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Blair does not deserve honours

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If good things happen to good people, as the saying goes, then it's difficult to understand why Britain's former prime minister Tony Blair is being showered with well-paying top jobs, high position and awards. Of course, everyone has their own idea on what constitutes a good person. But most would agree that a leader who manipulated the truth to take his country into a war that took the lives of up to one million men, women and children can hardly be considered 'good'. What's even worse is that Blair insists he would take the same decision all over again and doesn't even have the decency to apologise for what just about everyone considers was either a gross error of judgement or a criminal abuse of international law. Blair's partner George W. Bush isn't my favourite person either but at least he's maintained a low profile since leaving office. He's not hiring himself out as an advisor to multinationals. He's not charging a small fortune for after-dinner speeches or jetting around signing copies of his memoirs. On the recent anniversary of the September 11, 2001 attacks, Laura Bush gave a speech at a commemorative event while her husband contented himself with just a four line statement. Clearly, his shoe-dodging days are over. Blair, on the other hand, manages to laugh off his critics while wowing American audiences with his self-righteous hand-on-the-heart fake sincerity, natural charm and skilled political showmanship, which have long passed their sell-by date in his own country. In London, a book launch party and

other related events had to be cancelled after he was heckled by protestors who pelted him with eggs; one woman even attempted to make a citizen's arrest and was carted off by the police. I don't condone such behaviour but I fully empathise with the demonstrators' outrage. But credit where credit's due. He's a clever man. His autobiography *A Journey* - described by one British daily as "a love letter to George W. Bush" - is flying off the shelves because he was savvy enough to salvage potential readers' moral reluctance to pour cash into his personal bank account by announcing that his share of the proceeds will go to a Royal British Legion rehabilitation centre. Reflecting the anger felt by the British public, his books are appearing in stores in Crime or Fantasy sections. It's an entirely different story in the US where Blair has achieved almost super hero status for standing shoulder to shoulder with Americans in the aftermath of 9-11 and for his enthusiastic participation in Bush's two wars of choice, which most British people were vehemently against. If, by virtue of nationality and birthplace, he were eligible to be president, I have no doubt that he would beat all rivals to the Oval Office. At home, however, many feel a sense of betrayal after the man they entrusted to look after their interests trampled upon them to become an intellectually-challenged American President's grinning yes man answering to 'Yo, Blair'. For those who believe Blair should have a seat reserved at the International Criminal Court in The Hague, it was shocking to see former president Bill Clinton awarding his old friend Blair the prestigious Liberty Medal together with \$100,000 (Dh367,000) "in recognition for his steadfast commitment to conflict resolution" and praising him for his leadership and dedication to conflict resolution. To my ears that sounds like a sick joke when Blair has initiated far more conflicts that he's helped resolve. But it's no joke. The Americans genuinely think this smarmy, self-serving character is Mr Wonderful. On January 13, 2009, Blair was the recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom from George W. Bush and in 2003 he was awarded with the Congressional Gold Medal of Honour in recognition of his "steadfast stand against evil", which is still awaiting collection. When Blair moved out of Number Ten on June 27, 2007, his lucky star was shining bright. He got out when things were still good, before the global economic downturn shone on a spotlight on his government's spendthrift policies and fiscal indebtedness. Poor Gordon Brown, who is one of the good guys despite his social awkwardness, was left to pick up the pieces and was then slammed by his former chum Blair in his autobiography. 'Teflon Man' was then appointed Middle East Envoy to the Quartet - the US, Russia, the UN and the EU - tasked with reinforcing the Palestinian economy and institutions, which couldn't be more inappropriate for a self-confessed friend of Israel who champions the Jewish state at every opportunity and cosies up to the pro-Israel lobbying group AIPAC. At one time, he was even in the running to become the European Union's permanent president. What a scandal that would have been! Since, Blair's luck has continued. By some accounts, his commercial interests and company appointments have boosted his personal wealth, which is now estimated at around £20 million (Dh115 million). He has friends and associates in high places, multiple homes, an armed security detail, courtesy of the British taxpayer, and can look forward to a red carpet reception wherever he travels - apart from the UK and Eire that is. During a recent interview, Blair was asked whether he would ever consider returning to British politics. He said he feared that British politics had probably finished with him. That's true, but why should he care when he has the superpower grovelling at his feet? Blair will never face a court of law but it's time that the

court of public opinion took him to task. For all his money, medals and American adulation, with so much blood on his hands I can only wonder what kind of man he sees each time he looks in the mirror.