



HUMANITARIAN CRISIS AND U.S. OCCUPATION- A LOOK INTO IRAQI WOMEN

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Abstract

The continued war and economic sanction enforced on Iraq mainly under U.S. and British influence led to two million deaths, mostly children and women. Women's rights should be considered as the most important aspect in the human rights framework (Hannum 2006). The article attempts to highlight the impact of continued military interventions and economic sanctions on the innocent Iraqi people, especially women. It also examines the social and cultural impacts, economic and health impacts etc.. The coalition forces violated all human rights norms and laws for enforcing their vested interests. The general picture arrived at is that of women being pushed further into the background and back into their homes. Women are suffering in terms of a deteriorating humanitarian situation and an enduring lack of security on the streets. The recognition of women as a social group is especially valuable in cases where women claim refugee status because of the absence of state protection from internal violence.

Key Words: Human rights, Women, Iraq, Occupation, Feminist protest, Gender, Humanitarian Situation.

Introduction

During most of the last decade, the Bush administration's activities justified the war in Iraq. Subsequent to the first Gulf war, consecutive U.S. Administrations used a policy of repression toward Saddam Hussein's Iraq. It involved the hold up for U.N inspectors searching for weapons of mass destruction and sanctions against Saddam, which had disastrous impact on the Iraqi people. It would have sufficed to make sure that Iraq be made incapable of delivering weapons of mass destruction. In the short term, it means a willingness to undertake military action as diplomacy was clearly failing. In the longer term, it means removing Saddam Hussein and his regime from power. In the attempt to make the world safe for the U.S., the U.S. army has committed unpardonable crimes in Iraq, which are against human rights. U.S. cannot sit in judgement over the rest of the world. According to rules of international law and international human rights law, U.S. must get away from interfering in the affairs of sovereign self-governing countries such as Iraq. It is one of the biggest intrusions onto a sovereign country in recent times and apart from those in power, the civilians of the U.S. are equally guilty of having supported the evil schemes of the administration by electing junior Bush for a second term in spite of having waged a monstrous war. Women as a social group its recognition is valuable in cases where women claim refugee status because of the absence of state protection from domestic violence (Macklin 1995). War has been a way of life for Iraqis for the last few years, internal wars and war with its neighbors.

Humanitarian Impact of Women in Occupation Period

The military occupation of Iraq has deprived the people of their very basic needs and to a very large extent imperilled their personal security. Clean running water and adequate sewage are not assured, even in Baghdad. Electricity constantly turns on and off. The cycle is about three hours on, four hours off. In many respects, Iraq has become an instant third-world nation. Before March 2003, many of these families lived in nice apartments, had good jobs. Their children went to universities. After the invasion and the lift of the rent cap instituted by Saddam, rent rates quadrupled just when jobs were being obliterated. In Baghdad alone, thousands of families live in camps or on the streets. The effect of the lack of basic needs doesn't stop at the hospital or in the hungry belly. There are far reaching implications. Without their basic needs being met, the Iraqi people are not afforded the luxury to even begin thinking about women's political participation or the drafting of a constitution. The great majority are far too busy trying to find their next meal and place to sleep for the night to be concerned about the more abstract after-effects of the toppling of a dictator (Cunningham and Michael 2004). The fall of Baghdad on 10 April 2003 brought Iraq and the women living there into an uncertain transition period. In the post II world war period, Iraq was often touted as one of the Middle Eastern countries that offered its women more liberties with regard to education and employment. The Iraqi Ba'ath party, which came to power in 1963, included in its ideology provisions for women's equality. Despite this, Iraqi traditional societies outside the major urban centre of Baghdad still relegated Iraqi women to a very inferior position vis-à-vis men. Additionally the repression that all Iraqis suffered under Saddam's regime, as well as the consequences of this wars, applied to the female half of the population as well.

