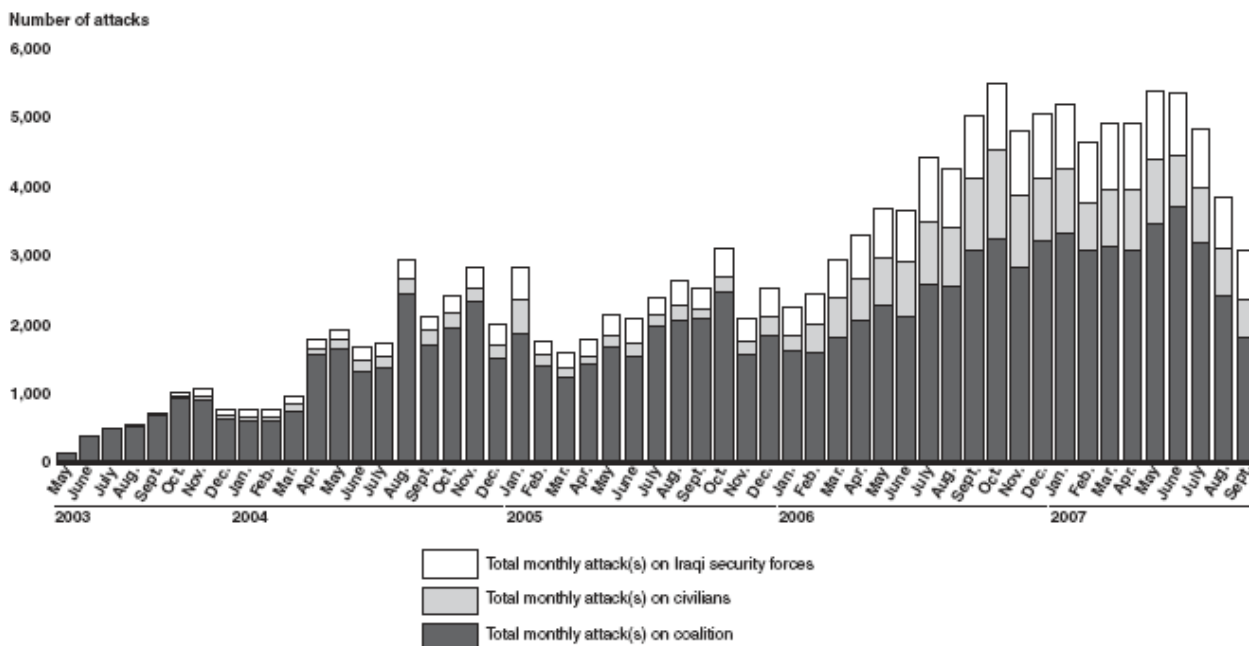
Many Iraqis themselves have alleged that US and British troops have been behind the

suicide bombings. There were eyewitness accounts from Iraqis that US agents secretly planted explosives in their cars or trucks while they were being detained or controlled at military checkpoints and then sent on their way to turn them into unwitting suicide bombers; statements from Iraqi police officers who arrested two plainclothes British soldiers on allegations they were planting bombs around the city — the two were shortly freed from prison by British troops backed by tanks; and mass protests by Iraqis in Baghdad and other cities claiming the occupation is behind terrorist acts, like the destruction of the Askariya Shrine in Samarra in February 2006, which sparked ethnic tensions. The available information suggests that the US is encouraging or even orchestrating the terrorist bombings against civilians, sectarian bloodshed, ethnic cleansing, and the waves of abductions and extrajudicial killings.^[44]

The graph below shows that the average number of attacks by June 2007 had increased to about 185 per day. That is 1300 per week, and over 5500 attacks per month. Another way of understanding this is that in any one hour, day and night, there were 7-8 new mortar attack, Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) such as roadside bombs, sniper fire, etc. From mid 2007 the daily attacks decreased, coinciding with the extreme repression by US sponsored death squads and sectarian Government militia's.

