



Written by on October 27, 2009

Al-Qaeda-Linked Group Claims Baghdad Bombings

The Islamic State of Iraq, an extremist group linked to al-Qaeda, claimed responsibility in a website posting on October 27 for a pair of bombings two days earlier that killed 160 people in Baghdad. The BBC quoted the Islamic group's statement that its suicide bombers had targeted "dens of infidelity" in the Iraqi capital, including "the ministry of oppression, known as the ministry of justice, and the Baghdad provincial assembly."



The bombings heavily damaged the Justice Ministry, the Foreign Ministry, the Baghdad Provincial Council, and the Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works. Citing an Iraqi Interior Ministry statement, CNN reported that the attacks wounded at least 540 people, in addition to those killed, and were the deadliest in the capital in more than two years.

A report in the British *Guardian* cited the October 26 website posting that is presumed, but not verified, to be from the Islamic State of Iraq. The message said that the group's "martyrs ... targeted the dens of infidelity." It said it wanted to punish the "pillars of the Safawi and rejectionist state in the land of caliphate," referring to the Shite-dominated government in Baghdad and its close ally Iran.

"One of these selected targets that were hit this time was the 'Ministry of Injustice and Oppression,' the so-called Ministry of Justice, along with the Baghdad Provincial Council," the statement said.

Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, after visiting the scene shortly after the explosions, said in a written statement that holding the elections as scheduled would not affect the steadfastness of Iraq's people against the extremists: "The cowardly attack ... should not affect the determination of the Iraqi people from continuing their battle against the deposed regime and the gangs of the criminal Baath party, and the terrorist al Qaeda organization."

Malik said in another address at Baghdad university on October 26 that there was a "wicked political will" behind the attacks.

"We are facing big challenges in the reconstruction process, but while we are building, they are destroying," he said.

Iraq's Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari told the media: "These attacks are targeting the symbols of Iraqi sovereignty, and they aim to paralyze the government."

In a White House statement released on October 25, President Obama said:

I strongly condemn these outrageous attacks on the Iraqi people, and send my deepest condolences to those who have lost loved ones. These bombings serve no purpose other than the murder of innocent men, women and children, and they only reveal the hateful and destructive



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agenda of those who would deny the Iraqi people the future that they deserve. These attempts to derail Iraq's progress are no match for the courage and resilience of the Iraqi people, and their determination to build strong institutions. The United States will stand with Iraq's people and government as a close friend and partner as Iraqis prepare for elections early next year, continue to take responsibility for their future, and build greater peace and opportunity. Together, we will continue to work for lasting security, dignity, and justice.

The White House press secretary issued an accompanying statement noting that the President spoke with Iraqi President Talabani and Prime Minister al-Maliki at about 1:00 pm Washington time and had "expressed condolences about the attacks and reiterated our commitment to stand with Iraqis."

A *Washington Post* report noted that as rescue efforts were continuing in Baghdad, terrorists in a minibus detonated explosives at the entrance to the holy city of Karbala, south of the capital. The report quoted Maj. Alaa Ghanimi, a spokesman for security forces in the city, who said the explosion killed at least 12 people and wounded several.

An AP report noted that, in response to the bombings, Iraq's prime minister, president, and parliament speaker pledged tighter security. They have also initiated prompt action to finalize an agreement among the leaders of Iraq's political parties to put a new election law in place so that the country's next national election can go ahead as scheduled on January 16.

While militant Islamic terrorism is widely believed among Westerners to be an extension of long-held animosity in the Muslim world against Christians, Jews, and other non-Muslims, the wording of the statements posted by the Islamic State of Iraq, if authentic, suggests something much more complex. It suggests that al-Qaeda and its allies can be as militantly opposed to their fellow Muslims as they are to Americans.

By invading Iraq and removing the tyrannical, yet stable regime of Saddam Hussein, we may have done as much good as kicking over a hornet's nest to get rid of its queen, only to infuriate the rest of the colony. Who in their right mind would stick around to face their fury!

In our eagerness always to "fix" the rest of the world, we Americans have often emulated the pitfalls of the British Empire at it worst, perhaps forgetting that the subtitle to Kipling's 1899 poem "[The White Man's Burden](#)" is "The United States and the Philippine Islands." Future American president Theodore Roosevelt read the poem and said that he considered it "rather poor poetry, but good sense from the expansion point of view."

Though written from a viewpoint friendly to imperialism (Roosevelt's "expansion point of view" — a foreign policy not far removed from present-day neoconservative expansionism), the hindsight afforded us by the passage of an additional 110 years of history may very well highlight the sheer folly of our present involvement in the Middle East and enable us to derive new meaning from "The White Man's Burden":

Take up the White Man's burden—
Send forth the best ye breed—
Go bind your sons to exile
To serve your captives' need;
To wait in heavy harness,
On fluttered folk and wild—
Your new-caught, sullen peoples,



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Half-devil and half-child.

Take up the White Man's burden—
In patience to abide,
To veil the threat of terror
And check the show of pride;
By open speech and simple,
An hundred times made plain
To seek another's profit,
And work another's gain.

Take up the White Man's burden—
The savage wars of peace—
Fill full the mouth of Famine
And bid the sickness cease;
And when your goal is nearest
The end for others sought,
Watch sloth and heathen Folly
Bring all your hopes to nought.

Take up the White Man's burden—
No tawdry rule of kings,
But toil of serf and sweeper—
The tale of common things.
The ports ye shall not enter,
The roads ye shall not tread,
Go mark them with your living,
And mark them with your dead.

Take up the White Man's burden—
And reap his old reward:
The blame of those ye better,
The hate of those ye guard—
The cry of hosts ye humour
(Ah, slowly!) toward the light—
"Why brought he us from bondage,
Our loved Egyptian night?"

Take up the White Man's burden—
Ye dare not stoop to less—
Nor call too loud on Freedom
To cloke your weariness;
By all ye cry or whisper,
By all ye leave or do,
The silent, sullen peoples
Shall weigh your gods and you.

Take up the White Man's burden—
Have done with childish days—



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The lightly proffered laurel,
The easy, ungrudged praise.
Comes now, to search your manhood
Through all the thankless years
Cold, edged with dear-bought wisdom,
The judgment of your peers!

Photo: AP Images



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