



DOSSIER PART 4:

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- The decapitation of secular Iraq - 15 May 2007.
- The US war and occupation of Iraq. The murder of a society - WSWS, 22 May 2007.
- **Lives in limbo - Nature, 22 May 2007. [PDF]**
- Death Threats and Academia in Iraq - Der Spiegel 23 May 2007.
- In 2004 – with Saddam gone – 27 Iraqi students started their degree course full of hope. Today just 7 will sit their finals - Times Online, 23 June 2007.
- Samarra security crackdown making life difficult for students - Irin 28 June 2007.
- Ministry to insure and protect professors - Irin, 08 July 2007.
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- Fellowships for Threatened Scholars from Iraq - Institute of International Education (IIE), 31 July 2007.
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- Gates Foundation to help Iraqi academics escape persecution - FT, 16 Aug 2007.
- Iraq's Elite Fleeing in Droves - Der Spiegel, 20 Aug 2007.
- Back to school: Education sector struggling to progress - AswatalIraq, 20 Sept 2007.
- Potential teachers...disaster to education, females more qualified - 09 Oct 2007.
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- Michael Schwartz, The Iraqi Brain Drain - Tomgram, 10 Feb 2008.



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READ ALSO DOSSIER PART 3:

<http://www.brusselstribunal.org/pdf/AcademicsDossier3.pdf>

- *Iraqis struggle over Baath purge* - CS Monitor, 26 June 2003
- *Turi Munthe Diary* - 10 July 2003
- *Intellectual Life and Academic Conditions in Post-War Baghdad [PDF]* - 15 July 2003.
- *Between Saddam and the American Occupation: Iraq's Academic Community Struggles for Autonomy* - April 2004.
- *The best university in Iraq. Imagine the rest* - The Guardian, 23 Sept 2004
- *Israeli secret agents killed 310 Iraqi scientists* (30 Oct 2004)
- *What is the U.S. role in Iraq's dirty war?* - 16 March 2006.
- *The Iraqi brain drain* - Guardian, 24 March 2006.
- *UNESCO Director-General condemns campaign of violence against Iraqi academics* - 05 April 2006.
- *Killings lead to brain drain from Iraq*, Telegraph, 17 April 2006.
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- *Iraq's universities and schools near collapse as teachers and pupils flee* - The Guardian, 05 Oct 2006.
- *Iraqi intellectuals seeking exile* - 18 Oct 2006.
- *Letter Regarding Murder of Two Professors* - AAUP, 10 Nov 2006.
- *SAR calls for urgent action to protect Iraqi higher education* - SAR 14 Nov 2006.
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- *The war on intellectuals claims lives and hope* - Sami Ramadani, THES, 24 Nov 2006.
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- *Mandatory university attendance in unstable Iraq angers many* - 20 Dec 2006.
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- Bomber strikes near Baghdad college - Al Jazeera, 16 Feb 2006.
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- Iraq's Universities Near Collapse - The Chronicle Of Higher Education, 18 May 2007.
- Extremists threaten new gov't Internet project in universities - Irin, 27 May 2007.

READ ALSO DOSSIER PART 1:

<http://www.brusselstribunal.org/pdf/AcademicsDossier.pdf>

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2. Urgent Appeal to Save Iraq's Academics
3. Selected Principal Endorsers of the Appeal
4. Selected Media Reports until April 2006
5. List of Assassinated Academics
6. Frequently Asked Questions
7. UNHCR Guidelines on Asylum
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Stop the Assassination of Iraqi Academics !

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- Iraq-killing field of scholars, scientists and intellectuals - April 2006

Iraq--killing field of scholars, scientists and intellectuals

Iraq, the land of ancient Mesopotamia, also known as the "cradle of civilization" to archeologists, gifted the world many of academia's "pillars of wisdom." Many who even came before Europe had built its first cathedral, or the Romans the Coliseum.

The first written records, domestic laws, astronomy, mathematics, pharmacology, and the wheel are believed to have been developed at Ur, the earliest civil society in the world. It is also believed to be the site of the Garden of Eden.

In between numerous invasions in the turbulent region, knowledge has been lost or destroyed, only to reemerge triumphant with an advanced enhanced civilization. Learning has long been central in Iraq. The first question by a prospective bride's parents, if they are educated, that is always asked is, "What did he study? What level is his degree?" said Sana al Khayat, the author of Honour and Shame: Women in Modern Iraq.

A modern repeat of history's losses was the 13-year-long US- and UK-driven UN embargo (1990-2003), which forced many academics to leave, seeking positions in countries that had harder currency so they could send back money to sustain both their extended and immediate families. Inflation had become, almost overnight, stratospheric and staples for many were virtually unaffordable.

One Sorbonne-educated Iraqi friend said early in the embargo that the often daily US and UK bombings of vital installations, which resulted in the accompanying brain drain, indicate a long-term plan: to create chaos, to invade Iraq, to grab the oil, and to establish a permanent hold on the strategic location of the country. It seemed like a conspiracy theory.

A prominent Iraqi academic told this writer on condition of anonymity, "Iraq is suffering from a huge brain drain that will not be compensated in another 20 years. This is a dramatic loss for the country and without Iraq's educated middle class, we will be sure to see a rise in sectarianism and extremism which is what the occupier wants."

"Iraq is suffering from a huge brain drain that will not be compensated in another 20 years."

In 1994, the government organized a conference, which became a yearly event for expatriate academics, professionals, and intellectuals. It declared an amnesty without any reprisals for those who



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had left the country illegally. The aim was to encourage academics to return to a land staggering under the weight of sanctions, a land that was in need of their brains to address myriad challenges. The amnesty seemed to hold, and some academics, exchanged their well-paid positions overseas, including in the US, for the rigors of embargoed Iraq. Nationalism won over comfortable living.

However, if the embargo's brain drain was a weighty challenge, the brain death of intelligentsia at the hands of the occupying forces and others is chilling, with the entire spectrum of Iraq's professionals being dragged from their homes, offices, and consulting rooms. They are tortured, shot, ambushed — or they simply disappear only to be found horrendously liquidated; dumped outside a morgue, a hospital; slumped over their car's steering wheel; or on the street.

Anecdotal reports have made estimates of the numbers of deaths and disappearances of academics to be from around 250 to over 500 — as reported by the Palestine Information Center. Due to fear, consistent killing, kidnapping, and arrests of journalists and other investigators on the ground — often by US troops — and collapsed or impossibly expensive communications, the verification of deaths is a slow and painstaking process.

The Brussels Tribunal, however, through its determined and ongoing research, is piecing together facts and has verified names and circumstances to date of 131 cases. The names of 31 professors and 100 doctors, surgeons, medical specialists, and PhD holders in every imaginable discipline stare from the pages of the report. That the list is incomplete seems incontrovertible, with credible reports citing over 80 academics killed from Baghdad University alone.

“Over 200 prominent Iraqi academics have been assassinated within the last three years alone. Those who are not assassinated are abducted or forced out of the country,” the Iraqi academic said.

Scrutiny gives rise to conjecture that specific disciplines are being targeted. In the demented world of Bush and Blair's new Iraq, the murder of Dr. Mohammed Tuki Hussein Al-Talakani, a nuclear physicist, shot dead in Baghdad just before Christmas 2004, shocked and appalled.

But actions generated resulting from a US Administration that kidnaps an entire sovereign government and finds it “not productive” to count Iraq's dead, shamefully, hardly surprises. To the paranoid in Washington and their varying imported or collaborative death squads, perhaps nuclear knowledge — never mind there was no nuclear program for years — warrants a death sentence.

But what threat could Dr. Eman Younis, a lecturer in translation at the College of Arts; Dr. Jammour Khammas, a lecturer in art at Basra College of Art; and Dr. Mohammed Washed, a lecturer in Tourism have posed? Or Professor Dr. Wajeih Mahjoub, a lecturer in physical education and author of eight books on the same subject and Dr. Sabri Al-Bayati, a professor of geography and faculty member of the



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College of Art, Baghdad University? Professor Laila Al-Saad, a dean at Mosul University College of Law, and her husband Muneer Al-Khiero, a professor of law at the same university, lived together, worked together, and were killed together.

Doctors and surgeons whose lives were devoted to healing were killed, their epitaphs written in the Tribunal's records. Two early murders were fellows of Britain's Royal College of Surgeons and distinguished board members of the Arab and Iraqi Boards of Medicine: Professor Dr. Emad Sarsaan and Professor Dr. Mohammed Al-Rawi, who was also chairman of the Iraqi Union of Physicians.

Experts in pediatrics, oncology, ophthalmology, pharmacology, dentistry, cardiology, and neurology; hospital directors; and administrators — all dead; they had fled from death threats and were kidnapped.

"University staff suspect there is a campaign to strip Iraq of its academics."

The Independent's veteran Middle East correspondent Robert Fisk, who is no conspiracy theorist, wrote on July 14, 2004, "University staff suspect there is a campaign to strip Iraq of its academics to complete the destruction of Iraq's cultural heritage, which began when America entered Baghdad."

Since dead men and women do not talk, morgues are overwhelmed, and forensic scientists are barely available in the circumstances, numbers of murders in Iraq since "liberation" — even sparse speculations of the numbers — are redundant. The only thing that is certain is that under the occupation's watch, a massive cull of Iraq's great academics has taken place.

That the occupying forces themselves have been responsible for many incidents is well documented. In chilling detail, journalist Saba Ali writes of two doctors who survived in Haditha, but who might well have died at the hands of US troops. In May, 2005, Dr. Walid Al-Obeide, a hospital director and surgeon, and Dr. Jamil Abbar were held for a week by soldiers in their own storeroom, and later in a pharmacy.

They were beaten so badly that between them they had a broken nose, a gashed head, and suffered from being beaten on their backs, legs, and even eyes. At one point Dr. Jamil was lying on the floor when a soldier came in, kicked him in the head, and then left, he said. Ali recorded the injuries and swellings shortly afterwards.

Haditha Hospital ambulance driver Mahmood Chima was shot by troops while trying to attend to



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injured families. Grenades were then thrown at his ambulance which was "ripped apart," records Ali. Haditha's horrors are documented by brave individuals, from Fallujah to northern Tel Afar, through the Euphrates valley, from town to town, village to village, border to border, and all throughout Iraq.

Professor Munim Al-Izmerly, a distinguished chemist, is recorded as having died under US interrogation. He was found to have been hit by what appeared to be a pistol shot, or bar from behind, suffering "brain stem compression." In the morgue he was found to also have a twenty centimeter incision bored into his skull.

Also recorded in detail are allegations of soldiers routinely taking over hospitals, pulling patients from their beds and IV drips, beating them, and, in one detailed case, allegedly beating surgeons in the middle of an operation. One surgeon is quoted as saying, "Patients were dying, while soldiers were beating us up."

Four more names were added to the Brussels Tribunal list in just the time it has taken to write this. They include the eminent Shiite political analyst, Dr. Ali Al-Naas, who was a frequent contributor to Arab television and an outspoken critic of the US occupation. He was shot dead in Baghdad in the early hours of January 27, 2006. There are, of course, "no leads to his assassination."

The Tribunal is urging student groups, medical organizations, hospitals, universities, and academic bodies to support their Iraqi colleagues. Their completed documentation and petition (details below) will be presented to the relevant authorities, including the UN Commission for Human Rights, demanding an independent international investigation.

- **Science, Humanity and the Iraq Holocaust - Gideon Polya, 14 April 2006**
- **SCIENCE, HUMANITY AND THE IRAQ HOLOCAUST** Editorial By Dr Gideon Polya



Science, Humanity and the Iraq Holocaust

This essay is a message of solidarity from an Australian scientist and writer sent to the Brussels Tribunal on the occasion of the Madrid International Seminar on the Assassination of Iraqi Academics and Health Professionals, 22-23 April 2006.

Sensible people want to change things for the better. Indeed that is how Man became sensible. The extraordinary intelligence of human beings evolved through the Darwinian selection of genetic variants who had improved survivability through enhanced ability to understand their environment and improve their

circumstances. There was a trade-off, a price to be paid for the resultant increased brain size, and that was infant birth after 9 months' gestation, the long-term helplessness of infants and their critical dependence on parents during postnatal brain development and enlargement. Associated with the co-evolution of increased intelligence and infant helplessness was evolution of survival-enhancing behavior patterns that resulted in our present behavioral fundamentals of parental affection, altruism and respect for Mother and Child.



As cogently argued by Richard Dawkins in "The Selfish Gene", Man also transmits behavior non-genetically from generation to generation through sets of learned behaviors, culture and ideas he describes as "memes" in contradistinction to the DNA-constructed "genes". The DNA-based "genes" are mutated, "shuffled" through genetic recombination and sex and are thence subject to natural selection. In contrast, "memes" are passed on in oral and written traditions from generation to generation, are selected through societal success and can over-ride genetic behavioral imperatives. Thus gene- and meme-determined social behaviors relating to "not killing" and to "doing unto others as you would have them do unto you" were codified in writing as "thou shall not kill" but conflicting ideological memes relating to nationalism, racism and power readily overcome this fundamental imperative.

Scientific approaches have dramatically improved Man's lot since the beginnings of sophisticated, agriculture-based civilization in the Fertile Crescent encompassing lands from Egypt to present-day Iraq. The scientific approach involves truth, reason, sensible communication and the critical testing of potentially falsifiable hypotheses. The scientific approach was implicit in the process whereby the earliest farmers carefully selected seed for sowing and applied a process of reiterated selection to eventually yield the cereal staples that became the mainstay of humanity. Lying, un-reason, censorship



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and fraud may serve narrow power interests but are ultimately self-defeating. Thus non-reportage of man-made mass mortality may serve the short-term interests of those responsible but simply ensures continuance of such catastrophes – history ignored yields history repeated.

Whether it is selecting better animal and plant breeds, developing better medical protocols or simply improving society generally, the basic approach involves minimizing risk. The best “risk minimization” protocol, which is applied most successfully in high risk areas such as heavy industry and aviation, successively involves (a) acquisition of information, (b) scientific analysis of the data, and (c) sensible systemic change to minimize risk. Unfortunately, in many areas of human activity this protocol is perverted by (a) lying by omission and commission, censorship, intimidation and self-censorship, (b) anti-scientific “spin”-based approaches involving the selective use of asserted facts to support a partisan position, and (c) “blame and shame” punishment of suitable victims with no sensible, risk-minimizing systemic change.

The tragedy of post-colonial Iraq since the return of Western armies in 1990 illustrates the perversion of humanitarian values, scientific approaches and rational risk assessment. The bottom-line parameter in any discussion about social policy is the human cost. According to the latest, Web-accessible [UN Population Division data](#) and UNICEF data (see: [here](#)), the "under-5 infant deaths per 1,000 births" in oil-rich Iraq versus impoverished Syria were 200 vs 170 (1953), 50 vs 44 (1990) and 125 vs 16 (sixteen) (2004) i.e. infant mortality decreased enormously under the dictator Saddam Hussein but increased hugely after 1990 due to Western intervention. The post-1990 under-5 infant mortality in Iraq under war-criminal UK-US sanctions, bombs and occupation now totals 1.6 million and the post-1990 excess deaths (i.e. avoidable deaths) now total 2.2 million. The 1990-2003 under-5 infant mortality and excess mortality in Iraq under sanctions and bombing totalled 1.2 million and 1.7 million, respectively; the 2003-2006 figures for post-invasion Occupied Iraq are 0.4 million and 0.5 million, respectively. In comparison, the post-invasion under-5 infant mortality and excess deaths in Occupied Afghanistan now total 1.4 million and 1.8 million, respectively (see [MWC News](#)).

These tragedies could have been averted by commitment by the responsible Western democracies to the scholarly and scientific ethos of truth, reason, sensible communication and application of the scientific method. Everyone is now familiar with the numerous, outrageous lies that preceded the illegal Coalition war on Iraq in 2003. However relatively few are familiar with the above mortality statistics – while deriving from authoritative, publicly-accessible UN and UNICEF reports just a click away on the Web,

“The appalling, continuing, avoidable mass mortality of infants in the Occupied Iraqi and Afghan Territories is a gross violation of the fundamental human behavioral imperative of respect for Mother and Child and reveals the semantically-absurd War on Terror as in actuality a War on Women and Children.”



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this crucial information is comprehensively ignored by Mainstream Media in a continuing process of racism, lying by omission and holocaust-denial. The horrendous under-5 infant mortality in Occupied Iraq and Afghanistan (1,300 infants dying every day, 0.5 million infants dying each year and with 90% of these deaths avoidable) is occurring because of the non-provision by the Occupying UK-US-led Coalition of the life-preserving requisites demanded unequivocally of Occupiers by the Geneva Conventions. Indeed these horrendous crimes constitute “passive genocide” and are the subject of formal complaints to the International Criminal Court (see Countercurrents).

The appalling, continuing, avoidable mass mortality of infants in the Occupied Iraqi and Afghan Territories is a gross violation of the fundamental human behavioral imperative of respect for Mother and Child and reveals the semantically-absurd War on Terror as in actuality a War on Women and Children. While this carnage has been occurring, the very people who can save societies from irrational perversion have been targeted, threatened and killed in Coalition-occupied Iraq, namely Iraq’s intellectuals, academics, lawyers, scientists, teachers and health professionals. According to the eminent Brussels Tribunal, about 220 Iraqi academics have been killed, hundreds of have been forced into exile, hundreds of Iraqi teachers have been murdered and there is evidence for targeting of professionals by death squads and see here . What can decent people do in the face of the racism, violence, unreason and untruth exhibited by the UK-US-led Coalition countries over Iraq? Peace is the only way but silence kills and silence is complicity.

We are all obliged to INFORM everyone about gross abuses of humanity.

Having read this, please inform everyone you know.

Dr Gideon Polya,

Melbourne, Australia

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***Dr Gideon Polya**, MWC News Chief political editor, published some 130 works in a 4 decade scientific career, most recently a huge pharmacological reference text "Biochemical Targets of Plant Bioactive Compounds" (CRC Press/Taylor & Francis, New York & London, 2003), and is currently writing a book on global mortality ---*

Contact Dr.Polya By E-mail



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- Iraq's situation much much worse - Guardian, 4 July 2006 .

Tuesday July 4, 2006

The Guardian

Iraq's situation is much, much worse

The remark attributed to the president of Baghdad University, "in the meantime, we carry on" (June 27), is a substantial understatement of the situation facing his university.

It may be understandable that Professor Mosa al-Mosawe describes the current circumstances in an upbeat way, but the information we have from those in Baghdad and from other sources point to a far more serious situation. We believe that many more academics are being killed and threatened because of their positions and the values they seek to uphold.

The verified figure of those academics killed in his university last year is over 100 (not 34 since 2003). In fact, in Iraq, as a whole, over 190 academics have been killed since 2003. Many more have been kidnapped and disappeared.

Freedom of expression is non-existent because no one dares to express ideas about religious factions. Many staff have been threatened or harassed by students, factions and security groups.

There are also considerable financial difficulties. The monthly salaries of university staff are delayed this month and there is a possibility they will not be paid next month. The university's budget is half that of two years ago.

It is hoped, therefore, that Mosawe will also refer to all these matters on his visit to Warwick University this week, otherwise those attending the global conference may get an account not recognised by his own staff or others in Iraq.

John Akker

Executive secretary, Council for Assisting Refugee Academics, London

- Iraqi education system on brink of collapse - Guardian, 4 Oct 2006.

Iraqi education system on brink of collapse

- **Peter Beaumont** in Baghdad Wednesday October 4 2006



An Iraqi man drops his children to school in Baghdad as guards look on. Photograph: Wathiq Khuzai/Getty Images

Iraq's school and university system is in danger of collapse in large areas of the country as pupils and teachers take flight in the face of threats of violence.

Professors and parents have told the Guardian they no longer feel safe to attend their educational institutions. In some schools and colleges, up to half the staff have fled abroad, resigned or applied to go on prolonged vacation, and class sizes have also dropped by up to half in the areas that are the worst affected.

Professionals in higher education, particularly those teaching the sciences and in health, have been targeted for assassination. Universities from Basra in the south to Kirkuk and Mosul in the north have been infiltrated by militia organisations, while the same militias from Islamic organisations regularly intimidate female students at the school and university gates for failing to wear the hijab. Women teachers too have been ordered by their ministry to adopt Islamic codes of clothing and behaviour. "The militias from all sides are in the universities. Classes are not happening because of the chaos, and colleagues are fleeing if they can," said Professor Saad Jawad, a lecturer in political science at Baghdad University.

"The whole situation is becoming completely unbearable. I decided to stay where many other professors have left. But I think it will reach the point where I will have to decide.

"A large number have simply left the country, while others have applied to go on prolonged sick leave. We are using recently graduated MA and PhD students to fill in the gaps."



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"What has been happening with the murders of professors involved in the sciences is that a lot of those involved medicine, biology, maths have fled," says Wadh Nadhmi, who also teaches politics in Baghdad. "The people who have got the money are sending their children abroad to study. A lot - my daughter is one of them - are deciding to finish their higher education in Egypt."

It is not only in Baghdad that the universities are beginning to suffer from the security situation. In Mosul, too, professors complain of a system now approaching utter disarray.

Mohammed U a 60-year-old science professor who asked for his full name not to be disclosed, spoke to the Guardian after returning from the funeral of a colleague, a law professor and head of the law faculty, who died in an explosion.

"Education here is a complete shambles. Professors are leaving, and the situation - the closed roads and bridges - means that both students and teachers find it difficult to get in for classes. In some departments in my institute attendance is down to a third. In others we have instances of no students turning up at all.

"Students are really struggling. To get them through at all, we have had to lower academic levels. We have to go easy on them. The whole system is becoming rapidly degraded."

The situation is reflected in many of Iraq's schools. "Education in my area is collapsing," said a teacher from a high school in Amariyah, who quit four months ago.

"Children can't get to school because of road blocks. The parents of others have simply withdrawn them from the school because of the fear of kidnapping [a rampant problem with the widespread criminal gangs.]

"If children have to travel by car rather than making a short journey on foot, we are much less likely to see them. When I left, we had 50% attendance at the school. We see the parents when they come in to ask for the children to have a "vacation" - and they admit they are too scared to let them come.

"Between September 8 and 28 two members of the staff were murdered. The teaching staff was supposed to be 42. Now there are only 20. Some applied for early retirement or they asked to be transferred to other safer areas."

Ala Mohammed, a high school student from Zafaraniya, had hoped to be going to university this year having completed her high school diploma. But her college is in Adhamiya - a notorious neighbourhood for violence.

"The journey is too long and too unsafe. I don't know whether I will be going to college or stay jailed at home."



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- **Kidnappers Strike Iraqi Science - 14 Nov 2006.**

November 14, 2006

Kidnappers Strike Iraqi Science

Author: Martin Enserink

Publication: Science

Country: Iraq

Science features an article about the difficulties facing Iraqi scientists. The article describes the letter writing campaign launched by SAR urging authorities to improve security conditions for higher education communities in Iraq.

Kidnappers Strike Iraqi Science

By Martin Enserink

ScienceNOW Daily News

14 November 2006

Gunmen abducted dozens of people working at the science and higher education ministry in Baghdad early today, only to release many of them late this evening, according to news reports. The attack, carried out by some 80 kidnappers, was one of the most brazen and massive kidnappings in the war-torn country to date, and was seen by some as another concerted effort by sectarians to undermine academic life in Iraq.

Scientists working outside Iraq were anxiously trying to find out all day what happened in Baghdad and surmise its effects on Iraqi science--all while fearing the worst about the fate of the kidnapped. "I have been very miserable today," says Abbas Al-Hussaini, an Iraqi engineer at the University of Westminster, U.K. who is secretary-general of the Iraq Higher Education Organizing Committee, a group trying to help rebuild science and education in Iraq.

News reports put the number of kidnapped between 30 and 150, but an Iraqi scholar working in the U.S. says that an Iraqi source has told him that as many as 228 people were missing. (The researcher asked not to be identified for fear of recriminations against his family.)

But after midnight in Iraq, CNN reported that many of the hostages had been released--although it's unclear if all of them are safe. The identity of the kidnappers is unknown. Television images today suggested that the ministry's Scholarship and Cultural Relationships Directorate had been the target.



Stop the Assassination of Iraqi Academics ! A campaign of The **BRussels** Tribunal and Campaña Estatal contra la Ocupación y por la Soberanía de Iraq

Academics have been frequent targets of killings and abductions in Iraq the past year--part of a campaign that appears aimed at thwarting reconstruction efforts and silencing intellectuals; some estimates put the death toll in the hundreds. Just 6 days ago, the Scholars at Risk Network, an international group based in New York City, initiated a letter-writing campaign to ask the Iraqi, U.K., and U.S. governments to help investigate recent murders and better protect Iraq's higher education institutions. Today's mass-kidnapping "was about the worst-case scenario," says Robert Quinn, the network's director.

But Hasni Abidi, director of the Study and Research Center for the Arab and Mediterranean World in Geneva, Switzerland, points out that other ministries have been targets of violence as well and says the kidnapping may have been aimed at destabilizing the Iraqi government. "I don't think there is a direct link with the killings of academics," he says.

Science and education minister Abdel Salam Thiab ordered universities in the country closed until the security situation has improved. "I don't think that's the solution," says Al-Hussaini, who says the government should beef up security instead. "Closing down the universities is exactly what [the kidnapers] want," he says.

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- **IRAQ: Minister closes universities following mass kidnapping - IRIN, 14 Nov 2006.**

Minister closes universities following mass kidnapping

BAGHDAD, 14 November 2006 (IRIN) -

TEACHERS UNDER THREAT

- 180 teachers killed since February.
- 3,250 teachers have fled Iraq.
- Up to 100 kidnapped on 14 Nov.
- Kidnappers dressed as police.



Stop the Assassination of Iraqi Academics ! A campaign of The BRussells Tribunal and Campaña Estatal contra la Ocupación y por la Soberanía de Iraq

- Teachers fleeing Iraq.

Iraqi Higher Education Minister Abed Theyab on Tuesday ordered the closure of all universities in the capital until the government could ensure a safe and secure environment for lecturers and students. This followed the kidnapping on the same day of up to 150 staff and visitors in one of the ministry's institutions in central Baghdad.

"I have only one choice, which is to suspend classes at universities. We have no other choice. I'm not ready to see more professors killed," Theyab told parliament. "Over and over, I had asked the government, defence and interior ministries to offer security for the ministry's institutions, but received nothing."

In what was seen as the largest mass abduction since the beginning of the US occupation in 2003, about 80 gunmen dressed as police commandos broke into the Ministry of Higher Education's scientific research directorate in the downtown Karradah district of Baghdad.

The institute is responsible for granting scholarships to Iraqi professors and students wishing to study abroad.

"It was a quick operation. It took about 10 to 15 minutes," Theyab said. "It is a four-storey building and the gunmen went to each storey." He added that the gunmen had at least 30 vehicles waiting outside.

Shi'ite militias and other illegal groups are known to wear stolen or fake police and army uniforms but it was not certain which group was responsible for this incident.

Analysts speculated that mass kidnappings of this nature could only be carried out by the Shi'ite Muslim-dominated security forces or at least with their involvement. Senior police officers from Karrada are already under investigation.

"This will never prevent us from continuing our studies," Said Ali al-Salihi, a 21-year-old student at the College of Sciences in al-Mustansiriyah University. "The terrorists want an Iraq of uneducated people, an Iraq of criminals, but it is they who will give up, not us," al-Salihi added.

But Eman Ali, a 20-year-old student at the College of Fine Arts in the University of Baghdad, has decided it is too dangerous to go to her classes.

"Enough... we had enough, there is no meaning behind being killed like this," Eman said. "I will manage by studying at home."

This latest attack has come amid systematic killings aimed at Iraq's academic community. This has prompted thousands of professors and researchers to flee to neighbouring countries.

A university dean, a geologist and a university professor were murdered over the past three weeks in Baghdad by unidentified gunmen, bringing the death toll among educators to at least 180 since February, according to the education ministry.

- **Scores of academics seized in mass kidnap - Guardian, 15 Nov 2006.**

Scores of academics seized in mass kidnap

- **Michael Howard**
 - Wednesday November 15 2006
-



A telephone and blood are seen on the floor of the education ministry building in Baghdad where employees and visitors were kidnapped. Photo: Wathiq Khuzai/Getty

Five senior Iraqi police officers were arrested last night after gunmen in police uniforms seized scores of people at a prominent scientific research institute in Baghdad in an audacious operation that underlined the lawlessness gripping the Iraqi capital and the threat it poses to the country's tottering education system.

As many as 80 armed men took part in the morning attack, which netted male academics, employees and visitors to the ministry of higher education's scientific research, scholarships and cultural relations directorate in Baghdad's relatively peaceful Karradah district.

