

Fallujah: U.S. Military Adopts Desperate Tactics

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Global Research, November 02, 2006

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November 2006

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FALLUJAH, Oct 31 (IPS) - Increased violence is being countered by harsh new measures across the Sunni-dominated al-Anbar province west of Baghdad, residents say.

"Thousands have been killed here by the Multi-National Forces (MNF) and Iraqi allies, and the situation is getting worse every day," a member of the Fallujah city council speaking on condition of anonymity told IPS. "We have no role to play because the Americans always prefer violent solutions that have led from one disaster to another."

The violence appears to be affecting the civilian population far more than it is stifling the resistance. The suffering of people in Fallujah increases by the day, and the number of resistance snipers appears to be increasing in response to the U.S. use of snipers against civilians.

"In fact it is many more snipers now, considering the number of incidents that have taken place," Sebri Ahmed from the local police told IPS. "Our men are terrified, and the majority of them have quit after serious threats of getting killed, like our three main leaders."

General Hudhairi Abbas, former deputy police chief of Fallujah was killed two months ago. Colonel Ahmed Dirii was killed soon after, and last week the police leader of al-Anbar, General Shaaban al-Janabi, was assassinated in front of his family house in Fallujah.

There are now no police patrols on the streets of Fallujah, and the only policemen around remain inside their main station.

"How come those three Fallujan born officers were killed while the Fallujah police leader General Salah Aati was hiding behind concrete barriers," a police officer said. Aati lives in the green zone of Baghdad, a highly barricaded government area.

Meanwhile, attacks against occupation forces have increased in frequency and severity. On Eid recently, four U.S. Humvees in a convoy were destroyed by roadside bombs.

The military responded by closing all the checkpoints in the city. Thousands had to spend the night, the first of the holidays, outside of the city. The main roads inside the city were also closed.

"Four firemen were killed by the U.S. army because they were late to get to the four burning hummers," a young man who witnessed the attack told IPS. "They were not killed by mistake, they were killed in front of many people."

The U.S. military has admitted that it killed three firemen by mistake because they were suspected to be militants.

Hundreds of residents later attended the burial of the firemen together with five other men killed by occupation forces the same day.

"The Americans brought five dead civilians whom they shot in the city streets in revenge for their casualties," a man at the former football field now called Martyrs Graveyard told IPS. "We are going to need another graveyard, this one is going to be full soon." All semblance of normal living in the province is disappearing. Saif al-Juboori, a student at the University of al-Anbar in Ramadi says this will be a wasted year for thousands of students.

"The whole university is now under siege, and there is a checkpoint at the main gate," Juboori told IPS. "The students or teachers who approach must lift their shirts from 50 metres away and listen to nasty comments of arrogant soldiers who give body checks before admitting people in. Most will no longer accept such humiliation, and so there will be no college this year."

Ramadi has been facing electricity and water cuts for about two weeks now. Most residents believe this is punishment for the popular support for Iraqi resistance.

"We would rather starve to death than accept this occupation and its Iranian allies," a 20-year-old student told IPS. "We will not let the blood of our brother martyrs go unpunished."

Despite the punishing tactics of the occupation forces, people appear unwilling to cooperate with local officials or the U.S. military against local fighters.

"Iraqis believe firmly that U.S. ambassador (Zalmay) Khalilzad is the actual ruler of the occupied country despite the repeated comedy of transfers of sovereignty to Iyad Allawi, Ibrahim al-Jaafari and now Noori al-Maliki's governments," a senior leader of the Arab National Movement in Iraq, speaking on condition of anonymity, told IPS.

"Yet, that does not mean that the U.S. embassy has real control, as long as there are resistance fighters who are firmly holding the Iraqi streets in Sunni areas, and militias with their death squads controlling the rest of the country as well as the huge oil market." Resistance fighters recently came out to show their strength in Ramadi, the capital city of al-Anbar province. Dozens of cars loaded with armed men went around the city.

Immediately after that, power and water supply were cut, and raids carried out in civilian areas. Several were killed by U.S. snipers, residents said.

The police did nothing, they have a hard time protecting themselves. Gunmen have attacked Iraqi police stations in Samarra, Beji and Mosul.

"We are back to point zero," a senior officer in the Ministry of Interior told IPS. "Our forces are either loyal to militias and political parties or too powerless to do their duties."

"Every one who fights the American occupation has our full support," Yassin Hussein, a 30-year-old teacher in Ramadi told IPS. "They lied to us all the time, and it is time for them to admit their terrible failure and leave. Let them go rebuild New Orleans."

Hussein said resistance fighters are the only force able to keep local peace and keep

criminal gangs in check. "The Americans are too busy trying to take care of their own security to care about Iraqis."

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