

Walls and War Crimes

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Theme: [Crimes against Humanity](#)

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

Baghdad's Sadr City (formerly named Al Thawa in the 1950's, then Medina al Saddam - Saddam City) dismissively and degradingly dubbed 'a slum', by the main stream media, has suffered grievously. Grindingly poor, proud, with both the criminality that poverty brings and the hardest of working, determined never to sink to it - and all the complexities in between, Sadr City is now America's latest victim. In Washington's unique interpretation of 'liberation', it is being walled in, so residents have no escape - and the trapped bombed. Add your own metaphor, starting with General Norman Schwarzkopf's 1991: 'Turkey shoot.' This is the neighborhood-wide equivalent of the homicidal maniac with arsonist tendencies, who locks in the family, pours gasoline over the surrounds and through the letter box, following up with a few lighted matches.

'Liberate' (Collins Dictionary) is: 'to free from social prejudices or injustices, to make free or to release a country from enemy occupation.' America and Britain's finest certainly got that one the wrong way round and now it is Sadr City's turn to become target for their sadistic distortions.

It is uncertain how many of Sadr City's residents have been liberated from their lives and/or their homes, but on Saturday 3rd May, in the densely inhabited and teeming area surrounding the general hospital, American insurgents went in search of 'terrorists' and a 'weapons cache' - from the air, with bombs.

'Civilian hospitals organized to give care to the wounded and sick, the infirm and maternity cases, may in no circumstances be the object of attack, but shall at all times be respected and protected by the Parties to the conflict. Persons regularly and solely engaged in the operation and administration of civilian hospitals, including the personnel engaged in the search for, removal and transporting of and caring for wounded and sick civilians, the infirm and maternity cases, shall be respected and protected', reads the Geneva Convention, Article 19.

However, at home and abroad, international law has been abandoned by America's lawmakers and their itinerant, uniformed killers. Recently it was disclosed that over three hundred thousand US soldiers suffer from 'mental conditions.' Given their astonishingly deviant behavior, where ever their postings, whether in peace, war, or illegal invasions, it has to be wondered how high the percentage of these 'mental conditions' were deep rooted long term disorders, well pre-existing their service.

The destruction in Saturday's bombing damaged the hospital and destroyed a fleet of ambulances (numbers differ between fifteen and seventeen) so as the trapped, injured, mutilated and terrorized waited for help, emergency response too had been rendered disabled. In the blackest, most tragic of ironies, it was 'protective' walls which collapsed on

the ambulances as a result of the blast, crushing them. Five missiles had exploded by the hospital car park, according to hospital guard, Alaa Mohammed. AFP reported three craters with a diameter of six meters, youngsters climbing the rubble searching for survivors. Under the dictatorship of the 'butcher of Baghdad', 'tyrant', 'despot', there was not a wall in sight in Baghdad's great sun kissed expanses, glittering both sides of the Tigris – or indeed across Iraq. Under the psychologically challenged administrators of freedom and democracy's bounteous rule, Israeli style (and built?) walls imprison streets, neighborhoods, villages, towns, cities, from Sinbad's Basra to Mosul's monasteries.

There were no weapons of mass destruction either, before the invasion, now they rain down on humanity with impunity and destroy every still remaining structure of civil society. As in Afghanistan, the New World's vicious vagrants simply announce that they targeted terrorists and questions or accountability become as miraculously redundant as the Geneva Convention.

In the Sadr hospital with: 'corridors ... littered with glass splinters, twisted metal and hanging electrical wiring' with ward partitions wards collapsed and staff in shock, Zaydan had kept vigil for twenty four hours. Her home had been demolished in a subsequent attack as she and her sister Samira prepared lunch. Neighbors rushed to help dig the family out of the rubble and in a now familiar barbaric, inhuman act, another missile was fired by the Americans, killing at least six of the rescuers. Only Zaydan, Samira and their brother Ahmed survived, he with leg injuries. 'Zaydan was still waiting for seven family members to be disinterred from the rubble and delivered to Sadr general. The other three were in the morgue, among them a nephew, aged three, lying on a trolley in a puddle of blood from a head wound.'

'What wrong have you done, my children?' She called to the spirits of four nephews and nieces who completed a toll of ten family members in the disaster. 'Mothers, children, babies; all obliterated for nothing,' she howled.

'They (the Americans) will say it was a weapons cache (they hit),' said the head of Baghdad's health department, Dr Ali Bistan. "But, in fact they want to destroy the infrastructure of the country. He charged that the attack was aimed at preventing doctors and medicines reaching the hospital which is located inside an area of increased clashes between American troops and militiamen. (Scene Reports compiled by www.travelling-soldier.org)

Another victim, two year old Ali Hussein, whose small lifeless body was yet another endorsement of wanton terrorism, courtesy of Uncle Sam, was killed when two hundred pound rockets were fired, reducing homes to rubble and lives to ruins. The US military say they were fired on by militia and that they killed twenty eight of them. Hospital officials said dozens of civilians were killed or wounded. Hussein's father recounted how the toddler repeatedly pushed against his legs, indicating he wanted to go out to play – it was deemed too dangerous. His mother recounted crawling round in the masonry and dust, looking for her children. Imagine her then – and now never ending – nightmare.

On May 5th a bomb on a Sadr City home incinerated a pregnant woman and her children, an action drawn to the attention of White House Press Secretary Dana Perino by the redoubtable Helen Thomas. Clearly it is not alone the armed forces who suffer 'mental conditions.' Perino is reported as replying: 'Well, the operation in Sadr City will continue until they root them out. And that is expressly in order to protect people like you mentioned.'

