

Iraq 15 Years Later: Forever War?

March 16,
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Fifteen years ago on March 19, 2003, despite some of the largest protests in global history, the US invaded Iraq. Then-President George W. Bush began the invasion with a barrage of missile attacks nicknamed “Shock and Awe.” Due to 13 years of US/UN sanctions, Iraqis at the time had limited access to electricity, medicine and food. Tens of thousands of Iraqis died in the invasion and subsequent fighting. And although the US declared “Mission Accomplished” on May 1, 2003, the war in Iraq continues today.

Mosul: Amnesty International calls for investigation into civilian deaths after Isis defeat

INDEPENDENT July 11, 2017

New report into human rights abuses during battle for Iraqi city claims US-led coalition forces used ‘unnecessary’ force and indiscriminate targeting which could constitute war crimes



The first war in Iraq was the “Gulf War” that began in January 1991, which continued with the sanctions and bombings in so-called “No-Fly Zones.” The invasion, which Congress approved in a 2002 Authorization for Use of Military Force, was designed to remove Saddam Hussein from power. Although that goal was accomplished, the 2002 AUMF remains in effect today and has been cited by the Trump administration as the reason the US was able to use military force against the Islamic State (ISIS). The fight against ISIS, arguably the third Iraq war, started in August 2014. The US claimed victory after the devastating “liberation” of Mosul, which caused the death of roughly 9000 civilians (Associated Press, December 20).

In late 2011, President Obama followed up on a pledge made by President Bush to withdraw US combat troops, but left about 500 military personnel there as “advisors” and to protect the US embassy in Iraq—the world’s largest. The fight against ISIS led that number to swell to roughly 9000 under Presidents Obama and Trump, even though the US official tally was around 5000 (ABC, November 27), and the Pentagon’s stance remained that no soldiers were engaged in combat. There are also almost 5000 “contractors” in Iraq (Army Times, January 16). In the efforts to push ISIS out of Mosul, the US damaged or destroyed all of that city’s bridges — imagine that happening in Portland. A formerly five minute trip reportedly took over two hours as of early 2018 (Agence France Presse, January 1). Even with the reported defeat of ISIS in December, the US continues to support Iraqi forces, dropping bombs with conventional and drone aircraft (“Friendly fire kills 11 in Iraq air strike,” Reuters, January 27; “U.S.-led coalition warplanes kill 13 Islamic State militants in Mosul,” Iraqi News, February 12), and about 4000 troops remain (Associated Press, February 5). NATO has also pledged to remain in Iraq (Al Jazeera, March 5) even though the Iraqi Parliament has asked all foreign forces to set a date to withdraw (Reuters, March 1).

The sanctions put in place against the late Saddam Hussein’s regime in 1990 included requirements for Iraq to repay Kuwait for their invasion of that country. Iraq still has to make payments despite its dire financial and political situation. Making matters worse, Donald Trump told NBC in January 2017: “We should’ve kept the oil when we got out”— as if the US had the right to take Iraq’s oil. The US initially made no promises to give money to Iraq’s reconstruction after the defeat of ISIS (Reuters, February 8). The estimates of America’s costs of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are about two trillion dollars, which doesn’t include treatment for over 600,000 US veterans who are now listed as disabled (Lobelog, February 17). At least 4500 American soldiers and 180,000 Iraqi civilians (with an estimated 80,000 more Iraqi combatants) died as a result of the invasion and subsequent wars.

The US is currently engaged in active warfare in seven countries— Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Yemen, Somalia, Pakistan, and Libya.* Various government activities and statements indicate possible military actions planned for Iran, Venezuela, North Korea and perhaps even Russia. The military budget proposed by President Trump is over \$700 billion as he plans to cut social safety nets (Truthout, February 27). Our infrastructure is crumbling, schools are cutting important programs (but considering using scarce funds to arm teachers), and thousands of people have no homes or health care in what is supposedly one of the wealthiest nations on earth. It is far past time to reduce America’s footprint in the Middle East by downsizing the US Embassy in Baghdad and bringing all the troops home now!

* Peace and Justice Works also notes that March 19 marks seven years since the US attack on Libya unleashed turmoil in that country.

This flyer was prepared
in March, 2018 by the
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Meetings usually 2nd Mondays, 7 PM; next one is April 9.

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Contact us about our meetings !