Since the beginning of the U.S. occupation, there has been a dramatic increase in sexual assaults and violations of women's rights by U.S. forces in Iraq. In Iraq there are additional challenges in addressing crimes of a sexual nature. In many parts of the country when a woman or girl loses her "sexual purity" she could be defamed and subject to imprisonment or even death



if she cannot prove, often with the testimony of four male witnesses, that the sexual incident was, in fact, rape (Jordan and John 2004). Many women have been taken hostages tortured, and sexually abused. The sexual abuse, rape and torture against Iraqi women is not confined only to Western media-loved Abu Ghraib prison, but is “happening all across Iraq”, said Amal Kadhim Swadi, an Iraqi lawyers representing women detainees at Abu Ghraib. “Sexualized violence and abuse committed by U.S. troops goes far beyond a few isolated cases”, she added. Many people feel it is due to the ongoing terror wrought in this land that brings so much oppression to women (Hassan 2005). In an online edition of Guardian, the reporter Mark Lattiner reports that despite promises and hopes given to the Iraqi population that their lives were going to change, Iraqi women’s lives “have become immeasurably worse, with rapes, burnings and murders now as a daily occurrence” (Mark 2007). Prior to the arrival of forces in Iraq, Iraqi women were free to wear whatever they liked and go wherever they chose. Since the invasion in 2003 “Iraqi women have been brutally attacked, kidnapped and intimidated from participating in the Iraqi society.” Iraqi women’s experiences of Baath rule and of the occupations have varied immensely depending on social class, political affiliation, religious identity, place of residence and educational background (Al-Ali 2008). She continues by arguing that “The first losers in all these were women”. Arising from their fear of being raped and harassed, women have to wear not only the veil, but must also to wear the black dress in order not to attract attention. In Baghdad, none had running water, guaranteed electricity, or adequate medical supplies (Ismael 2014).

Under the U.S. Occupation, the situation of Iraqi women has continued to deteriorate. In addition to torture and sexual violence perpetrated by U.S. Occupation forces, a great number of Iraqi women and girls are kept locked up in their homes by a very real fear of abduction and criminal abuse. Prior to the invasion of Iraq, Iraqi women had the most progressive human rights in the region and Iraqi women were the first Arab women to hold high positions in academia, law, medicine and government (Al-Ali 2005). Before the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq, Iraqi women made up 40 per cent of the public-sector work force. Men and women received equal pay for work; education and health care were free at all levels. In the 1980s, a government program to eradicate illiteracy among Iraqi women was exceedingly successful, and women have traditionally enjoyed freedoms not found in other Arab and Muslim countries. In addition, Iraq’s Constitution was the most advanced in the Middle East, if not the Muslim World. Women’s rights are enshrined in the Constitution, which was dissolved (together with Iraqi Police and Security) by the U.S. Occupation and replaced by a U.S. -crafted “Interim Constitution”, produced without women’s representation, which deprives Iraqi women of their rights and dignity. In today’s Iraq, crimes and abuse against women were back to the levels before independence from colonial Britain 1958. The crime of rape was capital offence under Iraq’s Constitution.

Social Conditions

The miseries of the Iraqi people have more than doubled in the last two years, and Iraqis viewed the occupation as the cause of their miseries. In addition to the crimes of sexual abuse, torture and rape committed by U.S. soldiers against Iraqi women, all other aspects of Iraqi women’s rights have also deteriorated (Verma 2005). Iraq had assent U.N. conventions regarding human rights but there had been no sufficient improvement of Iraqi women’s rights. Women health and education have fallen significantly. Unemployment, prostitution and malnutrition, have increased dramatically, and are now widespread among Iraqi women today. Iraqi women have also suffered great loss of lives. U.S. serial bombing and destruction caused the death of great numbers of women and children. Most of the victims were innocent women and children killed by U.S. bombing of population centres. Especially following, the U.S.-led 2003 occupation of Iraq and the fall of the Ba’ath regime of Saddam Hussein, the status of women’s rights in Iraq were expected to progress. But now the condition of women situation worsened because of continued and irregular violence and the adoption of the 2005 Iraqi constitution. Moreover, Iraqi women and their children are being taken hostages by U.S. forces and used as ‘bargaining chips’. On 11 April 2005, the Guardian reported, that U.S. forces were accused of violating international law by taking Iraqi women hostages to force their male relatives to surrender. Iraqi women are arrested, detained, abused and tortured not because of anything they have done, but to force their close relatives (spouses, sons and brothers) to collaborate with the occupation and to inform against the Resistance (Ismael 2014). Contrary to the Geneva Conventions, which stipulate that no one can “be punished for an offence he or she has not personally committed.” The practices, which have been condemned by the U.N. and human rights organisations, are widely used by the Israeli Army against Palestinian men, women and children in occupied Palestine.

