

SOS Ramadi: New Wave of US Sponsored Atrocities in Iraq

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The first heavy attack on Ramadi by the American and Iraqi forces was launched last Friday, the 9th of June. Ramadi is the capital of the Anbar province and is situated about 100 km west of Baghdad, on the Euphrates. The city's population numbers approximately four hundred thousand and it is well-known for its strong opposition to the foreign occupation. The anti-war front meticulously followed the build-up of the assault, but the official press didn't seem to be aware. The press mentioned rumors about a pending offensive against Ramadi a few times, but spokespersons of the US Army denied those plans.

A resident of Ramadi, Qasem Al-Dulaimy, distributed an emergency email on May 1st. At that time, he had already fled the city with his family. According to his testimony, US soldiers had killed three men during home raids on April 22. One woman was believed to have died of shock. A report on the website of *Free Arab Voice* describes how on that same day American troops stormed the residence of sixty-year-old Kazim Badiwi Hassan.^[1] Neighbors told the correspondent the soldiers blindfolded the family members, put them against a wall in one of the rooms and shot them with light machine guns. Kazim and his four sons were killed and his wife and daughter were wounded and taken away by the soldiers. It is possible that both testimonies concern the same incident. Also the same day, Todd Pitman, an American journalist embedded with a unit in Ramadi wrote: "As Iraqi forces swept through houses, troops from the U.S. Army's 1st Battalion, 506th Infantry Regiment entered several residential buildings, climbing to rooftops to secure the rest of the patrol. With families of men and women huddling in rooms downstairs, U.S. gunners firing light machine guns picked off several gunmen firing at their positions. U.S. Lt. Brett Blalock, 30, of Fernandina Beach, Fla., said four insurgents were believed killed." ^[2] In the western press no civilian casualties were reported for that day; *Iraq Body Count's* database could not be updated.

In the same email Al-Dulaimy wrote that on April 29 two children had been killed by American snipers: a seven-year-old girl who was with her mother on the way to the doctor was felled by a bullet, and an eight-year-old boy was gunned down while he was playing in front of his home. Also on the 29th, witnesses reported another five people were killed by snipers. That same day, Al-Dulaimy's father had nearly been shot when a bullet went through the rear window of his car, but missed him. Neither the western, nor the Arab press reported civilian casualties for the 29th, but an American 1st lieutenant announced the killing of two Iraqi children by a rocket grenade which he attributed to 'insurgents' on the 30th.^[3] Based on reports of the Associated Press and the New York Times, IBC included these last two victims in their database.

May 1

Free Arab Voice reported the death of eight civilians, among them two women and three children, in an American air raid. At the time of the report, three men were still missing.[\[4\]](#) The western press did not mention this incident. An attempt was also made on the life of the governor of Anbar. A source within the Iraqi Army informed the Arab press that the driver and another passenger had died in the attack.[\[5\]](#) According to the western press, an additional ten civilians were killed in the assault.

May 4

Al-Quds reported five people died in an air raid, according to a staff member of a Ramadi clinic.[\[6\]](#) Reuters also mentioned these deaths and added that the American military denied the air raid.[\[7\]](#) Mail & Guardian Online spoke of thirteen deadly casualties, but American Sgt. Dan Schonborg denied the allegation.[\[8\]](#) By the evening, Reuters emphasized contradicting statements in an update on the story.[\[9\]](#) Hospital staff and police announced five to thirteen people killed and another fifteen wounded. Dr. Muhannad al-Fahadawi said that at least eleven people had died, among them two girls and an eight-year-old boy. A spokesperson of the American army no longer denied the air raid, but claimed that only eight 'insurgents' had been killed. Relying on reports of the Associated Press and Agence France Presse, IBC included thirteen victims in its database.

May 10

Free Arab Voice announced the death of eleven civilians, five of whom were women and children.[\[10\]](#) All of them had reportedly been killed by snipers. In the western press no accounts on these victims were found.

Al-Dulaimy, who had by this time returned to Ramadi, sent an email which was posted on the internet by Brian Conley, an American journalist reporting from Amman (Jordan).[\[11\]](#) Al-Dulaimy wrote of the danger caused by American snipers, who had already killed many children with shots to the head. Al-Dulaimy personally knew one such child, seven-year-old Haitham Yusif Hubaiter, who had been killed on his way to school by a sniper two months earlier. On May 10, Al-Dulaimy's was also targeted, fortunately without injury. He writes:

"At 9:30 in the morning, the US troops tried to install more snipers by occupying more houses close to the core of the city, some fighters attacked them and tough fighting continued for 3 hours... US bullets damaged many houses because of their random shooting, this way hurt many families inside their houses and my family was harmed also when many bullets sparked fire in the kids room.. I heard their screams while 2 of my nephews run away from their burning bedroom. My brother and I ran upstairs to find out what kind of hurt we will find this time... my mind was full with images of a kid killed with sniper bullet in head or burned dead body of one of my nephews. I was scared too much and I lost control of my steps on the stairs. I found my brother broke down the door and crashed the window with his hands to get out the heavy smoke and he carried out his 5 year-old son Mustafa who was startled, to get him out of the burned room. The fire started to burn some blankets, I found my way to bring water and started extinguishing the fire. It was small fire caused by the bullets ...this kind of bullets used by US troops is very harmful gun for human beings or the materials-it contains lead that will be like a hot liquid inside the bullet...if the bullet get inside the body will explode and crash the body from inside and melt bones & fleshand if the bullet attacked a car or furniture or wood, it will burn and melt it ."

