

## Prisons and torture in Iraq

By [Sarah Meyer](#)

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[Index Research and GlobalResearch.ca](#) 14  
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Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

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

There is, at present, confusion about the closure date of Abu Ghraib. The United States is uncomfortable under the global spotlight on its prisons and torture policies in Iraq. Rather than moderate their policies to accommodate democratic and legal guidelines, they are, instead, planning to move 'detainees' [1](#) to newly built prisons which they hope will be less visible.

In February '04, The International Red Cross published its (January) ["Report on the Treatment by the Coalition Forces of Prisoners of War and other protected persons in Iraq."](#) The report drew the attention of the Coalition Forces "to a number of serious violations of International Humanitarian Law." These violations were "documented and sometimes observed while visiting prisoners of war, civilian internees and other protected persons by the Geneva Conventions (hereafter called persons deprived of their liberty when their status is not specifically mentioned) in Iraq between March and November 2003." The report said that mistreatment allegedly took place at Abu Ghraib, Camp Cropper and 'battle group unit stations.' Other 'mistreatment' places of internment mentioned were: 'Al-Baghdadi, Heat Base and Hubbania Camp in Ramadi governate; Tikrit holding area (former Saddam Hussein Islamic School); a former train station Al-Khaim, near the Syrian border, turned into a military base; the Ministry of Defense and Presidential Palace in Baghdad, the former mukhabarat office in Basra, as well as several Iraqi police stations in Baghdad. *Many of these locations are difficult to identify based on the reported place names, which in many cases do not correspond to the place names used by the US military."*

The International Red Cross also produced a later [statement](#) in May, which was a summary of the ICRC's attempts in person and in writing from March to November 2003 to get U.S. officials to stop abuses.

The first sexual humiliation, torture and homicide photographs from [Abu Ghraib](#) , taken in 2003 were released in [April 2004](#) . [2](#)

In May '04, Seymour Hersh published [The Grey Zone](#) in the New Yorker. "The roots of the Abu Ghraib prison scandal lie not in the criminal inclinations of a few Army reservists but in a decision, approved last year by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld ..."

On May 7th, Rumsfeld testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee. [More](#) .

On the 5th of October, The US Senate [3](#) unanimously passed a resolution [Senate Resolution 356](#) "Condemning the abuse of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib prison, urging a full and complete investigation to ensure justice is served, and expressing support for all Americans serving nobly in Iraq." The Senate condemned "in the strongest possible terms the

despicable acts at the Abu Ghraib prison” and urged “that *all individuals responsible for such despicable acts be held accountable.*”

In September '04, Lisa Croke reported that a [US legal team](#) from Michigan found evidence of abuse in 24 prisons. In addition to Abu Ghraib and Camp Cooper, they mentioned Baghdad's al-Salihiya; Al-Dhiloeia, north of Baghdad; a US base outside Fallujah; and the US/Polish jointly run Hilla military compound. “The majority of detention centers where former inmates allege American soldiers and contractors committed acts of abuse were found in and around Baghdad, most of them buildings that had been converted into prisons. (Mustansiriya University Student Housing, on the grounds of Akai Pharmaceutical Company Compound, the Palace of Conferences, the Scania transportation depot and Baghdad's Al-Sijood Palace)... Detention centres in Tikrit reportedly include one of Saddam Hussein's Presidential Palaces, Uday Hussein's former horse stables, and the US-confiscated Tikrit Elementary School.”

'Detainee' population grew to over 11,000, more than twice the number in October '04. Some were being held in 'field camps' before being moved to Abu Ghraib.

In January '05, Tara McKelvey told the stories of [women](#) in Iraqi prisons. Ghali Hassan has also written about [Iraqi Women Under Occupation](#) .

Baghdad Dweller wrote about a women's detention centre at [Al Kazimiyah](#) where rape [4](#) and abuse occurs. There are other women's stories: “google” ‘torture women Iraq.’

