

US-trained Iraqi troops ordered to “kill anything that moves” in western Mosul

By Bill Van Auken
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Two weeks after the Iraqi government hailed the “liberation” of Mosul, the scale and criminality of the mass slaughter carried out during the US-backed siege continues to emerge.

Iraqi soldiers and officers speaking to a reporter from Middle East Eye (MEE) have revealed that during the assault on the densely populated Old City of western Mosul, the order was given to massacre everyone remaining, men, women and children.

“We killed them all,” an Iraqi soldier told MEE. “Daesh [ISIS] men, women and children. We killed everyone.”

An Iraqi major told the web site, “After liberation was announced, the order was given to kill anything or anyone that moved.” He added that most of the remaining fighters of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), the Sunni Islamist militia that took control of the city in June 2017, had surrendered to the army. “They gave themselves up, and we just killed them,” he said.

The report, one of the few from Mosul, from which US-backed Iraqi security forces have barred the media, paints a horrific portrait of what was once Iraq’s second-largest city:

“Hundreds of corpses lie half-buried in the broken masonry and rubble that was once a bustling, historic quarter. The stench of decaying flesh, which comes fast in the 50C summer heat, overwhelms the senses.

“Feet are the most distinguishable remains; there are many poking from the rubble.

That final killing spree has left its mark, and it is one some appear keen to cover over.

“Over the last week, armoured bulldozers have trundled back and forth over the crumpled houses, grinding uncounted corpses into the rubble.

“But the dead refuse to go away. Rotting body parts

glow a reddish-brown amid the pale grey of the undulating heatscape of masonry, dust and broken buildings.”

The reporter also describes the large number of corpses—including those of small children—floating in or washed up on the banks of the Tigris River. While some are no doubt victims of US airstrikes, summary executions and fighting, the Iraqi major told MEE that others were civilians deliberately slaughtered. “People went down to the river to get water because they were dying of thirst and we killed them,” he said.

While initially the security forces and the government ignored pleas from the local population to assist in attempting to recover the remains of their loved ones, now they are actively engaged in ensuring that the bodies of the siege’s victims disappear forever.

The armored bulldozers brought in have, according to the MEE report, “churned over the rubble and the corpses and then driven back and forth over the terrain” so that “the real loss of life in the final bloodbath of the Mosul conflict will never be known.”

The same bulldozers are apparently creating still more victims, with drivers ordered to fill up holes leading to underground tunnels, potentially burying alive survivors still hiding in them.

While neither the Pentagon nor Iraqi security forces have offered any estimate as to the number of civilian lives lost in the nearly nine months of siege and US airstrikes that pummeled the city, the number is massive. According to Iraq’s former foreign and finance minister, Hoshyar Zebari, who was quoted in an interview last week with Patrick Cockburn of the British *Independent*, the Kurdish Regional Government’s intelligence agency has estimated that 40,000 men, women and children were killed.

Some 1 million residents of Mosul and its

surrounding area were driven from their homes by the siege, and nearly 850,000 of them are listed by relief agencies as being currently displaced. Across the country, the figure is 3 million.

The terror has not ended for the survivors, with families suspected of having collaborated with ISIS during the three years that it ruled the city facing reprisals.

Moreover, vast numbers of children have been left orphans by the siege. The *Guardian* quoted Sukaina Mohamed Younes, the head of the Office of Women and Children in Nineveh province, of which Mosul is the capital, as reporting, “We have received from Mosul tens of thousands of children who lost their mother and father.”

These reports demonstrate the real meaning of the Pentagon’s announcement that it was pursuing a strategy of “annihilation” in its so-called war on ISIS. The massive and indiscriminate killing in Mosul constitutes a war crime of world historic proportions. Yet, the same corporate media that was broadcasting every report and image of civilian suffering it could lay its hands on during the siege of Aleppo by Russian-backed Syrian government forces last year has turned its back on Mosul, deliberately covering up the evidence of Washington’s criminality.

Even as the scale of the slaughter in Mosul continues to emerge, US-backed forces are intensifying their siege of the ISIS-held Syrian city of Raqqa, resulting in a steady escalation of civilian casualties.

The so-called Syrian Democratic Forces, which is dominated by the Syrian Kurdish YPG militia, has reportedly taken close to half of the city amid heavy fighting.

The group Raqqa is Being Slaughtered Silently, initially formed to document ISIS atrocities in the Syrian city, reported on Wednesday that 36 civilians, most of them women and children, were killed and another 50 wounded in US airstrikes and artillery bombardments. On Thursday, the same group reported that US artillery fire was targeting the city’s National Hospital. The organization has used its Facebook page to post photographs of those killed in the siege. An estimated 50,000 people remain trapped under the hail of US bombs and shells.

Commanders of the US-led “anti-ISIS coalition” have made it clear that driving ISIS out of the

destroyed cities of Mosul and Raqqa will by no means spell an end to their military operations in both Iraq and Syria.

“Daesh is not defeated with the liberation of Raqqa. The defeat of Daesh was not completed with the liberation of Mosul,” British Maj. Gen. Rupert Jones, a spokesman for the coalition, told reporters last Sunday. There would still be “a great deal more” to do, he added.

Washington, backed by the British government, intends to establish permanent bases in both countries. It aims to continue operations directed at countering both Iranian and Russian influence, which US imperialism views as an obstacle to its protracted military campaign to assert its hegemony over the oil-rich Middle East. In this context, the so-called anti-ISIS campaign is merely the antechamber to far wider and more dangerous military conflicts.

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