

Letters on the Iraq elections

8 February 2005

The following is a selection of letters sent to the World Socialist Web Site responding to an initial exchange, “WSWS replies to letters on Iraq’s election and the US occupation”, including a reply by Bill Van Auken to the first letter.

Thanks so much for your insightful response to the critical letters concerning the WSWS’s articles on the recent “election” in Iraq. I don’t understand how anyone in their right mind can see the election as anything but a farce. The fact that most of the Iraqis did not even know who was going to be on the ballot until the eleventh hour should have been enough to make the US public suspicious of what the so-called liberal media was trying to whitewash.

In your response, you said:

“To hold elections under military occupation represents, in the final analysis, the continuation and deepening of a war crime. It is a blatant violation of international law. The 1907 Hague Convention, the basic law governing the conduct of occupying powers, expressly prohibits the occupiers from imposing any permanent changes in the form of government and laws of the occupied territory.”

This, of course, made me curious, so I went searching for the provisions of the Hague Convention. I found a couple of different web sites that had the articles listed, but I could not find the specific article that would condemn the US on this count. Could you please be more specific about which article you are alluding to? I would love to know, as my father-in-law (really a brilliant and kind man) is a die-hard Bush supporter, and I would love to be able to show him (once again) how this regime keeps breaking laws.

Thanks,

RJF

4 February 2005

Knoxville, Tennessee

Bill Van Auken replies:

Thanks for your letter. As to the question of the Hague Regulations of 1907, the relevant passage is fairly brief and—as is often the case with international law and treaties—undramatic. It is Article 43, which stipulates that an occupying power must “re-establish and insure, as far as possible, public order and safety, while respecting, unless absolutely prevented, the laws in force in the country.”

This statute has long been interpreted to mean that an occupying power may not introduce major changes in the political and legal structure of the occupied society. Clearly, the

Bush administration has sought to do just that, through the creation of new state bodies, the drafting the Transitional Administrative Law and laying the framework for a sweeping privatization of the Iraqi economy, including its oil industry.

The Geneva Conventions go even further. Article 54 reads: “The Occupying Power may not alter the status of public officials or judges in the occupied territories, or in any way apply sanctions to or take any measures of coercion or discrimination against them, should they abstain from fulfilling their functions for reasons of conscience.” In Iraq, the US occupation authorities have installed their own handpicked judges.

I agree with Mr. Van Auken’s reply to letters appreciating the US-managed election in Iraq. Elections are an essential ingredient of democracy. However, an enslaved people under an illegal invasion-occupation force violating human rights cannot have a free and fair election. A large section of Iraqis branded as “Sunnis,” “Saddamists,” “terrorists” and “Islamists” remained out of the process. Are the so-called Sunnis not required for American-style democracy in Iraq? Guns, slavery and exclusionism are anti-democratic items as obnoxious as terrorism, individual or state-sponsored. The election leaves Iraq in deep division for generations and ripe for a civil war. That is a ruse for the continued occupation-for-oil!

The USA has proclaimed that its occupation will continue without a time frame. President Bush has “declared” war against Lebanon, Iran and other nation-states “harboring” terrorists and WMD. He has pledged to bring about democracy in all countries. However, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Pakistan and other friends have been exempted.

The UN, now devoid of impartiality and multilateralism, has been relegated to the back burner. Global democracy is at stake. That is the price of the Iraq election.

SKTN

4 February 2005

West Bengal, India

Your summation of the state-mechanics behind the sham election in Iraq and its role in maintaining the brutal colonial occupation under a thin veneer of ostensible democracy is erudite, informative and completely praiseworthy. It is the best piece I have read on the election and its role in our murderous neo-colonial adventure. The WSWS is a great credit to the movement for internationalism, peace and justice.

RLV

4 February 2005

Bill Van Auken's reply to letters received by WSWS in response to the January 30 elections in Iraq stands as one of the most brilliant commentaries I've ever read on this subject. This fact says a lot, given there are many brilliant articles published by WSWS on the situation concerning Iraq.

