

US military massacres Iraqi civilians near Syrian border

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In the immediate aftermath of the vote on the Iraq constitution, the US military has stepped up its campaign of violence in several cities near the Syrian border. The new wave of killings underscores the cynicism of the claims that the referendum embodied the birth of democracy in Iraq—compliments of US missiles, bombs, bullets and torture chambers.

In the border city of Al-Qaim, US warplanes dropped bombs that killed 40 people and wounded 20, according to an article October 31 in Al Jazeera. The hospital doctor said most of the victims were women and children, and a local tribal leader explained that there were no weapons nearby.

An Associated Press television news crew near the Syrian border filmed Iraqis searching the rubble for their belongings and digging out the corpses of family members, which they rolled in blankets. In three of the bundles were mere children.

One man told AP, “At least 20 innocent people were killed by the US warplanes. Why are the Americans killing families? Where are the insurgents? We don’t see democracy. We just see destruction.”

The US has also launched an offensive against the nearby town of Hsaiba, which is located on Iraq’s border with Syria and is the town through which Syrian-bound rail traffic from Baghdad passes. Reporter Mahmud Al-Rawi told Al Jazeera that six homes in Hsaiba were destroyed by American warplanes, which have been conducting almost daily bombings of the town. As of this writing, the city has been encircled by US ground forces, which are preventing anyone attempting to flee the carnage from getting past.

“While we were trying to attend to the wounded, US fighter planes began bombing the place again,” Al-Rawi reported, “They are turning this town into another Fallujah.”

On Saturday, according to an article in the *New York Times*, the US military was active in the town of Ubeidi, also near the Syrian border. There, US soldiers shot and killed four men as they drove in a car.

The buildup of the US military presence on Syria’s eastern border is coordinated with diplomatic maneuvers by the US to place pressure on the Syrian government. On Monday, with joint European and American backing, the UN Security Council passed a resolution demanding full cooperation by the Syrian government in the UN’s probe into the assassination of the former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, and threatening “further action” against Damascus.

Ten separate operations have been conducted this year in Iraq’s Anbar province, which borders Syria.

In the midst of this carnage, British Prime Minister Tony Blair seized on a report that since January 1, 2004, anti-occupation insurgents have killed or wounded 26,000 Iraqis. The figure was given in a *New York Times* article published October 29 and was based on a bar graph contained in a Pentagon report to the US Congress. The estimate did not distinguish between civilians and Iraqi military and police personnel, and was not substantiated by any documentation.

Blair used the report to denounce the insurgency for killing civilians, and thereby justify the US-British subjugation of the country. “That’s not the Iraqi security forces, nor the multinational force,” he said. “It is the terrorists and insurgents who are killing people in order to stop the democratic process.... It is the violence that keeps us [there], in order to support the political process.”

The US government has not even bothered to produce an estimate of the number of Iraqi civilians killed and mutilated by its soldiers, bombs, smart missiles and “interrogators.” However, several independent

investigations have put the number of Iraqi civilian deaths caused by the US-British military occupation at 100,000 or more.

The latest US bombing atrocities underscore the tragic waste of human life—American as well as Iraqi—resulting from the illegal invasion and occupation of Iraq. This week the US military announced that eight more US soldiers had been killed.

Six were killed Monday morning by two separate homemade bombs. Four were killed near the town of Yusifiya, south of Baghdad, and two were killed near the northern town of Balad, near the US Anaconda military base. One was killed on Sunday in a similar bomb attack southwest of Baghdad, in the town of Amiriyah, and another was killed on Monday by a homemade bomb near Baghdad.

Including the eight deaths announced on Monday, 93 American soldiers were killed in the month of October. This marks the highest monthly death toll in American lives since January, when the US military, in preparation for elections that month, staged several large-scale operations to intimidate sections of the population hostile to the occupation.

US military sources attribute the higher death toll to more advanced technology used by the anti-occupation forces in Iraq. US forces are more and more often encountering explosive devices capable of penetrating American armored vehicles.

The rising death toll in American youth, which climbed over 2,000 last week, is fueling mounting opposition within the US to a war that millions realize was launched on the basis of lies. A poll taken over the weekend by USA TODAY/CNN/Gallup found that most Americans, 55 percent, view the Bush presidency to be a failure.



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