



# WUD'JA FALLUJA IT!

**“How can the media report this when they don't even have a correspondent in Falluja? Why are they failing so completely to report the Iraqi side of the story? How much more obvious can it be that they are only parroting the U.S. military lies concerning the situation?” Dahr Jamail, Independent reporter**

Remember the old Iraqi Information Minister nicknamed “Comical Ali” who amongst other things proclaimed the defeat of U.S. forces even as they moved into Baghdad? Well now it's the turn of Comical Blair and Bush who denounce any Iraqi resistance to the invasion and occupation of their country as “outside terrorists, an extremist who has created his own militia, and remnants of a brutal dictatorship.” While on the other side, they talk of “people of immense courage and humanity...” (SchNEWS thinks Blair is talking about American and British soldiers!).

So while Secretary General Amr Moussa said at a meeting of the Arab League, that a U.S. war on Iraq would “open the gates of hell” in the West we are being drip fed corporate news which Dahr Jamail, one of the only journalists who has been in Falluja since the siege says is merely “parroting the U.S. military lies”. In Iraq they are told instead of watching the televised images “of Americans and coalition soldiers killing innocent civilians”, to “change the channel” because these “are not legitimate news sources”.

In fact it was one of those ‘illegimate’ news sources that helped precipitate this latest wave of resistance, with the closure of the al-Hawza newspaper. Shut down for reporting eyewitness claims that a supposed car bombing that killed numerous volunteers for the New Iraqi defense forces was actually done by an American helicopter. The newspaper also criticized the Coalition Authority leader Bremner - something which is not allowed in the new ‘free’ Iraq.

US officials are fighting more than just the people of Iraq, but a huge propaganda war to cope with the truth of their actions. The war in Iraq is indeed a war of media, where they use images like weapons to manipulate public opinion. The fact that Bush is facing elections in the US increases the importance of this manipulation. On a televised speech, he asserted that the situation in Iraq was “not a civil war, not a popular uprising, and that most of Iraq is relatively stable.” Old Comical Bush has obviously been watching too much CNN, because as the American author Rahul Mahajan explains “In general, there is no quicker way to get an Iraqi to laugh, than to talk about how the United States is bringing freedom or democracy to the country.”

## STATUE OF LIBERTY?

Take Firdos Square where the infamous pulling down of Saddam's statue was stage managed. Independent journalist Dahr Jamail said “A few days ago it was closed and blockaded

by the American military. I stood atop my apartment listening to a speaker blaring instructions that anyone who approached the area would be shot on sight. This is freedom.” A week earlier Iraqi soldiers, trained and controlled by coalition forces had opened fire on a demonstration there. As the protesters returned to their homes in the poor neighbourhood of Sadr City, the US army followed with tanks, helicopters and planes, firing at random on homes, shops, streets, even ambulances. According to local hospitals, 47 people were killed and many more injured.

As Dahr Jamail angrily writes “It's no wonder the corporate media rarely reports on the torturing of many of the over 10,000 detained Iraqis by the US military, the constant home raids, or the infrastructure in nearly complete disrepair as we begin the second year of the occupation. For most of the corporate media tend to stick closer to their hotels, rather than where the stories are occurring and being lived every day - out amongst the Iraqi people.

“The majority of the corporate media tend to simply go where the U.S. military tells them it is safe to go, while donning their flak jackets, helmets, and the preferred ‘us vs. they’ mentality with Iraqis... Instead, the US public is fed bogus polls telling them half of Iraqis feel they are better off now with a year of occupation under their belts. That is an amazing figure, since nearly every one of the hundreds of Iraqis I interviewed throughout Iraq was understandably enraged at the 70% unemployment, less than 8 hours of electricity per day in Baghdad, water so terrible there are cholera outbreaks in southern Iraq, and a security situation that spirals further out of control on a daily basis.

About the only time it's easy to find Iraqis who are pro-occupation is if you let the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) show them to you thus it's the journalists with the least initiative that find the rarest selections of public opinion by speaking to those pushing brooms or sitting at a desk at CPA HQ.