The dismantling of the Iraqi Security and Police led to increase in violence and crimes against women. Women are no longer leaving their homes unaccompanied by relatives. Human Rights Watch documented a wave of sexual violence and abductions against women in Baghdad in the months following the invasion. It also documented during the invasion Iraq has made some efforts to improve the rights of women in recent years. The Bush administration’s promotion of religious fundamentalism and sectarianism mean the worst for Iraqi women rights. U.S. foreign policy preys on religious fundamentalism. The miseries of the Iraqi people had more than doubled in the following years, and Iraqis viewed the



occupation as the cause of their miseries. In addition to the crimes of sexual abuse, torture and rape committed by U.S. soldiers against Iraqi women, all other aspects of Iraqi women's rights also deteriorated (Enloe 2004). This traumatic situation had significant psychological effects on the health and welfare of the mothers. Doctors in Iraq have reported a significant increase in deformities among newborn babies that could be due to radiation passed through mothers following U.S. wars of 1991-2003. "The depleted uranium left by the U.S. bombing campaign has turned Iraq into a cancer-infested country. Women health and education had fallen significantly. Unemployment, prostitution and malnutrition, have increased dramatically, and are now widespread among Iraqi women today. During the period of the U.N sanctions, many women lost their jobs due to the deterioration of the economy. Moreover, sanctions led to the dismantling of government social programs and women suffered disproportionately. As a result of the U.S. dismantling of the Iraqi state, many women lost their jobs. Unemployment among Iraqi women was more than 70 per cent and rising. During the U.S. led invasion in 2003 and the war that followed, many women started private businesses in their homes, but when electricity was cut they could not continue. Women who benefited from commerce in the informal market had also been forced to give up this source of income. Before the U.S. occupation, Iraqi women made up 40 percent of the public-sector work force. Today, most women are unemployed. When the economy deteriorated, women were the first to lose their jobs. Today women's unemployment is at 70percent. In addition, due to the climate of violence and fear, fewer children attend school and consequently, mothers or the oldest female in the family have had to stop working to take care of the children. As a result, women and children have fewer opportunities. The U.S. dismantling of the Iraqi state meant that many women lost governmental positions.

Political and Economical situations

In several other aspects too Iraqi women's rights have deteriorated. Iraq suffered a lot; many women are widowed and others are abandoned. Iraqi women were not represented in the Iraqi ministries and in the judicial infrastructure (Eland 2005). A report by Women for Women International reveals that 57 per cent of Iraqi women and their families do not have adequate health care, and that maternal mortality rate has tripled when compared to the period between 1989 and 2002. Iraq's infrastructure has been reduced to rubble. The health care services and the education system are on the brink of total collapse. Only 3 women were nominated to the interim Iraqi Governing Council in July 2003. Women were not included in either the nine-member rotating presidential council or the committee working on constitutional reform. The majority of Iraqi women doesn't trust political parties. All political parties are run by men. Many activists in women's organizations gathered to discuss violence against women, including Hanaa Edwar, the head of the Al-Amal Association, Suhaila Alaasm of the Iraqi Women's League and Athraa al-Hassani, the head of the Model Iraqi Woman Organization. All of them noted that dozens of women have been killed by their husbands or other male relatives in horrible ways for not wearing the veil or over doubts concerning their morality (Bloom 2010). For example, if a woman speaks on the phone late at night and her family does not know whom she is calling, this could raise suspicion. Even today, most women in Shiite areas of Baghdad do not dare to go out on the streets without wearing the veil and a black abaya.

