

The Criminal Invasion of Mesopotamia, the “Land between Two Rivers”

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Theme: [Crimes against Humanity](#)

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

“Do you not know, my son, with how little wisdom the world is governed?” (Axel, Count Oxenstierna, 1583-1654. Letter to his son, 1648.)

Seven years ago today, I wrote:

“It feels as if I have a memory of every every building that falls, crushed and broken to the ground.

My pain could never be the same as it is for those who are losing those they love, limbs, homes, history and all that is familiar to them in Mesopotamia, the ‘land between two rivers’ (the great, biblical Tigris and Euphrates) the ‘cradle of civilization.’ It is only a second-best pain, but it surely feels like the real thing.” (1)

I had just returned from Iraq. In Iraq and across the globe, certainty was that another bombardment of enormity and invasion was inevitable and could be unleashed any hour. Over numerous visits to the country since the first onslaught in 1991 – as the US/UK driven embargo squeezed ever tighter, sucking life’s normalities and life itself, from an entire nation – I wondered each time if I would be again welcomed. I always was, with warmth, generosity of spirit and spontaneity utterly humbling to someone living in a country responsible for vetoing everything from cancer treatments, Ventolin inhaler for asthma (as pollution overtook Mexico city, due to the vetoing of spare parts for cars) insulin, medical syringes, surgical instruments, even ping pong balls, paper and childrens’ toys.

Mind-numbingly, a consignment of several tonnes of shroud cloth fell foul of the Sanctions Committee. Even in death, a being could not escape the embargo.

In February 2003, I was welcomed again, unreservedly. Susan, who had the franchise for the little shop in the Palestine Hotel, along with everyone else, beamed, hugged and said: “Welcome home” and showered me with sweets. As a child, she was one of the eight survivors of the Ameriyah Shelter. Her parents, brothers and sisters were incinerated.

It was dark, street lights were off (vetoed spare parts) but the need to feel Baghdad again, the sounds, the smells, overwhelmed. Anyway money needed changing – and a visit to an old friend who ran a liquor store, to later indulge in a glass of inimitable Iraqi arak with friends. (Manufactured by the Iraqi Chemical Company, overindulge and the following day you knew you had finally discovered Iraq’s most lethal chemical weapon.)

Unhesitating, I sent off, navigating by the oil lamps, or generated light, from shops and homes, in familiar Sa'adun Street. .

In the money exchange ("Welcome, Madam Felicity, welcome, welcome again in Baghdad ...") I changed \$50 for Iraq's collapsed dinars, about 2,300ID to the dollar (1989 \$3 to 1ID.) Great wads were piled up for each \$5. Worthless anywhere else, but a fortune for most Iraqis. I walked back, carrying, not concealing, the tell tale black plastic bags the exchanges used - as did most people - with little concern. Now, one would be lucky to make it beyond the door. On the way I bought the arak - more beams, more welcomes - more sweets, with tiny glasses of minted tea. These gracious people are now: "camel jockeys", "rag heads", "sand niggers" - or worse.

Contrasting the safety of Iraq just before the invasion and now are different worlds.

Last year, on the sixth commemoration of the occupation, Dr Suad al Azzawi, an associate Professor at Baghdad University, who had lost her husband, twenty two relatives, fifty friends and suffered through fifteen abductions of "close relatives and people I know and love", to America and Britain's invaders or imported or generated criminality, wrote, of the "New Iraq":

- 72 months of destruction
- \$607 Billions spent on the war
- 2 Million Barrels of oil being sold per day
- 2 Million Displaced Iraqis inside of Iraq
- 3 Million Iraqis forced to leave the country
- 2615 professors, scientists, and doctors killed in cold blood
- 338 dead journalists
- \$13 Billion misplaced by the current Iraqi government
- \$400 Billion required to rebuild the Iraqi infrastructure
- 3 hours average of electricity daily
- 24 car bombs per month
- 7 major mafias running the country
- 4260 Americans dead
- 10,000 cases of cholera per year
- At least 1.3 million Iraqis dead since 2003.

Dr Al Azzawi wrote of the deliberate targeting of civilians, and the uncounted additional casualties among children resultant from: " ... unexploded ordinance along military engagement routes." Further: " The direct killing and abuse of children during American

troop raids on civilian areas like Fallujah, Haditha, Mahmudia, Telafer, Anbar, Mosul, and most of the other Iraqi cities. The Massacre of Haditha children in 2005 is a good example of “collateral damages” among civilians

This year, she writes of collective punishment, of whole cities being starved “by blocking the delivery of food, aid and sustenance” and then being raided, children especially tormented and deprived. Also of:

“Microbial pollution and lack of sanitation (plus) drinking water shortages for up to 70% of the population caused the death of ‘one in eight Iraqi children’ before their fifth birthday. (Iraq’s child mortality) “.. has been attributed to water borne diseases such as diarrhea, cholera, typhoid, hepatitis, etc .”

Further: “.. exposing other heavily populated cities to chemically toxic and radioactive ammunitions, cluster bombs, napalm, white phosphorous, and depleted uranium (have drastically increased) cancers, deformations in children, multiple malignancies and child leukemia.

Contrasting the safety of Iraq then to “liberation’s” hell, is to view another worldChildren in areas like Basrah, Baghdad, Nasriya, Samawa, Fallujah, Dewania and other cities have .. multi-fold increases of such diseases. Over 24% of all children born in Fallujah in October 2009 had birth defects.The Minister of Environment in Iraq called upon the international community to help Iraqi authorities in facing the huge increase of cancer cases in Iraq.

The deterioration of the health system and assassination of doctors have resulted in an increased (mortality) amongst children.” In the death toll of up to over a million between 2003 and 2007 the collapse of the health system “is specified as one of the major causes.”

