

Controlled Press Ignores Criminal Obliteration of Fallujah

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The controlled press has scrupulously avoided discussing the devastation and prima facie evidence of war crimes committed during the U.S. siege and assault of Fallujah.

As Americans prepared for Thanksgiving, an estimated 100,000 residents of the besieged Iraqi city of Fallujah, trapped in their homes, struggled to survive without fresh food, water or electricity, reportedly cut off by U.S. forces on November 8.

Meanwhile, on the streets of Fallujah, a city of more than 350,000, dogs gnawed on bloated and rotting corpses that remained unburied for weeks.

Thousands of families in Fallujah were reported to be in a critical humanitarian situation after U.S. forces prevented the delivery of relief supplies. An Iraq Red Crescent Society (IRCS) humanitarian aid convoy, reportedly blocked by U.S. troops for more than two weeks, was allowed to deliver aid to residents in the heart of the city on November 25.

On Thanksgiving, U.S. forces permitted the IRCS convoy carrying thousands of food parcels, blankets, tents and medical supplies to enter the city and allowed one of the clinics to be converted into a temporary hospital to treat the injured. Rana Sidani of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Geneva, Switzerland however, told American Free Press on Nov. 30 that “many civilians” were still prevented from receiving aid or medical care.

At the beginning of the U.S. operation in Fallujah on Nov. 5, a hospital in the central Nazzal district of Fallujah was “reduced to rubble” as a result of U.S. air and artillery bombardment. “Only its façade, with a sign reading Nazzal Emergency Hospital, remained intact,” Reuters reported.

“A nearby compound used by the main Falluja Hospital to store medical supplies was also destroyed,” witnesses told Reuters. Fallujah’s main hospital was occupied by U.S. forces when the ground offensive began. These actions are apparent violations of international humanitarian law.

“Bodies can be seen everywhere and people were crying when receiving the food parcels,” Muhammad al-Nuri, a spokesman for the IRCS in Baghdad, said. “It is very sad. It is a human disaster.”

Al-Nuri said that it is difficult to move in the city due to the large number of dead bodies in the streets. The ICRC estimates there are more than 6,000 dead in Fallujah, al-Nuri said.

AFP asked Major Jay Antonelli at the Coalition Press Information Center (CPIC) in Baghdad if the ICRC estimate of 6,000 dead in Fallujah was credible. "We do not keep a count of dead Iraqis," Antonelli said. Asked the same question, the ICRC's Sidani said, "We don't know."

Antonelli said, "U.S. forces never blocked aid convoys from reaching the wounded. We only recommended to the aid convoys that they should not enter the city because the MNF [Multi-National Forces] could not guarantee their security or safety."

"The ICRC is very worried about the humanitarian situation in Falluja," Sidani said. Asked what the ICRC was doing to alleviate the suffering in Fallujah, Sidani said: "We are reminding the parties of their responsibilities under international humanitarian law."

It should be noted that the U.S.A. and Britain, the belligerent occupying powers in Iraq, are the two largest contributors to the ICRC, providing more than 42 percent of its budget for field operations.

A second convoy from Baghdad, headed by Dr. Said Ismael Haki, the IRCS president, delivered aid to Fallujah on Nov. 26. "There are no houses left in Fallujah, only destroyed places," Haki said. "I really don't know how the people will return to the city. No one will find their homes."

As U.S. troops in Fallujah engaged in what has been described as the most intense urban combat since Vietnam, the controlled press scrupulously avoided discussion or footage of the devastation of the rebellious Sunni city. For example, during the second week of the attack, rather than discuss the widespread devastation of Fallujah, U.S. television news programs focused largely on a brawl between basketball players and fans in Detroit.

Lt. Col. Brandl, commander of the 1st Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, was filmed giving a "pep talk" to his marines: "The enemy has got a face – he's called Satan," Brandl said. "He's in Fallujah, and we're going to destroy him."

At least 136 U.S. soldiers were killed during November in Iraq, and more than 800 were wounded, most of them in Fallujah, making it the most costly month, and operation, in terms of U.S. lives lost since the invasion of Iraq began in March 2003.

FOR WHAT CAUSE?

Michael Ware, Baghdad bureau chief for Time magazine, who has been in Fallujah during the fighting, said U.S. actions in Fallujah are "creating the nightmare that we are seeking to prevent."

"I stood there as I saw American boys die," Ware told Chris Matthews of MSNBC on Nov. 24, "I mean, a man shot at close range, blown apart by a rocket propelled grenade. He dies there in front of you and I can't help but think why? For what cause?"

