

By Debra Sweet

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Despite the Obama administration's announcement Friday that U.S. combat troops are finally leaving Iraq — giving rise to the popular perception that “Iraq war is over”— I ask those who are celebrating to consider: where is the joy coming from?

It's been ten years now since Donald Rumsfeld's brain went “9/11 = attack Iraq,” apparently minutes after the WTC was hit by airliners. From that moment, when the world's largest military machine began planning it, through today, after over a million Iraqi deaths, *this war and occupation has never been legitimate, just or moral!*

Tens of millions of us who care about humanity protested to prevent the Bush regime from getting the coalition it sought to attack Iraq; much of the world was convinced the U.S. was not invading to “save” Iraqis but to advance its own imperial agenda. Our actions *did* contribute to this loss of legitimacy as the United States military ran into deep geopolitical difficulties in the region (remember, Bush and Cheney planned to sweep through Iraq as a gateway to dominating the rest of the region, including Iran, a strategy that has, shall we say, not gone well.)

The Nobel Peace President, who promised an end to war on Iraq, isn't exactly blazing a peace trail. The Bush Regime set this time frame of “withdrawal” in 2011.

In fact the Obama administration, through the State Department, pursued very hard the plan to keep U.S. fighting forces in Iraq beyond this year. It was the Maliki government, which in general has been very compliant to its U.S. funders, who balked at allowing U.S. military to stay because the terms demanded by Obama included immunity from local prosecution for the troops.

Think of that: The widest sustained, imperialist government sponsored, mass war crime, destroying a whole country, displacing 4.5 million from their homes, the turning of a secular society into a bloody sectarian battlefield, was to be justified and continued *only on the basis of immunity from the victimized country!*

Glenn Greenwald specifically attributes the Iraqi government stand to the revelation of a cable

released by WikiLeaks in May, 2011, and, as McClatchy put it at the time, “provides evidence that U.S. troops executed at least 10 Iraqi civilians, including a woman in her 70s and a 5-month-old infant, then called in an airstrike to destroy the evidence, during a controversial 2006 incident in the central Iraqi town of Ishaqi.” The U.S. then lied and claimed the civilians were killed by the airstrike. Although this incident had been previously documented by the U.N. special rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, the high-profile release of the cable by WikiLeaks generated substantial attention (and disgust) in Iraq, which made it politically unpalatable for the Iraqi government to grant the legal immunity the Obama administration was seeking. Indeed, it was widely reported at the time the cable was released that it made it much more difficult for Iraq to allow U.S. troops to remain beyond the deadline under any conditions.

War crimes in 2003; war crimes *never prosecuted* at the hands of Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld, Rice, and one can go on into the dozens, as [War Criminals Watch](#) does.

I am not celebrating!

More to come on the continued U.S. State Department presence of fighters; the black operations, and the hundreds of thousands of U.S. contractors staying in Iraq.

