

## **ARAB MEDIA SURVEY OF ABU GHRAIB STORIES MAY 2004**

### **ARAB NEWS**

Tuesday 11 May 2004 (21 Rabi` al-Awwal 1425)

#### **Abu Ghraib Could Reduce US Mideast Dreams to Ashes**

Linda S. Heard, Arab News

CAIRO, 11 May 2004 — The US administration's "Greater Middle East" initiative has been rendered completely devoid of moral substance. Photographs depicting the deviant practices of America's "finest" at Abu-Ghraib have surely put an end to the hegemonic pact of the Jewish and Christian Zionist/hawkish military neocons within and around the Bush camp. No longer do they have any kind of moral platform from which to point condemnatory fingers at Arab leaderships. No longer can they hide behind the mask of freedom, justice and democracy. From Casablanca to Khartoum, from Algiers to Aleppo, from Dhahran to Dubai, the game is up.

Not only is the street of Cairo boiling with righteous indignation at the sight of hooded Iraqi prisoners attached to electrodes, leashed like dogs, made to twist their disrobed bodies into pornographic pyramids. While Egyptians seethe at fuzzy pictures in the Al-Waft Egyptian daily showing the rape by US soldiers of young Iraqi women, Arab-born Americans are stricken with shame.

"I used to be proud when I traveled around the world and said 'I am an American'", Bassem El-Kurd, a Palestinian told Ben Fox of the Associated Press. "I don't have that pride anymore. A country that stands for democracy is being viewed as a tyrant," he said. "Those people were treated this way under Saddam, so what did we accomplish? We just brought another Saddam to them."

Alexandria-born Ahmed Ramadan (not his real name), a businessman holding British citizenship told me: "Due to the actions of a few power-mad, greedy individuals in the Bush administration, Americans are no longer respected in the region and can no more expect a warm welcome. We used to trust the US and admire the American way, but since the invasion of Iraq our feelings have changed. However we may perceive our own leaderships, they are preferable to submitting to a repeat performance of the Iraq fiasco when Arabs have had to stand by as their children are killed or maimed, their men-folk gunned down and their sisters and daughters sexually abused."

He went on: "The US has demanded reforms in the Arab world but America should fix itself first. Arabs are waiting to see how the American people intend to repair their sullied international portrait. Bush's apologies won't suffice; they can't erase those disgusting images seared on the minds of every single Arab."

"If the US thinks it can bribe Arab military heads to open the doors to their capitals as may have happened in Iraq, it had better think again," he said. "The Americans went into Baghdad, albeit under a false pretext, as saviors but ended up as occupiers and oppressors. We all know that now and nobody in the region will fall for their empty promises and lies again."

The May 7 “Girl Blog from Iraq” reads: “Every newspaper you pick up in Baghdad has pictures of some American or British atrocity or another. It is like a nightmare that has come to life.”

According to the Iraqi Girl blogger, “... pictures of dead Iraqis are easier to bear than this grotesque show of American military technique... people would rather be dead than sexually abused and degraded by the animals running Abu Ghraib prison... No matter what one’s attitude was toward the occupation, there were moments of pity toward the troops, regardless of their nationality. We would see them suffering under the Iraqi sun, obviously wishing they were somewhere else and somehow, that vulnerability made them seem less monstrous and more human. That time has passed. People look at troops now and see the pictures of Abu Ghraib... and we burn with shame, anger and frustration at not being able to do something.”

As the US has squandered a wealth of international goodwill after Sept. 11 with its unilateral, arrogant, and self-interested foreign policies, so it has misspent the opportunity to really make a difference by handing back to the Iraqi people everything they lost under Saddam. They began by allowing widespread looting, failed to get essential services up and running and appointed a puppet council. Their trigger-happy, often badly trained, soldiers and reservists have gunned down civilians approaching checkpoints, kicked in doors in the middle of the night and tied up small children.

Those so-called purveyors of freedom have fired on demonstrators, closed down newspapers, set up a US propaganda television station and banned some of their Arab media detractors from reporting. Those who take up arms against them to free their own land are called “terrorists”.

So how does the actions of those the US administration refers to as a few bad apples impact on the “War on Terror”? The problem is no matter how many times Bush, Rumsfeld and Powell call those abuses “Un-American”, those who have read a report on US prison conditions in Iraq from the International Red Cross aren’t falling for that argument. The report says that mistreatment (of Iraqis) was “widely tolerated”. Red Cross director Pierre Krahenbuhl says, “We are dealing here with a broad pattern, not individual acts.”

Arabs inevitably compare the abuse meted out to Iraqi detainees with the kindness shown to the young American soldier Jessica Lynch, captured during the invasion and tended to by Iraqi medical staff. They recall the fuss made by Donald Rumsfeld when captured members of the US military were shown on Iraqi television drinking tea and his outraged invocation of the Geneva Conventions and compare that with his futile attempts to whitewash the brutal misdeeds of his own.

These horrors have served as a recruiting tool for the firebrand Iraqi cleric Moqtada Sadr, whose militia has been offered a bounty should members manage to kidnap a coalition soldier, who, if female, can be used as “a slave,” his spokesman says. As we brace ourselves for worse to come, as predicted by Rumsfeld, we can scarcely imagine more abhorrent images than those already circulating. The US should have borne in mind the adage: When fighting the enemy, be careful you don’t become the enemy you are fighting. But it didn’t and now it’s too late. All it can do now is cut its losses, pull out and work on polishing its image irreparably tarnished by the

grotesque leering features of Lynndie England and her equally degenerate uniformed friends.

Monday 10 May 2004 (20 Rabi` al-Awwal 1425)

**Will ‘the Doings of a Few’ Principle Apply to Us?**

Muhammad Salahuddin, Arab News

In one of his first press conferences in Baghdad following his appointment as civil administrator, Paul Bremer apologized for the heavy Iraqi casualties and the increasing destruction.