Last night, reports indicated that most if not all of the hostages had been released in police raids across the city.



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But the episode, one of the biggest mass kidnappings since the 2003 war, raised pointed questions about the reliability of the Iraqi security forces.

Major General Jalil Khalaf, the interior ministry spokesman, said those arrested in connection with the kidnapping included the police chief for Karradah. Also held were the commander of the police brigade in charge of the area and three other officers, he added.

The gunmen were wearing interior ministry commando uniforms specifically designed to prevent counterfeiting.

"It's a terrorist act," said Abed Dhiab, the minister for higher education. "They kidnapped more than 100 employees and visitors." The victims include Sunnis and Shias he added, though precise numbers were unclear. Initial reports suggested as many as 150 had been taken, though officials later revised that down to about 50.

According to police sources and witnesses, the gunmen arrived in more than 20 pick-up trucks and sports utility vehicles and sealed off the approaches to the building. Several cars approached the ministry's checkpoint and their drivers reportedly told guards they were part of an advance group from the interior ministry conducting a security sweep before a visit by the US ambassador to Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad.

Once inside the four-storey building, they forced men and women into separate rooms and took their mobile phones. The men, including senior academics, guards and visitors, were hand-cuffed and loaded on to the back of the pick-up trucks and driven off. The operation, which began at about 9.30am, was over in 15 minutes. The gunmen were reported to be heading toward the Shia stronghold of east Baghdad.

Insurgents, criminal gangs, and militias have frequently carried out attacks while posing as Iraqi security officers.

The interior ministry, which is controlled by the ruling Shia alliance, has repeatedly denied having links to the death squads and militias blamed by Sunni Arabs for instigating sectarian violence and kidnappings. A senior, non-Shia interior ministry source told the Guardian yesterday: "In truth we don't know whether the kidnappers were terrorists, militias, criminals, or interior ministry renegades. Whatever the explanation, it will do nothing for people's trust in us."

In response the minister for higher education, Mr Dhiab, ordered the suspension of all academic programmes and closure all universities, though he later appeared to pull back from a full shutdown. "I have only one choice, which is to suspend classes at universities because I am not ready to see more professors get killed," Mr Dhiab told parliament.



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The minister, a member of a leading Sunni Arab party, also accused Iraq's security chiefs of ignoring repeated requests to beef up security around educational institutions, following a series of threats.

Since the US invasion in 2003, Iraq's academic institutions and staff have come under regular attack from insurgents and religious extremists. Scores of senior academics have been killed and thousands more threatened.

Adnan Pachachi, an Iraqi politician and ex-governing council member, said: "There is evidence of a systematic and very sad attempt to drain Iraq of its brains."

• Additional reporting Salaam Jihad in Baghdad

- In Iraqi Colleges, Fear for an Already Shrunken Realm **Mass Kidnapping Seen Likely to Boost Educators' Exodus**

By Sudarsan Raghavan

Washington Post Foreign Service

Thursday, November 16, 2006; A23

BAGHDAD, Nov. 15 -- Over the past six months, Professor Amir Hassan's world has been shrinking. Two colleagues were assassinated, one with his family. Another was kidnapped. Two received death threats, forcing one to flee to Jordan. And since September, six other senior members of his political science department at Baghdad University have left Iraq.

Now, Hassan, a slim, carefully groomed man with a snowy mustache and owlish glasses, expects his world to condense even more. On Wednesday, in words filled with deep foreboding, he said the mass abduction of scores of people from a government educational agency a day earlier would persuade more academics to flee, further weakening a crucial, if fragile, pillar of Iraq.

"We are living in the killing stage," Hassan said, seated behind a neat desk in a spare, dimly lit office. "We know that our chance of dying is now greater than our chance of staying alive."

The emotions unleashed by one of the biggest mass kidnappings since the 2003 U.S.-led invasion reverberated across Iraq on Wednesday, splitting the cabinet along sectarian lines and spawning a heated dispute over how many men were abducted. But the most profound effect of what many Iraqis view as a national calamity was felt in university halls and campuses across Iraq. Here, the abductions highlighted the plight of academics and an educational system besieged by sectarian tensions, lawlessness and government ineffectiveness.



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"What happened in Baghdad yesterday was a catastrophe that could destroy the entire educational process," said Fikret Mahmoud Omar, an instructor at a technical college in the northern city of Kirkuk. "It shows that the process in Iraq is on the verge of collapse and confirms that terrorists and militias are the ones who are in control of events."

By late Wednesday night, it was still unclear how many Iraqis remained captive after Tuesday's brazen daylight raid on a Ministry of Higher Education building in Baghdad's upscale Karrada neighborhood. About 80 gunmen, dressed in blue police commando uniforms and driving police vehicles with no license plates, handcuffed, blindfolded and carried off male employees and visitors. They locked women up in rooms before driving away in their official-looking convoy.

Less than 24 hours later, captives were being freed, an unusual development in a nation where kidnap victims are often held for months or killed. A Ministry of Higher Education spokesman, Bilal al-Khatib, said about 70 of as many as 150 kidnap victims had been released. But Ali al-Dabbagh, a spokesman for the Shiite-led government of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, said about 40 had been set free and only a few remained captive. Higher Education Minister Abed Thiyab, a prominent Sunni Muslim, declared he would suspend his "membership in the Maliki government until all hostages are released."

Even as politicians bickered, they voiced a common belief that the assault could have serious repercussions in educational institutions across the country. Already, Khatib said, at least 160 professors have been killed since the U.S.-led invasion and more than 1,500 have fled the country, part of the growing exodus of middle-class professionals. Hassan, the professor, said he believes the kidnapers targeted the agency Tuesday because it granted scholarships to Iraqi professors and students applying to study abroad.

"This was the means to have contact with other countries. So if they cut this, they cut life," said Hassan, who said he himself had no plans to flee Iraq.

On Wednesday, Maliki visited Baghdad University, one of Iraq's most prestigious academic institutions, to show his commitment to bolstering security and stopping sectarian strife.

Addressing students and professors, he described the kidnapers as "worse than extremists" and said the attack was a product of militia rivalries. Although no group has asserted responsibility, many people say they believe Shiite Muslim militias -- especially the Mahdi Army, linked to cleric and political kingmaker Moqtada al-Sadr -- were behind the abductions. Shiite groups have staged previous mass kidnappings and are widely believed to have infiltrated Iraq's security forces.

"We will chase those who did this ugly criminal act," Maliki promised.



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But his audience was more interested about his plans for Iraq's universities. Several students and professors stood up to ask him questions about how he would shield them from the chaos infecting Iraq. Maliki said he would ban pictures, leaflets, placards or other politically inspired materials from campuses "because the universities shall remain outside partisan politics or sectarian affiliation." He also promised that the government would "allocate funds to support students" and that professors and students would be protected.

"I hope you will continue your studies vigorously and not bow in front of those who want to paralyze our universities," Maliki told the gathering. "We regret what happened yesterday, but the government's reaction was strong."

In Kirkuk, Essam Muhedeen Arzad, a student at the College of Education, said Maliki's words calmed him. "I feel very sad for what has happened, particularly since we are in Iraq, which is the land of civilization and learning," Arzad said. "We need to capture those who are responsible for this act and bring them to justice to show the world that we are a nation of civilized people and will not accept such terrorist acts."

But for other college students, the abductions were a tipping point. For months, Faiha Abdul Jabar, in her second year studying science at Diyala University, said she was thinking of quitting her studies and staying home. A few hours after the assault, she was convinced.

"As a girl, I have a lot of fears from what happened yesterday," Abdul Jabar said. "Those armed men were able to storm into a governmental office and kidnap all the employees, and no one was able to save them or protect them. So what will happen to us if armed men stormed our college and kidnapped us?"

"The government is responsible for what is happening, and the government is responsible for making me lose this year," she added.

Zaman Adam Ali, who is studying English at Diyala University, also quit her studies on Tuesday, along with her two sisters, Eman and Hanan. "The government is responsible for destroying our future," Ali said.

Like almost every upheaval nowadays in Iraq, the kidnappings are being viewed through a prism of sectarianism. Muhammad Jamal, a law student at Tikrit University, sees the political disputes as an attempt by Shiite officials, hardened by sectarian divisions, to "lessen the importance" of the assaults. "This action is proof that we have a sectarian government," he said.

In a parking lot at Baghdad University on Wednesday, Lena Sadhi and Fatima Salim were standing next to a white car. Two hours earlier, they and other students had staged a protest. They heard that

the Ministry of Higher Education was considering shutting down universities in the capital in the wake of the abductions, citing poor security. But they were hungry for education.

"The government doesn't want to continue our studies. That's why we protested," said Salim, who wore an aquamarine head scarf. "Why can people in the north and in the south be able to finish their studies and we can't?"

But Salim was also angry at the kidnappers. "They want our life to collapse," she said. "The only life we have is the university."

Special correspondents Muhanned Saif Aldin in Tikrit and Hasan Shammari in Diyala and other Washington Post staff in Iraq contributed to this report.

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- **They may look carefree, but this campus is now a battleground - Times, 17 Nov 2006.**

They may look like carefree students, but this campus is now a battleground

Once Western pop songs blared out, now only prayers are allowed as Iraqi extremists take over the universities



From Ned Parker in Baghdad

THE brazen kidnapping of up to 150 people at a Higher Education Ministry building this week was the latest shot in a sectarian war that has claimed university campuses as a battlefield.

Students wonder if the universities will survive the year or fall a victim to Iraq's burgeoning religious conflict. Many women come to school dressed in head scarves, terrified that criminals will abduct them on the way.



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A veneer of civility exists as men and women fraternise; Shia and Sunnis mix, but it is all superficial. Campus life now mirrors the chaos on the streets of Baghdad.

Amel Amad Adin, 21, a third-year biology student, says that she has watched Baghdad University, the biggest in the country, fall apart during her academic career. In the past year three of Adin's professors have been murdered, including the head of her department, while another five have left Iraq. "We've heard of instances where professors had to give passing marks to certain students just because they belonged to certain parties or militias," she said.

The situation is so bad that her family is pressuring her to leave. Twelve of her twenty-five classmates have dropped out. She is afraid of travelling to school and describes how minibuses carrying students have been attacked by gunmen.

"Something might happen at any second that could prevent us from attending school and stop our studies. Tuesday's incident was a warning sign that this whole system might collapse at any second and we will lose everything."

About 80 hostages are still being held from the mass kidnapping. Some were murdered while another 70, who were freed, claim to have been beaten, the Higher Education Minister told reporters yesterday.

A Shia lecturer at Mustansiriyah university in Baghdad told *The Times* that the attack had specifically targeted the office responsible for awarding overseas study scholarships to state employees because the department awarded more fellowships to Sunnis than Shias.

The Mahdi Army, a Shia militia supporting the anti-Western cleric Hojatolislam Moqtada al-Sadr, is believed to have carried out the attack.

Since 2003 at least 160 professors have been killed, more than 2,000 have fled abroad, hundreds of students have died and thousands have dropped out, while 7,500 have changed campuses because of the sectarian violence, the Higher Education Ministry spokesman Basil al-Khateeb told *The Times*.

Mahmoud Abdul Illah, 20, a film student at the Academy of Fine Arts in Baghdad, says that classes are cancelled because of murder. "Professors are obvious targets, especially at our school because extremists consider it unlawful to study film and art. They consider it *haram* [wrong]. We had one of our best professors, a famous film director named Hadi Oumran, killed last June. We could have learnt a lot from him."

The Mustansiriyah lecturer lamented the sectarianism sweeping the halls of learning. "People have begun to forget they are human beings. They are turning into monsters."



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She says that she used to love teaching her students, but in 2005, after the Shia religious parties took over the Government, her campus fell to the tide of Islamic fundamentalism.

The Mahdi Army overran the university, took over the student union and began to dominate campus life. Where American pop songs once blared on loudspeakers, now only Islamic prayers are heard. The campus has formally banned Western music.

“They’ve turned the campus into a Shia mosque,” said the teacher, a devout Muslim who asked not to be identified.

During important religious festivals such as Ashura, which commemorates a revered Shia figure, the al-Sadr loyalists draped the campus buildings in black. In turn, the campus’s smaller Sunni population grew angry at such displays. A bloody feud developed.

Students who supported Hojatoleslam al-Sadr started to follow Sunni classmates home, the teacher said. One Sadrist follower boasted to her that the movement was protecting the university. “The student told me, anyone we suspect of having political activities we follow home. Then we kidnap him to Sadr City to question him. We have courts in Sadr City, where we’ll try him and get a verdict.” She said she had little doubt that many of the verdicts ended in death.

Even teachers have fallen into the crossfire of the students’ religious wars and have started to give militia members passing grades in order to save their lives, she said. “It’s easy for a student to follow a teacher and kill him. Nobody can protect you. Even the university president is afraid of the students.”

Last June a Shia psychology professor was shot dead leaving the school’s main gate. A few days later a Sunni professor in Arabic studies was gunned down in his car. “It was completely tit-for-tat and the college of arts lost two professors.”

The university is a shadow of its former self. Some classes have counted only three students so far this autumn and some first-year students will not begin their autumn semester until December. The teacher wants to escape Iraq, as many of her colleagues have done.

- The Iraqi Government issued an arrest warrant last night for the country’s most prominent Sunni cleric, Harith al-Dari, the head of the Muslim Clerics’ Association. Jawad al-Bolani, the Interior Minister, said that he was accused of “supporting terrorism”. Shia leaders have complained that Mr al-Dari had appeared to justify violence by al -Qaeda. The cleric is believed to be out of Iraq. (*Reuters*)
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Stop the Assassination of Iraqi Academics !

A campaign of The BRussells Tribunal and

Campaña Estatal contra la Ocupación y por la Soberanía de Iraq

- **Iraq's Deadliest Zone: Schools - Washington Post, 27 Nov 2006.**

Iraq's Deadliest Zone: Schools

By Abdul Sattar Jawad

Monday, November 27, 2006; A19

The mass kidnappings of scholars in Iraq underscore the chilling fact that the most dangerous place in Iraq is not the mosque, the marketplace or the military checkpoint, but the classroom. More than 250 academics have been killed since 2003, targeted by so many warring factions that it seems to be the only issue they can agree on. To date, not one person has been arrested for these murders.

Fundamentalist Sunni, Shiite, Baathist, anti-Baathist and other anti-American militants all have taken credit for these murders. Some are groups of students doing the Mahdi Army's bidding and willing to take matters into their own violent hands. But they all share a common feature: the use of terrorism as a weapon to murder academics, plunge university life into chaos and threaten learning at its source.

Fanatics targeting Iraqi academics are wreaking havoc on the educational system by threatening, kidnapping and killing innocent professors. I know well the nature of the threat. In seeking to bring education, debate and intellectual curiosity to Iraq, I was forced to flee when my life was threatened.

I became a target for a variety of twisted reasons. I was editor of the Baghdad Mirror, the only English-language weekly. Zealots who mistakenly assumed we were aligned with Western sensibilities bombed our building in March 2005, causing extensive damage but, mercifully, no loss of life. It was too dangerous to continue operating, and I reluctantly closed the paper the next day.

At the time, I had just started as dean of the College of Arts at Mustansiriyah University in Baghdad. Several weeks after the newspaper bombing, I was surrounded by students dressed in white shrouds and chanting death threats at me. Being a secular person, like most scholars, I was getting a chilling message of intimidation and violence.

Today the Mahdi Army is running university life in Baghdad, installing its political agenda by canceling classes, altering syllabuses to include its version of religion courses and ultimately driving away professors and students alike.

Virtually overnight I became an editor without a newspaper and a professor without students or a university. And the army of murderers continued to pursue me. One morning in April 2005 I was about to leave my home in Baghdad when I saw my terrified driver gesture for me to stay inside. There were two cars waiting outside, Kalashnikov rifles pointing out their windows. It was clear that the threats were going to escalate, placing my family, my colleagues and me at risk. I knew I had to leave.



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My decision to flee was incredibly painful but necessary. I had to leave my wife and three children, and students whom I cherish. Before daybreak on a summer morning in 2005, a driver who knew how to avoid routes peppered with armed insurgents took me to Jordan.

That summer I was granted a visiting fellowship through a partnership between the Scholar Rescue Fund at the Institute of International Education and Duke University. The fund matches scholars, such as professors, doctors and journalists, with host institutions where they can continue their vital work free from fear. At Duke, I am teaching courses in Arabic literature. I am one of the lucky ones.

The Scholar Rescue Fund is grimly conscious that it cannot dedicate its work to Iraqi scholars alone. Despots around the world are waging terror campaigns against intellectuals and academicians. By year's end, perhaps as many as 500 scholars across the globe will be dead, targeted by groups that range from narco-terrorists to religious fundamentalists fighting in suicide and "martyr" brigades. In the struggle to save lives threatened on the classroom battleground, the Scholar Rescue Fund has much to do and little in the way of time or resources to do it.

I am determined to return to Iraq as soon as it is safe for me. Without an open and unfettered educational system, there can be no democracy. We cannot rebuild our country without academic freedom. We will never be able to provide an incubator for a new nation unless professors and students can freely discuss and debate literature and culture or listen to controversial positions on social, economic and political issues.

We are fighting not only for the streets of Baghdad but also for the classrooms. Rescuing our scholars has become as crucial in determining the future of Iraq as disarming the insurgents.

We may ultimately view victory in Iraq as the ability to restore Baghdad to its historical role as a home to intellectual greatness so that universities may once again buzz with the energy of our culture and literature and the celebration of the human mind. Until then, we must continue to find a "lifeboat" for every scholar who faces the murderous mob.

The writer is a visiting professor at the John Hope Franklin Center for Interdisciplinary and International Studies at Duke University.



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- **2 College profs among 23 slain in Iraq - Denver Post, 8 Dec 2006.**

2 college profs among 23 slain in Iraq

By Thomas Wagner

The Associated Press

Baghdad, Iraq - A series of bombings and shootings killed at least 23 people in Iraq on Thursday, including a 7-year-old girl and two college professors.

Iraqi police also found 35 bullet-riddled bodies that had been bound and blindfolded and left in different parts of the capital.

Brig. Gen. Abdul-Karim Khalaf, director of the Interior Ministry's national command center, vowed to strike back at the spiraling sectarian violence in Baghdad, saying Iraqi forces soon will launch house-to-house searches to confiscate hidden weapons.

"No house or area will be excluded from this search. All kinds of weapons will be confiscated," he told reporters, adding that 40 policemen were killed and 90 wounded in the capital in the past week.

The U.S. military confirmed that another soldier died in fighting Wednesday, raising to 11 the number of American troops killed on the same day the Iraq Study Group issued a report in Washington increasing pressure on President Bush to change his war strategy. Another U.S. soldier who was wounded on Wednesday died Thursday.

The 11th soldier killed Wednesday was shot while manning a machine-gun nest on the roof of an outpost in Ramadi, capital of volatile Anbar province, according to an Associated Press reporter on the scene.

Ten other U.S. troops were killed in four separate incidents in Iraq, a major blow on the day the high-level bipartisan panel recommended gradually shifting U.S. forces from combat to training roles.

The military said five died in fighting in Anbar, including three soldiers assigned to the 1st Brigade, 1st Armored Division, one Marine assigned to the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force Headquarters Group, and one Marine assigned to the 15th Marine Expeditionary Force.

One Marine assigned to Task Force Military Police, 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, also died Wednesday from nonhostile causes while operating in Anbar province.

The five other troops killed Wednesday were Task Force Lightning soldiers who were struck by a roadside bomb during combat operations near the northern city of Kirkuk. The soldiers were assigned to the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division.



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The military also said a soldier assigned to the 1st Brigade, 1st Armored Division, who was wounded in the fighting in Anbar on Wednesday died Thursday.

The deaths followed a particularly bloody weekend and raised to at least 32 the number of U.S. troops killed in the first week of this month.

- **Deaths top 100 in Baghdad bombings, shootings** - CNN, 17 Jan, 2007.

Deaths top 100 in Baghdad bombings, shootings

BAGHDAD, Iraq (CNN) -- Bombings and shootings in Baghdad on Tuesday killed 107 people and wounded more than 285, most of them in neighborhoods where the militia of a powerful anti-American Shiite cleric holds sway.

A suicide bomber and a car bomb killed at least 70 people and wounded 170 more at entrances to a once-prestigious university in Baghdad.

The strike at Mustansiriyah University was a dual bomb attack. The suicide bomber detonated a vest at the back entrance of the school, and a parked car exploded at the main gate under a pedestrian bridge where students and employees get public transit. ([Watch aftermath of 'massive' bombing](#) 📺)

A CNN producer near the scene said police sealed off the area and there were armed members of the Mehdi Army -- the militia under the control of Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr -- on the street.

The university, in northeastern Baghdad, is at the tip of Sadr City, a Shiite neighborhood where there is much support for al-Sadr. It is considered to be a Mehdi militia stronghold. ([Map](#))

Meanwhile, gunmen on motorcycles opened fire on a marketplace in the Mehdi Army-controlled Bunouk area of eastern Baghdad and killed 12 civilians. Seven others were wounded.

In the Sadr City neighborhood, a bomb left inside a minivan detonated, killing four people and wounding 10 others, the official said. The blast occurred 100 to 200 meters away from al-Sadr's main office.

There were two deadly incidents in central Baghdad.



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A bomb exploded near a police convoy along a main road in central Baghdad, the official said. When police and others responded to that blast, a second bomb exploded nearby. At least 15 people were killed and 70 wounded by the two bombs, the official said.

About two hours before that incident, two police officers who helped defuse a car bomb in central Baghdad's Karrada section were killed when another bomb hidden nearby exploded, the official said. Two civilians were also killed in the blast, and 10 people, including three policemen, were wounded, the official said.

In Baghdad's western Bayaa neighborhood, two policemen were gunned down as they drove home after work in civilian clothing and car.

Mortar rounds hit a residential area in the Amil neighborhood in western Baghdad, wounding 10 civilians.

Police on Tuesday found 25 unidentified bodies across Baghdad.

The peak in violence came on the same day as the release of a United Nations report that said more than 34,000 civilians were "violently killed" across Iraq last year. ([Full story](#))

University under influence of radical Shiites

Mustansiriya University -- an ancient university with relatively modern buildings -- had been visited by Paul Bremer, once the top U.S. civilian official in Iraq after the fall of Saddam Hussein.

The school, which emphasizes law and literature, was singled out as an example of the kind of institution that would need to thrive in the post-Saddam Hussein era.

However, students have come under the influence of al-Sadr militias over the past year. Sunni professors have left the school because of the influence of radical Shiites.

Iraqi PM links bombings to recent executions

Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki strongly condemned the bombings, saying "a clutch of desperate terrorists and Saddamists has targeted an educational institution" and "we promise that the perpetrators will not go unpunished."

Al-Maliki said the bombings came "at a time when the remnants of the previous regime were dealt a severe blow that put an end to their fake dreams forever; at a time when the Iraqi people folded a dark chapter of tyranny and dictatorship by punishing the lead criminals and those behind the mass



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graves," a reference to the executions of ousted dictator Saddam Hussein on December 30 and of two of his aides, who were hanged on Monday. ([Full story](#))

The prime minister said in a statement, "They have committed a crime that would make humanity cringe. Many children of Iraq were martyred in this cowardly act and their blood was spilled on campus and at the gates of the university."

Boycott by al-Sadr loyalists reportedly ending

Cabinet ministers and legislators loyal to al-Sadr were instructed to end their six-week boycott of the political process, a parliamentarian in the political bloc told The Associated Press on Tuesday, indicating that the decision was linked to a major security operation to be launched by the Iraqi government and U.S. forces. ([Watch U.S. troops go door to door in Baghdad neighborhood](#) 📺)

"We might be subjected to an attack and we should try [to] solve the problem politically. We should not give a chance for a military strike against us," the legislator told AP, speaking on condition of anonymity because the information was not yet public.

The lawmaker said the group's return was conditional, including demands that the government set up a committee to establish a timetable for the withdrawal of U.S. troops and a second that would set a date by which Iraqi forces were to take control of security nationwide, AP reported.

CNN's Jomana Karadsheh, Mohammed Tawfeeq and Sam Dagher in Baghdad contributed to this report.

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Stop the Assassination of Iraqi Academics !

A campaign of The BRussells Tribunal and

Campaña Estatal contra la Ocupación y por la Soberanía de Iraq

- Protect Iraq from a disastrous braindrain - 18 Jan 2007.

Protect Iraq from a disastrous braindrain.

Provide Iraqi students and academics with increased protection

By: Erik van Zuylen, Eline Veninga and Marielle Hetem

NRC Next: 18th of January 2007

Last Tuesday, January 16, 65 people were killed and over 100 were injured in violent attacks in Baghdad, the Iraqi capital. The attacks were directly targeted at students who have defiantly continued to attend university despite threats against their lives.

The day served as a tragic climax in a long row of kidnappings and attacks on the Iraqi academia.

The drama in the academic world unfolds in the dark shadow of an ever escalating civil war. At times, in other wars universities have remained relatively safe areas.

Currently in Iraq, academics and students are systematically forced to leave the country and if they do not comply they are specifically targeted and brutally killed. Since the onset of the American invasion in 2003, almost 500 academics have been killed while thousands of others have fled the country.

Recent history has seen students become the direct targets of violence. In November of 2006, flyers were spread at universities by Sunni militias (among others Ansar Alsuna), which called for an immediate withdrawal from public academic life. Students and professors were ordered to stay home and it was stated that if they did not comply their lives would be in significant danger.

This form of terror has potentially devastating results for Iraqis academia and the future of the Iraqis state. A disastrous 'brain drain' is occurring which will lead to a widespread lack of qualified supervision in Iraq's academic institutions. Fewer graduates will be produced while the degrees sought are of deteriorating value. We are witnessing the dismantling of the Iraqis intelligentsia, that segment of society in a position to offer valuable insight and direction in these tumultuous times. Ultimately, as the transfer of knowledge to new generations is eliminated hope for a bright Iraqi future deteriorates as well.

On campuses an increase in the polarization between students is also becoming visible as greater numbers of students join sectarian groups, often by force. This regrettable trend has led to a heightened distrust among students. At the University of Baghdad, The Student League for Human Rights has been forced to continue its activities off campus due to the deterioration of their personal security. Parents often even choose to keep their children home to shield them from the threat of violence, that which unveiled itself on January 16th.



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Of course the entire Iraqi population must be protected. Yet in consideration of the current developments in the nature of the Iraqi conflict students and professors need extra attention. They have become a specific target for religious fundamentalists, who want to control the society by keeping the people illiterate and consequently powerless. They know that the university campus in particular is a place where critical thought is nurtured and able to flourish. Critical thought is the best antidote against extremism and terrorism.

Furthermore students and academics are of significant importance to the economic and technological development of Iraq. The prospects for a quick fix to the current state of affairs in this sectarian war zone are non-existent. In this context it is crucial that the foundations upon which Iraq may rebuild are not destroyed.

The Iraqi Ministry of Education has recently implemented new measures to improve the security of schools. Still, in spite of the increase of security forces at university gates, many students stay at home because the trip to and from the university remains a dangerous obstacle. Fear is exacerbated by the fact that the perpetrators of these acts of sectarian violence are rarely prosecuted.

In these desperate times The European Union, the United States of America and other international organizations should take a role in ending this obvious problem. This must be carried out through diplomatic means as well as practical actions.

Academics that prefer to stay in Iraq should be protected at all costs. Those who want to flee the country and seek asylum should be compassionately accepted. An Iraq devoid of a strong and free academic community is doomed to a future of sectarian division and violence. The deliberate attack on Iraqi academia must be subsided; the international academic community must work to support those who are working in the face of this most deplorable threat to their lives.



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- **Iraq's Brain Drain Leaves Hopeless Legacy - 01 Feb 2007.**

Iraq's Brain Drain Leaves Hopeless Legacy

Posted February 1, 2007 | 11:16 AM (EST)

Read More: [Iraq](#), [United Nations](#), [Syria](#), [Jordan](#), [United States](#), [Joe Biden](#), [Iran](#), [John Murtha](#) ,
[Breaking Politics News](#)

I wish I could be as certain about my position regarding the war in Iraq as those who have been wrong for the past four years. I wish I could state unequivocally that redeploying the troops was the answer to getting us out of this mess.

The only thing I am certain of is we have a moral obligation to the Iraqi people that goes far beyond any increase or decrease in the number of troops on the ground.

Instead of being certain about our positions, we might be better off asking more questions. In the words of the late theologian Paul Tillich, "The questions are more important than the answers."

