

US War Crimes in Iraq: Manufactured Dissent

A Critique of Amnesty International's Report entitled Iraq, In Cold Blood: Abuses by Armed Groups

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The current US war against Iraq has helped blur the lines between those who advocate 'human rights' and those who facilitate imperialist power, and between those who "opposed" the war and those who support the war and the Occupation of Iraq.

Given the propagated importance of 'human rights' and 'democracy' in the West, it is important to take a brief critical look at the West's most well known 'human rights' group.

In its recent report on Iraq, Amnesty International (AI), the West's beacon of 'human rights', reveals that:

"armed groups opposed to the U.S.-led multinational force and Iraq's government are showing utter disdain for the lives of Iraqi civilians and others, continuing a pattern of war crimes and crimes against humanity".

Consider the title of the report: *Iraq, In Cold Blood: Abuses by Armed Groups*. AI does not use the same terminology when it criticises US forces in Iraq or Israel's brutal treatment of the Palestinian people. Indeed, AI has not issued a similar report or statement about the much larger atrocity of US violence in Iraq.

As Francis Boyle, professor of international law at the University of Illinois, who was a member of AI, rightly wrote; "[AI] is primarily motivated not by human rights but by publicity. Second comes money. Third comes getting more members. Fourth, internal turf battles. And then finally, human rights, genuine human rights concerns". He added; "AI is accountable to its pro-Israel Zionist funders of AI in the US, which fund the AI operations in London", not to the people AI pretends to defend.

The killing of Iraqi civilians, the torture of innocent Iraqi men, women and children by U.S.-British forces are not as important as the actions of those "armed groups", may be even acceptable. In other words, only the US has the power to kill others; only the US has the right to cause destruction, in time of war. The aim of AI is to focus people's attention on the violence of the occupied and oppressed, and turn people's attention away from the violence of the occupiers and oppressors.

Consider too that the war on Iraq was an illegal act of aggression in flagrant violation of UN Charter, the Geneva Conventions and International law. Like Western media, AI appears to be complicit in the deception and propaganda of Western powers.

Since March 2003, US-led forces have killed and injured a large number of innocent Iraqi civilians. According to a study published in November 2004 in the reputed and peer-reviewed British medical journal, the *Lancet*, US forces in Iraq have killed more than 100,000 civilians between March 2003 and October 2004; most of those killed were women and children. The estimate is considered “conservative”; the real number is probably much higher. The study excluded data for Fallujah, because the atrocity was too big to include in the study. In Fallujah US forces committed war crimes and crimes against humanity. Indeed, when the *Lancet* data used for the whole period of the occupation, the figure of civilian death is much higher.

Ignored by Al and the Western media, the *Lancet* study also revealed that 14 per cent of US soldiers and 28 per cent of US marines had killed a civilian: US-authorized war crimes. The *Los Angeles Times* reported (July, 25, 2005) that “U.S. forces killed 33 unarmed civilians and injured 45 in the capital [Baghdad alone] between May 1 and July 12 — an average of nearly one fatality every two days”. In a deliberate and criminal practice called “shoot to kill”, hundreds of innocent Iraqi civilians are killed every week.

The *Iraqiyun Humanitarian Organization* (IHO) in Baghdad estimated that at least 128,000 Iraqis have been killed since the US invasion began in March 2003. Dr. Hatim al-‘Alwani, head of (IHO), said that 55 per cent of those killed have been women and children aged 12 and under. The (IHO) compiled its data from relatives and families of the deceased, as well as from Iraqi hospitals throughout Iraq. The 128,000 figure includes only those whose relatives have been informed of their deaths and does not include those who were abducted, assassinated or simply disappeared by the US forces and their collaborators. The number includes Iraqis who were killed by US forces during the attacks on Fallujah and the town of Qa’im in western Iraq. It is now common knowledge in the West that non-Western lives do not count.

During the siege of Fallujah by US forces, water, food and electricity were cut off to the 300,000 citizens of the city – in violation of the Geneva Conventions. In blatant violations of the Law of War, US forces have prevented the departure of able-bodied males (ages of 16 and 60 years old) from leaving the besieged city. Occupation forces then adopted Nazi Germany terror bombing of the Spanish city of Guernica. More than 6,000 civilians, according to the Red Cross, were slaughtered in cold blood. Fallujah is now a large prison run by “trigger happy” US soldiers, and isolated from the outside world. Here, in Fallujah where Al work would make difference, if not urgent.

Al is not an anti-war organisation. Like many Western ‘humanitarian’ organisations, Al prospers on wars and conflicts. Just before the 1991 US war on Iraq, Al was the source of the fabricated and evil story of Iraqi soldiers ‘throwing Kuwaiti babies out of incubators’. The story was a lie that allowed US Congress to authorise a criminal war against Iraq. The war followed by the 13-years genocidal sanctions that killed an estimated 2 million Iraqis, a third of them children under the age of 5 years old.

