

Iraq: Hail Caesar?

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It would come as no surprise, if an entire generation of Iraqi boys were born to bear the name of Caesar Saadi Al-Jibouri, the Iraqi soldier who recently killed three American soldiers after seeing them kicking down the door of a house in Mosul and assaulting a pregnant woman.

Angered by the actions, it has been reported that Caesar opened fire on the US troops and killed two soldiers and a captain but now, like many other Iraqi's in the "democratic" country, Caesar is languishing in a Government prison, although his actions have not gone unnoticed.

The Lebanese newspaper Al-akhbar have reported, that in the streets of Mosul, graffiti has appeared on walls proclaiming "Well done Caesar!" with groups also distributing leaflets sending their greetings and congratulations to the Iraqi soldier.

Praise has also been given by the Association of Muslim Scholars in Iraq, claiming that

Caesar is a “hero” and have called upon the Iraqi police force and Army to look upon his response to repression as being that of a “role model”.

But what is rarely debated within the West, is where such reactions do come from and undoubtedly some will claim this is an “isolated incident” and bares no connection to the fact, that inside of Iraq, there currently exists a minimum of five million orphaned children.

Unlike the empty promises and false allegations of Western leaders, the killing of the US soldiers was a direct response to the death, destruction and misery which the US and UK have brought with them to Iraq but more importantly, it was an act of defence and a reflection of the reality which Al-Jibouri and millions of Iraqis are facing daily.

The British and American governments have ignored the repeated warnings, which have been given to them, such as those by The Independent’s State of the Nation report, which stated that “more young people today are illiterate in Iraq than in previous generations,” and that “Almost a quarter of children between the ages of six months and five years suffer from malnutrition.” (23/6/2005).

The West also fell silent to the Association of Iraqi Psychologists, who also announced in 2005 that there had been an increase in learning impediments, brought on by the fear of guns, bullets, death and a general “fear of the US occupation.”

Whilst the world cheered the murder of Saddam Hussein, the Iraq Solidarity Campaign published several articles in Feb 2006 which stated that around two million Iraqi families were living below the poverty line, with many “war widows being forced to separate their families” and with poverty growing to such a degree, consistent reports have left the country of people being forced to eat out of rubbish dumps.

In post invasion Iraq, there are families who through fear and the economic situation who are actually selling their children, with the hope that somebody may be able to provide these traumatised kids with a semblance of stability, whilst other people are turning to alcohol, drugs and prostitution, as a financial alternative to the forced separation of families.

But with over one million dead and millions displaced, normality for Iraq’s children is highly unlikely, when you also consider the fact that nearly 400,000 of these children, are suffering from a condition called “wasting”, which is characterised by chronic diarrhoea and high deficiencies of protein.

Even as refugees there has been no escape, with the aid agency CARE International reporting last year, that “many disorders in Jordan relate to gender based violence among Iraqi refugees. “There are many Iraqi refugees living in Jordan under extremely poor conditions, a situation that can lead a frustrated husband who cannot find a job to beat his wife.”

“Also prevalent is Post Traumatic Symptom Disorder (PTSD), affecting men, women and children, who were exposed to torture or witnessed the killing of a family member.”

One example given by the charity was of a child who witnessed his “father’s murder while driving with him and has since developed PTSD. According to counsellors, the child keeps drawing graves with his father’s face on it, as well as red and black cars”, which represent the colours of both his fathers and the killers vehicles.

The situation for the Iraqi people, is likely to deteriorate further, as the dictatorship of Nouri Al-Maliki is preparing to cut the already meagre rationing system and will render the majority of Iraqi families into further poverty and destitution, in an oil rich country which is already impoverished and destitute.

Such cuts to the food rationing system will only increase the difficulties and tensions facing the population, as one health worker told Dahr Jamail of the International Press Service last month: "I and my wife have five boys and six girls so the ration costs a lot when it has to be bought. I cannot afford food and other expenses like study, clothes and doctors."

The most deprived layers of Iraqi society are also going to face the prospect of malnutrition and outright starvation, with one mother telling Al Jazeera: "If they reduce the quantity of the ration, we will be displaced [made homeless] as the money to pay bills will have to be used for food. If we are considered a poor family today, tomorrow we will be considered absolutely desperate."

It is most probable with these reasons, why Caesar Saadi would have pulled the trigger, which killed the illegally occupying US soldiers and their Captain but unlike the US soldiers who were found guilty of the Abu Ghraib "scandal", I doubt Caesar will receive a slap on the wrists and a few months in a comfortable prison cell. For his actions, I am sure we will hear families shouting the name "Caesar" throughout the streets of Iraq.

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