



Hey! Mullahs! Leave Them Iraqi Emos Alone

In contrast, young people in Iraq are being murdered for the kind of music they listen to, for the way they dress or wear their hair — and that’s after more than 6,300 American troops have been killed and nearly 50,000 wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan trying to bring a semblance of sanity and human rights to the region.



That American price in killed and wounded doesn’t include the cost of the ongoing psychological wounds to American troops or our financial cost, with the ultimate price of these two wars estimated at more than \$3 trillion.

“At least 14 youths have been killed in Baghdad in the past three weeks in what appears to be a campaign by Shia militants,” reported London’s Associated Newspapers on March 27. “Militants in Shia neighborhoods, where the stonings have taken place, circulated lists naming more youths targeted to be killed if they do not change the way they dress.”

The murder spree began after Iraq’s Interior Ministry defined the “Emo” subculture among Iraqi youth as “Satanism” and called on police to stamp it out.

A young Iraqi who managed to escape from an attacking mob explained the encounter to Beirut-based Al-Akhbar: “First they throw concrete blocks at the boy’s arms and legs, then the final blow to his head, and if he’s not dead then, they start all over again.”

What identifies Emos — short for “emotionals” — and attracts the attention of the cops and mobs with their ever-ready baskets of stones and concrete blocks is tight jeans, black T-shirts, alternative music, male ponytails and any other nontraditional style of curls or too-long tresses on young men.

More succinctly, Iraqi Emos look like the somewhat alienated kids who gather daily here in Pittsburgh at the Beehive, an artsy coffee house that’s more poetic, politicized and vegetarian than the average Starbucks.

So imagine this: Some nut drives up to The Beehive and starts throwing concrete blocks at the patrons because he sees them as too “emotional.” And then the police and thugs from the Ministry for the Enforcement of Morality arrive and judge the dead and wounded kids on the sidewalk as the ones who were overly emotional, not the assailant.

Spiky hair also can get one killed in Iraq, plus having a preference for “Emocore” music, a genre of hard-core punk that emerged in the United States in the late 1980s — heavy songs with overwrought lyrics that are more about alienation than belly dancing.

Popular with Iraqi Emos is Fall Out Boy, an American pop punk band, with this lyric from their song “The Pros and Cons of Breathing”: “I want to hate you half as much as I hate myself.”

Similarly, from The Smiths, a British band: “And if a double-decker bus crashes into us, to die by your



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side is such a heavenly way to die.”

Negative, yes, compared to the moon being a pizza pie, but for the young and discouraged, it’s a stage, a not uncommon phase of maturation and development — and hardly enough reason for allegedly pious and balanced adults, supposed non-emotionals, to turn themselves into raging killers.

Wrote American essayist and human-rights activist Susan Sontag, “Religion is probably, after sex, the second-oldest resource which human beings have available to them for blowing their mind.”

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