

Iraq: The Age of Darkness

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

Part I : "Success", a devastating balance sheet

In the immediate aftermath of the 2003 invasion, the triumphalist verdict of the mainstream media was that the war had been won; Iraq was assured of a benevolent, democratic future. The Times's writer William Rees-Mogg hymned the victory: "April 9 2003 was Liberty Day for Iraq. (...) It was achieved by "the engine of global liberation", the United States. "After 24 years of oppression, three wars and three weeks of relentless bombing, Baghdad has emerged from an age of darkness. Yesterday was an historic day of liberation." [1]

"The problem with this war for, I think, many Americans is that the premise on which we justified going to war proved not to be valid, that is Saddam having weapons of mass destruction," Defense Secretary Robert Gates told reporters while visiting Iraq.

"So when you start from that standpoint, then figuring out in retrospect how you deal with the war — even if the outcome is a good one from the standpoint of the United States — it will always be clouded by how it began." [2]

So here Robert Gates acknowledges that this war was illegal according to international law, because there was no "casus belli". But in the same sentence he says that the outcome has been good for the United States. What does he mean exactly? How can all the killing and destruction be a good outcome for the USA? And what about responsibilities? If you know that Iraq is still paying reparations for the invasion in Kuwait in 1990, how about the payment of reparations by the USA for the destruction it inflicted upon Iraq?

"We fought together, we laughed together, and sometimes cried together. We stood side by side and shed blood together," Gen. Ray Odierno told Iraqi military leaders and hundreds of American soldiers and officers during the ceremony that officially closed combat operations. "It was for the shared ideals of freedom, liberty, and justice." [3] Yes, they laughed together, like in the infamous, by Wikileaks released video of the "Collateral Murder" helicopter gunship attack on Baghdad civilians in July 2007, that killed more than a dozen Iraqis, two of them journalists of Reuters. And blood they surely have shed together! A lot of blood of over a million mothers, fathers, children and elderly Iraqi people. All that for "shared ideals of freedom, liberty and justice", Mr. Odierno? Well, most Iraqis don't share that view. For them, the country has slid into the age of darkness.

The facts

Here the facts:

Iraq's child mortality rate has increased by 150 percent since 1990, when U.N. sanctions

were first imposed. By 2008, only 50 percent of primary school-age children were attending class, down from 80 percent in 2005, and approximately 1,500 children were known to be held in detention facilities.

In 2007, there were 5 million Iraqi orphans, according to official government statistics. More than 2 million Iraqis are refugees and almost 3 million internally displaced. 70 percent of Iraqis do not have access to potable water.

Unemployment is as high as 50 percent officially, 70 percent unofficially. 43 percent of Iraqis live in abject poverty. 8 million Iraqis require immediate emergency aid. 4 million people lack food and are in dire need of humanitarian assistance. 80 percent of Iraqis do not have access to effective sanitation. Religious minorities are on the verge of extinction.[4]

In a recent Oxfam-designed survey, 33 percent of women had received no humanitarian assistance since 2003; 76 percent of widows did not receive a pension; 52 percent were unemployed; 55 percent had been displaced since 2003; and 55 percent had been subjected to violence – 25.4 percent to random street violence, 22 percent to domestic abuse, 14 percent to violence inflicted by militias, 10 percent to abuse or abduction, 9 percent to sexual abuse and 8 percent to violence inflicted by multinational forces.[5] Iraq has a dysfunctional parliament, rampant disease, an epidemic of mental illness, and sprawling slums. The killing of innocent people has become part of daily life.

William Blum gives a short but devastating overview of the “good outcome” of this war: “No American should be allowed to forget that the nation of Iraq, the society of Iraq, have been destroyed, ruined, a failed state. The Americans, beginning 1991, bombed for 12 years, with one excuse or another; then invaded, then occupied, overthrew the government, killed wantonly, tortured ... the people of that unhappy land have lost everything — their homes, their schools, their electricity, their clean water, their environment, their neighborhoods, their mosques, their archaeology, their jobs, their careers, their professionals, their state-run enterprises, their physical health, their mental health, their health care, their welfare state, their women’s rights, their religious tolerance, their safety, their security, their children, their parents, their past, their present, their future, their lives ... More than half the population either dead, wounded, traumatized, in prison, internally displaced, or in foreign exile ... The air, soil, water, blood and genes drenched with depleted uranium ... the most awful birth defects ... unexploded cluster bombs lie in wait for children to pick them up.”[6]