ENEMY-INITIATED ATTACKS AGAINST THE COALITION AND ITS PARTNERS^[45]

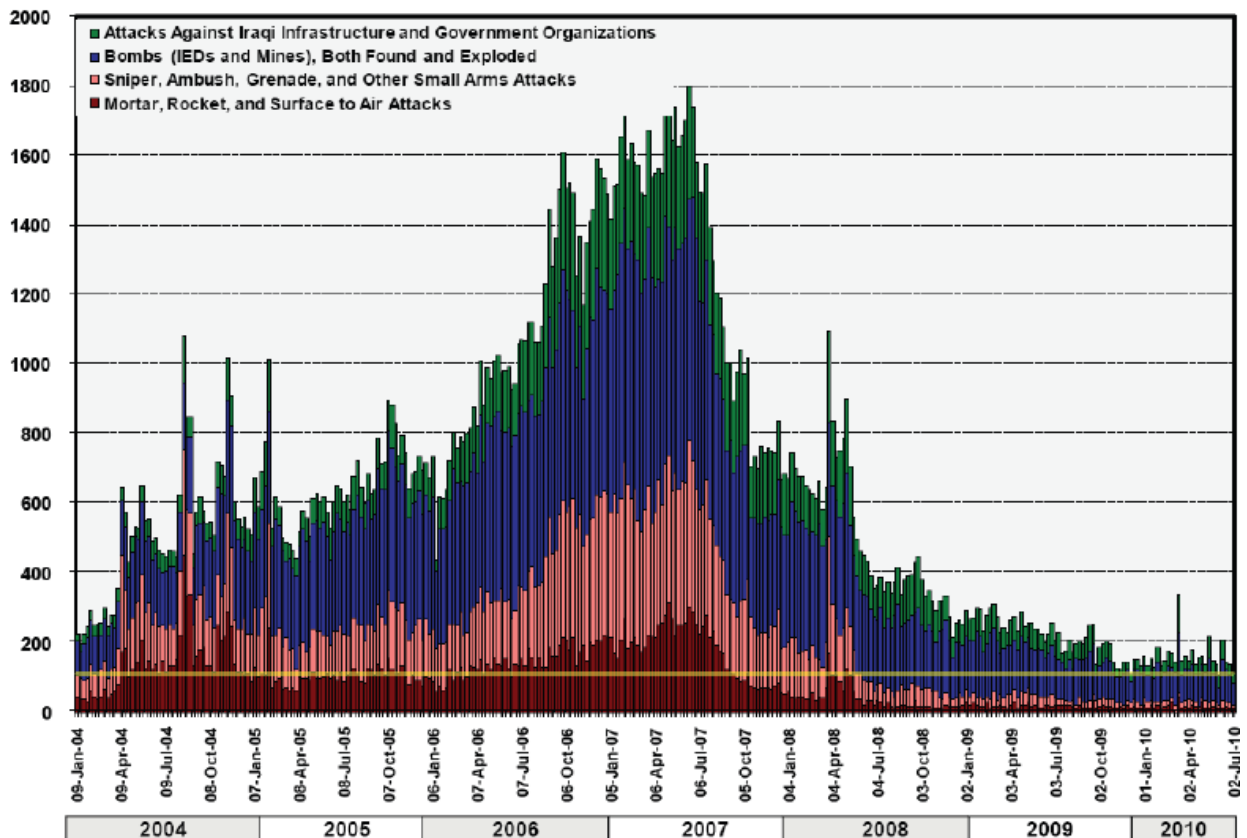
Figure 1: Enemy-Initiated Attacks against the Coalition, Iraqi Security Forces, and Civilians, May 2003 through September 2007



Source: GAO analysis of DIA-reported Multi-National Force-Iraq data, September 2007.

The next graph shows the resistance attacks against the “Coalition and its Partners” from January 2004 until July 2010 by the methods used. More recent statistics are not available^[46].

