

rendered impotent, irrelevant, nonexistent.

Thus, the bombing is to continue, more or less every day, in southern and northern Iraq. The so-called “no-fly zones” imposed by the French, British, and Americans after the war, and kept in force by the U.K.-U.S. warplanes in the region, will continue to be used as the pretext for aerial bombardments.

The real costs of the war

With world public opinion lulled by the press into believing that some “progress” is being made toward lifting the sanctions imposed on Iraq, actually the opposite is true. And, the continuation of the embargo over the past nine years, has not produced linear effects on the population. It is not the case, in other words, that the country, cordoned off from trade with the rest of the world, has somehow become accustomed to it, and achieved autarky to satisfy the needs of the population. On the contrary, with each passing day and week, the situation worsens in the country, as a vicious, entropic spiral has taken hold. The initial aggression in 1990-91 destroyed infrastructure, paralyzing the economic and social life. The continued sanctions prevented Iraq from restoring its infrastructure, especially crucial areas like sanitation, fresh water and food supplies, and health. In addition, the deployment of deadly weapons, including depleted uranium shells that were dropped on Iraq, introduced a new factor into the destructive process, whereby the soil and water of the country were essentially poisoned, with effects on health that became manifest only over time.

As Muthanna Hanooti describes in painstaking detail (see interview), the population of Iraq has become prisoner in what *EIR* has compared to a vast concentration camp: Deprived of adequate food, water, and hygienic conditions, people’s health has deteriorated and their resistance to disease has waned. Struck by illness—any illness, even the most common—people suffer, wither, and die, simply because they are deprived access to the most basic medical treatment. For serious illnesses, such as cardiac disease, kidney disease, or cancer, for example, there is by definition no hope: Without treatment, people will die.

Iraq’s population is being subjected to genocide. That is the effect, and that is the intention of the combined sanctions policy and military aggression. Iraq is being subjected to genocide, because it has refused to buckle under and accept the dictates of the “new NATO doctrine,” and its corollaries. Yet, as in the past, those in a position to halt the mass murder, “do not know” what is going on, or do not wish to know. This is the case emphatically of the members of the United States Congress, who have not bothered to find out, to visit Iraq on a fact-finding mission, and report back on what the reality is.

Why should they bother? they ask themselves. Aren’t “our boys” in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Turkey making sure that Saddam doesn’t start any trouble? Thus, war has replaced politics.

Interview: Muthanna Hanooti

Iraq has become a death camp because of the UN embargo

Mr. Hanooti is the head of the Michigan-based Arab-American organization called Life for Relief and Development. He was interviewed in June by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach.

EIR: Can you tell me what Life for Relief and Development is, when it was founded, and what it does?

Hanooti: The organization is basically a charitable humanitarian organization. It has the category of 501(c)(3) [a registered tax-exempt charity]. It was established in 1993 to meet the needs of the victims of the embargo, or the blockade in Iraq. So, it started just for that—I mean, as a focus.

Then, with time, we realized, especially in the United States, we cannot help just one country. We have to work with different countries, especially when it comes to emergencies. So, now, we’ve expanded to accommodate more than five countries.

But, still, the focus is on Iraq. We just added a country in West Africa, Sierra Leone, and other emergencies; like, for instance, the Kosovar refugees—we have a refugee camp in a city in Albania called Peqin.

So, whenever there’s an emergency, we try to do something, as we did earlier with Bosnia, Kashmir, Lebanon, and Palestine.

But still, I would say about 80% of the focus is on Iraq. Basically, the work is to try to alleviate the suffering of the Iraqi people and save some lives, though we know that our work with all the NGOs [non-governmental organizations] working in Iraq, meets about 5% of the needs of the people. But still, we believe that we have a key role when it comes to helping the people.

As you know, according to the United Nations statistics, the situation in Iraq is beyond description now.

EIR: When were you most recently in Iraq?

Hanooti: Most recently, I was there in October. And I’ll be there by the end of this month.

EIR: Can you tell me how the situation is, as you saw it?

Hanooti: Actually, this last visit was the seventh visit after the embargo. The way I see it, everything is getting worse and worse each time. Basically, we thought that this oil-for-food program, or UN Resolution 986, would make it better, but for

some reason, it's getting worse and worse.

The problem is not the starvation itself, but it's the diseases, actually. A lot of diseases are caused by malnutrition; but still, the major problem we have in Iraq is the contamination, whether it's from the water itself, or from the soil. You know, the whole sewer system was collapsed or destroyed in the Gulf War. A lot of this water just goes into the rivers, and you have terrible contamination and pollution.

