

US puppet government announces state of siege in Baghdad

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The defense and security ministers of the US-backed Iraqi government on Thursday announced a massive police-military operation in Baghdad involving 40,000 Iraqi police and soldiers, backed by the 10,000 US troops stationed in the city.

The plan outlined by Defense Minister Saadun al-Dulaimi and Interior Minister Bayan Jabor, to be launched next week, involves the setting up of a military cordon around the entire city, 675 checkpoints inside the city, and the deployment of “search and arrest” units that will patrol neighborhoods and check identity cards in hotels and restaurants.

Dulaimi, describing classic techniques of state terror, intimidation and repression long used in counterinsurgency operations against hostile populations, said the city would be divided into sections, each occupied by a specific police-military unit, and added, “We will also impose a stringent blockade around Baghdad, like a bracelet around an arm, God willing... You will witness unprecedented, strict security measures.”

He said the lockdown of the capital would continue indefinitely and serve as a model for operations to be mounted throughout the country.

Bayan claimed those arrested in the police sweeps would receive a “fair and just trial,” a worthless assurance from a puppet government that has already, since it formally assumed office at the end of April, arrested 587 suspected insurgents, and stands accused of dispatching commando units to assassinate prominent Sunni clerics.

Coming in response to an escalation of insurgent attacks over the past month, the measures announced Thursday amount to a reign of terror employing indiscriminate arrests and death squad violence.

On the same day as the Baghdad press conference

announcing the state of siege, the *Washington Post* published an article enthusiastically hailing the Iraqi regime’s plans to implement its earlier decision to reinstate the death penalty. Portraying the resumption of state killings as a broadly popular measure among Iraqis, the *Post* openly acknowledged that state executions would be used as a political weapon in the effort to crush the insurgency against the US military occupation and its Quisling government.

The *Post* wrote: “In a show of force the government hopes will help quell the insurgency, Iraq will soon carry out its first judicial executions since the fall of President Saddam Hussein.”

The newspaper’s undisguised support for the resumption of this barbaric practice is indicative of the American media’s unswerving backing for the illegal US invasion and occupation of Iraq, and the ongoing repression and mass killing that have already claimed many tens of thousands of Iraqi lives, thrown thousands of Iraqis into US-run prisons, and employed torture as a basic *modus operandi*.

The newspaper noted that numerous countries and international human rights groups have condemned the revival of capital punishment in Iraq, including Britain, which maintains thousands of troops in Iraq but abolished the death penalty decades ago.

It then quoted the statement issued by the US Embassy in Iraq effectively blessing the resumption of state killings in Iraq—an action that adds Iraq to the small list of countries, headed by the US, that continue to carry out judicial executions. Oozing hypocrisy and cynicism, the statement, issued by an occupying power that maintains 140,000 troops in the subject nation, declared: “The death penalty is a decision for democratically elected and legally chosen Iraqi authorities.”

The atrocities that will be committed inside the military cordon around Baghdad will go virtually unreported in the US media. The broadcast media already made this clear by barely reporting the announcement of the extraordinary security measures in Baghdad in their Thursday evening news programs. The networks and establishment press have universally and willingly accepted a regime of strict news censorship imposed by the White House and the Pentagon.

Nor will the Democrats issue any protests against the employment of such methods. The Democratic Party has, from the beginning, supported the war and occupation, and fully backs any and all measures to put down the Iraqi popular resistance.

It is clear that Thursday's announcement by the Iraqi regime came at the behest and under pressure from Washington. It followed by only eleven days a surprise visit by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to Iraq, in which Rice demanded that the newly formed government in Baghdad take stronger measures against the insurgency. In particular, Rice pressured Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari and his Shiite-based United Iraqi Alliance to recruit Sunni veterans of Saddam Hussein's security forces and use them in the war against the insurgents.

The Bush administration has been shaken by the upsurge of insurgent attacks since the April 28 installation of the government headed by Jaafari. The month of May has witnessed one of the bloodiest waves of violence to date in Iraq. More than 620 Iraqis and 60 US troops have died since the formation of the Shiite-led government.

The US military has responded with a sharp intensification of bloodletting against suspected insurgents. It has carried out major offensives, particularly in Anbar province, which abuts the Syrian border in the west of Iraq. Thursday's announcement of siege measures in Baghdad came a day after US forces launched Operation New Market, a security sweep in the town of Haditha involving 1,000 Marines and sailors.

In a similar operation two weeks earlier in the Anbar province town of Al Qa'im and its surrounding villages, the US military indiscriminately bombed entire villages, and then claimed to have killed 125 insurgents. Local residents said most of the victims

were innocent civilians.

As in Vietnam, the US authorities routinely count those Iraqis killed by American bombs and missiles as "insurgents."

The systematic use of lies and distortions by the US military was exemplified by a statement released Wednesday following the death of a child as the result of American fire in the northwestern city of Talafar. "When multinational forces engaged the terrorists," the statement read, "the terrorists used Iraqi children as shields. One child was killed as a result of their action."



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