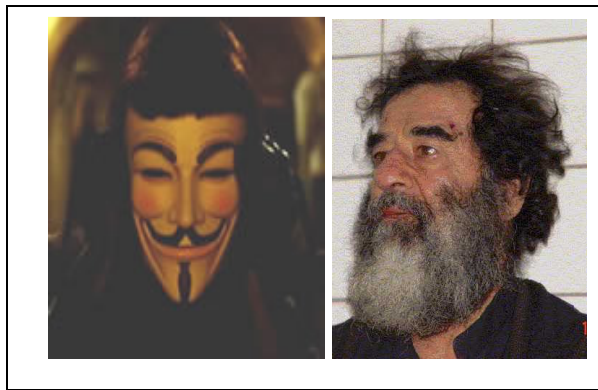


## Remember Remember the Fifth of November... ?

*By: Kameel Ahmady*

Guy Fox Night, although it is not much remembered nowadays, represents a violent chapter in English political history. Today, it is more of a children's celebration and the deep meaning of the event has been discarded. After Queen Elizabeth I died in 1603, English Catholics who had been persecuted under her rule had hoped that her successor, James I, would be more tolerant of their religion. James I had, after all, had a Catholic mother. Unfortunately, James did not turn out to be more tolerant than Elizabeth and a number of young men, 13 to be exact, decided that violent action was the answer. On the very night that the Gunpowder Plot was foiled, on November 5th, 1605, bonfires were set alight to celebrate the safety of the King. Since then, November 5th has become known as Bonfire Night. The event is commemorated every year with fireworks and burning effigies of Guy Fawkes on a bonfire.



Well, today the political underpinnings of Guy Fawkes Day are lost on many Britons. But 5<sup>th</sup> November will mark an important day for political history and for potential justice for another group of people, many of whom now find themselves calling Britain home. All those people who suffered at the hands of Saddam Hussien, the Kurds not least among them, will be watching the news with keen interest. As 5<sup>th</sup> November approaches, millions of young Britons will take to the streets in order to celebrate the Guy Fawkes Day with bonfires, fireworks displays, and partying through the night. As this happens, thousands of miles away in the Green Zone of Baghdad, Iraq's ex-president and his co-defenders are due to be sentenced in their war crimes trial. Many expect the death sentence for Iraq's notorious former dictator, and feel quite rightly that this is what he deserves.

While his trial will be watched by millions of Kurds in all parts of Kurdistan, who were his victims through Halabja and the Anfal genocide, the trial also will be watched by many Shi'ite Arabs, who also suffered years of his dictatorship. His death sentence will not only bring some measure of comfort to his victims in Iraq and Kurdistan. This symbol of justice will also travel across sections of Iran and Kuwait, where he brought years of war and destruction to his neighbouring countries. For those who lived through

these ordeals, tonight the sound of bangs and noise of the bonfires, which are meant to be celebratory, will no doubt be sad reminders of the dark days of bombs and conflict under Saddam. What an odd and surreal coincidence it is that Guy Fawkes Day will happen while Saddam faces trial. We can only hope that in future generations, our own children who have suffered as a result of this dictator, will be able to remember 5<sup>th</sup> November as one of celebration rather than sorrow, and when the bag of fireworks will suggest only coloured light in the sky, and not deadly bombings. They will drink and light their bonfires to the free sky, singing all together:

**Saddam, Remember Remember the Fifth of November...**