Also, according to what we hear in the media, about 1,000 depleted uranium shells were dropped in Iraq. It's like nuclear waste. This looks like [it's causing cancer], from our meetings with a lot of doctors there, because we've seen a lot of cancer cases all over the country. It's a very, very scary kind of situation, wherever you go. Some doctors even told me that they estimate that about 10% of the Iraqi population has some kind of cancer. I think this is an exaggeration; but still, I've been all over the country. Honestly, without any exaggeration, you feel as if the country has become a death camp, because wherever you go, you see funerals, people mourning for someone who has died in their family.

It's everywhere—not only among children. For the first time in my life, I've heard that young people in their 20s are having kidney failure, for instance. And when we checked with doctors, they told us it is because of the poisoning caused by—whatever—inside the country.

At every house I visited, whether it's in the south, north, or central, it's difficult, without any exaggeration, to find people in good health.

With children, basically there's definitely malnutrition. This is the case with women, also; most of them are anemic. And the children have all of those kinds of diseases, like dysentery, with leukemia on the rise.

Wherever you go, death and disease. And for me, it's unique, because I had been in the country before the embargo, and it used to be one of the best. I've been to a lot of Arab countries, and Iraq boasted at that time of having one of the best health systems, one of the best educational systems. As a culture, Iraqis love education. They had a lot of PhDs—people who just love, worship school, going for graduate studies. Now, all of that has collapsed.

The school system, the health and the education system, have basically collapsed because of lack of cash. When I went last time, even pencils, notebooks, paper, were very scarce. So, you have a different story now.

And as you know, Iraq has the second-largest reserves of oil in the world. Some even say it's number one, because this oil hasn't been used for the last nine years. So, even if we say, okay, the second-largest reserve of oil, you can tell how the country is rich—rich in oil, rich in natural resources. We have very fertile soil, we have two rivers, we have—used to have—a very educated population.

Now we have a very, very sad story. According to the statistics of the UN, Iraq is the poorest country in the world now—even poorer than a lot of countries in Africa or in Asia. Besides this, of course, you have the ugly, tragic stories of

deprivation and sickness.

Of course, when people or journalists ask us, we just tell them to go to either UNICEF, the World Health Organization, or the World Food Program. They have a lot of statistics about this. I'm not going to go through them. But you're talking about 5-10% of the people just perished—*died*—because of the embargo.

EIR: I've travelled to Iraq many times. Our Schiller Institute founded an organization, the Committee to Save the Children in Iraq, beginning in 1991, and we were also taking relief supplies and so on, and visiting the hospitals. So I know the country a little bit. But I haven't been there in the recent period.

Hanooti: In 1991, it was much, much, much better, and in 1992-93. The quick collapse started, I would say, in 1995 or '96, because it looks like the people used up everything they had.

EIR: What kind of relief do you take there? Do you take food, medical supplies, medical equipment? And do you work through the government there? You have good relations with the government, I assume?

Hanooti: We decided from the beginning to go legal, so we have a special license with the Treasury Department. Actually, it's a triple license—the Treasury Department, the State Department, and the United Nations. We renew this almost every year, because the way we do it, is that we take a license for 12 shipments, twelve 40-foot container shipments—because as a policy, we send a shipment each month. So, for instance, the last license we got, I think in November or December 1998—will expire this year. As of June, we have sent six containers.

We send, as a policy, an average of one 40-foot container a month by sea to Jordan, and from Jordan to Iraq. Most of the time, those shipments contain medical supplies and medical equipment, medicines, medical journals, or school textbooks.

The last shipment we sent, just to give you an idea, had 4 million pencils. We've started to focus on school supplies, because we know there's a lack of them.

Also, twice, or three times a year—it depends on the funds—we have big campaigns all over the country for food. So, we distribute whatever food is lacking in their diet, because we know the oil-for-food deal gives them very basic things, like wheat, flour, rice, sugar—basic staples. So, we try to give more protein, because they don't have meat or eggs or something like that. As I told you, we make two or three major shipments, taking in a total of about 100,000 families.

EIR: And how is it distributed inside the country?

Hanooti: We have an agreement with the Iraqi Red Crescent, because, as a U.S. organization, this is the only agency, as an NGO, we are allowed to work with. So, the medicine or school supplies we deliver, to, say, hospitals, universities—we

choose wherever we like, but a representative from the Red Crescent goes with us to supervise.

