

whistle on their colleagues, to bring these abuses to light, implicates the press either in a cover up or a gross failure to publish information in the public interest. The abuses in Abu Ghraib and elsewhere in Iraq, Guantanamo and Afghanistan are beginning to come to light because of journalism and international interest, prompted by and large by the conscience of soldiers uncomfortable with their mission. This reveals a mindset of doubt and discomfort in the coalition forces. It also clearly illustrates the US is a rogue state, no longer in control of the consequences of its earlier policy decisions.

Perhaps the most worrying example of this is the 'disappearance' of detainees linked with the September 11th attacks. Out of the reach of the ICRC, at the mercy of the administration, no one knows where these people are, or what they have been charged with, never mind whether their basic human rights are being upheld. The documented movement of prisoners to countries like Syria, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia are hindering attempts to monitor the treatment of Guantanamo Bay detainees, and this is clearly the intention.

Prospects are not much brighter for those held in protective custody in Iraq (12,000 since the supposed end of the conflict). The ICRC claiming that 70-90% of these detainees should never have been arrested in the first place, and have in fact been arrested 'by mistake'. The US department of defence said that 'Human Exploitation Teams' regularly use 50/10 tactics in centres across Iraq: 50 minutes in sun in a stressful position, with a bag over their head, followed by 10 minutes rest. Though it is refreshing to see the military finally unable to euphemise what they do, the chillingly accurate name 'Human Exploitation Teams' leaves little to the imagination.

As the US administration finds that it is losing its grip on the PR war, and that public opinion is becoming more and more uncomfortable with the Iraq mission, we may find that the number of abuses decreases. It is a mark of the rogue status of the US and UK states that this, rather than international law or even simple respect for human rights, determines their treatment of detainees. The Geneva Convention may not dictate what administration officials and soldiers do when they get up in the morning, but at the very least their consciences should.



*Some more 'bad apple' soldiers,
or just another day in Abu Ghraib?*

Article Sources:

www.hrw.org/reports/2004

www.guardian.co.uk

www.spiked-online.co.uk

www.antiwar.com

www.occupationwatch.org

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Kennedy, Helena: Just Law - the changing face of justice and why it matters to us all (Chatto & Windus, 2004). Accessible introduction to contemporary challenges to the legal system with a strong emphasis on human rights law.

Kovel, Joel: The Enemy of Nature: The end of capitalism or the end of the world? (Zed Books, 2002). Insightful, scholarly ecosocialist manifesto from New York based academic and activist.

Lynas, Mark: High Tide: News from a Warming World (Flamingo, 2004). Superbly written and inspiring look at the global climate catastrophe that faces us all.

Monbiot, George: Age of Consent: Manifesto for a New World Order (Flamingo, 2003). Thought-provoking and bold challenge to peace and justice activists in the West from the renowned Guardian columnist

Schell, Jonathan: The Unconquerable World: Power, Nonviolence and the Will of the People (Allen Lane, 2004). Beautifully written and brilliant dissection of the futility of war and the power of nonviolence.

Wainwright, Hilary: Reclaim the State: Experiments in Popular Democracy (Verso, 2003). Excellent survey of workable experiments in people-centred development and participatory democracy from the editor of Red Pepper.

Various: We are Everywhere (Verso, 2003). Beautifully told stories of resistance and revolution from around the world.

Jai Sen, Anita Anand, Arturo Escobar, Peter Waterman: World Social Forum: Challenging Empires. (2003) e-book from www.choike.org/nuevo_eng/informes/1557.html Large collection of penetrating essays on the theme 'another world is possible'.