

# The Destruction of Iraq's Educational System under US Occupation

The Ultimate War Crime, Killing the Children

By [Ghali Hassan](#)

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Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

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

“The Education system in Iraq, prior to 1991, was one of the best in the region, with over 100% Gross Enrolment Rate for primary schooling and high levels of literacy, both of men and women. The Higher Education, especially the scientific and technological institutions, were of an international standard, staffed by high quality personnel”. (UNESCO Fact Sheet, 28 March 2003)

## Editorial Note:

Global Research Contributing Editor Ghali Hassan has carefully investigated what the Western media and the self appointed “international community” have carefully kept from the public eye:

## Highlights

Some 84 percent of Iraq's institutions of higher education have been burnt, looted, or destroyed.

Iraq's educational system was the target of U.S-British military action, because education is the backbone of any society. Without an efficient education system, no society can function. Schools and universities were bombed and destroyed.

The current Iraq's school curriculum is a U.S-crafted curriculum to brainwash Iraqi children.

In a callous and murderous policy termed “DeBaathification”, thousands of academics, scientists and prominent Iraqi politicians have been murdered.

Today, more Iraqi cities and towns are under the same siege as Fallujah. People are not allowed to leave their homes and have no food and medicine. The cities of Ramadi and Qaim in western Iraq, just to mention two, have been under siege by U.S. forces for many days.

Hospitals have been destroyed to erase the number of civilians killed by U.S. troops in hospital data banks.

Schools, universities and government offices are closed. Random arrests of men, women and children, have resulted in the imprisonment of many young men, women and children.

Tens of thousands of Iraqis are now imprisoned and tortured in hundreds of U.S-run prisons throughout Iraq.

Very few people in the West heard the scream of Fallujah's victims. The atrocity was sold as a 'necessary step' to enforce Western "democracy".

While Iraqi children are dropping out of school and dying of malnutrition, Iraqi money nourishes Halliburton executives and friends, including U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney.

Circulate this text far and wide

Michel Chossudovsky, Global Research editor, 11 May 2005

Since 1990, the U.S. has targeted Iraq's educational system for destruction.

During the 1991 U.S. war, Iraq's civilian infrastructure was systematically bombed and destroyed.

U.S. aircraft bombed and strafed indiscriminately.

The U.S.-imposed sanctions, which were implemented with severity and disregard to the welfare of the civilian population, destroyed Iraq's education and health systems.

U.S. strategy against Iraq went beyond "strictly military targets". The aim was the complete destruction of the Iraqi society and its knowledge-based resources.

Prior to the U.S. led war and the imposition of sanctions, Iraq had among the finest educational systems in the Middle East.

Education and health care were free at all levels. In the 1980s, a successful government program to eradicate illiteracy among Iraqi men and women was implemented.

Before the 'Gulf War', 92 per cent of all Iraqi school age children attended school. Attendance at school has always been high in Iraq as primary education was compulsory until the U.S. invasion in 2003.

According to UNESCO, until 1989 Iraq had been allocating 5 per cent of its

budget to education. This is higher than the maximum rate in developing countries, which stands at 3.8 per cent. Iraq was also the largest and preferred destination for students from the Middle East, Africa and the Muslim world. Thousands of students went to Iraq to study and to better their lives.

**In the 1991 War on Iraq, the U.S. deliberately bombed and destroyed vital civilian infrastructure, water-treatment facilities, milk factories, power plants, schools, hospitals, pharmaceutical production facilities, communication centres, mosques, churches, civilian shelters, residential areas, historical sites, roads and bridges, irrigations, private vehicles and civilian government offices. The purpose of these attacks was to destroy life and property, and generally to terrorise the civilian population of Iraq.**

In addition, the U.S. and Britain then continued to oppose lifting the sanctions, which were imposed on Iraq in 1990, to ensure that Iraq would be unable to repair or replace most of what has been destroyed. **“We are in the process of destroying an entire society. It is as simple and terrifying as that. It is illegal and immoral”**, elaborated Denis Halliday, former UN Assistant Secretary-General and Humanitarian Coordinator in Iraq on his resignation in 1998.

