

The Link

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June-July 2004

- Before “60 Minutes II ”
- Before the Red Cross Warnings
- Before the Taguba Report

There Was

The CPT Report

And it went to

U.S. Ambassador L. Paul Bremer III

and

U.S. Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez

By Peggy Gish

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About This Issue

Seymour Hersh, the investigative reporter, was being interviewed in early May on NPR's "The Diane Rehm Show." At one point a caller named Peggy phoned in to ask Mr. Hersh if he had heard of the report on prisoner abuse compiled by the Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) and delivered in December 2003 to the chief U.S. civilian administrator in Iraq, L. Paul Bremer III, and to the commander of U.S. forces in Iraq, Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez. Mr. Hersh said he was unaware of the report, but would like very much to see it; he gave Peggy his phone number and asked her to contact him.

Peggy is Peggy Gish, and CPT, a pacifist organization, is well known to AMEU. Back in 1996 (v. 29, #1) *The Link* carried a feature article by Kathy Kern, a CPTer working in Hebron. And in 2001 (v. 34, #4) we carried an update on Hebron by CPTer and AMEU board director Jane Adas.

I called Peggy and asked if she would do a feature article for *The Link* based on the CPT December 2003 Report. And do it in three days! As it turned out, Peggy had just completed a manuscript for Herald Press, a Mennonite publishing house. Within two days she had an article, based on her book, in our hands,

along with photos from the CPT archives.

Peggy's article actually exceeded our 8-9,000 word count by 3,000 words. We had to decide either to delete significant portions of it or to delete our two book pages and refer readers to our website (www.ameu.org), where all our books and videos are listed. We opted for the latter.

While on our website, you might look at several of our back issues of *The Link* that deal with prisoner abuse. In 1983, we carried an article by Rev. Edward Dillon on the treatment of Lebanese prisoners by the Israeli army ("Prisoners of Israel," v. 16, #3); in 1986, we featured an article by sociologist Jan Abu Shakrah on the dehumanizing treatment of Palestinians ("The Making of a Non-Person," v. 19, #2); in 1990, we covered the mistreatment of Americans in Israeli prisons written by attorney Albert Mokhiber ("American Victims of Israeli Abuses," v. 23, #1); and in 2001, Jerri Bird, founder of Partners for Peace, reexamined the treatment of American prisoners in Israel ("Americans Tortured in Israeli Jails," v. 34, #3).

Throughout all these issues runs a common barbarity clothed in words. That changed with the "60 Minutes II" photos. The hope now is that we will read these past reports, especially the following CPT Report, with new eyes.



Link author Peggy Gish

John F. Mahoney
Executive Director

“Is there anything you can do to help find my brother?” a worried looking young Iraqi man asked, after finding our Christian Peacemaker Teams’ (CPT) apartment in central Baghdad in June 2003. He had heard from friends that this was a place he could get help.

Our first involvement with the U.S.-run prison system in Iraq and the problems of detainees and their families began in May 2003. Team members were assessing the effects of the war and the conditions under U.S. occupation and determining the focus of our work in post-invasion Iraq.

CPT started working in Iraq in October 2002. In the beginning we documented suffering caused by the sanctions, and tried to prevent the war by organizing public actions at the UN headquarters and other places in Iraq. We were in Baghdad during the bombing and continued our work after the invasion.

The team tried to visit the U.S.-run prison set up at the Baghdad airport, speak with the U.S. soldiers, and observe how Iraqi prisoners were treated. Despite several attempts, we were denied access. But while we were waiting we met several Iraqi families who had come to find their loved ones who had been arrested or had disappeared. They, too, were being denied access and information, so they asked the team for help.

In May there was no system for locating prisoners, but later we were able to go to the Iraqi Assistance Center and there find some of the names, charges, and serial numbers of detainees. As more people came for help, we discovered this was not easy to do. We found information for only about 10 percent of the cases we brought.

At first the disorganization of the system seemed to be a normal phenomenon of the chaos that follows war. But as we worked on this all summer, then into the fall and winter, we saw that the system did not improve. Sure, there would be a few successful inquiries, where the family was able to find and visit the prisoner, and even a few released. But for most families this didn’t happen.

With each family or released prisoner we talked to, we heard various stories of violent house raids in which the men were knocked down, beaten and often detained, in which household furnishings were destroyed and money and jewelry stolen. Released detainees told us about physical and psychological abuse both during the processing and interrogation phases and within the prison system itself.

As early as last summer we realized that abuse was widespread since the beginning of the occupation. At that time we shared with lower ranking military officers what we had found. They urged us to go to Ambassador L. Paul

Bremer, the U.S. appointed civilian chief of the occupation authority, and to Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez, the commander of U.S. forces in Iraq. We went to both, giving them copies of our report on 72 cases of detainees, summarizing the abuses and problems of the system and suggesting changes. (The full report is available on our website: www.cpt.org.)

In response, we were told that the violent house raids and wide sweeps of men from neighborhoods or streets were important for the security of U.S. troops.

We, in turn, pointed out that the excessive violence and abuses not only caused much suffering for the Iraqi people, but put U.S. forces, civilian personnel, and international humanitarian workers in danger.

With the recent exposure of the degrading pictures of U.S. soldiers abusing Iraqi prisoners, the first thought is usually, “It must be an aberration, ‘a few bad people,’” as President Bush asserted.

In our work with detainees over the past year we encountered countless honorable soldiers who work in the system. One female officer in particular at Bucca Prison Camp near Um Qasr, demonstrated great compassion when our team members accompanied an Iraqi mother and father to visit their three sons. Many released prisoners who told us stories of abuse, also talked about “noble soldiers” who protested such abuse and treated them with respect.

Yet the sheer numbers of allegations of mistreatment, many of which I have heard personally, suggest that the problem is not just a few bad people but something broader and deeper, something rooted in the very nature of a foreign occupation.

The Missing

As the summer progressed, more Iraqi people came to us to help find information about family members who had been detained by the U.S. military.

Dr. Amer, a dentist was distraught, because his brother, Ameer, a fourth year engineering student, had been arrested. He told us that Ameer and two friends had just left their classes and had been walking home on June 23 when they saw a fight break out among some Iraqi men nearby. He went to see what was happening, heard gunshots, and ran. U.S. military police caught him and at first were going to let him go, because he had no weapon. Then they found a weapon on the ground in the area and accused him of firing it. Soldiers took him to an Iraqi police station for questioning and arrested him. He had been scheduled to take his final exams the next day. At the end of August, when we got the lists of detainees from the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), we found he was

being held in Um Qasr. When I left Iraq, two months later, Ameer was still in detention.

