

*Not in Our Name: Statement to the Alistair Berkley Memorial Lecture
by the LSE Staff Against the War Group and the LSE Stop the War Coalition.
21st May 2004*

We welcome the opportunity for this statement to be read out in the Alistair Berkley memorial lecture, with thanks to its sponsors, organisers and chair.

We are protesting against the Anglo-American invasion and occupation of Iraq. The war was illegal and opposed by millions in Britain and across the world. It has been followed by a colonial style occupation that is becoming more brutal by the day. While we uphold Simon Haselock's right to free speech, he is a functionary of that occupation, and his presence at the LSE draws attention to the crimes that are being committed in our name.

The world is horrified at the pictures and accounts of the torture and murder of Iraqi prisoners. They are the tip of an iceberg of abuse – dozens of civilians have died in the custody of American and British troops.

This is the reality of the 'new' Iraq. It is not the 'liberation' the Iraqis were promised. It is not the 'civilisation' Blair and Bush pretended to defend. And it is certainly not the 'democracy' we were told could only be delivered by Cruise Missiles and Abrahams tanks.

The fate of the media tells us much about the 'new' Iraq. Since last years' invasion, a dozen journalists have been killed by US forces. Iraqi newspapers have been shut down for 'incitement', and Arab TV channels banned by pro-Consul Bremer. Iraqi journalists working for Reuters have been degraded and humiliated in Abu-Ghraib. The CPA's news channel is seen by many as a clone of the old state-run media, and its media policy is sharply criticised by international media watchdogs like the International Federation of Journalists. Iraq's future media independence is being tightly circumscribed by decrees outlawing 'hate speech'. A fine phrase indeed from functionaries of the state that coined 'the axis of evil' to guide its foreign affairs.

The CPA's authority in Iraq was established by brute force and is maintained by the same means. It has no popular mandate and no legitimate role in shaping the 'new' Iraq. The massacres in Fallujah and al-Qaim, the depravities in Saddam's old jails, and the assault on Najaf are fuelling a nationalist resistance which echoes the great anti-colonial struggles of the twentieth century. By their own figures, the coalition forces are now opposed by over 82% of Iraqis.

We believe that it is time for the troops to get out of Iraq. It is time to hand control of Iraq over to the people of Iraq themselves – a real transfer, not the phoney handover planned for June 30 which will leave security, finances and lawmaking powers in the hands of the U.S., and that has been cynically timed for the American Presidential elections. Only the Iraqi's have the right to determine their media policy and laws. To think otherwise reveals a colonial mentality that 'we' know best for 'them'. Advice and support can never be enforced, only freely requested and given. The Iraqis have a proud history of resisting foreign domination and they are right to

resist it today. We must do all we can to support them in their struggle. Freedom for Iraq means ending the occupation now.