

## Mission Accomplished: Iraq Today

By Sami Rasouli

Today, after nine years of American occupation and “nation-building,” Iraq is left with destruction. Tragically, the most affected segments of the population are women and children. An estimated three million Iraqi widows and five million orphans (one fifth of the country’s children) are struggling to survive.



This ad, sponsored by several peace groups, demanded that Congress not allow Bush to attack Iran but its message is applicable today as well. Text continued: “An ominous pattern of provocative words and acts from the White House points to a new war: a ‘preventive’ strike on Iran... ‘All options are on the table,’ says the Bush Administration...”

The U.S. troops officially pulled out by the end of 2011, but left behind a crippled country called Iraq. Iraq will never be the same after 2003. According to international law, the U.S. is legally and morally responsible to pay Iraqis reparations and to rebuild the country. But today, after nine years of American occupation and “nation-building,” Iraq is left with destruction. Education and health levels are far below what they were before the invasion. Electricity and clean water are not available for millions of Iraqis. Tragically, the most affected segments of the population are women and children. Trafficking of Iraqi women for prostitution continues through neighboring countries, and an estimated three million Iraqi widows and five million orphans (one fifth of the country’s children) are struggling to survive, according to a 2009 Iraqi Government report.

Mr. Deandar, the Minister of Displacement and Migration in Iraq, recently stated that 1.5 million Iraqis remain displaced within the country. Other Iraqi civil society organizations report four million Iraqis are still displaced from their homes, either living in exile outside the country or inside the country but unable to return to old neighborhoods after the sectarian violence of 2005 - 2007.

Meanwhile, the balance of power in the region, which President Bush hoped to tip in favor of the West, is precarious and dependent on many factors outside of American control, such as the Arab Spring uprisings. The Iraqi economy is in shambles and production facilities are destroyed. Ninety percent of the Iraqi population is traumatized, most having witnessed killing, explosions, and other violence over the past three decades. According to some estimates, over one million Iraqis have died from war-related violence since 2003.

Before the Gulf War in 1991, then-U.S. Secretary of State James Baker, III told then-Foreign Minister of Iraq Tariq Aziz, "We will destroy your country and bring it back to the stone age."

Amid this gloomy picture, it is timely to ask, "What lessons should the war hold for America?"

What was the point of invading Iraq? Who won the war? In 2011, President Obama declared success in Iraq after he ordered his forces to leave the destroyed country before the end of the year.

Iraqis today continue to celebrate the withdrawal of American forces from Iraq. Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki recently sent a congratulations text message to the millions of Iraqis who own cell phones, claiming victory (which he was supposedly behind)!

Unfortunately, Iraq is the main loser in the ongoing saga of destruction that began in 1991 with the Gulf War, continued with international sanctions throughout the 1990s, and deepened with the US-led invasion in 2003 and subsequent occupation.

Neither is the 99% of the American population a winner in this war. According to renowned economist Joseph Stiglitz, America lost or will lose \$4 trillion to the war: "With the end of the war looming, we can say for certain that the total cost will be at least \$4 trillion. This figure could climb much higher, depending on the number of veterans who require long-term care, the cost of replacing equipment, and the full social and economic impact of the war. The human toll has been equally high: 4,486 Americans have been killed in Iraq, 32,000 wounded in action, and tens of thousands seriously injured. More than one-third of recent veterans report having a service-connected disability."

This tremendous cost of the Iraq War has contributed to the struggles of the US economy over the last few years, resulting in jobs and homes lost.

So, who won this insane war? Let's read part of a lecture that was delivered by the former Israeli Minister of Security, Avi Dichter, on the Israeli role in Iraq: "We've achieved in Iraq more than we expected or planned."

The lecture was delivered on September 4, 2008, at the Research Institute of Israeli National Security. Dichter included the following points in his speech:

- \* Neutralizing Iraq is of the utmost strategic importance for Zionist security
- \* Iraq was crushed as a military power and a united country, and our strategic option now is to keep it fragmented
- \* Our strategic goal remains to prevent Iraq from returning to its Arab and regional role
- \* Israeli goals include supporting Kurds with weapons, training, and a security partnership in order to found an independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq that will control the oil in Kirkuk and Kurdistan

However, it seems the major goal of the American-Israeli war against Iraq has not, in fact, yet been accomplished—i.e., to divide the country into at least three pieces based on ethnic and sectarian backgrounds. This is the strategy suggested by former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger after the 2003 invasion and supported by the current U.S. Vice President Joe Biden, who worked to pass a bill in the U.S. Congress to divide Iraq.

The ongoing, internal political fighting between factions in Iraq, such as the latest exchange of accusations between Prime Minister Maliki and Vice President Hashimi, encourages the line of thinking that Iraq should be divided into three autonomous states. This is part of the legacy left by the U.S., a time bomb waiting to go off.

The Iraqi people, especially women and children, will continue to suffer from violence and destruction.

Sami Rasouli is the founder and director of the Muslim Peacemaker Teams (MPT), which is modeled after the nonviolent philosophy and practices of the Christian Peacemaker Teams in Iraq. He lives in Najaf, Iraq, with his wife and their two children when he is not in the United States, raising awareness for MPT.