

Saddam Captured

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By IWPR staff (ICR No. 40, Part I, 15-Dec-03)

"The shadow of Saddam has finally lifted from the Iraqi people," said Britain's prime minister, Tony Blair. "Let it be a moment to reach out and reconcile," he urged Iraqis.

IWPR reporters will pay particular attention to the social, political, economic, ethnic and religious divisions created during the decades long rule of Saddam.

More importantly, IWPR journalists will report the views of Iraqis on whether those gaps can finally be bridged to form a unified and peaceful nation.

With the capture of Saddam, 13 fugitives remain at large from among the 55 people on the coalition's most-wanted list.

Perhaps the highest-priority target is No 6, Izzat Ibrahim al-Douri, a former senior aide to Saddam, who is currently suspected of helping to coordinate part of the resistance.

While foreign analysts differ over the potential for violence created by the ex-Iraqi leader's arrest, IWPR reporters will gauge the reactions of local people and seek their views on the potential for continued insurrection.

The arrest of Saddam may also prove a high-profile test case for the Iraqi Governing Council which just last week passed a law establishing a tribunal to try officials of the former regime for offences from the day the Ba'ath Party took power in 1968 through to the declaration of the end of major Iraq combat last May.

Even assuming that the new tribunal will be the venue for any trial of Saddam, there are nonetheless a number of other questions now being raised over his future prosecution.

These questions include how fast the US will allow him to go from the interrogation cell to the courtroom; how quick and public his trial can be; what issues it will cover and exclude; whether the death penalty will be an option; and, above all, who will make those decisions.

Such questions are bound to raise conflicting views around the globe, but not least in Iraq itself. Those are the views that IWPR journalists will be seeking in the run-up to any trial of the former president, and they will seek those views in all segments of the Iraqi community.

Finally, the capture of Saddam will allow the US and its allies to question him directly about the country's alleged arsenal of Weapons of Mass Destruction, WMD – the very reason why the war was launched in the first place.

But Saddam could re-ignite international debate over the war's justification by insisting that the allies trumped up his alleged pursuit of prohibited weapons merely to justify their invasion of his country.

Such debate may be significant in foreign capitals around the globe, especially where much acrimony still exists among various global leaders over the justification for the war.

In Iraq, though, WMD may well be considered a diversion from the more important issue of regime change.

WMD aside, the war still brought down the Saddam regime and it is for the Iraqi people to voice their own views on whether that alone was justification enough for the invasion of their country.

IWPR journalists are on the move in Iraq, seeking out the views of their fellow Iraqis on these and other issues that will inevitably arise from Saddam's capture.

Location: [Iraqi Kurdistan](#)
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