

SPECIAL REPORTS

Proof of US orchestration of death squads' killings in Iraq

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Probably everyone remembers the [discovery](#) of the Jadiriyah detention facility in November 2005. US troops were reported to have uncovered the prison in their hunt for a missing person, only to discover some 170 detainees in horrific conditions, many of them clearly the victims of obscene tortures. Although it was admitted that the facility belonged to the Interior Ministry and that the detainees were held by a secretive Interior Ministry force known as the Special Investigations Unit, the story was quickly shuffled away as yet another example of the work of Shiite militiamen, in this instance, as was the vogue at that time, the Badr Brigade [1].

Myriad promises were forthcoming both from the US and Iraqi governments that investigations would be rapidly carried out and better supervision would in the future be applied to Iraqi-run detention facilities (for instance, the Iraqi government assured the world that a ministerial level investigation would rapidly be carried out, while US officials promised a legal team to go through the detainees' files and a [US embassy spokesman](#) stated that Justice Department and FBI officers would provide technical assistance).

Of course, given the scale of the abuse (flayings, burnings, drillings, etc.) and the proximity of the perpetrators to the Iraqi government (by dint of working for the Interior Ministry as well as by any possible Badr-SCIRI links) and to the US occupation which had, after all, established them (as numerous reports have amply documented, e.g., [Knight Ridder](#), 9 May 2005), such investigations were grossly less than what was urgently required -- a full and public criminal investigation by independent international agencies. Even these limited promises came to nothing, as the UN Human Rights Office in Iraq recently [highlighted](#). What we have actually seen is neither investigation nor prosecutions, despite the fact that Jadiriyah lies at the heart of the state of fear that Iraq undeniably now is.

In October last year, I had the privilege to interview one of the victims of that terrible abuse, the distinguished former professor of Pedagogy at Baghdad University, Tareq Samarree, who had been seized from his home in March 2005 by plain-clothes Interior Ministry personnel without charge. Professor Samarree, who provided a horrific first-hand account of the torture that he had suffered as well as details of others who had died and of the disappearance of his son within the Iraqi detention system, never had sight of any hint of judicial process nor any access to the outside world.

What made Professor Samarree's story most striking were the details of his release. Professor Samarree's physical condition was so bad when the American soldiers discovered the facility that he, along with around a dozen other detainees, was instantly taken to a local hospital. Here, he and his companions remained without access to lawyers, journalists, officials or even a telephone. In fact, it quickly became clear that these victims of torture were to be returned to Iraqi detention. Professor Samarree, another of whose sons lives in the United States, was fortunate to be able to persuade an American soldier to take pity on him and assist him and two of his companions to escape. The last words the soldier said to Professor Samarree were, "Run, run. Don't look back!"

Within days, Professor Samarree had arranged for himself and his family to flee the country. He is now in Europe, where he is claiming political asylum.

The full details of Professor Samarree's story and a detailed account of the US-built Iraqi intelligence apparatus are contained in the article [Ghosts of Jadiriyah](#), published by the [BRussells Tribunal](#). It should be noted that the story was offered on the one-year anniversary of discovery of the Jadiriyah facility to a range of mainstream media publications, including New Yorker, New Statesman, the Independent, The Big Issue, as well as to the radical left publication Z Mag. Of them all, only the New Statesmen and Z Mag were courteous enough even to reply to affirm their rejection. It seemed that Professor Samarree's remarkable story and any further interest in Jadiriyah were simply off the agenda.

But Jadiriyah, with its ghosts and its horror, will not go away.