“American soldiers are trained in combat and not in peacekeeping,” he said. Whether Bremer forgot or wasn’t aware at the time, American officers and soldiers are in fact trained in many things besides fighting — methods of humiliating, deadly torture which violate human dignity and degrades humanity!

In any case, Donald Rumsfeld wasn’t honest when he said that the torture inflicted on the Abu Ghraib prisoners in Baghdad was an isolated incident. He lied when he declared that his department didn’t know of the incident until the beginning of the year. The military reports to the secretary of defense cites incidents of torture as going back to October last year; the reports confirm through eyewitness testimonies, evidence and other documents that the torture and criminal acts of degradation were systematic and organized and that those who carried them out were constantly encouraged and praised by their superiors.

Perhaps readers remember the film leaked more than a year ago to the European Union that was later shown to the European Parliament. It revealed the tragedy of more than 3000 Afghan prisoners who suffocated to death as a result of being transported to their prisons inside closed tanks. Perhaps readers will also recall the massacre in one of Kabul’s prisons in which thousands of prisoners were killed.

In short the full extent of the American occupier’s crimes in Afghanistan and Iraq will not be revealed for years to come. They may even remain hidden forever.

We must not happily accept assertions from President Bush, Secretary of State Colin Powell and Rumsfeld that the group that tortured Iraqis, violated their dignity and trampled on their humanity does not represent the American people or the American armed forces nor America’s high principles and morals — the contention that it was the doings of a few. We would like to be able to accept it happily — but on one condition: that the American administration look upon the Saudi people and the Islamic Ummah with that same logic and review its insane policies and actions toward us on that basis.

Eleven young Saudi men were involved in the criminal attacks on New York but no one in the American administration seems to have realized that that number does not represent 15 million Saudis and their morals and principles. Neither does it affect the solid friendship of those 15 million Saudis with America. Yet that was the basis on which the Islamic Ummah was treated because a few of its sons deviated and adopted the methods of terrorism. Moreover Bush’s

malicious aides who in fact control him, considered the Ummah as a whole — religion, principles, educational curriculum and social system — responsible for what happened. It was as though the Ummah is one giant factory churning out terrorism and terrorists.

Even relief organizations, charities and donation boxes for orphans, widows, the sick, the retarded, charities teaching the Qur'an and schools to combat illiteracy were treated as if they were entities eagerly funding terrorism and creating killers. Or so the world was told by a merciless and fanatical Zionist campaign that trampled on all international laws, ignored all the rules of justice, human rights and requirements of law.

Well, Mr. Bush, can you now, from the depths of the Iraqi swamp, comprehend that the participants in the New York attacks don't represent the Saudi people and that others of their ilk who have turned to terrorism don't represent Arabs and Muslims? Can you curb the unruly extremist Zionist clique that rules in your name and stop the mad plans and policies that have only earned you and your country the hatred of the whole world, even of your closest allies, and made the world more dangerous than it ever was before? Have you, Mr. President, retained for yourself and your people any principles beyond the total and blind support for the war criminal Sharon, who has been condemned and denounced even by his own people — judges, politicians and military men?

Friday 14 May 2004 (24 Rabi` al-Awwal 1425)

### **Half-Hearted Apology Wouldn't Do**

Ramzy Baroud, Arab News

AMMAN, 14 May 2004 — Although it may seem as if the welfare of the tortured Iraqi prisoners of Abu Ghraib was itself the center of the unfolding political controversy in Washington, the reality is strikingly different.

Neither the fate of the abused prisoners, nor the interests of the people of Iraq is pertinent to America's foreign policymakers, or to those who covet their positions.

For the unexamined eye, the words of Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld before the Senate Armed Service Committee appear heartfelt and politically unadulterated. "To those Iraqis who were mistreated by members of the US armed forces, I offer my deepest apology," he said. Some analysts concluded that Rummy's little act might've secured his post, at least for a little while longer.

It's rather strange how the fate of millions of people, exemplified by the tortured prisoners would have to concede to events of greater consequence: For example, Rumsfeld's need to secure his post.

And since domestic politics, with its checks and balances, is the only factor of essence in a travesty such as Abu Ghraib's, it came as no surprise that the only questions raised by the US

media were meant to serve such an end: Whose head will roll? Who is the likely scapegoat? And how will Democrats exploit the matter?

A conscientious examination of the ingrained racism that led American troops to commit such sadist and vile acts against helpless — and most likely innocent — Iraqi prisoners seemed flat out irrelevant.

I also cannot help but wonder if opposing the occupation of Iraq, considering the physical and mental devastation brought about by Bush's destructive foreign policy in that country is still "un-American"?

But these naive sentiments aside, Washington's spin-doctors must be busy at work, offering their precious advice to Bush and his cronies — and of course his political foes — to escape the scandal unscathed.

Therefore, Rumsfeld was probably told to play the role of the martyr and absorb the fall like the old warrior that he supposedly is. "These events occurred on my watch as secretary of defense. I am accountable for them. I take full responsibility."

Yet, those who fought an illegal and unjustified war together persist on deceiving the American public together.

For one, Gen. Richard Myers, chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff insists on justifying his action on moral grounds. While it is hard to detect any morality in this degrading mess, Myers said that his request to CBS not to air the photos of the tortured Iraqi prisoners had nothing to do with a government cover-up. He simply wanted to ensure that the photos would not inflame the "insurgency" in Iraq and therefore endanger American lives. As far as Bush is concerned, the emperor is well shielded by his devout warriors, as if he's actually as stunned as the rest of us. Strange, I was always under the impression that it was the rigidity of the "Commander-in-Chief" that shoved Americans into this quagmire in the first place, sparking a murderous war that has claimed the lives of thousands.

Now President Bush has been assigned a new role: The seeker of the truth. "We will find the truth and everybody will see the truth. People will testify. There will be fair trials, if there are trials," he told reporters.