Women Prisoners

The Red Cross estimates there are between 10,000-15,000 prisoners. The oldest prisoner is 75 and the youngest 11. None of them has been charged. American led forces conduct daily raids, arresting men and women. Women are detained in most cases as hostages. There are no exact figures of how many women prisoners are in Iraq (Yacoub 2010). The rape of a woman stigmatizes her whole family. Historically, Iraqi women have not been confined to the private sphere and have attained high levels of educational and professional accomplishments in law, government, and medicine. During the Hussein presidency, women continued to work and study in the public sphere but during the period of the U.N. sanctions, many women lost their jobs due to the deterioration of the economy. Moreover, sanctions led to the dismantling of government social programs and women suffered disproportionately. The CPA lay off hundreds of thousands of government workers. Despite the amount of reconstruction work in Iraq, Iraqis themselves are not being employed. Instead, the U.S. has hired foreign contractors and flown in foreign workers for high and low skilled positions previously held by Iraqis. According to the household survey done by Women for Women International in August 2004, 84percent of the women surveyed had no income from formal or informal work. The women identified electricity, jobs, and water as the most pressing concerns. Despite Iraq's valuable oil reserves, 27 percent of the population is estimated to live on less than \$2 a day. In a move that worsened the crisis exponentially, while imposing a privatized model of governance not chosen by the Iraqi people, the CPA cut the social safety net. Following the many wars Iraq has suffered, many women are widowed or abandoned. According to the U.N and the World Bank, there were close to 1 million women heads of households in October 2003. As the U.S. increasingly pushes for privatization and a 100percent free market state, this means that more women will inevitably suffer disproportionately compared to men in Iraq

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U.S. foreign policy preys on religious fundamentalism. In July 2003, some observers argued that Iraqi women did not have an adequate presence in the Iraqi ministries and in the judicial infrastructure. In December 2003, Khuzai and Chapouk enunciated their frustration with CPA, writing that “women are severely under represented in the leadership established for the transition. They asserted that, as plans for a new governing structure are developed, the Iraqi Governing Council and the CPA should ensure women their rightful place at the decision making table. This criticism as some observers have noted, highlights one of the challenges facing U.S. officials working to include Iraqi women in all levels of the government. Prior to the formation of IGC Bremer reportedly promised that IGC would include a wide spectrum of Iraqis and would not be dominated by exiles. As a result one of the problems in appointing the local Iraqi women lay in identify experienced women, who had remained in Iraq but were not affiliated with the Baathist regime, to work within the interim government (Pratt and Nadje 2008). As part of its ‘de-Baathification’ policy, the CPA abolished the GFIW, which had been the only officially recognized organization for women under Baathist rule. After its collapse, some of the GFIW’s top leaders, who had been closely affiliated with the Saddam Hussein’s regime, reportedly fled Iraq out of fear of prosecution.

U. S. Post War Diplomacy and its impact on Iraqi Women

The U.S. appointed Iraqi Governing Council passed Resolution 137, which would have overruled the Iraqi Family Law that has been in effect since 1959. Resolution 137 would have placed several aspects of family law, including matters of marriage, divorce and inheritance, under Islamic law. Despite the concern over women’s constitutional rights, there were no Iraqi women on the nine-member committee drafting the Transitional Administrative Law, (TAL), which was signed by IGC, the TAL declares equal rights to all Iraqis regardless of gender, ethnicity, religion or nationality. It considers Islamic religion as a source of law; also, no provision in the TAL can violate Islamic principle. The TAL also contains a provision calling for targeted goal of 25 percent representation for women in the transitional National Assembly. It is not clear whether this provision will remain in effect after a permanent constitution is ratified. The Prime Minister of Iraq, Ibrahim al- Jaffari (a Shi’ia), stated that he supports women’s rights, including the right to become President or Prime Minister (Osgood 2005). Furthermore there is a widespread hope, among Iraqi women’s group, that a new constitution will continue to stipulate wide-ranging, liberal rights for Iraqi women. Yet, here are some who caution against the belief that women are virtually guaranteed gender equality in the civil and legal spheres of Iraqi society. The issue of Islam’s place in many Middle Eastern and predominately Muslim nations’ legal codes is common and Iraq is no exception. Although modern Iraqi history is replete with liberal view towards women, Iraqi Shi’iaism and the wider culture of the country may create obstacles for women increasing their participation and visibility in Iraqi political and social life. In particular, some analysts are concerned that any Iraqi constitution may mirror the ‘cosmetic’ rights Saddam Hussein extended to women during his regime. These experts note that a Shi’ia dominated Iraqi political system will face challenges from secular Iraqis with regards to persistent social issues such as honour killing, harassment, polygamy and property ownership.

