

US War Crimes in Iraq: Another U.S. Cover-Up Surfaces

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BAGHDAD, Jun 12 (IPS) – In the wake of the Haditha massacre, reports of another atrocity have surfaced in which U.S. troops killed two women in Samarra, and then attempted to hide evidence of their responsibility.*

Among the innumerable such cases people speak of, this one too has now come to light.

According to an earlier account, Nabiha Nisaif Jassim, a 35-year-old mother of two, was killed in firing along with her 57-year-old cousin Saliha Mohammed Hassan on May 30 when they were being transported to Samarra General Hospital for Nabiha to give birth.

What was not reported, according to an Iraqi human rights investigator who spoke with IPS on condition of anonymity, was that both women were shot in the back of the head by U.S. snipers.

"I investigated this incident myself, and both of these women were shot from behind," said the investigator. "Nabiha's brains were splattered on her brother who was driving the car, since she was in the back seat."

The U.S. military said soldiers fired on the car after it entered a "clearly marked prohibited area near an observation post" after failing to stop despite "repeated visual and auditory warnings." The U.S. military said in a statement that "shots were fired to disable the vehicle."

The brother of the pregnant woman, Redam Nisaif Jassim, who was driving the car, told IPS that he neither saw nor heard any warnings by the U.S. military. Two men who witnessed the incident from a nearby home also said they saw no signs of any warning.

"These kinds of killings by the Americans happen daily in Iraq," said Jassim, "They gave no warning to us before killing my cousin and sister. Of course we know they have no respect for the lives of Iraqis."

The U.S. military claims the incident is being investigated.

The Haditha slaughter in which 24 Iraqis were killed is under investigation for the incident itself, and further for the cover-up, since the initial report given by the Marine Corps stated only that 15 civilian deaths were caused by a roadside bomb and fighting with insurgents.

In this case too, all signs point to a cover-up. "The area where they were killed by the

Americans was completely unmarked,” the human rights investigator told IPS. A warning sign at the place was put up after the two women were killed, he said.

Like the Haditha massacre, this incident too should be investigated both for the killing and the cover-up, he said.

According to the investigator, the U.S. troops who killed the two women made no attempt to assist them after the shooting.

The next day Redam Jassim was summoned to a local police station. “The Americans offered me 5,000 dollars, and told me it wasn’t compensation but because of tradition,” Jassim told IPS. The U.S. military pays usually 2,500 dollars compensation for killing an Iraqi. Jassim says he refused the payment.

The U.S. military recently announced in a Defence Department report provided to Congress that it paid out 19 million dollars in compensation to Iraqis last year — half of which paid out by Marines in al-Anbar province west of Baghdad.

The military claimed the amount was paid in 600 separate incidents, but it is common knowledge in Iraq that the usual payout for a non-combat civilian death is 2,500 dollars.

A payment of 19 million dollars compensation at 2,500 dollars a person would suggest such killings in thousands.

Jassim told IPS and the human rights investigator that he was asked by the Americans’ translator to sign a paper written in English. The family and their relatives live in a village called al-Muta’assim, a 40-minute drive from the main hospital in Samarra.. Most people there, like the Jassims, neither speak nor read English.

After he signed the paper, Jassim was offered 2,500 dollars by U.S. soldiers, which he again refused.

“It is clear the Americans tried to cheat him as well as cover up their tracks at the same time,” the investigator told IPS. “Like in Haditha, this incident, along with so many others we cannot keep track of, requires a truly independent investigation, rather than one by the U.S. military.”

Phone calls and emails to the U.S.. military spokesperson in Baghdad have not been returned.

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