

# Remember the Attack on the Al-Amiriya Shelter

On February 13, 1991, the U.S. committed one of its many massacres against civilians

## Ramsey Clark, Former U.S. Attorney General

"Baghdad was the site of one of the air war's most horrific attacks. Probably 1,500 civilian, mostly women and children, were killed when the Amariyah civilian bomb shelter was hit by two bombs in the early morning hours of February 13, 1991. ... The first bomb hit at 4:30 AM. It did not kill everyone. Neighborhood residents heard screams as people tried to get out of the shelter. They screamed for four minutes. Then the second bomb hit, killing almost everybody. The screaming ceased."

Source: Ramsey Clark, *The Fire this Time*, 1992

## Dr. Ameed Hamid, Director, Iraq Red Crescent Society

"I went to the shelter the next day after the bombing. There was flesh all over the place, and you could hear children screaming in the rubble, but you couldn't get to them. I remember one woman with tears coming down her face, but making no sound, looking for her children. She found seven of them, but hadn't found her two-year-old. There were only charred bodies that she couldn't recognize. She was saying 'maybe it's him, maybe it isn't.' I'll never forget it. When I'm thinking or relaxing it plays over and over in my mind."

Source: ZNet, article by Larry Everest

## Bob Pounder, British Firefighter

"The shelter was a civilian installation and had been constructed during the Iraq / Iran War, to international standards by a consortium of Finnish companies specialising in structures that give protection against chemical and nuclear attacks. It comprised a building of three floors (including basement) each with an area of 500 square metres. The roof and ceiling were 1.5 metres thick reinforced with steel bars between three to four centimetres in diameter.

As we approached the shelter, Karim, the civil defence fire officer who had led the first team of firefighters into the stricken shelter, met us. He explained entry had been extremely difficult since the initial explosion had caused an electrical failure jamming the steel doors trapping the occupants in the ensuing fire. Consequently a side entry through an emergency door had to be made but the shelter was not immediately accessible because of the intense heat. Breathing Apparatus teams using charged 70mm hose were initially driven back by steam, further attempts to cool the fire produced more steam and boiling water. Emergency lighting was taken into the shelter at the earliest possible time during the operation. Unfortunately the worst fears of the firefighters would be realised. The recovery operation lasted for three days and was difficult since the bodies of many people trapped inside the building had melted into the concrete or were simply unrecognisable. ..."

Source: FireFighter, September/October 2001

## Ibrahim Alloush, Baghdad

"The Shelter is made up of two stories. Those in the upper level were burnt up and torn asunder. Those in the lower level died from the power of the explosion. Their brains just blew up and they went in a frenzy of internal hemorrhage. The photos of their remains show no mutilation, just bleeding through the nose, ears, and sometimes the eyes. Nobody made it alive from the shelter, except for fourteen people sleeping at the entrance who were hurled by the power of the explosion itself away from the shelter. These are the lucky ones. They just got away with severe injuries. The rest, well they just perished in the hellish soup that was stirred up by the two bombs. I was told by the guide that the power of the explosion was so great, human organs went out of the same hole through which the bomb went in."



... Over the walls you will find lined up rows of photos for the victims of the explosion. Old women, young women, teenagers, children, and older people stare at you from amongst the charred walls. On another wall, another row of photos for families peaks at you; one frame for each family that perished in Al Amiriya Bomb Shelter. Amongst these frames I noticed one frame for a Syrian family, then another for an Egyptian family, then another for a Jordanian family, then another for a Palestinian family, who must have thought that they were going to be safe from American bombs at Al Amiriya Bomb Shelter. They were wrong. There is no place on this planet where civilians can be safe from American bombs.

On the walls, you also find silhouettes, shadows of the dead. One woman whose frame sticks deeper than others was evidently holding her newborn. Another shadow is for a young woman. She died in her dreams. A third shadow right above hers was for a severed human head, standing above all shadows like a condemnation. They were all scraped off the same wall, but the contours remain in shades of grey.

As you go downstairs to the lower floor, you find a distinct line on the walls marking the level of the water that seeped from the huge water tank reservoirs installed for the benefit of the people who sought refuge in the shelter. Since the temperature inside reached 400 degrees Celsius, the water started boiling, thus cooking the walls and the humans within them, on the lower floor.