On 10 May '05, Bradley Graham reported in The Washington Post that the US was to [expand](#) three existing detainee facilities “and open a fourth, at a total cost of about \$50m.” [Camp Bucca](#) , near Umm Qasr, he wrote, would have two extra compounds built, accommodating 7,700. Camp Bucca is known for 'bone-crushing' abuse. Cost: \$12m.

[Camp Cropper](#) , near Baghdad airport, with 120 'high-value detainees', would have extensions built to accommodate 2000 (also 'high value'?) by the end of 2005. Cost: \$30m.

A Russian military barracks near al Sulaymaniyah, the capitol of Kurdistan, has been transformed into a “Theatre Internment Facility’ (aca prison), called [Fort Suse](#) . Building started in August '05; work was subcontracted (by Parsons [5](#) ?) The prison will accommodate 1,700+ prisoners. The first 'detainees' arrived on 24.10.05. It is alleged that the prison will be run by Iraqis, after “extensive training.” Cost: \$8m.

### **And ...**

Abu Ghraib was having an extension built for 800 'detainees.' Cost: less than \$1m.

These plans were approved by Donald Rumsfeld.

In August '05, Portal Iraq reported on Iraqi Infrastructure. They said that “nationwide, there are [22](#) prison and court projects planned, with 13 ongoing and nine complete.” Where are these prisons, then?

There was an [article](#) , ‘Sheik Beaten, Blinded, Tasered, Released Into The New Iraq’ by Aaron Glantz (09.05) in which Mr. Rolands of the Christian Peacemaker Team mentioned a new prison being built by Parsons Inc. in the north of Iraq. Mr. Rolands is quoted as saying, “In

my opinion, you don't build new prisons if you plan on just handing them all over to the Iraqis," Rolands says. "You build a new prison if you plan on staying a long time and arresting many Iraqis in big house raids and big sweeps." [Mr Fox](#) of the Christian Peacemaker team was recently found, tortured and murdered. The fate of the three remaining CPT members remains precarious.

By November '05, Larisa Alexandrovna wrote, in [Raw Story](#) , that 'detainee' numbers had grown to 13,514, which was confirmed by the United Nations. Only 1,300 have been tried, of which 636 have been convicted, she said. Detainees, said Raw Story, were also kept at lesser known camps. These include [Camp Ashraf](#) , where there have been reports of 'detainee escapes.' Camps [Al-Kazimiyah](#) and Al-Nasiriyah are mentioned. Finally, an alleged facility on [Diego Garcia](#) in the Indian Ocean, as well as "an installation on the USS Baton" are cited. [1](#)

The [2nd release](#) of Abu Ghraib photographs was published on 15 February 2006.

At the end of February '06, the New York Times reported that the State Department was requesting \$100m for [building prisons](#) , though "no other big building projects were in the pipeline for the department's 2006 supplemental and 2007 budget requests for Iraq, which total just over \$4b. Iraq Coordinator Jeffrey said that "money would also be set aside to increase the number of prosecutors and corrections advisers (sic)."

Is this request in addition to the Pentagon \$50m confirmed by Rumsfeld?

Since the Washington Post story in 05.05, the prison population has grown to 30,000. More than 15,400 were recommended for [release](#) in March '06.

On 9 March, the US DoD American Forces [Information Service](#) , said: "News reports that the U.S. military intends to close Abu Ghraib within the next few months and to transfer its prisoners to other jails are inaccurate."

On 13 March '06, [Peter Pace](#) , the Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, said, "We do have plans to and are in the process of building other facilities to move the detainees under US control out of Abu Ghraib. The facility then will be owned and operated by the Iraqi government and that government will decide when it closes - if it closes."

The [American Civil Liberties Union](#) Executive Director, Antony Romero, said, "The policies are still in place, and we haven't held high-level officials accountable for the abuse that happened on their watch. The ACLU will press on with our lawsuit to hold Donald Rumsfeld accountable. If the American government wants to restore faith in our commitment to human rights, we must hold high-ranking officials accountable for their actions. Only then will the horrors of Abu Ghraib truly come to an end."

