



In the Belly of the Green Bird: The Triumph of the Martyrs in Iraq

Nir Rosen

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Nir Rosen has been hailed by *The New York Review of Books* as the reporter who managed to get inside Fallujah "at a time when it was a death trap for Western reporters," and as one of the few Western reporters able to report the truth from Iraq. Still in his twenties, a freelancer who has written for *The New York Times Magazine*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, and *Harper's Magazine*, Rosen speaks Iraqi-accented Arabic and has managed to report from some of the country's most dangerous locales. Even *The Weekly Standard* notes that "he probably has more sources in the insurgency than any other American reporter."

Rosen knows better than anyone how much the Americans are hated, and how deeply the Sunni Iraqis hate the Shias and vice versa. He has listened to the insurgents, and he knows that they will never rest until the Americans are gone. Too many Sunnis and Shias are willing to use violence for Iraq to ever have peace. The overthrow of Saddam has proved to be nothing less than a triumph for the martyrs who use violence at every turn.

Ever since the fall of Saddam's regime Rosen has been in and out of Iraq, from north to south, listening to Friday sermons in mosques, breaking bread with dangerous men, interviewing political henchmen, joining Shia pilgrims, and listening to ordinary Iraqis who face American soldiers on raids in the Sunni triangle. He has had to plead for his life at times, and he has received more than one death threat. He has been present when bombs were detonated, and he has sat in meetings of insurgent leaders as they made policy decisions about territory they controlled. He has heard the double messages of Iraqi leaders -- the careful English messages for Western ears and the unvarnished hostility in Arabic -- and he has interviewed politicians and imams and seen how the insurgents and gang leaders create militias, private courts, prisons, security services, and more.

In the Belly of the Green Bird is a searing report, unlike any other book about the American experience in Iraq. Almost everything covered in the Western media has been at least one or two steps removed from the minds and acts of the people who will determine the future of Iraq. Some of them are peaceful, some are violent. Some of them hate one another with the intensity of ancient enemies. The depth of discord between Sunnis and Shias is difficult to fathom without listening to them. Their anti-Americanism is much more recent, but not much less intense. The divisions within this cobbled-together country, much like those within Yugoslavia after Tito, are simply too intense to contain.

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