“Getting the facts in Iraq is not rocket science. I am simply doing my job to report the Iraqi side of the story. An informed citizenry forms the basis of a democracy. Not only are U.S. citizens being deprived of access to information about the true nature of the critical situation in Iraq, they are being outright lied to by most of the corporate media outlets.”

## BYPASS MEDIA-CORP

\* Read a moving account of Jo Wilding's time in Falluja

“George Bush says to the troops on Easter Sunday that, “I know what we're doing in Iraq is right.” Shooting unarmed men in the back outside their family home is right. Shooting grandmothers with white flags is right? Shooting at women and children who are fleeing their homes is right? Firing at ambulances is right?”

www.wildfirejo.org.uk

\* Read Rahul Mahajan's report from Fallujah

## CRAP TERR-ARREST

Workers at the DHKC (Revolutionary People's Liberation Front) Brussels information Bureau were arrested last week by heavily armed anti terrorist police, who had previously sealed off the whole district and broken in the doors of the office.

The police commandos even dug up the garden hoping to find some explosives but all they found were vegetables and flowers. This ridiculous operation was really aimed at the office of Halkin Sesi TV, a TV channel broadcast by internet and whose office is on the top floor of the same building.

The channel committed the crime of broadcasting news about fighting units of the DHKC reported by telephone from Italy.

“To Americans, “Fallujah” may still mean four mercenaries killed, with their corpses then mutilated and abused; to Iraqis, “Fallujah” means the savage collective punishment for that attack, in which over 600 Iraqis have been killed, with an estimated 200 women and over 100 children. www.empirenotes.org Rahul also recently wrote ‘Full Spectrum Dominance: U.S. Power in Iraq and Beyond.’

\* Read Dahr Jamail, Iraq weblog dispatches “Solutions? One thing that remains glaringly apparent today is that Falluja has become another rallying point for the resistance. While most media in the U.S. (and many other Western countries) are failing to report the Iraqi side of the story there, everyone here knows it's turned into a full-on massacre, and people are extremely angry. This and the entire debacle of how the Americans have handled the situation with Muqtada Sadr, have together brought rivers of volunteers into the already growing resistance to the occupation.” <http://newstandardnews.net/iraqidispatches>

\* This Saturday (17) Ewa Jasiewicz who has been living in Baghdad and Basra will be speaking at Kinning Park Complex, Cornwall St, Glasgow 1pm. For a full list of her Scottish speaking tour [www.tramping.org.uk/ewa](http://www.tramping.org.uk/ewa)

\* There is a major conference being held in London and sponsored by Shell, from 26-28th April on the privatisation of Iraq with many corporate representatives looking for a piece of the pie and representatives from the Governing Council and Occupation Authority (Citizens arrest anyone?) attending. Counter demonstrations and actions are being planned by a variety of different peace, justice and anti-militarisation groups, plus a special focus on workers rights in occupied Iraq as well as a counter-conference website. An organizing meeting was held on the 15<sup>th</sup>. For more information see: [www.warprofiteers.com](http://www.warprofiteers.com), [www.voices.netuxo.co.uk/library/briefing\\_oct2003.html](http://www.voices.netuxo.co.uk/library/briefing_oct2003.html), or contact Voices in the Wilderness on 0845 458 2564 / [voices@voicesuk.org](mailto:voices@voicesuk.org).

## SQUAT THIS SPACE

\* There's a new **squatted social centre in Oxford** at 220 Cowley Road, where they are organising meetings, workshops. Find out more on Oxford Indymedia or contact them for information: [oxsocial@linuxmail.org](mailto:oxsocial@linuxmail.org), <http://free.hostdepartment.com/oxsocial/>

\* **The Roundhouse**, made of wood with a turf roof, was built by Tony Wrench in 1997 as part of an experimental community is under threat of demolition. In a bid to stop the demolition, around 40 squatters occupied the Roundhouse in Pembrokeshire Coast National Park over the Easter weekend. Protesters also occupied an Iron Age hill fort, built straw and wooden roundhouses in a lay-by to speak to the public, marched through local villages and then went to speak to the national park authorities. The planners first refused to speak to them, but after the determined protesters camped overnight in the park authority's car park, they met and agreed to hold a public meeting in 4-6 weeks. For more information contact Chapter 7 / The Land is Ours: 01460 249204, <http://www.thelandisours.org>

