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Iraq Occupation Focus Newsletter

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<http://lists.riseup.net/www/info/iraqfocus>. Please also ask all those who share our opposition to the increasingly brutal US-UK occupation to do likewise.

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Occupation Crimes

Troops to be called to account over killings

[The Guardian reports \(June 3rd\)](#): US forces in Iraq face scrutiny for the actions of marines in two incidents in which civilians were killed. Defence lawyers for US marines being held at Camp Pendleton, California said seven marines and one sailor were facing possible murder, kidnapping and conspiracy charges over the death of an Iraqi man in the Baghdad suburb of Hamandiyah on April 26. According to media reports, the victim was dragged from his house and shot and a gun was planted on the body.

Meanwhile, navy investigators were reported to be planning to exhume the victims of an alleged massacre in Haditha, north-western Iraq, last November, to examine claims that the 24 dead people had been shot at close range by a marine unit on the rampage after the death of one its own.

'Please stop the American troops killing any more people'

The Guardian reports (June 2nd): The news that US soldiers are to be investigated for the alleged killing of civilians in Haditha six months ago has done little to allay the scepticism of many ordinary Iraqis.

Thaer Juma, a lawyer and director of a non-government organisation in Baghdad, said: "These crimes are happening every day in [the western Iraqi cities of] Haditha and Ramadi, but the international community knows nothing about them because there are media blackouts on the operations, and there are no international humanitarian NGOs to record these transgressions."

New 'Iraq massacre' tape emerges

The BBC reports (June 2nd): The BBC has uncovered new video evidence that US forces may have been responsible for the deliberate killing of 11 innocent Iraqi civilians. The video appears to challenge the US military's account of events that took place in the town of Ishaqi in March. The US said at the time four people died during a military operation, but Iraqi police claimed that US troops had deliberately shot the 11 people.

A US military investigation has found there was no misconduct, a view challenged by the Iraqi government.

U.S. probes killing of pregnant Iraqi

CNN report (May 31st): The U.S. military is investigating reports its soldiers killed two women, one of whom was pregnant, in Samarra, according to the U.S. military and an official with the Joint Coordination Center in Salaheddin province.

Iraqis accuse Marines of killing unarmed civilian

Knight Ridder report (June 2nd): Before people talked about how Hashim Ibrahim Awad was killed, his friends shared tales about how the Americans wanted him to be an informant. U.S. Marines had approached him several times, Awad's friends say he told them. Every time, Awad, in his 50s with a lame leg and bad eyesight, refused. In an interview with Knight Ridder, Awad's family gave their version of what happened to him in the early morning hours of April 26. They said U.S. Marines dragged Awad from his home, killed him and then planted an AK-47 assault rifle and a shovel next to him to make him look like a terrorist.

His brother, asked to identify the body, said: "I saw a swollen face, and signs that he had been beaten. And it was clear a bullet had been shot into the mouth and broke part of his bottom teeth," he said. "I told the police officers, 'I know this man,' but I cannot recognize him. He was beaten to the point that I couldn't recognize his face."

Cherishing Children

Dahr Jamail writes (May 24th): The US occupation forces regularly detain children. There have been child prisoners in the most odious prisons, such as Abu Ghraib, since early on in the occupation.

While most, if not all, corporate media outlets in the US have been loath to visit the subject, [the Sunday Herald in Scotland](#) reported back in August 2004 that "coalition forces are holding more than 100 children in jails such as Abu Ghraib. Witnesses claim that the detainees - some as young as 10 - are also being subjected to rape and torture."

In June 2004 an internal UNICEF report, which was not made public, noted widespread arrest and detention of Iraqi children by US and UK forces. A section of the report added, "In Basra and Karbala children arrested for alleged activities targeting the occupying forces are reported to be routinely transferred to an internee facility in Um Qasr. The categorization of these children as 'internees' is worrying since it implies indefinite holding without contact with family, expectation of trial or due process."

On December 17, 2003, at the al-Shahid Adnan Kherala secondary school in Baghdad, I witnessed US forces detain 16 children who had held a mock, non-violent, pro-Saddam Hussein the previous day. While forces from the First Armored Division sealed the school with two large tanks, helicopters, several Bradley fighting vehicles and at least 10 Humvees, soldiers loaded the children into a covered truck and drove them to their base. Meanwhile, the rest of the students remained locked inside the school until the US military began to exit the area. Shortly thereafter the doors were unlocked, releasing the frightened students who flocked out the doors. The youngest were 12 years old.

