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## Blair shed his tears for Diana. Does he have any for the 6,000 children being killed by the west in Iraq each month?

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*Whether or not General Pinochet is sent for trial, the question looms: who is next? Henry Kissinger and George Bush come to mind. Their terrorism is documented from Chile to South-east Asia.*

The reluctance of the US administration to support the prosecution of Pinochet, America's man, is understandable; in many ways, he was only taking orders.

And what of those in this country whose actions have caused the death and suffering of innocent people? Day after day, British warplanes bomb Iraq, largely ignored by a media whose historic role has been to minimise the culpability of western adventures. Each bomb dropped is the equivalent of the Omagh bomb many times over. Yet Britain is not at war with nor threatened by Iraq. The actions of the Blair government are clearly illegal. That is, they are a crime.

Moreover, the crime is compounded by economic sanctions which, by the narrowest definition of the applicable UN Convention, are genocidal in their consequence. (Although implemented under a UN flag of convenience, they are Anglo-American designed and controlled.) The death of 6,000 Iraqi children of all ages each month, as a direct result, is a conservative estimate by the major humanitarian agencies and by Dennis Halliday, the UN's assistant secretary-general, who resigned "because I did not join the UN to wage war on children".

Try sending baby food, or bandages, or stethoscopes, or school books, or toys, or shrouds for the dead to Iraq, and you will encounter a Kafkaesque system of delay and procrastination; no one doubts it is deliberate and vindictive.

Here is a letter from the acting supervisor, Office of Foreign Assets Control, US Treasury, to Kathy Kelly of a humanitarian charity called Voices in the Wilderness: "This office has learnt that you recently announced your intention to collect medical relief supplies for the people of Iraq and to personally transport them . . . You are hereby warned to refrain from engaging in any unauthorised exportation of medical supplies. Criminal penalties for violating the regulations range from up to 12 years and \$1 million in fines."

Put that alongside the weaselly pleading by ministers in the Blair government, who are becoming more nervous by the day about being caught out for what they and the Americans are doing in Iraq. This is evident in the defensive letters they are showering on newspapers. They know they are killing children. In the Independent on Sunday last week, Derek Fatchett, the Foreign Office minister and flak jacket for Robin Cook, wrote that food and medicines had never been banned.

This is false. As Andrea Needham has pointed out, all imports were banned for eight months after the imposition of sanctions in 1990, during which time the death rate for under-fives began its inexorable rise, "tripling by the end of 1990 and now standing at around seven times the pre-sanctions rate". While food and medicine are now technically not banned, the reality is very different.

Iraq is allowed to raise \$6 billion from selling oil to buy food every year. Half of this goes in reparation to Kuwait and to the UN in "expenses". With oil prices collapsing, about \$200 per person is left. Out of this must come food, medicines and repairs to the country's infrastructure, such as a sewage-contaminated water supply and ruined hospitals attempting to cope not only with malnourished children, but those suffering from leukaemia on a scale equal to that of Hiroshima - the consequence of the use of depleted uranium shells by the Americans and British in 1991.

Writing in Tribune, the Defence Secretary, George Robertson, used Pentagon jargon: "By degrading Saddam Hussein's ability to build and use weapons of mass destruction, we have diminished the threat he poses to his neighbours." His words come from the same source of vacuities as Blair's claim that raining bombs on Iraqis had "caged" Saddam. The only weapon of mass destruction deployed in Iraq is that which is killing, according to Unicef, 4,000 under-fives every month. How have their deaths "diminished the threat" to the region, Secretary of State?

Having witnessed much war and violence, I am offended especially by murder committed at a distance, by those whose hands are never bloodied and whose rhetoric feigns humane principles and moral indignation. Remember Blair's tears for Diana Spencer? Remember the "moral challenge" he threw down as the guest of Rupert Murdoch on Hayman Island? Where are his tears for the infants of Iraq? Where is his shred of morality?

Sermonising about the "evil" Saddam Hussein, who has "one of the worst human rights records on the planet", Blair and Robertson know that Saddam's record is no worse than when the British government and British industry were giving him everything he wanted, and no worse than the dictatorship in Indonesia, which is currently carrying out mass murder in the province of Aceh with British-supplied weapons.

There was a picture in one of the papers the other day of Robin Cook and Madeleine Albright sharing a laugh. What an interesting, baroque couple they make. One day, will some stubborn foreign judge, fired by notions of true morality and justice, seek their extradition? Who knows? Certainly the evidence is on the record:

American TV interviewer: "We have heard that half a million children have died [as a result of sanctions against Iraq]. I mean, that is more children than died in Hiroshima . . . Is the price worth it?"

Albright: "We think the price is worth it."

  
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