...  
As I left Al Amiriya Bomb Shelter, it was not clear to me at all how the United States government dares to utter a word about spreading 'human rights', 'democracy', or 'freedom' in Iraq. It was less clear how the world can ever take any of what the United States government says seriously!!

Outside the complex, there is a small kiosk for the guide. In there, visitors can stop to write a few words in the visitors book if they wish. I wrote: "I passed through the gate of Al Amiriya Bomb Shelter into the tragedy of Iraq only to meet the tragedy of Palestine. Yet their faces on the walls remain, to testify to the heroism and steadfastness of Iraqis, and to shame to the world".

See, as you go in and out of the upper floor of Al Amiriya Bomb Shelter where the main bomb fell, the first and the last thing you will see is a very familiar face. No, it is not the picture of Saddam Hussein. The very first photo in the row of photo in Al Amiriya Bomb Shelter has been placed recently it seems. It is the photo of Muhammad Durrah, the Palestinian kid who was shot dead in cold blood by Jewish soldiers in Gaza.

Thus, in the pit of their pain, the Iraqis did not fail to put Palestine first. And that kind of power, in my opinion, is what the United States government means when it says it wants to go after Iraqi weapons of mass destruction. It is the power to wither American weapons of mass destruction, then remain true to Palestine."

Source: <http://www.freearabvoice.org>

### **John Schuchard, Interfaith Pilgramage for Peace and**

"In the middle-class suburb of Baghdad, this underground bunker had been built to protect more than two thousand people. Each evening this fortress provided a sense of security as thousands of U.S. bombs were dropped on the city. The woman's daughter was always among the first in the shelter. The mother, who was saving a bed for her mother. On this particular night the mother decided to stay home to catch up on housework that she had been unable to do because of the heavy bombing all that week. The daughter wanted to stay with her mother, but was told she must go to the shelter for her safety.

The mother, who was our guide through this chamber of death, had gone mad. From the night of the bombing until the present day she has rarely left the ruined shelter. At first, she screamed and wept. Later she experienced rage, then despair. As the clean-up and removal of bodies and debris continued, she wandered the empty underground cavern and communed with her daughter's spirit.

Eventually, the Iraqi government erected a small dwelling at the entrance to the shelter where she could stay. As her health returned, she acted as a guide for those who came to mourn.

Another mother, Nasara, with another soul's cry filled with passion, spoke out: "I hate the words democracy and human rights! I never thought I would say this. But these words are only used as weapons against the Third World. Why isn't there a single standard, instead of one set of rules for the rich countries and a different set of rules for the little, poor countries?" On June 17, 1993 Nasara saw her close friend, Laila Al-Attar, one of the most beloved artists of the Middle East, carried dead from her home, killed by a U.S. air attack on Baghdad with twenty-three cruise missiles."

Source: Ashes and Light: Iraq: A prayer for the dying, 1995



The picture shows 'shadows of the dead'. Numerous people burnt completely leaving these marks on the shelter walls..

The anniversary of the tragical event of February 13, 1991, shall give us a moment to remember fifteen years of aggression against Iraq. 88,500 tons of explosives, the equivalent of 7 nuclear bombs of the Hiroshima type were fired on Iraq during the 43 days of bombing in 1991. The U.S. and British continued to bomb Iraq ever since, flying over 300,000 sorties against Iraq and firing hundreds of cruise missiles.

With its basic infrastructure heavily damaged and foreign trade blocked and embargoed, the Iraqi people were systematically impoverished. Despite their utmost efforts to bring power plants and water treatment facilities back on line, rebuild some of the main lines of communication, fix the thousands of private homes and schools damaged and focus on increasing internal food production, they could not fully overcome the dependencies from imports.

Environmental damages, malnutrition and diseases, combined with serious shortages of medical facilities and medicine, due to destruction by the Coalition forces and UN-sanctions, succeeded in killing hundreds of thousands of Iraqi people, mainly children, the elder and sick. The combined number of deaths as a consequence of aggression and sanctions is an estimated 2 million people, which means that the UN and International Community are responsible for killing nearly ten percent of the Iraqi population.

**Solidarity with the Iraqi people in their Fight against Occupation and Foreign Domination  
Leave Iraq Alone!**