More than 1.5 million Iraqis have died, a third of them children under the age of 5, in this calculated mass murder of innocent people.

As Professor Ward Churchill of the University of Colorado wrote, “we find record of not a single significant demonstration protesting the wholesale destruction of Iraqi children” during the 13 years of genocidal sanctions. As usual, “opposition” to wars of aggression in the West has been passive, and once the criminal bombing of Iraqi cities begun again in 2003, it was “home entertainment” and the silence was deafening.

**Iraq’s educational system was the target of U.S-British military action, because education is the backbone of any society. Without an efficient education system, no society can function. Schools and universities were bombed and destroyed.**

The Al-Mustansiriyah University, one of the oldest schools in the world with a history that goes back at least 1000 years was bombed and partially destroyed. It was here in 1980 that Iranian agents tried to assassinate Prime Minister Tariq Aziz – a terrorist act that helped precipitate the Iran-Iraq War. After the 1991 war, UNSCOM inspectors, led by Australian Richard Butler, burned all chemistry books of the University Library. All other universities in Iraq have their science books burned by UNSCOM.

Furthermore, the sanctions and U.S. wars forced many Iraqi professionals to leave the country in what is called, Iraqi ‘brain drain’. An estimated 30-40 per cent of Iraq’s best-trained educators left to other countries. Under the sanctions, Iraq’s contact with the rest of the world was also restricted and contributed to the deterioration of Iraq’s educational system. To complete Iraq’s isolation and inflict more harm, the U.S-controlled sanctions committee banned all educational materials (including pencils, which allegedly could be converted to “weapons of mass destruction” by Iraqi children, papers and textbooks) from entering Iraq.

A newly released study by the UN University (UNU) International Leadership Institute in Jordan revealed that: “The devastation of the Iraqi system of higher education has been overlooked amid other cataclysmic war results but represents an important consequence of the conflicts, economic sanctions, and ongoing turmoil in Iraq” caused by U.S. militaristic policy.

**Furthermore, “some 84 percent of Iraq’s institutions of higher education have been burnt, looted, or destroyed.** Some 2,000 laboratories need to be re-equipped and 30,000 computers need to be procured and installed nationwide, said Jairam Reddy, director of UNU. “The Iraqi Academy of Sciences, founded in 1948 to promote the Arabic language and heritage, saw its digital and traditional library partially looted during the war and it alone needs almost one million dollars in infrastructure repairs to re-establish itself as a leading research centre”, the Study revealed.

There was no shortage of bombs to destroy Iraq, but “there weren’t enough desks, chairs, or classrooms and most schools lacked even basic water or sanitation facilities”, added the report. **According to the U.N. children’s fund, UNICEF, Iraq’s primary and secondary educational systems were further ruined by the war and almost 1 in 4 children has no access to education under U.S. Occupation.**

**The current Iraq’s school curriculum is a U.S-crafted curriculum to brainwash Iraqi children.**

The U.S. Occupation Authority or the (CPA) removed any content considered anti-American, including the 1991 Gulf War, the Iran-Iraq war, and all references to Israel policy in Palestine, and U.S support for Israel. “Entire swaths of 20th-century history have been deleted”, said Bill Evers, a U.S. Defence Department employee, and one of three American “advisers” to the Ministry of Education. It should be noted that these U.S. “advisers” are U.S-handpicked proxies who make the major decisions in the Iraqi ministries, (ie. it is not the U.S-appointed quislings, which occupy cabinet positions which make the decisions). “We considered anything anti-American to be propaganda and we took it out, and in some cases, we had to remove entire chapters”, said Fuad Hussein, an Iraqi expatriate in the Ministry of Education. In other words, Mr. Hussein made the decision to remove “propaganda” and enforce a “free” curriculum.