I have not heard how any position -- be it the president's surge, Rep. John Murtha's redeployment, or Sen. Joe Biden's call for maintaining a unified Iraq by decentralizing it and giving Kurds, Shiites and Sunnis their own regions -- factors in the following question: How does your plan consider the current brain drain that is besieging the country?

The United Nations reported late last year that nearly 100,000 Iraqis are leaving the country every month. Many of them are the professionals and intellectuals necessary for creating stability.

The U.N. report estimates there are up to 700,000 Iraqis in Jordan, at least 600,000 in Syria, at least 100,000 in Egypt, 20,000 to 40,000 in Lebanon and 54,000 in Iran. While many of them fled Iraq prior to the U.S. invasion in 2003, some 2,000 Iraqis are arriving daily in Syria and 1,000 a day in Jordan.

Prior to the U.S. invasion, Iraq boasted one of the best-educated work forces in the region, with one of the highest concentration of Ph.D.s per capita anywhere.

The more immediate impact is felt in terms of health care. According to the Brookings Institute, of the 34,000 physicians in Iraq before 2003, some 12,000 have left the country and 2,000 have been killed. The global health group Medact puts the number who have left closer to 18,000. Medact also states



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that the most basic treatments are lacking, noting: "Approximately 50 percent of Iraqi children suffer from some form" of malnourishment.

Moreover, the individuals leaving represent Iraq's best long-term hope of being a country not solely dependent on oil. Due to our policies, Iraq is methodically being transformed into another Afghanistan -- only with more oil. The current brain drain could diminish Iraq's ability to take full advantage of its rich natural resources, becoming another poor country depending on outside companies exporting its oil.

How does an additional 21,500 American men and women put an end to Iraq's intellectual hemorrhaging? Does redeployment stop the exodus? Or a decentralized Iraq? This exodus truly represents a frightening prospect for Iraq's future. With university professors, doctors, lawyers, engineers, etc., leaving the country because of instability, who's left behind?

We are asking our young men and women to referee stability that with each passing day becomes comprised more by angry underemployed Iraqi males who are being fed a steady diet of American culpability for their present condition. If this brain drain continues, we will have played a significant role in expanding terrorism, which would not only destabilize the region but would further jeopardize our national security.

There is no military solution for brain drain. This problem must be addressed diplomatically with the key players being the United Nations and those countries experiencing an influx of Iraqi refugees, which include Iran and Syria. There's not enough alternatives to be steadfast on which options are off the table.

The brain-drain dilemma also gives credence to Biden's proposal. Since Iraqi communities have unofficially taken a divided position through their actions, it might behoove the president to follow the lead of President Kennedy, who originally opposed the March on Washington in 1963. Once realizing he could not stop the winds of change, albeit reluctantly, Kennedy embraced it.

Ultimately, only Iraqis can stabilize Iraq. Only Iraqis can bring back those who can assist in providing the infrastructure for stability.

Byron Williams is an Oakland pastor and syndicated columnist. E-mail him at byron@byronspeaks.com or leave a message at (510) 208-6417. Send a letter to the editor to soundoff@angnewspapers.com.



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- **Amidst Iraq Chaos, Intellectuals Take Flight** - Epoch Times, 08 Feb 2007.

Thousands of the country's targeted professionals flee sectarian violence

BAGHDAD (Reuters)—Six months after the U.S. invasion, Esam Pasha, a 30-year-old Iraqi artist and writer, proudly painted a mural called “Resilience” over a giant portrait of Saddam Hussein on the wall of a government building.

Now he lives in the United States. Pasha is among hundreds of thousands of Iraqis who have been driven abroad since the war, many of them doctors, businessmen, academics, and other professionals whose skills Iraq can ill afford to lose.

Pasha talks wistfully about sipping tea and chatting all day at a gallery in Baghdad: “I can still hear the sounds and the birds and almost smell the tea.”

His mural was a colorful celebration of Baghdad life and what he called “the ever-shining sun of Iraq.” “I didn’t use a single drop of black paint in it. I felt like Baghdad had enough of black burnt in its memory,” Pasha said in a telephone interview from Connecticut.

The mural is on a wall of the Ministry of Labor, which like all government offices in Baghdad is now surrounded by blast walls and guards, off limits to the general public. “Hopefully someday it will be safe enough to have public artworks in Baghdad that people walk by safely and enjoy,” he said. “That was what I had in mind, that if other artists do as I did, Baghdad would be beautiful and clean as it once was. But if there’s no security, nothing can be done.”

Abu Mina, a ceramic artist and university professor, still goes to the gallery Pasha remembers so fondly, but he says nobody is buying art anymore and he too is considering leaving. He hasn’t been paid for a month by the university, and most of his students don’t come to class because it is too dangerous.

“Maybe only three students will graduate this year. The other 27 never showed up,” he said. “I wouldn’t even recognize their faces.”

Academics Targeted

The Higher Education Ministry says at least 185 university teachers have been killed since April 2003, another 52 kidnapped, and 41 wounded. A double bombing at a Baghdad university this month killed at least 70 people, mostly students.

Abu Mina’s son is studying medicine but classes are only held about once every two weeks, and many professors have moved to the safety of Damascus to teach at a private university.



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Finding a dentist or a specialist surgeon or consultant can take weeks and often proves impossible, driving those who can afford it to seek medical treatment abroad. Hospital emergency rooms faced with floods of casualties from bombings and shootings are often short-staffed and overwhelmed.

A United Nations report this month said there was a worrying increase in attacks on professionals such as teachers, doctors, artists, lawyers, ex-military officers, and journalists. “These attacks are typically perpetrated by extremists practicing conformist ideology and by militant/terror groups intent on spreading fear and intimidation,” the report said, adding that a growing climate of Islamic extremism was also linked to attacks on academics.

Rules of the Jungle

Asam Rifaat, 38, a criminal lawyer living in the upscale Mansour district of Baghdad, said he has decided to take his wife and two children out of Iraq. “I can’t live in Baghdad anymore. It’s turned into a city for dead people and I’m not ready to have my children grow up as orphans,” he said.

“I can’t work for justice in a country run by militias which act above the law,” he said, referring to armed groups blamed for operating death squads responsible for hundreds of killings every week, many thought to work in collusion with the police. “I mean it, we are living according to the rules of the jungle,” Rifaat said.

“Every time I leave my home, I take a long look at (my children) Nora and Mahmoud because I always have the feeling that I’m not coming back, I’ll be killed or abducted.”

His wife, a 35-year-old teacher, has quit her job to stay home with the children. “Every time Asam leaves for work I keep praying for his safety. And when I see urgent news on television about bombs, I start crying until he comes home.”

Salim al-Taie, a former army officer, 45, lives with his wife and three children aged 5 to 12 in Amriya in western Baghdad. “In the last four years many things have changed in Baghdad and definitely for the worse. No one respects the law any more, which is a disaster,” he said. “Life in Baghdad is like living in a city run by the mafia where anybody can be killed in cold blood,” he said, recalling two friends and former pilots who were killed by gunmen.

“Every time I convince my wife that we mustn’t give up hope, the ever-increasing blasts and sectarian killing prove I’m wrong,” he said, adding that he had stopped sending his children to school and decided to move to Egypt.



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“When I stopped Nahida and Jumana from going to school they started crying about not seeing their friends anymore,” Taie said. “They broke my heart and their tears encouraged me to pack up and leave Iraq forever.”

“I want no more tears in my children’s eyes, even if the price is never to return to Iraq.”

- Diala University professors suffering fears of physical liquidation – 12 Feb 2007

By Omaran Awwad and Asaad Jameel

Baaquba, 12 February 2007 (Voices of Iraq)

Physical liquidation of Diala University professors has lately been on the rise, particularly those marked by efficiency and enthusiasm like Dr. Walhan Hameed, the dean of the physical education college, who was killed early in February.

Armed men had attacked the college building and opened fire at Dr. Hameed and his son, killing them instantly. Two weeks earlier, a professor of Arabic language and literature was killed along with three students after gunmen stopped their vehicle while on their way to their college.

"Gunmen now dare raid university buildings and head without any resistance directly to offices of deans and professors and shoot them down," Ahmed Abad told the independent news agency Voices of Iraq (VOI).

"We can't go to our colleges unless the aggravating security conditions improved," he said.

Kareem Jabbar, a professor at the engineering college, called for "concatenated efforts to curb acts of violence and killings targeting university professors."

"Security stability has become an ever-pressing need if we want to have a better society," Jabbar told VOI.

A PhD student in the history department, who asked not to be named, said "targeting universities in general only aims at emptying them of their innovative energies and render science defunct," adding most professors and students had to immigrate or quit university.

Statistics and unofficial figures indicate that more than 250 university professors in different parts of the war-scoured country were killed since the March 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq. Most of them were directly targets for physical liquidation.

More than 2000 professors and academics left Iraq under threats of kidnapping or assassination, which resulted in the paralysis of more than 152 scientific departments in different fields in Iraqi universities and institutes.

A number of professors, as a result of this serious security deterioration, had set up late last month in the Qatari capital Doha the International Committee to Protect Iraqi Professors, in which more than 100 Iraqi university professors are members.

The committee chairman, a university professor who declined to be named, told VOI that the committee will dedicate monthly salaries for families of assassinated professors.

"The committee will also host at Qatari universities any professors or their children receiving death threats inside Iraq," the chairman said.

- **Bomber strikes near Baghdad college - Al Jazeera, 13 Feb, 2007.**

Bomber strikes near Baghdad college

Up to 16 people are reported to have been killed and 27 wounded after a suicide bomber detonated explosives in a van near a Baghdad college, police say.

Police sources said women and children were among the victims after the vehicle exploded in a car park between the College of Economic Sciences in western Baghdad and a food warehouse.

Twelve people were reported to have been killed or wounded when their house collapsed after the blast on Tuesday.



Iraqi soldiers secure the area of Tuesday's blast near a college in western Baghdad [AFP]

The explosion follows multiple bombings in crowded markets in the Iraqi capital on Monday that killed about 120 people and injured more than 150 others.

Monday's bombings came as Iraqis marked the first anniversary of a Shia shrine bombing that pushed the country to the brink of civil war.

Overnight, mortar shells had crashed into Suwaib, a suburb in the south of the city, killing three civilians, the security official said.

House collapse

Speaking of Tuesday's bombing, a security official said: "There were women and children among the victims, including 12 people from the same family killed or wounded when their nearby house collapsed."

US soldiers joined their Iraqi counterparts in securing the scene.

The carnage came despite a massive security operation by US and Iraqi forces, and one day after a series of bombings in market areas killed at least 79 people outright and saw 165 taken to hospital.



Firefighters try to douse the blaze sparked off by the suicide bomber on Tuesday [AFP]

In the Mansur district, near where Tuesday's suicide bomber struck, traffic was funnelled on to main roads by concrete barricades and protected by Iraqi checkpoints.

Brigadier-General Abdel Karim Khalaf said that three suspects - including two whom he described as "Asians" - were being interrogated after being arrested following Monday's blitz on the capital's commercial centre.

"If I told you any more, it would hurt the investigation, but we are making progress," the interior ministry operations chief told AFP.

Terrible blow

The attacks - three car bombs in a bustling wholesale trading area and an explosive device in a popular market area - struck a terrible blow to Nuri al-Maliki's authority as he paraded his security plan.

Your Views

"Success for Iraq will need both groups coming to terms and to work together for the benefit of all Iraqis"

Iceman, Atlanta, US

Send us your views

Television coverage of a speech the Iraqi prime minister gave on Monday calling on Iraqis to back the deployment of thousands of police and military reinforcements showed his team flinching as the

sound of the explosion echoed round Baghdad.

On Tuesday, his troops were once more out in force, manning checkpoints around the city, but for many war-weary Iraqis the timing and scale of the attacks confirmed suspicions that the situation is beyond his control.

- **Woman Bomber Kills 41 at Baghdad College** – ABC News, 26 Feb 2007.

[Woman Bomber Kills 41 at Baghdad College](#)

Female Bomber Kills 41 at Baghdad College; Shiite Cleric Condemns U.S-Iraqi Security Sweep



A man injured in a suicide bomber attack is rushed into the Imam Ali hospital in Baghdad's Shiite enclave of Sadr City, Iraq, Sunday, Feb. 25, 2007. A suicide bomber struck Sunday outside a college campus in Baghdad, killing at least 38 people and injuring dozens as a string of other blasts and rocket attacks left bloodshed around the city. (AP Photo/Adil al-Khazali)

By BRIAN MURPHY Associated Press Writer

BAGHDAD, Iraq Feb 26, 2007 (AP)

A female suicide bomber triggered a ball bearing-packed charge Sunday, killing at least 41 people at a mostly Shiite college whose main gate was left littered with blood-soaked student notebooks and papers amid the bodies.

Witnesses said a woman carried out the attack at the business school annex to Mustansiriyah University. Interior Ministry officials said they were still investigating those reports. The school's main campus was hit by a string of bombings last month that killed 70 people.



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The attack came as the powerful Shiite militia leader Muqtada al-Sadr said an ongoing security crackdown in Baghdad was doomed to fail because of U.S. involvement and suggested he was rethinking his cooperation. He bitterly complained that "car bombs continue to explode" in the capital despite the new security push.

The political situation in Iraq was further thrown into question after President Jalal Talabani, a 73-year-old Kurd, was taken to Jordan for medical tests after feeling ill. Talabani's son, Qubad Talabani, said his father was suffering from fatigue and exhaustion. "He did not have a heart attack" or a stroke, he told CNN.

The statement issued in the name of the radical cleric al-Sadr put increased strains on the U.S.-Iraqi security sweeps aimed at restoring order in the capital.

Al-Sadr's Mahdi Army militia pulled its fighters off the streets under intense government pressure to let the 12-day-old security plan proceed. But a relentless wave of Sunni attacks six alone in the Baghdad area Sunday has apparently tested the patience of al-Sadr as well as many ordinary Shiites.

A return to the streets by the Mahdi Army forces could effectively block the security effort and raise the chances of Baghdad falling into sectarian street battles the apparent aim of Sunni extremists seeking any way to destroy the U.S.-backed government.

"Here we are, watching car bombs continue to explode to harvest thousands of innocent lives from our beloved people in the middle of a security plan controlled by an occupier," said a statement read to hundreds of cheering supporters by an al-Sadr aide in Baghdad.

The cleric was highly critical of the U.S. role and urged leaders to "make your own Iraqi (security) plans." He said "no security plan will work" with direct U.S. involvement.

Al-Sadr who has not appeared in public in more than a month is no friend of Washington and his forces fought fierce battles with U.S. troops in 2004. But he has largely cooperated in the Iraqi political process to avoid strains with Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and the Shiite leadership.

The statement was the first public word from al-Sadr since U.S. assertions earlier this month that he fled to neighboring Iran to avoid arrest. Al-Sadr's aides and other loyalists insist he never left Iraq.

Shiite anger at the United States is running high since American soldiers on Friday detained the son of the most powerful Shiite political leader for nearly 12 hours after he crossed from Iran. U.S. officials claim Shiite groups, including the Mahdi Army, receive weapons and aid from Iran. Iran denies the charges.

"To my Shiite and Sunni brothers, I say, `Let us scorn sectarianism and hoist the banner of unity,'" said the statement from al-Sadr, whose militia is blamed for frequent execution-style slayings of Sunni rivals.



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Since the security crackdown began, the number of bodies thought to be victims of Shiite death squads has gone down dramatically in Baghdad, but there has been no respite from violence blamed on Sunni insurgents.

In other developments, Talabani's office said he had fallen ill due to "continuing hard work over the past few days."

A doctor said Talabani was being treated at the heart center at King Hussein Medical City in Amman because the facility has modern equipment, not necessarily because the president suffers from a heart ailment.

The president's son said he was "up and about" and able to communicate.

Under Iraq's constitution, the president serves as the country's titular head of state. The prime minister runs the government.

Besides the college blast, at least 18 people were killed mostly in Shiite districts in bombings and rocket attacks in the Baghdad area.

Security guards at the Mustansiriyah University annex scuffled with the bomber before the blast, witnesses said. Most of the victims were students, including at least 46 injured, said police

Suicide bombings by women are unusual but not unprecedented in Iraq's chaos. The main campus at Mustansiriyah, about 1 1/2 miles away, was the target of twin car bombs and a suicide blast last month that killed 70 people.

The students at the business college were returning to midterm exams after the Iraqi weekend.

A 22-year-old student, Muhanad Nasir, said he saw a commotion at the gate.

"Then there was an explosion. I did not feel anything for 15 minutes and when I returned to consciousness, I found myself in the hospital," said Nasir, who was wounded in the head and chest.

The blast flung blood-soaked notebooks and backpacks among the lifeless bodies and wounded. Cement walls were pockmarked by the hail of ball bearings. Parents rushed to the site and some collapsed in tears after learning their children were killed or injured. Students used rags and towels to try to mop up the blood.

The school is located in a mostly Shiite district of northeast Baghdad, but does not limit enrollment to that group.

In the northern city of Mosul, U.S. troops killed two gunmen in a raid and captured a suspected local leader of the insurgent group al-Qaida in Iraq, the military said. Additional details were not immediately available.

Iraq's Interior Ministry, meanwhile, raised the toll from a suicide truck bombing in the violence-racked Anbar province on Saturday to 52 dead and 74 injured.

The attack on worshippers leaving a mosque in Habbaniyah, about 50 miles west of Baghdad, was believed linked to escalating internal Sunni battles between insurgents and those who oppose them.

"This cowardly act of violence underscores that the terrorists are the enemies of all Iraqis, regardless of sect," the U.S. ambassador to Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad, said in a statement. "They want Iraq to fail. Now is the time for the Iraqis to come together against these terrorists."

Associated Press writers Shafika Mattar in Amman, Jordan, and Yahya Barzanji in Sulaimaniyah, Iraq, contributed to this report.

- **Iraq: Schools and Universities Deserted for Fear of Violence - UN news, 15 March, 2007.**

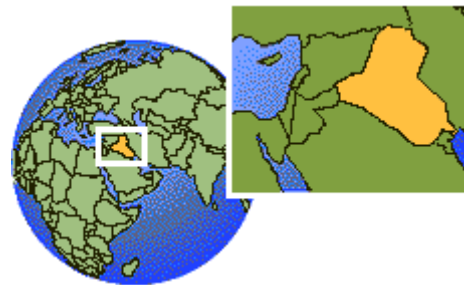
Iraq: Schools and Universities Deserted for Fear of Violence

A joint study by the Iraqi Ministry of Education and UNICEF informes that in Iraq, schools and universities are likely to continue emptying throughout 2007 if there is no let up to current levels of violence and the displacement it causes.

Roger Wright, UNICEF representative for Iraq, said: "Iraq's education system needs a great deal more investment and attention to survive this time of crisis".

Fear of death, violence and kidnapping are keeping children from schools, parents prefer to have them home rather than dreading every every school day. University Professors are fleeing the country in fear of their lives. According to the Ministry of Higher Education, at least 280 academics have been killed since the US-led invasion in 2003 by insurgents and militias.

Alert - Iraq



UN news reports that 'experts have raised concerns saying that if professionals continue fleeing Iraq on a daily basis the country will be depleted of academics and the level of education in Iraq will drop drastically'. Paul Colley, a London-based independent analyst declared: "By removing those groups [of people such as intellectuals], the insurgents are aiming to eliminate all support for a democratic society. [...]"

Iraq

Date:	15 Mar 2007
Source:	UN News
Source classification:	Media Article
Violation(s):	Access to education

Students who are graduating have the same level of information like a first year undergraduate



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during Saddam's regime. This shows how the structure of education has deteriorated and will bring serious problems in the future". The Ministry of Displacement and Migration said that at least 30 per cent of the total numbers of professors, doctors, pharmacists and engineers in Iraq have fled to neighbouring countries like Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt and United Arab States (UAE) but some have travelled to as far as the US, Canada, Australia and Britain.

Furthermore in a UN News article it is reported that at least 110 children have been killed and 95 injured since 2005 in attacks in schools carried out in the country. These numbers do not include children killed or injured on their way to or from school. According to a report released last year by NGO Save the Children, 818,000 primary school-aged children, representing 22 percent of Iraq's student population, were not attending school (74% of these are female).

The number seems to be increasing. Muhammad Tammin, a spokesman at the Iraqi Ministry of Education stated: "Teachers are fleeing the country on a daily basis, leaving schools without experienced teachers. Educational standards in Iraq have severely worsen he then added: "Violence against teachers is making them look for more secure places to work or even stay at home.

We must also not forget that hundreds of teachers are themselves displaced and can no longer go to teach at their regular schools."

-END-

- No easy way in for Iraq's asylum academics - SciDev.Net, 22 March 2007.

No easy way in for Iraq's asylum academics

Holding a victim's name on a scrap of paper: those who escape the death threats face different challenges

22 March 2007

Source: **nature**

Around 300 academics and clinicians have been killed in Iraq since the coalition invasion in 2003, although it is unclear why they are being targeted.



Yet those who escape the death threats face unsympathetic immigration authorities while they seek asylum in the United Kingdom and the United States, reports Jim Giles.

Even if they manage to overcome the legal obstacles to stay and work, they often find their qualifications are considered obsolete, and breaking into the academic community remains tough.

After Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990, Iraqi universities were isolated by sanctions, so even the most talented of academics will not have built up the reputation required to compete for jobs.

The UK-based Council for Assisting Refugee Academics says academic refugees "represent the core of their country's scientific and cultural capital".

The organisation has helped academics with accommodation and maintenance grants, as well as legal advice. But these academics need the opportunity to maintain and develop their skills and expertise.

[Link to full article in Nature](#)

Related SciDev.Net articles:

[Science minister resigns over mass kidnapping](#)

[Prominent Iraqi scientist killed by gunmen](#)

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[Council for Assisting Refugee Academics](#)

- [A searing assault on Iraq's intellectuals](#) - LATimes, 25 March 2007.



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A searing assault on Iraq's intellectuals

The middle class is fleeing the violence and threats, leaving the question: Who will lead?

By Alexandra Zavis, Times Staff Writer

March 25, 2007

BAGHDAD — Artist Jabbar Muhaybis stood amid the ashes of Baghdad's storied literary bazaar. Bloodstained pages were scattered at his feet. A wooden crate, eerily reminiscent of a coffin, covered his head.

Muhaybis spread his arms wide and, in a symbolic gesture, sadly intoned from the darkness of his crate: "The light will not shine here again."

Days after a suicide bomber plowed his explosives-laden truck into the heart of Mutanabi Street, Baghdad's intellectual icons gathered to mourn a place that had been their inspiration and refuge through decades of invasion, war and dictatorship.

Iraq's urban, educated, largely secular middle class had everything to gain from the fall of Saddam Hussein's oppressive and isolating regime. Four years later, it is on the way to being wiped out.

Writers, doctors and university professors are hunted down and killed. Entrepreneurs and engineers are kidnapped for lucrative ransoms. And the symbols of Iraq's intellectual heritage — its bookstores, libraries, museums and archeological sites — have been plundered and burned.

More than 200 Iraqi academics, 110 physicians and 76 journalists have been killed since Hussein's fall, according to figures compiled by government ministries and professional associations. Thousands of others have fled the country.

As the U.S.-led occupation enters its fifth year, holdouts of middle-class society are starting to ask: Who will be left to pick up the pieces when the fighting is done?

Days after the Mutanabi Street blast, Nejah Hayiani, 61, gingerly pulled a blackened trouser leg from the rubble. A cellphone attached to the waistband told him it belonged to his dead brother, Mohammed.

"We didn't find bodies, we just found pieces of flesh," he said bitterly.

A family legacy in ruins

The brothers grew up on Mutanabi Street. Their father opened the Renaissance bookshop in 1957.



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Here, artists, poets and book lovers from all backgrounds converged to leaf through dusty tomes of Ottoman history, religious texts and Shakespeare's sonnets, always watchful for the eavesdropping government informers who lurked in the alleys. From there they would wander over to the Shahbandar cafe for a glass of tea in a room swirling with lively debate and the sweet smoke of water pipes.

Mohammed Hayiani took over the shop from his father. A nephew, Yehyia, opened a small store nearby, specializing in lawbooks. Now both shops are in ruins, their owners and staff slaughtered in the March 5 blast that killed more than 30 and sent thousands of charred pages fluttering into the sky.

"The future is dark," Nejah Hayiani said. "If the thinkers are targeted and killed, who will lead Iraq? Only the ignorant."

Militants seeking to disrupt Iraqi society deliberately target the wealthiest and most senior professionals. But even those of lesser means are frequently caught in the bloodshed.

At the National Library and Archives, director Saad Eskander is trying to rebuild a collection that was burned and looted in the first weeks of the invasion. In a blog on the British Library's website, he describes the conditions that have turned the work of a librarian into a life-threatening proposition: gunshots through a window, bomb blasts and battles in the streets. In December alone he reported four employees killed, two kidnapped, 58 threatened and 51 displaced.

Iraq once was a modern society, with well-developed infrastructure and health and education systems. All that is in pieces now, and a generation of technical expertise has been ravaged with no prospect of filling the vacuum.

Attendance at Iraq's schools and universities has plummeted as campuses have become battlegrounds in the war between Shiite Muslim and Sunni Arab Muslim militants. University lecturers are afraid of their own students, some of whom report to militant groups.

"They want a people who can't think," said Abu Mohammed, head of Iraq's Assn. of University Lecturers.

Abu Mohammed's predecessor, a geology professor, was killed in a drive-by shooting after he campaigned to keep religion and politics off Iraq's campuses. Fearful for his own life, Abu Mohammed asked to be identified by a traditional alias based on his son's name.

Many students and lecturers, meanwhile, are translating their resumes into English and applying for posts abroad.



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"In a few years, I think you will see the middle class will have disappeared," Abu Mohammed said. "The guns, the bad people will control everything in our lives."

Many members of Iraq's middle class are the product of the 1960s and '70s oil boom, when the term "Baghdadi" became shorthand for big spender.

But a United Nations embargo imposed after the 1991 Persian Gulf War, and the U.S.-led purges of members of Hussein's Baath Party from government institutions after the 2003 invasion, devastated them. Though a flood of U.S. investment helped create a new elite, even it could not escape the swell of violence, first from Sunni Arab insurgents, then from sectarian militias and, finally, from common criminals.

Late last year, gunmen snatched businessman Fakhir Zihairi and held him, blindfolded, for 15 days, while they used his cellphone to negotiate a ransom with his family. The kidnappers' asking price was \$150,000, but they settled for \$7,000.

After he was freed, Zihairi immediately applied for a passport to leave Iraq. He sold his house, furniture, printing business and his wife's gold jewelry in preparation for the move to Cairo. He has no intention of coming back.

"I will leave Iraq to the gangsters, the terrorists, the sectarians and the chaos," he said.

Flight of the middle class

More and more families are trying to do the same. Outside the passport office on a recent Monday, guards pushed back a crush of about 50 people waving documents and clamoring to get inside.

About 2 million Iraqis now live abroad, and as many as 50,000 join them every month, according to U.N. figures. Middle-class families, with the means to buy the tickets and visas, make up a large portion of those who have fled.

Aida Mousawi never thought she would be among them. A Shiite from the southern city of Najaf, she survived years of torment under Hussein's Sunni regime. Her husband, a biology professor, went to work one day and never returned, swallowed up, she believes, in one of the dictator's mass graves.

For 14 years, she nurtured the hope that she would find him alive, or at least get his body back. It was only when she attended the opening of one of those graves that she realized she would get neither wish.



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"There were maybe 600 people in there piled on top of each other," she said. "How can you find someone in there?"

For all that time, she had suffered quietly at home, raising four children alone. But the collapse of Hussein's regime changed that.

"I thought this was our time to emerge," she said. "I am the Iraqi woman, and this is the day when the Iraqi woman should come forward and demand her say."

She started a women's center, which offered English and computer classes, ran a clinic and Internet cafe, and helped teach rural women to vote. But like other such groups, especially ones with ties to the U.S. military, it drew the suspicion of the city's conservative Shiite leaders.

One morning in December 2005, a white Opel carrying three gunmen pulled up alongside Mousawi's car as she was driving to work.

"The man sitting in the back seat opened his door, had a good look at me, pulled out a Glock pistol ... and emptied it into my car," she said.

Mousawi was hit in the back and arm. Her eldest son, who was also in the car, took two bullets in the chest but survived.

The attack only increased Mousawi's resolve. She was assigned 10 police bodyguards and went back to work. But when the guards showed her a letter from their commander instructing them to leave her within 24 hours, she knew it was time to go. By then, Shiite militant death squads had infiltrated Iraq's security forces.

A week later, she was in Syria. Her frustration is palpable through the crackling phone connection.