The Bush administration has continued to assert that the position of Iraqi woman has improved following the U.S. toppling of the Saddam Hussein’s regime. In a speech on March 12, 2004, President Bush indicated that ‘every woman in Iraq is better off because the rape rooms and torture chambers of Saddam Hussein is forever closed. Nonetheless, a number of concerns have been raised over the past year regarding the role of women in a future Iraq and the status of U.S. efforts to promote women’s rights. The concern for many is that any modest political gains Iraqi women have secured may be threatened by cultural forces and increased political authority of Shi’ia conservatism. Also, the question of equal distribution for women in local governance and judiciary may continue to resonate, despite any increases in the parliament. Furthermore, the continuing violence in Iraq affects ‘at risk’ populations, who often restrict themselves to their homes out of fear of physical harm, intimidation and abuse. A number of security concerns affect not only the involvement of women in the developing Iraqi political system but also the access of the Iraqi ordinary women to reconstruction programs (Mingus 2012). Some report that many Iraqi women, who work to advance political freedom, do so under threat of violence, and kidnappings. The lack of security has been cited as a major obstacle in the progress of reconstruction efforts aimed at advancing women’s rights. One analyst wrote in 2004 that since the start of the occupation, ‘life has not returned to normal’ in Iraq. In places where kidnappings occur frequently, children must be accompanied and women escorted to the market and have taken to donning abaya (body -covering garments) to ensure greater self protection.

Subjugated Womanhood

Religious and cultural factors in Iraq also present challenges to reconstruction efforts targeting women. For example, there is a debate over the extent of the role that Islamic law or Shari’a should play in a future Iraqi government. Some Iraqi groups - including those who represented on the U.S. appointed Governing Council -are interested in instituting Islamic courts instead of civil courts to oversee matters related to marriage, divorce, property ownership and inheritance. These courts would be run by Muslim clerics -all of whom are male. Some analyst expressed concerns that the growing religious conservatisms within



Iraqi society is threatening women who are liberal, secularist and non-Muslim or those Muslim women who do not wish to be ruled by religious -based law. There is also concern among Kurdish Iraqi women's group who feel that the strides made during years of relative autonomy (1990-2003) could be threatened by the inclusion of the Kurdish areas in what could become an Islamist -governed Iraqi state (Romano 2006). Many Iraqi women, including Christian female students in Shi'ite Basra, have complained that they were forced to wear a head scarf. Other Iraqi women's groups, however, point out that Islamic law is not inherently contrary to the rights of women. A Baghdad based group called the Islamic Women's Movements notes that Islamic scriptures accord women considerable rights-inheriting property, for example, or declining an unwanted husband. They say it's the way male authorities interpret those writings that keeps women from exercising them, 'adding that teaching women their rights under Islam would help end injustices against them. One study of southern Iraq indicated that most Iraqi men and women do not fully support civil and political rights of the women, including freedom to move about in public and to participate in government.¹² The study mentions that 'lack of support for such rights for women may be related to implementation considerations, such as inadequate numbers of teachers, employment opportunities, and safety issues, among others. This may not reflect the opinion of Iraqis towards women in other regions of Iraq. Women in Northern Kurdish region have experienced greater freedom and more opportunities for political involvement in the past several years. The attitude of Iraqi towards women in larger urban centres, such as Baghdad, has yet to be fully investigated and might also reflect a range of opinions on women's rights.

Under U.S. occupation children are dying from malnutrition, a lack of clean water and a lack of medical equipment and drugs to cure easily treatable diseases. This traumatic situation has significant psychological effects on the health and welfare of the children's mothers. Electricity blackout is as long as 15 hours a day, much longer than that of pre-war level. To increase the atrocity, the U.S. provides its soldiers with "self-immunity" from prosecution making it very easy for them to kill Iraqis with institutionalised immunity, as if Iraqis were not human beings. In addition, evidence shows that the U.S.-British forces use banned weapons such as napalm and weapons of mass destruction (WMD), which contaminated and polluted Iraq's environment, and caused health hazards (Smallwood 2011). As a result of armed conflict many Iraqi women had lost their husbands, generalized violence, and displacement. The resulting financial hardship has made them vulnerable to trafficking for sexual exploitation and prostitution. The parliament passed a counter trafficking law that outlines government obligations and provides for prosecution of traffickers. Iraqi authorities announced the arrest of a Baghdad trafficking leader, but little has been done to prosecute other people accused of trafficking, or to take measures to prevent it. Victims of trafficking continue to report having passports confiscated and being prevented from obtaining visas and new identification papers, leaving them vulnerable to arrest and unable to access health care. In June 2011, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) parliament passed the Family Violence Bill, which includes provisions criminalizing forced and child marriages; abuse of girls and women; and a total ban on FGM. Implementation of the law is poor, and dozens of girls and practitioners said that they had either undergone or performed FGM since the law was passed. The authorities took no measures to investigate these cases.

