

Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.



Sacking of Iraq

Chengiz Khan and the Huns did not do to any land anywhere what the so-called "Coalition" have done in mere 24 hours over the once majestic Baghdad.

Bush pleads "Geneva Convention" for his soldiers but the world stood still when Guantanamo Bay was made a prison without access to Courts or to the Red Cross and those that fell in American hands are held incommunicado in Cuba over these years.

I am tempted to recommend the m a k i n g o f y e t a n o t h e r Guantanamo Bay governed by UN where Bush and Blair and the ilk be lodged forever... but then can the world at large stoop so low?

VS

Dhaka

"Is this the way of the mighty?"

"Say you! Is this the way of the mighty?" by Mr. Faruq Choudhury (March 24) has echoed the thoughts and sentiments of millions of people in our country and around the world. I congratulate him for his comments and sincerely hope that the invaders would appreciate the likely consequences of their aggression.

Syed Farhat Ahmad Roomy
New DOHS, Dhaka

After Saddam

The war has started and will soon be over. The dictator Saddam will be gone. Bush said that the war is to disarm Iraq and remove any chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons. Once Iraq is subdued, he will have achieved this end.

But in the process, Bush has made billions of people mad at him. Like battling the Sorcerer's Apprentice, smashing one danger may only create tens, hundreds, thousands, millions more angry Muslims and Arabs. The most important resource terrorists have is anger, and anger can only be created by their enemy. Without anger, terrorists do nothing.

If Bush is truthful that his aim is to avoid future terrorism, he must stop when he has won and completely turn over Iraq to the UN or other neutral body to aid them to become a democracy. Bush should support Iraq's recovery with money only, not troops or administration.

Once the world sees that Bush was honest, that he leaves Iraq after achieving his stated goal, only then the world will grudgingly think that the US did the best thing and begin to believe again in US morality.

But if the US stays in Iraq and takes all the contracts for US companies, then the world will realise that Bush's ideal is not democracy, but oil, and that his God is not Jesus Christ, but Mammon.

Tom Trottier
Ottawa, Canada

"Why this hartal?"

This is in response to the letter "Why this letter?" by 'A Teacher' (March 22).

No, the attitude of the Left parties does not seem the least bit suspicious. March 22 hartal was called for a very logical reason.

The left parties, on behalf of vast majority of the people of Bangladesh, summoned this hartal to protest the barbarous American aggression and the callous and unsympathetic policy of our government towards Iraq.

I am sure our peace-loving citizens do not want the world to think that we are in favour of American injustice meted out to Iraq. This hartal has contributed to restoring the image of Bangladesh.

The hartal called by the 11-party was supported by the Islamic Law Implementation Committee and many other Islamic organisations. This is a milestone in the history of our country.

Regarding the rally at Dhaka University, that was not at all hampered by the hartal. More than ten thousand students and around hundred teachers joined that anti-American rally.

Ruma, a student
Dhaka University

Iraq and Afghanistan

I often see in the Letter Page, people expressing their view on how the West is showing double standards to the Muslims and the Islamic world.

However, we conveniently forget that we have our own double standards. The Afghan Taliban seized power and remained so for 5-6 years with recognition from Saudi Arabia, UAE and Pakistan. We watched how a nation went back to medieval times with no regards for human rights. We were sympathetic to their deportable human conditions but did not do

anything. We were happy to explain to rest of the world that, this is not true Islam- but still did not feel the urge to rectify such blatant misrepresentation of our religion. It is the USA, who left the country in disarray. Well, they left the country to Afghan people, didn't they? If they fight amongst each other, it must be the West instigating them. Luckily for whatever reason, Afghanistan got rid of their tyranny and a decent leader is in place. I haven't seen Saudi Arabia or any other Islamic countries besides Turkey, sending soldiers in harms way to champion the rights of Afghan people. If the West removed Taliban for their own agenda, shouldn't we be happy that they are gone?

Byrd, certainly solely on the basis of his apparent opposition to the war.

Maybe *The Daily Star's* readers might like to hear how some of the other senators replied? Here are some excerpts from the speech by Senator John McCain, one of the greatest men in American politics and the father of an adopted Bangladeshi boy.

"To allege that somehow the United States of America has demeaned itself or tarnished its reputation by being involved in liberating the people of Iraq, to me, simply is neither factual nor fair.

The United States of America has involved itself in the effort to disarm Saddam Hussein and now freedom for the Iraqi people, with the same principles that motivated the United States of America in most of the conflicts we have been involved in, most recently Kosovo and Bosnia, and in which, both of those cases, the United States national security was not at risk.

Now comes Iraq, who has a tyrant running or ruining their peoples' lives for last 25 years. They fought with Iran for 10 years over the access to the Gulf and an island. Besides buying arms from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, which subsequently caused invasion of Kuwait.

People of Iraq has no freedom of expression, held to the whim of some group of power hungry evil leaders. Nobody in the Islamic world seems to care about that. Iraq is conveniently accepted in the OIC and Arab league.