"If Iraq should have a strong government, where we can have a free voice, then I'd absolutely like to come back and help build the country, brick by brick," she said. "But not [under] this government of thieves and gangsters." zavis@latimes.com

Times staff writers Salar Jaff, Wail Alhafith, Suhail Ahmad, Said Rifai, Saad Khalaf and a special correspondent in Baghdad contributed to this report.

Bombings rattle classroom, unite students

- Students remain unfazed at Baghdad University despite nearby explosions
- The young Iraqis say no amount of terrorism will keep them from dreaming big
- The class had intended to examine comparisons between Iraq and Vietnam
- Lesson soon became surviving in the present

By Kyra Phillips

CNN

Editor's note: In our Behind the Scenes series, CNN correspondents and anchors share their experiences in covering news and analyze the stories behind the events. Here, CNN's Kyra Phillips describes a recent visit to Baghdad University.

BAGHDAD, Iraq (CNN) -- Political science students at Baghdad University had barely begun a discussion of comparisons between the Iraq and Vietnam wars when suddenly nearby explosions shook the classroom.

The talk instantly shifted from a past conflict to the here and now -- and what it's like to live in a war zone when it's unknown if a trip to school will be your last.

Yasser Thar, a junior, said such bombings fill him with fear and anxiety.

"I wonder if my family is OK because we have no idea where those bombs are landing," he said.

More bombs went off. The students didn't even flinch. ([Watch bombs shake class, make students more determined under fire](#))

"These explosions have united us as the sectarian violence divides us. Whether we are Sunni, Shia or Kurd, we are all targets and that has brought us closer," said Muhklas Ali, also a junior.

Such is the way of life for students at Baghdad University, where they could be killed at any time simply for trying to get a diploma. Extremists have terrorized this campus over the last four years.

Just this week, a car bomb exploded at the university's entrance, killing five students and wounding 18 others. Since the war in Iraq began in March 2003, at least 70 security guards and employees have been killed and 100 professors have been assassinated, officials said. The death toll from car bombs on campus isn't even known because there have been so many.



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The students who remain are courageous, focused on getting an education. They said they feel that if they want a future, they must continue to brave the terrorism that keeps their campus under seige.

Every day, they get up in the morning, most of them with no jobs and no money for a taxi, risking their lives just trying to get to class.

Nadia Rasheed, a junior, smiled as she spoke up. "As a woman, we suffer coming to college, going to home, studying to bombs."

I asked her, "So why do you do it? Even with bombs?"

"This is a big challenge for us. We are courageous people. We are brave," she responded.

Professor Abdul Jabber Ahmed added, "Maybe the situation in Iraq is not a good situation, but the challenge of the human is how to create the best situation for the future."

Classroom debate interrupted

I had met with the professor before the session and was inspired by his passion. Sitting in a humble office full of books, he insisted I sit down, have a piece of candy and talk to him while his students gathered for class.

I told him one of the debates going on in the United States was whether Iraq was turning into another Vietnam. He felt there were similarities with regard to the chaos and loss of life, but that the Iraq war was much more complex due to the economic, religious and extremist issues underlying it.

I was eager to see what the students had to say. When we got to the classroom, the students were initially shy but curious. The professor and I sat in the front of the class.

His introduction surprised me: "This is Kyra Phillips with CNN and this is her crew. They do not work for the government, they are independent journalists. Please speak openly and honestly and don't be afraid to share your opinion. "

All I could think about was how sad it is that these Iraqis still don't know who they can trust. Here I was, seeking to hear their voices, seeking truth and debate. I never would have thought they might question our CNN credentials.

The debate then began: Vietnam versus Iraq, and can you even compare the two wars? Immediately students started raising their hands. Moments later the nearby bombs started going off.

I soon realized that comparing Iraq to Vietnam was not today's lesson; today's lecture was living this war in this moment.



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All the students told me they are trying to believe in a better future. They have thought about what they want to do. Every student grabbed the microphone and with tremendous pride shouted out their dream job -- becoming a professor, Iraqi intelligence officer, a diplomat.

No amount of terror has kept them from dreaming big. In all, 12 explosions shook the classroom. Many of the students still managed to smile as they voiced their aspirations for themselves and their country.

For the professor, that is also a part of his lesson:hope.

"For me the best thing is how to keep unity in this classroom," he said. "So when they leave this classroom, they'll keep unity in their home and on the streets."

I asked the students -- Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds alike -- did they all feel as one in this classroom? One Iraq?

"Yes," they said in harmony and without hesitation.

It was perhaps the first time I have seen true unity in Iraq.

Find this article at:

<http://edition.cnn.com/2007/WORLD/meast/04/12/btsc.phillips.baghdad/index.html>

- **Lessons in war: Iraqi students brave violence, teacher shortages and damaged schools - IHT, 14 May 2007.**

Lessons in war: Iraqi students brave violence, teacher shortages and damaged schools

The Associated Press

Monday, May 14, 2007

BAGHDAD: Saif Abdul-Karim's path to school is often blocked by car bombings and gunbattles. Many of his teachers have quit. Most of his classmates have dropped out, fearing abduction.

As high school seniors across America giddily try on prom dresses and plan graduation parties, Iraqi students consider just making it to school a cause for celebration.

The security situation is so shaky that some schools have canceled graduation ceremonies and many have closed for weeks at a time. Education officials are in talks with the security services, tribal leaders and politicians to ensure schools are protected when students take final exams next month.



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The education crisis mirrors the breakdown of nearly all public institutions across Iraq.

Educators fear, however, that the collapse in schooling will have some of the deepest repercussions for the country, leaving a generation with little education and little hope.

"Iraq's future is at risk," said Waleed Hussein, the spokesman for the Education Ministry. "Its children are prevented from getting educated just as the country is in dire need of moving forward."

Abdul-Karim, a 17-year-old high school senior, senses his envy of American students deepening as the war in his homeland rages. "They can get and do many things, while here we are living in a tragedy," he said.

Students and educators in Baghdad and in other violence-plagued areas of the country tell harrowing stories of the challenges they face trying to reach graduation day.

Mustafa Ali, an 18-year-old student in Sadr City, says it is difficult for him to study at night or even to sleep because of the sound of explosions and gunfire in his Shiite neighborhood from clashes with U.S.-led forces or rival Sunni gangs.

Wajeda Ahmed, the principal of Dijlah primary school for girls in the mostly Sunni Mansour neighborhood of western Baghdad, said the school has no power or drinking water. Nearby roadside bombs and car bombs have damaged the school's doors and shattered many of its windows. About 25 percent of her students have left because their families have fled the violence, she said.

Mousa Halim, principal of a high school in Diwaniyah, 80 miles (129 kilometers) south of Baghdad, said a firefight several weeks ago between U.S. soldiers and the radical Shiite Mahdi Army militia outside the school sent students and teachers scrambling to take cover.

"The top priority was to send the students home without any casualties," he said. "We had to make them jump over the low wall at the back of the school instead of taking the risk of leaving from the main gate near the clashes."

It took another week before he was able to coax the staff and students back to school, he said.

The general breakdown in society has also eroded traditional classroom discipline. Several students linked to the Mahdi Army threatened their teachers if they did not help them pass exams, Halim said.

"The situation was better" under Saddam Hussein, he said. "There was security and the students used to respect their teachers."



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On Monday, students at the Sahel Ibn Saad high school in Sadr City had to study in the faint sunlight coming through dirty windows because of a power outage. Their desks were cracked and chunks of paint had chipped off the yellow walls.

A Quranic verse pasted over the blackboard in one class read: "God, make this country peaceful." Next to it was a picture of Muqtada al-Sadr and a quote from the anti-American Shiite cleric calling on Iraqis to unite to force out "the occupiers."

Abdul-Karim, the high school senior, said four of his teachers at the school quit because of the violence and were replaced by new college graduates with no experience. Only 300 of the school's 800 students show up anymore, and many of the classes are mostly empty, he said.

He makes it to school only three days a week because violence often blocks his path. His grade point average has plunged from about 80 to 65, he said. Nevertheless, he hopes to attend college next year and plans to become a journalist to "report the truth and the misery of my people," he said.

Another student at the school, Ahmed Shawal, said he wanted to be a doctor ☹ "but in such conditions I don't think I'll be able to achieve my ambition."

While many schools are indirectly affected by the violence, others are intentionally targeted, said Hussein, the spokesman for the Education Ministry. Last week, gunmen broke into a primary school in Khalis, 50 miles north of Baghdad, grabbed a teacher and his wife and killed them execution style in front of the horrified students, he said. The motive of the attack was not clear.

More than 300 teachers and Ministry of Education employees were killed last year and 1,158 were wounded, the ministry reported. A U.N. report released last month said the killings continued "at an alarming level" this year.

The attacks have paralyzed the government's plan to build 1,000 new schools this year and even forced it to close existing schools across the country, Hussein said.

Ahmed Qassim, a 19-year old student at Nissour High School in the northern city of Mosul, was forced to miss three exams during the first semester last year because the bridges linking his house to his school were sealed off. He had to miss the whole second semester because of insecurity.

Now he is repeating his senior year.

With the unrelenting security concerns regularly forcing classes to be canceled, many of his teachers are making up for lost lessons by passing out handwritten lectures to be studied at home, he said. Others are charging for private tutoring sessions at students' homes to fill in the gaps. Qassim said he has already paid about \$55 (€ 40.59), a substantial sum here, for four private lessons.



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The school has abandoned its traditional small graduation ceremony for fear it will be targeted by extremists, Qassim said.

If he manages to graduate, he hopes to leave Iraq, but worries that his education has suffered so badly he will never be able to compete with students abroad.

Though he seethes with envy when he thinks of the relatively easy life of students in America, he hopes eventually to get a scholarship there.

"I want ... to show the Americans the difficulties I had to overcome because of their government's policy," he said.

Associated Press reporters Sameer Yacoub and Sinan Salaheddin contributed to this story.

- **The decapitation of secular Iraq - 15 May 2007.**

Tuesday, May 15, 2007

The decapitation of secular Iraq

George Bush's Iraq policy is built upon the pretense that Iraqi society will be able to heal itself if only some semblance of order can be restored. For the most part, Bush & Co. have succeeded in focusing debate in the U.S. on the question of whether and how public order can be restored. Yet the presumption that Iraqi society can be retrieved from the brink of disaster in that way strikes me as a mirage, at this late date.

Iraqi society has already been decapitated. Almost as efficiently as the Nazis worked to rid Germany of intellectuals, extremists in Iraq have killed or driven into exile a large proportion of the country's most highly educated and skilled classes. Even if the nefarious influences in Iraq could be eliminated with a simple restoration of order, why assume that the lost intellectuals would flock back to help rebuild the country? What assurance would there be that they could retrieve their own property, positions, and liberties?

No, I fear that Bush's failed occupation of Iraq has almost irreparably damaged Iraqi society.

For evidence of this, perhaps you need not look much farther than [Nir Rosen's must-read in the NY Times Sunday Magazine](#) on the plight of Iraqi exiles. Although most of the 2 million Iraqis who've fled



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abroad in the last few years are facing significant difficulties, these are nothing compared to the fearful conditions were they to return home. That's why every month some 50,000 new exiles flee. Inside the country, meanwhile, there are another 2 million refugees. This is a complex refugee crisis for which (thankfully) there've been few modern parallels since World War Two. About 15% of the population of Iraq has been uprooted.

Those Iraqis who are best positioned to rebuild their lives abroad are the well educated.

From the Iraqi perspective, the greatest loss has been the flight of the professional class, the people whose resources and skills might once have combined to build a post-Saddam Iraq. It seems, however, that precisely because they are critical to rebuilding Iraq and less prone to sectarianism and violence, professionals are most vulnerable to those forces that are tearing Iraq apart. Many of them are now in Syria...

Right after the invasion of Iraq, [an Iraqi doctor in exile named] Lujai told me, Shiite clerics took over many of Baghdad's hospitals but did not know how to manage them. "They were sectarian from the beginning," she said, "firing Sunnis, saying they were Baathists. In 2004 the problems started. They wanted to separate Sunnis. The Ministry of Health was given to the Sadr movement" ...Following the 2005 elections that brought Islamist Shiites to power, Lujai said, the Sadrists initiated what they called a "campaign to remove the Saddamists." ...In June of last year, Ali al-Mahdawi, a Sunni who had managed the Diyala Province's health department, disappeared, along with his bodyguards, at the ministry of health. (In February, the American military raided the ministry and arrested the deputy health minister, saying he was tied to the murder of Mahdawi.)

Lujai told me that Sunni patients were often accused by Sadrist officials of being terrorists. After the doctors treated them, the special police from the Ministry of the Interior would arrest the Sunni patients. Their corpses would later be found in the Baghdad morgue. "This happened tens of times," she said, to "anybody who came with bullet wounds and wasn't Shiite."

In September 2006, Lujai's husband, a surgeon, was kidnapped by Shiites and murdered on his way home from the hospital.

She had asked the Iraqi police to investigate her husband's murder and was told: "**He is a doctor, he has a degree and he is a Sunni, so he couldn't stay in Iraq. That's why he was killed.**" Two weeks later she received a letter ordering her to leave her Palestine Street neighborhood.

On Sept. 24 she and her children fled with her brother Abu Shama, his wife and their four children. They gave away or sold what they could and paid \$600 for the ride in the S.U.V. that carried them to Syria. **Because of what happened to her husband, she said, as many as 20 other doctors also fled....**



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In some ways, despite the ethnic and religious motives of most of the Iraqi factions, the Iraqi civil war resembles internal conflicts in revolutionary China or Cambodia: **there is a cleansing of the intelligentsia and of anyone else who stands out from the mass.** The small Iraqi minorities — Christians and such sects as the Mandaeans — are mostly gone. The intellectuals and artists are gone.

The very existence of a war against intellectuals is a token of something deeply rotten in Iraq, which a mere restoration or order (should it come about) will do little to cure. Besides, once such a war takes root, the damage becomes nearly irreversible.

Though until very recently Americans were fairly well sheltered from information about the war against intellectuals in Iraq, it had become a major crisis within less than a year of the invasion. Already in July 2003 the President of Baghdad University, Muhammad al-Rawi, was murdered deliberately.

The dead man's name was on an ominous list naming professors, intellectuals and academics marked for assassination after the US-led occupation of Iraq. Although al-Rawi heard he was on the list, he did not take it seriously, says [his wife]. "He would say that he had no enemies. He would say to me 'I am a scientist and a doctor'," she says.

The politics of the killing and intimidation was byzantine from the start; you could get killed for having been a Baathist; for talking to the American occupiers; or for calling for resistance to the occupation

During the years of UN-imposed sanctions, thousands of Iraq's most talented professionals left the country. And almost one year after the recent US-led war, about 2000 professors and academics have fled. Many academics fear a deliberate brain drain is now being executed through murder...

But who is behind the murders?

General Ahmad Katham Ibrahim, deputy interior minister, claims Baathists, fearing that intellectuals will divulge information on alleged weapons programmes, are assassinating them.

However, not all black-listed professors come from the field of science: many have either journalism, political science or even literature backgrounds.

By late in 2004, the Associated Press finally published a report on the brain-drain from Iraq.

In the last 18 months, at least 28 university teachers and administrators have been killed, while 13 professors were kidnapped and released on payments of ransom, according to the Association of University Lecturers. Many others have received death threats.



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The result: an exodus of academics and other intellectuals, who are urgently needed by a shattered society, from their schools and often the country, joining an earlier generation of exiles who fled the regime of Saddam Hussein.

"The brain drain may cause serious problems in rebuilding a country that has just emerged from wars," said Mohammed Qassim, a lecturer at the Iraqi University of Technology in Baghdad...

"Assassins are targeting Iraqi university professors in a coordinated, liquidation process to force well-known scholars to leave the country and thus hinder the country's reconstruction," said Issam al-Rawi, a geologist at Baghdad University and head of the Association of University Lecturers.

But aside from political activists, few in the U.S. took the crisis very seriously. That was in line with the attitude of the American occupation, which turned its back on the looting of libraries and museums in "liberated" Baghdad and essentially ignored intellectuals in the drafting of the Iraqi constitution and virtually every other aspect of restoring the country.

While Americans looked the other way, the assassinations of intellectuals became systematized during 2005 as outside forces' influence in Iraq solidified. The ultimate goal was to eliminate the possibility of creating an independent, secular state.

Iraqi intellectuals and scientists are targeted by many elements. [When we analyze who is targeted and by what methods it is clear that] the Israelis and the Americans are after one part of them. Iran and the sectarian parties are after some others. The Baathists liquidated some of their old comrades when they noticed that they were cooperating with the Americans, and the local mafias kidnapped and assassinated others after making them pay ransoms. The problem of security, or the lack of it, is the main reason why intellectuals have become such easy targets for any act. Yet, precisely because of the chaos, the systematized assassinations of Iraqi intellectuals have gone largely unnoticed in the outside world. Iraq is being drained of its most able thinkers, thus an important component to any true Iraqi independence is being eliminated.

Here is one mark of how systematically the war on intellectuals was being conducted.

Iraqi assassins are being asked to take aim at hundreds of intellectuals whose names appear on a hit list circulating in the country by an unknown group, according to reports on the Science and Development Network's website, SciDev.Net.

The list's existence suggests that the ongoing assassination of Iraqi academics is more organised and systematic than previously thought. Leaflets calling for the murder of 461 named individuals were described in an article published last month by the newspaper Az-Zaman.



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The United States-based magazine Science reported this week that it has obtained a copy of the list, verified as authentic by several Iraqi scientists. It names scientists, university officials, engineers, doctors and journalists in Baghdad and other Iraqi cities.

The double bombing at Baghdad University in January, which killed 65 students, may have finally focused public attention in the U.S. Two months ago, perhaps for the first time, a major American newspaper drew attention to the disaster that long ago overtook Iraq. Alexandra Zavis of the LA Times told us of the disappearance of the Iraqi middle class under a "government of thieves and gangsters".

Iraq's urban, educated, largely secular middle class had everything to gain from the fall of Saddam Hussein's oppressive and isolating regime. Four years later, it is on the way to being wiped out...

As the U.S.-led occupation enters its fifth year, holdouts of middle-class society are starting to ask: Who will be left to pick up the pieces when the fighting is done?...

Iraq once was a modern society, with well-developed infrastructure and health and education systems. All that is in pieces now, and a generation of technical expertise has been ravaged with no prospect of filling the vacuum.

Attendance at Iraq's schools and universities has plummeted as campuses have become battlegrounds in the war between Shiite Muslim and Sunni Arab Muslim militants. University lecturers are afraid of their own students, some of whom report to militant groups. "They want a people who can't think," said Abu Mohammed, head of Iraq's Assn. of University Lecturers.

The current issue of the Chronicle of Higher Education reports that "Iraq's Universities [are] near collapse".

Thousands of academics have fled the country, classes are frequently canceled, students often stay away for fear of attack, and research is at a standstill...

"Terrorism is targeting scholars in an almost unprecedented way," says Allan E. Goodman, president and chief executive of the Institute of International Education, in New York. "It's hard to say there even is a higher-education system in Iraq anymore, with so many students and professors being killed and kidnapped on a daily basis."...

The situation has become so grave that the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research recently announced that university researchers may come to campuses just twice a week to reduce the risk of being attacked... more than 100 courses at the university [of Baghdad] have been canceled this semester for lack of instructors. At Al-Nahrain University, says Mr. Kamal [president of the Iraqi Association of University Lecturers], some departments have lost all their faculty members...



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The higher-education ministry recently decided to allow students and professors to transfer to other universities in the face of such threats. More than 1,000 academics and 10,000 students chose that option this year. But an even larger number of students, especially women, have stopped going to college altogether, with some universities operating at 10 percent to 20 percent of their usual capacity.

The result is a near paralysis of Iraqi universities. Almost all academic research in Iraq has halted because fieldwork and data collection are nearly impossible...

Sectarian battles have further effects in the classroom. According to a new Unesco report, academic posts that previously were distributed to Baath Party loyalists are now being distributed according to sectarian interests...

Before the invasion, Mr. Jawad says, he used to "encourage students to analyze, to criticize — of course without touching Saddam or his two sons. But we used to assure them that whatever they say is between the students. Now you can speak freely about the Baath Party or the Baath experience, but there are things, like the sectarian way of thinking or sectarian leaders and religious leaders — you cannot touch them or their thinking or even criticize them."

The armed militias that control Iraq have also begun using their power to control curricula.

Freedom of thought is vanishing under a pall of oppression almost everywhere in Iraq, under American occupation. Rapidly and almost inexorably, the independent, the educated, the skilled have been decapitated from Iraqi society.

This is what the much vaunted rebuilding of Iraq has wrought.



Stop the Assassination of Iraqi Academics !

A campaign of The BRussells Tribunal and

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- **The US war and occupation of Iraq. The murder of a society - WSWS, 22 May 2007.**

The US war and occupation of Iraq—the murder of a society

Part one

By Bill Van Auken

19 May 2007

This is the first part of a three-part series. The second part was posted May 21 and the third part on May 22.

While official politics and the media in the United States are focused largely on competing plans for salvaging the American occupation from the debacle it confronts in Iraq, little serious consideration is given to the historic catastrophe that has been inflicted upon Iraqi society itself.

Although no definitive figures can be given on the total number of Iraqis who have died as a result of the US war and occupation—including those killed in the invasion and subsequent armed violence and those whose lives have been cut short by disease and hunger, particularly among the young and old—every serious estimate places the excess death toll between several hundred thousands and one million human beings.

Iraq, once among the most advanced countries of the region, has been reduced, in terms of basic economic and social indices, to the level of the poorest countries of sub-Saharan Africa.

What is involved is the systematic destruction of an entire society through the unleashing of violence and criminality on a scale not seen since Hitler's armies ravaged Europe in the Second World War.

American society itself is suffering deadly consequences from this war. The number of US soldiers killed in Iraq has topped 3,400, with every indication that the casualty rate is climbing as the Bush administration's "surge" sends combat troops into the densely populated and overwhelmingly hostile neighborhoods of Baghdad.

Another 30,000 American military personnel have been wounded or injured, many of them grievously. Undoubtedly, hundreds of thousands more will suffer the psychological effects of having participated in a dirty colonial war.

The war's daily drain on the US economy is estimated at over \$300 million, with predictions that its total cost could top \$2 trillion.



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There is an even greater cost, however, in terms of the damage done by this criminal war to the political, social and, indeed, moral health of American society. The Iraq war—all of the tired propaganda about the “war on terrorism,” the struggle for “democracy” and the “liberation” of the Iraqi people notwithstanding—is a failed attempt by America’s financial elite to further enrich itself and secure its continued global hegemony through the naked theft of Iraq’s oil wealth.

Every section of the US political and corporate establishment, all branches and levels of government, both major political parties, and the mass media are all implicated in massive war crimes. Criminality on such a grand scale cannot go unpunished without grave implications for the future of the American people and, indeed, all of humanity.

Taken together, US operations in Iraq have amounted to *sociocide*—the deliberate and systematic murder of an entire society.

A series of recent reports have pointed to the scale of death, destruction and oppression that have been wrought by the US occupation, now in its fifth year.

An occupation army engaged in slaughter and abuse

First, as a telling indicator of the violence that the US occupation has unleashed against the Iraqi people, there is the report released by the Pentagon earlier this month on the mental state of American occupation troops. The document presents a chilling portrait of an army suffering from growing demoralization and mental and emotional dysfunction, which find expression, in part, in callous indifference, if not outright hatred, towards Iraq’s civilian population.

The survey found that a majority of troops believed that Iraqi civilians have no right to be treated “with dignity and respect,” and that approximately 10 percent of them admitted to having inflicted gratuitous violence on Iraqis in the form of beatings or destruction of personal property.

Perhaps the most significant finding was that 14 percent of US soldiers and Marines said they were directly responsible for the death of an “enemy combatant.” Given that some 170,000 US troops are currently in Iraq—and over 650,000 have been deployed there at one time or another since 2003—this would indicate a massive death toll inflicted directly by US forces.

Many of these troops, of course, are in Iraq for second and third tours of duty, and the data does not account for incidents in which more than one person is killed, much less air strikes or artillery bombardments that can claim scores of victims. Nor does it include those killed by the tens of thousands of armed mercenary contractors, who are answerable neither to Iraqi law nor the military code of justice.



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A further indication of the universal character of the deadly violence that has been inflicted upon the country came in the poll conducted earlier this year by ABC News, *USA Today*, the BBC and ARD German television, which found that fully 53 percent of Iraqis reported having a close friend or immediate relative either killed or wounded.

Along with the rising death toll has come a marked increase in the number of disappeared, which has far outstripped the horrors that this word came to symbolize in the worst years of dictatorship in countries like Argentina and Chile. Iraqi human rights organizations estimate that 15,000 or more Iraqis are missing, with between 40 and 60 more people joining the ranks of the disappeared daily—in other words, as many as 20,000 people on an annual basis.

Many, no doubt, have been exterminated by death squads, while others have joined the country's burgeoning population of detainees, who are imprisoned without charges and subject to unlimited periods of pre-trial detention and often torture.

The Iraqi Ministry of Human Rights reported in March that the regime was holding nearly 38,000 detainees and prisoners, while the US military admits to 19,000 detainees jailed in its two main detention camps—Camp Cropper and Camp Bucca. This total amounts to nearly six times the number of prisoners held by the Saddam Hussein regime before the US invasion to “liberate” the Iraqi people. No doubt, it will rise substantially as the US military's “surge” continues to sweep up large numbers of Iraqi civilians.

The displacement and exile of millions of Iraqis

In addition to the hundreds of thousands of deaths that the occupation has inflicted upon the Iraqi population, an equally telling indicator of its catastrophic implications for Iraqi society is the massive population of refugees and internally displaced persons.

It is estimated that 2 million Iraqis have fled their homeland, the vast majority of them seeking refuge in Syria and Jordan. Another 1.9 million Iraqis have been reduced to the status of displaced persons inside the country.

In sum, fully 15 percent of the country's population has been driven from their homes. The United Nations Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that between 40,000 and 50,000 more Iraqis are being displaced every week, many of them forced to sleep in tents or out in the open with no means of support.

“We left Baghdad because the situation is very difficult. We were threatened with death and they took our houses and also our shops,” a man who recently came with his family to Syria told UNHCR. “You see what the situation is there—just destruction and death.”



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The United States, which unleashed this destruction and death, has since 2003 admitted only 701 Iraqi refugees. Syria is currently hosting some 1.2 million. Washington has sought to obscure this massive refugee crisis—let alone take any responsibility for it—because it is such a damning indictment of the social catastrophe it has created in Iraq.

The vast flow of internal refugees has created increasingly desperate and volatile conditions in the country's south, where an estimated 700,000 have fled, joining some 200,000 locally displaced people within Najaf, Kerbala and Basra provinces. Local governments and relief agencies are overwhelmed, unable to provide this vast population with housing, food or medical care. The central government in Baghdad has proven unable and unwilling to provide basic support.

“There are dozens of families arriving every day at camps for the displaced, causing a lack of essential needs such as food and health care,” Ali Fakhouri, a spokesman for the Najaf provincial council told IRIN, the news agency of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, in March. “The past two months were the worst for those families. For security reasons, the delivery of aid has decreased considerably and because of a lack of medicines in the region's hospitals and inaccessibility to hospitals, children are more vulnerable to diseases. Diarrhea is common among children in the displaced groups in the south.”

Iraq's record rise in infant mortality

Perhaps most startling of the recent reports is that issued by the children's advocacy group Save the Children documenting worldwide trends in infant mortality rates, universally accepted as one of the most fundamental indices of social progress.

According to this report, Iraq recorded a staggering 150 percent increase in the rate of infant deaths between 1990 and 2005. In raw figures, 122,000 Iraqi children died in 2005, half of them newborn babies. The rate was 125 deaths of children under five for every 1,000 live births, compared to 50 in 1990. According to the Iraqi health ministry, conditions have only worsened since, with the ratio climbing to 130 deaths for every 1,000 births in 2006.

The years selected by Save the Children in conducting its international survey had particular relevance for Iraq, beginning in 1990 with the initiation of the punishing US-backed economic sanctions and ending in 2005, two years after the invasion. As with most of the essential indices of social devastation in Iraq, the infant mortality figures reflect both the country's relentless economic strangulation—punctuated by periodic military attacks—over the course of more than a decade, and the violent destruction of the invasion and occupation which followed.

The vast rise in infant mortality in Iraq is unprecedented. Even sub-Saharan African countries that have suffered the worst ravages of AIDS have not approached such a terrible retrogression.



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No doubt a significant share of these infant deaths can be attributed to US military operations. Virtually every air strike and bombardment carried out against populated areas claims children among their victims.

