

Iraq's Children Still 'Paying the Price'

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Theme: [Crimes against Humanity](#)

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

'No man is justified in doing evil on the grounds of expediency'.
Theodore Roosevelt.

'He never slept in a bed of myths, He didn't live his childhood'. Ali
Ahmed Said, Victims of a Map, Saqi Books.

Three years before the invasion of Iraq, a small film crew were near Mosul, in northern Iraq, filming John Pilger's soon to be award winning documentary: 'Paying the Price - Killing the Children of Iraq', for which I, with former U.N., Assistant Secretary General and former U.N., Co-ordinator in Iraq, Denis Halliday, were Senior Researchers. Halliday, a man of towering integrity, had resigned from the U.N., after 34 years, calling what that institution had been pressured in to doing to Iraq, primarily by the US and UK., as a result of sanctions - in reality, a crippling, water tight, old fashioned siege - 'genocide ...I did not join the U.N., to kill kids.' He added: 'We are in the process of destroying an entire society. It is as simple and terrifying as that. It is illegal and immoral.' (The Independent, 15th October 1998.)

Pilger, the crew and I, were standing, ankle deep in dead, dismembered, sheep, on a tranquil plane, in ancient Nineveh, which belied the violence (apart from the sheeps' remains) rained down on villagers, often daily, by U.S., and U.K., aircraft, patrolling the (anything but) 'safe havens' in northern Iraq. The patrols, of course, entirely illegal. The sheep were all that remained, to mark a sunny Friday (the Sabbath) where four children, the youngest five, the oldest thirteen, their father and grandfather, had been minding their flock. All were blown to pieces by U.K., or America's brave 'boys', marauding safely thousands of feet above.

Suddenly, the camera swung on me and Pilger asked how I had discovered this place. I explained finding it by chance, then talking to locals, with a colleague, when we were researching an issue of New Internationalist, devoted to Iraq, some months before (New Internationalist, issue 316: 'Iraq : What the United Nations have done'.) Due to the climate, the site and remains, were little changed. Expanding on tragedies, beyond count, over many visits, I found myself concluding : 'It is the children who are paying the price for this embargo'.

The children, any country's most vulnerable, paid the highest price for the embargo and are now 'paying the price' for the illegal invasion. America and Britain's shocking, shameless, price. A price paid financially, by the British people, since 1997 and since the invasion, in cheques written by the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, until the end of June 2007, when he became Prime Minister. Brown and his wife know the price of pain, their baby daughter died and their seventeen month old son, Fraser, has a life threatening condition -cystic fibrosis - from which he would last barely days in Iraq, Afghanistan or Gaza.

Brown the son of a Minister of the Church, like 'devout' Blair before him, clearly does not embrace the tenets of any religion that most would recognize, those of compassion and the sanctity of life, unless it affects their own. 'To save one is as if to save all..' believe Muslims. Christians believe in crossing the road to help a stranger. The bible bashers in Washington and Whitehall believe simply killing all, it seems and also killing the stranger, by one means or another. Even a new born stranger.

It is worth remembering (again) that in the latter years of the embargo, an average of six thousand children a month were dying from 'embargo related causes', primarily due to the collapse of the formerly excellent health services. Health facilities are now worse than under the embargo, thus, in spite of the recent WHO/Iraq Health Ministry Report, citing (comparatively) minimal deaths against the 1.5 million estimated by other respected bodies, since the invasion. One can only conclude that this is a face saving sleight of hand, in view of a near unique U.S.-U.K-driven infanticide and genocide, through both the unimaginable violence they have generated, neglect, destruction and default.

'If we invade Iraq, you will own a country of twenty five million people, Mr. President', Colin Powell was reported as saying to George W. Bush, prior to the invasion. Sickening as Powell's comment was - ironically, an African American who appears to have reverted to a slave-trader mentality. Nevertheless, with 'ownership' and occupation, comes responsibility and in law, a duty of care.

Above my desk, is an early example of Iraq's children 'paying the price'. Three colored drawings by children of six and seven, were given to me in 1991, by Professor Magne Raundalen, the world renowned expert on the trauma of children in war zones, who assessed that Iraq's children, after the forty two day carpet bombing in January and February that year, were the 'most traumatized child population on earth'.

The children were from the school which overlooked the Al Ameriyah Shelter, where all but eight inside were incinerated by U.S., bombs on the night of Eid, St Valentine's Day and the anniversary of the fire bombing of Dresden, in February 1991. The shelter was for women, children, students and the infirm. Many children and teachers from the school died that night.

