

The terrorist bombings in Jordan

A byproduct of US aggression

James Cogan
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The suicide bombings at three prominent hotels in Amman, Jordan, on November 9 were an indiscriminate and reactionary attack on innocent civilians for which there is no justification.

The organisation Al Qaeda in Iraq, which is believed to be behind many of the suicide bombings and sectarian attacks in Iraq and is purportedly led by Jordanian Islamic extremist Abu Musaab al-Zarqawi, claimed credit for the atrocities. The reason it gave for the attack was that the hotels were used by Western and Israeli intelligence agencies.

At the Radisson Hotel, most of the victims were Jordanians who were celebrating a wedding. The casualties at the Hyatt Hotel and the Days Inn were also predominantly local people. Of the 54 people killed, 38 were Jordanians, many of them members of the large community of Palestinian refugees who live in Jordan. Four officials from the embassy of the Palestinian Authority were among the foreign nationals slain, along with four Iraqis, three Chinese, an Israeli-Arab, a Lebanese man, a citizen of Qatar and two Americans of Middle Eastern background.

All the bombings have accomplished is to undermine the sympathy of the Jordanian people for the struggle of the Iraqi masses against the US occupation. Angry crowds demonstrated in Amman late last week chanting “Burn in hell al-Zarqawi.” The Jordanian monarchy has exploited the opportunity to detain hundreds of Islamic fundamentalist opponents of the US-backed regime, ostensibly as part of the investigation into the bombings. A senior Jordanian police officer admitted to Al Jazeera: “Scores have been rounded up in different parts of the country since the attacks. Many may simply be innocent.” The hundreds of thousands of Iraqi refugees in Jordan are now being subjected to intense state monitoring.

The most grotesque exploitation of the bombings, however, was the statement of US President George Bush last Thursday. The commander-in-chief of a military that

has strafed and bombed wedding parties in both Afghanistan and Iraq used the Amman attacks to slander the Iraqi resistance as an enemy “willing to bomb a wedding celebration.”

While the attacks and the way they are being used underscore the utterly bankrupt character of terrorism and Al Qaeda, they represent another horror for which ultimate responsibility lies with the Bush administration and the illegal US invasion and ongoing occupation of Iraq.

The bombers were all Iraqis from western Anbar province, where thousands of people have been killed, maimed or detained by the US military. From the few details that are known about them, it is clear that the bombers’ main motives for enlisting with Al Qaeda were anger and grief over the crimes committed by American troops in the city of Fallujah in November 2004.

Sajida Mubarak Atrous al-Rishawi, a 35-year-old woman from Fallujah, attempted to blow herself up in the Radisson Hotel with her husband, Ali Hussein Ali Shammari. While her husband’s bomb detonated, the explosives Rishawi had strapped to her chest did not, and she is now in the custody of the Jordanian police.

The US invasion of Iraq destroyed her life and her family. Her brother, a leading figure in a fundamentalist resistance group allegedly linked to Abu Musaab al-Zarqawi, was killed in one of the numerous US air strikes on Fallujah last year that preceded the ground offensive. The family connection with the organisation would have made her husband a prime target for arrest and detention by the US military or the pro-US Iraqi government. They had lived largely on the run before crossing into Jordan on November 2, using false passports.

Another of the bombers, 23-year-old Safaa Mohammed Ali, was wounded during the fighting and detained by US troops in the same mosque where a marine was filmed executing an unarmed and seriously wounded prisoner. He was held for some two weeks and most likely, given

the record of the American military, subjected to intense interrogation and abuse.

Little information has been published on the fourth bomber, 23-year-old Rawad Jassem Mohammed Abed. It is known, however, that he was also from Fallujah.

The willingness of four Iraqis to throw away their lives in meaningless attacks on Jordanian hotels can only be understood as the product of desperation, hopelessness and fury. The psychological impact of the war and the occupation on the Iraqi people has been immense.

Like every other person in Fallujah last November, the Jordan bombers were witness to men, women and children being blown apart or incinerated, the death of dozens of friends, and the leveling of much of the city. The US military in Fallujah not only murdered prisoners. Its other war crimes included using snipers against civilians, shooting at ambulances, bombing mosques and using phosphorous rounds to set residential areas ablaze. As Iraqi journalist Fadil al-Badrani reported at the time: "Every minute, hundreds of bombs and shells are exploding... The north of the city is in flames. I can see fire and smoke. Fallujah has become like hell..."

In the 12 months since, cities and towns such as Tal Afar, Qaim, Haditha and Husaybah have been subjected to similar attacks. While there is no exact figure, a credible estimate is that over 100,000 Iraqis have been killed since the March 2003 invasion, and there is no end in sight.

As well as living with the constant fear of death or injury, millions of Iraqis confront disastrous living conditions. People are struggling to get by without jobs, electricity, functioning sewerage systems or clean water supplies. The food rations that were provided by the former regime are not being distributed on a regular basis. Staples such as flour, rice, sugar and tea are not reaching millions of families that are virtually dependent on the rations to escape malnutrition.

A staple of White House propaganda over the past several years has been the accusation that Syria is allowing "foreign" extremists to infiltrate into Iraq and carry out suicide bombings and other attacks. The reality is that the desperation created by the US occupation and mass slaughter in Iraq has provided an ample source of recruits for Al Qaeda's promise of "martyrdom," both as an escape from intolerable conditions of life and a means of striking back at foreign oppressors. The number of suicide bombings in the country has reached truly staggering dimensions, with more than 60 in some months. While some are carried out by fundamentalists

from across the Middle East, US officials told the *Los Angeles Times* in September that Iraqis now accounted for "more than half" of Al Qaeda's forces.

In 2002 and 2003, the Bush administration lied to the American people and to the world, telling them that the regime of Saddam Hussein had links to Al Qaeda and the September 11, 2001 terror attacks on New York and Washington. The American people were told the invasion of Iraq would contribute to reducing the threat of any future terrorist acts. This lie was so integral to the justification of the war that the bases in Kuwait used by the American troops whose lives were put at risk in the invasion were named after the US states that were hit on 9/11.

The truth was that Iraq had no connection to 9/11 and Al Qaeda had no presence in Iraq. The real motive of the invasion was to seize control of Iraqi oil resources and erect a US puppet state in the heart of the Middle East.

In carrying out this political agenda, the Bush administration has turned Iraq into Al Qaeda's greatest recruitment zone. Before March 2003, figures like Zarqawi had no base of support in Iraq. All that was known of him was that he had been imprisoned in Jordan from 1996 to 1999, before being released during an amnesty and effectively deported to Afghanistan. After the US invasion of Afghanistan, he is believed to have made his way to remote villages on the Iran-Iraq border, in an area where the Iraqi government exerted no control. He had no organisation and no capacity to organise terrorist attacks.

Today, it is estimated that Al Qaeda has several thousand adherents in Iraq. While the attacks in Amman are the first time that Iraqi suicide bombers have struck outside the occupied country, they are unlikely to be the last. As Mustafa Alani, a security analyst from the Gulf Research Centre in Dubai, noted to Associated Press: "Iraq is no longer a magnet attracting terrorism... it is now exporting terrorist forces."

The responsibility lies in Washington.



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