Haditha Killings are Tip of the Iceberg

Karen Button writes (May 31st): Independent news sources and human rights groups have documented hundreds of Iraqi civilian deaths by US.

As early as October 2003, Human Rights Watch (HRW) released the report "Hearts and Minds: Postwar Civilian Casualties in Baghdad by US Forces" in which they collected information on 94 civilian deaths in Baghdad. Since the beginning of the US-led invasion Voices in the Wilderness and the Christian Peacemakers Team, both of which maintained houses in Baghdad, have also documented hundreds of civilian deaths. In August 2003, for example, VITW documented the deaths of a father and three of his children when troops shot at the whole family. They were thrown out of a press conference for asking

General Sanchez about the deaths.

In both US sieges on Fallujah several eyewitness survivors told horror stories of US military personnel killing civilians. Whole families were shot dead while sleeping in their beds. US snipers were found to have shot and killed children. Ambulances were targeted. An Iraqi doctor last summer said witnesses reported US troops had shot a patient dead as he lay in his hospital bed in Haditha.

These are not isolated instances. Similar reports have come out of Baquba, Mosul, Karbala, Al-Qaim, and Rawa, to name a few.

At the beginning of this month, troops responded to an IED, which targeted a US convoy in Samarra, by sealing off the neighbourhood. House raids followed. In one, a family were huddled together, frightened, in one room when US troops burst through the front door shooting. Three were killed. Soldiers took pictures of them with a digital camera, but not before dragging the 40-year old into the corridor, the witness says, and placing a gun next to his legs to cover their tracks.

Countless Atrocities in Iraq

Dahr Jamail writes (May 30th): Earlier this month, I received a news release from Iraq, which read, "On Saturday, May 13th, 2006, at 10:00 p.m., US Forces accompanied by the Iraqi National Guard attacked the houses of Iraqi people in the Al-Latifya district south of Baghdad by an intensive helicopter shelling. This led the families to flee to the Al-Mazar and water canals to protect themselves from the fierce shelling. Then seven helicopters landed to pursue the families who fled ... and killed them. The number of victims amounted to more than 25."

The Monitoring Net of Human Rights in Iraq reported that in the Yarmouk district of Baghdad, US forces raided the home of Essam Fitian al-Rawi. Al-Rawi was killed along with his son Ahmed; then the soldiers reportedly removed the two bodies along with Al-Rawi's nephew, who was detained.

Similarly, in the city of Samara on May 5, MHRI reported, "American soldiers entered the house of Mr. Zidan Khalif Al-Heed after an attack upon American soldiers was launched nearby the house. American soldiers entered this home and killed the family, including the father, mother and daughter who is in the 6th grade, along with their son, who was suffering from mental and physical disabilities." This same group, MHRI, also estimated that between 4,000 and 6,000 Iraqi civilians were killed during the November 2004 US assault on Fallujah.

Civilian Slaughter Update

Dahr Jamail writes (May 31st): On May 29, Al-Shaqiyah TV reported from Iraq: "US forces killed five civilians and wounded two others in the city [Ramadi] today. A source at Al-Ramadi State Hospital said that among the

dead were a child and a woman. An Iraqi officer in Al-Ramadi said that the US forces were beefing up their presence on the periphery of Al-Ramadi, noting that the city will soon come under siege 'ahead of an all-out attack such as the one that targeted Al-Fallujah' in 2004."

US Killing of Civilians "Fact of Life" in Iraq: Iraqis

IslamOnline reports (May 29th): Iraqi media and politicians have got accustomed to such incidents day in and day out. Mohammed Jawdaat, 47, like many Iraqis, can recount an incident in which he says he saw US forces open fire on civilians.

"Six months ago a car pulled out of a street towards an American convoy and a soldier just opened fire," Jawdaat said. "The driver was shot in the head and the person behind was killed too. They were innocents. There were no warning shots and the Americans didn't even stop. The police took the wounded."

US raid kills seven civilians in Iraq

Bahrain News reports (May 27): Medics in the Iraqi city of Al Ramadi announced today that seven civilians were killed and ten others injured by US troops over the last 24 hours. Deutsche Presse Agentur (DPA) reported Doctor Ahmed Dhiya in Al Ramadi Hospital as saying that children and women were among the victims of a US blitz that targeted their houses under the pretext of striking armed groups. Dr. Ahmed added that autopsies and medical examinations revealed that some of the injured were targeted by snipers.

In another town, Iraqis say US killed civilians

Reuters report (May 31st): U.S. forces denied a new accusation, from Iraqi officers, that American troops killed unarmed civilians in their home this month.

