

## **Have You Forgotten?**

September 11 was a tragedy. Not because 3,000 Americans died... but because 3,000 humans died. I was reading about the recorded telephone conversations of victims and their families on September 11. I thought it was... awful, and perfectly timed. Just when people are starting to question the results and incentives behind this occupation, they are immediately bombarded with reminders of September 11. Never mind Iraq had nothing to do with it.

I get emails constantly reminding me of the tragedy of September 11 and telling me how the "Arabs" brought all of this upon themselves. Never mind it was originally blamed on Afghanistan (who, for your information, aren't Arabs).

I am constantly reminded of the 3,000 Americans who died that day... and asked to put behind me the 8,000 worthless Iraqis we lost to missiles, tanks and guns.

People marvel that we're not out in the streets, decking the monstrous, khaki tanks with roses and jasmine. They wonder why we don't crown the hard, ugly helmets of the troops with wreaths of laurel. They question why we mourn our dead instead of gratefully offering them as sacrifices to the Gods of Democracy and Liberty. They wonder why we're bitter.

But, I \*haven't\* forgotten...

I remember February 13, 1991. I remember the missiles dropped on Al-Amriyah shelter- a civilian bomb shelter in a populated, residential area in Baghdad. Bombs so sophisticated, that the first one drilled through to the heart of the shelter and the second one exploded inside. The shelter was full of women and children- boys over the age of 15 weren't allowed. I remember watching images of horrified people clinging to the fence circling the shelter, crying, screaming, begging to know what had happened to a daughter, a mother, a son, a family that had been seeking protection within the shelter's walls.

I remember watching them drag out bodies so charred, you couldn't tell they were human. I remember frantic people, running from corpse to corpse, trying to identify a loved-one... I remember seeing Iraqi aid workers, cleaning out the shelter, fainting with the unbearable scenes inside. I remember the whole area reeked with the smell of burnt flesh for weeks and weeks after.

I remember visiting the shelter, years later, to pay my respects to the 400+ people who died a horrible death during the small hours of the morning and seeing the ghostly outlines of humans plastered on the walls and ceilings.

I remember a family friend who lost his wife, his five-year-old daughter, his two-year-old son and his mind on February 13.

I remember the day the Pentagon, after making various excuses, claimed it had been a 'mistake'.

I remember 13 years of sanctions, backed firmly by the US and UK, in the name of WMD nobody ever found. Sanctions so rigid, we had basic necessities, like medicine, on waiting lists for months and months, before they were refused. I remember chemicals like chlorine, necessary for water purification, being scrutinized and delayed at the expense of millions of people.

I remember having to ask aid workers, and visiting activists, to 'please bring a book' because publishing companies refused to sell scientific books and journals to Iraq. I remember having to 'share' books with other students in college, in an attempt to make the most of the limited resources.

I remember wasted, little bodies in huge hospital beds- dying of hunger and of disease; diseases that could easily be treated with medications that were 'forbidden'. I remember parents with drawn faces peering anxiously into doctors' eyes, searching for a miracle.

I remember the depleted uranium. How many have heard of depleted uranium? Those are household words to Iraqi people. The depleted uranium weapons used in 1991 (and possibly this time too) have resulted in a damaged environment and an astronomical rise in the cancer rate in Iraq. I remember seeing babies born with a single eye, 3 legs or no face- a result of DU poisoning.

I remember dozens of dead in the 'no fly zones', bombed by British and American planes claiming to 'protect' the north and south of Iraq. I remember the mother, living on the outskirts of Mosul, who lost her husband and 5 kids when an American plane bombed the father and his sons in the middle of a field of peaceful, grazing sheep.

And we are to believe that this is all being done for the sake of the people.

*"Have you forgotten how it felt that day  
To see your homeland under fire  
And her people blown away?"*

No... we haven't forgotten- the tanks are still here to remind us.

A friend of E.'s, who lives in Amiriyah, was telling us about an American soldier he had been talking to in the area. E's friend pointed to the shelter and told him of the atrocity committed in 1991. The soldier turned with the words, "Don't blame me- I was only 9!" And I was only 11.

American long-term memory is exclusive to American traumas. The rest of the world should simply 'put the past behind', 'move forward', 'be pragmatic' and 'get over it'.

Someone asked me whether it was true that the 'Iraqi people were dancing in the streets of Baghdad' when the World Trade Center fell. Of course it's not true. I was watching the tv screen in disbelief- looking at the reactions of the horrified people. I wasn't dancing because the terrified faces on the screen, could have been the same faces in front of the Amiriyah shelter on February 13... it's strange how horror obliterates ethnic differences- all faces look the same when they are witnessing the death of loved ones.

From <http://turningtables.blogspot.com/>