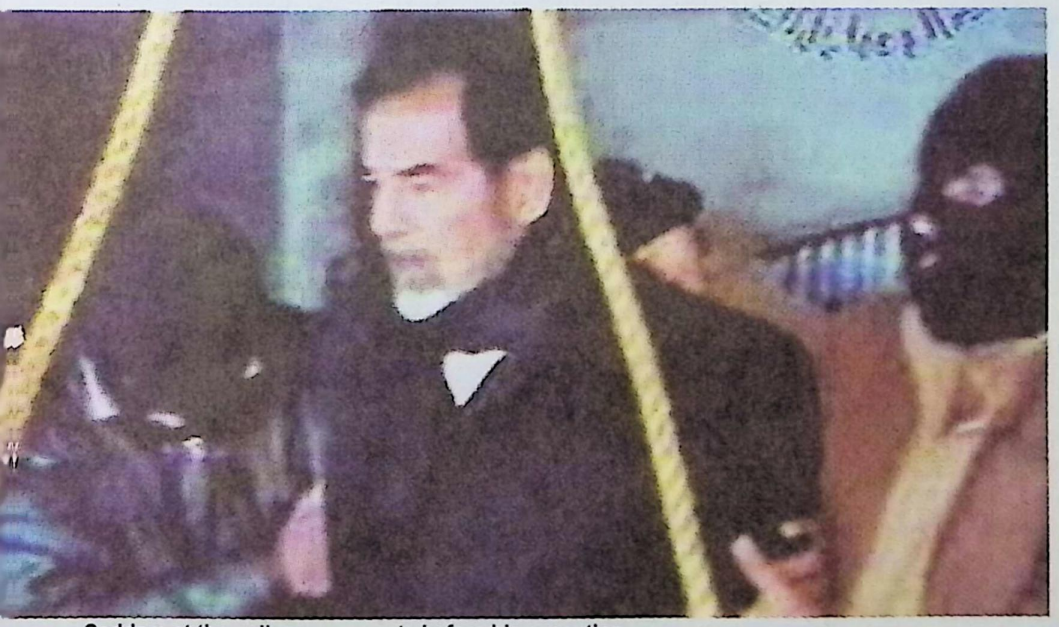
of his government's need to gain international support by carrying out the hanging in a way that could withstand any criticism. Basically he would have to carry out an execution that met with certain standards around the world for it to be truly accepted. Maliki was adamant that it would continue as planned. To that Khalilzad suggested that the Iraqis obtain a written ruling approving the execution from Midhat al-Mahmoud, the chief judge of Iraq's Supreme Judicial Council; Mahmoud refused. Malaki had another trick up his hand. He asked Shiite clerics in the holy city of Najaf, for approval from the "marjaiya", the ultimate authority in Iraqi Shiism. As soon as his officials reported that they had it, Maliki signed a letter authorising the hanging. Saddam Hussein's hanging was only authorised six and half hours before his death.

On the 30th of December, Eid day at 6:10 in the morning Saddam Hussein was hanged. Many view it as an act of retribution rather than justice, symbolically Shi'as were in charge. This was a far cry from what the U.S. wanted, their bungled attempt at freeing Iraq only resulted in the subjugated turning into the oppressors.

But there are bigger pictures to look at, after it was all said and done Saddam was hanged for the death of a mere 142 in Dujail. That was all he was tried for, where was the justice for his massacre of 8,000 Barzani Kurds in 1983, chemical attacks on Sardasht, the 1988 massacres on Anfal, and other crimes? At the time of his execution, Saddam was on trial, facing charges of genocide at Anfal, which resulted in an estimated 180,000 deaths. Where was the justice for the 30,000



Saddam at the gallows, moments before his execution.

Kurds that he killed 1991 rebellions? His execution left more questions than answers, more outrage than acceptance. The new era of Iraq had already started, with that in mind he should have been tried for every single person he killed. In the end he went unpunished for more than 200,000 deaths. Where was the justice that they deserved? An American lawyer who helped with Saddam's case said "I am disgusted; we had thought the court would be a beacon of light in a very dark landscape. But the way it has come out with the hanging, we've substituted one dictatorship for another." He got it spot on.

Saddam Hussein's hanging was shambolic, sent to the gallows just as people were waking up on the Sunni holy day of Eid. Was there a message in that as well, that while the previous regime cared little for Shi'as, the current regime cares even less for Sunnis. Sensibly he should have been hanged a day later, the guards should not have taunted him and his death should have been more dignified than it eventually was. But many will say he received much better than he doled out when he was in power. That mentality is a massive remnant of the old Iraq. His hanging should have been the dawn of a new era for the country, the first step towards a new Iraq.

Saddam was executed at the inappropriately named Camp Justice. A man who killed more than 200,000 people died a martyr, was that any justice at all? ■

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