

# THAT BEACON OF HOPE WE'VE CREATED IN IRAQ

As we discuss whether to abandon rule of law in Afghanistan under General Petraeus, we'd do well to consider how the war Petraeus "won" in Iraq turned out:

On a dull December day in 2009, Rabiha al Qassab, a 63-year-old Iraqi refugee living in a quiet residential area of north London, received a telephone call that marked the beginning of a new nightmare for a family already torn apart by Iraq's political upheavals.

Her 68-year-old husband, Ramze Shihab Ahmed, had been arrested while on a visit to Iraq, and no-one knew where he was being held or what, if anything, he had been charged with.

Nine months later, Ramze is still languishing in legal limbo in a Baghdad prison. His story lays bare the horrific abuses and lack of legal process that characterise post-Saddam Iraq's detention system, which human rights groups say has scarcely improved since the darkest days of the dictator's rule.

[snip]

"They beat him. They put a plastic bag on his head until he lost consciousness, and then they woke him with electric shocks. They told him that if he didn't confess, they would make his son rape him. They put a wooden stick into his anus," she says. "They have abused him in every way."

After days of torture, Ramze signed a confession admitting to being a member of al-Qaeda in Iraq, a claim Rabiha says is absurd. "He would see the

bombings on television and say 'what sort of Islam is this?'" she says. "He was very sorry for all the people who died."

Human rights experts say that Ramze's story is far from unique. In a new report on mistreatment in the Iraqi prison system, entitled *New Order, Same Abuses*, Amnesty International estimates that around 30,000 people are currently being held without charge or trial in Iraq. Many are being tortured with impunity, the group says.

I'm sure our decision to put aside rule of law in favor of "the principal goal" in Iraq has nothing to do with Iraq's embrace of the same kind of torture that we used—after the WMD rationale was exposed as a lie—to justify our invasion of Iraq.

Here's the Amnesty report.

If we're going to insist on continuing this imperial adventure we're on, we're going to have to come up with a better rationale than "democracy" or "rule of law" or "freedom from tyranny." Because all those excuses appear as bogus, at this point, as the WMD one.