

U.S. Soldiers' Egregious Conduct Belies Global Human Rights Position

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Global Research, January 31, 2012

[Frontier Post](#) 31 January 2012

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It has become a habit of some national and international media persons, a few HRs [human rights] activists and so-called civil society members to criticize and malign Pak Army/ISI for any incident related to human rights.

On the contrary, they keep mum over the excesses of American and NATO forces in Afghanistan and elsewhere. In a video clip on www.youtube.com, US soldiers are shown desecrating the dead bodies of Taliban fighters in Afghanistan by urinating on them, which is the worst example of gross misconduct and human rights violation.

But this is not the first incident of US soldiers' egregious behavior. On 13th May 2006 msnbc.com stated that U.S. military troops with severe psychological problems were sent to Iraq or kept in combat, even when superiors had been aware of signs of mental illness.

In Afghanistan, wedding parties were bombed not less than five times since 2002. Quoting an Afghan defence spokesman, CNN stated on 1st July 2002 that at least 20 people were killed and more than 60 injured in Afghanistan when a U.S. plane dropped a bomb on a wedding party as celebrants fired into the air.

On 5th November 2008, The Telegraph carried a report that Afghan officials confirmed there had been many casualties in an attack in the southern province of Kandahar. Villagers in Wech Baghtu said 37 people had died, including 23 children and 10 women, after planes flattened houses shortly after US troops had fought Taliban insurgents.

America has been engaged in wars since 1950s – from the Korean War to the Vietnam War to Iraq and the Afghanistan War. American soldiers have been perpetrating excesses on people in the occupied territories.

On 28th October 2009, a 26-year-old Fort Carson soldier was supposed to return to Afghanistan, but he intentionally shot himself in the shoulder to avoid deployment. On 5th November 2009, a 39-year-old US Army psychiatrist, who had faced repeated harassment for his ethnicity and faith from his fellow soldiers, shot dead 13 people at the Soldier Readiness Center military base in Fort Hood, Texas.

He was opposed to the war and upset about his impending deployment to Afghanistan. This tragedy once again showed how the very individuals that are trained to help victims of PTSD are themselves losing their own mental balance.

After achieving independence, the American founding fathers earned laurels for being

pioneers of democracy, democratic traditions, freedom and human values, but barring a few honourable exceptions their successors have not had a commendable track record; their actions were contrary to the principles they 'cherished'.

In the past, the US resorted to unilateral use of force ostensibly to promote democracy in Haiti, Nicaragua and elsewhere in Latin America. It had intervened forcibly to change regimes, restore order and preach democracy elsewhere. There is a long list of excesses by the American armed forces, and this is one of the reasons that today the US is hated in most countries of the world.

Though the US administration conveyed an impression that interrogation abuses at Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib were merely the work of a few rogue elements, former US president Bush promoted one of the authors of the infamous legal memos, proving such abuses emanated from White House policy.

Aside from torturing prisoners, there was a report regarding the use of white phosphorous in the Iraqi city of Fallujah in November 2007, later confirmed by a US military spokesman.

Researchers report that the rate of PTSD and other mental difficulties tied to war may be as high as 35 per cent. The Hartford Courant, citing records obtained under the federal Freedom of Information Act and more than 100 interviews of families and military personnel, reported numerous cases in which the military failed to follow its own regulations in screening, treating and evacuating mentally unfit troops from Iraq.

Vera Sharav, president of the Alliance for Human Research Protection, said: "I can't imagine something more irresponsible than putting a soldier suffering from stress on (antidepressants), when you know these drugs can cause people to become suicidal and homicidal."

A psychiatrist summed up the excesses perpetrated by soldiers under stress: "Your mind and mental state can have a profound affect on your physical body, your spiritual experience, and your over-all quality of life. The mind, the body, and the spirit are all inextricably interconnected. When one is affected, the other two suffer. We can live a healthy lifestyle and perform our spiritual duties, but if the mind is not healthy the other two cannot make up for the lack, and we are not truly holistically healthy or healed".

In April 2011, Rolling Stone magazine and the German newsweekly Der Spiegel published photos of American soldiers committing grisly acts against Afghan civilians. The rogue soldiers, who formed a "kill team," murdered innocent civilians for sport, posing for photos with some of their victims.

Some "kill team" members also kept gruesome souvenirs, such as fingers and skulls of the men and boys they killed. On 23rd March 2011, American army specialist Jeremy Morlock, 23, was sentenced for 24 years after he pleaded guilty in a US military court on 23rd March. He had admitted he was part of a "kill team" that deliberately murdered Afghan civilians for sport between January and May last year.

Yet the US State Department had the audacity to release a report on global human rights' violations in other countries. About China, the report stated that it had stepped up restrictions on lawyers, activists, Internet access and journalists, and tightened controls on civil society. China in a quid pro quo told the US to quit as human rights judge, as it is beset

by violence, racism and torture, and has no right or moral authority to condemn other governments' human rights problems.

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