

Aziz's story will remain untold

By [Pepe Escobar](#)

Global Research, October 27, 2010
[Asia Times](#) 27 October 2010

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

Theme: [Crimes against Humanity](#)

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The neo-conservatives always contended that the United States invaded Iraq to bring “democracy” (from the barrel of a gun). Seems like if not democracy, at least the greatest hits of the US judicial system are indeed being implemented in (still occupied) Iraq; torture (as WikiLeaks has amply demonstrated) and the death penalty. Talk about liberation.

And talk about payback. Former Iraq deputy prime minister Tariq Aziz, 74, ailing, frail, already caged, and the victim of a stroke this year, has been condemned to hang by the Supreme Court in Baghdad, according to Iraq state TV, “for his role in the elimination of Islamic [Shi’ite] parties”.

Aziz, born Mikhael Yuhann in 1936 in Mosul, a Chaldean Christian – the only one in the former Sunni and secular Ba’athist inner circle, its worldwide-known “human face” – holder of a degree in English language and literature, is already serving a 15-year sentence for a series of killings of 42 tradesmen in 1992 plus a further seven-year sentence for his alleged role in the deportation of Iraqi Kurds during the Saddam Hussein era. No Western court would admit what was presented as evidence showed that he was personally involved in both crimes.

The European Union (EU) at least is being true to its chart (the death penalty is “unacceptable”); the EU’s foreign representative, Catherine Ashton, will appeal to Baghdad to block the execution. Aziz’s defense will appeal to the Vatican – which also condemns it. Italian radical leader Marco Pannella has started a hunger strike to denounce it.

Anyone who does not see this as a political verdict is a believer in democracy by “shock and awe”. In this case, revenge is served to current Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki and his Shi’ite Da’wa party, which had been persecuted under Saddam’s Sunni regime. Everyone else loses badly – because Aziz is arguably the only person on Earth who could tell the real story, bit by juicy bit, about the rolling, decades-long American dirty game in Iraq.

His is the ultimate political best-seller we’ll never be able to read – telling for instance how the US, the United Kingdom and the Saudis shelled out over \$60 billion for Iraq to go to war with Iran during the 1980s; what was really discussed between Saddam, himself and former US defense secretary Donald Rumsfeld in Baghdad when they met in 1983; how every Western politician paid homage at the court of Saddam – the man who would get rid of those demented ayatollahs; how Saddam beat the late ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini’s human waves of martyrs by spraying them with Western-supplied chemical weapons; and how those fabled “weapons of mass destruction” were nowhere to be seen since 1995 at least – thus rendering George W Bush’s and Tony Blair’s casus belli null and void.

When US Marine Corps entered Baghdad on April 9, 2003, his villa was plundered – by the marines and by local mobs. I went to see it as soon as I could (A (mis)guided tour of Baghdad Asia Times Online, April 18, 2003), finding a DVD box set of The Godfather saga – Saddam’s favorite was the first one – right at the door. On April 24, Aziz surrendered to the Americans. He was the eight of spades in the Pentagon’s infamous deck of cards. (Saddam was the ace of spades.)

History may judge that Bush and Blair – with their Moloch-style terrorizing machine dubbed “shock and awe” – have been no better than Saddam’s inner circle; directly and indirectly, their “policies” killed more Iraqi civilians than Saddam ever did. Yet they did (Blair) and they will (Bush) publish books extolling their “glory”.

Aziz instead is the only one left with a real breathtaking story to tell. And as the proverbial man who knows too much, he had to be taken out.

Pepe Escobar is the author of Globalistan: How the Globalized World is Dissolving into Liquid War (Nimble Books, 2007) and Red Zone Blues: a snapshot of Baghdad during the surge. His new book, just out, is Obama does Globalistan (Nimble Books, 2009).

He may be reached at pepeasia@yahoo.com.

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