The description of the bullets indicates that these were so-called soft point bullets. Like dum dum bullets they expand on impact, which causes enormous damage to the body. Because expansion of soft point bullets happens less quickly than that of dum dum bullets, they penetrate deeper.[\[12\]](#) Since 1899, there is an international ban on the use of bullets with such effects.[\[13\]](#)

May 11

Free Arab Voice reported an air raid on an abandoned university dormitory.[\[14\]](#) At the time of the report, four bodies had been found with the search still incomplete. For her series about the front Lara Logan of CBS interviewed soldiers in Ramadi.[\[15\]](#) Five 500-pound so-called 'smart bombs' had been fired on uninhabited buildings this day. The marines estimated that they had killed eight enemies. Once again, these reports could conceivably all concern the same attack.

Free Arab Voice also reported that a warplane had fired on an ambulance, killing the driver and two aid workers.[\[16\]](#) No reports of this incident can be found in the western press.

May 12

Free Arab Voice reported an air raid on a dwelling.[\[17\]](#) Five victims: a man, a woman and three children were found dead under the rubble. Neighbors believed there were more victims, as relatives from Baghdad, fleeing sectarian violence, were staying with the family. An Iraqi officer stated that a major operation in Ramadi would be launched. US tanks fired upon six residences killing four men. For the first time in four days, the American troops allowed ambulances and fire engines to enter the area to provide aid. The western press remained silent.

What the western media do publish consistently are the reports and testimonies from within the American Army. Most of them deal with the battle against the 'insurgents' in Ramadi: the huge losses of the 'rebels', the search for Zarqawi and the heroic performance of American soldiers. Furthermore, the American spokespersons and corporate media reporters pay a lot of attention to the importance of military operations carried out with the excuse 'to hunt insurgents'. The Americans pretend that it is the 'insurgents', rather than the western foreign occupiers themselves along with their Iraqi collaborationists, that the local population needs to be liberated from.

In Jordan, Brian Conley met with some residents from Ramadi. Like Al-Dulaimy's reports, their testimonies differ considerably from the official press releases and show a completely different relationship between residents and resistance. He writes: "Residents of Ramadi repeatedly assure me that were the US troops to leave Ramadi, order could be restored within a matter of days. They feel that without the support of the local people, resistance elements would not be able to continue fighting." [\[18\]](#)

In contrast to the assertions of the US Army about resistance fighters threatening civilians after the occupying forces have used their home as a sniper post, Al-Dulaimy declares he does not fear any reprisals from the resistance. He states that when army troops occupy people's dwelling, resistance fighters ask them to leave and eventually assist them in finding another home. Al-Dulaimy, as well as Sheikh Majeed assured Conley that the resistance has rarely, if ever, targeted civilian buildings with residents inside. This cannot be said of the American troops.

Ramadi's people fear a major assault from the American and Iraqi armies. Iraqi Col. Ali Hassan considers a big operation necessary in order to gain control over the city, he said. But American spokesmen claimed that an attack like the one on Fallujah in November 2004 is unlikely to happen, at least for the moment.^[19] For the residents, such an operation would mean a humanitarian catastrophe. In Fallujah, journalists were expelled from the city. Military spokespersons and hotel journalists announced at the time that hundreds of 'terrorists' had been killed. Later, it surfaced that uncountable civilians had been killed in the massive air raids and that the army had not refrained from the use of chemical weapons. Thousands of refugees from the city lived under miserable conditions in the desert outside the city for months, causing numerous additional victims—especially children and the elderly— who go uncounted. Will Ramadi face a similar fate? The al-Quds correspondent thought it would, as sources within the provincial government said the US planned a major attack in Ramadi in the very near future.