Democratic presidential nominee Kerry, however, guessed that most Americans must have forgotten by now that he voted for a war and invasion of Iraq, and has in fact maintained a hawkish record himself, as militant and reckless as Bush. Consumed by his increased chances of a victory in the November elections, he decided to take on the truth-seeking Bush. "The chain of command goes all the way to the Oval office," he said. The disheartening reality however, remains unchanged: The fate of Iraqis is the least of these self-consumed politicians' concern. If it really is the dignity of the Iraqi man and woman that matters, then why not apologize for war itself? And why not confront Bush for unleashing his bloody campaign of "shock and awe" and false pretenses in the first place?

It's appalling that only a few seem to make the link between the torture at Abu Ghraib and the larger context of violence and bloodshed that engulfed Iraq in the last year, the collective humiliation of an entire nation, the thousands of victims, the chaos, the rape, the killings, the kidnappings and more.

Thursday 20 May 2004 (30 Rabi` al-Awwal 1425)

### **Clashes in Iraq as First US Soldier Is Jailed for Abuse**

Naseer Al-Nahr, Arab News

BAGHDAD, 20 May 2004 — Violent clashes between US forces and Shiite militias continued in Iraq yesterday as the first US serviceman accused of abusing Iraqi prisoners received the maximum penalty in a court-martial. Eight Iraqis were killed and 11 others wounded during overnight and early morning clashes in the cities of Karbala and Hillah, about 80 kilometers south of Baghdad.

In another development, a US helicopter fired on a wedding party yesterday in western Iraq, killing more than 40 people, Iraqi officials said. The US military said it could not confirm the report and was investigating.

Lt. Col Ziyad Al-Jbouri, deputy police chief of Ramadi, said between 42 and 45 people were killed in the attack, which took place about 2:45 a.m. in a remote desert area near the border with Syria and Jordan. He said the dead included 15 children and 10 women. Dr. Salah Al-Ani, who works at a hospital in Ramadi, put the death toll at 45.

Meanwhile, US soldier Spc. Jeremy Sivits received the maximum penalty — one year in prison, reduction in rank and a bad conduct discharge — in the first court-martial stemming from mistreatment of Iraqi prisoners by US forces.

Sivits had pleaded guilty to the conspiracy charge but maintained he had been asked by his superiors to take photos of abuses against Iraqi detainees in Baghdad's Abu Ghraib prison, among them that of a human pyramid of hooded naked prisoners.

So far seven service members have been accused with abuse, but Iraqi citizens and politicians yesterday remained skeptical about the US investigations into the scandal.

Raja Habib Al-Kuzai, a member of the Iraqi Governing Council, complained that the proceedings against Sivits took place behind closed doors and many Iraqis in Baghdad branded the trial as a public relations exercise by the US-led occupation.

The hearing in the US controlled Green Zone was open to the public, but not broadcast on television. A limited number of Arab news networks were allowed to attend the trial but human rights organizations were barred from entry to the courtroom.

As the court-martial was taking place in the capital, the city of Karbala was facing its latest

casualties in the ongoing battle between occupation forces and militias loyal to rebel Shiite cleric Moqtada Sadr.

Four Iraqis died and nine were injured, as US forces came within 50 meters of the Imam Hussein Mosque, according to Ali Mussa, the head of the Al-Hussein Hospital.

Three people were killed and four wounded in the Najjareen neighborhood when a US tank firing sporadically hit a taxi carrying seven people, reports said.

However, despite the fighting, some 1,000 supporters of Iraq's moderate senior cleric Grand Ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani also gathered peacefully in Karbala, calling for the withdrawal of US troops from the city.

In Hillah, gunmen killed local official Qassem Abdel Amir Ajam, his bodyguard, and his driver during a visit to the northern outskirts of the city. Ajam belonged to the Iraqi Communist Party and had been appointed to the municipality after the fall of Saddam Hussein.

Saturday 22 May 2004 (02 Rabi` al-Thani 1425)

### **More Prison Horrors Emerge**

Naseer Al-Nahr • Arab News

One of the photos of prisoner abuse that appeared in Friday's Washington Post.

BAGHDAD, 22 May 2004 — Hundreds of Iraqis were released yesterday from the infamous Abu Ghraib prison here as more instances of abuse of inmates surfaced.

According to a report in the Washington Post, some prisoners at Abu Ghraib were ridden like animals, fondled by female soldiers, forced to curse their religion and required to retrieve their food from toilets.

The Post also published new photographs and shots from a video of the abuse and sexual humiliation of Iraq prisoners by US soldiers. The newspaper said the material, including secret sworn statements from prisoners, came from evidence being assembled from investigations into possible criminal charges against US soldiers.

The photographs depict a US soldier apparently preparing to strike a shackled detainee, a hooded inmate collapsed with his wrists handcuffed to the railing and a baton-wielding soldier appearing to order a naked detainee covered in what looks like excrement to walk a straight line, though his ankles are shackled.

The Post said it obtained hundreds of more pictures and several digital videos of the abuse. In one photo, a cornered inmate is cowering as a soldier tries to restrain a large black dog with both hands. In another, a soldier appears to be kneeling on naked detainees.

In secret testimony to military investigators in mid-January, detainees said they were beaten and humiliated by American soldiers working the night shift at Tier 1A in Abu Ghraib during Ramadan, according to the Post.

The Post also said the detainees told investigators they were forced to denounce Islam or force-fed pork or liquor, required to masturbate in front of female soldiers, threatened with rape, and made to walk on all fours and bark like dogs.

“They said we will make you wish to die and it will not happen,” the newspaper quoted one detainee, identified as Ameen Saeed Al-Sheikh, as saying.

One detainee said he witnessed a US Army translator raping a boy of 15 at the prison, who shouted in pain. Another detainee described US Army Specialist Charles Graner and other US soldiers sodomizing an inmate with a phosphoric light.