(<http://www.uruknet.info?p=43788>)

The US and UK's physically and psychologically damaged touring killers, however, return home to the comfort zone of modern medical care and ancillary support. They have physical aids and a plethora of mental diversions. Their victims and the medical staff helping them, struggle with a health system destroyed by the embargo and the invasion. Survivors return to homes liberated from electricity, water (clean, safe water a mere memory) surrounded by sewage resultant from bombed installations and pipes (another Geneva Convention violation..) Iraqis do have one thing in common with their homicidal tormentors. All in Iraq breathe the same cancer causing, toxicity burdening, depleted uranium contaminated air.

The care contrast, however, was highlighted this week when it was announced that the rehabilitation center for Britain's most severely injured soldiers, Headley Court, in safe, leafy Surrey, are to receive £25 million for a gym and a swimming pool. I thought of Sadr city resident, Karim. He lost his leg at the thigh, blown off at the tail end of the US driven, eight year, Iran-Iraq war. The health services in Iraq were still exemplary at the time and he underwent appropriate surgeries and treatment and was to be fitted with an artificial limb as soon as the lengthy healing process was sufficient. Before that happened came the Kuwait invasion, the embargo and the collapse of the health service.

Karim's prime concern was that the loss of his leg would jeopardize his ability to support his family, so he earned a living by converting the family car to a taxi. He weaved skillfully through Baghdad's chaotically challenging traffic, his one foot dancing across the pedals of his battered manual car. It was surely a combination of Allah and the pride and spirit of his self-sufficiency that rendered him dent and scratch free, year after year, in days often seventeen hours long. And he never lost hope that one day, he would get his leg and throw away the crutch he needed to walk, which damaged his gait and his pride. In his car he was the most skilled of operatives, on the street he felt a cripple.

As the dawn rose over Baghdad in February 2003, I wandered down Sa'doun Street, savoring again the sights, sounds and smell of cardamom and aromatic herbs, in tiny glasses of tea brewed on makeshift pavement stands. Then a squeal of brakes, a deafening blast of a horn, a traffic-stopping yell: 'Madam Felicity, Madam Felicity ...' and Karim materialized, out of his car in an instant – and in the road, in public, in defiance of all Arab modesty, norms, he pulled up his dish dasa nearly thigh high: 'Look, look, Madam Felicity, I have my leg, I have my leg ...' He did, perfectly fitted, the hated crutch gone. He was whole again. He had waited fifteen years. No gym, no swimming pool, no computer games, just the hardest of work, quiet courage and dogged determination.

Karim encapsulates the Iraqi spirit – from Sadr City to the Shatt al Arab, from Samarra to Sinjar. The staff of the Sadr City hospital have fought for their patients with the same spirit. Sadr city traditionally had a disproportionate amount of gun shot wounds. Not only were guns fired frequently in the air in traditional celebration or commemoration, bullets ricocheting off walls with often near lethal results, disputes could also be settled with arms. During the embargo, the hospital struggled to repair and rehabilitate patients with complex wounds, often even the full range of sutures, rehydration fluids or that necessary to maintain a blood was vetoed by the UN Sanctions Committee (under US and UK pressure.).

On one hospital visit, an eighteen year old youth had been in the way of quite a barrage. He had been expertly repaired from groin to shoulder level. He was without pain relief of any kind or life sustaining fluids or antibiotics. The neat stitches had been fashioned with the only available sutures. Even to an untrained eye, they looked more suitable for the repair of

heavy leather, rather than youthful human flesh. Somehow he managed to grin through the raw pain. His shocking wounds were clearly going to be a badge of honor back on the street. 'He'll be back', said the exasperated surgeon, never the less putting a reassuring hand gently on his shoulder, for a long moment.

In common with all Iraq's hospitals, the elevators had long died for want of vetoed spare parts, so patients were carried between floors, theatres, wards, by wraith thin porters, who also delivered vast, weighty, old fashioned oxygen cylinders to those most in need. The central oxygen system too had long collapsed. In the basement an engineer showed me the generator for the central air conditioning, respite for the sick, from Baghdad's searing, sauna summers. It was overheating badly, so he had arranged free standing fans to try and cool it. 'What happens if the electricity goes off?' I asked. He bent and tore the lids off some large card board storage boxes, making a fanning gesture with them. He was not altogether joking.

It was in that hospital, where I stood helplessly as seven year old Yasmin died, after a five year wait for that needed for a relatively simple procedure for a heart ailment, embargoed and unavailable. Under silent, sanctioned genocide, or the deafening ongoing one, at least America and Britain can never be accused of discrimination. The unborn, the new born and the very young are scrupulously equally targeted with adults, the elderly, the vulnerable and the infirm.

When Yasmin died, a strange thing happened. Her mother and grandmother had run, screaming, keening her name, across the road, through the market: 'Yasmin, Yasmin, Yasmin ,,,,' her name faded, the further they ran, yet somehow it seemed to float back through the open window, again and again, near-tangibly settling over her small, cooling body. A skeptic, rather than a believer, I do know something outside understanding happened that morning.

May the voices, including those of the unborn, of all they have killed, haunt too, those who devised and those who have carried out the infanticide and tyrannicide in Iraq and Afghanistan, for all time. That might even be called a 'conscience' rather than a 'mental condition.'

And did Karim gain his precious leg only to be liberated from his life?

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