One picture is of two little girls, black hair, pigtails, stick arms, pointing outwards, legs wide, clearly running. Blobby tears spot their cheeks. Behind them, is a painstakingly drawn baby palm tree, smaller than the children, bent over, tears on its trunk, fronds bent forward, as if to try to hide it, protect it. Two coconuts, droop from under the fronds, also splattered with tears. Above them is a huge, black star, raining red, bullet-like tracers on their heads.

The next one is chaos, people everywhere, again with the near stick images, children draw, They are on the roof of the shelter; climbing up and down ladders, people running away and toward, the latter carrying various indecipherable items, but clearly Civil Defense, fire services, ambulance crew, by the colors of their clothes. Huge black crosses in the sky target the figures - and over all has been scribbled red, covering people, vehicles, the building, rising to the sky and the attacking crosses. The uncontrollable, all enveloping, fire.

The last picture is not dissimilar, except the people have gone. There are just numerous small items covering the ground and dozens of rescue vehicles, carefully drawn, little boxes with wheels, red for fire engines, white for ambulances and smaller police cars. And no one.

The items on the ground are the remains of those pulled from the building, who had shrunk to almost baby size, with the heat, which they did, as anyone who covered this massacre, knows. The little artists will have known no recovery from the images of that night, just a further fifteen years of bombing, invasion, terror, deprivation and deaths.

Those children, trapped within the now, around twenty year olds, that they are, as all Iraq's young, are still 'paying the price'. Remember, occupying forces, next time an IED explodes near you, or metes out to a colleague, a terrible end, remember why you and all you represent, are hated. And when you seek help for PTSD because you have driven over, traumatized, threatened, raped, bombed, burned, shot a baby, child, youth, those they love, or all of the above, think what it has meant to be an Iraqi, under your country's embargo, your boots, your bombs, your invasion and reign of terror – and be ashamed of yourselves. Your condition is entirely self inflicted. Iraqis had and have, no where to hide – and no one to turn to, for the treatment of the terror imposed upon them by your barbarity.

Yet U.S., forces can sink ever lower. This week, two days before Muharram (10th January) the first day of the (Shi'a) Islamic calendar, when killing is forbidden a: ' A U.S., force stormed a kindergarten in a Shi'a-dominated district in Baghdad, smashed toys, doors and windows 'they raided Kanari kindergarten in the Jamila area of Sadr City in Baghdad where they smashed children's toys, doors, windows and roofs', according to a statement by the media centre of the Iraqi cabinet.

' No evidence was found during the raid on the kindergarten that proves ... involvement in terrorist acts' the statement said, of America's finest raiding a kindergarten.

What is it about U.S., soldiers and kids? One of their first acts after the invasion, was to storm orphanages and throw the children on to the street. Children are pulled from their beds and expelled from their homes as parents are held at gunpoint (and those are the lucky ones, children too have been held at gunpoint and shot, raped – and how many such incidents have we not heard of?)

' What did you do in the war, Daddy?'

'Gee son, I raided some pretty scary nursery schools, and plenty of terrorist-filled orphanages. Couldn't sleep at night ... as for those babies and toddlers on laps in cars at checkpoints, you couldn't take any risks, we just shot first and didn't ask questions later, they were sure scary times ... Some of the critters we shot up, we even got to post on porn sites, in exchange for a free look at their stuff ... You wan't to try on Daddy's Purple Heart ..?'

In another act of exceptional bravery on the actual day of Muharram : A military statement said two B-1 bombers and four F-16 fighters dropped thirty eight bombs with 40,000 pounds of explosives, in ten minutes, on 40 targets in Arab Jabour just south of Baghdad, in 10 strikes. Of course, 'Al Qaeda' fighters, are believed to control Arab Jabour, a Sunni district lined with citrus groves'. Presumably 'Al Qaeda', obligingly came out in to the open, clearly marked, so as to avoid the sky born serial killers from vaporizing local homes, their inhabitants – and their children, whose terror, yet again, cannot be imagined.

Oddly, as Arablins reports, on 11th December 2007,: 'Joseph Inge, fourth brigade, third American infantry division, said his forces with the aid of the Awakening forces had been able to clear out the last strongholds of Al Qaeda in the regions of Arab Jabour and Al-Buaita south of Baghdad. He told Radio Sawa: "We have secured the area by freeing it

from the threat of AlQaeda, with the assistance of local citizens". And Captain Inge called on the families that had fled to return to their homes in those areas, promising every type of support and assistance to those families.'

(<http://www.uruknet.info?p=40014>)

Do America's finest lie, are they dumb, do they have no communications, or as I was told in a conversation in Jordan just before the invasion, is it that: 'They won't get their hands on Iraq and it's oil unless they kill every last man, woman and child in the country'? The numbers stacking up are certainly looking as if that is the aim.

And Iraq's children are still 'paying the price'.

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