

Silencing Dissent

Author: Mohammed al-Homrani

A labourer tells the story of mutilation at the hands of Saddam Hussein's 'stupid son' Odey.

Hamid al-Shibili, a mechanic, was 50 years old when his tongue was cut off on the orders of Odey Saddam Hussein, the former president's younger son and leader of the Fedayeen of Saddam militia. His crime? To have faced up to a Fedayeen officer who insulted him and his workmates.

The mutilation took place in Amara's central market in the last year of the regime, carried out by men armed with pliers and a knife. Bystanders still remember the tip of Hamid's tongue being sliced off and thrown into a rubbish bin.

"I was trying to repair one of the vehicles in the garage when a man climbed into it," Hamid said. "I told him it wasn't working and certainly couldn't reach Baghdad. He was impolite - violent with the drivers - and spat in my face, warning me that he was a major in the Fedayeen. I told him: 'Damn you and damn who made you a Fedayee.'"

Hamid was taken to the local office of the Fedayeen. He was interrogated for two hours, then beaten and tortured with a piece of hot metal put on one eye. He had been imprisoned three times before. On the first occasion, he was held for five years. On the subsequent occasions, he was released after paying hefty bribes to the police. This time, however he was sent to Baghdad - to the main office of the Fedayeen, where he says Saddam Hussein's son-in-law Jamal Mustafa, the 22nd in America's pack of 55 Ba'athist criminals, was in charge of torture.

"They kicked and beat me," said Hamid. "Every part of my body hurt. I saw a man called Alia cut the hands off four prisoners who were brought in front of me as soon as I arrived. I was imprisoned for three days and interrogated by seven people. When I did not confess, they suspended me from the ceiling with a rope for nine hours. I lost consciousness."

Hamid was then taken from his cell and brought - to his astonishment - face to face with the man he calls "the stupid son" - Odey himself. Hamid explained that he was only trying to earn a living in Amara. The people of the South were poor and depended on God, he said. Odey flew into a rage.

"Are you their lawyer?" he said, according to Hamid, and ordered his tongue to be severed.

The following day, Hamid was driven back to Amara and told that he was to be released. But he feared execution. Suddenly, the ambulance in which he was being transported drew to a halt.

"They ordered me to kneel," Hamid recalled. "I was unable to see because I was blindfolded. People gathered round me, increasing in number all the time. One of the Fedayeen ordered me to open my mouth and put my tongue out. Then they pulled it out and cut it off."

The Fedayeen refused to allow Hamid's wound to be treated, even though he was later discovered to have lost four litres of blood. But a doctor known to his family, Ali Abboud al-Aziz, found him and succeeded in staunching the flow and, he believes, saving his life.

Hamid lay low for more than a year. Today, with the collapse of Saddam's regime and the disappearance of the Fedayeen, he feels free to appear in public and to talk for the first time since his ordeal.

"I am completely happy because the dictatorship has gone," he said. "Saddam was evil, and evil with the people. Now Iraqis have a chance to live in peace and happiness."

Mohammed al-Homrani writes for al-Watan, an Amara weekly.

Focus: [Iraq](#)

Source URL: <https://iwpr.net/global-voices/silencing-dissent>