

UK Government Hid Torture and Killing of Civilians in Afghanistan and Iraq by British Soldiers

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The United Kingdom's government and its armed forces hid solid evidence of war crimes committed by British soldiers in Afghanistan and Iraq against civilians among them children, an investigation led by the BBC and the Sunday Times revealed Sunday.

The investigation found that British troops were implicated in the murders of children and the killing and torture of civilians. The soldiers' behavior during the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq was documented by two government-ordered inquiries - the Iraq Historic Allegations Team (IHAT) and Operation Northmoor - which investigated war crimes during the occupation in Afghanistan.

Based on leaked documents kept secret by the government, the accusations include assassinations by a soldier from the elite SAS unit, as well as deaths in custody, beatings, torture, and sexual abuse of detainees by members of the Black Watch infantry unit.

Military detectives who disclosed proof of the alleged war crimes told the year-long investigation that senior commanders covered it "for political reasons."

In response, the Ministry of Defence said the allegations were "untrue" and the decisions of prosecutors and investigators were "independent" and involved "external oversight and legal advice."

The British government closed IHAT and Operation Northmoor's investigations in 2017 after Phil Shiner, a lawyer who had registered more than 1,000 allegations, was suspended from practicing law as a consequence of an accusation of paying fixers in Iraq to find clients.

However, some former IHAT and Operation Northmoor detectives say Shiner's actions served as a pretext to shut down the inquiries after wrongdoings at the highest levels were discovered. None of the cases investigated by IHAT or Operation Northmoor resulted in a prosecution.

"The MoD had no intention of prosecuting any soldier of whatever rank he was unless it was absolutely necessary, and they couldn't wriggle their way out of it," an investigator told the BBC.

Another former detective said the victims had been gravely failed.

"I use the word disgusting. And I feel for the families because... they're not getting justice. How can you hold your head up as a British person?"

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab told the BBC that “all of the allegations, that had evidence, have been looked at,” adding “the right balance” had been struck over decisions whether or not to investigate alleged war crimes.

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