

Iraq Through a Bullet Hole: A Civilian Returns Home

Issam Jameel

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Reviewed by Dr. Michael Philliber for Reader Views (8/08)

What would it be like to return to the home of your early years, only to find that a war has changed the face of almost everything as well as the quality of life of most of your extended family? Issam Jameel recounts this exact experience in his small, 198-page paperback called, "Iraq Through a Bullet Hole: A Civilian Returns Home." In this book he relates the sights, sounds and situations he encountered during his travel back into his home country, Iraq, in 2005, after having been away for twelve years.

Jameel describes, in a diary-like fashion, his nearly three-month stay in Iraq from June through August of 2005. Beginning with his nerve-wracking entrance from Jordan into Iraq, to his explosive exit, Jameel relates the personal insecurities and fears he faced day by day. Included in his narrative are the tense conversations he regularly had with his family over his conversion to Christianity, their perceptions of the presence of the American military forces, and the constant threats from assassins and bombers.

In "Iraq Through a Bullet Hole," Jameel shows in a brutally honest fashion the deconstruction of the infrastructure in Baghdad since the fall of Saddam, as well as the splintering of once peaceful communities into hostile religious factions. He also gives a personal, eyewitness picture of the effect the new environment had on his kinfolk, especially how his nominally religious family had turned toward radical and strident forms of Islam as a way of giving meaning to their daily struggles. The anger and hurt that many of his relatives had comes through clearly. Disappointments, loss of security, fear, worry and empty future fill almost every page of Jameel's hard-hitting story.

The book really has no ending since the conflict in Iraq still continues until this day. The reader coming to the conclusion of the book will most likely be left with a sense that when an ending finally does arrive, it will probably be tragic. This ill foreboding seems to flow from the writers own saddened and troubled heart.

Though Jameel writes in English, it is quite obvious that this is his second language. And yet he communicates his story intelligibly for the average reader. "Iraq Through a Bullet Hole" will give the person who reads it an insider's view of how the war has affected the common person in Iraq.