\* The squat at **Colliers Wood School in London** was violently evicted by police last Monday despite an agreement that the occupants would go peacefully. Developers have moved in, demolished the whole school and dug a trench around the site "to stamp their authority on it". The squatters are determined to carry on the fight by other means in Colliers Wood, which has been

devastated by greedy developers. Local residents associations and council workers are supporting them. Call Dave - 07986465552

\* **The Tufnell Park** squat lost their court case two weeks ago, and are trying to appeal. They are negotiating to avoid eviction before payday, but the Police are determined to close the centre, and say they will storm it at the end of April. There is a campaign to stop the eviction including local residents and squatters. Resistance to the eviction is being planned, and they need your help, there's a meeting at the Grand Banks opposite Tufnell Part tube station next Wednesday (21<sup>st</sup>) at 7:30 pm, [www.wombles.org.uk](http://www.wombles.org.uk), or call 07986 075829.

\* Residents of **Hebden Bridge** in Yorkshire took over a former Council building in West Yorkshire over Easter. They turned it into an open community space, with films, a free shop, food and events all weekend. The building was a former Tourist Information Centre, which has been handed to a developer by Calderdale Council. Developers want to turn the building into posh flats and a chippy. The occupiers said they wanted to highlight the threat of unsustainable development and rising house prices. The developers went running to the police asking them to evict the squatters, the police had to acknowledge that the locals were legally "squatting" the building.

More info: [www.hebdenbridge.co.uk](http://www.hebdenbridge.co.uk)

## BOXED UP

Thousands of NHS hospital patients were offered TV beside their beds as part of a deal with a private company, it was billed as a triumph for the government's drive towards "patient power". The only problem was that the patients couldn't turn the sets off. The TVs were not equipped with an off switch, and cast their flickering light for a fixed 15 hours a day.

The sets were installed by Patientline, a private firm chaired by Derek Lewis, former director general of the prison service. Their captive audience includes 17,500 patients in 32 hospitals across the country. The sets come on automatically at 6am or 7am and close down at 10pm. Patients pay £3.20 a day for the full range of programmes. But those not wanting to subscribe don't escape: they get trailers for the service and messages from the hospital authorities instead. So you either have to pay for constant trashy TV or get non stop adverts for fifteen hours a day. SchNEWS reckons it's a cunning way of getting people to leave hospital quickly and cut waiting lists.

A company spokesman said the failure to provide an off button was "an accident" that was rectified in more recent installations. Robert McMaster, a patient at Royal Berkshire hospital in Reading, said it was "irritating to be subject to this continuous and unwelcome stimulation, particularly at night or when trying to rest". A Patientline spokesman managed to tear herself away from the TV for a minute to comment: "These complaints have taken us by surprise. We've been operating the system since 1995 and I've not known of this criticism before."

### ...and finally...

New lows were reached when a judge told Shirley Law, Plymouth grandmother and veteran peace activist, it was "time to put down her bolt croppers and pick up her knitting needles, and to stay the right side of the fence!"

Shirley, along with two others were recently found guilty of breaking into Devonport Dockyard - the base for the MoD's illegal Trident Nuclear Submarine Refit Programme and the Hunter Killer submarines used on Iraq. Magistrates refused to hear the protestors' arguments relating to international law.

SchNEWS reckons that our legal system should stop trying to pull the wool over our eyes, and face up to the illegality of having our own use of nuclear weapons of mass destruction. The wisdom of older people should be respected and they should be manning the barricades instead of being sent to old age knitting hell homes.

\* Trident Ploughshares have organised another Devonport Disarmament Camp on the 27th May - 1<sup>st</sup> June. 0845 4588363 [www.tridentploughshares.org](http://www.tridentploughshares.org)

### Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers you've had yer 'Comical Ali', Bush The Clown - now it's yer Falluja of it SchNEWS punned down!