On 7 February 2007, another former inmate from Jadiriyah, Abbas Z Abid, presented his sworn [testimony](#) at the international peace conference in Kuala Lumpur. Like Professor Samarree's, his description of the torture that he and others underwent is almost too harrowing to bear. What sets his testimony apart and completes our understanding of the grim world of Iraq's secret prisons are the dates of his incarceration. Mr Abid, an electrical engineer from Fallujah who was the Chief Engineer in Baghdad's Science and Technology Ministry, was arrested in August 2005, but was not released until October 2006. That means that Mr Abid, like Dr Samarree, was held when the American soldiers raided the facility, but his ordeal did not end there. In fact, not only does Mr Abid describe the ongoing tortures that he was repeatedly subjected to after the US intervention, as well as describing the tortures that continued to be inflicted on fellow inmates, including the use of Black and Decker drills and other power tools (Mr Abid names eight fellow detainees who died from their injuries), but Mr Abid states that "American troops have visited the prison many times and therefore cannot deny the existence of such a prison."

The implications of these two testimonies as well as the absence of independent and public scrutiny are obvious.

The Occupation has done nothing at all to halt abuse at the Interior Ministry's [network of secret prisons](#) or curtail in any way the culture of impunity in which they exist. And let's be absolutely clear what we are talking about here. This is as close as we can get to the tide of sectarian violence sweeping Iraq, whose victims are almost invariably arrested by Interior Ministry personnel, who are then horribly tortured within Interior Ministry prisons and whose bodies finally surface in abandoned lots, are dredged from rivers, are buried in shallow graves in the desert or left as human detritus around sewage works. (Former human rights chief in Iraq John Pace stated that the majority of killings were being carried out by groups under the control of the Interior Ministry, [Independent](#), 26 February 2006, while the [Iraqi Organisation for Follow-up and Monitoring](#) in Iraq found that in 92 percent of some 3,498 cases of extrajudicial killing, the victims had been arrested by Interior Ministry forces). Such would undoubtedly have been the final fate of Professor Samarree and Mr Abid's hapless fellow detainees.

Of course the Americans have always been aware of the existence of this and other horrific dungeons within Interior Ministry facilities. How could they not be? They set them up and continue to operate from the same facilities! And for any who would question the validity of Mr Abid's testimony that American forces were regular visitors, his story is confirmed by Solomon Moore writing in the [Los Angeles Times](#) (9 July 2006), who stated that the US military had been at the facility before the November raid! And the same happened in Basra. After it was revealed by the Plaid Cymru MP Adam Price that British trained policemen had [tortured prisoners to death](#) with drills, we discovered, through the [New York Times](#) (!!), that American intelligence officers had been working alongside them at the Jamiyat police station, where they passed on names of suspects knowing that those suspects would end up as the victims of death squads. That is their modus operandi and it is duplicated by British military intelligence units, like the Joint Support Group, who brought their nefarious experience from Northern Ireland (where, as Chris Floyd has recently documented, they [orchestrated sectarian murder](#) through the Ulster Defence Association) straight to Iraq. Thus in Basra we find a paramilitary death squad outfit called the Revenge of God (Thar Allah) nurtured and protected by the British, linked to police intelligence and given control of nightly curfews, despite its boasts of killing members of the former state (see [Ghosts of Jadiriyah](#) for a more complete account)!

Since the mainstream Western media will not hear such voices as Professor Samarree and Mr Abid, it is absolutely beholden on every decent-minded individual as well as every organisation that opposes the illegal occupation of Iraq to demand the truth and bring an end to this monstrous culture of impunity.

Jean Paul Sartre noted that the American assault on Vietnam was not only an attack against that nation, but an act of violence directed against the whole of humanity. If we are to have any hope of rescuing our own collective humanity, we must raise our voices to bring an end to the screaming from Iraq.

Two important notes:

Note 1: On sectarianism

The cherished Western mainstream media notion, undoubtedly nurtured by false flag covert warfare and so-called psyops, that Iraq has fragmented into a state of intercommunal sectarian civil war is the biggest single impediment to understanding the role of the Anglo-US Occupation in the thousands upon thousands of extrajudicial killings taking place in Iraq.