In the weeks and months leading to the 2003 war on Iraq, the US and Britain were readying their NGOs and “humanitarian” organisations to manage the atrocity and control, the victims and pacify the population. Despite the illegality of the war, Al did not oppose the war or condemn it. Al simply advised the US to conduct its “Supreme International Crime” with “precautions”. These war crimes, crimes against humanity by Western powers are not considered as such by the beacon of ‘human rights’, and are not on its radar of concerns.

Given Al's interest in the treatment of prisoners and prison conditions, one would expect Al to be the guardian of US-run prisons in Iraq and elsewhere. Tens of thousands of innocent Iraqi men, women and children are imprisoned without charges. They are abused, tortured and denied their human rights by invading forces, and in contravention of the Geneva Conventions forbidding the abuse and torture of prisoners. Many Iraqi prisoners and detainees have been murdered in cold-blooded and cowardice fashions by US-British killers.

It was the veteran investigative reporter Seymour Hersh of *The New Yorker*, not Al, who sniffed and exposed US crimes at Abu Ghraib prison, where Iraqi prisoners and detainees are subjected to blatant, sadistic, cruel and inhumane treatment by US forces. Like the UN, and the Red Cross (CICR), Al has cooperated with the US forces and remains silent when it came to the US and British soldiers torturing and murdering Iraqi prisoners and Iraqi civilians. Like the role of mainstream media, Al role is to normalise the atrocity, not to condemn it.

In May 2005, it was reported that there are 3,160 Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib, 660 more than the military's own recommended level of 2,500 prisoners. The largest US prison, Camp Bucca in the south, has at least 5,600 detainees. There are hundreds of other prisons throughout Iraq. The British occupying forces built their own prisons and are implementing their own sadistic abuse and torture of Iraqi prisoners. Iraqi source estimated the number of prisoners to be more than 60,000 (see Dahr Jamail on BreakForNews.com). Many prisoners have been murdered, and many have simply disappeared. Al had no problem ranting and condemning the crimes alleged committed by the regime of Saddam Hussein, but fails to do the same when the crimes committed by US forces. Al seems to have no problem with the latest US forces "search and destroy" orders which target all Iraqi civilians and "take no prisoners".

Recent reports from Iraq suggest that the brutal practices and treatments of Iraqi prisoners and Iraqi civilians have been transferred, as part of Iraq's "sovereignty" from the occupying forces to the puppet government. Peter Beaumont of *The Observer* (July 03, 2005) reported that: 1. "A 'ghost' network of secret detention centres across the country, inaccessible to human rights organisations, where torture is taking place; 2. Compelling evidence of widespread use of violent interrogation methods including hanging by the arms, burnings, beatings, the use of electric shocks and sexual abuse; 3. Claims that serious abuse has taken place within the walls of the Iraqi government's own Ministry of the Interior; and 4. Apparent co-operation between unofficial and official detention facilities, and evidence of extra-judicial executions by the police". Can you imagine the reactions of Al and the West in general, had the government of Saddam been in power?

On top of all the crimes and destruction, Al, and Western "progressives" (the "Left" and the "Right") are embarking on a disinformation campaign to normalise the war, distort the true nature of the Iraqi Resistance and deny the Iraqi people their legitimate right to resist the occupation by enforcing the myth that:

1. the Iraqi people are engaged in "violent" Resistance against the occupation, as if the US army is on a peace finding mission for the last hundred years; and
2. the Iraqi Resistance is led by "religious fundamentalists". It is utterly misleading.

The occupation is a collective punishment to all Iraqis; therefore the Iraqi Resistance is heterogeneous Resistance movement of all Iraqis, regardless of religious or political affiliations. It draws out a variety of tactics; from armed Resistance to peaceful Resistance determined by the resources and opportunities available to it. The sole aim is the full withdrawal of US forces from Iraq.

The creation of the “Al-Zarqawi” phantom, the walking WMD, is carefully crafted to confuse retail terrorism with legitimate Resistance. The purpose is not only to delegitimise dissent and intimidate those who dare to support the Iraqi Resistance, but also to distort the image of the Iraqi Resistance. Yet despite the media hype and distortion, there exists no substantial evidence to support the allegations against the Resistance, or the existence of the phantom to that effect.

All Iraqis, including the Resistance leaders have rejected the attacks against civilians and has blamed U.S. forces and their allies for orchestrating the violence. Iraqis have always differentiated between the crime perpetuated by the occupation forces, and the legitimate Iraqi Resistance against US forces and their collaborators.