In January 2013, Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki promised to reform the criminal justice system, beginning with releasing detained women who had judicial orders of release. The New York-based watchdog said the brutal tactics of security forces remain essentially the same and hundreds of women remain in detention illegally. Many of the 27 women who spoke with HRW described being beaten, kicked, slapped, hung upside-down and beaten on their feet (*falaqa*), given electric shocks, and raped or threatened with sexual assault by security forces during their interrogation. HRW found that Iraqi security forces regularly arrest women illegally and commit other due process violations against women at every stage of the justice system. Women are subjected to threats of, or actual, sexual assault, sometimes in front of husbands, brothers, and children. Failure by the courts to investigate allegations of abuse and hold the abusers responsible encourages the police to falsify confessions and use torture, Iraq's broken criminal justice system fails to achieve justice for victims either of security force abuses or of criminal attacks by armed groups, the watchdog said (Steinberg 2013). Arrests and convictions documented by HRW appeared often to have been predicated on information provided by secret informants and confessions coerced under torture. "The abuses of women we documented are in many ways at the heart of the current crisis in Iraq," Stork said. "These abuses have caused a deep-seated anger and lack of trust between Iraq's diverse communities and security forces, and all Iraqis are paying the price." Violence in Iraq is some of its highest levels, with more than 1,000 people killed in the country.

Increased rates of miscarriages and developmental disabilities in children in Fallujah and Basrah to environmental toxins left by U.S. military operations in those areas. Human Rights Watch (HRW) reported that Iraqi authorities are detaining thousands of Iraqi women illegally and subjecting many to torture and ill-treatment, including sexual abuse. The report documents abuses of women in detention, based on interviews with women and girls in prison, as well as their families, lawyers and prison medical service providers (Evers 2014). The report came at a time of escalating sectarian violence in Iraq,



involving security forces and armed groups. “The vast majority of the more than 4,200 women detained in interior- and defense ministry facilities are Sunni, but the abuses HRW documents affect women of all sects and classes throughout Iraqi society. Iraq’s large Sunni minority complains of large-scale discrimination by the Shiite led government in Baghdad. The report said that “Many women were detained for months or even years without charge before seeing a judge.” Joe Stork Deputy Middle East and North Africa director at HRW mentioned “Iraqi security forces and officials act as if brutally abusing women will make the country safer.” Doctors in Iraq have reported a significant increase in deformities among newborn babies that could be due to radiation passed through mothers following U.S. wars of 1991-2003. ‘After studying family history of couples with deformed babies, they concluded that radiation and pollution caused by ‘depleted’ uranium dust, DU were the main causes of the deformity,’ Dr Lamia’a Amran, a paediatrician at the Iraqi Red Crescent Society (IRCS) hospital in Baghdad, told Irin news (Hassan 2005). “Since 1991 the number of children born with birth deformities has quadrupled”, said Dr Janan Hassan, who runs a children’s clinic in Basra in southern Iraq. If DU is the cause of the cancers, which is most likely, the crisis could become infinitely worse for women and children in Iraq. The U.S. and Britain used thousands of tonnes of DU in their wars on Iraq and over a wide range of areas. It took three to five years for the cancers to begin manifesting after the first Gulf crisis. Iraqi women and their newborn babies are expecting bleak future as a result of the U.S.-Britain use of WMD. The pretexts for the war were proved to be just lies. Iraq had no WMD and Iraq had no relations with terrorism. The war on Iraq was an illegal act of aggression, designed to increase the threat of terrorism and violence, in order to exert control (Pitt 2002). The female suicide bombers are also violating the peaceful situation in Iraq. Mainly three types of terrorist or insurgent groups operate in Iraq. There are Al Qaeda-affiliated groups, Sunni nationalist organizations, and Shi’ite militias. The Al Qaeda affiliated groups are controlled and financed by non-Iraqis, it has both Iraqi nationalists and non-Iraqi fighters. The Sunni nationalist groups are almost entirely made up of Iraqi nationals, and mainly target coalition forces and Shi’a elements. This groups work to end the U.S. occupation and secure political and economic resources; they infrequently use suicide tactics. Other terrorist groups are the Shi’a militias consist of groups such as Badr Corps and Mehdi Militia, and have attacked coalition and Sunni societal elements. The continuing occupation of Iraq is to rob Iraq of its oil resources, and enhance U.S. imperialist doctrine (Cleminson 2003). So, as news of the appalling miseries of Iraqi women pile up, the setting up of an international war crimes tribunal to investigate and prosecute those who committed these crimes against the Iraqi people should be the aim of the world community. It will enhance human rights and democracy worldwide.

