

COMMENT

Hitchens and Iraq War

THE PENTAGON ISSUED A BRIEF statement declaring celebrity writer Christopher Hitchens and the Iraq War dead. Hitchens is perhaps best remembered as a charming member of the Western elite who delighted in drinking and waxing poetic on war crimes.

Christopher Hitchens, nominally left-of-center and anti-Zionist, joined the extreme, right-wing, Zionist neo-conservative tendency in championing the Iraq war. His arguments for the war were perhaps a defining example of Western intellectual propaganda. "The best case scenario is a rapid attack by precision-guided weapons, striking Saddam's communications in the first hours and preventing his deranged orders from being obeyed. Then a massive landing will bring food, medicine and laptop computers to a surging crowd of thankful and relieved Iraqis and Kurds. This could, in theory, all happen," he wrote in 2003 in "What Happens Next to Iraq", (*Daily Mirror*).

An estimated half million to 1.3 million Iraqis were killed, unlike the precision accorded to counting the US and coalition forces casualties, (4,486 US troops as of November 2011). "The death toll is not nearly high enough... too many [jihadists] have escaped," stated Hitchens in a 2004 speech referring to the Fallujah offensive.

Iraq which possessed one of the higher standards of living, access to health care and education in the Arab world, had its civil institutions and infrastructure almost completely destroyed by the war. The US invasion led to a humanitarian crisis. Health centers were bereft of medicines, medical equipment could not be repaired, and there were dire shortages of medical personnel as war casualties exponentially increased. Infant and maternal mortality skyrocketed. 30,000 people are imprisoned in Iraq, many without due process.

The sheer war expenditures, about \$1 trillion in US taxes to maintain the Iraq war, coupled with the massive militarization of the US economy has significantly contributed to the economic crisis facing American cities and families—who are stripped of reserves. Social spending was attacked by the conservative movement which championed the tax pipeline to the military and private corporations.

As a result, the military-industrial-complex grew and profited enormously from the Iraq and subsequent wars and military missions. About 200,000 private contractors cashed in on Iraq, including Vice President Dick Cheney's company Halliburton, which the Pentagon reported overcharged the US by \$1.4 billion.

For many Iraqis and Americans, the passing of the official American war in Iraq and Christopher Hitchens is a somber reminder of the terrible price they paid for belonging to a Muslim nation un-aligned with the US, and sitting on top of strategic oil reserves. □

[contributed]