

Iraq War Crimes: Haditha: Another Small Massacre - No One Guilty

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“We gather tonight knowing that this generation of heroes has made the United States safer and more respected round the world.” (President Barack Obama, State of the Union address, 24th January 2012.)

On the 24th January, the day President Obama delivered his last State of the Union speech to Congress before the election, citing the: “selflessness and teamwork of America’s Armed Forces (their) focus on the mission at hand”, the “selfless” Staff Sgt., Frank Wuterich, leader of the massacre at Haditha, in Iraq, became the seventh soldier to walk free – from the mass murder of twenty four unarmed men, women and children, in three homes and a taxi.

It was another chilling, ruthless, cold blooded, up to five hour rampage, revenge for the death a colleague, in a roadside bomb – which had nothing to do with the rural families that paid the price.

The youngest to die was one year, the oldest was seventy six year old, wheelchair-bound amputee, Abdul Hamid Hassan Ali. He died with nine rounds in the chest and abdomen.

Other children who died were aged 3,4,5,8,10 and 14.

On May 9th 2007, Sergeant Sanick De la Cruz received immunity from prosecution in return for testimony in which he said that he had watched Wuterich shoot five Iraqis attempting to surrender. He further stated that he and Wuterich had further fired in to the dead bodies – and that he had urinated on one of the dead Iraqis.

“Imagine what we could accomplish if we followed (US troops) example”, pondered the President in his speech – in a week which worldwide revulsion was expressed at a video of Marines, allegedly with the 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marines from Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, urinating on dead bodies in Afghanistan.

It was, of course: “behaviour ... not in keeping with the values of the US Armed Forces ... not consistent with our core values (or) indicative of the character of the Marines in our Corps”, said a Defence Department spokeswoman.(i).

Ross Caputi – a former Marine who took part in another massacre, Falluja, exactly a year before Haditha, was sickened at what he saw and experienced, and now campaigns tirelessly for Iraq and for reparation for Falluja – disputes the Defence Department’s sunny view of “core values.

"These attitudes are common in the Marine Corps. The guys who peed on the poor dead Afghans were not 'bad apples', they were average Marines", Caputi told this publication. For his outspokenness, Caputi has received such volume of chilling and obscene threats from former colleagues and US Service personnel (seen by the writer) that they stand testimony to his words.

As Afghanistan, the litany of Iraq's blood-lettings are silent witness to "core values" of an altogether different kind. In an expression disturbingly mirroring "cleansed", homes are "cleared." Grenades are thrown in and then troops storm in, automatic rifles (and more grenades) blazing.

A description of the assault on one Haditha home, from a Lt. William T. Kallop records:

"The Marines cleared it the way they had been trained to clear it, which is frags (grenades) first ... It was clear just by the looks of the room that frags went in and then the house was prepped and sprayed like, with a machine gun, and then they went in. And by the looks of it, they just ... they went in, cleared to room, everybody was down." (ii)

"Most of the shots ... were fired at such close range that they went through the bodies of the family members and plowed in to walls or floors." (iii)

As Marjorie Cohn's meticulous, eye watering piece (see iii) points out, days after the mass murders at Haditha became public: "US forces killed eleven civilians, after rounding them up in a room in a house in Ishaqi", in Salahuddin Province. All were handcuffed (presumably not the six month old) and executed. They were:

Turkiya Muhammed Ali, 75 years

Faiza Harat Khalaf, 30 years Faiz Harat Khalaf, 28 years

Um Ahmad, 23 years

Sumaya Abdulrazak, 22 years

Aziz Khalil Jarmoot, 22 years

Hawra Harat Khalaf, 5 years

Asma Yousef Maruf, 5 years

Osama Yousef Maruf, 3 years

Aisha Harat Khalaf, 3 years

Husam Harat Khalaf, 6 months

"A report by the US military found no wrongdoing by the US soldiers", writes Professor Cohen.

There are Falluja's football fields of mass graves, Najav's hotel and hospital parks, turned graveyards, the pathetic uncounted ones in gardens, in yards, the lost buried in the family home, across Iraq, by families who would be also shot if they ventured with their beloved, to

the cemetery.

In Falluja, reminiscent of other historic “cleansings”, categorized war crimes, men between fifteen and fifty five were forbidden to leave or enter their city.

Iraqi families shot in their cars by US service personnel are beyond counting – and indeed have not been: “It is not productive to count Iraqi deaths”, as the inimitable General Kimmit reminded the world.

Deaths included the family of Ali Abbas, by rogue US missiles, in the residential Zafaraniya suburb of Baghdad, with its evocative Convent and ancient Catholic church. Ali lost his pregnant mother, father, brother and thirteen other family members. He also lost his arms. He was twelve years old.

Allegations of summary executions have emerged from Tel Afar, whose blood drenched toddler, her parents shot by troops in their car, remains a never to be erased image; Samarra, Quaim, Taal al Jal, Mukaradeeb, Hamdaniya, Ramadi, Tikrit, Mosul – and throughout the country.

In Mahmudiya, in 2008, fourteen year old Abeer Quasim Hamza, was gang raped then killed by five US servicemen – after they had murdered her mother, Fakriyah (34) father Qasim (45) and six year old sister. All were burned in an attempt to cover the crime. There were two convictions.

And never forget Abu Ghraib.

Long forgotten are the wedding and funeral massacres, a particular target for the US military, a litany. One, early in the invasion, was just a month after the first Falluja onslaught.

On 19th May 2004 forty six people celebrating a wedding in Mugrideeb village were mown down by assault helicopters, other attack planes and Marines.

USMC Major General James Mattis at the time simply commented: “How many people go to the middle of the desert to celebrate a wedding ...?” He later said that it had taken him thirty seconds to decide to attack.