Ramuydh, age 39, left his job as a guard at a chicken farm between Falluja and Ramadi, as usual, at 6:30 a.m. on July 13, and started home on his motorcycle. He carried a gun that he uses to protect the chicken farm. Later, when he didn't return home, his brother and friends went to find him along his usual route. They found tracks in the desert, some remnants of food he had with him, and small broken parts of his motorcycle. There were other tracks there, so they assumed he had been arrested by U.S. soldiers. His brother came to the governor's office in Falluja, where we met him. We tried to find information about Ramuydh at the Iraq Assistance Center (IAC) in Baghdad, but had no success.

The family of another detained man told us his story: The father had been an officer in the Iraqi army. After the invasion of Baghdad he was afraid and stayed mostly in his home. U. S. soldiers came to his home at midnight, started shooting at his house, then blasted the door open and came in. They searched the house, destroying furnishings, and stole money and gold jewelry. In the process of shooting at the house, they shot the man's wife in the face, arm and leg, and later she lost one of her eyes. The man was still detained and the family did not know where he was.

Suhail, a veterinarian, told us the story of his detention. On May 16, he and his son, Ahmed, had gone out of curiosity to see one of Saddam's palaces. There was a truck nearby which the U.S. soldiers thought belonged to the two men. Soldiers initially arrested just his son, but Suhail, who spoke some English, decided to stay with him, and was arrested too. Suhail had high blood pressure and was on medication. They were detained at the airport, but later moved to Abu Ghraib prison. They were in tents and slept on bare ground, with no mats or blankets, with about a hundred men in each tent. On June 13, the prisoners shouted, "Freedom!" repeatedly and the U.S. soldiers opened fire on them, killing four and wounding three. Suhail knew one of those killed, a young man of 19 who had been married four months. He held the young man as he died. The next day soldiers gave him clean clothes, told him not to speak about what he had seen, and then released him. We helped find where his son had been transferred, and later, at the end of August when his son had been released, he came to thank us.

"This whole experience is so unreal, it's like science fiction," an Iraqi science professor told us when recounting to us his three-month ordeal being interrogated in more than a dozen meetings with the U.S. "Scientific Assessment Team." Many other scientists he knew had similar experiences. One professor he knew was taken away

and detained for two weeks. Another was still in detention. "I wish there was something I could do to close this file," he lamented.

"It started with a polite interview," he said, "and then the interrogation became more harsh and threatening. We were guilty until proven innocent." They demanded that he tell them where weapons of mass destruction (WMD) are. When he told them he didn't know about any, interrogators insisted he was lying. "They asked me over and over, telling me I was lying. That was the hardest part. When they asked why I wasn't telling the truth, I answered, 'Are you interested in the truth, or just in what you want to hear?'"

"We explained in detail how our systems work. The judgment of all in the group of scientists I know, is that WMD do not exist here or elsewhere in the country. The interrogators referred to a 'reliable source' claiming the existence of a secret underground laboratory. We were honest. We knew of no such place. I finally said, 'Then bring that person here and let him find it for you!'"

When we first started looking for information about the detainees, we would mostly go to the Iraq Assistance Center where officers were friendly and helpful and would look at computer lists to try to find the names. But in one case we went to an Iraqi police station with an Iraqi man to find out the charges against his brother. When we pressed the U.S. army captain in charge at that station about any due process or time line for a trial, he told us, "This is a war. We don't have to give them any rights!"

Later in the summer, I and Cathy Breen, who worked with us on the Iraq Peace Team, went through a lengthy process to get into the main CPA headquarters. One of the persons we talked to was Judge Campbell, a U.S. judge who was primarily responsible for trying to reconstruct Iraq's new Justice Ministry. He welcomed us and proceeded to have his staff photocopy two huge documents, one in English, and one in Arabic, listing about 6,000 names. "These were men arrested for anything from curfew violations to murder," he said. It did not list men accused of violence against U.S. troops or ones currently being transferred from one detention center to another.

When we shared with him some of the cases we were working with and pushed him about the lack of legal rights for the detainees and their families, he expressed his frustration. "The situation is horrible," he said, and then added, "but it is the best we can do right now."

We went away, glad to have the lists of detainees. It would help us with our work, but it was tragic to realize there is not much hope in the system of justice in Iraq being changed or improved in the near future.

This also meant we needed to take further steps to

deal with the problems of human rights here. We decided to take one case and see how far we could go with it in dealing with U.S. authorities.

The Case of Dr. Talib and His Sons

In late August, we visited the home of Dr. Talib, a retired physician and his wife, Nawal, a practicing dentist. They told us their story.

Just after midnight, August 1, 2003, they woke to the sounds of shooting and the crashing in of the outside door. Their first thought was that it was thieves, so the oldest son shot their gun into the air to scare them away. The response was heavy firing on their house from every direction. They then realized it was American soldiers. For the next two and a half hours Dr. Talib went toward the door and called out in good English, "Come in. We are not violent!" and every time he did this, the shooting would start up again. The family members were afraid they would all be killed.

Finally about 3:00 a.m., the father crawled near the door and called out. "I am coming to open the door. One soldier answered nervously, "Open the door!" When he did, the soldiers rushed in and started hitting and kicking him and his three adult sons, knocking them to the floor, now covered with kerosene from a punctured tank. They handcuffed them behind their backs, stepped on their heads, and continued kicking them. Meanwhile other soldiers ransacked the house, destroying household furnishings. The only weapons soldiers found were a legally permitted small pistol and automatic rifle.

One of the soldiers asked the father if his name was Akif. He replied, "No, my name is Talib. Akif's house is farther down on this street." The soldiers realized they had made a mistake and had come to the wrong house.

The captain apologized. Then they got into an incredible conversation. Dr. Talib asked the soldiers, "Why didn't you just ring the doorbell. We would have let you in." The captain replied, "We were scared." The captain asked Dr. Talib, "Do you like America?" "I did until this happened," Dr. Talib said. "I thought you were from a country of freedom and democracy. Is this freedom? Is this democracy?" The captain replied, "You don't know how many of our people are being killed each day."

When they were ready to leave, the captain said he would have to take the three sons. All of Dr. Talib's pleading did not stop the soldiers and they took them away. We were there one month later and the family still didn't know where the sons were. We saw the physical damage done to the house, but we saw a deeper damage in their faces. Evident in their eyes was the strain of fear, pain and worry the family was carrying for their sons.

We decided to try to find where their three sons were being held, so two team members spent an entire day accompanying the family at a CMOC (Civil Military Operations Center). We finally learned that the sons

were incarcerated at Um Qasr in southern Iraq. The family filed an appeal for their release.

A few days later, in early September when I was preparing to leave Iraq, we arranged for Dr. Talib and his wife to be driven to the prison at Um Qasr. Other Iraqis were waiting in the hot sun, also trying to go in. After three hours, they were able to see the three brothers. They also talked with Major Kathy Gerety who was concerned and said she would recommend they be released. The three were not released until the end of October.

We were horrified by this story, and the team continued to document other such cases. Here are some of them:



"Where are my sons?" An Iraqi mother holds up pictures of her three missing sons.

