

# Open Letter to Tony Blair: Dear Prime Minister - Blood on Whose Hands?

By [Felicity Arbuthnot](#)

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**The Rt. Hon. Tony Blair, M.P., Q.C.,**

**Dear Prime Minister,**

It is seldom one can be shocked any more by politicians who resort to illegal wars, based on dodgy dossiers, whitewash Enquiries, non-existent weapons. Politicians whose actions have incarcerated and 'disappeared' an entire sovereign government, whose legitimacy and territorial integrity was enshrined in the first United Nations Resolution after the 1991 Gulf war and never rescinded. After Abu Ghraib's horrors, naked bodies piled Belsen like in pyramids in the name of 'liberation' and allegations relating to the activities of British troops in the south, including allegedly beating a hotel worker to death and allegedly forcing kids unable to swim into the great biblical Tigris river - resulting in the drowning of one - can politically motivated acts shock further?

Well, yes. On Wednesday evening I confronted my own personal, psychological 'Shock and Awe'. After the beheading of two American captives held in Iraq and the impassioned, careful, logical plea of British captive, Kenneth Bigley's family to the same group, you and President Bush effectively scuppered all their efforts, prevented acquiescence to the request for the release of women prisoners in Iraq and said you did not deal with hostage takers and terrorists. Few on earth believe this was really 'Prime Minister' Allawi's decision.

Putting aside the fact that Britain and America and the coalition of the increasingly unwilling has taken an entire nation of twenty five million people hostage and terrorised whole towns, Fallujah, Samarra, Mosul, Ramadi, Baladi, Tel Afar, Najav, Kufa, Kerbala - and yes, British held Basra and region, blown off heads, limbs and vaporised whole families, you now personally, almost certainly condemn a man to death. His British passport with its fine words about rendering all assistance without let and hinderence is invalid - by you Prime Minister. In a situation of your making. Whatever the hue of the former regime Iraq was a safe, welcoming country - unless, fair to say, you messed with the regime. Kenneth Bigley's kidnapping and that of numerous others of many nationalities, their deaths (and those of journalists) lie at your and President Bush's door - and you walk away from humanity itself - a gesture which might save a life. You would rather save face, be strong, not deal with terrorists....

I have dealt with 'terrorists'. Arguably one could also say they were the brave resistance fighters that George Bush kept invoking alluding to the resistance of World War Two. People who want their country back. I also know how it feels to have blood on one's hands.

When the independent journalist Micah Garen was kidnapped in Iraq last month, it took a colleague and myself a matter of hours to get a route to those holding him. We never asked those in Iraq who they were speaking to, but in this complex, knitted society, there is always a route. We found the area where he was being held, learned that Shia Cleric Muqtada Al Sadr – rebel or freedom fighter, depending on whether you are being bombed or abused in ‘coalition jails, or making a fortune stealing from Iraqi homes looking for ‘bad people’ – held authority in the area.

In short, after many heart stopping moments, we negotiated his release, on trust, not money. Al Sadr’s word was kept every step of the way. Micah, a gentle man with a passion for Iraq and its people, threatened with execution, was released to Al Sadr’s representative In Nassiriyah, embraced, fed and given safe passage.

What we did not know, was that held, seemingly, by the same group, in the same area, was Enzo Baldoni, the Italian journalist, who was also highly trained para medic and volunteered with the Red Cross in all the war zones he covered. He both wrote from Fallujah and Najav sieges and delivered medicines, blood, water and treated the injured. Our ignorance of his whereabouts almost certainly killed him. We could I am fairly certain, have brought him out with Micah. Iraqis are loyal to those who love them – and they only had to look at his website. His death haunts me every waking moment. However, like you, Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi said he did not deal with terrorists. Enzo’s death created a furore and grief across Italy which will not be forgotten at election time. By the way, when you next speak to Mr Berlusconi, do ask him if the allegation that the two Italian aid workers, Simona Toretta and Simona Pari and their Iraqi colleagues Dr Ra’ad Ali and Mahnad Bassam, from Bridge to Baghdad, still being held, were kidnapped by former MI6, CIA asset, Iraq’s Prime Minister Allawi’s men is true.

Prime Minister, we probably killed Enzo, by default, Berlusconi by intractability. How it feels is indescribable. You are making a conscious decision to allow a British citizen to be beheaded. Would you be making that same decision if it were your son Euan, or Leo? Paul Bigley, Kenneth’s brother, has asked you just to but out and leave him to the sort of negotiations in which we were involved. You can do more.

Since we are illegally in Iraq, squatting in its great buildings, nicking its oil, what about making a stand, being ‘tough on crime’ and also proving we are again a sovereign nation again? Release the women prisoners held in British jails in Iraq (oh yes there are) pull out the troops (save more lives) stand up to America – and save Kenneth Bigley.

Otherwise, when the axe or knife falls, as with Berlusconi, you might as well have wielded it yourself. After the cover up of the sinking of the submarine Kursk, by the Russian government, a widow of one of the sailors said: ‘People get punished if they betray their country, but what if a country betrays its people?’ Indeed.

Yours faithfully,

Felicity Arbuthnot.

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