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Falluja, Symbol of Iraq's Unending Tragedy

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"If war should come, whichever side may claim ultimate victory, nothing is more certain that victor and vanquished alike would glean a gruesome harvest of human misery and suffering." (UK Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, July 31, 1939, to the House of Commons.)

Felicity Arbuthnot

Falluja has become a symbol of Iraq's suffering since the onslaught on the country in 1991, numerous, uncounted interim US-UK bombings, then the 2003 invasion, occupation - and misery unending.

In 1991, a busy market was bombed, as was a hotel, which was "leveled." Two hundred people were incinerated. Another attack: "destroyed a row of modern, concrete, five and six story apartment buildings, as well as several other houses nearby." Middle East Watch recorded: "All buildings for four hundred meters on both sides of the street, houses, markets, were flattened."

Falluja merchant Hamid Mesan, lost his son, brother and nephew in a bombing and: "saw the bombs from one attack hit a market. " This pilot said he had come to hit the bridge, on the television and it was a mistake. But we're a distance of one and a half kilometers from the bridge. In our minds, we are convinced the attack was to the market, to kill our people." That attack was

seemingly by the British Royal Air Force, who, in a tired, all too familiar excuse, said that their "precision-guided" missiles had missed their target.(i) One man's "collateral damage" is another man's son, brother and nephew.

In 2004, the US military launched a revenge attack on Falluja after US troops, who had taken over a school, shot peaceful demonstrators, which led to four Blackwater mercenaries being hung from a bridge. To describe the "liberators" aggression as a blood bath would be massive understatement.

One Minister Dr Khalid ash-Shaykli: "described large areas of Fallujah where nothing, people, cats, dogs, birds were left alive, alleging that mustard and nerve gasses had been used. InterPress reported people being roasted alive, in unquenchable, jellied fire. Numerous reports during the assault recorded people on fire leaping in to the Euphrates - and continuing to burn. Bodies were found with clothes melted in to the skin - and bodies were found with no injuries at all, giving credence to the accusation of the use of gasses and chemical weapons."

"It wasn't a war, it was a massacre", wrote an unidentified soldier in militaryproject.org (ii)

The massacre has been described as the greatest urban military operation involving U.S. troops since another massacre, in Hue City, Vietnam, during the Tet offensive of 1968.

"By one estimate 36,000 of the city's 50,000 homes in Fallujah were laid to waste."(ABC, 3rd January 2014.)

The rampant epidemic of cancers and birth defects in the city - and throughout Iraq - are the shocking, ongoing testimony to the chemical and radiological toxicity of the weapons used. Perhaps one day the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons will head from the road to Damascus to the road to Washington.

Falluja, nearby Ramadi in Anbar Province, this Western region of Iraq which borders Syria, now faces a new threat.

At Friday prayers (27th December 2013) a masked fighter of the self declared Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) "took the podium and addressed the crowd, declaring the establishment of an 'Islamic emirate' in Fallujah ... promising to help residents fight the government of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and his Iranian allies."

The "al-Qaeda-affiliated force asserted control ... raising its flag over government buildings and declaring an Islamic state ... amid an explosion of violence across ... Anbar in which (residents)

Iraqi security forces and al-Qaeda-affiliated militants have been fighting one another for days in a confusingly chaotic three-way war."

"At the moment, there is no presence of the Iraqi state in Fallujah," said a local journalist who asked not to be named because he fears for his safety. "The police and the army have abandoned the city, al-Qaeda has taken down all the Iraqi flags and burned them, and it has raised its own flag on all the buildings."(iii)

Falluja, Ramadi and much of western Iraq has been demonstrating for a year against the vicious, sectarian, US imposed puppet government of Nuri al Maliki. Now this ancient "City of Mosques", dating back to Babylonian times, is threatened with the most fundamentalist perversion of Islam, which is also (literally) invading neighbouring Syria via Western backed insurgents.

The invasion of Iraq by the US and UK and their murderous meddling in Syria has reduced the two of the most developed, secular States in the region and is reducing them to sectarian, fundamentalist-run multi-cantons.

Ironically, the name Falluja is believed derived from the Syriac "Pallgutha", from the word "division", since it is where the great Euphrates river which flows through Turkey, Syria and Iraq, divided.

The region is now largely fighting against the imposed government, whose horrendous execution rate makes the excesses of Saddam Hussein pale and even has the supine UN vocally appalled, and a brand of fundamentalism which was introduced by the US-UK invasion, whether intentionally or through complete ignorance of the region. Also their feckless lack of management of the borders, certainly never a problem to the government they overthrew. Saddam certainly understood the multi complexities of the region. Al Maliki is equally manifestly border inept.

Further: "A group representing the tribal fighters, calling itself the Military Council of the Anbar Rebels, posted a video on YouTube in which masked men declared their opposition to Maliki's government but made no mention of al-Qaeda. The fighters called on local members of the Iraqi security forces to desert, hand over their weapons 'and remember always that they are the sons of Iraq, not slaves of Maliki.' " Up to nine thousand people died in America's "New Iraq" in violence in 2013.

The last words go to the unnamed Falluja journalist: "It is sad, because we are going back to the days of the past," he said. "Everyone is remembering the battles of 2004 when the Marines came in, and now we are revisiting history."

The US Marines are thus being compared with Al Qaeda and their spawn, ISIS. Irony rules.

i. Ramsey Clark, "The Fire this Time", U.S. War Crimes in the Gulf.

ii. <http://www.globalresearch.ca/war-crimes-in-fallujah-tony-blair-and-a-man-with-a-mission/21212>

iii. http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/al-qaeda-force-captures-fallujah-amid-rise-in-violence-in-iraq/2014/01/03/8abaeb2a-74aa-11e3-8def-a33011492df2_story.html?tid=sm_fb