ENEMY-INITIATED ATTACKS AGAINST THE COALITION AND ITS PARTNERS, BY WEEK²



The fact that well over 100,000 attacks have been carried out by the Iraqi resistance against the U.S. occupation forces in the first four years of the occupation (currently about 200 per week) should be enough to indicate the steadfastness, strength, and popularity of the resistance. The frequency and intensity of these attacks would be inconceivable without a certain level of inter-organizational political unity, coordination and cooperation. Further, it would be impossible to fight a guerrilla war of this scope without the broad support and involvement of millions of ordinary Iraqis.^[47]

John Pilger, award winning documentary filmmaker, explained on New Year's eve 2003-2004 why the resistance in Iraq is so important and should be supported: "I think the resistance in Iraq is incredibly important for all of us. I think that we depend on the resistance to win, so that other countries might not be attacked, so that our world in a sense becomes more secure. Now, I don't like resistances that produce the kind of terrible civilian atrocities that this one has, but that is true for all resistances. And this one is a resistance against a rapacious power, that if it is not stopped in Iraq will go on to North Korea where Mr. Cheney and others are chomping at the bit to have a crack at that country. So, what the outcome of this resistance is, is terribly important for the rest of the world. I think if the United States' military machine and the Bush administration can suffer a defeat in Iraq, they could be stopped."^[48]

We owe the Iraqi resistance our full support. Thanks to their struggle they managed to keep the US army inside the borders of Iraq for many years. Thanks to the Iraqi armed resistance, other countries, especially in Latin America, obtained space to breathe, and many independent governments came to power during that period, including Bolivia, Ecuador, Nicaragua. Let's not forget that the neoconservative plan was to wage 7 wars in 5 years:

Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Iran.^[49] The onslaught of Libya was already planned way back. The fierce heroic Iraqi resistance has forced the US to postpone its plans, but Obama is realizing those plans now, apparently.

Here are excerpts of a video message of the media platoon of the Islamic Jihad Army on 10 December 2004^[50], explaining the motives of the Iraqi resistance:

We are simple people who chose principles over fear.

It is our duty, as well as our right, to fight back the occupying forces, which their nations will be held morally and economically responsible for what their elected governments have destroyed and stolen from our land.

We have not crossed the oceans and seas to occupy Britain or the U.S. nor are we responsible for 9/11. These are only a few of the lies that these criminals present to cover their true plans for the control of the energy resources of the world, in face of a growing China and a strong unified Europe. It is ironic that the Iraqi's are to bear the full face of this large and growing conflict on behalf of the rest of this sleeping world.

Educate those in doubt of the true nature of this conflict and do not believe their media for their casualties are far higher than they admit.

We only wish we had more cameras to show the world their true defeat.

The enemy is on the run. They are in fear of a resistance movement they cannot see nor predict.

We now choose when, where, and how to strike.

We do not require arms or fighters, for we have plenty.

We ask you to form a world wide front against war and sanctions.

We will pin them here in Iraq to drain their resources, manpower, and their will to fight. We will make them spend as much as they steal, if not more.

We will disrupt, then halt the flow of our stolen oil, thus, rendering their plans useless.

The Iraqi resistance does not attack civilians. To the contrary, they protect the civilian population against raids and attacks on their houses and neighbourhoods by occupation forces and militias as shown in the following lines, written on 18 October 2006 by a well-informed person who lived in Baghdad^[51].

"Everything says we are facing a very difficult time in the next few months, violence is surrounding us from all sides. Movement on the highways to and from Baghdad is becoming extremely dangerous, and of course inside Baghdad. People disappear, get kidnapped or killed on the highways. Death squads and criminal gangs control them; only the resistance is protecting the individuals and the communities... The government is part of the killing sides (...) The streets are full of people with strange accent(...) I hear a big explosion now(...)They began artillery bombing of different parts of Baghdad, between districts of different sectarian groups (...) An eye witness from Ghazaliya said

that the American troops started the bombing, and then an Iraqi doer continues. The political players are using their militias on both sides. It is very important to notice that the resistance is never mentioned within the sectarian classifications“.