Hannah Gurman adds the following challenge to this grim picture of “success”: “No matter how much the U.S government erases the past or predicts the future of Iraq, ordinary Iraqis will continue to face the more messy and complicated realities of the present. I dare Obama and everyone else in the spin machine to go to Iraq and look a child in the eyes. A child who, seven years after the U.S. invasion, still lacks adequate housing, drinking water, sanitation, electricity and education. Now, tell that child that the war in Iraq was a success.”[7]

Or read this evaluation of the “Iraqi success story” by Iraqi Dr. Riad El Taher: “To date the net achievements of the Bush/Blair adventure are: Handing the Iraqi people a future in the hands of thugs and economic profiteers. None of them have had the slightest interest to serve the Iraqi people. The proof is instant wealth acquired by Chalabi, Alawi, Maliki, Sistani, Hakin, Bayati, Bachachi, Baher Alom and Rubai by virtue of their political adventure. Iraq’s natural resources are mortgaged for the next 50 years to the international oil contractors. Iraq experience intellectual and talent are forced to migrate. Sectarian divide is thriving and encouraged by the constitution. Ethnic minorities are undermined or forced to

leave – Christians/Subain. Human rights, particularly of women, are violated and have reversed their past achievement in protecting maternity rights, employment and health. Education, health, environment and water resources are not seriously addressed and the same applies to agriculture, industries and culture. Thanks to Bush/Blair, Iraq held several democratic elections where the votes were bought by favour, intimidation or fear. Currently Iraqi citizens have access to a mobile phone, multi-TV channels, which are owned by the Iraqi Green Zone thugs and their sponsor US/UK/Kuwait investors”.

The destruction of Iraq has produced 2 million refugees but they’re not welcome in Europe. The UN refugee agency (UNHCR) on Friday expressed its concern and objected to the continuing forced returns of Iraqi citizens from Western European countries soon after 61 people were flown back to Baghdad[8].

The fundamental contradiction of this success is the fact that Bremer’s 100 orders turned Iraq into a giant free-market paradise, but a hellish nightmare for Iraqis. They colonized the country for capital – pillage on the grandest scale, a cutthroat capitalist laboratory, weapons of mass destruction. Iraqis got no role in the planning nor were given subcontracts to share the benefits. New economic laws instituted low taxes, 100% foreign investor ownership of Iraqi assets, the right to expropriate all profits, unrestricted imports, and long-term 30-40 year deals and leases, dispossessing Iraqis of their own resources, so no future government could change them, writes Stephen Lendman[9].

A Transparency International Report states that the corruption in Iraq will probably become “the biggest corruption scandal in history”. [10] And as the U.S. draws down in Iraq, it is leaving behind hundreds of abandoned or incomplete projects. More than \$5 billion in American taxpayer funds has been wasted — more than 10 percent of the some \$50 billion the U.S. has spent on reconstruction in Iraq, according to audits from a U.S. watchdog agency.

That amount is likely an underestimate, based on an analysis of more than 300 reports by auditors with the special inspector general for Iraq reconstruction.[11] Despite \$53 billion in “aid” spent since the 2003 invasion, 70 percent of Iraqis are without potable water or electricity. These funds have lined the pockets of foreign military contractors and corrupt officials.[12] The Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction said the US Department of Defence is unable to account properly for \$8.7bn. Out of \$9bn, 96% is unaccounted for. It’s interesting to note that much of this money is not “aid” money, but came from the sale of Iraqi oil and gas, and some frozen Saddam Hussein-era assets were also sold off.[13]

Iraqi authorities have started the construction of a security wall around the capital Baghdad, reports the country’s Al-Iraqiya TV citing a Baghdad security spokesperson. The concrete wall with eight checkpoints is to be completed in mid-2011.[14] So not only the people of Baghdad are forced to live in gated communities (concrete “security” barriers between different districts), the whole city will be gated, sealed off from the outside world like a medieval fortress.

This past May, a study called The Mercer Quality of Living survey[15] released its results of “most livable city” in 2010. It ranked Baghdad dead last—the least livable city on the planet.