Brig. Gen. Janis Karpinski, who oversaw the prison, said that the new photos were shocking but reiterated that she had seen no abuses of prisoners during the time she oversaw the facility.

She said she had limited access to the cellblocks where the abuses occurred because military intelligence personnel oversaw interrogation of prisoners and had panels installed over the doors and windows.

“If anybody had briefed me on those procedures and said ‘This is what we’re planning to do,’ I would have said, ‘Not in one of my facilities,’” Karpinski told CBS television.

Yesterday, Hundreds of prisoners were released from Abu Ghraib, some accusing their US captors of maltreatment. Some 13 buses filled with prisoners left the gates of the jail. Coalition officials said Thursday that 472 people were to be freed.

As the vehicles pulled away through the dust under the baking sun, female relatives of detainees, among hundreds who crowd outside the prison every day for news of loved ones, wailed out.

“I’ve been waiting here for eight hours. I hope 16 of my relatives will be released today,” said Hamed Idham Jassem, 24, who says his brothers and cousins, arrested last September, are jailed at Abu Ghraib.

There was jubilation for reunited families. Ahlam Ahmed was overjoyed to embrace her grinning son, who was delighted to be a free man again. “Alas, two of my other sons have not been released. I’ll continue to wait, but I’m frightened for them. I’ll only rest when the last American soldier leaves the country,” she said.

Prisoners pressed their faces against the grubby windows, straining to pick out their own relatives from the crowd. As each bus snaked its way out of the prison gates, US soldiers battled to keep the crowd at bay.

One elderly woman cried with joy, although her son was not let out. “I am so happy to see these

people freed. They are not people from my family, but that's how it is," said 64-year-old Suhad Abdeluahab Al-Sheikh.

She said her brother has been at Abu Ghraib for four months. "I can't see him because he is still being interrogated. After everything I've heard, I'm scared for him," she added. Later, three of the buses pulled up at the base of the paramilitary Iraqi Civil Defense Corps at Amariyah nearby, where about 60 former detainees got off, clutching blankets and bags.

## **Dar Al Hayat**

### **he Dialogue Of Cultures At Abu Ghraib**

**Azmi Bishara    Al-Hayat    2004/05/6**

As we were contemplating the new modern flag, an innovation of the Macintosh computer, we heard the news from America about the torture, had it not come from America it would not have even been news worthy. Yet, first the concept of changing flags should not be undermined, for changing symbols and flags contribute to creating a psychological instability that affects the legitimacy of the country. Two blue stripes denote the Tigris and the Euphrates and a yellow one symbolizing the Kurds. Since the flag claims to symbolize what exists in Iraq, then according to its direct symbolism there is nothing in Iraq except the Tigris, the Euphrates and the Kurds. It claims to represent what is there and there are no Arabs. While the crescent is a religious symbol in blue, the resemblance between this flag and another ethnic flag in the region, which also has two blue stripes and a blue religious symbol, is astounding. As we were engrossed in this modernity, the Abu Ghraib news came to remind us that there is another side for modernism.

The first thing we should pay attention to is that the American torture that was perpetrated by some male and female American and British hooligans and that generated a wave of anger and condemnation took place between October and December of last year. Half a year has passed and no one has even heard of what happened except the inspectors, as if it did not happen. It took half a year for it to actually happen that is for it to affect public opinion, just because it was on TV. If it is on TV, then it "existed." Who knows how many cases of torture and murder have occurred without being on TV. Yet, we are sure that such occurrences happen on a daily basis and that what happened in Abu Ghraib is not an exception, as General Myers claimed, but is the rule. Why do I say so? Because what is taking place in Iraq is an occupation, and occupation from afar is a forceful subjugation of a country, theoretically it is about interests, strategies, security ideologies and geopolitical realities... but up close occupation is a physical act of subjugation of those under occupation, a situation of random violence or random tolerance, it all depends on the occupier's haphazard will. Ask the Palestinians!

The occupation is also a group of young people eager to oppress an older generation and freely act out their sexual perversions, their sick imagination, prejudgments, hatred and racism against those under the occupation. It is a situation of control and control at the end is physical. Occupation is the absurd concept of leaving young men to control a people, protected by their

uniforms and weapons. Free and democratic colonialism has generalized the right of control and oppression on all citizens. In dictatorships there are those who specialize in torture while in democratic systems the right to torture is everybody's. Ask the Palestinians! Average young men and women carry out torture. When some of us saw the image of nude men toppled over each other we were reminded of the pictures of corpses in the Auschwitz concentration camp, not that the comparison is scientific or precise but because it is a visual resemblance. I admit that there is no relation between the two but let us at least remember the Auschwitz crime took place in the heart of Western civilization and not in the "backward Islamic East." Furthermore, in what Bush and Sharon like to call the Judeo-Christian tradition, although we reject this term and its connotations, there is a frightening amount of physical violence whether the genocide against Native Americans and the Jewish genocide in Europe and the behavior with political dissidents and peoples under the occupation.

Scoundrel young men from Iowa and West Virginia will bring freedom. They come armed with racism and prejudgments produced in Hollywood along with their sexual perversions and digital cameras in order to document and show off what they are doing. Nothing is done in the postmodern world without an entertainment or exhibitionist factor. If an adventure was not pictured it did not happen. This is not only true about the scandalous news but also about showing off to friends the video clip of torture. I bet that some have sent pictures through cellular phones, some were tempted to insult and commit obscenities against Iraqis just to entertain friends, since the phones are there and it is a feasible possibility.

