

Uday Al-Zaidy - Another Life in the Balance in “The New Iraq.”

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Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

“This is a very serious matter – they will slaughter him.” – (Sabah Al-Mukhtar, President of the Arab Lawyers Association.)

On Saturday 10th January the BRussells Tribunal circulated a Press Release: “Iraq: Mr Uday Al-Zaidi – Appeal of Extreme Urgency.” (1)

It outlined: “an appeal for the immediate and urgent mobilization of (the relevant UN Agencies, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and other international NGOs and appropriate legal bodies) in securing the release of the prominent human rights defender, Mr Uday Al-Zaidi.”

The Appeal was necessarily brief, but the wider context is vital to understanding as another life hangs in the balance in the living hell of the Bush and Blair led “New Iraq.”

Mr Al-Zaidi was arrested by Iraqi security forces at 6 pm, local time, on Friday 9th January near Al-Nasriyah in southern Iraq. Al-Zaidi, a respected journalist, is internationally renowned for his courageous advocacy against the sectarian cleansing in Iraq which began with the onset of the “divide and rule” policy of the US-UK invasion, continued under the occupation, their puppet Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and now under his replacement of August 2014, Haider Al-Abadi.

Al-Abadi came in with the US-UK tanks in 2003, having lived in London since 1977, where he was on the Executive of the (Shia) Islamic Dawa Party – which is headed by Nouri al-Maliki. The Prime Ministerial change has all the hallmarks of “same car, new paint.”

The urgency and gravity of Mr Al-Zaidi’s situation cannot be over-stressed. Originally his whereabouts were not revealed, in contravention of all international legal norms.

Under Article 17 of the Geneva Convention: “No one shall be held in secret detention.”

On 19th January it was learned that Uday Al-Zaidi has now appeared before an “investigative Judge” with a lawyer who said that charges against him (details of which still remain to be known) were trumped up, false and irrelevant. He looked “tired and drained.”

Fears during his disappearance were that he would simply vanish and claims be made that he had been “kidnapped” by freelance militia, or that he had been spirited to a neighbouring country “as has happened to very many before”, according to an impeccable source. Finally it is established he is being held by the government.

Also now known is that he is being held in prison in Al-Nasiriya, being tortured, interrogated daily and has been on hunger strike in protest at his incarceration and treatment for five days.

In an interview with Al Jazeera (15th December 2014) he described graphically, at length, the reality of the humanitarian catastrophe resulting from the Iraqi government's brutal systematic sectarian edicts.

Afterwards he said that he was "expecting" anything as a result. Warned to take extreme care in his movements, he determined to attend the funeral of a friend and was arrested.

His witness to Iraq's ongoing tragedy has been tireless and international. On 19 March 2013 he received the BRussells Resistance Award. (2)

Two months later in May, invited by the Madrid-based State Campaign Against the Occupation and for the Sovereignty of Iraq, talking at venues in a number of cities he showed visuals, the reality of: "... killing of children, raping of women and men, secret prisons, daily humiliations", of families assassinated by U.S bombs over eight grinding years. "An image is worth a thousand words. These images show what the occupation has done for us", he said. (3) The numbers continue to rise daily.

"Since 2003, there have been a million deaths and four million orphans ... Iraq is a wealthy country. But its people, us, have to dig in the garbage to try and survive."

He also called courageously for an end to the corruption under Prime Minister al-Maliki - and returned to Iraq.

In January that year in Iraq he addressed the dishonour of the Iraqi people manifested by a government: "... representing their groups, militias and parties, and their masters abroad." He talked of the "defilements" of Iraq "in ever deepening crisis" and "tyranny."

Nouri al-Maliki is now Vice President of Iraq.

Sabah Al-Mukhtar, President of the Arab Lawyers Association and Vice President of the Geneva International Centre for Justice states starkly of Mr Al-Zaidi's detention:

"This is a very serious matter. They will slaughter him."

Serious indeed. A March 2013 Amnesty International Report on Iraq's Human Rights record (5, pdf) is chilling, including:

"Ten years after the US-led invasion that (overthrew) Saddam Hussein, Iraq remains mired in human rights abuses. Thousands of Iraqis are detained without trial or serving prison sentences imposed after unfair trials. Torture remains rife and continues to be committed with impunity, and the new Iraq is one of the world's leading executioners. The government hanged 129 prisoners in 2012, while hundreds more languished on death row. (Emphasis mine)

"... even the Ministry of Human Rights has listed methods of torture that detainees reported they were subjected to by Iraqi security forces, recently citing electric shock torture applied to the genitals, partial suffocation by putting a bag over the detainee's head, threats of rape

of detainees' wives or other relatives, and beatings with cable.

"UNAMI (United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq) has also reported the use of these and other methods. Amnesty International has also done so."

Moreover: 'Lawyers ... have told Amnesty International that they no longer take the trouble to seek access to their clients during the initial interrogation phase because they know the detaining authorities will not permit it. Moreover, seeking to do so, it would appear, can sometimes result in action being taken against the lawyers themselves. For example, in February 2012, the Ninewa branch of the Iraqi Bar Association informed UNAMI that five lawyers had been detained by the security forces because they had "attempted to represent individuals detained by the military."' "

Uday Al-Zaidi is the brother of journalist Muntadher Al-Zaidy, who threw "the shoe that went around the world" at George W. Bush on December 14th 2008: " ... for the widows and orphans and all those killed in Iraq."

In Court he testified that watching the US President he had: "felt the blood of the innocent people bleeding from beneath (Bush's) feet", compelling his action. (4.)

Representation to the Iraqi government at the highest level is incumbent on all those to whom humanity and human rights is utmost priority. No time can be wasted. Rivers of blood have bled, literally, from Iraqi feet and bodies, from Abu Ghraib to the innumerable secret prisons. Delay will near certainly be death.

It is also incumbent upon the UN's relevant organizations, UNAMI and all other relevant international organizations that pressure be brought on the Iraqi Authorities for Mr Al-Zaidi's immediate release.

It is further, imperative to draw Prime Minister Al-Abadi's attention to his personal responsibility for the safety of Mr Al-Zaidi and all under government detention. Should human rights and international law in Iraq now count for even less than the woeful post-invasion standing, the Prime Minister will surely eventually be held accountable in international law for the horrifying abuses with his predecessor, Nouri al-Maliki.

Uday Al-Zaidi symbolizes all condemned to the nightmare of "freedom and democracy", justice and Iraq's jails, secret and overt, in the "New Iraq."

Notes

1. <http://www.globalresearch.ca/arrest-of-internationally-renowned-iraqi-human-rights-advocate-uday-al-zaidi-appeal-of-extreme-urgency/5424015>
2. http://www.brussellstribunal.org/article_view.asp?id=701
3. [http://warresisters.wordpress.com/iraq-reports-analysis-and-interviews-on-movement-building-now/"we-will-protest-until-the-occupiers-leave"-an-interview-with-uday-al-zaidi/](http://warresisters.wordpress.com/iraq-reports-analysis-and-interviews-on-movement-building-now/)
4. <http://www.rferl.org/content/icons-iraq-war-shoe-thrower-bush-zaidi/24931805.html>
5. <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE14/001/2013/en/bbd876ee-aa83-4a63-bff3-7e7c6ee130eb/mde140012013en.pdf>

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