## Positive SchNEWS

Critical Mass London is 10 years old later this month and you're all invited to their birthday party. Critical Mass is a monthly get together of cyclists that happens in hundreds of cities around the world. It started eleven and a half years ago in San Francisco and is a celebration of the alternatives to cars, pollution, accidents and the loss of public spaces and freedoms.

As one cyclist put it "At the end of every workday, thousands of people pour into the streets, in what has become a central ritual of life in the 21st century — the daily commute. For most people, however, getting off work is not cause for celebration, or even relief. The ride home promises frustrating gridlock, disgusting air, and for cyclists, constant threats to safety and well-being. But one day a month, the ritual is transformed. Hundreds of us get together and ride through the streets on bicycles, providing motorists, as well as ourselves, with a vision of how things could be different."

Ultimately, Critical Mass is just a bunch of cyclists riding around together. But the incredible thing is that, in attempting this simple task, so many important and interesting questions come up. Why is there so little open space in our cities, where people can relax and interact, free from the incessant buying and selling of ordinary life? Why are people compelled to organize their lives around having a car? What would an alternative future look like?

So if you're in London April 30<sup>th</sup> get along to the Southbank at Waterloo, in front of the National Film Theatre, under Waterloo Bridge at 6pm [www.criticalmasslondon.org.uk](http://www.criticalmasslondon.org.uk)

\* For a history of critical mass check out 'Critical Mass - Bicycling's Defiant Celebration' by Chris Carlsson, available from AK Press, PO Box 12766, Edinburgh, Scotland. EH8 9YE [www.akuk.com](http://www.akuk.com)

\* 'We aren't blocking traffic, We are Traffic!' a movie about Critical Mass showing on the 29 April at Indymedia Cinema @ The Other Cinema London, 11 Rupert Street, London W1 (Leicester Sq)

## COCA-COLA LOSE THEIR BOTTLE

In an important victory by the Colombian food and drink union, Sinaltrainal, has ended a 12-day hunger strike (see SchNews 447) with victory for the strikers and 91 co-workers, who had been targeted for dismissal. Supported by fellow trade unionists, church and other solidarity groups the workers were also protesting against the use of illegal paramilitary groups to target union organisers. Bottling plant Femsa, has also agreed that the hunger strikers will receive two weeks of paid holiday for some R&R (hunger strikers were required to work their usual eight-hour shifts and faced disciplinary action for falling productivity!) The company has also agreed to run a national newspaper advertisement discouraging paramilitary reprisals against the workers.

Over the past 14 years, nine Sinaltrainal members have been murdered, five of its leaders have gone to jail on terrorism charges, and 65 of its activists have received death threats. Coca Cola's support for anti union activities is well documented from the United States, to Guatemala and Brazil. Stop the attacks and support an international boycott of Coca Cola, remember that Coke also owns Barcardi Breezers, aquapure, Dr Pepper, Dannon, Sprite and Schweppes.....

More info: [www.killercoke.org](http://www.killercoke.org)

### The SchNEWS at Ten Tour continues with dates in:

(16) Leamington Community Gallery, Avenue Road. (17) Bolton (18) Liverpool (19) Lancaster LaRC-The basement, 78a Penny St. (20) Glasgow. Pearce Institute, Govan, G51 3UU (21) Faslane Peace Camp, probably. (22) Bilston Woods road protest camp, near Edinburgh. (23) Edinburgh Forest Cafe, Bristol Place (24) Newcastle The Cluny, under Byker Bridge 2-4pm. (25) Leeds The Packhorse Pub, Woodhouse Lane (26) Sheffield. Cricketers Arms, Bramall Lane 8pm. (27) Nine Ladies protest camp (28) Manchester Arch Bar, Stretford Road, Hulme 7.30pm. (29) Nottingham. Sumac Centre, 245 Gladstone Street 8.30pm (30) Norwich The Hog In Armour, Charring X, 7-11pm. (May Day) Ipswich.

For more details 01273 685913 [www.schnews.org.uk/extras/tour.htm](http://www.schnews.org.uk/extras/tour.htm)

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