Eman Khammas of Iraq Occupation Watch braved the dangerous road out to the village as soon as she heard. She found carnage – and remains of the musicians’ instruments, decorations, pots, sacks of rice, improvised bread ovens, sacks filled with leftovers for the animals – all who had been shot – and surviving eyewitnesses.

There were blood stained toys, clothes, childrens’ hair slides, camera batteries. The family were sheep traders. Khammas recalled:

“The ground was full of bullets holes of different sizes, spots of blood every where, some a meter wide. In some of them the remains of human flesh were drying in the sun. . . . In one of these remains there was a long black lock still attached to the flesh. I could not see any more. I ran away back to the demolished house.”

Those mown down, of the Rakaad Naif family, as they celebrated were:

1. Mohammad Rekaad, 28
2. Ahmed Rekaad, 26
3. Talib Rekaad, 27
4. Mizhir Rekaad, 20
5. Daham Rekaad, 17
6. Saad Mohammad Rekaad
7. Marifa Obeid, Rekaad's wife
8. Fatima Madhi, Rekaad's daughter in law
9. Raad Ahmed, grandson, 3
10. Ra'id Ahmed, grandson, 2
11. Wa'ad Ahmed, grandson, 1 month
12. Inad Mohammad, grandson, 6
13. Anood Mohammad, granddaughter, 5
14. Amal Rekaad, daughter, 30
15. Anood Talib, granddaughter, 2
16. Kholood Talib, granddaughter, 6 months
17. Hamid Monif, son in law, 22
18. Somayia Nawaf, wife, 50
19. Siham Rekaad, daughter, 18
20. Hamda Suleiman, wife, 45
21. Rabha Rekaad daughter, 16
22. Zahra Rekaad daughter, 15
23. Fatima Rekaad daughter, 4
24. Ali Rekaad son, 12
25. Hamza Rekaad, 6

Five from a family called Garaghool also died, thirteen of the band and three photographic crew. Forty six, mown down for celebrating a wedding..

Kholood, 8 months, Sabha, 22, Iqbal 14, Mouza, 12, Feisal and Adil (children, ages unknown)

were hospitalized.

There were no prosecutions.

General Mark Kimmit, questioned on the liquidation of the party goers – the dead womens gold also torn from their necks by the troops, according to consistent survivors accounts – simply replied: “Bad people have parties too.” Asked about the near countless other acts of carnage, he responded:

“Change the channel.”

As the cost in Iraqi lives at the hands of US troops briefly hits the headlines again, some of the names that are known, in the perhaps 1.7 million lost, should be remembered. They are not “collateral damage” or “regrettable incidents”, each one is a unique human being, often a small, fledgling one.

In Haditha the victims were:

House One:

1. Abdul Hameed Hassin Ali, 76.
2. Khamisa Tuma Ali, 66, wife of Abdul.
3. Rashid Abdul Hamid, 30.
4. Walid Abdul Hamid Hassan, 35.
5. Jahid Abdul Hamid Hassan, middle aged.
6. Asma Salman Rasif, 32.
7. Abdullah Walid, 4.

Injured: Iman, 8 and Abdul Rahman, 5.

Escaped: Daughter-in-law, Hiba, with 2 month old Asia.

House Two:

8. Younis Salim Khalif, 43.
9. Aida Yasin Ahmed, wife of Younis Salim, died shielding her youngest daughter, Aisha.
10. Muhammad Younis Salim, 10, son.
11. Noor Younis Salim, 14, daughter.
12. Sabaa Younis Salim, 10, daughter.
13. Zainabl Younis Salim, 5, daughter.
14. Aisha Younis Salim, 3, daughter.

15. One year old girl staying with the family.

Survived: Safa Younis Salim, 13, who pretended to be dead.

House Three:

16. Ajamal Ahmed, 41.

17. Marwan Ahmed, 28.

18. Qahtan Ahmed, 24.

19. Chasib Ahmed, 27. Brothers.

Taxi: Passengers were students at the Technical Institute in Saqlawiyah:

20 Ahmed Khadir, taxi driver.

21. Ahram Hamid Flayeh.

22. Khalid Ayada al-Zawi

23. Wajdi Ayada al-Zawri

24. Mohammad Battal Mahmoud.

Lance Corporal Roel Ryan Briones, who, seemingly, was not involved, was ordered to photograph the bodies. He picked up a little girl, shot in the head. The contents of her small skull spilled out on to his trousers. "I need immediate help", he said.

What of help for then thirteen year old Safa, pretending to be dead amongst her family's bodies. Of Hiba, lone survivor of her home, and her now six year old daughter?

What of the heroic Taher Thabet al-Hadithi, young journalist and human rights activist, who filmed every minute, bloody detail the following day, and amassed the truth of what had really happened, as the Defence Department were busy trying to cover their tracks? He fled to Syria in fear of his own life expectancy, should the US military learn of his evidence.

It was his witness materials that made its way in to Time magazine, engendering an "inquiry." Evidence that was indisputable..

The reaction of Major General Steve Johnson, Commander of US Forces in the Province was salutary: "It happened all the time ... it was just the cost of doing business ..."

Routine massacres.

"The renewal of American leadership can be felt across the globe", said President Obama, concluding his address, citing : "... the enduring power of our moral example ... tyranny is no match for liberty."

On the wall of the deserted house of one of the Haditha families, silent witness to this "moral example", is written: "Democracy assassinated the family that was here."

Notes

i.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2085378/US-troops-urinating-dead-Afghan-bodies-video-used-Taliban-recruitment-tool.html#ixzz1lERqw3iC>

ii. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haditha_killings

iii. <http://www.marjoriecohn.com/2012/01/haditha-massacre-no-justice-for-iraqis.html>

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