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The American Genocide Against Iraq: 4% of Population Dead as result of US sanctions, wars

by Juan Cole

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A new household survey of Iraqis has projected the civilian death toll from the Bush administration's invasion and occupation of Iraq at roughly 450,000. Passive information-gathering techniques like logging deaths in the Western press have produced estimates closer to 150,000, but such techniques have been proven to miss a lot of people. (To my knowledge no one was counting all the deaths reported in the some 200 Arabic-language Iraqi newspapers in the 2000s, so even the passive information-gathering was limited. And, the Wikileaks US military log of civilian deaths did not overlap very much with e.g. Iraq Body Count, so both of them were missing things the other caught.)

Of those extra deaths beyond those who would have died if the US had never invaded, some 270,000 died violently, with US troops responsible for about 90,000 civilian deaths and militias for another 90,000. Of those killed violently, 60 percent were shot, and 12 percent died from car bombs. Some 180,000 died because of the destruction of the public health infrastructure (lack of access to hospital treatment, e.g.).

Despite the horrific total, this estimate for 2003-2011 is smaller than the Lancet study of some years ago, which was done under wartime conditions. The authors admit, however, that the death toll could have been even higher; this total is a projection based on 2000 interviews.

The US/ UN sanctions on Iraq of the 1990s, which interdicted chlorine for much of that decade and so made water purification impossible, are estimated to have killed another 500,000 Iraqis, mainly children. (Infants and toddlers die easily from diarrhea caused by gastroenteritis, which causes fatal dehydration).

So the US polished off about a million Iraqis from 1991 through 2011, large numbers of them children. The Iraqi population in that period was roughly 25 million, so the US killed or created the conditions for the killing of 4% of the Iraqi population.

If Iraq had killed 4% of Americans, it would be 12 million people dead.

Iraq did not attack the United States. It did attack Iran in 1980, but by 1983 the US was an ally in Iraq's war against Iran. It also attacked Kuwait, which it occupied quite bestially, but it was out by spring 1991. There was no casus belli or legitimate legal cause of war in 2003. Iraq's main crime appears to have been to be an oil state not compliant with US demands.

All this is horrible enough. Even more horrible is that the US occupation of Iraq sparked a Sunni Arab insurgency, which is still vigorous. Insurgencies typically take 10 to 15 years to subside. Some 5000 Iraqi civilians have been killed so far this year by that insurgency. US occupation is the gift that goes on giving.

Despite the Bush administration's violation of the UN charter and its war crimes in Iraq, none of its high officials has faced prosecution. Some of them even have the gall to come on television from time to time to urge more killing