This is due to the complete destruction of Iraq’s sewage treatment plants, factories, schools, hospitals, museums and power plants by the U.S. military.[16] UN-HABITAT, an agency of the United Nations, recently published a 218-page report entitled State of the World’s Cities,

2010-2011.[17] Adil E. Shamoo's comment: Almost intentionally hidden in these statistics is one shocking fact about urban Iraqi populations. For the past few decades, prior to the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, the percentage of the urban population living in slums in Iraq hovered just below 20 percent. Today, that percentage has risen to 53 percent: 11 million of the 19 million total urban dwellers. In the past decade, most countries have made progress toward reducing slum dwellers. But Iraq has gone rapidly and dangerously in the opposite direction.[18]

The 2007 launched Global Peace Index (GPI) ranks countries annually according to peacefulness, identifying key peace or violence drivers. Of the 144 countries in its 2009 report, Iraq ranked last, Afghanistan second last. In April 2010, Amnesty International released a report titled, "Iraq: Human Rights Briefing," Their conclusion: "the human rights situation in the country remains grave. All parties to the continuing conflict have committed gross abuses and the civilian population continues to bear the brunt of the ongoing violence. The security situation is still precarious despite some improvement in 2009. Attacks on civilians, arrests, kidnapping, armed clashes" happen daily.

There is still no functioning government in Iraq. "Some cynical analysts intimate that the current situation was exactly what the US (and Israel) wanted or what Washington had in mind when it drafted the constitution. The current Iraqi divisions keep the country weak and at the mercy of the US and allow the latter to continue playing the part of the balancing power in order to perpetuate its presence", writes Saad Jawad, professor of political science at Baghdad University.[19]

Who is threatening Iraq's security? Who is responsible for the deadly attacks, car bombs...? There are a lot of stories about involvement of security forces. On the 28th of August U.S. forces have arrested a deputy of Ahmad Chalabi, Ali Faisal al Lami, who was once the Bush administration's favorite Iraqi politician, and implicated him in bombings that killed Americans and Iraqis. Al Lami is a Shiite Muslim official and a member of the Sadrist Party who's serving as an executive of the Justice and Accountability Committee, which Chalabi heads.[20] The meaning of this piece of information is that the thugs, who came to Iraq with the US troops, whose militias were armed, funded and trained by the US, are at least partially responsible for the strings of bombings that ravage the country.

With these facts in mind, it's astonishing to hear the US officials talk about a "good outcome for the United States". Obama declared the so-called end to Combat Mission in Iraq[21]. He refuses to look back at 7 years of catastrophe; he wants to look at the future, escape his responsibilities. Perhaps the most striking comment on Obama's speech came from Chris Floyd:

After mendaciously declaring on 31 August an "end to the combat mission in Iraq", (...) Obama delivered what was perhaps the most egregious, bitterly painful lie of the night: 'Through this remarkable chapter in the history of the United States and Iraq, we have met our responsibility.' "We have met our responsibility!" No, Mister President, we have not. Not until many Americans of high degree stand in the dock for war crimes. Not until the United States pays hundreds of billions of dollars in unrestricted reparations to the people of Iraq for the rape of their country and the mass murder of their people. Not until the United States opens its borders to accept all those who have been and will be driven from Iraq by the savage ruin we have inflicted upon them, or in flight from the vicious thugs and sectarians we have loosed — and empowered — in the land. Not until you, Mister President, go down on your knees, in sackcloth and ashes, and proclaim a National of Day of Shame to

be marked each year by lamentations, reparations and confessions of blood guilt for our crime against humanity in Iraq.’[22]

But the US does not intend to pay reparations for the damage done. On the contrary: Christopher Crowley, USAID director in Iraq, said the push for Iraqis to take over the U.S. victims aid program is part of a general trend for all American assistance programs in Iraq. The U.S. is “seeking a larger contribution from the (Iraqi) government to these programs so they will become more sustainable as time goes on,” he said. Crowley said many in the U.S. believe Iraq has the means to pay its own way to rebuild after the war, with the world’s third largest proven reserves of crude oil. Asked why the Iraqi government should pay compensation for deaths during American operations, he said the victims “are Iraqi citizens”.[23] This is really unbelievable: The US wants the Iraqi government to pay compensations for the destruction and all the killings the US military machine inflicted upon the country. The reasons they give are: a) Iraq can sell a lot of oil to reconstruct the country and b) the victims are Iraqis and thus compensations should be paid by... Iraqis. Twisted logic this is. Comment from an Iraqi: “Someone entered my house illegally and destroyed everything and killed my family and he asks me to pay for the damage? Am I talking to barbarians who just came out of a cave?”