The testimonies of Professor Samarree and Mr Abid shed some further light on just how far we can see sectarianism as a factor in Iraq's violence. Both accounts describe hearing a language that they believe to be Farsi, as well as, variously, images of Shiite saints and mobile ring tones with Iranian songs. Dr Samarree even states with a high degree of confidence that the head of the Badr Organisation, Hadi al-Amery, attended one of his interrogation sessions. [2]

There is no reason to doubt their testimonies. In fact, as newspapers have [revealed](#), and I have documented on multiple occasions, the Badr Brigade/Organisation was among the major political parties in exile from whom the CIA recruited the core of the new intelligence apparatus, an organisation which started out with the innocuous title of the Collection Management and Analysis Directorate (CMAD), a title which masked the fact that in reality it was producing what amounted to death lists to be targeted by its paramilitary wing in conjunction with US (and UK) special forces (See [Ghosts of Jadiriyah](#) for a detailed discussion).

That such parties are running at least some of the worst detention facilities (others are undoubtedly run by Kurdish groups in the north of Iraq) is, therefore, not surprising and, of course, their members at every level of responsibility should face justice. But more instructive are their demonstrable links with the Occupation, which I have sought to document. It is this intellectual authorship of extrajudicial killing that the Western anti-occupation movement needs to focus on. If the torturers and killers in Jadiriyah were indeed taking their instruction from Iran, as some would hold, then they not only need to prove that, but in the face of concrete evidence that such forces work in close conjunction with the US (see also [Diyala: a Laboratory of Civil War?](#)), they also need to prove that the US state is working hand in hand with the Iranian state.

In fact, as Kurt Nimmo has highlighted, we know that the Iranian state is being stitched up in Iraq [over fabricated charges](#) of supplying weapons to Shiite groups. As anyone who remembers anything about similar US charges in other theatres of war (such as the [Nicaraguan Migs](#), the [Gulf of Tonkin incident](#), etc., etc.) will remember, they were all made up! As modern military theorists hold, the major part of contemporary warfare is informational -- or better stated, disinformational.

Note 2: On genocide

The distinguished dissident academic Edward Herman recently wrote a paper, entitled [Iraq: the Genocide Option](#), in which he argued that the US war in Iraq threatened to become genocidal. He was quite right to point to

genocide. With credible figures of [over one million Iraqi casualties](#), another 3 to 4 million displaced internally and externally, the total collapse of civic infrastructure and the imminent threat of political disintegration, there must already be a very real question as to whether Iraq continues to exist as a viable nation. To fully substantiate the charge, the only question technically remains establishing intent, although I believe that, too, is perfectly possible when we consider the statements on partition made by the likes of Leslie Gelb (New York Times [25 November 2003](#), [1 May 2006](#)).

To make his argument, Herman drew upon two analogies: El Salvador and Vietnam. Whilst explicitly acknowledging the existence of the so-called Salvador Option in Iraq, Herman's argument was that genocide had occurred in Vietnam though the direct application of US force with its implementation of weapons of massive destruction, whereas, in El Salvador, where the US had had to resort to more lightly equipped proxy armies, only mass murder had occurred, which he compared with the Phoenix Programme in Vietnam. With the greatest respect, however, I believe that Herman is understating the terrible impact of the Phoenix Programme, the brutal US-sponsored war in El Salvador and the ongoing Salvador Option in Iraq.

First of all, Herman compares El Salvador's estimated death toll of some 100,000 (which Noam Chomsky describes as the crucifixion of the country) with the several (commonly around three) million estimated victims in Vietnam. Whilst one should not doubt the scale of the horror brought to Vietnam and its tragic ongoing legacy, it should be pointed out that to compare these figures is somewhat misleading. El Salvador has a population of some five million, compared to around 10 times as many in Vietnam. Thus it would not be unreasonable to suggest that had El Salvador's Salvador Option been carried out in a country as populous as Vietnam, the direct casualties would have totalled around one million, bringing it instantly into the same order of magnitude as Vietnam. In fact, something very much like this under US auspices did take place in Indonesia. Thus, we can see that with an arsenal of much lighter weapons, including a plentiful array of improvised torture devices, a multitude of human lives can be extinguished. In El Salvador this slaughter was [meticulously organised](#) by the US through the training and provision of its armed forces, through control of its intelligence departments and through strategically placed advisors at every level of the Salvadoran Armed Forces.

