

People are seething with anger- the pictures of Abu Ghraib and the Brits in Basrah are everywhere. Every newspaper you pick up in Baghdad has pictures of some American or British atrocity or another. It's like a nightmare that has come to life.

Everyone knew this was happening in Abu Ghraib and other places... seeing the pictures simply made it all more real and tangible somehow. American and British politicians have the audacity to come on television with words like, "True the people in Abu Ghraib are criminals, but..." Everyone here in Iraq knows that there are thousands of innocent people detained. Some were simply in the wrong place at the wrong time, while others were detained 'under suspicion'. In the New Iraq, it's "guilty until proven innocent by some miracle of God".

People are so angry. There's no way to explain the reactions- even pro-occupation Iraqis find themselves silenced by this latest horror. I can't explain how people feel- or even how I personally feel. Somehow, 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.

There was a time when people here felt sorry for the troops. No matter what one's attitude was towards the occupation, there were moments of pity towards the troops, regardless of their nationality. We would see them suffering the Iraqi sun, obviously wishing they were somewhere else and somehow, that vulnerability made them seem less monstrous and more human.

I sometimes get emails asking me to propose solutions or make suggestions. Fine. Today's lesson: don't rape, don't torture, don't kill and get out while you can- while it still looks like you have a choice...

Chaos? Civil war? Bloodshed? We'll take our chances- just take your Puppets, your tanks, your smart weapons, your dumb politicians, your lies, your empty promises, your rapists, your sadistic torturers and go..

That time has passed. People look at troops now and see the pictures of Abu Ghraib... and we burn with shame and anger and frustration at not being able to do something. Now that the world knows that the torture has been going on since the very beginning, do people finally understand what happened in Falloojeh?

All I can think about is the universal outrage when the former government showed pictures of American POWs on television, looking frightened and unsure about their fate. I remember the outcries from American citizens, claiming that Iraqis were animals for showing 'America's finest' fully clothed and unharmed. So what does this make Americans now?

We heard about it all... we heard stories since the very beginning of the occupation about prisoners being made to sit for several hours on their knees... being deprived of sleep for days at a time by being splashed with cold water or kicked or slapped... about the infamous 'red rooms' where prisoners are kept for prolonged periods of time... about the rape, the degradations, the emotional and physical torture... and there were moments when I actually wanted to believe that what we heard was exaggerated. I realize now that it was only a small fragment of the truth. There is nothing that is going to make this 'better'. Nothing.

Just go!

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takeaction to end torture:

visual takeover of montgomery & market on monday, march 20, 7am • montgomery BART, sf
planning and artmaking march 19, 12:30pm • st. martin de porres, 225 potrero at 16th st., sf