We have full control of the food. We choose one of those so-called benevolent or charity organizations inside Iraq, and we have our own people or volunteers there. At the key points, we give out tickets. We have a network of people, like teachers or government employees. We give them those coupons, and we assign a date for delivery, or for them to come and pick it up, and they come and pick it up.

The other work we do is, for instance, renovation. In December or January, we finished the renovation of two orphanages. They hadn't been maintained since 1989 or 1990, so we furnished them and gave them back to the Ministry of Social Affairs, which is in charge of orphanages.

Now, we are working with some schools, because we have a program from the U.S. government for school supplies. We chose at this point ten schools in Iraq, basically elementary schools. Next year, we'll do preservation and renovation, and furnish them, provide them with basic school supplies.

Also, we just started medical treatment for children last year—and this is one of the major things we want to do. We just started with six children, but we are trying to work with some medical associations and even with the Congress, to help us, hopefully, bring children to be treated in this country.

EIR: This is something we did some years ago, I'm sure you are familiar with it.

Hanooti: Yes. But see, for us, it doesn't make sense—since we started this program last year, we just have six, seven children, we have three or four coming in July. But we will try to bring 50, 60 children a year.

The problem is, it's very, very expensive. Each case will cost an average of \$50,000. So, the way we are doing it, is we are contacting hospitals and doctors, and church organizations, so that we would, all of us, as a group, share the expenses. Each would provide some funds also for the treatment.

This is one of the things we want to focus on, because we are under tremendous pressure to bring children here. I have more than 40 files of children between the ages of something like 5-6, and 16-17. The agreement we have with the U.S. consulate in Amman, is that they will give visas to people, provided that they are children. Because if we were to bring older people, then they might stay, and we have trouble with Immigration, or whatever.

Children are kind of non-controversial, everybody sympathizes with them, and it's easy to get a visa to bring them here. So, we also started the children's program.

Also, we have educational work, to educate the public—American Muslim, Arab-American, the media, the Congress, basically the American population—about what's going on in Iraq. From our experience, even members of Congress are very ignorant about what's going on.

EIR: Can you describe your work in Congress?

Hanooti: By law, I don't think we can do lobbying, because

we are non-political. But we are involved in education: We contact them, we visit them, we coordinate. We have great groups in the United States, like EPIC (Education for Peace in Iraq Center), we have Peace Action in Washington, we have the American Friends Service Committee, we have Voice in the Wilderness, Kathy Kelly's organization.

So, we visit. Of course we focus on Michigan, which is our state. And we have a great delegation here, like Reps. David Bonior, John Conyers, Carolyn Kilpatrick, and Sens. Spencer Abraham, Carl Levin. We meet, talk to them, update them about the situation. And at this point, we've even invited them to visit Iraq for a fact-finding mission. This has proved to be very, very effective.

Just to give you an example: Rep. John Conyers, a high-ranking Democrat, a couple of years ago, wrote a letter to the President, kind of demanding lifting of the sanctions. At this point, we have 45 Congressmen who have signed it. Now we are working with Conyers for another letter with stronger language, in the form of a resolution, and we are drafting that letter now, with other organizations.

Also, we have something called the "One Million Signatures"—hopefully, by the end of this year, we'll have 1 million signatures collected from people all over the United States. At this point, we have about 50,000. This is basically with EPIC, in Washington, D.C.

A few months ago, we sent a small booklet to all members of Congress, all 535, a booklet explaining to them, with pictures, the whole story in Iraq, what's happening to the people of Iraq, especially the children, just to tell them the story from a humanitarian point of view.

Always our argument is that this has nothing to do with the regime. We cannot destroy a nation and a country of 22 million people just for one person's actions. We care about the people. We have nothing to do with the political aspect of it.

We also try to lecture in Islamic centers and churches also about what's going on there.

EIR: Have you had any success in getting Congressmen to go over for a fact-finding mission?

Hanooti: No. At this point, all we have is promises. We have three or four who are very interested, and I know they're sincere, like Rep. Cynthia McKinney from Georgia, Rep. Tom Campbell from California, Reps. Bonior and Conyers from Michigan. But, the problem, as far as I know, is that they need the approval of the Speaker of the House—it's not easy for them just to go. This is a risky job, and we want them to do it through the legal system, because we love them, we want them to keep running and stay in Congress.

So at this point, I know they're trying. But I don't have any confirmation that anyone is going. The only thing is, they have this desire and intention to go.

EIR: Are you familiar with this new draft resolution which the British and Dutch governments have presented to the UN,

and which the U.S. is supporting officially?