**Before the staged “handover of sovereignty” in June 2003, Paul Bremer, the former U.S. Proconsul in Baghdad, issued a series of “edicts” that “take away virtually all of the powers once held by several ministries”, reported The Wall Street Journal on 13 May, 2004. In addition, Bremer enacted the “Bremer’s Orders”, a set of colonial “laws” widely known as the “100 Orders”.**

“The Bremer orders control every aspect of Iraqi life — from the use of car horns to the privatization of state-owned enterprises. For example, “Order No. 39 alone does no less than ‘transition [Iraq] from a ... centrally planned economy to a market economy’ virtually overnight and by U.S. fiat”, wrote Antonia Juhasz, a scholar at the International Forum on Globalisation in San Francisco. Order 37 will lower Iraq’s corporate tax rate from about 40 per cent to a flat rate of 15 per cent. The accurate description of Iraq’s economy is a “Capitalism dream” economy. The Virginia-based Corporation, BearingPoint Inc., received 250 million contracts to facilitate the looting.

On May 22, Bush signed Executive Order 13303 granting blanket immunity to any U.S. corporation dealing with Iraqi oil through 2007. **The order “unilaterally declares Iraqi oil to be the unassailable province of U.S. corporations.... In other words, if Exxon Mobil or Chevron Texaco touches Iraqi oil, it will be immune from legal proceedings in the United States”,** said Jim Vallette, research director for the Sustainable Energy and Economy Network. It makes the new “sovereignty” more like a U.S. colonial dictatorship with no “democracy” and no national independence. That is why the January elections were a U.S.-made trap to legitimise the U.S. Occupation of Iraq.

**Nonetheless, these U.S.-crafted “Orders” and economic therapies are illegal and in violation of the Geneva Conventions and The Hague Regulations, which stipulate that the occupiers ‘must abide by the country exists laws unless prevented’.** Under international law, the occupiers are ‘prohibited from selling of state-own assets’ of the occupied country. Further, these “Orders” are illegal because they were enacted without tacit approval of legitimate Iraqi government, but under the threat of U.S. military force.

To make things worse for Iraq’s education, Iraq’s reconstruction has become the “biggest corruption scandal in history”. In April 2003, USAID awarded a one-year, \$62 million contract to Creative Associates International Inc. (CAII), and \$1.8 billion to Bechtel Corporation to build Iraq’s infrastructure, including schools and higher education institutions, without a public tender, a by-invitation-only deal awarded in a secret process. “For this initial round of contracts alone, Bechtel was also guaranteed another \$80 million for company profits”, wrote Jeffrey St. Claire, author of Grand Theft Pentagon. “While the situation continued to deteriorate for the U.S. military forces in Iraq... Last year Bechtel earned more than \$17 billion for the first time”, added St. Clair.

Bechtel record of dodgy business does not bode well for the Iraqi people. Its record in Bolivia and India left poor communities without affordable drinking water. U.S. officials often have highlighted their renovation of schools as a success story of Iraq under the Occupation. However, despite the size of contracts, little has been done to rebuild or repair Iraq’s schools and universities. “Schools listed as fully rebuilt are in fact flooded with sewage and lack desks, but are often freshly painted”, wrote Christian Parenti of The Nation. Indeed schools were only painted to remove the old regime slogans from the wall and replace them with George Bush’s own lies of “democracy” and “liberation” rhetoric. A propaganda cliché designed to manipulate public opinions in the West (the U.S. in particular), and enhance U.S. imperial agenda of militaristic domination of the world.

In a recent report Antonia Juhasz noted that; “The constant complaints from the Iraqi Ministry of Education officials and principals of schools that Bechtel has worked on, is that the work is either non-existent and shoddy, often putting students health and safety at risk”. There is “[n]o improvement to the infrastructure, and no new equipment has been bought”, Muzhir Al-Dulaymi, spokesman for the League for the Defence of Iraqi People’s Rights, told Aljazeera on 28 May 2004.