Humanist philosophers explained torture in many ways; however, the essence of torture is invading privacy, the basis of which is the body. Torture creates a feeling of impotence and turns the victim's body as a weapon in his enemy's hands. If there is a place that studied the relation between sex, control, sexual humiliation, the pretense of authority and turning the dominated man into a woman by sexually humiliating him, for the woman is conceived by chauvinist culture to be an object... if there is an academy where the issues of sexual violence and colonialism are discussed, it is the American academy. As usual the American thinkers who justified torture following 9/11 are now considering the torture at Abu Ghraib as an exception. All the crimes perpetrated there are sadist and brutal crimes that are punished by American law and would repel the average American. The articles that justified torture after 9/11 contributed in creating a general atmosphere that justified torture, the stream of articles, talk shows and movies that demonized and dehumanized Arabs and Muslims, especially the men among them, made such treatment of them possible by average young men. This is the most dangerous aspect that torture is being committed by normal young men within the occupation; the occupation being the perversion.

The gesture that, in my opinion, should be banned is the rude, chauvinist and showy "thumbs-up" gesture, regardless if it was done by a female soldier. Accompanying this gesture is an image of Iraqi nude and abused men. This macho thumbs-up gesture is the flag of the occupation, if there is to be a new flag.

**Thoughts On Abu Ghraib**  
**Hazem Saghieh Al-Hayat 2004/05/8**

The horrible pictures that reached the whole universe confirmed once more the cruelty of wars and their tendency, even if fought for the noblest of goals, to decline to a brutal and inhumane level. Yet, the torture that the Iraqi detainees were subjected to has some distinct attributes that cannot be ignored. The goals which the war was fought for have been proven to be false. The only remaining motive is the claim of the liberation of the Iraqis from their former tyrant. Suddenly, this liberation exposes what took place at Abu Ghraib! We could cynically say that wars always carry with them the seeds of torture, it remains to be said that the torture, this time, comes preceded by a grand pattern and a huge event, which in itself has become a pattern.

There is on the one hand the tendency of individualism and unilateralism which was conducted by the Bush administration, particularly after 9/11, and then it climaxed during the war on Iraq. Individualism, whether deliberate or not, marginalizes the values championed by humanity. If it is true that dehumanizing a person is an introduction and justification of torture, then the policy of individualism implies a hierarchy of countries and of values. In this context, Republican America, which is overconfident in its rights and uninterested in what others have to say about them, is more capable of conducting the torture that we all saw the pictures of. Being an occupying country, America is adding one hierarchy to another. The event which has become more of a pattern is the Guantanamo military camp which is considered to be a shameful reminder of the moment when democracy and the rule of law declined. Who will evaluate Guantanamo and find its justifications, like in the case of Iraq?

The Italian writer and intellectual Umberto Eco once wrote that the sanctity of the body and its respect is the one thing that unites humanity on common values. What happened in Abu Ghraib represents a flagrant violation in this respect and it would probably widen the gap which is tearing "the unity of humanity" apart. When the parties involved are Americans, Arabs and Muslims who already have their bitter history, then the hateful feelings are more likely to intensify. Instead of containing the reason of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in causing "hate of America," another reason was added.

It might be argued that American officials have apologized in one way or another. It might also be said that the Abu Ghraib atrocity was a daily habit in the Saddam Hussein era and is still a daily habit in many Arab societies. This is all true but beside the point. The issue is about America as it marches towards us carrying the promising slogans of a savior!

**ALJAZEERA ONLINE**

**UPDATED ON:**  
**Thursday, May 05, 2005**  
**03:15 Mecca time, 00:15 GMT**  
**archive**  
**Mistrial called in Iraq abuse case**

## **England has pleaded guilty to abusing Iraqi prisoners**

A judge has rejected a guilty plea and declared a mistrial in the court martial of Lynndie England, the US soldier who featured in some of the worst Abu Ghraib prison abuse photos.

The judge, Colonel James Pohl, told England he was obliged to throw out her plea after Charles Graner, the alleged abuse ringleader, testified that he had ordered England to hold a leash that was tied around the neck of a naked Iraqi prisoner.

That was one of many statements made during the court martial which contradicted a sworn statement England made.

"I know this is hard on you, but this trial is going to stop today," Pohl said on Wednesday.

"There is evidence being presented that you are not guilty," Pohl told England, 22, after sending Graner and the jury out of the room.

Graner, England's former lover, said one of the central acts of the case - in which England appeared holding a naked prisoner on a leash - was a legitimate prison procedure.

"If you don't believe you are guilty, if you honestly believe you were doing what Graner told you to do, then you can't plead guilty," the judge said.

England pleaded guilty on Monday to seven counts of abuse in return for a shorter sentence and the dropping of two charges.

### **Abuse scandal**

Her smiling face on pictures of naked and humiliated Iraqis, taken at the prison outside Baghdad in late 2003, is a lasting image of the scandal.

In presenting testimony before the six-member military jury, England's lawyers were trying to show mitigating circumstances.

They were skating a fine line between minimising England's role and having the judge reject the guilty plea.

In a televised interview last year, England said she was just following orders, and took a similar line when the judge first asked her about her guilty plea on Monday.

### **Photographs**

"I assumed it was OK because he (Graner) was an MP (military policeman). He had the background as a corrections officer and with him being older than me I thought he knew what he was doing."

Graner outranked England in Iraq, but his rank was reduced to private as part of his sentence after he was earlier found guilty of abuse.

Graner, addressing the leash incident in court for the first time, said the prisoner involved had repeatedly threatened and assaulted Americans.

**"There is evidence being presented that you are not guilty. If you don't believe you are guilty, if you honestly believe you were doing what Graner told you to do, then you can't plead guilty"**

Judge Colonel James Pohl

"I had wrapped what I call the tether around his shoulder and at that point it slid round his neck. I asked [England] to hold the tether and I took three quick pictures," he said.

Referring to his time as a prison officer in Pennsylvania, Graner said: "I tried to bring what we would have done at Pennsylvania."

Explaining the photographs, he said: "Since we had a planned use of force, I documented it."