—CPT Photo Archive

Imad Abdul Raheen; Kamel Hassen Khoumais

On December 16, 2003, U.S. forces surrounded the farming village of Abu Siffa at 2:00 a.m. and, in the course of a 14-hour operation, detained 80 men and three teenage boys (ages 14, 15 and 16). Abu Siffa is located on the outskirts of Balad, a city of 90,000 people about 50 miles north of Baghdad.

According to Mohammed Jasim Hassan Altaai, "The Coalition Forces were looking for one person but they searched all our houses. It was a rainy night and they surrounded our whole village (about 25 homes) with tanks and Humvees. They surrounded the farmers' fields with tanks and destroyed the fences. They destroyed the doors of our houses and kicked down our bedroom doors, or used their weapons to open them, while we were sleeping. They didn't allow anyone to remain in the houses while they searched. They stole 14 million dinars from Imad's house and more than 4 million from Kamel's house (in all the equivalent of about \$17,000). They gathered the men together and beat them severely. A 70-year-old man suffocated and died when they put a black plastic hood on him."

The object of the raid was to capture Kais Hattam, a prominent Baath Party official. According to the military commander who conducted the raid, Colonel Nate Sassaman, Saddam Hussein was captured with documents directly linking him to Kais Hattam. Sassaman said they found weapons, confiscated \$1.9 million dollars in cash, and detained 72 men in the raid.

On December 31, 2003, U.S. forces returned to Abu Siffa and shelled the home of Abas Muhamed Abd Wahid, a 41-year-old primary school teacher currently in detention. The front of the simple brick building, which once housed 16 people, was completely destroyed. The interior of the house was full of rubble and its contents removed.

Three days later, on January 2, the U.S. military attacked a second house belonging to four brothers: Hamis (35), Abd Kadir (28), Jasim (30) and Mohammed (16). Their father, Tarik, is deceased. All of the brothers are detained. The main entrance and two of the house's support pillars were destroyed by tank fire. Soldiers punched holes through interior walls and riddled the ceilings in every room with scores of bullets leaving the six-room house uninhabitable.

When asked if there was any reason why these particular houses were destroyed, Altaai said, "No. They just choose every sixth house, ones that are hidden away so no one will see."

"They have detained all of the men in our village," said Altaai. "Jamal and I are the only two men still living

in the area. They took about fifteen teachers from the secondary school, so now there aren't enough teachers to give lessons." Police officers, farmers and students are also being held.

The effect on this agricultural community has been devastating. There are no men to do the work, and local farmers are reluctant to assist for fear of reprisals from Coalition Forces.

None of the detainees at Abu Ghraib prison have seen a lawyer or received a visit. Altaai and one other person from the community were allowed to visit the teenagers who are held in a separate Baghdad prison. "It is so difficult for us to visit them," Altaai lamented. "The soldiers treat us badly, and they don't allow us to be close to the detainees. They put a line and we have to stand about 10 meters away so we cannot talk freely with them. If only we could visit one of the prisoners, then we could get news about all of them."

The al-Obaidi Brothers

These three brothers, Ma'ad Khalil Hassan, Masseh Khalil Hassan, and Omar Khalil Hassan, were taken away from their family's home in the first week of July 2003, leaving three women, four children, and the men's mother, Zakia. Two of the men were taxi drivers and the third a carpenter. They are charged with an attack on U.S. forces. Sheikh Moayed of Baghdad's Abu Hanifeh mosque insists that these charges are completely false. Zakia believes someone gave the U.S. authorities malicious information about her sons.

U.S. forces raided the family in the middle of the night, dynamited the front gate and used flares to light up the whole house. "First we heard shooting," says Zakia. The soldiers broke all the windows in the house and caused major structural damage to the front entryway. Several helicopters hovered overhead.

The soldiers pointed guns at the whole family, including the children, and kept them under guard in the kitchen. Four soldiers kept their weapons trained on one of the women as they forced her to show them every possible hiding place in their house. When they entered Maseh's room, a soldier shot into the pillow beside his face to wake him. They tied each man's hands behind his back, put a sack over his head and forced him to kneel. A child who was present through all of this now shakes and has nightmares. He thinks the helicopters took away his father.

"The soldiers said they were searching for weapons, but didn't find any so took my sons instead," says Zakia. The soldiers also took about 300,000 Iraqi dinars (\$150), and the family's supply of sugar and rice. Christian Peace-

maker Teams (CPT) observed that there were few furnishings in the home. A television speaker was shot through. "We have nothing, we are poor, simple people," Zakia told the soldiers.

Ma'ad, Maseh, and Omar are being held in Bucca prison. Their family has gone to the U.S. military authorities and to the International Committee of the Red Cross but no further information about their status is available. When Zakia visited CPT in January 2004, they still had not been able to visit the men in prison.

Ma'ad is 43 years old, Maseh is 36 and Omar is 32. Their sequence numbers are 115448, 115284 and 115286 respectively. The three brothers are charged with "Attack on Coalition Forces."

Mohammed Abbas Fraiyh Abd al Dulaimy

The facts surrounding Mohammed's disappearance were given to us by his father, Abbas Fraiyh:

"I have searched the hospitals, the morgues, the human rights agencies, the forensic institutes. I have even started digging the ground around the graves of the dead in search of my son.

"My son is 21 years old. He was an office worker in the Agricultural Department of the President's Bureau. On April 5, he reported to work as was his duty. He never returned.

"One day by chance, I picked up a video CD of news clips from the war. I saw the battle which took place in the neighborhood where my son's office was, and I saw him being led out of his office with eight colleagues. I recognized him by the clothes he was wearing. The U.S. soldiers had put sacks over each of their heads and made them walk in a chain with each person's hands on the next person's shoulders. I saw the number on the vehicle of the Marine unit that invaded his office. The number was 123.

"My son had no relation to the Ba'ath party, or any other political parties. The Coalition forces took civilian workers out of their offices. These people were not soldiers in the military. Why did they do this? These people were not fighting the U.S.

"I went [twice] to Um Qasr prison camp [eight hours south of Baghdad] to look for my son. I wasn't allowed in either time. There are many detainees at Um Qasr whom the Coalition says are not there. The Coalition doesn't list their names where their families can find them.

"There are several camps which the International Red Cross and other organizations are not allowed to enter. One official told me, 'There are five VIP camps which we cannot enter unless the Coalition gives us the names of the people inside.' They also told me that the Coalition is not

providing them with the names of all detainees. There is no effort on the part of the Coalition Forces to follow the Geneva Conventions.

"There are many, many prison camps for the Coalition. I can't count them all. Some of them are in Qatar. Others are on the border of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. No one is allowed in these camps, and you can only find out they exist through underground radio networks.

