

The WikiLeaks documents and the rape of Iraq

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The nearly 400,000 documents released by WikiLeaks give some indication of the barbaric reality of the US invasion and occupation of Iraq. The military reports contain ample evidence of war crimes, for which the highest levels of the US military and political establishment are responsible.

The major revelations contained in the documents include:

- Reports of thousands of previously undisclosed civilian causalities. The Iraq Body Count, which has kept a conservative estimate of the number of deaths based on reports in the media, has found in the military logs some 15,000 civilians deaths not included in its earlier count. This is despite the fact that the documents report no civilian deaths in connection with major US atrocities, including the US assault that reduced much of Fallujah to ruins in 2004. The documents lend credence to other reports giving a much higher death toll, including one study by the medical journal *Lancet* estimating over one million killed.

- Clear evidence of specific war crimes. This includes the killing of two Iraqis seeking to surrender to a US helicopter gunship in February 2007. The soldiers in the helicopter spoke by radio with an army lawyer who advised them that people cannot surrender to aircraft—a falsehood—and they proceeded to kill the individuals in cold blood. The soldiers were part of the same crew that was involved in the July 2007 killing of 12 unarmed civilians, including two Reuters journalists, captured in a video released by WikiLeaks earlier this year.

- The killing by US forces of 834 people at military checkpoints, including at least 681 civilians and 30 children.

- Systematic torture carried out by the Iraqi stooge army

and police, with the de facto sanction and complicity of the American military. US soldiers reported more than 1,300 claims of torture between 2005 and 2009, including beatings, burnings, electric shocks, sodomy and rape—similar to the atrocities carried out by the US at Abu Ghraib. The US military was also aware of cases in which the Iraqi puppet regime murdered detainees. A March 25, 2006 report on one prisoner kept by the Iraqi Ministry of Justice is typical: “His hands were bound/shackled and he was suspended from the ceiling; the use of blunt objects (pipes) to beat him on the back and legs; and the use of electric drills to bore holes in his leg.”

- US soldiers were ordered not to investigate prisoner torture carried out by the Iraqi stooge forces on the grounds that these incidents did not involve American troops. More than 180,000 people were detained at some point between 2004 and 2009, or one in 50 Iraqi males.

There will no doubt be further revelations as these documents are examined. They include a trove of information that has been withheld from the population of Iraq, the United States and the world.

The US-led conquest of Iraq stands as one of the most barbaric war crimes of the modern era. Writing in April 2003, one month after the invasion, the *World Socialist Web Site* noted that during the buildup to World War II “it was common to speak of the Nazis’ ‘rape of Czechoslovakia,’ or ‘rape of Poland.’” What characterized Germany’s modus operandi in these countries was the use of overwhelming military force and the complete elimination of their governments and all civic institutions, followed by the takeover of their economies for the benefit of German capitalism. It is high time that what the US is doing is called by its real name. A criminal regime in Washington is carrying out the rape of Iraq.” (See, “The rape of Iraq”)

The devastation inflicted on the Iraqi people has only intensified over the past seven-and-a-half years. The US has engaged in sociocide—the systematic destruction of an entire civilization. In addition to the hundreds of thousands killed, millions more have been turned into refugees. There has been a staggering growth of disease, infant mortality and malnutrition. The US military has destroyed the country's infrastructure, leaving an economy in ruins, with an unemployment rate of 70 percent.

To the horror of the world's population, the Iraqi people have been made to suffer an unimaginable tragedy at the hands of the most powerful military force on the planet. And for what? To establish US domination over the oil-rich and geostrategically critical country.

Every major institution in the United States is complicit in this crime. In the face of broad popular opposition within the US, both Democrats and Republicans authorized the war and have supported it ever since, expending hundreds of billions of dollars in the process. The American people have sought repeatedly to end the war through elections, only to be confronted with the fact that the war continues regardless of which corporate-controlled party is in office.

Obama, elected as a result of popular hostility to Bush and the Republicans and their policies of war and handouts to the rich, has continued the same policies. Running as a critic of the Iraq War, he now praises the US military occupiers as "liberators."

The Democratic administration has expanded the war against Afghanistan and Pakistan, vastly increasing the use of drone attacks and targeted assassinations. The Obama White House asserts the right to kill anyone it chooses, including US citizens, merely on its say-so that the victim is a terrorist.

The US media, including its liberal wing, promulgated the lies used to justify the war and, as "embedded journalists," covered up the atrocities committed by the US military. Its response to the WikiLeaks revelations compounds its complicity in war crimes. On the one hand the US media downplays the significance of the documents, echoing the Pentagon line that they reveal "nothing new," and on the other they witch-hunt WikiLeaks and its founder Julian Assange for helping to bring these atrocities to light.

The absence of any significant protest within the political or media establishment in the face of these enormous crimes testifies to the wholesale descent of the American ruling class into lawlessness and criminality.

The architects of these war crimes remain at large. Those who planned and oversaw the illegal invasion of Iraq—including all the top officials of the Bush administration and the US military—have yet to be held to account. Obama and his top officials—Hillary Clinton, Robert Gates—have added their own expanding list of crimes to those of the preceding administration.

The release of the WikiLeaks documents coincides with an upsurge in the class struggle. Millions of workers—including most recently in France—are coming into direct conflict with the corporations and their political representatives, who are demanding unprecedented austerity measures to pay for the economic crisis. The struggle against imperialist war must be made a central component of this offensive of the working class, above all in the United States.

The interests of workers throughout the world are the same, and workers of every country face the same class enemy. Imperialism, Lenin noted, is reaction all down the line.

The corporate aristocracy that has unleashed such violence on Iraq will not hesitate to use violence and terror against the American working class to protect its wealth and power. The forces turned into hardened killers and sociopaths in colonial wars such as Iraq and Afghanistan will eventually be flung against those fighting within the US against unemployment, poverty and homelessness.

To succeed, the struggle of the working class against war and social reaction must be guided by a new political perspective and strategy. To end imperialist war the international working class must wrest power from the blood-soaked hands of the capitalists and their political representatives and establish democratic control over the world economy.

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