Contrary to the assertion of the senator from West Virginia, when the people of Iraq are liberated, we will again have written another chapter in the glorious history of the United States of America, that will fight for the freedom of other citizens of the world, and we again assert the most glorious phrase, in my view, ever written in the English language, and that is: We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal and endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, and among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

Unfortunately, at that time the Western countries in general and the USA and Britain in particular turned a deaf ear to his words.

Iqbal Ahmed
Dhaka

Wrong war, wrong time and wrong place

Now that the Iraqis have captured a dozen or so US troops, President Bush and his maverick Defence Secretary are saying that in the event of a war, the prisoners must be treated as per the rules of the Geneva Convention. Anything otherwise would result in the captors being branded as "War Criminals".

Can someone explain to GW Bush and his hawks that Iraq never went into war with the US? It was the sole intention of the US and Great Britain to wage this unjust war. An action initiated entirely on their own without any endorsement from the UN and the international community.

Where does the laws of the Geneva Convention apply here? As tragic as it seems right now, with so many casualties on the side of the coalition forces, the live footage of the captured US troops and body bags flown back to their countries will probably be the only jolt that the US & the British Governments needs to accept reality. The reality being that this is the wrong war, fought in the wrong place and at the wrong time!

Farhan Quddus
Old DOHS, Banani, Dhaka

Strike on Iraq

In the '80s Iran's spiritual leader Ayatullah Khomeini told the UNO to accept his two demands for ending the Iran-Iraq war. The demands were 1) to declare Iraq as the aggressor 2) one day Saddam Hussein would pose as a great threat to the entire world so out him as soon as possible.

Unfortunately, at that time the Western countries in general and the USA and Britain in particular turned a deaf ear to his words.

Iqbal Ahmed
Dhaka

"America vs. Iraq"

I was terribly distressed when I read the letter written by "A proud American citizen" (March 23). There are a few points that I would like to point out to him/her.

1. The citizens of Bangladesh are not under any misconception about the war against Iraq. We are quite well informed and we have heard both sides of the story. If you think we have been misled, I wonder what you think of all those Americans in San Francisco and Manhattan and all the millions of people around the world who were brave enough to protest against the war.

2. I wonder where you got the information that the Iraqi Government believes that their life/culture/religion is the only way of life.

3. You have described Iraq as a nation that harbours terrorists and weapons that threaten world peace. If that is really one of the reasons for attacking Iraq, then why doesn't your government take any action against Israel and Ariel Sharon, the biggest threat to world peace at the moment?

4. There is hardly any evidence that Saddam Hussein is linked to Al-Qaeda. I hope you understand that a mere statement by George W Bush does not count as proof!

5. Perhaps you are right that Saddam Hussein does not care about his people. But please don't expect us to believe that Americans care about the Iraqi people. What makes you think that the people of Iraq want to be liberated from Saddam through a violent war, through massive bombing and profuse bloodshed? If you believe in freedom, then why don't you let the Iraqi people decide how they want to be liberated from their autocratic leader?

6. Do you really believe that America does not want Iraq's oil? Well, then you are either very naive or you know very little about your country.

7. We sympathise with the victims of 9/11 but the American government has responded to it by killing and wounding even more innocent people in Afghanistan and Iraq. I'm sure the relatives of 9/11 victims don't appreciate that. I read in *The Daily Star* that some relatives of 9/11 victims were arrested when they took part in a protest against the war.

In conclusion, I would like to make a request to the proud American citizen. Please don't become so engrossed in your pride that you fail to see what is really going on around you.

SF
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

My fellow American, your letter printed in *The Daily Star* contains contradictory statements. Statements which further strengthen the belief that the average Ameri-

Dhaka

This illegal war

George Bush has finally fulfilled his ambition to attack Iraq joined by our Mr Blair. They continued to flout the authority of the UN and the advice of other governments by trying to convince us that they are going in to liberate the Iraqi people.

Now almost a week into the 'war' we are already seeing the results of American so-called 'friendly fire'. I am morally bound to support the men and women who join the Services of my country, to protect us but I do not agree with those brave people being deployed to fight George Bush's War. I do not believe that they should be in Iraq supporting this illegal

war, propagated by a right wing American 'dictator'.

Bush has already decided that contracts for the 'rebuilding of Iraq' will be given to American companies. No doubt, when it is all over, they will claim that it was their servicemen who won the war (if that is the final result). I despise the arrogance of Bush and his 'buddies', with their attitude that everyone must do as they say or suffer the consequences. The people of the U.S.A. should take a long look at themselves and their Government and ask why do people dislike them so much.

We are able to watch this war 24 hours a day on our televisions and listen to the rhetoric of the American Government. Rumsfeld has today dared to say that Iraq is in breach of the Geneva Convention by showing American Prisoners of War on television and Bush is saying that he expects them to be treated within International Rules of War. Excuse me if I point out that this is an illegal war, declared on a sovereign state and on the point of prisoners of war can we please remember the American treatment of the 'prisoners of war' in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

I ask Bush to look into his Bible and remember the saying 'Do unto others as you would they should do unto you'. However I realise that his theory is more, 'Do as I say and not as I do'.