"I went to the Iraqi Assistance Center asking for information about my son. They told me, 'We only have the names of detainees taken after May 1, 2003. For others, we cannot assist you.'

"I met a BBC reporter who took an interest in my son's story, and he went to ask Paul Bremer where my son was. Bremer said, 'Go to the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) and they will tell you where he is.' So the reporter went to the IGC, but they gave him no help at all. Then the BBC reporter lost interest and didn't do anything else to help me.

"I did my best to find my son, but I didn't succeed."

Yaseen Taha

U.S. forces detained Yaseen Taha, a 33-year-old farmer and student in Islamic studies at the University of Baghdad, after a series of tragic events for his family.

At about 4:00 p.m. on October 17, 2003, U.S. soldiers approached the village of Abu Hishma from the south. They fired randomly towards the village and shot Yaseen's brother Aziz. Aziz was 25 years old, unmarried, and an English language student at the University of Baghdad.

When Majida Thamir, Yaseen's 30-year-old wife, saw her brother-in-law injured on the ground near their house, she bent down to try to help him. She too was shot and killed instantly.

U.S. soldiers prevented bystanders from helping Aziz. He bled to death after about two hours. When Esmaa, Aziz's sister, came and saw him dying, she started crying. One soldier fired a warning shot in the ground and imitated her crying in a mocking way.

About a week later, after an attack on U.S. forces, soldiers came back to the village. They approached Yaseen on the street, asked him to identify himself and arrested him along with others in the village. Yaseen was accused of being involved in the attack since he would have a motive of revenge for the death of his wife and brother.

Yaseen has three children. His youngest was only fifteen days old and nursing at the time of his wife Majida's death. Since then, Majida's brother's family has been caring for the children. Family members went to Abu Ghraib

prison but were not allowed to visit Yaseen.

Yasser Hameed al-Mohamedy

Yasser is one of many Iraqis known to have been detained by the Coalition Forces and disappeared. These detainees are presumably in one detention camp or another, but their families have been unable to locate or contact them. Yasser's family has spent the last ten months searching for him. This is Yasser's story as told to Christian Peacemaker Teams by his uncle, Hameed Ahmed Abdulla, and Yasser's friend, Salah Mehdy Abbas, who was with Yasser at the time of his capture.

On April 4, 2003, shortly before Baghdad was invaded by Coalition Forces, Yasser and Salah were traveling home in their Nissan pickup from the dairy in which they both work. As they were nearing Salah's home on the outskirts of Baghdad (Radwania), they approached some sand piles alongside the road. Concealed from view by the sand piles, Coalition Forces opened fire on their vehicle. Both Yasser and Salah were wounded—Salah in the head and right thigh, Yasser in the leg and hand.

After searching the vehicle, the soldiers administered first-aid, transported them to a helicopter which then took them to a hospital. Salah, who was the more severely injured of the two, fainted at some point during this trip. His recollection of that hospital is foggy, but he thinks it was on a ship in the Gulf. Salah and Yasser were separated when Salah was transferred to a hospital in Nasiriyah (which was under Coalition control by that point) for further medical attention. When Salah made inquiries, the hospital staff said no one by the name of Yasser had ever been admitted.

Salah left the hospital early against medical advice in order to reassure his worried relatives. He also met with Yasser's family after returning home. It was through Salah that Yasser's family finally learned what had happened to him.

Equipped with this new information, Yasser's family and friends began a search. They inquired at the Iraqi Assistance Center, the agency that acts as the Coalition Provisional Authority's liaison to Iraqis and keeps lists of detainees. They then went to the International Red Cross and the Red Crescent. They sought out translators who worked in the prisons and, through conversations with released detainees, they learned that Yasser had been seen in three different prisons. Detainees released in the south of Iraq from Bucca prison in Um Qasr, and another prison in Basrah, reported that Yasser had been in both those prisons. More recently, a detainee released from Abu Ghraib prison on the outskirts of Baghdad also reported seeing Yasser.

THE CPT REPORT

In December 2003, as the number of detainee families we were working with increased, it seemed helpful to compile a report to summarize the team's findings. Matthew Chandler, full-time CPTer from Oregon, took up the challenge and compiled a report on 72 cases. Several of those cases are reported here.

One is a follow-up with Dr. Talib and his wife, Nawal. Their three sons had been released by October 28, 2003 and were back with their family. All three told us the stories of their time in detention. The following is a shortened version of one brother's story, corrected to make his English smoother:

"Through the entire first night and into the first day for a total of about 14 hours we were held blindfolded and forced to kneel with our arms tied behind our back. I can still see the places on my arms where my handcuffs cut into my arms. At one point they placed a smaller handcuff, wire-like device on my arms and twisted them. A soldier said, 'Tie it until you can see blood.' They tightened the handcuff so that my hands swelled up and blood came out. The scars remain until now, December from the time of my arrest August 1.

"During that day the guards shouted at me. 'You want to kill the U.S. Army!!! I will take you to Guantanamo.' I told them I did not shoot at the U.S. army. Then a soldier came and said to us, 'Everyone is going to die.'

"While we were still blindfolded, a soldier came and took my brother away and shot a bullet into the air. That soldier then went to my brother and told him that they had killed me and said that he is next. He told him that he is going to die. The soldier made sounds like he was reloading the gun. And then said, 'Say goodbye because you are going to join your brother and you are going to die.' Several times he put the gun to my brother's head after making sounds like he was loading the gun. During this whole time we were blindfolded. Each brother was sure the other was dead. Then someone came and hit me on the shoulder.

"Then they took us to another building where they put us in a small prison-like cell. There were three other people there too. The keepers were told to give us water every hour.

"Finally another soldier came and removed our blindfolds and handcuffs. Until we reached the cell we had been given nothing to drink and handcuffs and blindfolds had been in place since arrest.

"The next day they took us back to the place where we had been terrorized earlier. Two of the Akif boys were

now released. Then they put us in the truck for transport to the airport where a woman detective questioned us. We were asked, 'Why are you here? What do you do? Are you a Baath party member? What was the occupation of your father?' I told the detective exactly what happened and the detective was a little surprised. The detective said to me, 'Your record says you resisted U.S. forces.'

"Then we were processed into the camp at the airport and assigned a capture tag and numbers for Camp Cropper in the Airport. We were there for 14 to 15 days. The water was terrible. Food was military rations, two meals per day. It tasted terrible but we were forced to eat it. Some people vomited it right back up. The number in our 4- by 7-meter tent varied between 30 and 40, so it was crowded and hot.

"Two days later I was transferred to Bucca (Um Qasr). At the airport before departing a doctor checked me, including my blood pressure. The doctor asked me what kind of water I was drinking and I told him that, 'I drank what you gave me to drink.' The doctor said to me, 'You need a lot of water.'

