

A Very Pink Protest: Today I visited the "Code Pink" protests on behalf of despotism in Iraq, and it was clear that a pleasant time was being had by all. Families were there with their children, who wore anti-Bush buttons and carried drawings of the Powerpuff Girls ("Buttercup says: 'Books not bombs,'" read one). The marchers dressed in goofy pink outfits and wore fun accessories like feathered hats, pink berets, and shiny plastic necklaces with peace-symbol pendants at the end. They carried pink balloons. Little puppies marched alongside their owners, sporting cute pink bandanas. Large papier-mache puppets paraded down the street like it was Chinese New Year, and these were followed by a Volkswagen Beetle made to look like a giant pig. There was a man in a Saddam Hussein mask and uniform (he was a counter-protester, but all the kids got a kick out of it anyway). People banged on drums and hooted and chanted. There was dancing and singing in the street. The whole Code Pink affair was like a family-friendly Mardi Gras, though Iraqis probably wouldn't have found the festivities amusing, given [what's at stake](#) for them. But it was a beautiful day for suburban parents to take their sons and daughters out to the big city for a parade. It was lots of fun.

Someone with a loudspeaker said something about the warmongering of corporate America, but the nearby McDonald's and Subway and Cosi were all packed. Starbucks was stuffed so full of pink-clad protesters that I had to wait over half an hour for a grande, half-caff, no foam, mocha soy latte. And let me tell you something about these "peace activists": they're quite bellicose when waiting in line.

A guy in a pink smock and scarf, who wore some kind of pink headdress and two very large earrings, offered me a flyer about yet another rally they're organizing in the future. In Iraq, of course, this man would be shot on sight. It's often hard to argue with Iraqi justice.

Several of the protesters, evidently, are rather big fans of Iraqi justice. They chanted "Protect the women and children of Iraq" -- from George W. Bush, apparently (Bush is a "woman-hater," as one poster put it). Iraqi soldiers raped at least [5,000 Kuwaiti women](#) during Iraq's occupation of their country. Today in Iraq, as [Tony Blair notes](#), 135 out of every 1,000 Iraqi children die before age five, mostly from easily preventable conditions like diarrhea and respiratory infections. George W. Bush must hate women and children *a lot* if he's worse than the status quo.

But why is the National Organization for Women, which sponsored this weekend's carousing, making pronouncements on weapons inspections and terrorism and defense policy? Aren't they supposed to be concerned about women's rights issues? Issues such as [these](#):

Starting in October 2000, Saddam's Iraqi regime decapitated dozens of women accused of prostitution, according to Amnesty International. Officials then hung the women's severed heads outside their families' homes, according to the Committee in Defense of Iraqi Women's Rights.

Other crimes against Iraqi women include systematically raping female prisoners; raping wives, sisters and daughters of suspected dissidents and mailing videos of the rapes to family members; abducting young women for perverted dignitaries; and allowing male relatives to kill allegedly adulterous women, according to Human Rights Action France.

Anyway, there was no mention of such gruesome realities at today's protest. It was all balloons and

puppets and unthreatening-but-socially-conscious songs ("All we are saay-ing is give peace a chance..."). Not even bourgeois bohemian, but totally bourgeois. And, as protests go, quite lame.

Steven Menashi :: [3/08/2003](#) ::

Especially: Al-Jazeera's Yosri Fouda is the only reporter to have [interviewed Khalid Sheikh Mohammed](#) before his arrest. He spent 48 hours with Mohammed, and then joined him and Ramzi bin al-Shibh "for a last prayer before saying goodbye" on April 21, 2002. There were hugs and compliments ("You would make the perfect terrorist"), and I'm sure it was a very sweet moment. But before that:

Khalid went off to another room and came back with a small box. "This is for you," he said as he opened the box and started to hand me some CD-roms and mini cassettes, including a will made by one of the September 11 hijackers, a documentary on what Khalid called the "new crusades" and a video of the beheading of the *Wall Street Journal's* reporter Daniel Pearl.

He said he wanted me to distribute the tapes to western news agencies, adding quizzically: "Especially the French."

Especially the French! Five months earlier, the head of French counterintelligence had dismissed the al-Qaeda leadership in the wake of allied victory in Afghanistan: "I like to discuss them in the past tense," he [told the Washington Post](#), "as long as they are off balance and hiding out in caves." Maybe the al-Qaeda folks didn't like being written off, and wanted the French to know who's calling the shots.

Or maybe they just know where their [friends are](#).

Steven Menashi :: [3/06/2003](#) ::

Double Standards and the Fatal Hug: [Joe Klein](#) writes, "The U.S. is the only major country that indulges in diplomatic ostracism (although most Arab states don't recognize Israel)." Which is another way of saying, "The U.S. and about twenty other countries indulge in diplomatic ostracism" -- and this is not even to mention the non-Arab states that don't recognize Israel. Why is it that the same rules don't apply when Israel is concerned? Why is diplomatic ostracism of Israel different or permissible? (And don't think Klein's "major country" caveat gets him out of this. Saudi Arabia and Indonesia and Pakistan and North Korea are major counties.) Belgian prime minister [Guy Verhofstadt](#) doesn't think terrorism is really terrorism when it's directed at Israel. And Joe Klein doesn't think diplomatic ostracism of Israel really counts as ostracism. Why is that?

Anyway, Klein has an interesting idea: opening diplomatic relations with our enemies. "It would drive them crazy," says Azar Nafisi of the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, "the thought of having an American embassy in Tehran again, with lines of people around the block, trying to get green cards. There is a theory that American cultural and economic power is so insidiously attractive