

PRESS RELEASE

PRESS RELEASE

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Event: Friday rally and march condemns US massacre of civilians in Fallujah, calls for investigation of war crimes by US forces in Iraq.

Contacts: (503) 344-5078
pprcnews@yahoo.com
www.pprc-news.org

Date: Friday, November 19th, 2004

Time: 5:00 p.m.

Place: Pioneer Courthouse Square

Friday rally and march condemns US massacre of civilians in Fallujah, calls for investigation of war crimes by US forces in Iraq.

The *Portland Peaceful Response Coalition's* Friday rally and march is once again calling attention to reports of civilian casualties running in the hundreds in the latest US assault on Fallujah. "The recent video footage showing a US marine killing a wounded and unarmed Iraqi prisoner is another stark reminder that this war is being waged by commanders who have rejected the most basic elements of the Geneva Conventions," said William Seaman, a volunteer with the PPRC. "The result is young soldiers going into combat ignorant or contemptuous of these conventions and so almost certain to commit atrocities of these kinds." Recent reports of refugee interviews and Red Cross personnel suggest that civilian deaths in the US assault on Fallujah now exceed 800.

"According to many reports Fallujah is decimated, destroyed by US bombs, tanks and other weaponry," said Jody Heatlie, another PPRC volunteer. "These reports contradict the US government propaganda claiming that we have won, cleaned up, and haven't killed civilians" The US military has imposed strict censorship on reporting from Fallujah, with only so-called "embedded" reporters being allowed into the city. The US forces early on took over the hospital in Fallujah in order to control reports of civilian casualties. The reports of civilian casualties during the US assault on Fallujah last spring, and the Iraqi and international outrage that followed, have been cited as the main reason for the US forces ending the assault and withdrawing from the city.

In spite of the intense efforts by the US to control all information about the Fallujah assault, reports by Dahr Jamail, an unembedded reporter based in Baghdad, and by relief organizations including the Red Crescent and Red Cross, indicate very high civilian casualties, lack of safe drinking water, lack of food and lack of medical personnel to treat the sick and injured, and increasing danger of disease. The US forces recently prevented a Red Cross relief convoy from entering the city.

“The US military has said that any journalist who reports negatively on Fallujah will be detained, and has already detained a journalist from Al Arabia,” explained Heatlie. “Al Jazeera, the Qatar-based Arab-language news outlet, has been banned from Iraq for the last three months, an indication of the level of repression of press freedoms by the US occupation and its puppet regime in Iraq.”

Heatlie agrees with former administrator of the UN oil-for-food program, Denis Halliday, who has urged an end to the US occupation. “Homes are ransacked, civilians are shot, and it keeps getting worse, the Bush policy is to just keep on killing,” said Heatlie. “As Halliday has said, we need to close down the occupation and give back Iraq to the Iraqi people.”