Amid mounting public interest in the United States in an inquiry into a suspected massacre at Haditha, the allegations about the deaths of three people at Samarra are among many that Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki said this week were trying his patience with the U.S. military's "excuses" over "mistakes".

Iraqi army and police officers and several people who said they were witnesses and relatives of the dead said U.S. soldiers killed two women, aged 60 and 20, and a mentally handicapped man in their home on May 4 after insurgents fired on the troops.

More atrocities

Socialist Worker reports (June 3rd): Last month US troops opened fire on two

families driving through the northern city of Mosul. Soldiers then fired on locals who rushed to help the survivors, a wounded girl and an elderly lady.

In March this year, 37 Shia Muslim worshipers were executed under the orders of a US officer as they gathered for prayers in a Baghdad mosque.

The Way Americans Like Their War

Robert Fisk writes (June 3rd): Could Haditha be just the tip of the mass grave? I remember clearly the first suspicions I had that murder most foul might be taking place in our name in Iraq. I was in the Baghdad mortuary, counting corpses, when one of the city's senior medical officials, an old friend, told me of his fears. "Everyone brings bodies here," he said.

"But when the Americans bring bodies in, we are instructed that under no circumstances are we ever to do post-mortems. We were given to understand that this had already been done. Sometimes we'd get a piece of paper like this one with a body." And here the man handed me a U.S. military document showing with the hand-drawn outline of a man's body and the words "trauma wounds."

Premier Accuses U.S. of Attacking Civilians in Iraq

The New York Times reports (June 2nd): Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki lashed out at the American military, denouncing what he characterized as habitual attacks by troops against Iraqi civilians.

In his comments, Mr. Maliki said violence against civilians had become a "daily phenomenon" by many troops in the American-led coalition who "do not respect the Iraqi people. They crush them with their vehicles and kill them just on suspicion," he said. "This is completely unacceptable." Attacks on civilians will play a role in future decisions on how long to ask American forces to remain in Iraq, the prime minister added.

Daily life

Citizens chafe under rising unemployment

IRIN reports (June 1st): According to Mohamed Taha al-Mousawi, an adviser at the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the national unemployment rate surpassed 60 percent last year. "And the rate rose further in the first quarter of this year, as many policemen and army members quit their jobs due to threats by militants groups," al-Mousawi said. He added that his ministry had no plans to promote employment until the security situation had improved.

Hero Ibrahim Ahmed, a respected businesswoman and founder of the Kurdistan Women's Union, agreed. She warned that that joblessness could be

expected to increase further, especially in central and southern Iraq.

With 2 More Journalists Dead in Iraq, Total Tops World War II

Editor and Publisher report (May 29th): The deaths of two CBS journalists on Monday means the Iraq conflict is now the deadliest war for reporters in the past century.

Since 2003, 71 journalists have been killed in Iraq, more than the 63 killed in Vietnam, 17 killed in Korea -- and now the 69 killed in World War II, according to Freedom Forum. The Iraq numbers do not include the 26 members of media support staff who have also died, as counted by the Committee to Protect Journalists.

Iraqi legislators' main concern: salaries, perks and armored cars

Azzaman reports (June 1st): Demands for higher salaries, perks and better protection are hindering any serious debate by the newly elected parliament of issues crucial to the country's security.

The members have halted all serious debate until the government agrees to raise their net-of-tax monthly salaries to \$8,000 from the current \$5,000. The massive wage is more than three-fold of what a Swedish member of parliament earns a month before tax.

Anti-war News

3,000 UK troops are Awol since war began

The Times reports (May 29th): Nearly 3,000 British soldiers have gone absent without leave every year since the start of the Iraq war, with more than 1,000 of them still missing, according to Ministry of Defence figures.

The numbers evading capture by the Royal Military Police have risen sharply since the invasion of Iraq, giving rise to allegations that an increasing number of soldiers might be trying to avoid further tours to the conflict zone.

Mothers say war was 'based on lies'

The Independent on Sunday reports (June 4th): Tony Blair faces an unprecedented revolt from the wives and mothers of serving soldiers, who want British troops to be withdrawn from Iraq. Dozens of women whose sons, husbands and daughters are now in the Gulf or have served there, have joined a national campaign to be launched this week calling for Britain

to pull out of Iraq. In a strongly worded statement, they claim the war in Iraq "was based on lies", and call for British withdrawal "as a matter of urgency". The organisers of Military Families Against the War, set up by the parents of dead armed forces personnel last year, say their movement is supported by hundreds of service families and that more than 100 families and veterans are actively involved.