The Iraqi resistance distances itself from terrorist actions against civilians. They have often expressed their aversion to terrorism. One such example is the head of the Shura Council in Fallujah, Abdullah Janabi, who issued a statement on 21 September 2004 calling Zarqawi a “criminal”. “We don’t need Zarqawi to defend our city,” said Janabi, who sought to draw a distinction between what he called “Iraqi resistance fighters” and foreign fighters engaged in a campaign against Iraq’s infrastructure, foreign civilians and Iraqi security forces. “The Iraqi resistance is something and the terrorism is something else. We don’t kidnap journalists and we don’t sabotage the oil pipelines and the electric power stations. We don’t kill innocent Iraqis. We resist the occupation.”^[52]

On 12 April 2007, Haifa Zangana explained:

Occupation has no room left for any initiative independent of the officially sanctioned political process; for a peaceful opposition or civil society that could create networks to bridge the politically manufactured divide. Only the mosque can fulfil this role. In the absence of the state, some mosques provide basic services, running clinics or schools. In addition to the call to prayer, their loudspeakers warn people of impending attacks or to appeal for blood donors.

But these attempts to sustain a sense of community are regularly crushed. Troops from the Iraqi army, supported by US helicopters, raided a mosque in the heart of old Baghdad. The well-respected muazzin Abu Saif and another civilian were executed in public. Local people were outraged and attacked the troops. At the end of the day, 34 people had been killed, including a number of women and children. As usual, the summary execution and the massacre that followed were blamed on insurgents. The military statement said US and Iraqi forces were continuing to “locate, identify, and engage and kill insurgents targeting coalition and Iraqi security forces in the area”.

It is important to recognise that the resistance was born not only of ideological, religious and patriotic convictions, but also as a response to the reality of the brutal actions of the occupation and its administration. It is a response to arbitrary break-ins, humiliating searches, arrests, detention and torture.^[53]

The resistance groups and movements are many and there is no unified command. The advantage of this situation is explained by Sheikh Bashar Mohammed Al Faidhi, official spokesperson of AMSI: “The US can not destroy the resistance because they don’t know who they fight against. There are too many groups, too many leaders. Let’s not underestimate US intelligence. With a unified leadership and command it would be much easier to defeat the resistance.”

Over the years the Iraqi resistance has developed from hundreds of smaller organizations to a handful of large, powerful political and military fronts. This is very much an ongoing process: in July 2007 the formation of the Patriotic National Islamic Front for the Liberation of Iraq was announced.^[54] This marked yet another major advance in the unification of the

Iraqi resistance. It will take some time to form a single, unified political and military command for all of the Iraqi resistance, but its formation is question of when, not if.

Early May 2007 the Jihad and Change Front was formed, including:

1920 Revolution Brigades, The Rashideen Army, The Army of Muslims in Iraq, The Islamic Movement of Iraqi Mujahedeen, Jund Al-Rahman Brigades in Iraq, Da'wah and Ribat Brigades, Al Tamkeen Brigades, Muhammad al Fatih Brigades, The Army of Tabeeyn, Jihad Army, Asaib al Iraq al Jihadiyyah, The Army of Mujahideen Murabiteen, The Army of Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal

The statement of the resistance factions confirmed that they empowered Secretary General of the Association of Muslim Scholars in Iraq (AMSI) Sheikh Dr.Hareth Sulaiman al Dhari, to speak and negotiate on their behalf in matters related to politics and at all the forums^[55]

On 03 October 2007 albasrah.net reported that 22 Iraqi Resistance fighting groups had convened a Unification Congress in a liberated neighbourhood in Baghdad. The Congress also created a Supreme Command of the Jihad and Liberation struggle and it elected 'Izzat Ibrahim ad-Douri as the Supreme Commander of the Jihad and Liberation.

The Resistance organizations taking part in the founding congress of the Jihad and Liberation organization were: The Army of the Men of the Naqshbandiyah Order, The Army of the Prophet's Companions, The Army of the Murabiteen, The Army of al-Hamzah, The Army of the Message, The Army of Ibn al-Walid, The United Command of the Mujahideen (Iraq), The Liberation Brigades, The Army of al-Mustafa, The Army of the Liberation of Iraq, Squadrons of the Martyrs, The Army of the Sabireen, The Brigades of the Jihad in the Land of the Two Rivers, The army of the Knight for the Liberation of the [Kurdish] Self-Rule Area, Squadrons of the Jihad in al-Basrah, Jihadist Squadrons of al-Fallujah, The Patriotic Popular Front for the Liberation of Iraq, The Squatrons of the Husayni Revolution of at-Taff, Squadrons of the Liberation of the South, Army of Haneen Squadrons of Diyala for Jihad and Liberation, The Squadrons of Glory for the Liberation of Iraq.^[56]

While all of the armed groups joining these fronts reject attacks on civilians, they have no qualms about armed attacks against Iraqi National Police and soldiers, or US and British troops. But aren't there other, more peaceful ways to try to achieve their aims?

