

Fallujah Revisited

By Dahr Jamail
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Nearly a year after they occurred, a few of the war crimes committed in Fallujah by members of the US military have gained the attention of some major media outlets (excluding, of course, any of the corporate media outlets in the US).

Back on November 26, 2004, in a story I wrote for the Inter Press Service titled 'Unusual Weapons' Used in [Fallujah](#), refugees from that city described, in detail, various odd weapons used in Fallujah. In addition, they provided detailed descriptions such as "pieces of these bombs exploded into large fires that burnt the skin even when water was thrown on the burns."

This was also mentioned in a web log I'd penned nine days before, on November 17, 2004, named [Slash and Burn](#) where one of the descriptions of these same weapons by the same refugee from Fallujah said, "These exploded on the ground with large fires that burnt for half an hour. They used these near the train tracks. You could hear these dropped from a large airplane and the bombs were the size of a tank. When anyone touched those fires, their body burned for hours."

On December 9th of 2004 I posted a gallery of [photos](#), many of which are included in the new RAI television documentary about incendiary weapons having been used in Fallujah.

Like the torture "scandal" of Abu Ghraib that for people in the west didn't become "real" until late April of 2004, Iraqis and journalists in Iraq who engaged in actual reporting knew that US and British forces were torturing Iraqis from nearly the beginning of the occupation, and continue to do so to this day.

All of this makes me wonder how much longer it will take for other atrocities to come to light. Even just discussing Fallujah, there are many we can choose from. While I'm not the only journalist to have reported on these, let me draw your attention to just a few things that I've recorded which took place in Fallujah during the November, 2004 massacre.

In my story "Fallujah Refugees Tell of Life and Death in the Kill Zone" [published](#) on December 3, 2004 there are many instances of war crimes which will, hopefully, be granted the attention they deserve.

Burhan Fasa,a, an Iraqi journalist who worked for the Lebanese satellite TV station, LBC and who was in Fallujah for nine days during the most intense combat, said Americans grew easily frustrated with Iraqis who could not speak English.

"Americans did not have interpreters with them," Fasa,a said, "so they entered houses and killed people because they didn't speak English. They entered the house where I was with 26 people, and [they] shot people because [the people] didn't obey [the soldiers,] orders, even just because the people couldn't understand a word of English." He also added, "Soldiers thought the people were rejecting their orders, so they shot them. But the people just couldn't understand them."

A man named Khalil, who asked not to use his last name for fear of reprisals, said he had witnessed the shooting of civilians who were waving white flags while they tried to escape the city.

"I watched them roll over wounded people in the street with tanks," said Kassem Mohammed Ahmed, a resident of Fallujah. "This happened so many times."

Other refugees recounted similar stories. "I saw so many civilians killed there, and I saw several tanks roll over the wounded in the streets," said Aziz Abdulla, 27 years old, who fled the fighting last November. Another resident, Abu Aziz, said he also witnessed American armored vehicles crushing people he believes were alive.

Abdul Razaq Ismail, another resident who fled Fallujah, said: "I saw dead bodies on the ground and nobody could bury them because of the American snipers. The Americans were dropping some of the bodies into the Euphrates near Fallujah."

A man called Abu Hammad said he witnessed US troops throwing Iraqi bodies into the Euphrates River. Abu Hammad and others also said they saw Americans shooting unarmed Iraqis who waved white flags.

Believing that American and Iraqi forces were bent on killing anyone who stayed in Fallujah, Hammad said he watched people attempt to swim across the Euphrates to escape the siege. "Even then the Americans shot them with rifles from the shore," he said. "Even if some of them were holding a white flag or white clothes over their heads to show they are not fighters, they were all shot."

Associated Press photographer Bilal Hussein reported witnessing similar events. After running out of basic necessities and deciding to flee the city at the height of the US-led assault, Hussein ran to the Euphrates.

"I decided to swim," Hussein told colleagues at the AP, who wrote up the photographer's harrowing story, "but I changed my mind after seeing US helicopters firing on and killing people who tried to cross the river."

Hussein said he saw soldiers kill a family of five as they tried to traverse the Euphrates, before he buried a man by the riverbank with his bare hands.

"I kept walking along the river for two hours and I could still see some US snipers ready to shoot anyone who might swim," Hussein recounted. "I quit the idea of crossing the river and walked for about five hours through orchards."

A man named Khalil, who asked not to use his last name for fear of reprisals, said he had witnessed the shooting of civilians who were waving white flags while they tried to escape the city. "They shot women and old men in the streets," he said. "Then they shot anyone who tried to get their bodies."

"There are bodies the Americans threw in the river," Khalil continued, noting that he personally witnessed US troops using the Euphrates to dispose of Iraqi dead. "And anyone who stayed thought they would be killed by the Americans, so they tried to swim across the river. Even people who couldn't swim tried to cross the river. They drowned rather than staying to be killed by the Americans," said Khalil.

Why should blatant lying from the military come as a surprise? Even back in November of 2003, I wrote about how US forces claimed to have been attacked by, and then killed 48 Fedayin Saddam in Samarra. Then magically, overnight, they raised the number to 54. Upon investigation of this, I found that 8 civilians had been killed in the city, and wrote about it [here](#) and posted photos of it [here](#) .

However, why should any of us be surprised at this? When we have an administration which led the country into an illegal war of aggression and continues to lie about it, events like torturing and the use of incendiary weapons on civilians are small change.

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