**UPDATED ON:**

**Monday, May 10, 2004**

**02:49 Mecca time, 23:49 GM**

**US military damaged**

As part of her plea deal, England accepted a sentence, still undisclosed, substantially below the 11-year maximum allowed by the charges. The military panel is able to reduce that sentence but may not increase it.

**Graner's testimony forced the judge to declare a mistrial**

England's mother attended the hearing and brought England's seven-month-old baby by Graner to the courthouse.

The defence lawyers seeking a lower sentence have two main arguments - that England had suffered from learning disabilities while growing up, and that she was manipulated by Graner, who has been sentenced to 10 years for his part in the abuse.

Publication of the photographs in early 2004 hurt the credibility of the US military at a time when the United States was being criticised around the world for the Iraq invasion.

To date, high-ranking officials have not been charged in the abuse scandal even though details of harsh practices in detention centres across Iraq, Afghanistan and Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, have emerged.

## **US military sets up Iraq abuse court**

### **Stung by world outcry, US is to bring abuse cases to court**

The US military has announced the first court martial in the Abu Ghraib prisoner scandal, ordering a reservist to face a public trial in Baghdad on 19 May.

Jeremy Sivits, a member of the 372nd Military Police Company, will face a military court less than a month after photos of prisoners being abused and humiliated were first broadcast on 28 April.

Both the speed of the trial's scheduling and the venue in the Iraqi capital underscore the military's realisation that it must demonstrate resolve in prosecuting those responsible for a scandal that threatens to undermine US occupation authority in Iraq and President George Bush's re-election chances.

Brigadier General Mark Kimmitt, announcing the trial date on Sunday, said the proceedings would be held in the Baghdad Convention Centre, which houses the occupation press office, and be open to media coverage.

### **Specific charges**

Sivits is one of seven soldiers facing charges, but appears to be a lesser figure in the case.

Some of the others will likely go before a general court martial, which can give more severe punishments than the "special" court martial that will try Sivits.

But his trial could produce evidence for prosecuting others believed more culpable.

He is believed to have taken some of the photos that triggered the scandal. His father, Daniel Sivits, said last month his son "was told to take a picture, and he did what he was told".

### **US lawyers say there are much worse pictures to come**

He said his son trained as a mechanic, but found himself performing military police work for which he was unqualified.

The soldier was charged with conspiracy to mistreat detainees, dereliction of duty for failing to protect prisoners and maltreatment of detainees. Seven officers have received career-ending reprimands.

If convicted, he could face one year in prison, reduction in rank to private, forfeiture of two-thirds of his pay for a year, a fine or a bad conduct discharge. Penalties could include only one, all or any combination of those punishments.

Choosing between trial before a single military judge or a three-member panel of senior officers, he has the right to a civilian attorney and will have access to military counsel.

### **Exception or rule?**

Officials hope the trial will convince Iraqis that the US does not tolerate torture and will act swiftly to punish those responsible.

The trials could determine whether abuse at Abu Ghraib was an aberration - as the US command insists - or stemmed from pressure from military intelligence units to make detainees more compliant under questioning.

**"We were dealing here with a broad pattern, not individual acts.  
There was a pattern and a system"**

Pierre Kraehenbuel,

Red Cross operations director

Months before the scandal broke, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) told top Washington officials it had problems with the treatment of prisoners in Iraq and at the US detention centre in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, said Antonella Notari, chief agency spokeswoman.

She said ICRC President Jakob Kellenberger spoke about prison conditions during January meetings with Secretary of State Colin Powell, National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice and Deputy Defence Secretary Paul Wolfowitz.

"He raised concerns regarding detention in Iraq, along with Guantanamo and other locations," Notari told The Associated Press in Geneva.

### **Breaking prisoners in**

One soldier facing charges, Sabrina Harman, said she and others with the 372nd Military Police Company took direction from army military intelligence officers, CIA operatives and civilian contractors who conducted interrogations.

American officials have insisted the abuses at Abu Ghraib were carried out by a handful of soldiers who failed to follow procedures and were not part of a systematic programme of brutality.

### **Brig Gen Mark Kimmitt (L) insists most soldiers are professional**

"Please don't paint with such a wide brush that it indicts the other 135,000 American soldiers and marines out there doing the right thing," Kimmitt told reporters. He said investigators believe that only a "very small number of guards" were involved.

However, Iraqis freed from US custody since the war began in March 2003 have long told of abusive treatment including lying bound in the sun for hours; being attacked by dogs; being

deprived of water; and left hooded for days. Until photos were published, their complaints won little attention except from human rights groups.

### **History of abuse**

Last summer, Amnesty International said it learned Red Cross inspectors were finding serious abuses, and it charged that "torture and gross abuse of human rights" were occurring.

On Friday, the ICRC disclosed it had repeatedly demanded last year that US authorities correct problems at Abu Ghraib and other detention centres. The Americans took action on some issues but not others, it said.

### **Punishments could range from a year in jail to a pay cut**

"We were dealing here with a broad pattern, not individual acts. There was a pattern and a system," Pierre Kraehenbuel, the Red Cross operations director, said in Geneva.

US lawmakers have warned that the most repulsive photos have yet to be released and have insisted that the army investigation should have repercussions for those higher-up and not just the military police accused of abusing detainees.

"I think command responsibility has to be looked at just as seriously as the abusers," Republican Senator Lindsey Graham of South Carolina said on Saturday.

"The culture that led to this outrageous conduct has to be addressed just as much as the conduct itself."

### **Admission**

Senator Ben Nelson, a Nebraska Democrat, added: "I think we need to move beyond scapegoating here of privates and sergeants to get at the facts as to what truly did happen."

In an interview by email from Baghdad, Harman, the military policewoman, told The Washington Post it was made clear that her mission was to break down the prisoners.

"They would bring in one to several prisoners at a time already hooded and cuffed," Harman said. "The job of the MP was to keep them awake, make it hell so they would talk."