"On the way to Bucca we stopped for one night at Nasiriyah. I was so happy to get away from the airport because we all know that no one ever gets released from the airport. Other detainees had told me that the road to release goes through Um Qasr and I was on the way there. The food was better and the water was better. My total time in detention was 66 days. During that time I lost 20 kilos or about 45 pounds. There was a man in our group who was suffering from a diabetes-induced coma, but the guards refused to get help for him. We prisoners managed to revive him.

"At Um Qasr a detective with the same questions interviewed me again. The woman detective told me that I was not a criminal, a terrorist or a supporter of Saddam so I should be patient and I would be released. Persons in Bucca with charges of being connected to Al Qaeda described how they were beaten but otherwise many of us were treated well. I was happy to see my parents when they came."

* * *

On January 26, 2004, Dr. Ali Al Za'ag, an Iraqi science professor at Baghdad University, was released. I had met and interviewed Dr. Ali back in the summer after he had been interrogated 15 times. This time he was detained when he went to a General Information Center (GIC) in the Karrada District of Baghdad. He had been urged by U.S. forces to go there and get a gun permit in order to protect himself from the threats to the scientific community. He was arrested by a U.S. soldier who refused to listen to his argument that he had been interrogated 15 times

last summer and then had been declared "clean" by weapons inspector Scott Alcott.

A neighbor who went with him reported that Dr. Ali never came out of the office. After visiting the GIC (a former palace of Saddam Hussein's daughter) several times and receiving no information, the family approached CPT and International Occupation Watch (IOW) for assistance. For several weeks CPTers and Eman of IOW went with family members to various CPA offices trying to find out where Dr. Ali was, what the charges were, and to protest the arrest. Major Peterson, head of the GIC told them, "This is not a case of Big Brother. He will not disappear down some black hole. In one week we will be able to tell you whether he will be held or released." Weeks went by and the family still received no further information. Several of us joined in a vigil at the university sponsored by faculty and students on his behalf.

The family believed Dr. Ali was arrested because another American weapons inspection team had returned to Iraq for another search for WMD. U.S. forces had arrested at least six other scientists in this latest search, despite the fact that the head of the previous inspections team recently returned to the U.S. declaring that there had never been any such weapons, that they were destroyed in the early to middle 90's.

On March 4 we got a call saying that after 38 days, Dr. Ali was free. A week later he told us his story.

From the GIC he was taken to the Green Zone where soldiers put him in a three-meter by three-meter wire cage that he likened to an animal cage. It was out of doors, unprotected from the weather, and was next to 15-20 other cages that held prisoners. "I was treated like a dangerous person," he said. He was only there until dark when U.S. military police in two Humvees transported him to Cropper Camp at the Baghdad Airport.

Dr. Ali assumed that the camp he was taken to was under the auspices of U.S. military intelligence. Upon entry, guards took his picture, did an eye print, took fingerprints, and, with their computer, printed out a wristband that gave him a prisoner of war number.

While he was there he tried to find ways to resist being dehumanized by his experience. Guards put him in a small cell about the same size as his earlier cage. "As a biologist I prefer not to call my humiliating confinement a 'cell,' one of the essential building blocks of all of life which God had called 'good.' And I made friends of the guards. I refused to call them my enemy."

For five days he stayed in solitary confinement before he was able to question guards about the reason for his arrest. Ten days later guards gave him a pencil and paper to write the anonymous person in charge to ask that same

question. "Two men came the next day and told me, 'We didn't know you were here. Sorry, you shouldn't be here.' I replied, 'So, let me go home.' They answered, 'This bureaucratic system won't easily get you released.' 'Will I be here for days or weeks?' I asked. They said, 'We don't know.'"

Some time later, after he gave up hope for an early release, guards took him to another location where three people questioned him for two hours. One he knew as Brenda, one of the interrogators from last summer. They admitted that some of the questions were the same. After they asked questions, he wrote the answers, and they sent the report to Washington, D.C. Dr. Ali commented after his release, "They are looking for 'true lies,' which don't exist." This was the only time during his confinement that he was questioned.

Some days later, guards came to his room and said he could go home. After 38 days in detention he arrived on his doorstep and greeted his surprised and delighted wife, son, and daughter. At the university, colleagues and students sacrificed three sheep to recognize his return, a ritual reminiscent of Abraham's sacrifice and often done after a person goes through a grueling event.

* * *

We listened to the stories of men who had recently been released. On February 13, 2004, a group of us went to visit "Ahmed," a 52 year-old farmer who lives on the outskirts of Baghdad. He was detained and tortured by U.S. forces at the end of January. Ahmed has 8 children. His youngest son is 11 years old. He grows vegetables, wheat, rice and beans, and was a driver for the Ministry of Irrigation. He asked us not to use his real name for fear of punishment from the U.S. military. The following is a summary of his story:

"One day, at the end of January, I was inside my house when there was an explosion about 2 km. away. We went to the mosque to pray because it was a Friday. When we finished the prayers, we saw helicopters everywhere and we heard the news that the Americans came to my house and arrested my nephew who was visiting from another city. I told everyone in my family we did nothing, so they would release him.

"My son lives in the next house. They searched his house and took his money. When they finished checking his house they were waiting for us. They arrested us and asked us if we did this explosion. We said no. They asked us do you know who did it and we said no. The soldiers said either tell us you did it, or tell us who did it.

"They handcuffed me and pulled me by the back of my collar to their car. They beat us and kicked us with their shoes. They put bags over our heads so we couldn't

see who was beating us.

"On the way to the camp, I asked for water and they beat me on the head with the bottle of water. I fell down when I was getting out of the car and somebody lifted me under my arms and threw me to the ground. They lined us up against a wall. Somebody kicked me, my head jerked and banged into the wall, I fell down.

"They took us at 1:00 p.m. and we reached the camp at 5:30 p.m. For four days we only had water, no food. And for all this time we were outside, not under a roof, and we can see nothing because we were wearing hoods.

"After I hit the wall with my head and fell down they handcuffed me with my hands behind my back lying on my stomach. (Ahmed shows us his wrists. They are ringed with pink scar tissue.) They kept me in this position through the night and into the next day—almost 24 hours—and we weren't allowed to move our legs in that time. We could not sleep during that time because they always kicked us. I don't know for sure, but I think they did this for a purpose, as a way to torture us and not give us a chance to sleep.

"Look at this. (His wife brings in a white tunic. Numbers were written in black marker across the front of the tunic.) This is what they wrote on me, to identify me.

"During these 24 hours, they brought some dogs. I could hear them searching and doing things with them. They didn't bite me but I could hear the screams of other people, so I thought they were being bitten.

"There was a translator and I tried to tell him that we couldn't feel our hands—it feels like they are cut—and he said that's the way it is. The next day, they made us sit cross-legged with our hands handcuffed behind our backs and hooded. The soldiers came and kicked us on the kneecaps and you could hear them laughing. I was so tired, but if I started to fall asleep they kicked me.