Far more important, however, is the overall disintegration of Iraq's water, electricity and sewage systems, as well as its healthcare network, which together have created conditions in which the principal killers of children—diarrhea, malnutrition and preventable diseases like typhoid and hepatitis—go unchecked and untreated.

The United Nations has reported a stunning 70 percent increase in diarrhea among Iraqi children just since January 2006, with the highest rates in Anbar province, a center of resistance to the occupation that has been continuously under siege by US forces. Fully 60 percent of the people in the province have access only to polluted river water for drinking.

Less than a third of the population nationwide has access to clean drinking water, and just 19 percent have a functioning sewage system. Both the water and sewage systems were damaged heavily by US bombardments in the 1991 Persian Gulf War and the 2003 invasion. After toppling the Iraqi government, US forces did nothing to stop looters from stripping water treatment and pumping stations of essential equipment. "Reconstruction" here, as elsewhere, has proven catastrophically inadequate.

On average, Iraqis receive only eight hours of electricity a day, with even worse conditions in Baghdad, where most of the capital's seven million people get only six hours or less of service daily.

The US war and occupation of Iraq—the murder of a society

Part two

By Bill Van Auken

21 May 2007

This is the second part of a three-part series. Part one was posted May 19. Its purpose is to examine a series of recent reports establishing the immense scale of death, destruction and oppression that have been wrought by the US occupation of Iraq, now in its fifth year. Taken together, these reports confirm that US operations in Iraq have amounted to sociocide—the deliberate and systematic murder of an entire society. The third and concluding part was be posted May 22.



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Desperate plight of Iraq's children

Iraq's Ministry of Health estimates that fully half of the country's children suffer from some form of malnutrition. According to a recent study by UNICEF, 10 percent of Iraqi children under five are acutely malnourished, while another 20 percent are chronically malnourished.

With the heat of Iraq's summer coming on, medical authorities fear a sharp rise in child deaths from dehydration, cholera and infections, and they warn that the shattered Iraqi medical system is virtually powerless to stop it.

The desperate plight of Iraqi children and their families was summed up by one Iraqi mother. "Last year I lost my daughter and my mother because of dehydration," Zahra Muhammad, 35, told the UN news agency IRIN. She said that the family had been forced from their home last May.

"We couldn't afford cooling systems in our tent. My daughter was only four years old and couldn't stand the hard living conditions in addition to the very hot weather," she continued. "I have two more children and they are already sick because of malnutrition. The doctors have told me that without proper cooling and drinkable water, I should expect serious consequences in the coming months. If I lose another child for lack of electricity and clean water, then I would prefer to die with them."

As many as 260,000 children have died since the March 2003 invasion, according to one estimate reported by the British daily *The Independent* in January.

For those children who do live to see their fifth birthday, Iraq has become a hostile and often deadly environment.

Less than a third of Iraq's children now attend school, compared to 100 percent attendance before the March 2003 invasion. The principal reason students are staying out of the classrooms is fear of the endemic violence that makes a trip to school a deadly risk their families are unwilling to take.

At the same time, the relentless killing has left countless thousands of Iraqi children orphans, who have become a new and tragic fixture of life in Baghdad and other major cities, sleeping and begging in the streets. As the UN's IRIN news agency reports: "Thousands of homeless children throughout Iraq...survive by begging, stealing or scavenging garbage for food. Only four years ago, the vast majority of these children were living at home with their families."

The desperate conditions confronting Iraqi children led a group of 100 prominent British physicians to address an open letter to Prime Minister Tony Blair in January expressing their extreme concern over the impact of the occupation. "We are concerned that children are dying in Iraq for want of medical treatment. Sick or injured children, who could otherwise be treated by simple means, are left to die in their hundreds because they do not have access to basic medications or other resources. Children who



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have lost hands, feet and limbs are left without prostheses. Children with grave psychological distress are left untreated.”

There are fears that this last issue—the wholesale traumatization of an entire young generation—may have the most far-reaching and devastating effect upon Iraqi society. “Children in Iraq are seriously suffering psychologically with all the insecurity,” the Association of Psychologists of Iraq declared. Based on a survey of 1,000 school children, it found that 92 percent had learning impediments caused by the climate of violence and fear. “The only things they have on their minds are guns, bullets, death and a fear of the US occupation,” Maruan Abdullah, spokesman for the association told reporters.

The hellish conditions that have been imposed upon Iraqi children constitute a war crime. As the occupying power, the United States is enjoined by the Geneva Conventions to ensure “preferential measures in regards to food, medical care and protection” in favor of children under 15 years, expectant mothers, and mothers of children under seven, and to “maintain all institutions devoted to the care and education of children.”

A catastrophic decline in the status of women

The US war and occupation have driven Iraqi women back generations, condemning millions to statutory second-class citizenship and nightmarish conditions in which they are virtually prisoners in their homes.

This development is closely bound up with the record rise in infant mortality and is just as vital an indicator of social progress—or retrogression. It was Charles Fourier, the French utopian socialist, who wrote 155 years ago, in a passage cited by Marx and Engels: “Social progress and changes of a period are accompanied by the progress of women towards freedom, while the decay of the social system brings with it a reduction of the freedoms enjoyed by women.” He concluded: “Extension of the rights of women is the basic principle of all social progress.”

A report released in April by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) on human rights in the country recorded 40 cases of “honor killings” of women over a three-month period in the governorates of Erbil, Duhok, Sulaimaniya and Salahuddin. These women were murdered by their own family members, in some cases burned alive, for alleged “immoral” conduct.

A report by the Iraqi news agency Awena indicates that this hideous practice is even more widespread. Basing itself on data obtained from the Duhok criminal court and the Duhok Azadi Hospital, Awena reported last January that in this governorate there were 289 burning cases resulting in 46 deaths of women in 2005, and 366 burning cases resulting in 66 deaths in 2006. Meanwhile, the Emergency Management Center in Erbil cited 576 burning cases resulting in 358 deaths in that governorate since 2003.



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Also in Erbil, the UN report found that the number of reported rapes quadrupled between 2003 and 2006.

The Iraqi constitution, drafted under US supervision, declares Islam the official state religion and establishes that no law may be enacted that “contradicts the immutable rulings of Islam.” This principal sets the stage for the overturning of Iraq’s more liberal civil laws governing divorce, family property and child custody, substituting in their place *sharia* law, which denies women most rights.

Already, these principles are being imposed in the streets by armed militias of the Islamist parties, which have killed women for daring to hold professional positions as professors or doctors or to play a visible directing role in a business. Vigilantes have also forced the use of Islamic dress, including the hijab, or veil, backed by the threat of violence. Such groups in some areas have also demanded that women not leave their houses after midday, not drive automobiles or walk outside without a male relative.

A report issued by the Organization of Women’s Freedom in Iraq on the fourth anniversary of the US invasion declared: “Women of Iraq have gradually let go of most of their 20th century gains and privileges in the last 4 years of occupation. Iraq turned from a modern country of educated and working women into a divided land of Islamic and ethnic warlords who compete in canceling women from the social realm. Millions of women’s destinies are wasted between the destructive US war machine and different kinds of Islamic rule which have turned women into helpless black objects of no will or worth.”

The report cited growing violence against women, including gang rapes of female detainees and assaults on women by militias of other sects as an instrument of sectarian warfare. Kidnappings of women have also become rampant. A report issued by the group in March of last year found that the crime, virtually unknown under the regime of Saddam Hussein, claimed 2,000 female victims in the first three years after the US invasion, many of whom were raped or tortured. Such incidents, together with all other forms of violence, have escalated markedly over the last year.

Four women are on Iraq’s death row, waiting to be hanged, two of them imprisoned together with their young children.

The eradication of Iraq’s minorities

Also a telling sign of the social disintegration in Iraq is the status of minorities. A report issued this month by Minority Rights Group International warns that minority communities in Iraq are being systematically eradicated. It ranks Iraq as the second-worst country in the world in terms of the threat posed to minorities—better only than Somalia and worse than Darfur.



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The report, entitled “Assimilation, Exodus, Eradication: Iraq’s Minority Communities Since 2003,” tracks the situation confronting Iraq’s Armenian and Chaldo-Assyrian Christians, Bahais, Faili Kurds, Jews, Mandaeans, Palestinians, Shabaks, Turkomans and Yazidis, who together make up 10 percent of the country’s total population.

“Iraq continues to see targeted killings of people from minority groups, including Christians, Yezidis and Mandaeans. Other minority groups in Iraq face daily violence, torture and political assimilation, which has led to an exodus of these communities from the country,” the report states. Last year, Iraq ranked the worst in the world. Its decline to the second worst is a reflection of the marked deterioration of the situation in Somalia, where a US-engineered intervention has unleashed rampant violence.

Some of Iraq’s minorities predate the Arabs in terms of their presence in the country, which dates back to ancient Mesopotamia. Now, victims of violence and intimidation, they are disappearing from Iraq, many killed and the rest fleeing into exile.

The report’s authors blame the US occupation for this disaster. They write: “Following the occupation of Iraq in 2003, the coalition authorities established an Iraqi Governing Council in which membership was strictly apportioned along ethnic and sectarian lines. Political patronage ensured that whole ministries became dominated by officials from the minister’s own sect or group, and sectarian politics quickly became the defining feature of the new Iraqi state.” As a result, minority populations were excluded and subsequently repressed.

The decimation of Iraq’s medical professionals

The murderous violence in Iraq and the flight of millions of refugees have decimated the ranks of key professions who are indispensable for the maintenance of society.

The British non-governmental organization Medact, citing the official figures of the Iraqi Medical Association, reported in March of last year that 18,000 of Iraq’s 34,000 doctors have left the country. Another 2,000 have been murdered and at least 250 have been reported kidnapped.

In his article on the exodus of refugees from Iraq in the May 13 *New York Times Magazine*, Nir Rosen interviewed one such doctor, a family medicine specialist, who had fled to Damascus with her five children.

She left after her husband, a thoracic surgeon and a medical school professor, was dragged from his car by armed men, abducted and later found murdered. She told Rosen that when she asked the Iraqi police to investigate, they said, “He is a doctor, he has a degree and he is a Sunni, so he couldn’t stay in Iraq. That’s why he was killed.” Both the police and the Ministry of Health are controlled by Shiite Islamist factions. She was subsequently ordered by letter to leave her neighborhood.



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The lack of trained medical staff, together with the shortage of basic supplies and the overwhelming burden of mass casualties, has left Iraq's healthcare system in a shambles.

In an article published last October in the *British Medical Journal*, three doctors from the Diwaniyah College of Medicine in Iraq estimated that nearly half of the hundreds of thousands who have been killed since the 2003 US invasion could have survived if they had received adequate medical care.

“The reality is we cannot provide any treatment for many of the victims,” they wrote. “Emergency departments are staffed by doctors who do not have the proper experience or skills to manage emergency cases. Medical staff...admit that more than half of those killed could have been saved if trained and experienced staff were available.”

The article added: “Our experience has taught us that poor emergency medicine services are more disastrous than the disaster itself. But despite the daily violence that is crushing Iraq, the international medical community is doing little more than looking on.”

It is not just the international medical community. The state of the Iraqi healthcare system constitutes a US war crime. The Fourth Geneva Convention demands that an occupying power “[e]nsure the effective operation of medical services, including hospitals and public health programs, with special focus on preventing the spread of contagious diseases and epidemics, and allow medical personnel to carry out their duties.”

The Geneva Conventions also require that an occupying power guarantee the neutrality of hospitals, protecting them from attack and ensuring that all are able to seek medical care. Yet US occupation troops have repeatedly attacked hospitals. Moreover, militias have been given free rein in the medical facilities, often dragging away patients of other sects for execution.

The killing and kidnapping of doctors and their wholesale flight from the country are phenomena common to virtually every profession in Iraq. The Iraq Index, maintained by the Brookings Institution in Washington, estimates that 40 percent of Iraq's “professional class,” including doctors, professors, pharmacists and other university-trained personnel, have left the country since 2003.



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The US war and occupation of Iraq—the murder of a society

Part three

By Bill Van Auken

22 May 2007

This is the final part of a three-part series. [Part one](#) was posted May 19 and [part two](#) on May 21. Its purpose is to examine a series of recent reports establishing the immense scale of death, destruction and oppression that have been wrought by the US occupation of Iraq, now in its fifth year. Taken together, these reports confirm that US operations in Iraq have amounted to sociocide—the deliberate and systematic murder of an entire society.

The assault on higher education

Estimates of the number of university professors killed since 2003 range between 250 and 1,000. These educators have been targeted by Islamist militias because they are seen as proponents of secularism and a national identity that cuts across religious-ethnic divides.

Attacks on universities have also driven away students. The first two months of this year saw two bombing attacks on Al Mustansiriya University that claimed a total of 111 lives.

The entire higher educational system—once considered one of the best in the region—is in a state of collapse. Classes are being taught by untrained graduate students and undergraduates.

“Violence and lack of resources have undermined the education sector in Iraq,” Professor Fua’ad Abdel-Razak of Baghdad University told the IRIN news agency. “No student will graduate this year with sufficient competence to perform his or her job, and pupils will end the year with less than 60 percent of the knowledge that was supposed to be imparted to them.”

He added that medical graduates in particular are leaving the university without the knowledge or confidence to provide care. “There is a really huge difference between now and the times of Saddam Hussein, when medical graduates left college with the competence to treat any patient,” he said.

Destruction of the economy and growth of mass poverty

At the base of society, the Iraqi economy has ground to a halt. The official unemployment rate is reported by the Iraqi Ministry of Social Affairs to be 48 percent. However, when one adds the hundreds of thousands of former employees of now closed state enterprises, who still receive 40 percent of their old salaries, the figure climbs to 70 percent.



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The inflation rate for 2006 climbed to 50 percent, the second highest in the world. Increased prices for basic necessities, including food, have dramatically affected the living standards for the vast majority of Iraqis. Within the space of just the last two years, the price of fuel has increased five-fold.

The report released in April by the UN aid mission in Iraq found that 54 percent of the population is barely surviving on less than US\$1 a day, while 15 percent must endure extreme poverty, with less than 50 US cents a day. The Iraqi regime's Central Statistical Bureau echoed these findings, saying that 43 percent of Iraqis suffer from "absolute poverty," lacking the necessary food, clothing or shelter to survive.

The International Monetary Fund has estimated the country's per capita Gross Domestic Product at \$1,687, less than half the figure reported 25 years ago. Even oil production—the principal concern of the American occupiers—has yet to be restored to the severely depressed pre-invasion levels, with sabotage curtailing operations and much of what is produced apparently being stolen.

On top of the armed violence and sabotage, decisions imposed by the US occupation authorities have deepened the economic crisis and the agony it has created for millions of Iraqis. Driven by the profit interests of US-based corporations and the right-wing ideology of the US administration, the occupation regime headed by L. Paul Bremer launched the wholesale privatization and shutdown of 192 state-owned enterprises that employed half a million Iraqis.

The *Washington Post* noted recently that among these enterprises—all decreed hopelessly outmoded and inefficient by Bremer—was "a bus and truck factory south of Baghdad that had a modern assembly line, talented managers and skilled employees." It added, "All but 75 of 10,000 employees had been laid off," as the Iraqi government, previously its sole customer, has been barred from buying the vehicles.

Clearly, the aim was to eradicate the national economy, sell off whatever profitable sectors existed to US transnationals and, above all, clear the way for the US oil companies to seize control of the Iraqi oilfields.

Bremer also decreed an end to all tariffs aimed at protecting Iraqi agriculture, ostensibly for the purpose of making imported goods cheaper. The effect—and it is hard to believe that it was unintended—was to bankrupt Iraq's small farms, where production was already hampered by continuous military attacks. Now, as the occupation enters its fifth year, the Iraqi agricultural sector has collapsed and the country is totally dependent upon imported food, which sells at prices that are beyond the reach of much of the population.



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Finally, the US colonial administrator implemented a “flat tax”—the dream of the Republican right in the US itself—and issued decrees allowing foreign corporations to repatriate all profits and giving them equal rights with domestic producers in the Iraqi economy.

Blaming the Iraqis for US war crimes

Both Democrats and Republicans in Washington now find it politically expedient to place the blame for the catastrophe in Iraq on the Iraqi people themselves. They claim that US troops are caught in a sectarian civil war and complain that the Iraqi government has failed to act decisively in quelling the violence and transforming political, economic and social conditions.

This is all self-serving and hypocritical nonsense. First of all, the sectarian violence that exists in Iraq is entirely the responsibility of Washington—legally, politically and morally. The US is an occupying power and, under the Geneva Conventions, is obliged to guarantee the security of the occupied population. But thousands of Iraqis are killed or wounded and tens of thousands driven from their homes every week.

More fundamentally, the eruption of sectarian violence was directly stimulated by US policy. Like colonial conquerors before it, Washington sought to dominate Iraq with a policy of divide and rule. Having destroyed every national institution in the country, it sought to reconstitute political life along ethno-religious lines, giving a weight to the division between Sunnis and Shia that had never before existed in Iraq.

The US occupation authorities handed out political positions in the emerging Iraqi puppet regime along strictly sectarian lines. Tensions between Sunnis and Shia were whipped up and the Iraqi security forces were handed over to the militias of Shia religious parties.

Now, the US occupation has reached the point of trying to erect walls around Sunni neighborhoods in Baghdad, separating populations along ethnic lines in a practice that echoes brutal colonial counterinsurgency wars in a number of countries and, indeed, recalls the Nazis’ creation of the Warsaw ghetto.

Before the US invasion, Sunnis and Shia lived side-by-side in Baghdad and other cities, without friction and little concern over the religious background of their neighbors. Fully a third of marriages in Iraq were between the two communities. Now this ethno-religious identity is a matter of life and death for millions, forcing them to flee their homes and condemning them to summary executions at the hands of militias.

As for the demands that the Iraqi government meet “benchmarks,” this is strictly for political show. The fact remains that the regime headed by Nouri al-Maliki inside the US-controlled Green Zone is a largely powerless puppet, with the US continuing to exercise effective control over the country.



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This reality was underscored last week with the release of a report by the leading British think tank, Chatham House, describing the Iraqi government as “largely irrelevant in terms of ordering social, economic and political life.” It added, in what is unquestionably a major understatement, that the country is on the “verge of becoming a failed state.”

The poisoning of the River Tigris

Among the most emblematic of the horrific stories coming out of Iraq is the transformation of the River Tigris, cited in the Bible as a tributary of the river flowing from the Garden of Eden and the historic lifeline of civilization in the region from ancient times. It has been turned into a stagnant and fetid waterway, hopelessly polluted by raw sewage, chemicals and toxic military waste produced by the US war and occupation.

While before the war the river supported fishermen, now it is virtually dead, with boats banned from the water and subject to hostile fire. Much of the river’s banks have also been turned into military no-go zones.

The river has also become a dump for corpses, which are pulled daily from the water, most of them bearing the marks of horrible torture. The IRIN news agency quoted an Iraqi Interior Ministry officer as saying that since January 2006, over 800 bodies have been pulled from one area of the river alone, where iron nets had been put in place to catch water lilies and garbage.

The impact of four years of US occupation upon the consciousness of the Iraqi people found at least partial reflection in the recent poll carried out in March by US, British and German news agencies. It found that fully 78 percent of Iraqis oppose the presence of US troops—up from 65 percent in 2005—and 51 percent, a majority, support armed attacks on US military forces, compared to only 17 percent in 2004.

Such a dramatic shift in public opinion is explicable only from the standpoint of the magnitude of the crimes that have been carried out against the Iraqi people, who have been subjected to a bloodbath and seen their society reduced to rubble.

These are world historic crimes, and those responsible for the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis and thousands of American troops—and for the systematic destruction of an entire society—remain unpunished and occupy the leading positions of power within the US.

“Preemptive war” and the Nuremberg precedent

The government in Washington—both the Republican White House and the Democratic Congress—continues to embrace the doctrine of “preemptive war,” i.e., unprovoked aggression, as a principal instrument of US foreign policy. Both the US president and leading figures in the ostensible opposition



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party—the Democrats—regularly threaten to reprise this policy in an even more catastrophic form in a war against Iran.

A thorough criminal investigation and prosecution of those responsible for the Iraq war is an urgent political task confronting the American people. It is indispensable both for preventing new and even bloodier wars of aggression and for halting and reversing the unprecedented attacks on basic democratic rights within the US itself.

The handful of prosecutions that have been brought against junior enlisted personnel responsible for such horrors as the gang rape and murder of a 14-year-old girl in Mahmoudiya and the slaughter of her entire family, or the massacre perpetrated by Marines in Haditha, only underscores the reality that those who bear the ultimate responsibility not only for these individual atrocities but for the rape of an entire country enjoy continued impunity.

The premeditated destruction of an entire society carried out on the basis of lies and in pursuit of the financial and geo-strategic interests of America's ruling elite constitutes a war crime of historic proportions, punishable under the same statutes and on the basis of the same principles as those used to condemn leading figures of Germany's Third Reich at Nuremberg.

Those responsible for launching the war in Iraq consist not merely of the right-wing Republican cabal grouped around Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz. They include also the Democrats who enabled this war, the heads of US energy conglomerates and finance houses that hoped to profit from it and the chiefs of the media monopolies that promoted it. All of these layers, constituting the political establishment and financial aristocracy of the United States, are guilty of the same fundamental crime for which the Nazis were prosecuted nearly 60 years ago: the plotting and waging of a war of aggression. It is from this principal crime that all the multiple crimes and horrors inflicted upon the Iraqi people have flowed.

For these crimes to go unpunished and those responsible to continue acting with impunity would have fatal implications for the political, social and indeed moral life of the US and indeed the world. It would only render the next round of war crimes and atrocities that much easier and more inevitable.

The struggle against the war in Iraq must be waged on the basis of the demand for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all US troops, the implementation of a massive program of humanitarian and economic aid to the Iraqi people, and the prosecution of all those responsible for this war before an independent and international tribunal.

The six months since the US midterm elections have amply confirmed that none of these demands can be realized through the existing political parties or government institutions. As this is published, congressional Democrats, who gained the leadership of Congress as a result of the massive vote against



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the war last November, are holding closed-door meetings with their Republican counterparts and White House officials to work out a bill that will provide tens of billions of additional dollars to continue the bloodbath in Iraq. Behind their ever more transparent posturing as opponents of the war, the Democrats have made it clear that they remain committed to the imperialist aims of the 2003 invasion and are determined to maintain tens of thousands of US troops in Iraq to realize those aims.

Ending the war and holding the war conspirators accountable—to prevent further and even more catastrophic acts of aggression—can be achieved only by means of a direct political struggle against both parties of war: the Democrats and Republicans Workers, students and young people must fight for the building of an independent mass political movement of the working class based upon a socialist program that is directed against the American financial oligarchy in whose interests the war is being waged.

Concluded

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- **Lives in limbo - Nature, 22 May 2007. [PDF]**



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- **Death Threats and Academia in Iraq - Der Spiegel 23 May 2007.**

SPIEGEL ONLINE - May 23, 2007, 06:16 PM

URL: <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/0,1518,484036,00.html>

THE LIST

Death Threats and Academia in Iraq

By Charles Hawley in Alvesta, Sweden

There is a formula in Iraq: The more education you have, the more at risk you are. Kais, a doctor and professor of medicine, left his homeland after his name appeared on The List. Insurgents had decided he was too smart to live.

On an Iraqi refugee's tongue, it's a terrifying word -- one that conjures up the worst images of hostages begging for their lives; of dead bodies found on the streets at dawn; of Baghdad morgues full of unidentified corpses. The word is "list." If your name appears on The List, you can be sure your time is short.

There are a number of ways to make the list. Iraqi security personnel have a privileged place at the top. Anyone suspected by the insurgency of working with the American occupiers risk being added. But the simple fact of having a higher education is sometimes enough. Just ask Kais.

The 35-year-old doctor used to work at a hospital in a Shiite section of the Iraqi capital. He was a cardiologist, but he also taught physiology at the university. Indeed, when Saddam Hussein fell in the spring of 2003, Kais's life didn't change much at all. His job at the hospital continued as before, except for a sharp shortage of medical supplies. But four months ago, Kais fled, first to Syria and then to Sweden. He'd received word that his name had been added to The List. Now he lives in the tiny town of Konga in the heart of Sweden, an hour and a half north of Malmö by train.

'Just Kept Getting Worse'

"Even after the war, I didn't have any real problems," Kais says in the precise English he learned during his studies. "Just two years ago, in 2005, I even went to France for two months. But I came back because I thought things were going to get better for me. Instead, it just kept getting worse."

Particularly perilous for Kais was the rising sectarian violence. After the Feb. 2006 bombing of the al-Askari Mosque in Samarra, Shiite holy site -- and the subsequent revenge killings of Sunnis perpetrated by Shiite radicals -- commuting between Sunni and Shiite areas of Baghdad became more dangerous. And Kais, a Shiite, lived in a neighborhood controlled by Sunni extremists.



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Sectarian violence on the streets of Baghdad skyrocketed last year and drove an ever-increasing number of Iraqis out of the country. Aside from the people killed in car bombings that grabbed international headlines, a horrific number of seemingly random murder victims turned up on the streets of the capital every morning -- no less than 1,030 were found in December of last year. The number has since dropped, with 473 corpses found on the streets in April, even as deaths from vehicle bombs have ticked upwards.

After the Samarra explosion, though, the change was dramatic. The mosque was bombed on the morning of Feb. 22, and by that afternoon, the streets of Baghdad were largely empty. People prepared for the worst. There was also a marked increase of impromptu checkpoints in the Shiite Baghdad neighborhood of Sadr City, as Muqtada al-Sadr's Shiite militia prepared to go on the offensive.

On the List

Then the corpses started turning up. "You got the feeling that things were changing when you went out in the morning and saw a couple of dead bodies on the streets," says Firas, a fellow refugee who lives in Alvesta and who used to work as an interpreter with the Americans in Baghdad's Green Zone. "Or when you saw a checkpoint manned by people in civilian clothes and you didn't know who they were."

In his hospital, though, Kais quickly learned that the new violence wasn't just sectarian. "We began hearing that there was a list of specialists and doctors who were threatened," Kais recalls, perched on the edge of a bed in a sparsely furnished, government-issue apartment in Alvesta. "Someone had told me that I was on those lists."

There are a number of reasons that Kais and his colleagues became targets. For one, they had money. Start-up insurgents in need of cash, or even organized criminals profiting from chaos, could pick up a doctor and demand a ransom. In September of last year, Kais reports, a specialist at his clinic was kidnapped next to a checkpoint at the entrance to the complex. Another colleague was nabbed and only set free after a \$40,000 payoff.

There were reasons beyond the money, though. At the university where Kais taught, three students were kidnapped and killed -- presumably just because they were studying.

Stop Life

"It started in around September last year that doctors and academics became targets," says Firas. "The goal is to create chaos and stop life. The message is: 'Don't go to college. Don't get an education. Stop life.' This is the message. Stop life."

It is a message the insurgents have been remarkably successful in communicating. Sweden's refugee camps are full of well-educated Iraqis with professional degrees -- exactly those Iraqis the country needs in order to rebuild. According to an early May UN report on humanitarian conditions in Iraq, at



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Kais felt the pressure. As the security situation worsened, he changed his schedule: He would go to work early one day and late the next. Each day tried to take a different route to the hospital. And during his last month in Iraq, he was able to go to work only once or twice a week.

Then one day, he couldn't go at all. He got a phone call from a Sunni friend at the hospital, who, like many Iraqis, knew someone who knew someone who was involved in the insurgency. "He said he was calling to tell me not to come anymore," Kais says. "He said that my name was high up on the list. He had always been the one to tell me to relax and that whatever happened, it was God's will. When he called to tell me not to come, I knew it was real."

Kais's journey to Sweden included a two and a half month stop in Syria, where he flew from Baghdad. He says it's a relief for him to be in Sweden -- or it will be, when he's granted residency and can bring over his wife, who is still in Baghdad. Once that happens, he says, he is planning on staying.

Other academics are sure to follow. "The hospitals are empty of specialists," he says. "It is really the young people who are running things now. And they are targets, too."

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- **In 2004 – with Saddam gone – 27 Iraqi students started their degree course full of hope. Today just 7 will sit their finals - Times Online, 23 June 2007.**

From The Times

June 23, 2007

In 2004 – with Saddam gone – 27 Iraqi students started their degree course full of hope. Today just 7 will sit their finals

Richard Beeston in Baghdad

Linda Hayali should be elated. Like thousands of other Iraqi undergraduates, she will sit down today and take her final examination after three years of hard work at Baghdad University.

Once, a degree from the prestigious college on the banks of the Tigris would have opened opportunities for a good job at home or abroad, and even the possibility of postgraduate studies anywhere in the Arab world.



