

The Truth of What Happened in Iraq

Z. Mahmud

I am a woman from Iraq. I am forty-seven years old. I lived my whole life in Baghdad until 2006. I really love my country with all my heart. We have a rich history and civilization, with many natural

We felt that people were going to pay their lives for nothing.

resources. Unfortunately, we have had three great wars from 1980 until now, which have destroyed many of our resources and much of our civilization. The results of the wars in my country have changed my life completely.

The most recent war was very difficult for the Iraqis. First, we were exhausted from the previous wars. Second, the military was not equipped with advanced weapons like the occupation army was. Third, many people supported the change in leadership and did not want to fight a war. We felt that people were going to pay their lives for nothing. When the war broke out in 2003, about 90% of the people did not have the fighting spirit, especially in the capital, Baghdad.

At the beginning of the war, U.S. planes bombed all the vital centers all over the country. Then, the occupying army from the U.S. and other countries entered Iraq from the south. When the war started, I decided not to leave my house. I tried

to handle it. But soon the fighting intensified. We heard the occupation forces would enter Baghdad. We decided to leave our home in Baghdad and move to a safer place in the east where my husband's relative lived on a big farm.

Eventually the army entered Baghdad, but there was no strong resistance. The

government collapsed in a short time. Later on, the Northern Province followed. We stayed at the farm for one month, until the war ended (or so we thought).

I had mixed feelings. I felt happy that Saddam Hussein was gone...

After that, we went back home to check on all my family and I wanted to see if my house was in a good condition. During my trip home, I saw many strangers dressed in army uniforms. I said, "Oh my God, this is the occupation army." This was the first time I saw them in our country. I had mixed feelings. I felt happy that Saddam Hussein was gone because we struggled to survive during his leadership, and I thought we would never live in peace with him in charge. But, when I saw the strangers – the occupying army – I didn't feel comfortable, be-



cause they carried weapons. Then I saw that the streets and the buildings of the government were destroyed. What a mess! I felt pain and sadness at what happened to my beautiful city. At that time, I didn't realize that there was more to come.

When I arrived at my house, there was no electricity, no water, and no phone. It was hard to find fuel for cars. In Baghdad, it seemed that life had almost stopped. After a while, life began to move again step by step, but slowly. Meanwhile, I saw the U.S. military patrolling the streets.

They didn't hurt anyone, but later on we be-

gan to lose safety, because violence started against the U.S. military and the Iraqis.

There were so many groups involved, we really didn't know who was doing it!

The U.S. army began to deal violently with the Iraqis for fear of any surprise attack.

Booby-trapped cars filled the streets, and kidnappings of both Iraqis and U.S.

military personnel began. "We have an invisible enemy," I said. You really didn't know who the enemy was. If people wanted to leave their houses, they didn't know if they would come back alive or not.

The violence kept escalating, so we decided to move to a neighboring country to live in peace.

We chose Amman, Jordan. To live in safety, we had to leave behind all that we had. From Jordan, my husband, my two children, and I were accepted as refugees by the U.S. to start again, a new life very different from our mother country.

Now, I am studying at the International Institute of Boston and trying to improve my English to get a suitable job. (I have a

degree in civil engineering in my country.) My husband is looking for a job too. We hope he finds one soon. I feel safe here, but I miss my relatives in Iraq.

When I arrived in Boston six months ago, I left everything behind me—the wars, the mess, the violence. I tried not to think about all those bad things. They make me

feel so tired and uncomfortable. Even though I really hated writing in the past, I feel a strong energy inside me to write about all these events that I have been through. I want the world to know what really happened in Iraq.

Z. Mahmud is an ESOL student in Boston.

I felt pain and sadness at what happened to my beautiful city.



For Discussion

Describe the author's "mixed feelings" about the U.S. invasion. How do you think you would feel if you were an Iraqi?

What is an occupying army? Has the U.S. ever been occupied by a foreign army? What would it be like to live in an occupied nation?

Why did the U.S. invade Iraq in the first place? (See p. 10 for more on this question.)