From Australia

Green Left Weekly reports (May 31st): Peace movement supporters turned out in their hundreds to public meetings around the country last week featuring US anti-war activist Cindy Sheehan and founding member of Doctors of Iraq Salaam Ismael.

"The health system has been destroyed after three years of occupation", he told the 500-strong meeting in Sydney on May 23. Eleven hospitals have been completely looted and the water supply is 40% less this year than last.

Ismael described the horrific effects of the enhanced napalm and cluster bombs used by the US military, including on children, who have lost not only their limbs, but also sometimes 16, 17 or 18 family members.

More than 300 people attended the meetings with Sheehan and Ismael in Brisbane on May 24 and Melbourne on May 25.

Upcoming events

SECOND THURSDAY OR EVERY MONTH, LONDON: MONTHLY MEETING OF IRAQ OCCUPATION FOCUS.

7.30 - 9.30pm, Indian YMCA, 41 Fitzroy Square, W1T 6AQ (nearest tube Warren Street).

The dates for the this year's meetings are: 8 Jun, 13 Jul, 10 Aug, 14 Sept, 12 Oct, 9 Nov and 14 Dec. See www.iraqoccupationfocus.org.uk

9 JUNE, BRISTOL: SCREENING OF "A LETTER TO THE PRIME MINISTER: JO WILDING'S DIARY FROM IRAQ."

8pm, Cube Cinema: Dove St South (off Kings Square), Bristol (see www.cubecinema.com).

Introduced by Jo Wilding (tbc).

Org. by Bristol Stop the War Coalition.

9 JUNE, SWINDON: CIRCUS2IRAQ BENEFIT. Featuring Paradigm X, DJ Badger, Kakastisti Drummers and more.

10pm - 7am, The Synergy Centre, 220 Farmers Road, SE5. £5 before 12, £8 after.

Info: www.swindonstopwar.org.uk or 07906 305 681.

10 JUNE, LONDON: FIFTH ANNUAL STWC CONFERENCE.

Speakers and workshops, including: Iraq Today: Towards Democracy of Civil War? - Why Iran is Under Threat - Where Now for Palestine? - Is Latin America the Next Target? - The Forgotten Wars in Africa - Civil Liberties and Guantanamo - Islamophobia and the Anti-War Movement - Military Families Against the War

Friends Meeting House, Euston Road, London WC1. Email:

office@stopwar.org.uk

Telephone: 020 7278 6694 or see details on www.stopwar.org.uk

16 JUNE, LONDON: PUBLIC MEETING WITH ANTHONY ARNOVE ("Iraq: The Logic of Withdrawal"), TARIQ ALI ("Bush in Babylon") and GLEN RANGWALA ("Iraq in Fragments").

7pm, Main Hall, Indian YMCA, 41 Fitzroy Square, London W1 (tubes: Warren St., Great Portland St., Euston Square).

Organised by Iraq Occupation Focus: www.iraqoccupationfocus.org.uk

17 JUNE, CANTERBURY: STOP THE WAR COALITION FESTIVAL AND PARTY FOR PEACE.

Music, anti-war speakers, stalls, food and drink, entertainment.

1-8pm. Dane John Gardens, Canterbury, Kent. More details: 0778 636 7975

22 JUNE, BRISTOL: BENEFORT GIG FOR BRISTOL STW with Attila the Stockbroker and David Rovics.

8pm, The Trinity Centre, Trinity Road, Bristol BS2 0NW. £8 (on the door)

bristolstopwar@hotmail.com.

23 JUNE, LONDON: DEMO FOR IRAQ'S WAR WIDOWS on International Widows Day. With Tony Benn and others.

3pm, steps of St Martin in the Fields, Trafalgar Square. Please bring placards and banners.

Contact (0)207 603 9733.

28 JUNE, LONDON: A NIGHT OF CONSCIENCE FOR LIEUTENANT MALCOLM KENDALL-SMITH (given an 8 month sentence for refusing to serve in Iraq - and ordered to pay £20,000 costs - this April).

Benefit to help raise funds to pay these costs. With Tony Benn, Mark Thomas, Mark Steel, Michael Nyman, Janet Suzman, Ken Loach and others. 7.30pm, St. James Church, 197 Piccadilly, London, W1J 9LL. Org. by STW.

Tickets are available from Stop the War Coalition at £15 You may also pay by credit/debit card by calling 020 7278 6694 or by sending a cheque made payable to 'Stop the War Coalition' to Stop the War Coalition, 27 Britannia Street, London WC1X 9JP.