The depleted uranium left by the U.S. bombing campaign has turned Iraq into a cancer-infected country. “For hundreds of years to come, the effects of the uranium will continue to wreak havoc on Iraq and its surrounding areas”, said Iraqi artist and author of ‘Baghdad Diaries’, Nuha Al-Radi before she died of leukaemia on August 13, 2004. The occupation had both immediate and long-term negative implications for the safety of Iraqi women and for their participation in post-war life in Iraq (Anastasiou and Gould 2007). Al Qaeda-affiliated groups use suicide terrorism primarily to attack Iraqi security forces and Shi’a civilians. The end of the Occupation is supposed to stop the chain reactions of violence, and may allow the victim’s wounds to heal.

The biggest and most important national challenge is to retain girls in school during their primary years, and particularly to ensure that they progress from grade 1 to grade 2 and from grade 5 to grade 6. In Iraq there is also a major issue with the number of children in each grade who are over age. The decreased percentage of girls, the older a girl becomes, less likely she is to remain in school (UNICEF 2013). Economic growth is a crucial component for sustainable development. However, in the context of war-affected countries like Iraq there is the added cost of reconstruction investment. Therefore the simplistic notion that, in Iraq, oil revenues alone will pay for recovery fails to recognise that there is no supporting institutional and administrative infrastructure in place to ensure the trickle-down effect. While many commentators, consider economic growth to be critical to ease the transition from the immediate post-war recovery to longer-term development (Hill 1996). This does not mean simply promoting national ‘economic growth’ by employing liberal market strategies, as the World Bank and other financial institutions have had the tendency to advocate in the past. Such an emphasis, particularly when it is purely ideologically motivated, as now in Iraq, can often lead to extra pressure on emerging societies. Privatisation and restructuring can result in large job losses and wider grievances at a time when reconstruction should be creating hope through delivering tangible benefits to individuals and their communities. The public may not have the means to purchase the enterprises or the enterprises themselves may not be attractive to the private sector when they are not functional (Kubrusi 2003). On the other hand, stimulating the economy through increasing the number of people employed has the added advantage of improving legitimacy and therefore security, as noted above. However, the U.S. strategy of inviting corporate U.S. business to tender for the large reconstruction contracts, and its intended oil privatisation, is more likely to lead to asset stripping than to the investment in the economy which is so crucial for encouraging employment. In addition Iraq’s \$200 billion war reparations debt could seriously hinder any capital investment for economic and social development (Abdel-Fadil 2003). This economic



dislocation will continue as long as the U.S. remains obsessed with oil as the only form of economic salvation (Abdel-Fadil 2003). Kubrusi argues that it is the agricultural sector, which has traditionally been an engine for growth, which should be seen as a priority and stimulated to complement oil revenue. This would not only restore the livelihoods of a substantial section of the population but also increase food security. Contrary to the economic reconstruction needs discussed above, the U.S. strategy neither addressed the immediate macro nor the micro economic priorities necessary to initiate development. At the macro level currency stabilisation, rehabilitation of the banking sector and national control of economic assets (oil) are not yet addressed (Corm 2003 and Abdel-Fadil 2003).

At the micro level the combined effect of deBaathification, disbanding the army, privatisation of state enterprises, the dollarization of the economy and the resulting insecurity has increased levels of unemployment across all classes of society. It has also failed to stimulate alternative income generation from small businesses and agriculture (Abdel-Fadil 2003). According to Barton and Crocker the interim evaluation found that the continuing lack of economic opportunity and high levels of unemployment (Barton and Crocker 2004). These lack of economic opportunity and high levels of unemployment combined with personal insecurity, are now the main concerns of the Iraqi public (Barakat 2005).