All this destruction has cost the US taxpayer a lot of money. “As the United States ends combat in Iraq, it appears that our \$3 trillion estimate (which accounted for both government expenses and the war’s broader impact on the U.S. economy) was, if anything, too low. For example, the cost of diagnosing, treating and compensating disabled veterans has proved higher than we expected.” writes Joseph Stiglitz in the Washington Post[24]. Moreover, a report published by the Strategic Foresight Group in India in a book entitled The Cost of Conflict in the Middle East, calculates that conflict in the area over the last 20 years has cost the nations and people of the region 12 trillion U.S. dollars. The Indian report adds that the Middle East has recorded “a high record of military expenses in the past 20 years and is considered the most armed region in the world.”[25] Imagine if that sum would have been spent on rural and urban infrastructure, dams and reservoirs, desalination and irrigation, forestation and fisheries, industry and agriculture, medicine and public health, housing and information technology, jobs, equitable integration of cities and villages, and repairing the ravages of wars rather than on arms that can only create destruction.

The unbearable lightness of Iraqi public services

As mentioned above, basic necessities such as potable water, reliable electricity, garbage pickup, a functioning sewage system, employment, health care, etc. are beyond the reach of the vast majority of Iraqis. Iraq has slid into the age of darkness, not only in the figurative, but also in the very literal sense, since light has become a scarce commodity. Complaints have been growing about public power lasting just a few hours each day. Iraqi police used water cannon and batons to disperse protesters in the southern city of Nassiriya after protests flared on 22 August over crippling electricity shortages and inadequate services. Similar demonstrations occurred in Nassiriya in June when 1,000 protesters tried to storm the provincial council building, scuffling with police, and also in Basra, where two people died in clashes with police.[26]

Violent protests in several cities over power shortages In June forced Iraq’s electricity minister Kareem Waheed to resign.[27]

He was replaced by Hussain al-Shahristani, Oil Minister of Iraq, who came to Iraq in 2003 on the back of US/UK tanks. He issued a decree: “prohibits all trade union activity and ceases all forms of cooperation and official discussions with the electricity sector unions; Directs management to help police enforce the closure of union offices and confiscation of documents, furniture, computers and anything else present.

Akram Nadir, the International Representative of the Federation of Workers Councils and Unions in Iraq, FWCUI, has urged people to write protest letters to Al-Shahristani: “This order is a clear violation of international labour standards which your government is obligated to uphold, and we call on you to reverse course and stop this assault on Iraqi unions.”[28]

After the “Desert Storm” bombing campaign in 1991, power plants and power lines were for 91% destroyed: 95 power stations and all power lines of 400,000 and 135,000 volts. The oil supply had totally stopped: the oil fields of Kirkuk in the north and Rumaila in the south, refineries, pumping stations, oil terminals for export in Um Qasr and Fao: all eliminated. Iraqis were able to restore electricity within 6 months, despite the severe sanctions imposed on the country. The reconstruction campaign following the end of hostilities in March 1991 was an achievement of staggering proportions. Now, after 7 years of “liberation”, basic public services are still not properly functioning.

A blogger wrote: “During the reign of the old minister, we used to have electricity power for two hours on and four hours off. That means we used to have electricity for eight hours a day. Sometimes it was less than that. Now and during the days of Shahristani, we have less than four hours a day electricity during the crazy SUMMER of Iraq where temperature is always over 50 degrees for more than three months. The great minister came up with the reason for the problem and a very simple solution to solve the dilemma of electricity. He believes that we (Iraqi people) waste electricity and all the families in any house should gather in one room at night and sleep together. I do not know how he could even say that or even think about this shameful solution.”[29]

Shahristani doesn’t have to worry about the summer heat. Have a look at some of the Iraqi Excellencies’ salaries: Iraqi president: About 700,000 USD a year. Iraqi Vice presidents: 600,000 USD a year. Iraqi news agencies claim that Vice President Adel Abdul Mahdi receives One Million USD a month, in total. Maliki’s salary is equal to that of the Iraqi President.

Head of the Judiciary council: about 100,000 USD a month (not clear on allocations).

Their pension: 80 percent of the last received paycheck for the rest of their lives. [30]

Freedom? Liberty? Justice?

Part II: Endless occupation and its insidious effects

Withdrawal?

