

Image of War's Pain

Source: "Face That Screamed War's Pain Looks Back, 6 Hard Years Later" by Tim Arango, *The New York Times*, May 7, 2011.



The over 8-year war/occupation in Iraq, **based on false pretenses**, has cost the lives of 4,452 U.S. soldiers and over a million Iraqi civilians.

Among them were Samar Hassan's parents.

A front page article in the *New York Times* (5/7/11) read "**The image of Samar, then 5 years old, screaming and splattered in blood** after American soldiers opened fire on her family's car in the northern town of Tal Afar in January 2005, illuminated the horror of civilian casualties."

Now 12-year-old Samar lives on the outskirts of Mosul with relatives. The trauma left Samar and her siblings wounded psychologically. Ali, Samar's brother-in-law, said, "I've taken them many times to the hospital, where **they get pills**" for emotional problems.

He says Samar's 8-year-old brother, Muhammad, talks to himself when he is alone. "When we go out and see a family, they get sad," he said. **Sometimes he finds the children in a room together, crying. "When they remember the accident, it's like they just died."**

Sarah Leah Whitson, director of the Middle East and North Africa division for Human Rights Watch, remembers crying when she first saw the photo in a newspaper, and having to explain the image to her children.

"At the time, **I thought it captured perfectly the horrors of the war that was not really understood by Americans,**" she said. "Everything in that girl's face symbolized what I felt all Iraqis must feel." She added, "I wonder what life will be like for this girl?"

Samar had never seen the picture until this week, but she said she understood that it showed the world "the sad thing that is happening in Iraq."

Near the end of the interview, she pointed to a family photograph on the wall. "**I always dream about my father and mother and brother,**" she said.

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