"I see us creating the very thing that the president said we went there to prevent," Ware said, "...subsequent to this invasion and the occupation and the guerrilla war that is currently underway, we are the midwives of the next generation of al Qaida and Islamic terrorist."

Ware, who has interviewed senior insurgent leaders, said they study the writings of the

Vietnamese general Vo Nguyen Giap, Che Guevara, and Mao Zedong. “They’re bringing it straight from the Vietnam, and the broader insurgency playbook,” Ware said.

“The name of the game is deny the population to the insurgents,” Ware said. “That’s what we’re trying to do, win hearts and minds. But we’re not winning them.”

The U.S. struggle to win Iraqi hearts and minds suffered a further set back when NBC TV broadcast footage of a U.S. marine executing a wounded and unarmed Iraqi in a Fallujah mosque. The much-publicized shooting, apparently part of a massacre of a group of wounded resistance fighters, “was a rare crack in the façade that Washington, with the complicity of most of the corporate media, has tried to present to the world of its brutal assault on the rebel Iraqi city,” Rohan Pearce wrote in *The Greenleft Weekly Australia* on Nov. 24.

The New York Times has reported actions taken by U.S. forces in Fallujah, which appear to be prima facie evidence of war crimes, without mentioning that the actions constitute clear violations of the Laws of Land War found in the U.S. Army Field Manual 27-10.

For example, a Nov. 20 Times article by Edward Wong, with two correspondents in Fallujah, reports that U.S. marines had transformed a mosque into a fortress with snipers and machine gunners perched on the roof.

Then, using the passive form, Wong goes on to say that “no neutral group has been able to enter the city,” without mentioning that U.S. forces blocked humanitarian aid convoys. Likewise, Wong wrote, “Electricity and water had been cut off.”

The Times, whose motto is “All the news that’s fit to print,” apparently didn’t think that it’s readers needed to know the U.S. forces had cut off the water and power to a city of 340,000 people.

Asked if U.S. forces had cut power and water to Fallujah, Maj. Jay Antonelli of CPIC wrote: “MNF did, with approval of the Interim Iraqi Government, cut off electricity to the city of Fallujah as Operation Al-Fajr began. Water was not cut off intentionally, however the water system did sustain some kinetic damage during strikes.”

American Free Press asked the Pentagon’s Lt. Col. Joe Yoswa if it is true that U.S. forces were using mosques as fortresses. “It’s not possible,” Yoswa said. “Under no circumstances. We would not set up snipers in a mosque in an offensive position.”

CPIC’s Antonelli said: “MNF would not use a mosque as a ‘fortress.’ MNF and Iraqi security forces would only fire from a mosque if they were being fired upon and were firing back in self-defense.”

Abu Sabah, a refugee from Fallujah, reported seeing phosphorus bombs: “They used these weird bombs that put up smoke like a mushroom cloud. Then small pieces fell from the air with long tails of smoke trailing behind them. These exploded on the ground with large fires that burnt for half an hour,” Abu Sabah said. “When anyone touched these fires their bodies burnt for hours.”

Eyewitnesses from Fallujah also reported seeing “melted” bodies.

“THROW-AWAY SOLDIERS”

Having seen what appeared to be a depleted uranium (DU) missile fired at a building in Fallujah on CNN during the first week of the fighting, AFP asked the Pentagon if DU weapons are being used in Fallujah. "Yes," Yoswa said, "DU is a standard round on the M-1 Abrams tank."

Because U.S. marines in Fallujah are very close to the poison gas produced by exploded DU shells, AFP asked Yoswa if anything was being done to protect the troops from DU poisoning. Yoswa seemed unaware of the dangers posed by the use of DU.

Marion Fulk, a retired nuclear scientist from Livermore National Lab told AFP that U.S. troops in DU contaminated battlefields are considered "throw-away soldiers." The Marines exposed to DU in Fallujah, and elsewhere, face greatly increased risks of cancer, deformed children, and other health problems in the future.

OBLITERATION OF FALLUJAH

The "obliteration of Fallujah" is a serious war crime, according to Francis A. Boyle, a professor of international law at the University of Illinois. "The obliteration of Fallujah continues apace," Boyle wrote in his Nov. 15 article, A War Crime in Real Time: Obliterating Fallujah. "Article 6(b) of the 1945 Nuremberg Charter defines a Nuremberg War Crime in relevant part as the 'wanton destruction of cities, towns or villages.' According to this definitive definition, the Bush administration's destruction of Fallujah constitutes a war crime for which Nazis were tried and executed."

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