Even as President Barack Obama was announcing the end of combat in Iraq, U.S. forces were still in fight at the so-called end of Iraq combat mission. American soldiers were sealing off a northern village early Wednesday as their Iraqi partners raided houses and arrested dozens of suspected insurgents.[31]

“Along with the Great Wall of China,” said Ambassador Hill, “ the US embassy in Baghdad is

one of those things you can see with the naked eye from outer space. I mean, it's huge." [32] Indeed. At 104 acres, it is the largest U.S. embassy in the world. In addition to six apartment buildings, it has a luxury pool, as well as a water and sewage treatment plant. (...) The State Department has requested a mini-army to protect this Fortress America — including 24 Black Hawk helicopters and 50 bomb-resistant vehicles.[33]

After this month's withdrawal, there will still be 50,000 US troops in 94 military bases, "advising" and training the Iraqi army, "providing security" and carrying out "counter-terrorism" missions. About 5,800 of them airmen, said Maj. Gen. Joseph Reynes, director of the Air Component Coordination Element for U.S. Forces-Iraq.[34]

Meanwhile, the US government isn't just rebranding the occupation, it's also privatising it. There are around 100,000 private contractors working for the occupying forces, of whom more than 11,000 are armed mercenaries, mostly "third country nationals", typically from the developing world. One Peruvian and two Ugandan security contractors were killed in a rocket attack on the Green Zone only a fortnight ago.[35]

The Pentagon may be sharply reducing its combat forces in Iraq, but the military plans to step up efforts to influence media coverage in that country — as well as in the US. "It is essential to the success of the new Iraqi government and the U.S. Forces-Iraq mission that both communicate effectively with our strategic audiences (i.e. Iraqi, pan-Arabic, international, and U.S. and USF-I audiences) to gain widespread acceptance of core themes and messages," according to the pre-solicitation notice for a team of 12 civilian contractors to provide "strategic communication management services" there.[36]

The plain and simple fact is that the war and occupation will continue until the people of Iraq and the world force the U.S. to total withdrawal. People in this country (the USA) have a particular responsibility to build a powerful movement of determined political opposition to the ongoing occupation of and war upon Iraq waged by the U.S. government. Do not be fooled into thinking that Obama or any presidential administration will leave Iraq on its own volition, concludes Kenneth J. Theisen from the US antiwar group "World Can't Wait".[37] And the National Popular Resistance has stepped up its activities against the occupation recently: There has also been a major increase in rocket and mortar attacks in the fortified Green Zone and at the Baghdad airport, according to Brig. Gen. Ralph O. Baker, the deputy commander of American forces in central Iraq. General Baker, who said there had been about 60 such attacks in the last two months compared with "two or three" in the preceding months[38]

The infamous underevaluation of civilian casualties counts.

While the destruction of Iraq is considered by Washington's ruling elite as a "good outcome for the United States", most journalists in the mainstream press keep on fixing the number of civilian casualties at around 100,000. Another lie, a gross underestimate and an insult to the suffering Iraqi people. That number comes from Iraq Bodycount, an organisation that does valuable work in collecting data of the deaths that are reported in the mainstream press[39]. But their figures cannot serve as a scientific norm to establish a relevant estimate of Iraqi casualties.

Let's give a few examples: Twenty thousand[40] of Iraq's 34,000 registered physicians left Iraq after the U.S. invasion. As of April 2009, fewer than 2,000 returned, the same as the number who were killed during the course of the war[41]. Iraq bodycount has some 70

doctors in their database of casualties[42], which means that they have only listed 3,5% of the estimated number of killed physicians.

Iraq Bodycount has 108 academics listed in its database. The BRussells Tribunal has a partial list of 448 murdered academics[43], compiled from different sources. Although that list is very incomplete, Iraq Bodycount lists only 24% of the academic casualties reported by the BRussells Tribunal.

Perhaps the best monitored category of victims in this war are the media professionals. The BRussells Tribunal has a list of 354 killed media professionals.[44] Al-Iraqiya director general Habib al-Sadr told AFP in September 2007 that at least 75 members of his staff have been killed since he took over the channel in 2005 and another 68 wounded.[45] The BRussells Tribunal list of killed media professionals had at that moment less than 1/3rd of this number in its database. But the number of Iraq Bodycount stands at only 241 casualties.

Les Roberts, author of the two Lancet studies of Iraq mortality, defended himself on 20 September 2007 against allegations that his surveys were “deeply flawed”: “A study of 13 war affected countries presented at a recent Harvard conference found over 80% of violent deaths in conflicts go unreported by the press and governments. City officials in the Iraqi city of Najaf were recently quoted on Middle East Online stating that 40,000 unidentified bodies have been buried in that city since the start of the conflict. When speaking to the Rotarians in a speech covered on C-SPAN on September 5th, H.E. Samir Sumaida’ie, the Iraqi Ambassador to the US, stated that there were 500,000 new widows in Iraq. The Baker-Hamilton Commission similarly found that the Pentagon under-counted violent incidents by a factor of 10. Finally, the respected British polling firm ORB released the results of a poll estimating that 22% of households had lost a member to violence during the occupation of Iraq, equating to 1.2 million deaths. This finding roughly verifies a less precisely worded BBC poll last February that reported 17% of Iraqis had a household member who was a victim of violence. There are now two polls and three scientific surveys all suggesting the official figures and media-based estimates in Iraq have missed 70-95% of all deaths. The evidence suggests that the extent of under-reporting by the media is only increasing with time.” [46]