And the results of the US war in El Salvador were the economic subjugation of the country, including dollarisation, with an uncounted human toll in terms of blocked social reform and the entrenchment of poverty. In the sense that the hopes and dreams of emancipation from economic slavery of the poor majority were drowned in rivers of blood, this too was a genocide.

It also seems unduly dismissive to describe the Phoenix Program as only accounting for the deaths of around 40,000 Vietnamese. The point of the Phoenix Programme was that it was a systematic campaign of targeted killing in South Vietnam designed to destroy the leadership of the resistance movements (including the leaders of the unarmed social resistance) and terrorise the population into obedience (as in El Salvador). As such it formed an important tactical contribution to what amounted to a genocidal attack against the Vietnamese, whose aim was to extinguish that people's hope of national development. Nor should the value of the eventual exposure of the Phoenix Program be regarded as insignificant. The effect of this exposure was to give the necessary impetus to closing down the Office of Public Safety (*Supplying Repression*, Institute for Policy Studies, 1981), whose various programmes contributed to the implementation of repressive security apparatuses around the world and certainly added to growing pressure for US withdrawal from Vietnam. We will never know what effect its earlier exposure might have had if more people had been prepared to break the silence.

In his address to the Bertrand Russell Tribunal on Vietnam, Jean Paul Sartre specifically addressed the question of genocide. Sartre argued that the US could conduct genocide in Vietnam not because it had the means, but because its lack of significant economic interests meant that there was nothing to lose and the salutary effect of this lesson in apocalypse would not be lost on other nations bidding for independence.

In Iraq (with its much smaller population) the US has already matched in scale the violence perpetrated on Vietnam and the war goes on, although there is little indication that it has given up its economic interests. Undoubtedly a very great part of this violence is conducted directly by US forces (the extremely credible [Lancet study](#) suggests from 30-40 percent), but, despite surges, that proportion appears to be falling. That leaves perhaps as many as 500,000 violent deaths unattributed to Coalition military action. Herman states that some of these would belong to the Salvador Option, while the bulk of the others would fall into the pattern that he explicitly describes as large-scale communal civil war manipulated by the US. I think it is vital that we all remember that this intercommunal sectarian warfare [still consists](#) of anonymous bombs that target the Shia and which most Iraqis for good reason believe are the work of the Occupation and sectarian killings of Sunnis by members of the security forces -- along with academics, engineers, lawyers, trade unionists, imams, doctors, teachers and other state functionaries by paramilitary forces operating from the Ministry of the Interior [3]. This is indeed the application of the Salvador Option and it contributes an essential part of the ongoing genocide in Iraq.

Endnotes:

1. The charge that the Badr Brigade was responsible for most of acts of sectarian violence through its alleged infiltration of the Interior Ministry Police Commandos was [revised almost overnight](#) following the bombing of the Samarra Mosque in February 2006. From that moment on, the majority of complaints against Shiite militiamen were levelled against the so-called Mehdi Army associated with Muqtada al Sadr. No explanation has ever been provided as to how such a switch could have come about, especially perplexing given that it was [explicitly clear](#) that police units were the primary culprits prior to Samarra.
2. The very fact that Mr Abid is able to describe the special attention given to Sunni detainees demonstrates that there were Shiites among the detainees, a fact commonly glossed over. In addition, Mr Abid was neither detained by the Badr Brigade nor the Mehdi Army but by US and Iraqi forces (the Muthana Brigade, which, despite reported

reverence for Muqtada al Sadr, continues to host US advisors), before being handed over to the Special Investigation Unit.

3. In each of the high profile accounts of supposed sectarian attacks and massacres that have taken place within the last year, a detailed examination of the evidence demonstrates that the violence specifically occurred within the context of security operations and/or directly under the noses of Occupation forces. Examples include Operation Knockout in [Baquba](#), the assault on the [Adhamiya](#) district of Baghdad, the massacre in the [Jihad](#) district of Baghdad, the massacre in [Balad](#) and the mass abduction from the [Ministry of Education](#).

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