“By 2004, it was estimated that two out of every three Iraqi children were dropping out of school ... Prior to the US invasion, UNESCO indicated that school attendance was nearly 100%. Assassination of educators and academics ... drove their colleagues to (emigrate.)” There is a “... cultural cleansing of Iraqi society and identity.” (3)

In stark contrast, Professor Martin Yapp points out in: “The Near East since the First World War” (ISBN 0 582 256518 PPR) that after Iraq took the petroleum industry in to state control in 1972, “..the main emphasis was on social and economic development ... health, housing and especially education.” UN statistics showed that “ .. by 1990 eighty seven percent of Iraqis had clean water, ninety three percent had access to (free) health care ... by 1980 virtually one hundred percent of children attended elementary school ... adult literacy had risen from fifteen percent in 1958 to ninety percent in 1990. The education of women was particularly advanced ..”

The revolution was “secular” and “social reforms should be based on what were regarded as universal principles of human development.” In seven years, Iraq has been reversed to a failed state and what, were it not US driven, would be called a barbaric one.

Dr Gideon Polya, author of the meticulously researched: “Body Count, Global avoidable mortality since 1950”, (4) calls Iraq’s mortality between the imposition of the embargo in August 1990, the invasion and this woeful time of reflection: “.an Iraqi Holocaust ... an Iraqi Genocide.” He has written a letter to the media world wide:

“It is the 7th anniversary of the illegal and war criminal invasion of Iraq by US, UK and Australian forces on 20 March 2003. What has been the human cost?

As of 20 March 2010 post-invasion violent deaths in Occupied Iraq total 1.4 million (according to the eminent US Just Foreign Policy).

Post-invasion under-5 infant deaths total 0.8 million and post-invasion non-violent excess deaths (avoidable deaths, deaths that did not have to happen) total 1.1 million (based on 2006 revision data from the UN Population Division), this being identical to an independent estimate from under-5 infant deaths.

Gulf War violent deaths totalled 0.2 million and excess deaths and under- 5 infant deaths under Sanctions (1990-2003) totalled 1.7 million and 1.2 million, respectively.

In the period 1990-2010 Iraqi violent deaths totalled 1.6 million, non-violent excess deaths from deprivation totalled 2.8 million, under-5 infant deaths (90% avoidable and due to US Alliance war crimes in gross violation of the Geneva Convention) totalled 2.0 million and refugees totalled 5-6 million.

This is an Iraqi Holocaust and an Iraqi Genocide as per Article 2 of the UN Genocide Convention (cf WW2 Jewish Holocaust, 5-6 million killed, 1 in 6 dying from deprivation.)”(5.)

So seven years on, the world has been brought to statements such as this, by an academic with a five decade scientific career.

“Why do they hate us?” has been the US Administration’s bleat, as they see a “terrorist” in every shadow, behind every computer screen and every arab sounding name.

In all the deprivations of the embargo years, talking to parents who had lost children as a result, burns victims with near-indescribable injuries from the routinely exploding lamps used for lighting (parts for reliable ones embargoed)to the widows, the orphans, I never experienced anything but warmth and hospitality, a gratitude that one had come in friendship and to listen, hear, learn. Except once.

On my last afternoon in Baghdad before the invasion, I walked again down Sa’adun Street. There was a small local barracks amongst the shops and apartments. On my late night walks over the years, I would practice floundering arabic with the young conscripts who sat outside on watch, in a country on a war footing for over thirty years. They would laugh, correct me, repeat for me patiently the soft pronunciation which comes from somewhere deep in the throat, that most westerners find so hard. We would laugh together as I failed in the intonation – and they would laugh again and clap as I finally got it right.

That afternoon, newly called up youths, teenagers, were milling outside, some squatting down in groups under the trees, on the sun-dappled pavement, talking. There was no way through. These were Iraq’s future, from university graduates to market workers, their childhood lost to the embargo their future to fight yet another war, not of Iraq’s making, against odds that were a no-brainer.

Normally, in a crowd, an innate courtesy extends and it parts, people smile, one passes, smiles returned. They fell silent, looked at this western woman, the embodiment of all they were going to endure – or not survive. After all the years, I finally saw cold hate in those young eyes. And I understood absolutely.

Little after dawn the following morning, I went in search of coffee, before the up to twenty seven hour journey to Amman and a flight home (flights still ninety nine percent vetoed.) The musac in the restaurant was quietly playing: "I left my heart in San Francisco."

Ironically, along with a number of others who braved a few hazards over the years (US and UK bombings being high on the list) I am one who has been warned by sound sources, that if I return to democratic, liberated, free Iraq, I will be killed. Risk taking has been a way of life. Suicide is not an option.

Inspite of an estimated thirty million people marching, world-wide against the invasion - five million more than Iraq's population at the time - the illegal carnage went ahead. But, as a correspondent wrote in response to my article cited at the top: "Those thirty million who marched for peace throughout the world need not feel it was worthless. Peace will come when all the world's people wake up and march for an end to conflict (and) unrestrained material aqisitivness." On this grim, shameful, anniversary, all of the same mind should vow to double their efforts.

20th March 2010

Notes

1 <http://www.newint.org/features/baghdad/080403.htm>

2

<http://merryabla64.wordpress.com/2009/03/26/let-the-numbers-speak-by-dr-souad-al-azzawi/>

3. <http://www.brusselstribunal.org> (See: March 2010 Newsletter.)

4. <http://www.globalbodycount.blogspot.com>

5. <http://www.uruknet.de/index.php?p=m64324&hd=&size=1&l=e>

See also: <http://sites.google.com/site/iraqholocaustiraqigenocide/>

<http://sites.google.com/sitemuslimholocaustmuslimgenocide/>

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