Feminist Protest against War in Iraq

The National Women's Studies Association (NWSA) had joined hundreds of thousands of Americans in an unprecedented historic grassroots movement by sending a message to President George W. Bush and other elected officials urging the U. S. government to refrain from using military force against Iraq (Hudnall 2003). NWSA, which adopted an anti-war resolution on 25 February 2003, speaks for thousands of women's studies practitioners and feminist organizations in the U.S. who are committed to resolving conflict through negotiation. The National Women's Studies Association is committed to resolving local and global conflicts through negotiation; hence, it urges the U.S. government to refrain from using military force to effect social and political change in Iraq. NWSA further urges the U.S. government to immediately and wholeheartedly commit itself to international conflict resolution processes that will lead to greater social justice and enduring peace worldwide. NWSA's position on the question of war against Iraq is based on feminist thinking about the causes, consequences, and solutions to violence against women. Feminist analysis shows that there is a connection between individual acts of violence directed against women and violence that women experience as the result of war. Feminist practice also demonstrates that working to eliminate oppression and establish social justice is more effective than military aggression in reducing interpersonal and state-sponsored violence (Anderson and Clack 2004).

The penal law criminalizes rape but allows the case to be dropped if the offender marries the victim, permits a maximum sentence of life imprisonment if the victim dies, and does not address spousal rape (Teague 2010). There were no reliable estimates of the incidents of rape or the effectiveness of government enforcement of the law. Due to social conventions and retribution against both the victim and perpetrator, victims of sexual crimes did not usually pursue legal remedies. The U.N Development Program documented cases of families of rape victims sometimes demanding that the victim marry her perpetrator in order to maintain the family's honour, noting that in some cases when the victim refused the marriage, families asked judges to intervene and force the marriage between victim and perpetrator. Moreover, reporting by local and international NGOs and media indicated that domestic violence often went unreported and unpunished with abuses customarily addressed within the family and tribal structure. Harassment of legal personnel working on domestic violence cases and a lack of trained police and judicial personnel further hampered efforts to bring perpetrators to justice. June 2011 KRG Family Violence Law criminalizes domestic violence, including physical and psychological abuse, threats of violence, and spousal rape. During the year the KRG mounted public awareness campaigns, issued directives to police; and trained judges on the provisions of the law. Provisions of the law creating a special police force to investigate cases of gender based violence and a reconciliation committee within the judicial system was not implemented at year's end. The IKR's Iraqi Kurdistan Region (IKR) Council of Ministers (COM) established a Women's Rights Monitoring Board to address women's problems, including gender based violence.

Feminist scholars were already questioning how a collapsed state able to guarantee basic policing utilities could possibly the individual right to women.¹⁶ Women remained noticeably under- represented in party leaderships, the constitution- writing and review committees, positions outside the Ministry of Women's affairs and backroom bargaining to form a government (Al-Ali and Nochola 2006). The moral victory of a parliamentary quotas was devalued further in 2010 when stalemated elections were followed by protracted negotiations resulting in a conspicuously make government. Thus instituting a quota for the representation of Iraqi women was a symbolic achievement but not necessarily a very sustentative one. Many Iraqi women seemed dubious about economic autonomy and parliamentary quotas. A former political prisoner of the Iraqi police state, an exile returnee observed that the enemy is not Islam, nor their families but the occupation itself (Zangana 2005). By



2006, female parliamentarian, officials and activists expressed ambivalence about gains amidst socio-economic deterioration. Nearly fourteen Iraqi women murdered by other Iraqis between March and December 2004. They were two news reporters, two district council members, two translators, two women activists and a pharmacist whose body was dumped on a highway in a traditional headscarf she never wore. The headscarf incident presumably signified that all these crimes were cultural or religious rather than political or even criminal.

Iraq faces one of the worst ever humanitarian crises in the history of the world. Continued war and sanction regime imposed by the external powers devastated the country and inflicted heavy sufferings to the masses. Women and children were the most affected group in this category. Women were the victims in of the crisis in multiple ways. This range from loss of life, liberty, property, dignity and even their existence were also challenged. Human rights violations in many cases are evident in Iraq in various phases of history. This article briefly portraided these violations. They also lost their kith and kin during war and post invasion phase. The post war political arrangements are also inadequate to protect the life and dignity of the women community in Iraq.

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