"When you asked the translator to go to the toilet the soldiers shouted at you and kicked you. You had to ask 10 to 15 times before they let you go. When you reached the toilet, they released your hands but you could not use them—they had no feeling in them and wouldn't bend—so sometimes you couldn't control yourself.

"For all this time there was no food—only water. It did not rain, but it was cold. We had to sit this way all through the night until the next day. This is the mark it made. (Ahmed shows us a quarter-sized, red scab on the outside bone of his ankle.) Then they made us stand. And so it continued this way for four days.

"Sometimes they would take me to another place and let me walk into a wall. They interviewed me three times. Each time they took me inside a room before someone

with a translator. They lifted the hood from my head. It's made of the same material they use to make sand bags. They asked me for 3 to 5 minutes if I knew someone who did it and then they took me back.

"After four days, they told me I would have lunch. They took me in front of the wall and beside me was a dog. A soldier had a biscuit to give the dog and a piece of meat to give to me but I couldn't eat the meat because of its smell. So I told him give me the biscuit and give the meat to the dog, but the soldier gave the biscuit and the meat to the dog. They put the bag back on my head and took me back to my place.

"On the fifth day, again taking me by the neck and hitting me into walls, they put me in a car and took me to Scania, a huge military base they built in Al Dora (a suburb of Baghdad). I could hear other voices with me. They searched me, took my cigars and my lighter and my money, and put them in a bag. They said I would get it back.

"One of the soldiers spoke to me in Arabic. He said he would help me. He said he would put me with the group that had already been tortured. They took off the bag and freed my hands.

"They took our group inside a room and closed the door. There were beds and blankets so you can sleep. I slept inside this room but there was no food until 9:00 in the night. They brought us the same bags of dried food they make for the soldiers, which is difficult for us to eat. Then we spent all of the night until the next morning. In the morning you could go to the toilet if you wanted. About 20 of us spent three days in this room.

"After the three days, they took 10 of us and stood us against the wall outside. They said they would release us. They said when you reach the main road, stop a car and tell them you have no money and that you will pay them when you get home. They did not return my ID or my cigars or my money. I went to the main road, found a taxi and drove home.

"God says you have to tell the truth. For that reason I am telling you the truth."

"Ali," Ahmed's 26 year-old son, told his story next. He has three children (ages 1½, 3 and 4) and drove for the Ministry of Education. Like his father he had been hooded, handcuffed and had received no food for four days.

"They put us in a dark room and we were sitting cross-legged on the floor. They took the bag off my head and an officer who was doing the investigation asked me with a translator about the explosion—who did it, where I was. Then they put the bag over my head again and took me back (to where my father was).

"At the second time, they took my father first and then they took me. They told me that my father told them everything so now we want to hear the truth from you. I replied to them the same—'I don't know anything about the explosion.'

"The third time, they put me inside the same room with the officer and the translator. They took the bag off my head and put me against the wall. He came really close to me and told me not to look to the left or to the right, to just look at him. He said you will answer my questions. But first he gave me four points to remember. Because I was nervous I forgot the fourth point and he beat me with his hand and I fell down. He asked me the four points again but I forgot the fourth point again so he kicked me in the groin and I fell down.

"He kept asking me about the explosions. He put his hand under my chin and lifted me up from the floor. While he was doing this to me he said if you vomit you must swallow it—don't spit it out. Then he hit me with his hand and I fell and he kicked me with his shoes. Then he said if you refuse to answer my questions I will take pictures of your wife and your mother and your sister naked and I will put them on the satellite as a sex film. The last time he beat me I collapsed and I couldn't remember anything after that.

"The next day they used something like a needle on my neck and my back. I couldn't tell what it was because I was hooded, but it felt like they were poking me with a nail.

"When we were released after four days, they took us to the outside gate and left us with our hands handcuffed behind our backs. We were 11 persons. We had to go to someone with a shop nearby and ask for a knife to cut our handcuffs.

"When they released me, they took 400,000 dinars (about \$280) and my ID."

* * *

Two brothers from the city of Samara came to our apartment to tell us the story of the death of their father while he was being detained. The following is a shortened version of the story according to Abdulkahar:

"On December 21, 2003 at 9:30 p.m., U.S. soldiers surrounded our house and crashed in the front gate with a tank. When we opened the house door to see what was happening, about 15 soldiers rushed inside, broke open cupboards and cabinets and ransacked the house. The brothers saw soldiers dividing up family money they took during the search. Soldiers pushed around our 70-year-old father, Mehide Al Jamal, who had recently had a hip replacement operation and had difficulty walking. Our father was a former surveyor and planner for the rural areas

around Samara, and was well respected in the community.

"Soldiers handcuffed four of us, our father, my brother, and my uncle. They put plastic bags over our heads and took us away in an armored military vehicle.

"My father started gasping for breath and called out 'Help me! I can't breathe!' The soldiers responded with 'Shut up! Shut up! F___ you!' When I pleaded for the soldiers to loosen or take the bag off my father's head, soldiers cursed me and hit me in the chest with a rifle butt. I heard one soldier say, 'The f___ing old man may be dead.'

"My brother, uncle, and I were then transferred to another vehicle and taken home and released. There we found the body of our dead father. A soldier told us that our father had died of heart failure, but I responded angrily, 'No, you killed my father. You soldiers treat us like animals!'

"After the funeral service, we filed a claim against the U.S. Military and a man in our community who we believed accused our father falsely. Many in the community hated him because he had been an informant for the former regime. Now he was doing it for the U.S. Col. Nate Sassaman, commander of the unit involved, told us he would bring the informant to us, but we said, 'No, we don't want revenge. We want justice.' Sassaman then said he would investigate the informer, but later told us that he was innocent."

At the time we heard this story, we had a plastic sandbag that Theresa, a woman working to help families of detainees, had brought to us saying that soldiers had used it to put on the head of a four-year-old boy when his father, the Imam of a mosque, was detained. On the bag was written with a black marker pen, Wrongo, Dongo, Captain Stupid." We showed this bag to Abdulkahar, and he said, "Yes, this is the kind of bag soldiers put on our heads when we were detained." He put it on his head, and we could see how tightly it fit.

WHO WILL SPEAK TO THOSE WHO WIELD THE POWER?

Being North Americans in Iraq carries a lot of privilege. On the street our lighter skin, our hair, and clothing made us stand out in any crowd. We had access to information and resources from back home that helped us rise above the limitations and some of the chaos of post-invasion Iraq. Because of our passports, English language, and some knowledge of how these military systems operate, we were able to get into CPA or U.S. military offices and talk to the personnel. We wanted to use this privilege,

not only to help Iraqis access what little help was available, but also to speak directly on their behalf to those in power.

Often our contacts with U.S. officials in Iraq came in the process of getting information, advocating for particular families, or just traveling around the country. But we also made special appointments or contacts with certain officials in order to share what we had learned in our work or to give our suggestions.