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But the 20-year-old admits that she feels little sense of achievement and has few real prospects. She simply feels lucky to have survived in this country, where students and professors have been caught up in the cycle of killings, kidnappings and bombings.

“There were times when I wanted to drop out. I stuck it out at university because I had no choice. What else is there for me to do? Once I graduate I will probably just stay at home. There are no prospects for young people in this country, however educated they are,” she said.

Her attitude is born from experience. She embarked on her degree in administration in 2004, after Saddam Hussein had been overthrown, and assumed that life would improve. Instead, the best teachers have fled the country or have been killed. Some of her fellow students have been murdered. Her bleakest moment was when a car bomb exploded near the university, blowing eight pupils to pieces, including her best friend, Marwa.

The 21 universities in Iraq have not simply been caught up in the general violence and chaos that is afflicting the country. They have been targeted specifically by militant groups who intend to cripple Iraq and to destroy any vestiges of Western culture and secular education.

The universities, which are free and open to men and women, are regarded by Islamic militants as a dangerous challenge to their extreme interpretation of Islam.

Students at the College of Law in the town of Baquba, near Baghdad, fled their classrooms recently and have not returned since al-Qaeda gunmen spray-painted graffiti outside the college that read: “This is the law of the infidels.”

Shia Muslim militants belonging to the Mahdi Army have harassed and threatened Sunni Muslim pupils, who fear for their lives by just showing up to classes on the wrong side of town.

“Everyone knows from my name that I am Sunni,” Omar Saad, a student at Baghdad University, said. “Every day that I come in for my final exams in this side of town could be my last. I never know if I will see my family again.” The darkest day in the tragic story of Iraqi universities came on January 16 when two car bombs blew up outside Mustansiriyah University in Baghdad, killing 70 students who had just finished classes and were leaving the campus.

“I remember that day well because it was the day after I became engaged,” Dunya Mohammed, a 22-year-old Arabic studies student, said. “I had brought chocolates into school to give to classmates. I found Soha, one of my friends, reading as usual. She was a very clever student. I gave her a chocolate then we went out of the university.



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“Suddenly there was a huge explosion and everything was covered in thick black smoke. We ran and ran to escape the bombing. I came back to the campus a week later and discovered that Soha was one of those killed.”

Today there is a small memorial near the spot, and flowers left by students wilt in the blistering summer heat. Mustansiriyah has the grim distinction of being the only university in the world with its own mass grave. The unidentified body parts of its students were collected and buried in a garden near its now heavily fortified entrance.

The students have not been the only casualties. More than 200 professors have been killed since the US-led invasion in 2003 and thousands have fled abroad for jobs in Syria, Jordan or anywhere that will take them.

Nour, a Professor of Biotechnology at Al-Nahrain University in Baghdad, is part of a small and shrinking group of courageous faculty members who still try to teach in the face of extraordinary odds.

Her department began with eleven professors but today there are only two left. One doctor, Abdel Wahhad, was kidnapped and killed because of his work. Another, Kadam al-Sumaidi, stuck it out until his son was kidnapped and killed. “He went crazy with grief and left the country for Syria soon afterwards,” Nour said.

She has stuck it out, but often wonders why. From her original class of twenty-seven students only seven have finished their degrees this month. Everyone else has fled or dropped out.

“Believe me, if I could escape I would,” she said. “But I am stuck here.”

Campus killers

By last October, only 30 per cent of Iraq’s 3.5 million registered students were still attending classes, according to the Ministry of Education, down from 75 per cent the year before. There has been a sustained campaign of violence targeting universities. This year’s attacks include:

- **June 20** Gunmen kidnap 8 Christian university students and a lecturer in Mosul as they returned from exams
- **May 28** A sniper killed a female student near Mustansiriya University in eastern Baghdad
- **April 16** Dean of the Political Science College at Mosul University dies in a drive-by shooting
- **February 25** A suicide bomber detonates an explosive vest in Mustansiriya University, killing at least 40 and wounding 55

— **January 16** A car bomb and suicide bomber set off twin blasts at the entrance to Mustansiriya University as students, teachers and employees are heading home. Nearly 90 students and lecturers are killed and another 140 injured

Source: Agencies

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- **Samarra security crackdown making life difficult for students - Irin 28 June 2007.**

IRAQ: Samarra security crackdown making life difficult for students



Photo: [Afif Sarhan/IRIN](#)

Six schools of the 34 in Samarra have been occupied by security forces, leaving classrooms empty

BAGHDAD, 28 June 2007 (IRIN) - In a bid to restore order in the northern city of Samarra after the bombing of its prized Shia shrine, 6,000 Iraqi soldiers and police have been deployed there, making it difficult for residents to go about their normal life.

Local officials said nearly half of the security forces have been stationed in three schools and students have consequently been shut out.

"Six schools of the 34 in Samarra have been occupied by security forces and three of the six were flattened when suicide bombers attacked the soldiers inside with massive car bombs," said Khalid Hamid, an official at Samarra Education Directorate.

"Some of these six schools were the main centres for baccalaureate examinations [final examinations for high school seniors] and students are obliged to scramble to take their exams in other schools," Hamid said.

"About 200 students are affected as there are not enough classes and desks and we are forced to make some of them take their exams sitting on the ground. The rules do not allow us to have two shifts for the exams because only one set of questions is given to all students," he said.

Security clampdown

On 13 June insurgents - presumed to be Sunni militants - blew up two minarets of the revered al-Askariya Shia shrine in Samarra. Its glistening golden dome was blown up in an earlier attack in February 2006 that triggered a wave of sectarian violence which is continuing even now.

"We have to be everywhere as the country is in a war situation and we need to be stationed in empty buildings to protect civilians," said a police officer who asked to remain anonymous as he feared reprisals.

"Schools are the most obvious places for our deployment as we can't be stationed in government buildings which are not empty, or in houses. Some of the schools in which we are deployed are empty as summer holidays have already started for some students, and education officials can easily find alternative places for the others," he added.

"If this situation continues, we will definitely not have enough places for the city's nearly 10,000 students," Hamid added.

The finals, which are the qualifying exams for Iraqi colleges and universities, are being held against a backdrop of unrelenting sectarian violence in Iraq despite a nearly five-month-old US-Iraqi security crackdown.

Ahmed Khalaf, 19, is paying to hire a taxi so he can take his exams in another school.

"My original school is less than 100 metres from my house and now I have to pay US \$5 a day for the taxi," Khalaf said.

"I missed out last year as I couldn't go to school because of the security situation and added.

Blast-proof concrete

blast-proof concrete walls are compounding the difficulties faced by Samara residents.

"We don't want them to protect us like this," said Hazim Hassan al-Samaraie, a 44-year-old supermarket owner.

"They completely closed off our street with blast-proof concrete walls, as they are stationed in the nearby school. Two days ago, I couldn't rush my old mother to hospital when she collapsed and we had to put her on a chair and carry her for about 100 metres to where the ambulance was waiting," al-Samaraie added.

sm/ar/cb

Report can be found online at:

<http://www.irnnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=72965>

More on education in Iraq

[Local tribes in south set up schools](#)

[Extremists threaten new gov't Internet project in universities](#)

[Educational standards plummet, say specialists](#)

[Hundreds of displaced children in south unable to get school places](#)

[Hassan Khalid Hayderi, "Either you give us good marks or you will die"](#)

[Children's education gravely affected by conflict](#)

pay at least 4,000 Iraqi dinars (about 6 euros) for the return journey to the other school,"

couldn't take my exams because of the security situation, I'm likely to lose the year again," he

walls

In addition, security checkpoints and blast-proof concrete walls are compounding the difficulties faced by Samara residents.

Six schools of the 34 in Samarra have been occupied by security forces and three of the six where flattened when suicide bombers attacked the soldiers inside with massive car bombs.

- Ministry to insure and protect professors - Irin, 08 July 2007.

IRAQ: Ministry to insure and protect professors



Photo: Afif Sarhan/IRIN

Iraqi teachers and professors have been leaving the country in droves. The government is now trying to give them an incentive to stay or return

BAGHDAD, 8 July 2007 (IRIN) - The Iraqi Ministry of Finance is to give life insurance to university professors following an increase in the number of lecturers leaving the country because of violence. The initiative will also include providing university teaching staff with personal bodyguards.

“Professors are being targeted on a daily basis and they are fleeing the country, leaving a gap in the educational system,” said Marwan Imad, a press officer for the finance ministry. “They will be offered life insurance and bodyguards chosen by themselves.”

“They will receive a special budget so that they can hire bodyguards from private companies who will protect them and in case anything happens to them, their families will receive enough money to support themselves,” Imad added.

According to Imad, the initiative aims to protect professors and also to convince university teaching staff who have fled Iraq to return and continue teaching at universities. The Ministry of Higher Education has expressed serious concern that most qualified professionals have left Iraq.

“In addition to the escalation in sectarian violence, most of the professors in our country have fled and [we] depend on the few who have remained as well as on recent graduates,” Ahmed Abdel-Barri, a senior official at the education ministry, said. “The problem is critical today and maybe when lectures start next September it could get worse.”

According to the ministry, the State Insurance Company is offering professors ‘full insurance’ but it did not specify how much the compensation is going to be.

“The aim of the policy is to contribute to the alleviation of the danger of military operations and their impact on Iraqi families,” a finance ministry statement released last week said.

“Professors are being targeted on a daily basis and they are fleeing the country, leaving a gap in the educational system They will be offered life insurance and bodyguards chosen by themselves.”

Precise figures are difficult to obtain but more than 240 university professors have been killed since the US-led invasion in 2003 and thousands have fled abroad, according to Abdel-Barri.

The violence in the country is such that in May 2005, the interior ministry gave doctors the right to carry weapons for self-defence.

“The life insurance is a good thing because at least if something happens to us, our families are going to be protected,” Dr Rafid Muhammad, a professor at Baghdad University’s College of Medicine, said. “It is a noble initiative which I believe can help more professionals return home.”

see also

[Educational standards plummet, say specialists](#)

Report can be found online at:

<http://www.irnnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=73129>

- **UNHCR deputy chief urges Iraqi refugees to send children to school** -
UNHCR, 19 July 2007.

UNHCR deputy chief urges Iraqi refugees to send children to school



Date: 19 Jul 2007 | UNHCR News Stories



UN Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees L. Craig Johnstone talks to the media about Iraqi refugees at the the refugee registration centre in Damascus. © UNHCR/P.Sands

DAMASCUS, Syria, July 19 (UNHCR) – Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees L. Craig Johnstone on Thursday urged Iraqi refugees in Syria

to enrol their children in public schools as he continued his first visit to the Middle East for UNHCR.

"The Syrian government allows your children to register in public schools. Make the most of this opportunity; send your children to school," Johnstone told a gathering of more than 400 Iraqi refugees at the UNHCR Registration Centre in Damascus.

"The education of your children will secure the future of Iraq and the future of your families. Spread the word – we want all Iraqi families in Syria to know that they have the right to send their children to school," added Johnstone, who arrived here Wednesday evening from Jordan on the second leg of his first visit to the region since joining UNHCR in June.

Johnstone's visit to main host countries Syria and Jordan has given him a chance to see for himself the humanitarian situation for more than 2 million Iraqi refugees and to show support for the two countries. He met several Iraqi families on Thursday and heard their tales of suffering.

The visit also coincides with the launch of a joint campaign by the UN refugee agency and the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) to increase the number of Iraqi children in schools in Syria from the current 33,000 to 100,000 by the end of the 2007-08 school year.

An appeal last week for extra funds for UNHCR's Iraq-linked programmes noted that most Iraqi children were not attending school and said that outside Iraq, the agency would focus on five areas of assistance for Iraqi refugees – education, health, food, social and legal counselling and shelter. A



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recent survey in Damascus indicated that a significant number of children were not yet enrolled in school.

At Thursday's meeting with refugees waiting to register, Johnstone also extended his sympathy to those gathered and reiterated the agency's gratitude to the Syrian government for offering refuge to the estimated 1.4 million Iraqi refugees living in Syria. He took the opportunity to highlight the services available to refugees, especially health and education.

The UN refugee agency has been appealing for increased international support for the governments of both Syria and Jordan as they struggle to cope with the influx of refugees. In last week's appeal, UNHCR issued a revised budget of US\$123 million for its programmes, up from US\$60 million in January.

"UNHCR has already registered more than 150,000 Iraqis in the region and many of them have special needs, including help in getting their children in school and serious medical problems. The needs are enormous and these governments should not have to cope alone," said Johnstone.

He talked to several families about their flight from Iraq and the struggle to make ends meet in Syria. Among those the Deputy High Commissioner met were a young family who needed urgent medical care for the father, a woman who has been separated from her children in Iraq and a family that is waiting for news of relatives who were abducted in Iraq.

Their cases were typical. During the past six months, more than one in five refugees interviewed by UNHCR in Syria has been registered as a victim of torture, and one in six has a serious medical condition.

Johnstone also spent time in the UNICEF child-friendly space at the registration centre, where Syrian Arab Red Crescent volunteers were providing entertainment for the children as they waited for their appointment.

The Deputy High Commissioner has held positive meetings with senior government officials in both Syria and Jordan, where he kicked off his visit earlier this week. He has met top government officials and senior representatives of UNHCR implementing partners in both countries.

Meanwhile, the displacement of Iraqis in the face of extreme violence continues unabated, with a significant impact on the surrounding region. To date, over 4 million Iraqis have been uprooted. The more than 2 million refugees in surrounding countries include some who fled their country during the pre-2003 regime of Saddam Hussein. The outflow has escalated in the past eighteen months.

More than 2 million Iraqis are displaced internally. Some 1 million Iraqis are estimated to have fled their homes since the bombing of an important Shiite Muslim mosque in the central city of Samarra in February 2006. The displacement continues at a rate of about 100,000 a month.

*By Sybella Wilkes
in Damascus, Syria*

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- **Iraqi refugee families need help to educate their children - UNHCR, 31 July 2007.**

Iraqi refugee families need help to educate their children

Date: 31 Jul 2007 | UNHCR News Stories



Refugee children fleeing the violence in Iraq study in a makeshift school last month. © UNHCR/J.Wreford

DAMASCUS, Syria, 31 July (UNHCR) – When the Mikhail family escaped to Syria, hounded from their home in Baghdad at the end of last year by death threats, they had to begin a new struggle as refugees. Repeatedly, the parents have

been told there is no room at school for their six children.

"We tried to get our four boys and our seven-year old twin girls into school when we arrived, but they told us again and again that the schools were full and there is no space for our children," said Ashur, head of the family. "We cannot put them in a private school, which costs more than \$600 per child. We are barely surviving ourselves."

The fact Syria has given Iraqi refugees full access to the state schools – a step that Jordan also announced last week – does not solve the fundamental problem that the school systems do not have the capacity to absorb the tens of thousands of Iraqi children needing education.

That reality prompted the UN refugee agency and UNICEF to launch an appeal last Friday for \$129 million to get an additional 155,000 Iraqi children back into school by the end of 2008. More than 2 million Iraqis have fled to nearby countries – primarily Syria and Jordan – to escape continuing



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violence in their homeland and most of the 500,000 who are of school age have limited or no access to education.

Last Thursday an Iraqi father called a hotline UNHCR has set up in Syria to call for information. He had been trying to register his children for classes but had been told by the school they would have to wait until September to know if there was any room by the time the local Syrian children have been accommodated.

Of an estimated 300,000 Iraqi school-age children in Syria, only about 33,000 attend school. In Jordan, the government estimates 19,000 Iraqi girls and boys are in fee-charging private schools, while at least 50,000 are not in any classes. The goal is to get another 100,000 Iraqi children into school in Syria; 50,000 in Jordan; 2,000 in Egypt; 1,500 in Lebanon and 1,500 in other countries in the region.

UNHCR and UNICEF will work with ministries of education and other partners in each country to expand the capacity of public schools; reintegrate those – particularly girls and adolescents – who have dropped out; provide outreach and direct support to some 12,000 poor and vulnerable families; and inform Iraqi families of the opportunity to get their children back in school.

This assistance will include providing pre-fabricated classrooms; identifying buildings to use as temporary schools; upgrading water and sanitation in schools; building new schools or classrooms; and rehabilitating existing schools. Buses will be obtained to bring children to school.

The appeal estimates more than 4,000 new teachers will be required and the programme will cover salaries, other entitlements and training costs. Many children – some who have suffered traumatic experiences – have missed up to three years of schooling and special support will be given to them and their families to reintegrate them in the school system.

In Jordan also, UNHCR staff have been trying to assist Iraqi families struggling to get their children in school. Layla fled Baghdad two years ago with her son and daughter after her husband, who had been a police officer during the Saddam regime, was killed. Most of her \$5,000 in savings has gone to educate her son as refugees previously did not have access to the free public school system.

Her daughter's future has been among the sacrifices. She is just one of the 155,000 Iraqi refugee children, who are in real danger of growing up without an education, that the UNHCR-UNICEF appeal is intended to help.

"I will do everything to keep my son in school and give him an education...I took my daughter out of school as she can do without," Layla said. "We – my daughter and I – are both not eating meat and chicken anymore, just vegetables. All for my son, who needs to eat well, grow and learn."



Stop the Assassination of Iraqi Academics !

A campaign of The BRussells Tribunal and

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(the names of refugees have been changed to protect their identities)

By Astrid van Genderen Stort

In Damascus

The full appeal document is available online at www.unher.org and www.unicef.org

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- **Fellowships for Threatened Scholars from Iraq - Institute of International Education (IIE), 31 July 2007.**

IIE Scholar Rescue Fund

FELLOWSHIPS FOR THREATENED SCHOLARS FROM ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD

The Scholar Rescue Fund formalizes an unwavering commitment to academic freedom that the Institute of International Education (IIE) has demonstrated for over 85 years. At the heart of the Fund is the idea that each person we help — each scholar who continues his or her work in safety — is a beacon of hope in our world.

Individually and collectively, their contributions will make a difference — advancing knowledge while exposing the fear and repression under which too many people still live.

Beyond rescuing today's scholars one by one, IIE is building a comprehensive endowment for the Fund. We invite you to join us. Together, we can guarantee that there will always be a safe haven. There will always be hope. Together we can make a difference. One life, one voice, one idea at a time.

SPECIAL FELLOWSHIPS FOR THREATENED SCHOLARS FROM IRAQ

Thanks to the generous support from private and public sector funders, the Institute of International Education's Scholar Rescue Fund (SRF) has launched an emergency rescue plan of historic proportions to assist more than 150 senior scholars in Iraq whose lives and work are threatened. SRF has created the **Iraq Scholar Rescue Project** to respond to one of the greatest academic crises of our time: the systematic destruction of the intellectual capital of Iraq through the persecution and killing of scholars.



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The Institute of International Education (IIE) invites qualifying Iraqi scholars or their nominators to apply to the **Iraq Scholar Rescue Project**, a special division of IIE's Scholar Rescue Fund. This new project provides fellowship assistance for threatened scholars seeking refuge through temporary academic positions at universities, colleges and other institutions of higher learning in the Middle East and North African regions. (Some exceptions may be considered for university positions in other world regions.)

Fellows are expected to teach, research or publish at host academic institutions. While pursuing their academic work, fellows will also be asked to continue to educate Iraqi students within and outside of Iraq. One-year fellowships will cover living expenses and initial relocation costs, and may be renewed for up to one additional year. When conditions allow, scholars are expected to return home to help rebuild universities and societies destroyed by conflict.

[Read this in Arabic \(PDF\)](#)

Eligibility:

Iraqi academics, established researchers and professors in any field or discipline may apply. Preferences will be given to scholars with a Ph.D. or equivalent in their field; who have been employed in advanced academic activities at a university, college or other higher learning institution; who demonstrate superior academic accomplishment; and whose selection is likely to benefit the academic community in Iraq and in the host country. Female scholars are encouraged to apply.

To apply for a fellowship, please fill out an [application for Iraq candidates \(available here\)](#). If you have questions about the application form, or would like to learn about

- [Gates Foundation to help Iraqi academics escape persecution](#) - FT, 16 Aug 2007.

Gates Foundation to help Iraqi academics escape persecution

By Victoria Kim in New York

Published: August 16 2007 03:00 | Last updated: August 16 2007 03:00

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation is making its first foray into Iraq, helping to fund a new initiative to relocate more than 150 Iraqi scholars who are facing persecution.

In a departure from its usual focus on health and development projects, the foundation will provide \$5m (£2.5m) for fellowships to Iraqi scholars trying to continue their work at institutions in other countries, notably Jordan. The US Congress has also approved \$5m to rescue Iraqi scholars.



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The attempt to help Iraqi academics is the most ambitious project of the Scholar Rescue Fund, an organisation founded in 2002 by Wall Street figures including investors George Soros and Dr Henry Jarecki; Tom Russo, vice-chairman of Lehman Brothers; and former Salomon Brothers economist Henry Kaufman.

Officers at the fund, which has helped scholars in countries ranging from Iran to Zimbabwe, began focusing their efforts on Iraq after mounting violence - such as the bomb attack outside a Baghdad university that killed 70 people this year - caused the number of applications from scholars there to soar.

Requests for help from Iraqi academics jumped to as many as 40 a week after averaging three or four a month before autumn 2006. So far, the fund has helped 17 Iraqi scholars find work in other countries.

Iraq is "the closest thing that any of us have seen to the Holocaust in terms of attacks on science and learning", said Allan Goodman, president and chief executive of the non-profit International Institute of Education, which administers the fund.

"It is not even clear who is doing it," said Dr Jarecki, the fund's chairman. "No one is being arrested. No one is being punished for harming scholars."

Bill and Melinda Gates support the project because "the protection of part of Iraq's intellectual capital . . . will be essential for Iraq's future development," a spokeswoman for the foundation said.

The fund, which is working with the Iraqi ministry of higher education, hopes scholars will eventually be able to continue teaching students in Iraq through long-distance learning programmes, said Dr Jarecki.

Many of the scholars pulled out of Iraq will be relocated to neighbouring Jordan, where many Iraqi scholars are already living in poverty as refugees, in some cases driving taxis rather than teaching.

<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/198bf7bc-4b91-11dc-861a-0000779fd2ac.html>



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- **Iraq's Elite Fleeing in Droves - Der Spiegel, 20 Aug 2007.**

URL: <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,500857,00.html>

LOSING ITS BEST AND BRIGHTEST

Iraq's Elite Fleeing in Droves

By Amira El Ahl, Volkhard Windfuhr and Bernhard Zand

One in ten Iraqis has left the country. Baghdad's elite are trying to make ends meet in neighboring Jordan and Syria. Washington wants the United Nations to address the refugee crisis. In the meantime, the country is losing its best minds -- the very people needed to rebuild Iraq.

The first stage on the road to safety is a \$20 taxi ride. It takes the future refugee past nervous soldiers, through dangerous checkpoints and along streets with nicknames -- like "Grenade Alley" and "Sniper Boulevard" -- that bespeak the perils of travel in Iraq.

Stage one ends at the curb in front of Samarra Terminal at Baghdad Airport, where travelers are so overcome with relief that they hardly even notice the gruff way guards treat them. Before they are even allowed to enter the terminal, security officers order them to deposit their suitcases and carry-on bags next to a yellow line painted on the asphalt and flanked by two sets of six-foot-tall concrete barriers. While police dogs sniff the luggage for explosives, the travelers -- men, women, grandparents and grandchildren -- stand to the side in the heat, parents wearing stiff-looking travel clothes and a few children in brightly colored wind-breakers.

"We are flying to Amman," says one mother, smiling as she hands her whining son his stocking cap, "and then to Prague and on to Stockholm. The children think it's snowing there."

The first flight, a charter flight operated by Flying Carpet, isn't scheduled for departure until the afternoon, but the airport is already crowded at 9 a.m. Three doctors -- old friends from their university days, who haven't seen each other in years -- are reunited in the terminal. One of them, a child psychologist named Khaldun Fahmy, was kidnapped a week earlier when he returned to take one last look at his abandoned villa. After three terrifying days, in which he was tortured, the \$50,000 ransom money was paid and Fahmy was released and taken to the hospital. "Am I talking too much?" he asks his friends. "It's all therapy, all self-therapy."

Four flights are departing from Baghdad Airport on this particular afternoon, bound for Amman, Damascus, Beirut and Dubai. Few are shedding tears. Most of the travelers have already said their goodbyes, and their farewells are well considered and long planned. Some expect to return, while others are leaving "for good," says Fahmy.

Mass Flight

Iraq, a country still shaken by daily violence, is currently the scene of what is likely the biggest refugee disaster since the displacement of Palestinians in the Arab-Israeli War in 1948. On the eve of the Iraq war, the United States, the United Nations and neighboring countries had expected refugees to number in the tens of thousands. Four years later, more than 2 million Iraqis have already left the country. Jordan has accepted close to 750,000, the Gulf states 200,000, Egypt 100,000 and Syria at least 1,400,000. Roughly one in 10 Iraqis has fled the country, and about the same number are now internal refugees.

They are not just the country's poor and desperate. Many are the elites of a nation that already lost many of its best and brightest during decades of tyranny and economic embargos. Ironically, those choosing to leave the country today are precisely the doctors, lawyers, judges, engineers and government bureaucrats the country will desperately need to rebuild itself.

The West -- especially the two leading coalition nations, the United States and Great Britain -- has opened itself up to severe criticism for its unwillingness to step up to the plate. Since the 2003 invasion, Britain has accepted a mere 115 and the United States only about 500 of a total of more than 14,000 seeking asylum in the West. The Bush administration has promised to process 7,000 applications for political asylum this year and has made a commitment to accept 3,000. Former senior US diplomat Richard Holbrooke calls the Bush administration's efforts "pathetic" and the American public's indifference "shameful."

Graphic: Iraqi Refugees



Meanwhile, Washington has been more than generous in seeking to transfer its Iraq responsibilities to the UN. The organization, says Zalmay Khalilzad, the former US Ambassador to Iraq, should focus more of its attention in the future on the political process in Baghdad, security issues, the country's oil law -- and the refugee crisis. But this is a tall order, with the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) not even in a position to get the most vulnerable Iraqis -- the interpreters and reconstruction workers being hunted down by terrorists, who accuse them of collaborating with the occupiers -- out of the country. US authorities in Iraq do not accept asylum applications, and those Iraqis who do manage to make it abroad are better off not mentioning any ransom money they may have paid for kidnapped relatives, especially not in the United States. US immigration authorities define such payments as "material support" for terrorist organizations. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation recently contributed \$5 million to a fellowship fund for Iraqi academics. The purpose of the fund, says a foundation spokeswoman, is to "protect Iraq's intellectual capital." The foundation currently receives about 40 applications a week, but the program's funds are only enough to pay for about 150 academics and will have been used up within a few months.



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Staggering Costs

Meanwhile, the cost to Syria and Jordan, whose governments warned against an invasion and are now being left to deal with the humanitarian consequences, is running into the billions. Jordan has now virtually closed its borders to Iraq, while up to 2,000 Iraqis cross the border into Syria every day. Syrian Interior Minister Bassam Abdul-Majid says that Damascus will likely follow Jordan's lead before long.

No one knows precisely how many Iraqis there are in Syria today. The demand for subsidized goods like bread and gasoline has increased by one-fifth, at an additional cost to the government of several hundred million dollars. Apartment rents in some neighborhoods have skyrocketed, government-run schools are overflowing with students and unemployment and inflation are on the rise.

The growing crisis has also affected the UN. At the beginning of the year, two employees at the UNHCR office in Damascus were sufficient to register Iraqi refugees. But within weeks, the situation spun out of control. Suddenly UNHCR officials saw thousands of people lining up outside their office every morning.

Today, only half a year later, 30 clerks sit at desks in a warehouse in eastern Damascus, recording personal data and translating it into English. "It's the largest operation of its kind that we're running worldwide," says British UNHCR official Sybella Wilkes.

Before the building opens in the morning, employees walk through the crowd with megaphones, warning the refugees about con artists. No one from the UNHCR will ask for money, they say, adding that while the process will be time-consuming and inconvenient, it is free. Then health experts arrive on the scene to scan the crowd for the sick and fatigued. "We have to fish out the most vulnerable ones first," says Wilkes, "otherwise they won't make it through the waiting period in the heat." The disabled, old men in wheelchairs and chemotherapy patients are taken to the front of the line.

Huda Sibawi, 33, a grief-stricken young woman, is carrying six death certificates: those of her mother, her father, two uncles, her brother and her brother-in-law. The father, a wealthy Sunni from New Baghdad, had donated money to a mosque and, at the end of Ramadan, broke the fast a day earlier than is customary among the Shiites. He paid dearly for his infraction. Fighters from the Shiite Mahdi militia exterminated most of his family in a two-week murdering spree.