"Peaceful resistance will not end the occupation," states Abu Ahmad^[57]. He's right. It would be highly hypocritical for peace movements, analysts and commentators to condemn a resistance movement that emerged only in response to the violence unleashed by the Anglo-American invasion. And as we said before: even the U.N. Charter recognizes the "inherent" nature of the right to self-defense against an aggressive war, which the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg, following World War II, called "essentially an evil thing...to initiate a war of aggression...is not only an international crime; it is the supreme international crime, differing only from other war crimes in that it contains within itself the accumulated evil of the whole."^[58]

Other anti-occupation groups include the Iraqi National Foundation Congress (INFC), a civil society movement. It was set up following the US-led invasion of Iraq to offer a peaceful

protest to the ongoing occupation of the country and press for a united Iraq, and explicitly eschews violence in its methodology. The congress was founded on 8 May 2004 by Sheikh Jawad al-Khalisi. A Shia, Al-Khalisi is the Imam of Al-Khadhimiya mosque in northern Baghdad. The group's spokesperson is Dr. Wamidh Nadhmi, a senior political scientist at Baghdad University. The membership of the congress is diverse, including women's rights groups, religious groups and nationalists. They include Nasserites, leftists and Ba'athists from the era before Saddam, as well as Kurds, Christians, representatives of the Association of Muslim Scholars (AMSI), and Sheikh Khalisi's own Shia friends and colleagues.

A special attention should be given to the Sadr movement (known as the Mehdi Army), led by Muqtada al-Sadr. Initially they were part of the Iraqi resistance. On April 4 2004, when fighting broke out in Najaf, Sadr City and Basra, Sadr's Mahdi Army was attacking the coalition forces. During the first siege of Fallujah in late March and April 2004, Muqtada's Sadrists sent aid convoys to the besieged Sunnis there. But the movement has been accused of many crimes, death squad activities and sectarian killings since the Sadr movement entered the political process in 2006. Muqtada al-Sadr returned to Iraq on 5 January 2011.^[59]

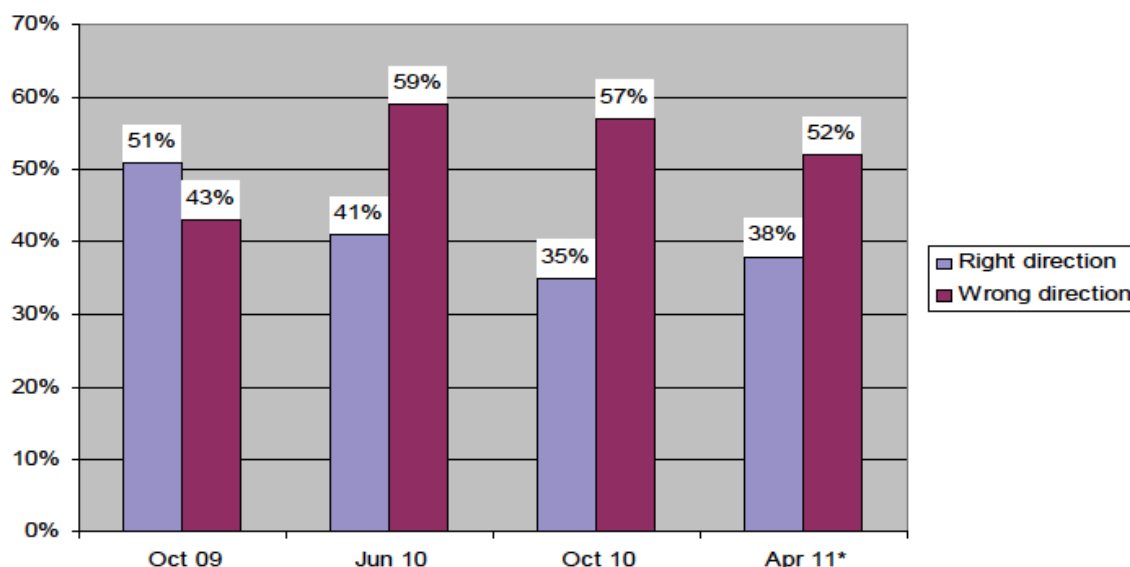
Despite playing a major role in the formation of the current Iraqi government, Mr al Sadr had not been seen in the country since 2007. Since then he has been living in Iran, and studying in Qom, a major centre of learning for Shiite Muslims. His anti-occupation rhetoric is often contradictory to the realities on the ground. He remains — especially to Iraq's Sunni minority — synonymous with the black-clad death squads of 2006-7. Muqtada Al Sadr promotes Shiism in a sectarian way and is lukewarm about aligning himself with the secular Iraqi resistance movement. It is often said that Muqtada is following orders from Iran and wants to turn Iraq into a Shia Islamic state. The meddling of Iran in Iraqi affairs has been well documented. Mr. Mohammad Ali Abtahi, the Iranian President's deputy for legal and parliamentary affairs (during the "Gulf and future challenges Conference", organized in Abu Dhabi, January 2004 by Emirate Center for Strategic Researches and Studies) pointed out the role of Iran in the occupation of Iraq. "The fall of Kabul and Baghdad would not have happened easily without the assist of Iran", Abtahi said, clearly indicating the role of Iranian militias and intelligence in Iraq and Afghanistan.

