

[The Bloody History of Iraq: What the West Ignores](#)

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In his review of Robert Spencer's [The Truth about Muhammad — Founder of the World's Most Intolerant Religion](#), Andrew C. McCarthy wrote:

“Islam is quintessentially tolerant. Its adherents are hospitable to liberty, equality, and pluralism, the rudiments of modern democracy. Those committing terror in its name are heretics — a fringe which has ‘hijacked’ a ‘religion of peace. This conventional wisdom brims over the mainstream media’s daily servings. It is, moreover, the not-to-be-questioned premise of U.S. policy on a host of paramount issues.” National Review Online, 11 January 2007*

I remember former President Clinton repeating the mantra, **“Islam is a religion of peace,”** on more than one occasion. After the 9/11/01 attack on the United States, President Bush proclaimed to the joint meeting of Congress that Islam was a religion of peace, but that its radicals had hijacked it, and declared war on the West.

Actually, the campaign of misinformation about the true nature of Islam was in full swing long before 9/11. For example, several PBS stations across the country telecast a documentary, **“Islam: Empire of Faith.”** In this presentation, Western Islamophiles sang the praises of Islam and portrayed its worldwide expansion as propelled by its message: **“There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the apostle of Allah.”** That’s all that it took to spread Islam from Arabia throughout Asia, Africa, and Europe! Islam must have been the exception in the long history of mankind. Of all the ancient and modern empires, only Islam spread by the power of its “faith!”

However, when we turn to Islamic sources and reflect on Islam’s worldview, we discover that the concept of war has always been a **basic tenet of the faith.** The very division of the world into **Daru’l Islam** and **Daru’l Harb**, (the House of Islam and the House of War) points to the fact that Muslims themselves have understood and claimed that their expansions (**futuh**) took place by their resort to the sword, and not by the proclamation of their faith. So, I am not exaggerating when I say that documentaries such **“Islam: Empire of Faith,”** and **“The Legacy of the Prophet”** are nothing but campaigns of disinformation designed to delude Westerners; and are not unlike the Communist propaganda that used to portray the USSR as an earthly paradise!

In this article, I would like to concentrate on the history of Iraq that for centuries was the very center of the vast Islamic Empire. This land is notorious for the acts of savagery that have taken place on its soil. Here is a chronological list that begins with the murder of Hussein, son of Ali, and ends with the execution of Saddam Hussein in January 2007.

1. On the tenth day of the month of **Muharram** A.H. 61, corresponding to 10 October 680, Hussein, son of Ali and Fatima, and grandson of the Prophet, was murdered in

Karbala. Shi'ites commemorate this tragedy by calling it '*Ashura*, a word derived from 'ashra, the Arabic for the number ten.

2. In 750, most members of the *Umayyad* dynasty were massacred by the *Abbasids*. The first Abbasid caliph is known as *al-Saffah*, i.e. "*the butcher*," due to his utter cruelty toward his enemies. Soon after his death, Baghdad became the capital of the Islamic Empire.

3. On the order of the Abbasid Caliph *al-Mansur*, the military Persian genius, *Abu-Muslim al-Khurasani*, who had masterminded the victory over the Umayyads, was assassinated in 755.

4. Caliph *Harun al-Rashid* (786-809), reputed for his "wisdom and clemency," ordered the assassination of the *Barmakis* in 803. Members of this Persian family had served the Abbasids faithfully for generations as treasurers of the empire.

5. Civil war broke out between the two sons of *Harun al-Rashid*, *al-Amin* and *al-Ma'mun*. That led to the siege of Baghdad in 812, and the triumph of *al-Ma'mun* over his brother in 813.

6. The revolt of the black slaves working in the *Basra* area known as the *Zanj Revolt* (869-883). These African slaves worked in the salt mines under extremely harsh conditions. They sacked Basra in 871. Later on, their revolt was brutally crushed.

7. The twelfth in line from Ali, known as the *Twelfth Imam* "disappeared" in 873. That gave birth to the Shi'ite belief that he will return at the end of time, to bring justice to the world.

8. In 1258, the Mongolians sacked Baghdad and brought an end to the Abbasid Caliphate.

Fast forward to Modern Times

The Ottoman Turks conquered Iraq and ruled until the end of World War I. The following is a summary of the bloody events that have marked the modern history of Iraq.

9. The Kingdom of Iraq was born in 1921. Its first king was *Faisal I*; he was the son of *Sherif Hussein* of Mecca. His brother *Abdallah* worked with him during WWI to defeat the Ottoman Turks. *Faisal I* died in Bern, Switzerland in 1933. Rumors spread that he was poisoned! He was succeeded by his son, *Ghazi*.