The killers seized the Sibawis' assets, which included 11 apartment buildings and a small chain of supermarkets. Neighbors from Baghdad occasionally call Huda to tell her that members of the Mahdi militia are now driving the family's company cars around the city.



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Some of the Iraqi refugees are so desperate that mothers have been known to take their daughters to nightclubs, where they offer them to Western and Arab tourists from the Gulf as if they were exotic fruits. "Diana, for example," says a driver who works for the limousine service of a large, Western hotel, "just arrived from Mosul. You can meet her in our disco after 1 a.m."

Careful Preparations

But so far, abject poverty is still the exception among refugees. Many Iraqis made careful financial preparations before leaving the country, selling their houses and cars in Baghdad so that they could buy apartments in Damascus or Amman. Other families are using up their daughters' dowries bit by bit. "Our funds will last us for exactly six months," says Huda Sibawi. "By then we'll need a decision on whether a European country or Canada will accept us."

Other refugees retain a place of residence in Kurdish northern Iraq so as not to lose their pension claims. "Most of these people are very well-educated and self-confident," says a UNHCR employee who once worked in West Africa. "Only a fraction comes to us. Asking for handouts goes against their grain. That's the most tragic thing about this crisis: The ones who have left Iraq are its 2 million best and brightest."

Meanwhile, the Iraqi nose for business is in full evidence in the Jordanian capital of Amman, dominated by the Iraqi-owned Le Royal, a luxury hotel designed as a striking sandstone cylinder, a variation on the renowned spiral minaret on the mosque in Samarra. While Iraqis make full use of Amman's liberal economic environment, the country also benefits from their presence.

The wave of refugees has also led to rising living expenses, rents and real estate prices in Jordan. "We are a country without resources," says Jordanian businessman Abd al-Sattar al-Kuda. "We have no water, no oil and little agriculture," he says. "In other words, there is nothing the refugees could take away from us." On the contrary, the Iraqis are partly responsible for a boom in consumer spending.

Baghdad's wealthy residents, many already with one foot in Amman before the war, have settled in Abdoun and Deir Ghubar, exclusive residential areas in the city's southwest. They include Iraqis tied to the former regime, such as former dictator Saddam Hussein's daughter Raghad, who is often seen driving her blue BMW sports car and is said to have opened a beauty salon recently. Refugees from the Iraqi middle class have settled in western Amman, while the poor live in the east. Although many are in Jordan illegally, Iraqis have already made the Jordanian capital a different place than it was.

Amman's Transformation

Once-sleepy Amman has turned into a vibrant big city with busy restaurants and cafes. After 2003, many Iraqi restaurant owners moved their businesses from Baghdad to Amman, often mimicking the



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original restaurants and naming them after Iraqi provinces and neighborhoods. At "Anbar" in western Amman, the "samak masgouf," a carp dish, is served just as it's prepared in waterside restaurants along the Tigris River -- fresh, rich and moist. The waiters and patrons converse in Iraqi dialects, while Jordanians are in the minority. Big cars with Baghdad license plates are parked bumper-to-bumper on neighborhood streets.

But as harmoniously as Iraqis seem to fit into Amman's street scenes, their status is precarious. The government has gradually ramped up its requirements for residency permits, demanding that Iraqis deposit increasingly large sums of money as collateral. Those who are turned down have no right to appeal the immigration court's decision.

Being pushed around like this in Jordan or Syria is especially humiliating for educated Iraqis. Baghdad's middle class, in particular, has always considered itself the Arab world's urban elite. An old Iraqi Arab saying sums up the way many Iraqis see themselves today: "Books are written in Cairo and published in Beirut, but they are read in Baghdad."

A retired archaeology professor from Baghdad, who prefers not to give his name, found a bullet wrapped in a balled-up piece of paper in his garden one day. "Get out, or we'll come and get your daughter," the note read. He packed his bags and drove to Amman with his wife and daughter. That was a year ago, or the space of two six-month tourist visas. At some point, the 70-year-old professor realized that he would probably not be returning to his native country.

But this time, the Jordanian immigration office is refusing to issue the professor a third visa because he is unable to pay the \$75,000 fee. "Not to be granted a residency permit in Jordan is extremely hurtful to me, a person who spent decades at the university and years working for UNESCO," he says.

He stands, watery-eyed, in a friend's basement apartment in Amman, wearing a light blue shirt and gray flannel trousers. "Do you know what I have done now?" he asks. "I have prepared my resume and attached an application to it. Perhaps one of the universities here will take me."

Translated from the German by Christopher Sultan

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- **Back to school: Education sector struggling to progress - AswatallIraq, 20 Sept 2007.**

Baghdad - Voices of Iraq

Baghdad, Sept 20, (VOI) – With the new academic year approaching, many educational institutions voice their concerns about the U.S. forces' appropriation of some Iraqi schools.

Abdul Rahman al-Kabisi, the general director of the education sector in Karkh, said that there are a few days to go before the beginning of the new academic year and four primary schools in Karkh are still under the control of U.S. forces, despite several calls from the education department.

"The educational process should not be isolated from the current economic and social circumstances facing Iraqi society," al-Kabisi told the independent news agency Voices of Iraq.



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"Another problem that we suffer from are raids staged by U.S. and Iraqi forces on some schools," he explained. "During these raids, security forces destroy school gates and archives."

Abdul Raziq al-Zubeidi, head of the Education Committee in Baghdad's municipal council, described the U.S. forces' appropriation of some schools as a "stumbling block" facing the education sector.

"Schools have become overcrowded with students after U.S. forces took control of some schools," al-Zubeidi explained.

When asked about preparations for the new academic year, al-Zubeidi said that Baghdad's municipal council allocated 20 million Iraqi dinars (16,182 U.S. dollars) to establish health centers in Baghdad's schools. "Other projects to distribute school bags and toys for primary students are currently being discussed," he added.

Commenting on possible modifications to school curricula, al-Zubeidi indicated that several committees have been set up to examine them and suggest amendments. "The committees made great progress in this regard, particularly in Arabic and history syllabi."

Walid Hassan, the head of the Iraqi Ministry of Education's media office, said that the ministry spares no effort to compensate for the lack of schools throughout the country. "The General Department for School Buildings in the ministry built 14 schools in several parts of Baghdad to resolve the capital's problem with a shortage of schools," he said. School facilities will be planned in accordance with the population of each area: seven schools will be established in Missan, eight in Thi Qar and four in Basra. "Residential buildings will also be set up near these schools to house the teachers..." Hassan noted.

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In response to a question about the chances for fresh graduates to secure jobs in newly-built schools, Hassan said that committees of parliamentarians and members of the Teachers' Syndicate have been formed to examine job applications submitted by fresh graduates seeking positions in the state-run education sector.

SS/SR

- **300 Iraqi Scientists Martyred, 3000 Migrated After Occupation: Parliament Committee Chief**

Tuesday, October 9, 2007

S.Abadi, IkhwanWeb - Bagdad, Iraq



Dr. Alaa Makki, chairman of the education committee in Iraqi parliament, confirmed that more than 300 Iraqi scientists have been gunned down by armed militias and death squads and more than 3000 Iraqi scientists migrated.

Makki said in a statement to Ikhwanweb: " We have accurate figures about all professors who were killed, kidnapped and professors who were forced to leave Iraq."

"I think that there is a plan for targeting Iraqi professors, scientists and intellectuals. Reviewing the list of the professors who were targeted, we can notice that they include rare specialists in their fields, very prominent doctors, physicists and intellectuals up to 300 in all specializations including economy, Arabic literature, history, engineering, physics and chemistry" said Makki .

These great scientists and professors have no personal enmity. Most of the victims are specialized in Arabic, literature, specialists in fractures, internal medicine and physics. 300 professors have migrated, a figure which may be less than the actual number. This actually took place gradually. This migration has been going on during the previous regime as professors were harassed and they were given lower salaries but this migration has sharply doubled after the US-led invasion of Iraq and toppling the regime, Makki said a member of parliament for the Iraqi Accordance Front.

Asked whether there is a plan for curbing terrorist operations targeting schools and professors, Makki said: " We have put many plans to protect educational environment including universities and schools, especially during exams. We declared about this in satellite channels. We took part in the law enforcement plan and we took part in the plans of the multinational forces and the Interior Ministry



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and we helped teachers and professors to protect places in which exams are held, professors, exam observers and students.

Some students have been kidnapped and some facilities have been attacked but such violations haven't disappointed us. We witness this year a relatively better semester as much as the security situation is concerned. There will be a better university and school attendance and we hope the results will be better than last year's, god willing" said the Iraqi MP.

- **Potential teachers...disaster to education, females more qualified - 09 Oct 2007.**

- **Basra - Voices of Iraq** Monday , 11 /02 /2008 Time 7:42:06

Basra , Oct 9, (VOI) – The beautiful image stuck on most Iraqis' mind about their teachers seemed no more attainable as teachers' training institutes are skeptical about their graduates' capabilities to educate new generations.

Muhammad Hassan, the dean of the Teachers Institute in Ashar, Basra province, says, "We have to admit that we are witnessing a disaster to education. But, to be frank our institutes are part of the crisis and not the main cause."

The southern Iraqi city of Basra, which enjoys some security, has now four teachers institutes for males and eleven more for females.

"Current and potential teachers suffer from a remarkable retreat in general education and teaching capabilities. It is part of the society's retreat due to decades of wars and lack of stability," he complained.

"A female teacher, in general, is little more qualified than the male teacher due to some external stressing conditions," Hassan told the independent news agency Voices of Iraq (VOI) Ahmed Obeid, a student at the institute, tried to justify the deterioration in the institute students' educational levels.

"Most of us have various exhausting jobs. Some of us are working as porters, others are drivers or grocers after the classes to help our families. We arrive at the institute nearly half dead. It is so humiliating," Obeid said.

The institute staff fear that their graduates could not properly teach pupils in the near future.



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"Once I told my students at the institute that I would make sure that none of them will be my son's teacher in the future because they would teach them nothing," Qutaiba al-Diwan, an Arabic teacher in the institute, told VOI bitterly.

Although the new situation in the country after the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in March 2003 has overburdened the society with more hardships as commodities' prices and rental expenses soared up while unemployment rate increased, some blame the former regime for the currently deteriorating level of education in Iraq.

Amal, a psychologist, said, "The former regime was mainly to blame for the crisis. Teachers during that time were at the rock bottom. Their salaries plunged to a paltry figure of 3,000 Iraqi dinars (\$6), forcing teachers to moonlight in lower jobs."

Educationists predict a catastrophe in the process if no remedy was introduced to the crisis. "Today's low-level students at the institute entails lower levels of education in the future," Majeed al-Mousawi, a teacher at the institute, told VOI.

Muhammad al-Jassim, an English language teacher at the institute rang an alarm bell as he complains of the low levels of his students.

"Potential teachers at the institute receive English lessons as deaf people would receive whispers. They can't even recite the English alphabet!" he quipped.

"How could these current students would teach children English in the future?" wondered Jassim. The institute dean, Hassan, suggested offering subsidy to students at the institute, giving them a chance to be hired with a decent salary once graduated, re-qualifying the present teachers through training courses and introducing high standards to pass the exams.

"Otherwise, we will end in a real disaster," Hassan warns.

AMS/SK



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- **Violence forces scholars to become refugees** - USA Today, 11 Oct 2007.

Violence forces scholars to become refugees

By Barbara Slavin, USA TODAY

Donny George endured three wars, international sanctions and looting that robbed Iraq of many of its ancient treasures.

The university professor, who was director of the National Museum and chairman of Iraq's Board of Antiquities and Heritage, stayed put until a year ago. Then an envelope arrived at his home, containing a bullet and a threat to kill his teenage son for allegedly cursing Islam and teasing Muslim girls.

LIFE IN IRAQ: [A weekly glimpse into civilians' experiences](#)

George's accountant, a colleague and two of his students had already been killed, he says. He and his family fled to Syria and four months later to the USA, where he teaches at the State University of New York at Stony Brook.

George is among the beneficiaries of a small but growing international effort to preserve Iraq's scholars.

Several hundred Iraqi academics have been resettled outside the country with support from organizations in the USA, England, Spain and the Netherlands, says Kate Robertson, deputy executive secretary of the London-based Council for Assisting Refugee Academics. Such groups provide professors with financial aid and help them find positions at universities.

At least 256 Iraqi professors have been killed since 2003, according to the council. Of those, 134 were from Baghdad, including 89 from the University of Baghdad, the organization says.

Robertson says academics are targeted by common criminals and both Sunni and Shiite extremists.

"If you are trying to sow chaos and take advantage of the vacuum you create, independent thinkers with secular perspectives are a threat," she says.

Of perhaps 20,000 academics in the country, a quarter have left, Robertson says. They are among 2.2 million Iraqis who have become refugees since 2003.

"In 2004, we began to get one or two requests every few months," says Allan Goodman, president and chief executive officer of the Institute of International Education, a non-profit New York-based organization that has been rescuing foreign academics since 1919. "By early 2007, it was 40 or 50 a week."



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Robertson's group is sponsoring about 70 Iraqis, about 20 of whom are in or on their way to the United Kingdom. The Scholar Rescue Fund, administered by the Institute of International Education, is funding 55, 10 of whom are in the USA.

The Bush administration has been slow to process visas for all kinds of Iraqi refugees because it did not anticipate such large outflows and had to create new infrastructure in the Middle East, says Terry Rusch, the State Department official in charge of refugee admissions.

The United States admitted 1,608 Iraqi refugees in the fiscal year that ended Sept. 30, according to the State Department. Rusch says the goal is to admit 12,000 Iraqis this fiscal year, which began Oct. 1.

The U.S. government does not single out academics for admission, Rusch says. Some may qualify under other criteria, which give priority to victims of severe trauma and to people associated with the U.S. military and civilian programs in Iraq.

Rescue groups hope they can help Iraqis "maintain their skills so they can go back to re-create their education system" when conditions permit, Robertson says.

Just when that might happen is difficult to predict.

George says an optimistic estimate is five to 10 years. In the meantime, he says, the world must do what it can to preserve Iraq's academic heritage.

Scholars "are the treasures for the future of young Iraqis," George says. "Each one can produce generations of educated Iraqis. If we lose one, we lose a lot."

Find this article at:

http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/iraq/2007-10-11-iraq-week_N.htm



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- **A Civil War On Campus** - Newsweek, 12 Nov 2007.

A Civil War On Campus

Sunnis and Shiites are dividing the classroom.

By **Babak Dehghanpisheh**

NEWSWEEK

Updated: 2:47 PM ET Nov 3, 2007

The ceremony was no ordinary after-school activity. Prayer flags and banners were plastered across walls at east Baghdad's Mustansiriya University last spring to commemorate the birth of Hassan al Askari, a Shiite imam. Devout activists urged students to join a celebration at the school stadium after class. Hamid Duleimi, a 22-year-old physics major, tried to slip off campus, but he didn't get far. An AK-47-toting guard halted him at the school gate. "If this was a celebration for Saddam's birthday," the guard said, "would you be leaving so soon?" The guard demanded to see Duleimi's *jensiya*—his national ID. "To be asked for my *jensiya* means they want to know my sect," says the light-bearded Sunni. He flashed his school ID instead and shuffled off, promising to bring his *jensiya* the following day.

A group of black-clad men, the signature outfit of the Mahdi Army militia, loitered near the guard shack the next day. Two of Duleimi's classmates had recently been kidnapped, and one was later found dead. So Duleimi (who, like all Iraqis quoted in this story, asked not to use his real name, for safety) fled when one of the militiamen headed toward him. He hasn't gone back. "I'm still wanted by those Mahdi Army members," he says. "Mustansiriya isn't a place for learning anymore."

That's true of many Iraqi universities. Amid Iraq's low-grade civil war, hundreds of students and teachers have been kidnapped or killed since 2003. "Some academics are assassinated by Shia militants because they are suspected of collaborating with the regime under Saddam Hussein; others are killed by Sunnis because they did not," says a report from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (A UNESCO official says roughly 10,000 teachers have fled the country in the past five years.) Like many other Iraqi institutions, the university system is fracturing along sectarian lines. Students now make a habit of finding out whether instructors and classmates are Shiite or Sunni before signing up for courses. Majors and entire campuses are seen as being dominated by one sect or the other. Rather than places where minds are broadened and communities mix, campuses are becoming furnaces in which sectarian identities are forged.

At Baghdad University, for instance, students see the College of Medicine and College of Pharmacy as Sunni schools, and the College of Education as Shiite. Would-be majors have to gauge where they'll be able to speak most freely and have the fewest confrontations. "Every student who wants to enter a



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university now needs to ask: Is the college Sunni or Shia? Is the dean or president a Sunni or Shia?" says a Baghdad U undergrad. Students worry about *allas* ("chewers")—informants who may be watching their movements or listening to their conversations.

The sectarian shift at Mustansiriya, which used to have a reputation for liberalism, has been dramatic. Students and professors say the government-appointed security force for the campus, the Facilities Protection Service, is largely made up of Mahdi Army fighters, loyal to Moqtada al-Sadr. Posters of him and his father, Mohammed Sadeq al-Sadr, are dotted around campus; pro-Sadr (and anti-American) graffiti is spray-painted on walls. The faculty includes many Sadr supporters; most teachers who don't like the new regime have either left or learned to keep their mouths shut. "Mustansiriya is a university totally controlled by the Sadr faction," says a Shiite instructor there. "Before, nobody could speak ill about Saddam. Now nobody can speak ill about Moqtada."

Some students capitalize on this fear. During finals last semester, one student scared an instructor into giving him a passing grade by claiming to be in the Mahdi Army and leaving threatening notes on the teacher's car. On religious holidays, local clerics descend on the campus with bullhorns to preach, and female students, whether Shiite or Sunni, are warned they'll go to hell if they don't wear a *hijab*. Secular professors say the creeping religious influence is affecting student behavior. Recently a group of Shiite students beat their chests to protest poor dorm conditions—"the same way they do during [the Shiite festival of] Ashura," says one professor. "I was shocked."

The militiamen who guard the campus are a most divisive issue. While Sunnis like Duleimi see them as a threat, many Shiites are grateful for their presence. In January, two car bombs and a suicide bomber killed more than 70 people and wounded approximately 170 at Mustansiriya. One month later, a female suicide bomber hit the College of Economy and Administration and killed at least 40 people. Attacks across Baghdad are down recently. But Iraqis' defensive barriers—both physical and mental—are not going away soon.

URL: <http://www.newsweek.com/id/67922>

- **Mossad mission: Murder Iraqi scholars - 10 Dec 2007.**

Mossad mission: Murder Iraqi scholars

Mon, 10 Dec 2007 14:47:45

More than 500 Iraqi scientists and professors have been murdered by Israel's Mossad intelligence agency, an Iraqi newspaper reports.

The report stated that the killings were part of a mission to get rid of those Iraqi nuclear specialists and university professors that refused to cooperate with the Zionist regime.

The assassinations were carried out by Mossad and the US Defense Department - the Pentagon.

So far 350 scientists and 200 professors have been surreptitiously murdered by Israeli Mossad commandoes, deployed to Iraq exclusively to carry out these atrocities.



According to the US State Department, these killings came after Washington's attempts to entice Iraqi scientists to cooperate with the US failed.

Many specialists living in the US also refused to comply and fled, seeking refuge in other countries. Those willing to cooperate suffered grueling interrogations and even torture by the hands of US officials.

According to the Al-Bayna newspaper, Tel Aviv sees these scientists posing a threat to the security of the Zionist regime, and has decided the best way to deal with this is to assassinate the offending intellectuals.

The Pentagon expressed its approval of such a scheme seven months ago, dispatching back-up for the Israeli commandoes, and also providing them with full personal records of the targeted victims.

The scholars are killed far from their homes in staged scenarios, taking advantage of the regularly expected bomb attacks happening every day in Iraq.

FBA/BGH

- **Iraq's Scholars Reluctant to Return - IWPR, 18 Jan 2008.**

Iraq's Scholars Reluctant to Return

The continuing shortage of academics is damaging higher education throughout the country.

By Zaineb Naji in Baghdad (ICR No. 243, 18-Jan-08)

Zahra, a doctoral candidate studying immune-system diseases, shook her head in disappointment when she saw the list of professors who were supposed to review her thesis.

Three had fled the country. While one promised to attend her defence of her thesis, another was unable to make it because of the security situation.



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Zahra, 40, who received her PhD two months ago, did most of the work on her own. She doesn't blame her professors – one left Iraq after receiving a bloodstained bullet in an envelope together with a note which read, “You're wanted because you are a scientist.”

“I thought that the good security situation might encourage the professors to return to Iraq,” said Zahra, who did not want her real name to be used. “On the contrary, some are still fleeing the country, and the universities are still suffering from a shortage of lecturers.”

Widespread threats against Iraqi university staff have all but stripped the country of its intellectual core, particularly in Baghdad.

According to the country's higher education ministry, 240 lecturers were killed from 2003 to October 2007.

Approximately 2,000 academics have fled the country, according to Tariq al-Bakaa, a former minister of higher education who served under the 2004 government of the then prime minister Ayad Allawi.

Most have fled to Jordan, Gulf States, Libya and Syria, where some have established the Syrian International University for Science and Technology.

Many others cannot find work or are struggling to make ends meet in their countries of refuge, but are wary of returning.

The wife of a pharmacology lecturer who recently came back from Syria said her husband stayed behind while she checked out the situation.

“I was fed up of living in Syria,” she said. “I came back to Iraq with my sons to ascertain that the situation is secure before my husband returns. He works at a university there [in Syria], but he wants to be at his own university, with his students in Iraq.”

Despite the recent improvement in the security situation in the capital, academics both inside Iraq and abroad say that scholars who fled intimidation are unlikely to return in the near future.

Al-Bakaa, now a visiting scholar from Harvard University, is researching the state of Iraq's educational system and threats against academics.

“You won't return to a country where you will be killed,” said al-Bakaa, who left for the United States in October 2005 through the US-based Scholars at Risk Network.



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According to one of al-Bakaa's reports, approximately 60 per cent of the murdered academics held PhDs, came from Baghdad and taught at universities.

No one has been tried in any of these murder cases, he said.

"The violence targeted the best of the professors," said Kawther Ahmed Fadel, a 19-year-old student at al-Mustansiria University in Baghdad.

"Not a week goes by without an announcement that a professor or other teaching staff member has been killed."

There are indications that Iraqi scholars continue to face risks.

Of the 21 academics currently seeking refuge outside their countries through the Scholars at Risk Network, 11 are from Iraq.

Six pleas have been made since September last year, and the latest appeal was listed on January 8.

The ongoing intimidation threatens to drive out the last of the country's academics.

The higher education system has long been in decline.

Until the Eighties, Iraq was regarded as the centre of academia in the Arab world. However, the late Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein cut educational funding as he beefed up the military budget during the Iran-Iraq war of 1980 to 1988.

Many of Iraq's top professors fled the country under Saddam's Baathist government and as a result of the United Nations-backed sanctions of the Nineties.

In 2003, the US-led Coalition Provisional Authority instituted "de-Baathification" policies, under which party members – including 1,000 lecturers and professors - were fired from their jobs.

According to al-Bakaa, a former Baathist who left the party two decades ago, the government had to shut down 153 academic specialisations because there were no longer any experts in those fields.

While all academic fields have been affected, "the medical schools have been totally devastated by the lack of expertise", he said.



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“Teaching standards are deteriorating at Iraqi universities because of the lack of professors,” said Fadel. “Most of the lecturers obtained their master’s or doctoral degrees only recently.”

The ministry has tried to compensate for the shortage by giving teaching jobs to people with higher degrees - 7,900 master’s degree holders and just over 1,000 PhDs were appointed between 2005 and 2007

But the number of new lecturers and their level of knowledge are insufficient to fill the void, academics say - particularly since the ministry announced in December that it wants to establish nine new universities across Iraq.

According to ministry spokesman Basil al-Khateeb, the government is encouraging university staff to return home.

Parliament is currently debating legislation that would raise lecturers’ salaries and benefits by 200 per cent, and provide additional perks such as life insurance and housing.

Most Iraqi professors currently make anywhere between 350,000 and two million dinars a month, or 290 to 1,645 US dollars.

Khateeb said Iraq badly needs its best and brightest scholars to return, particularly those who are now teaching in western universities.

“There is a verbal call out for professors to return to Iraq,” he said. “At conferences and meetings in Iraqi Kurdistan and abroad, the minister keeps telling them to come back. Some want to return, but others are hesitant because they’re worried about the security situation.

“We will welcome them if they want to return.”

But many academics argue that the government and the ministry are not doing enough to support them.

“The ministry should be more serious about bringing back the universities’ teaching staff,” said Ibrahim Mohammed Ahmed, a political science professor in Baghdad.

“I don’t mean that they should only address security,” he . Many professors who fled the country for fear of their lives find that they are treated better [abroad] than their colleagues inside Iraq. That’s why they don’t want to come back, in addition to the security threat.”



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Some of the names in this story were changed because of security concerns.

Zaineb Naji is an IWPR reporter in Baghdad. IWPR Iraq editor Mariwan Hama-Saeed contributed to this report.

- **Michael Schwartz, The Iraqi Brain Drain - Tomgram, 10 Feb 2008.**

Tom Dispatch

posted 2008-02-10 20:15:20

Tomgram: Michael Schwartz, The Iraqi Brain Drain

I'm an innumerate, but the figures on this -- the saddest story of our Iraq debacle -- are so large that even I can do the necessary computations. The population of the United States is now just over 300,000,000. The population of Iraq at the time of the U.S. invasion was perhaps in the 26-27 million range. Between March 2003 and today, a number of reputable sources place the total of Iraqis who have fled their homes -- those who have been displaced internally and those who have gone abroad -- at between 4.5 million and 5 million individuals. If you take that still staggering lower figure, approximately one in six Iraqis is either a refugee in another country or an internally displaced person.

Now, consider the equivalent in terms of the U.S. population. If Iraq had invaded the United States in March 2003 with similar results, in less than five years approximately 50 million Americans would have fled their homes, assumedly flooding across the Mexican and Canadian borders, desperately burdening weaker neighboring economies. It would be an unparalleled, even unimaginable, catastrophe. Consider, then, what we would think if, back in Baghdad, politicians and the media were hailing, or at least discussing positively, the "success" of the prime minister's recent "surge strategy" in the U.S., even though it had probably been instrumental in creating at least one out of every ten of those refugees, 5 million displaced Americans in all. Imagine what our reaction would be to such blithe barbarism.

Back in the real world, of course, what Michael Schwartz terms the "tsunami" of Iraqi refugees, the greatest refugee crisis on the planet, has received only modest attention in this country (which managed, in 2007, to accept but 1,608 Iraqi refugees out of all those millions -- a figure nonetheless up from 2006). As with so much else, the Bush administration takes no responsibility for the crisis, nor does it feel any need to respond to it at an appropriate level. Until now, to the best of my knowledge, no one has even put together a history of the monumental, horrific tale of human suffering that George



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W. Bush's war of choice and subsequent occupation unleashed, or fully considered what such a brain drain, such a loss of human capital, might actually mean for Iraq's future. *Tom*

Iraq's Tidal Wave of Misery

The First History of the Planet's Worst Refugee Crisis

By Michael Schwartz

A tidal wave of misery is engulfing Iraq -- and it isn't the usual violence that Americans are accustomed to hearing about and tuning out. To be sure, it's rooted in that violence, but this tsunami of misery is social and economic in nature. It dislodges people from their jobs, sweeps them from their homes, tears them from their material possessions, and carries them off from families and communities. It leaves them stranded in hostile towns or foreign countries, with no anchor to resist the moment when the next wave of displacement sweeps over them.

The victims of this human tsunami are called refugees if they wash ashore outside the country or IDPs ("internally displaced persons") if their landing place is within Iraq's borders. Either way, they are normally left with no permanent housing, no reliable livelihood, no community support, and no government aid. All the normal social props that support human lives are removed, replaced with...nothing.

Overlapping Waves of the Dispossessed

In its first four years, the Iraq war created three overlapping waves of refugees and IDPs.

It all began with the Coalition Provisional Authority, which the Bush administration set up inside Baghdad's Green Zone and, in May 2003, placed under the control of L. Paul Bremer III. The CPA immediately began dismantling Iraq's state apparatus. Thousands of Baathist Party bureaucrats were purged from the government; tens of thousands of workers were laid off from shuttered, state-owned industries; hundreds of thousands of Iraqi military personnel were dismissed from Saddam's dismantled military. Their numbers soon multiplied as the ripple effect of their lost buying power rolled through the economy. Many of the displaced found other (less remunerative) jobs; some hunkered down to wait out bad times; still others left their homes and sought work elsewhere, with the most marketable going to nearby countries where their skills were still in demand. They were the leading edge of the first wave of Iraqi refugees.