## REPORTS

08.02 Office of the Attorney General: Memorandum for Alberto Gonzales, Re: [Standards of Conduct for Interrogation \(pdf\)](#)

"On 19 January 2004, Lieutenant General (LTG) Ricardo S. Sanchez, Commander, Combined Joint Task Force Seven (CJTF-7) requested that the Commander, US Central Command, appoint an Investigating Officer (IO) in the grade of Major General (MG) or above to investigate the conduct of operations within the 800th Military Police (MP) Brigade." [TAGUBA](#)

## [REPORT - HEARING ARTICLE 15-6 INVESTIGATION OF THE 800th MILITARY POLICE BRIGADE](#)

01.04.04. "Request that the findings and recommendations of the subject investigation relating to BG Janis L. Karpinski be set aside and no additional adverse action taken. The 800th Military Police (MP) Brigade (Bde) under the command of BG Karpinski successfully accomplished every mission assigned despite being under-strength and under-resourced." [BG Karpinski Rebuttal to AR 15-6 Investigation of the 800s' Military Police Brigade](#)

21.07.04. Department of the Army: The Inspector General. "This inspection report responds to the Acting Secretary of the Army's 10 February 2004 directive to conduct a functional analysis of the Army's conduct of detainee and interrogation operations to identify any capability shortfalls with respect to internment, enemy prisoner of war, detention operations, and interrogation procedures and recommend appropriate resolutions or changes if required." [PDF 2.287 Mb] [Detainee Operations Inspection](#)

23.08.04. [AR 15-6 Investigation of the Abu Ghraib Prison and 205th Military Intelligence Brigade by LTG Anthony R. Jones and MG George R. Fay US Army](#) [PDF 920 Kb]

### **Amnesty International**

18.03.04. Iraq. [One year on](#) the human rights situation remains dire.

07.04.04. An [open letter](#) to President George W. Bush on the question of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment

08.01.05. Cruel. Inhuman. Degrades us all. [Stop torture](#) and ill-treatment in the 'War on terror'

06.03.06. [Beyond Abu Ghraib](#) : detention and torture in Iraq

### **Human Rights Watch**

05.04. [Letter to President Bush](#)

05.04. [Summary of International and U.S. Law](#) Prohibiting Torture and Other Ill-treatment of Persons in Custody

06.04. [The Road to Abu Ghraib](#)

06.04. [Bush Policies Led to Abuse in Iraq](#)

07.04. [Military Investigations into Treatment of Detainees in U.S. Custody](#)

01.05. [The New Iraq](#)

04.05. [Getting Away with Torture?](#)

09.05. [Leadership Failure](#)

24.05. [New Accounts of Torture by U.S. Troops 2006 World Report](#)

"We don't do torture." CIA Director, Porter Goss, testifying before the Senate Armed

Services Committee, March '05.

How can the United States Senate and Congress sit there doing NOTHING to prevent the disgrace of US prisons in Iraq and the subsequent torture of incarcerated detainees?'

The URL to Prison and Torture in Iraq is: [Here](#)

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Footnotes

[1] A prisoner has legal rights. The OED definition of 'detainer' has negative implications, implying unlawfulness. A 'detainee' has no rights, and can be imprisoned, tortured, deported and/or suffer 'rendition' by the US/UK.

[2] [Abu Ghraib Scandal Time-Line](#)

[3] See also [Treatment of Prisoners Dossier](#)

[4] [Photographs 2004; women raped in Iraq.](#)

[5] The [press release](#) , 'Parsons Will Design/Build Security and Justice Facilities,' was on 29.03.04, i.e. one month before the Abu Ghraib '03 photographs became public. This 'awarded' contract was worth \$900m.

[6] On 14 March '06, the [Moscow Times](#) revived an allegation that Ukraine hosted a secret CIA prison for terrorist suspects.

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