Of the many excellent points Bill makes one rings so true as to be deafening. The Iraqis voted as a means to rid themselves of the US occupation, while the Bush administration sees the voter turnout as a vindication of its military occupation. This divergence of realities can only lead to the type of catastrophic outcome that Bill predicts later in his reply.

Thank you, Bill, for publishing a reply that is a "must read" for anyone remotely interested in what is going on in Iraq. Major kudos!

JL

4 February 2005

New Orleans, Louisiana

I've changed the names in your response a bit, but you get the point:

"The German government and the Nazi-controlled media have conducted a massive propaganda campaign to sell the invasion of Poland as a triumph for democracy and freedom. Such campaigns have their effect on popular consciousness, even among those who oppose Chancellor Hitler and hold the media in general contempt. That is precisely why the principal task of the *World Socialist Web Site* is—despite the objection of our first correspondent—to treat this invasion precisely as 'something that needs to be scrutinized instead of cherished.'"

PK

4 February 2005

The WSWS is right to observe that the elections in Iraq are a sham. To legitimise the Iraq elections is to only justify the actions of aggression taken by the new colonials in the first place. Firstly, the Shiite majority in Iraq represent a minority in the whole of the Middle East. Many of the most extreme fundamentalist groups in the region arose out of the Shiite sect of the political ecology of the Middle East. The vast majority of the region adopts the Sunni philosophy. A quick look at any map of world geography relating to religion demonstrates that.

Certainly, one should not downplay the fact that "60% of Iraqis turned out to vote amidst hostile conditions" and that the Shiite majority of Iraq will apparently be in power for the first time in 1,400 years. But to suggest that this "election" demonstrates some sort of "moral victory" for US imperialism is laughable on its face! For obviously the political elite are not about to give up the "sacrifice" they have made in the name of "resources" just because a few million "newly liberated" Iraqis risked their lives to create a sovereign nation there. The political elite in the US and UK would never let that truly happen.

Please continue to remind people of how ridiculous it is to suppose that after everything that's happened, and after all the

money that has been spent (the lifeblood of the bourgeois), that the elite are going to simply hand over the second-leading producer of their "god-given" oil to a sovereign Iraq!

Don't misunderstand me; in my heart of hearts I hope for a resolution of this travesty that favors the weak over the strong, but history shows again and again that favor follows favor, not idealism. Particularly when the capitalists are involved.

JS

4 February 2005

Jacksonville, Alabama

If the circumstances were honest, then the elections in Iraq would have been something to celebrate, but the elections were nothing but a dishonest cover-up, with no real scrutiny, except for the Americans and their allies. If you believe them, you are as gullible as those who believe that there were weapons of mass destructions.

If you want proof of how unsuccessful things are going, you have only to pose the question, why send more troops when they should be coming home? After all, Bush went on national TV saying they won.

The fact is that the so-called new Iraqi army is made up of Kurdish and Marsh Arabs that have been fighting Saddam for years. Any true Iraqi that has joined is considered a traitor to his country by helping the enemy. If any American did the same to America, he too would be branded a traitor. And the biggest traitor to his country is the so-called prime minister Allawi. Does the similarity not resemble Vichy France and those collaborators that today are so despised?

LA

4 February 2005

Victoria, Australia

Those readers who consider the elections a triumph of democracy or some such should consider going to Dahr Jamail's web site at www.dahrjamailiraq.com and reading his discussions with Iraqis about their attitudes toward the elections and the reasons why those who voted did so. There is no triumph of democracy when elections are imposed by the violence of mass murderers such as compose the US military. And, no, the resistance fighters beheading people are not "just as bad" and certainly not worse than the US slaughterers. Go to Jamail's site to get graphic verbal and photographic representations of what the US has really done and is doing to the people of Iraq. The elections won't stop the US slaughter.

DG

4 February 2005

Austin, Texas



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