Kathleen Haq, UK

Enter war zone

can not tell the difference between fact and opinion; real or imagined; right or wrong. I would like to address the contradictions in the letter by parts.

1) You say that it is not assumed but is fact that Saddam possesses weapons of mass destruction. From where have you obtained this misinformation? Up till now the USA has not been able to provide any credible evidence to the world that Iraq has WMD.

2) You say "Bush tried to negotiate". But I do not recall President Bush making efforts to speak with the Iraqi leader directly or indirectly. The only time Bush ever had a message for Saddam was in his ultimatum speech.

3) "Terrorism in Iraq": There has been no credible evidence provided that Iraq harbours terrorists or has links to Al-Qaeda, the people responsible for the 9/11 attacks.

4) You say the terrorists think that what they believe is only the right way of things. Here, you have it all backwards. It was the terrorists who felt that their country/people/religion/culture was being encroached upon by western values. They (Muslims and Arabs) feel that they were being oppressed by America directly or indirectly (e.g. blatant support for Israel in the Middle East conflict with Palestine). They have become tired of USA imperialism and corporate take over. This is the REAL reason they attacked.

5) "We are not after oil". The first thing the American forces did when they reached Iraq was to take over the oil fields in Southern Iraq.

7) "We will put an end to ME violence": America has a poor human rights record in war. ME conflicts have been going on for years, due to American intervention, I believe ME will never see peace until America decides to leave it alone.

So please, come of your high horse for a minute and get your facts straight! God needs to bless the world, not just America.

ZA (a 17-year-old American citizen)
Dhaka

First of all, I for one, am not being misled into why America has taken military action against Iraq. I still strongly believe that America is on the hunt for oil since their supplies are soon to be running out. And yes, Bush is "assuming" that Iraq has weapons of mass destruction, since there has been no proof. And, if America really wants the people of Iraq to have a better life, then why are they bombing their houses? And how can they the youths of Iraq have a better and free life, when the memories of late night attacks and bombs will forever haunt them?

6. Do you really believe that America does not want Iraq's oil? Well, then you are either very naive or you know very little about your country.

ZA (a 17-year-old American citizen)
Dhaka

I would like to make a few points in context to A Proud American Citizen's (PAC) letter.

My advice to PAC is not to completely believe what the media is broadcasting. The Government

wouldn't tell you what they don't want you to hear, so if Mr Bush convinces you, he can't convince the majority if the majority knows the truth. Unfortunately, the same goes for news teams, such as the BBC - as it's started to become biased towards the war.

I do admit what Saddam Hussein is doing is completely wrong. But it isn't as bad as to what the Americans have done in the past. I would also like to state that A President giving shelter to terrorists is better than a President that would not prove with evidence whatsoever that Iraq possess WMD.

Within three days of aggression, Iraq could show none of its vast treasure of WMD. If Bush is sure, why he failed to produce evidence before the international community? One of the reasons might be that this would prove the US as the major collaborator of terrorism around the world. The WMD (chemical and biological) used against Iranians were supplied by the US Government. The involvement of Iraq with Twin Tower demolition is yet to be proved and the same with Iraq's relation with Al-Qaeda network. I agree with your teaching freedom of speech

This is in reply to a "Proud American citizen. The very adjective "proud" demands explanation. Isn't it? While I totally fail to prove that would prove the US as the major collaborator of terrorism around the world. The WMD (chemical and biological) used against Iranians were supplied by the US Government. The involvement of Iraq with Twin Tower demolition is yet to be proved and the same with Iraq's relation with Al-Qaeda network. I agree with your teaching freedom of speech

Finally, God bless the innocent civilians who died due to the delinquency of the three juvenile Leaders (i.e. America, Britain and Iraq)

Samia Rahman, London, England

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Despite this the following points illustrates that it is the US and has been violating the Geneva

a) As everyone is reminding the US, the prisoners in Guantanamo Bay held indefinitely without any charges is also a clear violation of Human rights values, which it constantly lectures the world.

b) The blatant execution of prisoners in Mazar-e-Sherif (Afghanistan), shot with hands tied behind their backs, and some were bludgeoned to death, by the criminal international organisation (CIA) of the US government.

c) The constant bombing of the drinking water installation plants in Iraq, coupled with the sanctions, causing the deaths of many children. Destroying facilities indispensable to the survival of the civilian population is prohibited by article 54 of the Geneva Convention.

d) The US resorted to the orgy of needless mass execution when the Iraq soldiers were retreating to Basra in the first Gulf War. It was clear the soldiers were not a threat to the US forces, a despicable barbaric act for the "liberators" of Iraq!

e) The US are threatening to prosecute the Iraqis for war crimes in the International Criminal Court, something that the US are refusing to sign up and apply it on themselves!

Yamin Zakaria
UK, London