Free Arab Voice continues to report on the situation.^[20] On May 27, American troops arrested seven journalists of international, Arab and local press agencies. The next day, the US carried out air raids on the city, resulting in eight deaths (three of whom were children and a woman) and fifteen wounded. The western press apparently did not see anything. On May 30, *Free Arab Voice* reported five civilians killed, among them a woman and a child. Al Sharqiya TV also mentioned the incident, but once again, it was not announced in the western press. On June 5, five people were killed in an air raid: two children, an elder, and two women. Among the fifteen injured were nine students who were taking their final exams for school at the time of the bombing. The same day, hundreds of fresh troops arrived at Anbar, most of them were stationed in Ramadi. When the army began to seal off the city on June 6, the situation became deadly serious. Water and electricity were cut off and fuel stations were closed down. Medical stores were bombed, all the hospitals were closed and first aid supplies were confiscated. In an attempt to avert the looming major offensive, resistance fighters decided to withdraw from the city. Apparently, this move did not effect the occupation's plans. On June 9, the first attacks began. The western media resembles the sleeping beauty. Except for an article in the LA Times, at the time of writing this article, no report on the operation can be found in the western press on the internet. All have their eyes still on Zarqawi in a media-induced trance. Meanwhile, on Monday, 12 June, Al-Quds reported that the US Army had issued an ultimatum to Ramadi residents.^[21] By June 15, they should turn in all the resistance fighters – what an irrational demand! – or face a massive attack. Again, as in Fallujah, those civilians who have no financial means to leave or no place to go, will be portrayed as 'terrorists' or 'foreign fighters' after they are killed, in order to clean up the face of this dirty war.

^[1] US troops storm family home in ar-Ramadi, murder five men, kidnap two women. *Iraqi Resistance Reports*, 22 April, 2006. (<http://www.freearabvoice.org/Iraq/Report/report497.htm>)

^[2] PITMAN, T., U.S., Iraqi Forces Fight Ramadi Insurgents. *Washington Post*, 22 April, 2006. (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/04/22/AR2006042200508.html>)

^[3] SALAS, B.F., Insurgent attack kills 2 children in Ramadi April 30. *NewsBlaze*, 30 april, 2006. (<http://newsblaze.com/story/20060430142521nnnn.nb/topstory.html>)

^[4] US aircraft blast civilian house in ar-Ramadi. *Iraqi Resistance Reports*, 2 May, 2006. (<http://www.freearabvoice.org/Iraq/Report/report507.htm>)

- [5] Resistance car bomb blasts motorcade of puppet governor of al-Anbar. *Iraqi Resistance Reports*, 2 May, 2006. (<http://www.freearabvoice.org/Iraq/Report/report507.htm>)
- [6] US airraid kills five civilians in ar-Ramadi Thursday morning. *Iraqi Resistance Reports*, 4 May, 2006 (<http://www.freearabvoice.org/Iraq/Report/report509.htm>)
- [7] At least 5 dead in strike on Iraqi house-witnesses. *Reuters Foundation Alertnet*, 4 May, 2006. (<http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/GEO433830.htm>)
- [8] WAGNER, T., Suicide bomber strikes at Baghdad court building. *Mail&Guardian Online*, 4 May, 2006. (http://www.mg.co.za/articlePage.aspx?articleid=270779&area=/breaking_news/breaking_news_international_news/)
- [9] US, Iraqis differ on civilian casualties in Ramadi. *Reuters Foundation Alertnet*, 4 May, 2006. (<http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/L04731714.htm>)
- [10] By nightfall Wednesday, bodies of 11 victims of US offensive on ar-Ramadi had been brought to local hospital. *Iraqi Resistance Reports*, 10 May, 2006 (<http://www.freearabvoice.org/Iraq/Report/report515.htm>)
- [11] CONLEY, B., Continued account from Qasem in Ramadi. *Alive in Baghdad*, 13 May, 2006. (<http://www.aliveinbaghdad.org/v2/node/161>)
- [12] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soft_point_bullet
- [13] Declaration (IV,3) concerning Expanding Bullets. The Hague, 29 July, 1899. (<http://www.icrc.org/ihl.nsf/FULL/170?OpenDocument>)
- [14] US warplanes rocket dormitory building at Al-Anbar University in ar-Ramadi, killing four. *Iraqi Resistance Reports*, 11 May, 2006. (<http://www.freearabvoice.org/Iraq/Report/report516.htm>)
- [15] LOGAN, L., Where the danger is. *CBS Evening News*, 1 May, 2006. (<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2006/05/11/eveningnews/main1612946.shtml>)
- [16] US warplanes rocket homes, ambulance in northeastern Ramadi. *Iraqi Resistance Reports*, 11 May, 2006. (<http://www.freearabvoice.org/Iraq/Report/report516.htm>)
- [17] At least five family members killed in US air raid in ar-Ramadi. *Iraqi Resistance Reports*, 12 May, 2006. (<http://www.freearabvoice.org/Iraq/Report/report517.htm>)
- [18] CONLEY, B., Media Misconceptions of Ramadi Continue – Media Analysis! *Alive in Baghdad*, 23 May, 2006. (<http://www.aliveinbaghdad.org/v2/node/170>)
- [19] Insurgents hamper U.S., Iraqi forces in Ramadi. *Associated Press*, 22 May, 2006. (<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/12922324/>)
- [20] (<http://www.freearabvoice.org/Iraq/Report/index.htm>)
- [21] US orders Resistance fighters to surrender, gives residents of ar-Ramadi until 15 June to leave their city or else face massive US offensive. *Iraqi Resistance Reports*, 12 June, 2006. (<http://www.freearabvoice.org/Iraq/Report/report548.htm>)

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