Everywhere we went we encountered soldiers who believed that their presence here was important and helpful to the Iraqi people. There were also soldiers who believed the opposite, or didn't want to be in Iraq. Even though we opposed the occupation, we wanted to support the soldiers in their struggle to retain their humanity and not dehumanize Iraqis. We wanted them to see that it is not necessary to use excessive force to maintain security. Indeed, our experience showed that the use of excessive violence put them in greater danger.

In December the team decided to develop and pass out to the soldiers the flier entitled "Coalition Forces and the Human Rights of Iraqi Citizens." In it we invited all coalition soldiers to abide by the Geneva Convention, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and related humanitarian and human rights law, all of which postulate a soldier's duty to protect civilians and their property, to notify the families of detainees, to refrain from collective punishment; arbitrary arrest or detention; torture; cruel and inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; and attacks against honor and reputation.

Responses to the flier were mostly positive, but occasionally soldiers got defensive and angry, especially those who had been in Iraq a long time and had been under a lot of stress.

One time on the way home from Falluja, the team stopped at a large U.S. army base. While trying unsuccessfully to get in, the team members passed out fliers to guards around the entrance and to soldiers on convoys as they came through. Another time Cliff Kindy, a CPT member, was walking near the Palestine Hotel and offered fliers to two soldiers on a tank. One refused to take it, but the other took it gladly and wanted to talk. It seemed like he was considering trying to leave the military.

In February, my husband Art came to spend a week with the team and me in Iraq. He went with Cliff and an Iraqi man to Abu Ghraib prison to try to help him visit his detained brother. After walking through the razor wire in front of the prison, a guard told them, "He is not allowed any visits."

Art and Cliff challenged this, and told the Iraqi guards they wanted to talk with an American official. That is

when they met "Tony," an American soldier, about 22 years old, short, and good-looking. "I like to work out in the gym, but most days I am too tired to even think after standing guard in front of the prison for 12 hours every day," he said.

He told them he was only a common soldier. He had no authority and there was nothing he could do to help them arrange a visit. Then he opened up. "The situation is a mess in Iraq, and the American military is making it worse. I can understand that the Iraqi people are angry. Under Saddam," he said, "families could visit their loved ones once a week."

Tony expressed a lot of frustration with the military. He was eager to leave Iraq and the military, and said he could be killed any day. He was wearing a ragged piece of cloth as an armband in remembrance of a buddy who was killed a few days earlier. Tony said, "If you try to do what is right, you get kicked. I tried to do what is right, and I got knocked down into the cellar." He didn't explain what he meant.

He was fighting back tears as Cliff and Art told him they wanted him to be safe, that they cared about him. Here was a good person, caught in a force he could not control, trying to preserve his integrity, trying to keep his heart from becoming hard and cold, trying to do the best he could.

In early January, we began to take our CPT Report to meetings we had set up with U.S. military and civilian officers who were influential in carrying out detainee policies.

Since the previous August, when I had gone into the Republican Palace in the Green Zone for the first time and Judge Campbell had given me copies of the lists of detainees, other U.S. personnel, supportive of our work of giving information to families, continued to give us updated lists on a computer flash disk. We in turn provided this list to the three Iraqi human rights organizations working closely with us. Lower ranking military personnel, concerned about the problems in the system, encouraged us to talk to higher ranking officers who have more influence on policy making. The first one they suggested that we talk to was Col. Ralph Sabatino, who oversaw the CPA Ministry of Justice, and who had been in charge of classi-

fying the names of all the detainees since immediately after the war was declared over, May 1, 2003.

In early January, three CPT members, Sheila Provencher, Allan Slater, and I went to talk to Col. Sabatino and two other officers. I summarized our concerns about the excessive violence used in house raids, abusive treatment of detainees, and unjust confiscation of property. Sheila outlined our concerns about the inaccessibility of information and poor visitation policies. Allan shared specific examples that he had observed.

Col. Sabatino stated right out that night raids would continue, because they were military operations procedure. The "bad guys" operate at night, and that is when military forces have the best chance to capture them, he explained. "It is safer to hold such raids than to try to dialogue," he said.

CPTers suggested that, in the long run, the trauma to families and their resentment and their anger compromised security. Might treating the people with dignity and respect make a difference? Col. Sabatino confirmed that



Peggy Gish shows poster of Yasser Hameed al-Mohamedy, missing since April 4, 2003; his story is on page 8.

—CPT Archive Photo

"Abusive treatment of detainees is a training problem," he said. "Detainees who have been mistreated or their families should file a complaint. It will be investigated and prosecuted." He then outlined the proper steps for filing a complaint. When we related the extreme difficulties families have had in trying to go through these steps, with very little results, he acknowledged that, "Yes, there isn't a good way for an Iraqi civilian to report a military crime."

Col. Sabatino defended the practice of confiscating property, but agreed with us that there were many problems connected to this. Soldiers were not following their own policies of issuing receipts. He admitted that he had never seen any soldier issue a receipt. He suggested that the head attorney at the Organization for Human Rights

request a meeting with the staff Judge Advocate at the airport detention center to discuss the claims procedure. CPT agreed to draft the letter of request.

"Yes, a four to six month wait for visitation at Abu Ghraib prison is poor policy, but we are trying to work on it," he said. He also said it was unlikely that international NGOs or Iraqi organizations would receive access to the lists of prisoners.

CPA's plan is to update the list, translate it into Arabic, and make it available to every Civil Military Operations Center. He suggested we write letters to Ambassador L. Paul Bremer and Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez, asking for meetings, if we wanted to pursue the issues of inaccessibility of information.

Less than two weeks later Allan briefly took our advocacy work another step further, when he had a short "sit-in" and fast at the Iraqi Assistance Center. He had been working hard to help a family go through the system to try to get back their property or at least get compensation. The property had been confiscated by U.S. soldiers when their house was raided the previous September. They had gone more than five times to different offices since October and finally got a letter from a U.S. Colonel saying their case should be investigated. Each time they were put off until finally they were told there was nothing U.S. agencies could do for them.

Allan felt pain and frustration with the injustice of this dysfunctional system and the unnecessary suffering it was causing this and other Iraqi families. He felt this so deeply that he decided to just stay at the offices until the officials investigated this family's request. He called on officials to provide a more consistent, well-defined, efficient, and just system of responding to claims.

Allan sat at the offices overnight and started a liquids-only fast, which he kept for four and a half days. Three of our team were there talking with him when the head of the IAC asked him to leave and threatened arrest. Instead, when he didn't leave, the official brought over three military police to escort Allan to the door and tell him he was barred from the building. For a couple weeks after that CPTers were not allowed entry into the IAC.