What about the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP)? Are they part of the Iraqi resistance? No, they are not. From the start of the invasion, the ICP welcomed Saddam Hussein's removal and was happy that the ousted legal president was to be put on trial. They made a big mistake and lost a lot of credibility among the Iraqi people when instead of leading the National Resistance, they joined the political process from the beginning, when they accepted to be included in the Interim Governing Council (IGC), a body created by the US and largely drawn from prominent Iraqi emigres, many of whom were appointed ministers in the interim government. US occupation officials subsequently said they were happy with the ICP's behaviour, and their reception grew warmer. This was partly because the ICP – Iraq's oldest and broadest secular political group – was seen as a potential counterweight to less favoured, conservative Islamist organisations. One American supporter was the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), a private, taxpayer-funded group lead by the former secretary of state, Madeleine Albright, that aims to promote democracy abroad. "At present, the ICP boasts the most significant organisational structure among all the secular parties," NDI Middle East director Leslie Campbell was quoted as saying in the US media in January 2004.^[60] It should be noted however, that the ICP was not in favour of a

prolonged stay of the occupation forces in Iraq and that they did not welcome the wholesale privatisation of Iraq's state-centred economy. But they refused to join the ranks of the resistance. Instead they joined the choir of the occupiers by labelling the armed resistance terrorists instead of freedom fighters.

Despite the sectarian divisions, brought to Iraq by the occupation, the fact remains that the majority of Iraqis favour the unity of Iraq and don't want the occupation to continue. And they're not optimistic about the future of their country as the following graph shows:^[61]

QUESTION: IS THE COUNTRY HEADED IN THE RIGHT OR WRONG DIRECTION?



NOTE: All polls are national except the one conducted in April 2011, which was conducted in the “Northern Triangle” of Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninawa and Salahhadin provinces.

4. NGOs, Missionaries of the New World Order?

Currently there's a mushrooming of NGOs that flood the country and concentrate their efforts on improving the hopeless situation of the Iraqi people. Many of these NGOs were involved in the peaceful protests in support of the just demands of the people.

A relevant quote of an article on the website of the NGO Coordination Committee For Iraq (NCCI) makes this clear:

Iraq's “Arab Spring” highlighted the role of civil society organizations as a major and influential stakeholder, with the potential and capacity to inflict change in a country that continues to build civil reforms.

Between 2003 and 2010, the number of Iraqi NGOs considerably increased and were estimated somewhere in the region of 8000-12000. That said, a formal count and coordination of these NGOs is only beginning to emerge now with the establishment of the New NGO Law, 2010. Despite considerable delays and obstacles within the NGO registration system, the Law is considered one of the best and most liberal NGO laws in the region.

