

The Statue of Liberty Should Weep.

By [Felicity Arbuthnot](#)

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New York based Judith Karpova risks losing everything she has, or going to jail for a long time. Her crime? She went to Iraq in February 2003 as a Human Shield. She was prepared to risk her life to attempt to avert an illegal war, invasion and illegal occupation.

'The charges (are) that I violated the travel ban against Iraq' states Ms Karpova: 'No hearing was ever held. The strangest part of the decision involves the fact that the Director of OFAC changed between 2004 and 2005. Most oddly, the court resolves the issue of whether OFAC violated impartiality, by both bringing the charges and finding me guilty.'

The charge was not alone violation of the travel ban, but boosting the Iraqi economy. It is shocking to read of the plight of Ms Karpova at the hands of the U.S. 'Justice' system. I was in Iraq and Baghdad at the same time as the Human Shields. Did they break the US/UK driven UN embargo (which was to force Saddam to give up the weapons of mass destruction they knew he did not have) did they aid Iraq financially?

Well, if you call going to the local soukh to buy local produce, aiding Iraq, yes. If you call giving a few Dinars to children as young as five, forced out of school to sell cigarettes, clean shoes, as a result of the embargo (in a country which valued education above all and with Palestine had the highest PhD's per capita on earth) yes, they put a little extra food on a family table, a miniscule amount more money circulated in the soukh, in a country where many families often ate in rota, one giving up food for a day, to give a little more for the others. When children fainted in school, the reason was usually: 'It's not my turn to eat today' - courtesy USA and Britain.

When they visited the hospitals and held grief stricken parents, watching their children die, for want of often the simplest medications, vetoed by the US and UK and gave them another few Dinars to try and find that life saver, on the black market, did they re-charge the Iraqi economy? With the equivalent of usually about \$5? No they re-charged, a small life, if they were in time. Don't forget, all Iraq's bank accounts were frozen, state and private.

Did they aid Iraq by the few dollars a night, they paid the family owned hotels, they stayed at near Firdos Square, where Saddam Hussein's statue was toppled? If you count giving a small living to a family, who had somehow kept the hotels going, from love and pride, through the thirteen grinding embargo years, in an outward looking country, which welcomed visitors with open arms, who now barely ever came, yes. And they gave them their pride back.

Did they aid Iraq by buying the occasional meal in the small hotel restaurants? Yes, as above and they gave the Chef his pride back. Inventive meals were produced again, when

even hotels could afford only most basic ingredients. Imagination was challenged and wonders were produced from little, in gratitude also to those who came in solidarity, in a country where 'embargo related causes' (U.N.) were estimated to have killed one and a half million people (majority the under fives, the sick and the elderly) in thirteen years.

Did they aid Iraq by their presence? Yes. The people, the children (broadly, half the population is under fifteen) had known nothing but thirteen years of deprivation (Iraq imported seventy percent of almost everything prior to the embargo) and thirteen years of illegal US and UK bombings. Iraq's children were diagnosed by child psychiatrists from the West as 'the most traumatised child population on earth', as a result. These children who had known nothing but fear and deprivation from the West, suddenly learned, either first hand, or from the media, that not all westerners were George W. Bush and Tony Blair, but there were those who were prepared to risk their lives, with them, as they waited again for the bombs to fall. They learned of the 'greater love that no man (or woman) has' than to be prepared to suffer, even die, for another.

Lastly, Ms Karpova and those who traveled to Iraq, acted explicitly in the true spirit of that which the United Nations was meant to stand, declared in San Francisco on the 26th June 1945, betrayed by the U.S. and U.K. from Hiroshima Day 1990 (the date of the imposition of the embargo) to now (there was no U.N, mandate for the invasion of Iraq) :

'We the peoples of the United Nations, determined to save successive generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind - and to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small - and to establish conditions under which justice and respect arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.'

Further: 'And to these ends, to practice tolerance and live together as good neighbors and unite our strength to maintain international peace and security and to ensure, by the acceptance of principles and the institution of methods, that armed force shall not be used' And to: ' ... take effective, collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to peace and to bring about by peaceful means ... justice and international law, adjustment or settlement or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace'.

Ms Karpova and those prepared to risk so much in traveling to Iraq on the eve of war, uniquely embody the wondrous aspiration of the San Francisco declaration, so shamefully trashed, broken and ignored by Washington and Whitehall. It is the architects of the Iraq disaster in the latter who should be in Court. Ms Karpova and those prepared to stand for right in a far away place, should be honored by their countries, the United Nations and be nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Should the Court do anything but laud and acquit her, even the Statue of Liberty should weep - or topple.

Ms Karpova can be reached at: dahlia@wildblue.net

Her lawyer, Michael Sussman at: sussman@frontiernet.net

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