

## Crimes against Humanity: Iraq's Mass Graves

Iraqi mass-kidnapping mystery solved. Disappeared Ministry of Higher Education officials, arrested by Iraqi National Police in November 2006, end up in mass grave

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BRussels Tribunal,

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In-depth Report: [IRAQ REPORT](#)

*\* US Occupation authorities: guilty. They created, trained and armed the National Police and controlled the Ministry of Interior, responsible for death squad policies.*

*\* Maliki government: guilty. They acted as local US stooges. They carried out the US counterinsurgency strategy, protected the kidnappers and prevented an investigation.*

*\* UN Human Rights Bodies: guilty by negligence. They refused to nominate a special Human Rights rapporteur for Iraq. They refused to investigate this crime against humanity.*

On 22 October 2012, Shafaq, an Iraqi News Agency, reports: "An official security source revealed on Monday that a mass grave was found in Sada area on the outskirts of Sadr City, belonging to the staff of the Department of missions of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research who disappeared in 2006."

"A security force found 16 bodies buried in a mass grave in Sadr City in Baghdad belonging according to the confessions of one of the detainees of the staff members of the Department of Missions of the Ministry of Higher Education. The available intelligence reports that the bodies belong to employees of the Department of Missions who were abducted in 2006 and buried in a mass grave. The competent authorities are conducting DNA tests on the bodies to make sure of their identities and inform their families".

### Summary of Events

On Tuesday 14 November 2006 paramilitary gunmen in the uniforms of Iraqi National Police commandos raided a building belonging to the Ministry of Education in Baghdad's Karrada district and arrested around 100 members of staff from two departments and around 50 visitors, according to lists compiled by the Minister of Education.

The raid took place in broad daylight, 1km from the Green Zone, in an area that contained several high-security compounds, including the department where passports are issued. According to a [BBC correspondent](#) the Karrada area, occupying an isthmus in the River Tigris, is 'well protected with a heavy presence of Iraqi troops and several checkpoints'. The paramilitary force estimated at between at least 50 and 100 arrived in a fleet of some 20-30 camouflage pickup trucks of the kind employed by the Interior Ministry and rapidly established a cordon of the area. They stated that they were from an anti-corruption unit and were carrying out arrests ahead of a visit by the US ambassador. The paramilitaries

made their arrests according to lists, confirming the identities of those present by their ID cards, then handcuffed and blindfolded the detainees and put them into the backs of pickups and into two larger vehicles.

The paramilitaries then made their exit through heavy traffic without opposition, despite the reported presence of a regular police vehicle. According to some witnesses, the paramilitaries made off in the direction of Sadr City.

The Iraqi government quickly declared that the number of detainees was far lower (18 guards, 16 members of staff and five visitors) and by Wednesday claimed that all of the detainees had been released after a series of dramatic police raids. A number of senior policemen, including the district police chief and the commander of a National Police paramilitary commando brigade and three other officers were reportedly detained for questioning over possible complicity. According to one report, an Interior Ministry spokesman claimed the senior police commanders 'should be held responsible'.

Prime Minister Maliki declared that this was not a case of terrorism, but a dispute between 'militias'.

The Education Ministry insisted that both Sunnis and Shiites were among those illegally detained.

US commanders stated that they would support all efforts to free the detainees.

By Thursday the Education Minister stated that around 70 of 150 detainees had been released and reported that some of those released had been tortured (some legs and hands had been broken) and that there were allegations that others had been killed.

On Friday 17 November Mowaffak Rubiaie, the National Security Advisor, stated that all of the detainees had been released, although an Interior Ministry spokesman claimed that all of the Education Ministry personnel had been released but some of the visitors detained were still missing.

One of the detainees, who refused to reveal his actual name, said that his arm had been broken while in detention. He also described seeing three security guards suffocated to death and hearing a number of senior academics who had been put in a separate screaming in agony; according to the witness their cries were cut off abruptly.

The witness also said that he had not been released as the result of a dramatic police raid. His captors had simply dragged him and others from the building where they were held, put them back into trucks and dumped them at various locations around Baghdad. His account is confirmed by earlier reports, which stated that those released had been blindfolded and deposited in various parts of Baghdad.

Five more detainees were reportedly released on Friday. They had been tortured.

On Saturday 18 November the Education Ministry continued to insist that 66 people were still missing.

The Interior Ministry spokesman said that all of the detainees had been released and the matter was now closed.

Joint US and Iraqi forces conducted a raid on a mosque in Sadr City on Saturday. None of the detainees were found.

On Sunday 19 November a further four detainees were released, who reported seeing one Ministry official, Hamid al-Jouani, killed.

On Monday 20 November joint US and Iraqi forces conducted another raid in Sadr City. None of the detainees were found.

The BRussels Tribunal issued a statement on 22 November 2006: "Action Needed Over Detention of Iraqi Education Ministry Officials. Unknown numbers murdered, dozen still illegally held" <http://www.brussellstribunal.org/PressRelease221106.htm>

The BRussels Tribunal requested clear answers from the occupation forces and Iraqi authorities and formulated relevant questions:

#### Unanswered Questions

From the above description of events drawn from mainstream media sources (please see references at end) making use of government statements and eyewitness testimony it is clear that the raid on the Interior Ministry was carried out as a complex military operation requiring detailed intelligence, careful preparation and extensive training. In fact, everything about this raid conforms with what we should expect of an operation conducted by Iraq's new US-trained, armed and supported specialist counterinsurgency paramilitary National Police commandos, who are specifically trained to conduct cordon and search operations of this kind.