Iraqi civil society organizations not only played a major role in the issuance of the NGO Law itself, but recently they were significantly influential in Iraq's “Arab Spring”, advocating for democracy and independent media; fighting

illiteracy; and combating administrative and financial corruption among others, all of which aim at protecting human rights, especially vulnerable groups. Civil society organizations have as well been a key stakeholder in issuing and pushing for several laws in Iraq.

Iraqi NGOs were among the advocates for demonstrations in Tahrir Square in Baghdad and other cities in February 2011. They have also been present in the streets, participating in demonstrations, and continue to promote a collective voice demanding better standards for the people. They supported the issuance of the Law on Journalists' Rights in August 9th, 2011, regardless of the debate it triggered among all parties, including civil society. Some came out in strong support of the legislation, while others strongly objected, arguing that freedom of opinion and the press is already guaranteed under Article 36 of the Iraqi Constitution, which provides for freedom of expression, the press, peaceful assembly and demonstration, within the guidelines put forward by the law.^[62]

This optimistic prospect implies that the situation in Iraq can be improved through cosmetic operations. But how can democracy be built in a country that is under occupation, since occupation is the highest form of dictatorship?

Back to Basics. The de facto US occupation of Iraq is explicitly prohibited under international law from instituting changes aimed at permanently altering the foundational structures of the Iraqi state, including its judiciary, economy, political institutions and social fabric^[63]. Further, and given that the 2003 invasion of Iraq was unequivocally illegal under international law, not only are the US-designed Iraqi permanent constitution and National Assembly illegal, every law, treaty, agreement and contract signed in Iraq since the illegal invasion and subsequent occupation began is illegal. All states are obliged under international law not to recognize as legal the consequences of illegal acts by other states^[64].

The occupiers are prohibited under international law from establishing any long-term economic contract that has not been agreed upon by a sovereign Iraqi government representing the sovereign Iraqi people.^[65] Since no such government can, by definition, exist under occupation, all attempts to bind the future of Iraqi oil to foreign multinationals — particularly through unfavourable “Product Sharing Agreements” (PSAs) — are illegal and null and void^[66].

Denouncing the illegal occupation should be the starting point of any analysis and of all humanitarian work.

NCCI is not about ending the occupation, but about:

Improve coordination amongst the humanitarian community (NGOs, UN and local authorities) to optimise provision of relief, development support and protection to the most vulnerable groups in Iraq; increase NGO Knowledge and capacities to deliver adapted and relevant aid to better meet on-the-ground needs, empower communities and strengthen Civil Society participation in public policy making; improve general information sharing to increase awareness on humanitarian and development concerns for informed and effective response strategies; advocate for humanitarian work, guaranteed access to basic services and lobbying for respect of Human Rights and

While their work in improving daily life of the most vulnerable groups in Iraq and strengthen Civil Society is very important and should be appreciated, if they accept the illegal situation of foreign occupation and only try to amend the worst excesses of this catastrophic situation, they will be doing the same work as the missionaries in colonial times.

That's why armed and non-violent resistance are two sides of the same coin, if the starting point is to make an end to the occupation. Both are necessary. One cannot do without the other. "Peaceful resistance will not end the occupation," Abu Ahmad said earlier, but peaceful resistance can be a very powerful force in the anti-occupation Civil Society. The protest movements of the "Arab Spring" have clearly shown this.

Dirk Adriaensens is coordinator of SOS Iraq and member of the executive committee of the BRussells Tribunal. Between 1992 and 2003 he led several delegations to Iraq to observe the devastating effects of UN imposed sanctions. He was a member of the International Organizing Committee of the World Tribunal on Iraq (2003-2005). He is also co-coordinator of the Global Campaign Against the Assassination of Iraqi Academics. He is co-author of Rendez-Vous in Baghdad, EPO (1994), Cultural Cleansing in Iraq, Pluto Press, London (2010), Beyond Educide, Academia Press, Ghent (2012), and is a frequent contributor to Global Research, Truthout, The International Journal of Contemporary Iraqi Studies and other media.

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