Two weeks later, on January 24, Sheila, Cliff and I met with Ambassador Richard Jones, Deputy Administrator and Chief Policy Officer of the CPA; Scott Norwood, liaison between military and CPA; and Ronald Schilcher, Office of Provincial Outreach, who had known CPT team members in Hebron in the West Bank when he had worked at the U.S. Consulate in Jerusalem. Ambassador Jones was personable and expressed respect for CPT's perspective, saying, "The detainee issue is of great concern to us." He said that the CPA has "competing interests," secu-

rity interests, public relations interests, and humanitarian interests. He said that until November the priority was security, but now they needed to work on relationships with the Iraqi people.

He described the steps they were taking to resolve some of the "horror stories" of human rights abuses and detainee injustices. Such steps included creating an executive board to work on these issues, and reducing the time from 24 to 14 days that detainees spend in holding areas before they are assigned to a detention facility. He pointed out that this is now the policy, but that it remained to be seen whether or not the policy would be carried out. Ambassador Bremer also announced the planned release of 500 detainees, and ordered an informational center to be created in a trailer outside Abu Ghraib prison to assist families seeking information.

Sheila, Cliff, and I then summarized CPT's report of abuses against Iraqi people when detained and the lack of a clear, consistent, transparent process for families to find information or to make compensation claims, giving some examples. The men seemed surprised by what we described. We gave suggestions for policies that would reduce these abuses, and would be more respectful of the Iraqi people, as well as, in the long run, increase the security for international people in Iraq. We suggested that their staff arrange for regular meetings with Iraqi human rights lawyers to discuss these problems and involve them in the planning for the new justice system of Iraq. We left information with them about contacting three such groups that we work with on a regular basis and offered to help make initial connections with them.

In response, Scott Norwood suggested they were in the process of setting up a website that would list the detainees so that family members could go to the Internet and check for themselves. He suggested we contact his office to get more information about filing a report on abuses by the U.S. Military. We continued to set up meetings with other officials in the military and the CPA.

Our team began a series of follow up steps. We began to funnel information of claimed abuses to their offices by e-mail, the way they had suggested, but by the time I left in late March, we had not received any responses. We arranged for a meeting with Ambassador Jones and three Iraqi human rights organizations. This meeting was postponed three times, each time being called off just before it was scheduled to begin. As of April the meeting had yet to be held. The cancellations were especially hard because the phone system was still not working and it was difficult to contact the people who had been invited to participate. So each time they showed up at our apartment ready to go, we had to tell them the meeting was postponed. It seemed to hurt our credibility with their organizations.

The promised releases of prisoners have been slow and small, compared to the number of new prisoners detained each day.

Our next meeting was on February 14 with Col. Marc Warren, Chief Judge Advocate under Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez. Two military personnel picked us up at the IAC and drove us over to the Republican Palace. As we walked in, Col. Warren deliberately rearranged the furniture in the cramped office so that he was not sitting behind a desk, and we were all in a circle on the same level. When we introduced ourselves, he shared openly about missing his family.

Sheila, Cliff, and I presented CPT's report and summary of the report and shared our concerns, providing examples from Abu Hishma village, and the Al Dora suburb of Baghdad. Col. Warren responded, saying that he thought our report was well written. In response to my sharing some of the stories of the men we had interviewed in the Al Dora raid, He said, "You can't believe everything you hear." "That's true," I answered, "but I have been hearing similar stories widely in different areas of Iraq, so that we have concluded that these are not isolated incidents or accidents, but general practice."

He told us that his job was to see that the U.S. forces followed the law. They would work on correcting abuses by improving the training of the new soldiers who were being rotated into Iraq. They want to train them to be more culturally aware, to use precise force and to restrain their use of force.

He mentioned the book and movie *Algiers*, a story that took place during the Algerian revolution against French colonization. What struck him in this account was that the French started using extreme interrogation tactics and used extreme counter-force measures, which seemed effective in the short run, but increased the resistance and later "blew up in their face." It's instructive for the situation we are in right now," he added.

"Family visits are a real concern of mine." he said and acknowledged that they have done a poor job of disseminating information and that the process of moving detainees through the system was incredibly slow. Soon, however, the CPA website will include a list of lesser security prisoners. "Information about high security guys, we will keep under our control." One other improvement he mentioned was that more judge advocates had been commissioned to work on the review board to make decisions on individual cases. Instead of only two days a week, they will work on this seven days a week and each week try to process at least a hundred cases.

In response to our talking about prisoners' legal rights and referring to the Geneva Conventions, he said the Ge-

neva Conventions allow occupying forces to hold security detainees "forever." "But we will try to cull out those amenable for trial." When we asked if they would turn over the oversight of security detainees to Iraqis when the transfer of power came on July 1, he said, "No."

Because of the rotating in of new military troops during February and the CPA's work on reorganizing the detainee lists, we did not receive any more updated lists. In early March, Cliff met Edward Schmultz, the former assistant attorney general of the U.S., who told him, "There are thousands of Iraqis being held who should be at home. We're working on a list to get all the names straight."

No one actually knows just how many Iraqis have been detained by the U.S. military. The U.S.-led Coalition Provisional Authority asserts between 11,000 and 13,000 but they acknowledge that their records are incomplete. The Baghdad-based Organization for Human Rights (OHR) estimates at least 18,000.

We began to study more closely the last list we had received, dated December 30, 2003, which listed 8,855 names. We were aware that there were thousands more detainees, considered higher security detainees, not on this list. We found that of those on this list, 453 had no charges listed, 22 were held because they are relatives or friends of a suspected person (hostages), 89 detained because they were at or near the target of a military raid, and the charge of 79 was listed as being a Baath Party member. We took this study to various journalists. In his testimony before Congress on May 7, 2004, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld noted that some 43,000 people had been captured or detained in Iraq, of whom 31,850 had been released, leaving over 11,000 still in prison.

There were many good people in this horrible system, many who wanted to do things differently, but were under orders or felt like they had no power to change things. Talking with the U.S. military and CPA officials seemed important to do, but we didn't have very high expectations for what would come from it. We didn't know how much influence our work had on the recent increase of releases of security detainees or of the CPA's investigation into allegations of abuse by U.S. soldiers in detention centers. We would continue to seek out meetings with people in the system. We would still urge giving decision making power to the Iraqi human rights workers in this early stage of the process.

Any change, however, seemed very slow and fairly small, not really addressing the basic structural violence used to prop up a system of occupation.

That, of course, was before "Sixty-Minutes II" – and all those photographs. □

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The bequest of a fixed sum or a percentage of an estate ensures that our voice on behalf of peace and justice will remain strong.

AMEU is a tax-deductible, educational organization. The amount of your bequest is deductible from the amount of money that is subject to state and federal inheritance taxes.

Our official name is: Americans for Middle East Understanding, Inc., 475 Riverside Drive, Room 245, New York, N.Y. 10115.

For further information, please call John Mahoney at 212-870-2053.

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