10. In 1936, the founder of the Iraqi Army, *General Ja'far al-'Askari* was assassinated after a coup led by *Bakr Sidqi*. A few days later, *Bakr* himself was assassinated together with an Iraqi Air Force officer at the Mosul Airport.

11. That same year, *King Ghazi* died in a mysterious car accident. He was succeeded by his young son, *Faisal II*, with his maternal uncle, *Emir Abd-al-Ilah*, acting as regent.

12. During WWII, a pro-Nazi Iraqi leader, **Rashid Ali al-Kilani** led a revolt against the Iraqi Government. The British army rushed from Jordan and crushed the revolt. **Rashid Ali** and four army officers that engineered the coup were hanged. This was followed by the hanging of the leader of the Iraqi Communist Party.

13. On 14 July, 1958, Iraqis woke up to the news of an army coup led by **Abdel-Karim Qassem**, that brought to a violent end the regime of **King Faisal II**, the Regent, and Prime Minister **Nouri al-Sa'eed**. They were assassinated, disfigured, and their bodies were dragged throughout the streets of Baghdad. The king was only 23; none of the victims were buried! Some Iraqis wept, but the majority rejoiced. Colonel Nasser's propaganda machine went into high gear broadcasting insults on the murdered King and his officials. Several army officers that had not sided with **Qassem** were executed. It was a horrific blood bath!

14. On 8 February 1963, **Abdel-Karim Qassem** was attacked by the Iraqi Air Force while at the Ministry of Defence building. The next day, he surrendered to his attackers, but was executed with three army officers. His body was shown on Iraqi television. Killings broke out all over Baghdad between Communists and Baathists. The frenzied crowds sang and danced in the streets. Nasser's infamous "**Sawt al-'Arab**" (Voice of the Arabs) radio station broadcast vilifications of the massacred men!

15. Another coup took place in Iraq on 18 November, 1963. **Abdel-Salaam 'Aref**, the leader of the coup against **Qassem**, turned against the Baathists who had aided him in the coup, and assumed sole power in governing Iraq. He died in a tragic helicopter accident, and was succeeded by his brother, **Abdel-Rahman**.

16. On 17 July 1968, an army coup toppled President **Abdel-Rahman 'Aref**. He was exiled to Turkey. Many others, however, were executed in awful ways, that pointed to the utter depravity of the perpetrators of the coup.

17. A new president assumed power, **Hassan al-Bakr**; and **Saddam Hussein** from Tikrit was appointed as his vice-president. **Al-Bakr's** presidency was extremely brief. He died in 1979, preceded by the equally mysterious death of his two sons! Saddam Hussein assumed absolute power, and began his reign of terror by executing several men whom he considered as a threat to his dictatorial rule. Saddam's regime was infamous for its utter depravity, and lasted more than three decades. Incredible killings of Muslims by Muslims continued during his long dictatorship: the mass murder of Kurds in Northern Iraq, and of Shi'ites in Southern Iraq. Not to forget the ecological devastations that occurred when the southern marshes, that had marked the area for millennia, were drained on orders by Saddam! He did that to punish his enemies, regardless of the cost to the entire area.

For details of Saddam's years of absolute horror, please consult the following books:

"Republic of Fear: The Inside Story of Saddam's Iraq," by Samir al-Khalil. It was

published by Pantheon Books, New York in 1990; and republished in 1998 under the title of **“Republic of Fear: The Politics of Modern Iraq, Updated Edition.”** Samir al-Khalil is the nom de plume of Kanan Makiya, an Iraqi-American intellectual.

His other book on Iraq is: **“Cruelty and Silence: War, Tyranny, Uprising in the Arab World”** Published in 1994 by W.W. Norton & Company

“Between Two Worlds: *Escape from Tyranny: Growing Up in the Shadow of Saddam*”

by Zainab Salbi and Laurie Becklund, Gotham Books, a member of Penguin Group, Inc. New York, 2006

In preparing this brief chronology, I did not intend to imply that no other civilizations ever engaged in acts of mass murders and brutal treatment of prisoners. The past century was replete with the events of the Jewish Holocaust, Stalin’s purges, the horrors of the Gulag Archipelago, and Pol Pot’s “Killing Fields.” My compiling of the list of the bloody events that took place on the soil of Iraq is simply to allude to the often-forgotten fact that they were committed within a culture that is infused with the teachings of the religion of “peace.” The truth is that Islam’s sacred and authoritative texts contain those very ingredients that give birth to the tragic events that have made the modern Middle East, a place where unbelievable tragedies happen, and keep on happening to this very day.

*For a full text of Andrew C. McCarthy’s review of Robert Spencer’s book, please go to:

<http://article.nationalreview.com/?q=OTljZmRjMGU5NGI0NDkzM2FmMzczZjljYzc4YzYzMzY=>