Hanooti: Yes, but it's kind of a tricky resolution, because—

EIR: That's a nice way of putting it.

Hanooti: Yes. To make it simple, we are advocating kind of a permanent resolution to get rid of the sanctions, but not *this* one. We told them already, "Okay, you keep the military sanctions and free the whole Middle East from all that trash—the nuclear"—I mean, we want the whole Arab world and the whole Middle East to be free of all weapons of mass destruction, whether it's Iraq, Israel, Turkey, or Iran.

But not just Iraq! It doesn't make sense. We would love to get rid of all those weapons. So I would love to see, as a policy, whether it's the U.S. or the United Nations, just focus on that. Okay, let's lift the sanctions against Iraq, and get rid of all those so-called weapons of mass destruction or nuclear weapons—let's make it a zone free from all those weapons.

As an organization, I would love to focus on the United States, because I want to help a lot, especially because we are an Arab-American organization. We want to help our

community all over the country, until this Iraq thing is over. And I think the point that everybody should focus on—because it's unprecedented in the history of humankind, that genocide like that is taking place under the umbrella of the international community or the United Nations. It's like legalized genocide. That's what makes it unique.

So that's why we are 100% against it, because you cannot justify any bloodshed, whether it's Muslim, Christian, Jewish, Arab, non-Arab—we cannot accept that.

Also, I want to explain that we are not working for Iraq because it's Iraq; we advocate this as a policy: We don't like this sanctions regime or system to be applied to *any* country. Because as you know, most of the countries of the world are now under U.S. sanctions. And, we are against that.

EIR: Are you working also in Sudan, for example?

Hanooti: No, but as a principle, while we are advocating lifting the sanctions against Iraq, we don't want this to happen to any other nation, whether it's Cuba or another country. And especially when it comes to human life, as in this case: We are losing human lives because of it.

'LaRouche Doctrine' published in Moscow

The issue of the Russian newspaper *Ekonomicheskaya Gazeta* which came out on July 15, carries a translation of Lyndon LaRouche's April 7 article, "The LaRouche Doctrine on the Balkans Crisis." The article appeared in *EIR* on April 16. It is a concise, 10-point analysis of the British geopolitical motivation of the bombing of Yugoslavia, the danger of world war, and the "remedies"—above all, the immediate formation of a New Bretton Woods monetary system among sovereign nation-states, with a leading role to be played by the United States, China, Russia, India, and at least one major continental European power.

Ekonomicheskaya Gazeta introduced LaRouche's policy statement, with an article titled "The Americans Are Under the Heel of the British—And So Is the Rest of the World." Here, the editors mention that LaRouche has also published a longer policy document, "Balkan Peace and World Economy."

The introduction emphasizes that LaRouche links "the not only insane and senseless, but essentially criminal" bombing, with "the ongoing world financial crisis." It is an attempt by "the world financial oligarchy" to use "the traditional colonialist methods of instigating military conflicts, through governments and international organizations under its control." The commentary notes that, during the bombing, mouthpieces of the oligarchy were telling everybody that the world financial crisis had ended, "although, in reality, nothing of the

sort had happened." Now, after the end of the bombing, there is new stock market and currency turmoil, and new military conflicts such as Israel's bombing of Lebanon and "the known provocations of Britain in Pakistan, against India."

"Lyndon LaRouche, who sees the British monarchy and its American henchmen (A. Gore, M. Albright, W. Cohen, Z. Brzezinski, et al.) as the initiators of the Balkan War, . . . views that war as a sort of gambit in a chess game, intended to wipe a weakened Russia from the world map once and for all." LaRouche likewise warns of attempts to destroy China, says *Ekonomicheskaya Gazeta*, noting the explosion of London-financed operations in Central Asia, directed against Russia, China, Iran, India, and even Pakistan.

"The role of President Clinton, who in Russia is considered to be the main guilty party in this world destabilization and the aggressive actions of the U.S.A. and NATO, is assessed somewhat differently by LaRouche. He believes that Clinton has been under constant attack by the British monarchy," culminating in his impeachment, and, most recently, supplemented by overt attacks on the President by his own Vice President, Al Gore.

"In such circumstances, it is difficult for the President to make rational, constructive decisions. The President is only a high-ranking official, without the ability to conduct his own theoretical research; he believes the briefings he receives." Thus, the U.S. President is pressured by ill-wishers around him, and by artificially shaped "public opinion."

"Lyndon LaRouche puts forward a definite view: We should acknowledge that the main cause of all these woes is the current financial system. A fundamental change in that system should spark a change of economic policy in the entire world."