Bechtel waves off complaints with: “No matter what we do, the Iraqis will never be on the losing end”, reported CorpWatch, a U.S.-based anti-corruption organisation. The billion of dollars approved by Congress for the “reconstruction” of Iraq, was simply a “gift” from U.S. taxpayers to U.S. private corporations, not for the Iraqi people. In other word, U.S. citizens are subsidizing Bechtel, Halliburton and other U.S. corporations.

In October 2004, the CPA paid \$12 billion to the contractors out of the Development Fund of Iraq (DFI), instead of using the money earmarked by Congress for the “reconstruction” of Iraq. In other words, the CPA used Iraq’s oil revenues to pay off the U.S. contractors – money that before the war was said (by Secretary of State Powell, among others) to be the “Iraqi people’s” money.

According to an independent audit conducted by KPMG for the multilateral International Advisory and Monitoring Board for Iraq (IAMB) (established under UN Security Council Resolution 1483 as an audit oversight board), nearly \$1.5 billion was extracted from the DFI to pay Halliburton. While Iraqi children are dropping out of school and dying of malnutrition, Iraqi money nourishes Halliburton executives and friends, including U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney.

The IAMB and auditors working for the United Nation's Iraq Advisory as well as the CPA's own Inspector General have since blasted the occupation authorities for sloppy handling and faulty accounting of the more than \$9 billion in seized assets (including Iraqi oil revenues) known as the DFI. The \$9 billion simply vanished. They discovered a wide range of irregularities, including the lack of competitive bidding for large contracts, missing contracts information, payments for contracts that had not been supervised, and, in some cases, outright theft. "The billions of dollars of oil money that has already been transferred to the U.S-controlled [CPA] has effectively disappeared into financial black hole", reported Christian Aid, a British humanitarian organisation. Protected by the presence of more than 200,000 U.S-British troops and mercenaries, Iraq is the biggest imperial lootocracy in the history of Western colonialism, and a "capitalism dream" economy.

Iraq's education system has also fallen victim to the Occupation-instigated violence. School dropouts are very high, particularly among females as a result of violence and kidnappings. Many schools in Iraqi cities and towns have been closed, preventing hundreds of children from receiving basic education. "Approximately 50 percent of children are not going to school because their parents are too scared to send them, having heard these stories about children being kidnapped and held for ransom", a spokesman for Save the Children UK, Paul Hetherington, told IRIN. Moreover, malnutrition amongst Iraqi children has almost doubled from 4 per cent in 2002 to roughly 8 per cent since the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq. The ongoing Occupation and associated violence is wreaking havoc on Iraqi children and Iraq long-term future.

Although the UNU report noted briefly that only "[f]our dozens academics have been assassinated", the real number is much higher. **In a callous and murderous policy termed "DeBaathification", thousands of academics, scientists and prominent Iraqi politicians have been murdered. Together with the C.I.A., and Israel's Mossad agents, criminal elements and militia groups including, the Kurdish Peshmerga, the Iranian-trained Badr Brigade, the INA of Iyad Allawi and the INC of Ahmed Chalabi, have terrorised an entire nation and murdered its entire intellectual community.**

**Two years of continuing Occupation and violence have killed thousands of innocent men, women and children. The November 2004 scientific report by the reputable British medical journal, the Lancet, shows that from March 2003 to October 2004, U.S. forces have killed more than 100,000 Iraqi civilians.** The Lancet authors acknowledge that most of the victims were innocent women and children killed by U.S. bombing of population centres. The number of Iraqis killed is increasing daily.

**Instead of condemning and exposing the crimes of this illegal Occupation, Western liberal elites and the "anti-war" organisers close ranks with their own governments and have deliberately shifted the blame on the Iraqi Resistance with increasing sophistication.** This known falsehood is intended to discredit the Iraqi Resistance and to deny the Iraqi people a legitimate Resistance movement against an illegal foreign Occupation. After all, the U.S. and its collaborators have the most to gain from a divided Iraq embroiled in sectarian violence.

How can the liberal elites and the "anti-war" organisers blame the Iraqi Resistance for the violence?