When asked about, *“How should the world distinguish between those who espouse violence and those who belong to the Iraqi National Resistance?”* Dr. Mohammad Al-Obaidi, a member of the People’s Struggle Movement (PSM) said: “By actions. It is known to all Iraqis that any operation carried out by the resistance targets the occupation and the security forces. It must be kept in mind that at this point in time, with the absence of any true sovereignty in Iraq, the security forces are merely an extension of the occupation itself. Those operations that do otherwise and target civilians can be said for certain to not belong to the National Resistance. For example, hundreds upon hundreds of university professors, military pilots, scientists and doctors have been killed in Iraq. What possible benefit would the resistance have in attacking our country’s most talented and educated people? It is clear to all Iraqis that there are foreign fingers pulling the triggers to commit these crimes and murder the human resources of Iraq, all the while attempting to steal the country’s natural resources”.

Iraqis everywhere have blamed the presence of US forces for the deterioration of security and increase in crimes. The aim was predictable, after the destruction of the Iraqi state, the destruction of the Iraqi society follow.

After more than two years of US occupation, the destruction of Iraq and the Iraqi society have not stopped. There is no “freedom” in Iraq, and there is no independent government, there is only US occupation. The so-called Iraqi “sovereignty” was a farce, and the January 2005 elections were fraudulent elections aiming at creating a colonial dictatorship to serve US-Zionist hegemony in the Middle East, and manipulate the ignorant masses in the West, Americans in particular, to support US wars.

A recent report by the United Nations World Food Programme (UNWFP), found the majority of the Iraqi population lack the required daily calories to survive and remain healthy. Iraqi living condition has worsened, and many Iraqis admit openly that life before the occupation was much better and safer. Iraqis have only one option left: Resistance by any means. “International law grants a people fighting an illegal occupation the right to use ‘all necessary means at their disposal’ to end their occupation and the occupied “are entitled to seek and receive support” in order to resist the occupiers.

The attacks on civilians by forces allied with the occupation serve to prolong the occupation,

divide the Iraqi people and create sectarian strife. The most worrying trend to come out of the war on Iraq is the disappearance of 'dissenting voices' and the moral bankruptcy in Western intellectuals.

The position of Western "progressives" on the occupation is imperialist at best. As Stephen Gowans rightly wrote: "Since occupation and resistance are mutually opposed [to each other], being equally against both is like being equally against bacterial infection and antibiotics and equally against central plumbing and open sewers in the street". Hence, it is meaningless to oppose both; the occupation and the Iraqi Resistance. The Occupation is the cause of the violence and chaos and therefore must be resisted and removed. Outsiders, wherever they are, have no right to engage in lecturing Iraqis on how to resist and defend themselves and their country against a brutal imperialist occupation. The recent petition of one million Iraqi signatures demanding the immediate withdrawal of the occupation forces from Iraq is evidence of 'the rejection by Iraqis of foreigners in Iraq'.

What is certain is that without effective and true dissent; people everywhere will become complicit in the criminal actions of an imperialist power on the loose. The cliché purported by 'humanitarian' organisations, and Western "progressives" that; "we are against the violence, whether expressed through occupation or the Resistance", is naïve and contradictory. As mentioned earlier, the occupation is the cause of the violence. Those same people who oppose the tactics used by the Resistance against the forces of the occupation grant the imperialist forces the exclusive right to use brutal violence against defenceless people. The struggle for freedom and liberty for all humans is a universal cause. The continuing brutal violence and destruction of Iraq wrought by the US occupation exposed the true nature and complicity of AI and Western 'dissent'.

It is important to recognise that the US invasion and occupation of Iraq can only be compared to the invasion and occupation of Poland by the forces of the Third Reich. The destruction of Iraqi cities and towns, the mass killings of innocent Iraqis, and the arrest and imprisonment of Iraqi men, women and children in US-run prison camps are reminiscent to the great injustice and brutal system of repression created by Hitler's forces in Poland. It is criminal to oppose the Iraqi people resisting against an illegal and criminal occupation of their country.

Remember, Iraq was supposed to be the launching pad in US imperial agenda of dominating the world by force. Had it not been for the Iraqi Resistance against US Occupation, other nations, Syria in particular would have been attacked by now. There is no pretext for US forces to remain in Iraq, and it is the Iraqi people's legitimate right to force them out of Iraq.

Far from bringing "liberation" and "democracy" to the Iraqi people, the US war and occupation have destroyed Iraq and inflicted great harm on the Iraqi society. The cost of the US war to Iraq is unmatched. It is immoral to think of other way than the way of immediate and total withdrawal of foreign forces from Iraq. It is imperative to return Iraq to full sovereignty. Real dissent has no fear and offers no short cuts.

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