

## US Style Democracy in Afghanistan: “Vote for the president — or we’ll burn your house down!”

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Here’s a direct quote from the campaign trail: “Vote for the president — or we’ll burn your house down!”

Ah yes, democracy in action, Bush-style — ya gotta love it! As it happens, this particular manifestation of the Bushist Party’s peculiar notion of free elections comes not from the White House — whose court-appointed denizens have thus far confined themselves to mild, civilized declarations that anybody who opposes them is a godless, baby-killing traitor in league with Satanic terrorists. Instead it’s the Big Oil bagman whom the Bushists have installed ruler of their stepchild colony in Afghanistan.

Installee Hamid Karzai, facing election on Oct. 9 (in those isolated portions of the country not controlled by the “defeated” Taliban, that is), has hit upon a novel campaign strategy, the BBC reports: arson. Tribal chiefs touting their fellow Pashtun for prez have broadcast explicit warnings to their people: Anybody who doesn’t vote for Karzai will have their house burned down and their family cut off from all communal activities, such as weddings and funerals. Karzai, the polished sophisticate whose urbane manner and dynamite threads have put a glamorous face (Ben Kingsley’s face, actually) on the Bush Regime’s atrocious botching of the Afghan adventure, urbanely refused to condemn this barbarity on his behalf.

And why should he? Barbarity is all the rage in Bushist Afghanistan, where large numbers of women are now burning themselves alive to escape continuing repression at the hands of fundamentalist warlords in the pay of the Pentagon, the Guardian reports. And while three years of pounding sand has failed to turn up Osama bin Laden, George W. Bush’s huggemugger “Special Forces” crews — operating without supervision or accountability — have done a crackerjack job torturing and killing civilians, the Los Angeles Times reports.

The paper detailed the delightful antics of a Special Forces squad — led by a berserker known only as “Crazy Mike” — who subjected captives to near-drowning and electric shocks, ripped out their toenails, and beat them so savagely that some were left crippled while others joined Bush’s favorite philosopher way up in the sky. Crazy Mike also threatened to kill any local official who interfered with his good clean fun. Army investigators, prodded into action by the Times story, say they have no idea who was actually in command of Mike’s secret unit — nor could they say how many other pocket gulags were squirreled away across the Bushist satrapy.

This stinking fish of unaccountability rots from the head, of course: Bush has given his personal blessing to a worldwide system of torture and murder, pointedly telling his shock troops “I don’t want to know” where their secret prisons are and what’s being done there,

investigator Seymour Hersh reports. The official Bushist line on torture, top intelligence officers told Hersh, is short and sweet: “Grab whom you must. Do what you want.”

And why not? There will be no consequences, except for the usual small fry offered up in the ritual sacrifice of “a few bad apples”: show trials to divert attention from the systematic perversion of law and morality ordered from on high — as *The New York Review of Books* makes clear in a devastating excavation of the “official” prison abuse reports. Despite buckets of Pentagon whitewash and Bushist weasel-wording, even these severely constricted Potemkin probes lay bare a nightmare network extending far beyond the goon show at Abu Ghraib. Here too, buried beneath layers of butt-covering lard, we find the most damning fact of all: the professional judgment, by professional soldiers, that Bush’s lawless regimen has actually produced “less actionable intelligence” than interrogators were gathering with legal, ethical methods. Not only is Bush’s torture policy deeply immoral; it’s stupid and ineffective as well.

Recent investigations by independent American legal teams have unearthed more gut-churning details of other “Crazy Mikes” — many of them mercenaries from Bush-crony corporations — still raping and whomping their way through U.S. holding pens all over Iraq, the *New Standard* reports. This in a prison system where up to 90 percent of the captives have been innocent of any crime, as the Red Cross reports. Yet there is not a chance in hell that any high-ranking commander — much less the perps on the Potomac — will ever face justice for these atrocities.

Meanwhile, as Hamid’s tribal henchmen lay down the Bushist line in Afghanistan, the tribes in Iraq are getting a dose of the lessons learned long ago by the Cherokee and the Sioux: White man speak with forked tongue. Washington’s armchair warriors are now shredding hard-won cease-fire deals negotiated by U.S. officers with Iraqi tribal leaders to restore peace to volatile areas, the *Financial Times* reports. The Bushists have ordered new jabs into “no-go areas” — often with airstrikes in heavily populated neighborhoods — in preparation for a late-year offensive to eliminate all resistance to the installation of a client regime in the upcoming “free elections.” (Already rigged, natch, in favor of the ruling cliques — not unlike the U.S. election.)

Coalition forces are now killing twice as many innocent people as the insurgents are, the pro-American Iraqi Health Ministry reports — with more than 3,400 civilians killed in the fighting since April alone. All this to smooth the way for Bush’s appointed strongman, ex-Baathist enforcer Iyad Allawi, who once led terrorist hit teams in Europe, preying on anti-Saddam dissidents, *The New Yorker* reports. He later turned on his master, joined the CIA payroll, and directed a terror-bombing campaign against civilian targets in his native land.

Terrorists, torturers, house-burners, oath-breakers, vote-riggers, goons: That’s the Bush Tribe for you — a violent, greedy, barbarous clan, befouling the name of democracy all over the world.

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