It is impossible to believe that any forces but officially sanctioned ones could have made such a daring daylight assault in one of the most secure areas of Baghdad. It is equally impossible to believe that any forces but Interior Ministry ones could have assembled a fleet of Interior Ministry camouflage pickup trucks. The designation of the paramilitaries responsible for this outrage as Interior Ministry commandos is fully confirmed by eyewitness testimony, which specifies that at least some of the raiders were wearing blue camouflage uniforms of a type very recently introduced to National Police commandos, specifically intended to prevent any other parties from masquerading as National Police commandos. The digitally designed uniforms are supplied by the US. A US Army spokesman was so convinced that the uniforms would have been impossible to replicate that he stated that the raiders could not have been wearing such uniforms. Of course, he was not at the scene. Eyewitnesses contradict him.

The fact that the raid was conducted by Interior Ministry forces was in fact confirmed by Iraqi government spokesman Ali al-Dabbagh, who claimed the mass detention was the work of militiamen who had infiltrated the Interior Ministry.

Since it is almost certain that the raid was carried out by National Police commandos, it is imperative that the following questions are answered immediately and publicly.

- Which National Police or other Interior Ministry force carried out the raid?
- Under whose authority was the raid authorised?
- From whom did the Interior Ministry force obtain the lists of names that were used to select individuals for arrest?

- Where were the international advisers (Special Police Transition Teams) that are embedded with each battalion of National Police Commandos and work with them on a daily basis?
- Where did the police commandos take the detainees?
- Why were aerial surveillance assets not immediately deployed to follow a fleet of pickup trucks through heavy traffic in Baghdad? How many such aerial assets were operating over the Green Zone and other parts of Baghdad at that time?
- Who operates the facility where the detainees were held?
- If detainees were freed as a result of police raids, why have no large scale arrests been made and why has the only detainee to speak on record stated that no such police raid occurred?
- What are the names of the individual police officers who have been held for questioning?
- Have they been charged and if so what have they been charged with?
- Why is the Interior Ministry insisting that the case is now closed, when the Education Minister has provided a list of the name of further detainees and the subsequent release of additional detainees demonstrates that he is wrong.
- Why is the Interior Ministry insisting that none of the detainees were killed when eyewitnesses reported seeing people brutally murdered in front of them?
- How is it that paramilitary/militia death squads can operate from the Interior Ministry, making full use of US-supplied government equipment, without the knowledge of embedded international training teams and advisors within the Interior Ministry?

It is absolutely clear that neither in this case nor in any of the multitude of other equally harrowing cases that show Interior Ministry involvement with extrajudicial killing can the Iraqi government be trusted with carrying any sort of investigation. In the case of the Jadiriyah torture facility discovered in November 2005, the government has still to make public findings that were promised within weeks. It should also be noted that at that time, US officials promised to increase their efforts to oversee Iraqi detention facilities and police commando units, stating that they would double the number of embedded trainers. Since that promise, extrajudicial killings at the hands of Interior Ministry forces, mostly inside detention facilities, appears to have grown exponentially.

It is equally clear that US authorities in Iraq have no interest in carrying out an investigation or restraining the killers.

It is therefore imperative for teams of international investigators to take on the task with the full cooperation of British and American forces. Manfred Novak, the UN rapporteur for torture has indicated his willingness to undertake such a mission. Such a mission must be immediately supported by all those who honestly claim to seek to halt the genocidal violence in Iraq; those who will not support such a mission must be considered accomplices to crimes against humanity.

Nothing happened. Now they're dead.

As usual nothing has been done, nor by the occupation authorities, nor by the UN official Human Rights Bodies. And certainly not by the Iraqi authorities.

On 27 April 2011 the Iraqi government has set up a committee to trace thousands of Iraqis missing since the 2003 US-led invasion, said an official. The government committee includes representatives from the ministries of defence (Islamic Dawa Party), interior (Islamic Dawa Party), national security (Islamic Dawa Party), health (Al Sadr bloc), justice (Islamic Virtue Party) and human rights (Islamic Dawa Party), in addition to intelligence services and anti-terrorism forces.

Many of those Ministries were involved or are leading the very militias that have been suspected of carrying out most of the ferocious crimes of extrajudicial assassination, inciting sectarian violence, torture and enforced disappearance, in conjunction with the occupying forces. So how can one expect this committee to investigate the very crimes that their militias are responsible for?

Human Rights Council: it's time to ACT

So now we finally know part of the terrible truth. Will the Human Right Council finally wake up and start to investigate the thousands upon thousands of war crimes, committed by the Anglo-American occupation forces and their local Iraqi stooges? Will the ICC finally do what it is created for: persecute war criminals? Investigate the US genocide in Iraq? Please? After more than one million deaths, and millions of refugees?

2013: the commemoration of 10 years of US occupation. It would be only fair if this and other clear cases of crimes against humanity would be put on the agenda of International Human Rights bodies. It would be only fair if the full truth of this dirty counterinsurgency war is finally revealed.

2013: the year of "Accountability and Restoring Justice For Iraq". DO something !

*Dirk Adriaenssens is coordinator of SOS Iraq and member of the executive committee of the BRussells Tribunal. Between 1992 and 2003 he led several delegations to Iraq to observe the devastating effects of UN imposed sanctions. He was a member of the International Organizing Committee of the World Tribunal on Iraq (2003-2005). He is also co-coordinator of the Global Campaign Against the Assassination of Iraqi Academics. He is co-author of Rendez-Vous in Baghdad, EPO (1994), Cultural Cleansing in Iraq, Pluto Press, London (2010), Beyond Educide, Academia Press, Ghent (2012), and is a frequent contributor to GlobalResearch, Truthout, The International Journal of Contemporary Iraqi Studies and other media.*

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