

US officials guilty of “sociocide” in Iraq must be held accountable

the Editorial Board
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This week the *World Socialist Web Site* ran a three-part article, “The US war and occupation of Iraq—the murder of a society,” by Bill Van Auken. The series, bringing together facts and statistics drawn from the international media and a variety of studies and surveys, painted a horrifying picture of Iraqi society after more than four years of US-led war and occupation, preceded by more than a decade of lethal sanctions.

“Taken together,” the article argued, “US operations in Iraq have amounted to *sociocide*—the deliberate and systematic murder of an entire society.”

Here are certain of the series’ key findings:

—The US occupation is responsible for the death, displacement or disappearance of between 4 and 5 million Iraqis.

—Iraq has experienced a staggering and globally unprecedented increase in the rate of infant mortality. Since 1990, on the eve of the first Gulf war, the rate has grown by 150 percent. In 2005, 122,000 Iraqi children perished, half of them newborns.

—Half of Iraqi children suffer from some form of malnutrition, less than one-third attend school (compared to 100 percent before March 2003) and the war has produced thousands of orphaned and homeless children.

—The status of women in Iraqi society has been driven back generations as a result of the general social retrogression and the rise to prominence of Islamic parties and armed militias.

—A report by the Minority Rights Group International now ranks Iraq as the second-worst country in the world in its treatment of minority peoples, better only than Somalia and worse than Sudan (Darfur).

—Eighteen thousand of Iraq’s 34,000 doctors have left the country. An additional 2,000 have been

murdered under the US occupation. Forty percent of Iraq’s “professional class” (including doctors, professors, pharmacists and other university-trained personnel), have left the country since 2003. Iraq’s educational system, once one of the best in the region, has virtually collapsed.

—The official jobless rate in Iraq is 48 percent. The actual figure is estimated to be closer to 70 percent. Iraq’s inflation rate in 2006, the second highest in the world, soared to 50 percent. Fifty-four percent of the population is surviving on less than US\$1 a day, 15 percent on less than 50 cents a day. The country’s GDP has been more than halved in the past two decades.

In sum, the encounter of America with Iraq has been catastrophic for Iraq’s population, and the situation grows worse on a daily basis. In official US circles, there is less and less talk about Iraq’s “fledgling democracy,” which was never more than a smokescreen, and a good deal more cynical discussion about how America’s interests in the country, i.e., its vast oil reserves, can still be “secured.” Having raped and pillaged the country, the cabal in Washington is still calculating how to carry out its plunder.

Every major institution in American life is complicit in the Iraq war. Upon reading “The US war and occupation of Iraq—the murder of a society,” one of the first things that comes to mind is that this generalized portrait of Iraqi life is never presented in the US mainstream media.

The *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* have vast resources, considerably greater than those of the *World Socialist Web Site*, but they have not troubled themselves to investigate in a systematic manner or comment upon the tragedy inflicted on the Iraqi people. Nor has the *Los Angeles Times* or the *Boston Globe*, or CNN, or ABC News or CBS News, or any other major

news outlet. All these organizations transmitted, without criticism, the lies of the Bush administration about “weapons of mass destruction” and Iraq’s “ties to terrorism” and share responsibility for the present situation. Their silence implies both indifference and a guilty conscience.

The present horror in Iraq has profound implications not only for that ravaged nation, but for American society as well. Whatever tactical differences exist between Bush and his Democratic opponents, the entire ruling elite is agreed that America must “succeed” in the region. By “success” is meant taking whatever ruthless measures are necessary to guarantee US domination of Middle East energy supplies.

The barbarism of the Iraq occupation casts a dark shadow over American life. The social, political, cultural and psychological health of the US population is also at stake in this war. Despite the blackout of the Iraq reality in the major media, a growing section of the American people feels shame and anger over what has been done in its name.

At present this finds no possible expression in the public arena. The lack of mass protest does not, however, betoken satisfaction or acquiescence. With both major parties, the media, the trade unions, indeed every official social organism, firmly and conspicuously “part of the problem” in America, to whom should protests be directed? This simply means that the inevitable social explosion will occur outside official channels.

It is absolutely critical that those responsible for the vast crimes in Iraq be held accountable. George W. Bush, Dick Cheney, Colin Powell, Donald Rumsfeld, Condoleezza Rice, Robert Gates, leading Democrats, the top generals and media conglomerate moguls are guilty of preparing, encouraging or carrying out war crimes. Crimes of this magnitude cannot go unpunished without the most devastating social and moral consequences.

As we have explained before, this is not a matter of vengeance, but the political education of the population as a whole. The process by which these bloody crimes against foreign peoples are set in motion, as well as their true geopolitical driving forces, needs to be exposed in full view of masses of people. Only when the population understands the character of such wars, sees through the lies of the establishment and takes

political matters into its own hands will the mad war drive of American imperialism be halted.

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