Harman, 26, is one of two smiling soldiers in a photo standing behind naked, hooded Iraqi prisoners stacked in a pyramid.

### **UPDATED ON:**

**Tuesday, May 03, 2005**

**10:39 Mecca time, 07:39 GMT**

## **Abu Ghraib abuse soldier pleads guilty**

### **England will get no more than 11 years in jail for the abuses**

Private First Class Lynndie England, the woman pictured grinning and giving a thumbs-up in some of the most notorious photos to come out of the Abu Ghraib prison scandal, has pleaded guilty to mistreating Iraqi prisoners.

England said she let her comrades talk her into going along with the abuse.

Wearing her dress green US Army uniform and speaking sombrely in a soft voice, the 22-year-old reservist told the judge that she initially resisted taking part in the abuse at the prison outside Baghdad, but ultimately caved in to peer pressure.

"I had a choice, but I chose to do what my friends wanted me to," she said, entering her plea on Monday, a day before the start of her trial.

### **Plea bargain**

The charges carry up to 11 years in prison, but prosecutors and the defence reached an agreement for a lighter sentence, the length of which was not disclosed.

**"They were being very persistent, bugging me, so I said, 'OK, whatever'"**

Lynndie England

A military jury will convene on Tuesday to determine her punishment; she will get the lesser of the jury's sentence or the term agreed on in the plea bargain.

If she had been convicted as charged, she could have been jailed for 16 1/2 years.

The judge asked her about a photo depicting her smiling and pointing at a naked detainee's genitals while smoking a cigarette. England said she replied: "No, no way" at first when a fellow soldier asked her to pose for the picture.

"But they were being very persistent, bugging me, so I said, 'OK, whatever'," she told the judge.

### **Military image tarnished**

The plea bargain settles one of the most prominent cases to come out of the Abu Ghraib scandal, which damaged the image of the US military and sparked outrage against the United States around the globe.

### **England (C) posed for pictures with naked Abu Ghraib detainees**

England became a central figure in the scandal after photos emerged last year showing her and

others sexually humiliating Iraqi prisoners.

One of the photos showed her holding a hooded, naked prisoner on a leash. Another showed her smiling and giving a thumbs-up next to nude prisoners stacked in a pyramid.

England's lawyers have argued that she and others in her military police unit were acting on orders from military intelligence officers to "soften up" prisoners for interrogation.

### **Having fun**

But army investigators testified during hearings last summer that England said the reservists took the photos while "they were joking around, having some fun".

The judge, Colonel James Pohl, went through each photo while asking England about her actions at Abu Ghraib in the fall of 2003.

"I could have said no," she said. "I knew it was wrong."

### **"I could have said no. I knew it was wrong"**

Lynndie England

She told the judge that Private Charles Graner Junior, the reputed ringleader of the abuses and the man said to be the father of England's infant son, put the leash around the prisoner's neck in order to take him from one cell to another.

When the prisoner resisted, she told the judge, Graner said to her: "Hold this, I'm going to take a picture." Pohl asked if she thought the leash was a legitimate way to control the detainee.

"I assumed it was OK because he was an MP," England said of Graner. "He had a background as a corrections officer."

Graner was convicted in January on a range of abuse charges and sentenced to 10 years in prison.

### **Mental problems**

England's lawyer Rick Hernandez said last week that the defence would present evidence during the sentencing that England had severe learning disabilities and mental problems. He said there had been no decision on whether she would testify.

Graner is expected to testify for the defence during England's sentencing as early as Tuesday.

### **The defence says England (L) has mental problems**

England entered guilty pleas to two counts of conspiracy to maltreat prisoners, four counts of maltreating prisoners, and one count of committing an indecent act. Prosecutors agreed to drop another count of committing an indecent act and one count of dereliction of duty.

England, from Fort Ashby, West Virginia, is one of seven members of the Maryland-based 372nd Military Police Company charged with humiliating and assaulting prisoners at Abu Ghraib.

Four other members of the 372nd and two low-level military intelligence officers have entered guilty pleas, with sentences ranging from no prison time to 8 1/2 years.

The only soldier to stand trial so far is Graner. Specialist Sabrina Harman, a former Abu Ghraib guard, is scheduled to go to trial at Fort Hood next week.

Several investigations have been conducted, but so far only low-level soldiers have been charged, although the defendants have alleged that high-level officials condoned the abuse.

#### **UPDATED ON:**

**Monday, May 03, 2004**

**12:55 Mecca time, 09:55 GMT**

**US report 'confirms' serial Iraq abuse**

#### **Pictures showing prisoners being abused appalled the world**

An American magazine has reported that Iraqi prisoners faced numerous "sadistic, blatant and wanton criminal abuses" including sodomy and beatings by US occupation soldiers.

The New Yorker magazine in its 10 May issue quotes extensively from a 53-page, internal US military report, confirming widespread abuses at Baghdad's Abu Ghraib prison.

The army report authorised by Lt General Ricardo Sanchez "the top US army officer in Iraq - lists the diabolical tortures often heaped on Iraqi prisoners.

The report listed abuses such as "breaking chemical lights and pouring the phosphoric liquid on detainees | beating detainees with a broom handle and a chair, threatening male detainees with rape, allowing a military police guard to stitch the wound of a detainee who was injured after being slammed against the wall in his cell, sodomising a detainee with a chemical light and perhaps a broom stick".

The report, written by Major General Antonio Taguba, said evidence to support the allegations included "detailed witness statements and the discovery of extremely graphic photographic evidence."

#### **Disturbing photos**

News of the military report comes days after photographs showing abuse by US occupation troops of Iraqi prisoners were published and broadcast around the globe.

The photos showed US troops smiling, posing, laughing or giving the thumbs-up sign as naked, male Iraqi prisoners were stacked in a pyramid or positioned to simulate sex acts with one another.

