

# Balad Massacre once again demonstrates US orchestrated genocide

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The tragic events that unfolded in Balad over the weekend of 13-14 October, in which around 60 residents lost their lives, have once again been portrayed as an example of inter-communal sectarian violence. In reality, as in every other reported instance, they prove that Iraq's US-trained, equipped and supported forces are responsible for the flood of killings attributed to Shiite death squads.

## Untangling events

According to US military spokesmen, and reiterated in mainstream media outlets, the cycle of violence in Balad began on Friday 13 October, when insurgents murdered 17 farm labourers in the vicinity of Duluiyah.

The labourers are reported to have been Shiites and the killings have consequently been labelled as sectarian murders by Sunni insurgents.

Seldom picked up in the press is the fact that in relation to these killings, two local police officers have been arrested.

On the same day (Friday 13 October), according to [Major General William Caldwell](#), spokesman for Multinational Force-Iraq, a small Quick Reaction Force (QRF) was dispatched to Balad, some 5 miles from Duluiyah, based on unconfirmed reports that some Iraqis had been murdered.

The QRF made contact with unspecified local security forces to offer military assistance. Caldwell did not clarify why the US army considered that Iraqi security forces might need assistance in Balad on 13 October. The likeliest explanation is that MNF-I was aware that a major security operation was about to commence in Balad. Caldwell states that local authorities did not want any additional ground support, but requested overhead assets (helicopters presumably) and intelligence-collecting assets, which were made available. Once again, the presence of such assets indicates that a security operation was underway. From that point on, an unknown number of US forces (Caldwell suggests a platoon) continued patrolling actively in Balad.

According to media reports the violence in Balad began the following day, Saturday 14 October. Whilst many resident undoubtedly hold militias responsible, eyewitnesses are quite clear that units of the National Police assisted Shiite elements in their attacks on Sunnis. Again, this is what we would expect from a government-sponsored operation.

## Was the Mahdi Army present?

According to Ellen Knickmeyer of the [Washington Post](#), citing a local Shiite cleric, frightened Shiite elders contacted the office of Moqtada al-Sadr in Kadhimiyah on 13 October.

In response, Mahdi fighters in plain clothes allegedly crowded into two buses and headed for Balad, followed by more Mahdi fighters in army uniforms and vehicles, as well as others in the uniform of Interior Ministry commandos (National Police units). These various elements assembled in Balad on the morning of 14 October and commenced to take control of Balad's streets, setting up checkpoints to control motor traffic.

By Tuesday (some 3 days later), the head of Balad city council, Malik Laftah, [claimed](#) that 'the Mahdi Army is controlling the town'.

But according to US and Iraqi government officials, it was government forces that were in control of Balad on Tuesday.

In fact, the three Mahdi elements that a spokesman described as heading to Balad to exact revenge are exactly the same three elements of the Iraqi state security forces that are present at every other government-sponsored cordon and search operation: army (normally holding the perimeter), police commandos (National Police) manning checkpoints and conducting house to house raids, plainclothes intelligence officers accompanying commandos\*. It may be that additional irregular 'militia' elements were also involved, but the context remains categorically a security forces operation.

Interestingly, Ellen Knickmeyer wrote that the US QRF did not arrive in Balad until the end of 14 October (even this would leave glaring questions about the total failure to take any form of preventative or remedial action), but General Caldwell was very clear on this point:

*We in fact did hear about the incident that did occur on the 13th there. We did despatch, based on the reports that occurred, a quick reaction force into the city to link up with and assist the local Iraqi security forces that were present at that time ... the first QRF force went into the city on the 13th.*

General Caldwell also stated that if coalition (occupation) forces discovered persons or groups of persons operating outside the law, they would 'target' such persons or groups, 'irrespective of who they may or may not attribute some sort of membership to'. Should we assume that the US QRF and aerial surveillance assets simply missed the presence of the Mahdi Army (an illegal militia), who had set up roadblocks and taken control of the city, or must we conclude that the forces present in Balad were Iraqi state forces?

Two further pieces of circumstantial evidence support such a conclusion.

Firstly, some of the bodies that were eventually received at the Balad morgue bore electric drill holes, indicating that the victims had been detained against their will prior to death, ie had been arrested and taken to a detention facility where they were tortured. This is consistent with one detailed account, in which a woman described how she and her husband were stopped at a checkpoint while attempting to flee the town. A hooded man identified her husband as a former army colonel; he was then beaten and taken away in a white sport-utility vehicle (ie a police vehicle) before being killed. These details are consistent with every other account of extrajudicial killings carried out by Interior Ministry personnel.

Secondly, the Kadhimiya district, where frightened Shiite elders looked for support, is not

only home to an important Shiite shrine, but to one of the [most important military/police bases](#) (previously Camp Justice) in Baghdad, situated in a former intelligence facility. The base serves as the headquarters for one of the National Police divisions, formerly the Public Order Division. The National Police were expressly designed to be able to provide a strike force capability to the Interior Ministry, able to quickly deploy around the country to bolster local forces, in contrast to the Mahdi Army, which enjoys no formal backing, training or logistics and would be completely unable to deploy at short notice or to establish control over a large urban settlement.

Ultimately, it is the attested presence of US forces that demonstrates that this was a coordinated government operation and had nothing to do with any unauthorised militias.

For further examples of security force operations that have been attributed to sectarian violence, please see:

[The Assault on Adhamiya – Not Civil War Yet](#)

[Operation Knockout in Diyala Demonstrates US Collusion with Death Squads](#)

[JIHAD KILLINGS IN BAGHDAD REQUIRE IMMEDIATE UN INVESTIGATION](#)

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