As the post-war chaos continued, kidnapping became the country's growth industry, targeting any prosperous family with the means to pay ransom. This only accelerated the rate of departure, particularly among those who had already had their careers disrupted. A flood of professional, technical, and managerial workers fled their homes and Iraq in search of personal and job security.



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The spirit of this initial exodus was eloquently expressed by an [Iraqi blogger](#) with the online handle of AnaRki13:

"Not so much a migration as a forced exodus. Scientists, engineers, doctors, architects, writers, poets, you name it -- everybody is getting out of town.

"Why? Simple: 1. There is no real job market in Iraq. 2. Even if you have a good job, chances are good you'll get kidnapped or killed. It's just not worth it staying here. Sunni, Shiite, or Christian -- everybody, we're all leaving, or have already left.

"One of my friends keeps berating me about how I should love this country, the land of my ancestors, where I was born and raised; how I should be grateful and return to the place that gave me everything. I always tell him the same thing: 'Iraq, as you and me once knew it, is lost. What's left of it, I don't want...'

"The most famous doctors and university professors have already left the country because many of them, including ones I knew personally, were assassinated or killed, and the rest got the message -- and got themselves jobs in the west, where they were received warmly and given high positions. Other millions of Iraqis, just ordinary Iraqis, left and are leaving -- without plans and with much hope."

In 2004, the Americans triggered a second wave of refugees when they began to attack and invade insurgent strongholds, as they did the Sunni city of Falluja in November 2004, using the full kinetic force of their military. Whether the Americans called for evacuation or not, large numbers of local residents were forced to flee battleground neighborhoods or cities. The process was summarized in a thorough review of the history of the war compiled by the Global Policy Forum and 35 other international non-governmental organizations:

"Among those who flee, the most fortunate are able to seek refuge with out-of-town relatives, but many flee into the countryside where they face extremely difficult conditions, including shortages of food and water. Eventually the Red Crescent, the UN or relief organizations set up camps. In Falluja, a city of about 300,000, over 216,000 displaced persons had to seek shelter in overcrowded camps during the winter months, inadequately supplied with food, water, and medical care. An estimated 100,000 fled al-Qaim, a city of 150,000, according to the Iraqi Red Crescent Society (IRCS). In Ramadi, about 70 percent of the city's 400,000 people left in advance of the U.S. onslaught.

"These moments mark the beginning of Iraq's massive displacement crisis."

While most of these refugees returned after the fighting, a significant minority did not, either because their homes (or livelihoods) had been destroyed, or because they were afraid of continuing violence. Like the economically displaced of the previous wave, these refugees sought out new areas that were less dangerous or more prosperous, including neighboring countries. And, as with that first wave, it



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was the professionals as well as the technical and managerial workers who were most likely to have the resources to leave Iraq.

In early 2005 the third wave began, developing by the next year into the veritable tsunami of ethnic cleansing and civil war that pushed vast numbers of Iraqis from their homes. The precipitating incidents, according to Ali Allawi -- the Iraqi finance minister when this third wave began -- were initially triggered by the second-wave-refugees pushed out of the Sunni city of Falluja in the winter of 2004:

"Refugees leaving Falluja had converged on the western Sunni suburbs of Baghdad, Amriya and Ghazaliya, which had come under the control of the insurgency. Insurgents, often backed by relatives of the Falluja refugees, turned on the Shi'a residents of these neighbourhoods. Hundreds of Shi'a families were driven from their homes, which were then seized by the refugees. Sunni Arab resentment against the Shi'a's 'collaboration' with the occupation's forces had been building up, exacerbated by the apparent indifference of the Shi'a to the assault on Falluja.

"In turn, the Shi'a were becoming incensed by the daily attacks on policemen and soldiers, who were mostly poor Shi'a men. The targeting of Sunnis in majority Shi'a neighbourhoods began in early 2005. In the Shaab district of Baghdad, for instance, the assassination of a popular Sadrist cleric, Sheikh Haitham al-Ansari, led to the formation of one of the first Shi'a death squads... The cycle of killings, assassinations, bombings and expulsions fed into each other, quickly turning to a full-scale ethnic cleansing of city neighbourhoods and towns."

The process only accelerated in early 2006, after the bombing of the Golden Dome in Samarra, a revered Shiite shrine, and crested in 2007 when the American military "surge" onto the streets of Baghdad loosened the hold of Sunni insurgents on many mixed as well as Sunni neighborhoods in the capital. During the year of the surge all but 25 or so of the approximately 200 mixed neighborhoods in Baghdad became ethnically homogenous. A similar process took place in the city's southern suburbs.

As minority groups in mixed neighborhoods and cities were driven out, they too joined the army of displaced persons, often settling into vacated homes in newly purified neighborhoods dominated by their own sect. But many, like those in the previous waves of refugees, found they had to move to new locales far away from the violence, including a large number who, once again, simply left Iraq. As with previous waves, the more prosperous were the most likely to depart, taking with them professional, technical, and managerial skills.

Among those who departed in this third wave was Riverbend, the pseudonymous "Girl Blogger from Baghdad," who had achieved international fame for her beautifully crafted reports on life in Iraq under the U.S. occupation. Her description of her journey into exile chronicled the emotional tragedy experienced by millions of Iraqis:



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"The last few hours in the house were a blur. It was time to go and I went from room to room saying goodbye to everything. I said goodbye to my desk -- the one I'd used all through high school and college. I said goodbye to the curtains and the bed and the couch. I said goodbye to the armchair E. and I broke when we were younger. I said goodbye to the big table over which we'd gathered for meals and to do homework. I said goodbye to the ghosts of the framed pictures that once hung on the walls, because the pictures have long since been taken down and stored away -- but I knew just what hung where. I said goodbye to the silly board games we inevitably fought over -- the Arabic Monopoly with the missing cards and money that no one had the heart to throw away...

"The trip was long and uneventful, other than two checkpoints being run by masked men. They asked to see identification, took a cursory glance at the passports and asked where we were going. The same was done for the car behind us. Those checkpoints are terrifying but I've learned that the best technique is to avoid eye contact, answer questions politely and pray under your breath. My mother and I had been careful not to wear any apparent jewelry, just in case, and we were both in long skirts and head scarves...

"How is it that a border no one can see or touch stands between car bombs, militias, death squads and... peace, safety? It's difficult to believe -- even now. I sit here and write this and wonder why I can't hear the explosions..."

The Human Toll

The number of Iraqis who flooded neighboring lands, not to speak of even approximate estimates of the number of internal refugees, remains notoriously difficult to determine, but the most circumspect of observers have reported constantly accelerating rates of displacement since the Bush administration's March 2003 invasion. These numbers quickly outstripped the flood of expatriates who had fled the country during Saddam Hussein's brutal era.

By early 2006, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was already estimating that 1.7 million Iraqis had left the country and that perhaps an equal number of internal refugees had been created in the same three-year period. The rate rose dramatically yet again as sectarian violence and ethnic expulsions took hold; the International Organization for Migration estimated the displacement rate during 2006 and 2007 at about 60,000 per month. In mid 2007, Iraq was declared by Refugees International to be the "fastest-growing refugee crisis in the world," while the United Nations called the crisis "the worst human displacement in Iraq's modern history."

Syria, the only country that initially placed no restrictions on Iraqi immigration, had (according to UN statistics) taken in about 1.25 million displaced Iraqis by early 2007. In addition, the UN estimated that more than 500,000 Iraqi refugees were in Jordan, as many as 70,000 in Egypt, approaching 60,000 in Iran, about 30,000 in Lebanon, approximately 200,000 spread across the Gulf States, and another 100,000 in Europe, with a final 50,000 spread around the globe. The United States, which



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had accepted about 20,000 Iraqi refugees during Saddam Hussein's years, admitted 463 additional ones between the start of the war and mid-2007.

President Bush's "surge" strategy, begun in January 2007, amplified the flood, especially of the internally displaced, still further. According to James Glanz and Stephen Farrell of the New York Times, "American-led operations have brought new fighting, driving fearful Iraqis from their homes at much higher rates than before the tens of thousands of additional troops arrived." The combined effect of the American offensive and accelerated ethnic expulsions generated an estimated displacement rate of 100,000 per month in Baghdad alone during the first half of 2007, a figure that surprised even Said Hakki, the director of the Iraqi Red Crescent, who had been monitoring the refugee crisis since the beginning of the war.

During 2007, according to UN estimates, Syria admitted an additional 150,000 refugees. With Iraqis by then constituting almost 10% of the country's population, the Syrian government, feeling the strain on resources, began putting limits on the unending flood and attempted to launch a mass repatriation policy. Such repatriation efforts have, so far, been largely fruitless. Even when violence in Baghdad began to decline in late 2007, refugees attempting to return found that their abandoned homes had often either been badly damaged in American offensives or, more likely, appropriated by strangers (often of a different sect), or were in "cleansed" neighborhoods that were now inhospitable to them.

In the same years, the weight of displaced persons inside Iraq grew ever more quickly. Estimated by the UN at 2.25 million in September 2007, this tidal flow of internally displaced, often homeless, families began to weigh on the resources of the provinces receiving them. Najaf, the first large city south of Baghdad, where the most sacred Shiite shrines in Iraq are located, found that its population of 700,000 had increased by an estimated 400,000 displaced Shia. In three other southern Shia provinces, IDPs came by mid-2007 to constitute over half the population.

The burden was crushing. By 2007, Karbala, one of the most burdened provinces, was attempting to enforce a draconian measure passed the previous year: New residents would be expelled unless officially sponsored by two members of the provincial council. Other governates also tried in various ways, and largely without success, to staunch the flow of refugees.

Whether inside or outside the country, even prosperous families before the war faced grim conditions. In Syria, where a careful survey of conditions was undertaken in October 2007, only 24% of all Iraqi families were supported by salaries or wages. Most families were left to live as best they could on dwindling savings or remittances from relatives, and a third of those with funds on hand expected to run out within three months. Under this kind of pressure, increasing numbers were reduced to sex work or other exploitative (or black market) sources of income.



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Food was a major issue for many families; according to the United Nations, nearly half needed "urgent food assistance." A substantial proportion of adults reported skipping at least one meal a day in order to feed their children. Many others endured foodless days "in order to keep up with rent and utilities." One refugee mother told McClatchy reporter Hannah Allam, "We buy just enough meat to flavor the food -- we buy it with pennies... I can't even buy a kilo of sweets for Eid [a major annual celebration]."

According to a rigorous McClatchy Newspaper survey, most Iraqi refugees in Syria were housed in crowded conditions with more than one person per room (sometimes many more). Twenty-five percent of families lived in one-room apartments; about one in six refugees had been diagnosed with a (usually untreated) chronic disease; and one-fifth of the children had had diarrhea in the two weeks before being questioned. While Syrian officials had aided refugee parents in getting over two-thirds of school-aged children enrolled in schools, 46% had dropped out -- due mainly to lack of appropriate immigration documents, insufficient funds to pay for school expenses, or a variety of emotional issues -- and the drop-out rate was escalating. And keep in mind, the Iraqis who made it to Syria were generally the lucky ones, far more likely to have financial resources or employable skills.

Like the expatriate refugees, internally displaced Iraqis faced severe and constantly declining conditions. The almost powerless Iraqi central government, largely trapped inside Baghdad's Green Zone, requires that people who move from one place to another register in person in Baghdad; if they fail to do so, they lose eligibility for the national program that subsidizes the purchase of small amounts of a few staple foods. Such registration was mostly impossible for families driven from their homes in the country's vicious civil war. With no way to "register," families displaced outside of Baghdad entered their new residences without even the increasingly meager safety net offered by guaranteed subsidies of basic food supplies.

To make matters worse, almost three-quarters of the displaced were women or children and very few of the intact families had working fathers. Unemployment rates in most cities to which they were forced to move were already at or above 50%, so prostitution and child labor increasingly became necessary options. UNICEF reported that a large proportion of children in such families were hungry, clinically underweight, and short for their age. "In some areas, up to 90 per cent of the [displaced] children are not in school," the UN agency reported.

Losing Precious Resources

The job backgrounds of an extraordinary proportion of Iraqi refugees in Syria were professional, managerial, or administrative. In other words, they were collectively the repository of the precious human capital that would otherwise have been needed to sustain, repair, and eventually rebuild their country's ravaged infrastructure. In Iraq, approximately 10% of adults had attended college; more than one-third of the refugees in Syria were university educated. Whereas less than 1% of Iraqis had a postgraduate education, nearly 10% of refugees in Syria had advanced degrees, including 4.5% with



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doctorates. At the opposite end of the economic spectrum, fully 20% of all Iraqis had no schooling, but only a relative handful of the refugees arriving in Syria (3%) had no education. These proportions were probably even more striking in other more distant receiving lands, where entry was more difficult.

The reasons for this remarkable brain drain are not hard to find. Even the desperate process of fleeing your home turns out to require resources, and so refugees from most disasters who travel great distances tend to be disproportionately prosperous, as the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans so painfully illustrated.

In Iraq, this tendency was enhanced by American policy. The mass privatization and de-Baathification policies of the Bush administration ensured that large numbers of professional, technical, and managerial workers, in particular, would be cast out of their former lives. This tendency was only exacerbated by the development of the kidnapping industry, focusing its attentions as it did on families with sufficient resources to pay handsome ransoms. It was amplified when some insurgent groups began assassinating remaining government officials, university professors, and other professionals.

The exodus into the Iraqi Diaspora has severely depleted the country's human capital. In early 2006, the United States Committee on Refugees and Immigrants estimated that a full 40% of Iraq's professional class had left the country, taking with them their irreplaceable expertise. Universities and medical facilities were particularly hard hit, with some reporting less than 20% of needed staff on hand. The oil industry suffered from what the *Wall Street Journal* called a "petroleum exodus" that included the departure of two-thirds of its top 100 managers, as well as significant numbers of managerial and professional workers.

Even before the huge 2007 exodus from Baghdad, the United Nations Commissioner of Refugees warned that "the skills required to provide basic services are becoming more and more scarce," pointing particularly to doctors, teachers, computer technicians, and even skilled craftsmen like bakers.

By mid-2007, the loss of these resources was visible in the everyday functioning of Iraqi society. By then, medical facilities commonly required patients' families to act as nurses and technicians and were still unable to perform many services. Schools were often closed, or opened only sporadically, because of an absence of qualified teachers. Universities postponed or canceled required courses or qualifying examinations because of inadequate staff. At the height of an incipient cholera epidemic in the summer of 2007, water purification plants were idled because needed technicians could not be found.

The most devastating impact of the Iraqi refugee crisis, however, has probably been on the very capacity of the national government (which de-Baathification and privatization had already left in a fragile state) to administer anything. In every area that such a government might touch, the missing managerial, technical, and professional talent and expertise has had a devastating effect, with post-war



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"reconstruction" particularly hard hit. Even the ability of the government to disperse its income (mostly from oil revenues) has been crippled by what cabinet ministers have termed "a shortage of employees trained to write contracts" and "the flight of scientific and engineering expertise from the country."

The depths of the problem (as well as the massive levels of corruption that went with it) could be measured by the fact that the electrical ministry spent only 26% of its capital budget in 2006; the remaining three-quarters went unspent. Yet, at that level of disbursement, it still outperformed most government agencies and ministries in a major way. Under pressure from American occupation officials to improve its performance in 2007, the government made concerted efforts to increase both its budget and its disbursements for reconstruction. Despite initially optimistic reports, the news was grim by year's end. Actual expenditures on electrical infrastructure might, for example, have slipped to as low as 1% of the budgeted amount.

Even more symptomatic were the few successes in infrastructural rebuilding found by *New York Times* reporter James Glanz in a survey of capital construction throughout the country. Most of the successful programs he reviewed were initiated and managed by officials connected to local and provincial governments. They discovered that success actually depended on avoiding *any* interaction with the ineffective and corrupt central government. The provincial governor of Babil Province, Sallem S. al-Mesamawe, described the key to his province's success: "We jumped over the routine, the bureaucracy, and we depend on new blood -- a new team." They had learned this lesson after using provincial money and local contractors to build a school, only to have it remain closed because the national government was unable to provide the necessary furniture.

The government's staggering institutional incapacity is, in fact, a complex phenomenon with many sources beyond the drain of human capital. The flood of managers, professionals, and technicians out of the country, however, has been a critical obstacle to any productive reconstruction. Worse yet, the departure of so many crucial figures is probably to a considerable extent irreversible, ensuring a grim near-future for the country. After all, this has been a "brain drain" on a scale seldom seen in our era.

Many exiles still intend to, even long to, return when (or if) the situation improves, but time is always the enemy of such intentions. The moment an individual arrives in a new country, he or she begins creating social ties that become ever more significant as a new life takes hold -- and this is even truer for those who leave with their families, as so many Iraqis have done. Unless this network-building process is disrupted, for many the probability of return fades with each passing month.

Those with marketable skills, even in the dire circumstances facing most Iraqi refugees, have little choice but to keep seeking work that exploits their training. The most marketable are the most likely to succeed and so to begin building new careers. As time slips by, the best, the brightest, and the most important carriers of precious human capital are lost.



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The Displacement Tsunami

The degradation of Iraq under the American occupation regime was what initially set in motion the forces that led to the exile of much of the country's most precious human resources -- absolutely crucial capital, even if of a kind not usually considered when talk turns to investing in "nation building." How, after all, can you "reconstruct" the ravaged foundations of a bombed-out nation without the necessary professional, technical, and managerial personnel? Without them, Iraq must continue its downward spiral toward a nation of slum cities.

The orgy of failure and corruption in 2007 was an unmitigated disaster for Iraqi society, as well as an embarrassment for the American occupation. From the point of view of long-term American goals in Iraq, however, this storm cloud, like so many others, had a silver lining. The Iraqi government's incapacity to perform at almost any level became but further justification for the claims first made by L. Paul Bremer at the very beginning of the occupation: that the country's reconstruction would be best handled by private enterprise. Moreover, the mass flight of Iraqi professionals, managers, and technicians has meant that expertise for reconstruction has simply been unavailable inside the country. This has, in turn, validated a second set of claims made by Bremer: that reconstruction could only be managed by large outside contractors.

This neoliberal reality was brought into focus in late 2007, as the last of the money allocated by the U.S. Congress for Iraqi reconstruction was being spent. A "petroleum exodus" (first identified by the *Wall Street Journal*) had long ago meant that most of the engineers needed for maintaining the decrepit oil business were already foreigners, mostly "imported from Texas and Oklahoma." The foreign presence had, in fact, become so pervasive that the main headquarters for the maintenance and development of the Rumaila oil field in southern Iraq (the source of more than two-thirds of the country's oil at present) runs on both Iraqi and Houston time. The American firms in charge of the field's maintenance and development, KBR and PIJV, have been utilizing a large number of subcontractors, most of them American or British, very few of them Iraqi.

These American-funded projects, though, have been merely "stopgaps." When the money runs out, vast new moneys will be needed just to sustain Rumaila's production at its present level.

According to *Harper's Magazine* Senior Editor Luke Mitchell, who visited the field in the summer of 2007, Iraqi engineers and technicians are "smart enough and ambitious enough" to sustain and "upgrade" the system once the American contracts expire, but such a project would take upwards of two decades because of the compromised condition of the government and the lack of skilled local engineers and technicians. The likely outcome, when the American money departs, therefore is either an inadequate effort in which work proceeds "only in fits and starts;" or, more likely, new contracts in which the foreign companies would "continue their work," paid for by the Iraqi government.



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With regard to the petroleum industry, therefore, what the refugee crisis guaranteed was long-term Iraqi dependence on outsiders. In every other key infrastructural area, a similar dependence was developing: electrical power, the water system, medicine, and food were, *de facto*, being "integrated" into the global system, leaving oil-rich Iraq dependent on outside investment and largesse for the foreseeable future. Now, that's a twenty-year plan for you, one that at least 4.5 million Iraqis, out of their homes and, in many cases, out of the country as well, will be in no position to participate in.

Most horror stories come to an end, but the most horrible part of this horror story is its never-ending quality. Those refugees who have left Iraq now face a miserable limbo life, as Syria and other receiving countries exhaust their meager resources and seek to expel many of them. Those seeking shelter within Iraq face the depletion of already minimal support systems in degrading host communities whose residents may themselves be threatened with displacement.

From the vast out-migration and internal migrations of its desperate citizens comes damage to society as a whole that is almost impossible to estimate. The displacement of people carries with it the destruction of human capital. The destruction of human capital deprives Iraq of its most precious resource for repairing the damage of war and occupation, condemning it to further infrastructural decline. This tide of infrastructural decline is the surest guarantee of another wave of displacement, of future floods of refugees.

As long as the United States keeps trying to pacify Iraq, it will create wave after wave of misery.

Michael Schwartz, professor of sociology at Stony Brook University, has written extensively on popular protest and insurgency. This report on the Iraqi refugee crisis is from his forthcoming Tomdispatch book, War Without End: The Iraq Debacle in Context (Haymarket Books, June 2008). His work on Iraq has appeared on numerous Internet sites, including Tomdispatch, Asia Times, Mother Jones, and ZNET. His email address is Ms42@optonline.net.

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The hi-jacking of the international campaign against the assassination of Iraqi academics, initiated by the IAON (International Anti-occupation Network)

Aljazeera.net - April 10, 2006

<http://english.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/36D8D6BA-7F8C-4993-8FC7-FF6BDE657DDE.htm>

SOS over Iraqi Scientists

by Ahmed Janabi



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Since the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, an alarming number of the country's leading academics have been killed. A human rights organisation puts the number at about a thousand and has a documented list of 105 cases. These professors, it says, were not random casualties - they were assassinated.

The first documented case is that of Muhamad al-Rawi, the president of Baghdad University, who was killed on 27 July, 2003, when two men entered his private clinic, one of them feigned severe stomach pain and was doubled over. Concealed against his stomach was a gun with which he shot al-Rawi dead.

Assassination incidents continued after al-Rawi's shooting. Dr Majid Ali was assassinated in 2005, shot four times in the back. He had a PhD in physics and was one of the best nuclear energy experts in Iraq.

The Paris-based Arab Committee for Human Rights (ACHR), an international NGO which has special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the UN, has issued an international appeal for help to protect Iraqi academics.

Al Jazeera.net spoke to ACHR's president, Dr Violette Daguerre, a human rights activist and psychology professor in France, and Dr Qais al-Azawi, director of the Committee for Protecting Iraqi University Professors.

Has ACHR taken action to prevent the assassination of Iraqi scholars?

Daguerre: We are actually moving within a well-organised network of firms involved in defending freedom and academics. The network is big and includes organisations in North America, Europe and other parts of the world.

I also think it is important to classify the assassinated scholars according to their specialisations so that their trade unions and syndicates can move accordingly. I would also like to stress here that journalists should put in more effort in this regard, as this crucial issue is not getting the proper attention in media.

Al-Azawi: Urgent contacts have been made with Iraqi and international organisations. We work closely with Iraqi trade unions that represent Iraqi professors.

We also met the Qatari ambassador to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (Unesco) and we are discussing with them how can we protect Iraqi academics.



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Since our campaign has found support among academic organisations in different parts of the world, a suggestion has been made that each interested university would host three Iraqi university professors for one year as visiting lecturers to keep them away from dangers in their own country.

The general perception is that scholars targeted are those who specialise in the sciences and who were, or might be, of use to weapons of mass destruction programmes. In your view, what is the explanation behind the assassination of scholars working in fields such as Arab literature and history?

Daguerre: I think the target is intellectuals in general, regardless of their field of specialisation - they are all important to their country's renaissance. Iraq is known for producing high-calibre people not only in the scientific field but also in the humanities. I can mention here Jawad Ali, who is regarded as an authority on pre-Islamic Arab history, and Abdul Aziz al-Douri, an expert in Arab economic history. But there are many others. I think the role of Iraqis in Arab poetry, literature and jurisprudence goes without saying.

Here I would like to notify you of another dangerous phenomenon growing in Iraq, the targeting of human rights activists and lawyers.

Al-Azawi: High-calibre academics in general are regarded as the backbone for the development in any country.

Do you think the assassinations are politically motivated?

Daguerre: Assassinating chosen scholars would hit Iraqis' spirit and consequently deepen the rift among Iraqi factions, which is what Iraq's enemies want, although death can hit any Iraqi.

The assassination policy has been adopted by all ideological groups, who have convinced assassins that if what they do does not serve the country, it definitely serves their faction or group, which is not necessarily national.

The Lebanese civil war is a good example that assassins might be fellow countrymen of the victim but they are working within a network of foreign interests and implementing a plan put before the war.

Al-Azawi: Our information indicates that some assassinations are of a sectarian or political nature.

What is your evidence that the assassination campaign is directed by foreign parties?

Daguerre: Nationalists cannot work for the destruction of their own country, and the evidence is logic. Foreign parties do not reveal their agenda; as long as there is a party from inside the targeted country



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willing to do the dirty job, why would a foreign party involve itself in public?

What about sectarian motives?

Daguerre: It is obvious that there is a plan to provoke sectarian violence in this country. I think sectarian violence is one of the key elements of a plot aimed at destroying Iraq.

Sectarian tension and violence grow along with fear. When fear controls you, you tend to get terrified of others who are different from you.

Fear would prevent you from analysing that difference, how important it is, How big it is. You just delude yourself with the notion that the other person is different - so he is the enemy.

When the culture of fear rules, the distance among different religious, political or sectarian groups becomes huge, and people tend to isolate themselves from the bigger society. They become attached to their closest bond which might be the sect, the tribe, or the political party.

Have you made contact with academics inside Iraq to find out if the government has taken action to protect scientists and scholars?

Daguerre: The co-ordination is going on with the Iraqi committee for protecting Iraqi university professors, which has recently issued an SOS calling the international community to protect Iraqi scientists and scholars.

What we are trying to do in the Arab Committee for Human Rights is to be the bridge between Arab countries and the rest of the world.

Who do you think will benefit from targeting Iraqi scientists?

Daguerre: The same parties that have been working for years to make this country fall to pieces, and prevent it from retaining its original key role in the area. Maybe it was Iraq's bad luck to have that huge oil wealth after all.

It was not comfortable for some that this country was investing its own wealth in its own way; they decided to deny Iraqis this legitimate right.

Successive US administrations have always fallen prey to Jewish lobbies. Their strategy is to launch a massive character assassination campaign followed by insulting and degrading actions that would destroy the target's will and morale before giving the final blow.



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Al-Azawi: Based on our correspondents and meeting with dozens of Iraqi academics, all of them were convinced that they were targeted by "parties interested in preventing Iraq from moving forward".

Scenarios circulated among Iraqis point the finger at the US-led forces in Iraq, and at Iran and Israel. What do you think of that?

Daguerre: Examples prove that the involvement of those parties is a lot, especially the Israelis, as all those parties have interest in tearing Iraq apart in order to pass their geopolitical and economical plans.

Al-Azawi: Maybe both of them [Iran and Israel] are involved in this killing campaign, but to be objective we do not have solid evidence to prove that.

But we have many cases of Iraqi professors kidnapped and were not released before they made clear commitment to leave Iraq. Iraqis know very well who is interested in keeping them behind.

What is the impact of the "assassination campaign" on Iraq's educational system?

Daguerre: Definitely the negative impact is huge, because that terror campaign is pushing many scientists and scholars to leave their country [Iraq].

This is a major blow to the process of conveying knowledge to the coming generations, which will need such quality people to plant the culture of civil and modern society and brush aside the culture of sectarianism, violence and hate.

Al-Azawi: I would like here to cite a statement made by the Iraqi minister of higher education in which he said: Nearly 160 Iraqi university professors have been killed, and nearly 2,000 have fled the country, which led to the closure of 152 post-graduate departments in Iraq.

How is the Iraqi government dealing with the assassination of scientists and scholars? Are there criminal investigations? Any results?

Daguerre: Let me answer this by raising a counter question; Do the current rulers of Iraq have any sort of genuine interest in launching such investigations?

I believe that as long as the violence and extremism continues in Iraq, its foreign enemies will continue to act like ticks, sucking the blood of the country and stripping it of its defence potential.



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I would like to seize this opportunity to urge the world's biggest organisation for academics' rights, the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) in Washington, to intervene.

Two of ACHR staff got NAS's award for human rights - Haytham Manna and Moncef Marzouki - and just as the Guantanamo issue gained international coverage after the efforts of NGOs, we hope that the case of the assassinations will be brought into the spotlight as well.

Al-Azawi: All the cases were dropped for the lack of evidence.

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