Who committed the Fallujah atrocity, where more than 6000 innocent men, women and children were slaughtered with napalm and chemical weapons? Where were the liberal elites and the "anti-war" organisers when Iraq's cultural heritage which stands at the heart of human civilization, was destroyed and looted?

Very few people in the West heard the scream of Fallujah's victims. The atrocity was sold as a 'necessary step' to enforce Western "democracy".

On many occasions, the Iraqi Resistance has rejected violence against civilians, and has called on foreign journalists to stay in Iraq and report honestly. **By contrast, U.S. troops have detained and killed journalists who cover the Iraqi Resistance view of the war. Indeed U.S. troops in Iraq have killed more than 13 journalists there. You do not need to do lots of research to find out why U.S. troops targeting independent journalists.**

**Today, more Iraqi cities and towns are under the same siege as Fallujah. People are not allowed to leave their homes and have no food and medicine. The cities of Ramadi and Qaim in western Iraq, just to mention two, have been under siege by U.S. forces for many days. Hospitals have been destroyed to erase the number of civilians killed by U.S. troops in hospital data banks. Schools, universities and government offices are closed. Random arrests of men, women and children, have resulted in the imprisonment of many young men, women and children. Tens of thousands of Iraqis are now imprisoned and tortured in hundreds of U.S-run prisons throughout Iraq.**

Had it not been for the Iraqi Resistance, Iraq would have been sold on the cheap to private U.S. corporations, and Syria and Iran would have been attacked by now in pursuit of U.S. hegemony. As a result of potent Iraqi Resistance, U.S. Army recruitment is at its lowest level, and the war becoming very unpopular among the citizens of the imperial power(s). And the so-called "coalition of the willing" is fleeing and is losing its will. Even U.S. Joint Chiefs Chair Gen. Richard Myers acknowledged the presence of an effective Iraqi Resistance against U.S. forces, although the U.S. maybe using the presence of the Resistance as pretext to justify the ongoing Occupation. The liberal elites and the "anti-war" organisers have yet to have an impact on their own government's policy.

Meanwhile, hundreds of Iraqi children are dropping out of school and experienced Iraqi professionals, who were once called the 'German of the Middle East' for their technical prowess, are unemployed. Unemployment rate in Iraq is as high as 70 per cent today. Iraqis are watching their country and their society destroyed and looted by an armed imperial power and its private corporations. They can only be praised for their courage to stay and continue the struggle against the odds. "The bravery and dedication of educators [and other professionals] who remain in a shattered Iraq should inspire the swift, meaningful and practical support of the international academic community," says UN Under Secretary-General Hans van Ginkel, Rector of the Tokyo-based UNU.

The most urgent actions needed in Iraq today are the end of U.S. violence and the revitalisation of Iraq's education and health systems. "Repairing Iraq's higher education system is in many ways a prerequisite to the long term repair of the country as a whole", said Jairam Reddy of UNU.

World-wide academics and educators should campaign for the end of the Occupation and use the recommendation provided by the authors of the [Iraqi Observatory report](#) as a benchmark to assist the Iraqi people in rebuilding their education system. It stated rightly that, "American Universities should refrain from competing for USAID Higher Education grants until the military occupation of Iraq ends and an independent and sovereign government exists in Iraq. That said, institutions should make an effort to build contacts and offer expertise to the Iraqi academic community on an informal basis in preparation for that moment".

The deliberate U.S. strategy targeting anything other than “strictly military targets”, including Iraq’s educational system, constitutes a major war crime. In addition, legal evidence has shown that the war on Iraq amounted to a ‘crime of aggression’. Clearly, U.S. wars against Iraq violated the 1923 Hague Rules of Aerial Warfare (Article 22) and the 1949 Geneva Convention IV Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Times of War (Article 3).

A major reason the Nuremberg Tribunal was convened was because Germany had failed to prosecute its own war criminals after World War I. The setting up of an international war crimes tribunal, like the Nuremberg Tribunal, to investigate and prosecute those who committed these crimes against the Iraqi people should be the aim of the world community.

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