A memo by the MoD’s Chief Scientific Adviser, Sir Roy Anderson, stated that: “The (Lancet) study design is robust and employs methods that are regarded as close to “best practice” in this area, given the difficulties of data collection and verification in the present circumstances in Iraq.” In an e-mail, released by the British Foreign Office, in which an official asks about the Lancet report, the official writes: “However, the survey methodology used here cannot be rubbished, it is a tried and tested way of measuring mortality in conflict zones.”[47]

The discussion about casualties is not over yet, but we can safely put forward the number of + 1 million excess deaths caused by this war, most of them from violent causes. An archive of articles about the heated discussions in the press and blogs on civilian death counts during the US occupation can be found on the BRussells Tribunal website: <http://www.brusselstribunal.org/Lancet111006.htm>

A dark summer for Iraqi academics

The BRussells Tribunal is well known for its campaign it started in 2005 to create awareness about the situation of Iraqi academics. It receives regularly updates on summary executions of Iraqi academics from a variety of Iraqi sources. Here’s a short overview of casualties that

occurred during the summer:

Ehab Al-Ani, Hospital Director in Al Qaim, was killed on 5 June 2010 by a roadside bomb. The initial investigation indicated that Dr. Al Ani was not killed randomly.

On 29 June, Ahmed Jumaa, vice-chancellor of the Islamic University in Ramadi, was killed by a roadside bomb in Hit. On the same day Professor Ali Sayegh Zidane, a specialist in cancer in the Harithiya hospital in Baghdad was assassinated by gunmen.

On 14 July Iraqi police found the decomposed body of university professor Adnan Al-Makki, who was stabbed to death with a knife in his home in Baghdad. On the same day an unknown university professor was assassinated by gunmen in West Baghdad.

On the 11th of August, early in the morning, gunmen burst into the house of Dr. Intisar Hasan Al Twaigry, director of Illwiyah obstetric hospital in Baghdad. They tied up her husband, shot only Dr. Al Twaigry and left with 20.000 \$.

Mohammed Ali El-Din, specialized in pharmacy, was killed in the afternoon of the 14th of August in the area of Al Numaniya. He was attacked by armed men. They opened fire on the professor and he died immediately. The professor came back to Iraq a few months ago after a period of studies in George Washington University, USA.

Dr Kamal Qasim Al Hiti, prof of sociology, was kidnapped in Baghdad on 14 Aug 2010, 4 pm. A few weeks before, he received a letter with a bullet threatening him to leave. His tortured body was found on the 22th of August in the Tigris river opposite the Green Zone, in the Karad district (under control of the Islamic Supreme Council – Badr Brigade). His face was partially burned, he was tortured and hanged. He was very outspoken against the occupation. He was the editor of Al Mustaqila newspaper that was raided and eventually banned for criticizing the occupation and its militias.[48]

On 28 August 2010 the BRussells Tribunal received the following email: "I would like to add the name of my close friend Dr.Samer Saleem Abbas, who was assassinated in his private ultrasound clinic by a gunman with silencer pistol with cold blooded killer, who told his patients: "there is no need to stay and wait in the clinic anymore: your doctor is dead". Dr.Samer was shot 5-6 bullets, one of them in his mouth... He was killed with a pen in his hand. He used to work as Radiologist/Specialists and chair of radiology department at a specialized surgery hospital (Al-Jerahat Hospital) in Baghdad medical city.

We named the lecture hall in his department after his name.

We used to chat and dream about building the radiology in Iraq after the war.

Please I hope these informations are fair enough to add his name."

There is no end in sight of the targeted killings of Iraq's best and brightest minds. Roughly 40% of Iraq's middle class is believed to have fled the country by the end of 2006. The situation has only worsened since then, although at a lower frequency. Actions to reverse this brain drain remain very necessary. But most observers don't see the government taking concrete measures that create the necessary conditions for the educated middle class to return. Without the middle class Iraq has no viable future.

Notes

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- [6] <http://killinghope.org/bblum6/aer85.html>
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