A London-based newspaper on Saturday also published pictures showing British soldiers urinating on a hooded Iraqi captive.

Stung by the pictures and the resultant global outrage, UK Prime Minister Tony Blair said the abuse of Iraqi prisoners was "completely and totally unacceptable."

"Let me make it quite clear that if these things have actually been done, they are completely and totally unacceptable. We went to Iraq to get rid of that sort of thing, not to do it," the prime minister said.

**UPDATED ON:**

**Saturday, April 09, 2005**

**10:31 Mecca time, 07:31 GMT**

**US general: Iraq abuse trials unfair**

**Brigadier Karpinski says punishments have been selective**

A US general, who oversaw prisons in occupied Iraq, has said that only low-ranking soldiers have been singled out and punished for prisoner abuse.

Brigadier Janis Karpinski, who oversaw 17 Iraqi prisons including Abu Ghraib, said the reservists jailed to date did not devise techniques such as stacking up naked prisoners or forcing them to masturbate.

"I don't think that any of them had a fair opportunity. I will never change my position on that," she said.

"I guarantee you that none of those soldiers knew enough about the Arab culture to be able to say this is the right thing that we should do," she said."

"Somebody who was very familiar with what would work told them how to do those things."

**Fixing responsibility**

Since the prison scandal broke last year, six soldiers have admitted abusing Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib. Another, Charles Graner, contended he was following orders to soften up prisoners, but a military court rejected that line and sentenced him to 10 years in prison.

"Look, I am not defending any of them," Karpinski said. "There were some things that they did

wrong, they crossed the line. What I am saying for them is fair and equal."

"Graner's sentence is 10 years. Soldiers that were responsible for actually a prisoner's death have been simply removed from the military. In some cases it was a reduction in rank."

Karpinski said she was in the dark about abuses and denied any personal involvement.

Now suspended from her command of the 800th Military Police brigade in Iraq, Karpinski is writing a book on Abu Ghraib prison.

## **QUOTES**

Last Updated: Thursday, 6 May, 2004, 11:48 GMT 12:48 UK

### **Arab media anger at prison scandal**

**Following President Bush's Arabic TV interviews, media commentators in the region continue to focus on the revelations of abuses at Iraq's Abu Ghraib prison. Several newspapers on Thursday point to the contrast between US words and US deeds. One dubs the US actions "a war crime".**

No matter what programmed American media channel [President Bush] uses, he cannot justify what cannot be justified, vindicate what cannot be vindicated, or apologize for something for which no apology can be accepted.

### **Syria's Al-Thawrah**

If the president imagined for one minute that his acknowledgement of the wrongs done to luckless detainees was going to help matters, he was mistaken. Once again his simplistic and elementary worldview has played him false... The savagery of the US military is only a symptom of a wider abject policy failure for which the president ought actually to have been apologizing last night. The whole exercise simply cut no ice.

### **Saudi Arabia's Arab News**

President Bush has chosen to speak at a time when the US image in the region in general is the worst it has been for decades. The US administration, with its political and military branches, is responsible for what happened at Abu Ghraib prison and for countless violations against the Iraqis throughout an entire year. There are systematic human rights violations taking place on a daily basis, represented by arrests, storming of houses, imprisonment without trial and torture in prisons.

Iraqi political analyst **Liqā Makki** on Al-Arabiya TV

The people of Iraq, who endured injustice and offered up millions of martyrs and prisoners to see the dawn of justice across Iraq's horizon, will not allow the mill of death and discrimination to return under whatever justification.

### Iraq's **Al-Bayan**

All the slogans and objectives fabricated by the US administration regarding the so-called "operation to liberate Iraq" have evaporated. The time has come for the world to know that what the US is doing in Iraq is total occupation, mockery and slavery.

### Egypt's **Al-Jumhuriyah**

We certainly believe that what happened in Abu Ghraib prison is still happening on a daily basis.

### London **Al-Hayat** - commentary by Azmi Basharah

What has been shown of the unbearable scenes in Abu Ghraib prison reminds Iraqis in particular and Arabs in general that nothing has changed in Iraq - the US has lost the trust of Iraqis, something that will not be retrieved by plastic surgery.

### Palestinian **Al-Ayyam** - commentary by Ahmad Yaghi

When torture, rape and degradation become the adopted tool to break down the will of the national Iraqi forces and abort the resistance, this becomes a clear indication that those responsible for the political and moral direction of the US occupation forces suffer from moral bankruptcy. It also indicates that the US administration is ignorant.

### Palestinian **Al-Quds**

This is a war crime by any measure.

### Syria's **Al-Thawrah** - commentary by Fa'iz Al-Sayigh

The similarities between the Vietnam and Iraq wars include the fact that the US went to war in both cases based on illusory perceptions and ignorant of national realities and the independence of the two peoples. The American people did not realise the magnitude of its entanglement in a long-standing and costly war except when it was too late. This is due to the deception by the US leadership.

London **Al-Quds Al-Arabi** - commentary by Dr Bashir Musa Nafi

We are not against the US. We only disagree with its leaders.

Saudi **Al-Riyadh**

The Bush administration had no option but to accept that it made blunders in Iraq since the first day of the occupation... If the administration has now accepted the major mistakes made by its men in Iraq, it is expected that it will begin correcting those blunders, given the problems facing it now.

UAE's **Al-Ittihad** - commentary by Dr Wahid Abd-al-Majid

The Iraqis are now starting on the Palestinian experience. The Americans have come to Iraq to establish the freedom of torture and prisons.

Palestinian **Al-Ayyam** - commentary by Abdallah Awad

Arab public opinion is not the only one which rejects the current US policies regarding Iraq, Palestine and other issues in the Middle East. There is also international public opinion which mostly perceives the US in the same way as the Arab in the street, who does not get anything from White House policymakers but policies which benefit the Zionist interest.

UAE's **Al-Bayan**