

Why Tony Blair Is A War Criminal Who Should Be On Trial In The Hague

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Archbishop Desmond Tutu's recent condemnation of Tony Blair's role in the invasion of Iraq, and his refusal to attend a summit with the former British prime minister, increases the pressure on [war criminal Blair](#).

In a searing [written indictment](#) published on Sunday, Tutu slammed Blair for the devastating war. He criticised Blair's fabrications which led to the invasion of Iraq, including his lies about the country's supposed weapons of mass destruction, and his refusal to allow UN inspectors more time to establish whether or not Saddam Hussein posed a genuine threat to world peace.

He described Blair and Bush as immoral playground bullies, whose reckless warmongering has caused extensive suffering and loss of life, further polarised the world, and helped normalise a climate of Western aggression that currently threatens formerly stable, sovereign, and peaceful Iran and Syria.

Here are five reasons why Tony Blair is a war criminal, who should be on trial in The Hague.

1) Blair launched a war of aggression that broke international law

In attacking Iraq, Blair committed a [crime against peace](#), defined by the Nuremberg Principles as the "planning, preparation, initiation or waging of a war of aggression". The Iraq war was waged for a reason other than self-defence, which made it a crime of aggression and violated Articles 33 and 51 of the UN Charter.

2) Blair knew he was breaking international law

Eight months before the invasion, the British government's most senior legal adviser [wrote to Blair](#) and advised him that an attack on Iraq would be a serious breach of international law, and the UN charter. Lord Goldsmith's July 2002 letter stated that an invasion launched on the premise of self defence would be illegal because Britain was not under threat by Iraq, and that whilst in certain circumstances the UN allowed 'humanitarian intervention', it was not relevant in the case of Iraq.

Blair not only ignored Goldsmith's letter, but banned him from attending cabinet meetings and gagged him so that he could not speak out publically.

Blair was explicitly warned by his Cabinet Office that a "legal justification for invasion would be needed. Subject to law officers' advice, none currently exists." Then Foreign Secretary

Jack Straw similarly advised Blair that none of the legal conditions for war had been met.

3) UN Security Council Resolution 1441 did not authorise war

Blair and his supporters argue that [UN Security Resolution 1441](#), passed on November 8th 2002, authorised war on Iraq. This resolution did strengthen the mandate of the UN Monitoring and Verification Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and gave Iraq “a final opportunity to comply with its disarmament obligations” – but it did not authorise war.

American ambassador John Negroponte assured the Security Council the resolution meant a “further breach” by Iraq would require “the matter...return to the Council for discussions as required in paragraph 12.”

UK Permanent Representative Sir Jeremy Greenstock KCMG similarly confirmed that “there is no ‘automaticity’ in this resolution. If there is a further Iraqi breach of its disarmament obligations, the matter will return to the Council for discussion as required in Operational Paragraph 12.”

4) Blair lied to help fix the intelligence and facts around the policy

There are numerous examples of [Blair lying, deceiving, and misleading](#), in order to hype the supposed threat from Iraq, and try and justify war. Here are just a few examples.

In April 2002 he claimed that Saddam Hussein had major stockpiles of chemical and biological weapons – even though the Joint Intelligence Committee had described the intelligence as “sporadic and patchy” just the previous month. They also said that Saddam only had “some production equipment, and some small stocks of CW agent precursors”.

Blair claimed that Iraq posed a regional threat, when the previous month a secret Cabinet Office paper noted that “Saddam has not succeeded in seriously threatening his neighbours.”

During a press conference Blair and Bush jointly referred to a purported IAEA report, apparently confirming that Iraq was six months away from developing a nuclear weapon. IAEA spokesman Mark Gwozdecky later denied that the agency had issued any such report, said that there was no substantiated evidence for an Iraqi nuclear weapons program, and that anyone who claimed to know the nuclear situation in Iraq was “misleading you”.

In late September 2002, citing a British government dossier, Blair claimed that Iraq had “existing and active military plans for the use of chemical and biological weapons, which could be activated within 45 minutes”. When this was later revealed to be untrue, Blair claimed that he had never understood that intelligence agencies did not believe Saddam had long-range weapons of mass destruction.

However, former Foreign Secretary [Robin Cook confirmed](#) that on March 5th 2003 – two weeks before the attack on Iraq – Blair told him that Saddam’s “battlefield weapons had been disassembled and stored separately”.

Blair later claimed that he did not recall Cook telling him that Saddam had no long-range weapons.

5) The illegal war on Iraq has caused an enormous amount of suffering and death

Estimates vary, but according to the [Iraq Body Count Project](#) at least 108,000 Iraqi civilians have died as a result of violence since the country's invasion in March 2003, with tens of thousands wounded and traumatised and millions displaced. Nearly 5000 military personnel have been killed.

Others have been tried for war crimes which resulted in the deaths of far fewer people than the Iraq war and, as Archbishop Tutu states:

in a consistent world, those responsible for this suffering and loss of life should be treading the same path as some of their African and Asian peers who have been made to answer for their actions in the Hague.

Let's keep up the pressure on the war criminal Tony Blair – and everyone else who was complicit in the illegal invasion of Iraq.

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