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## Prosecutors in Argentina Set Date in Court for Carlos Aznárez

We want to ask all the compañeros, media workers and other supportive people to join us in our protest against the encroachment on freedom of expression, which is being by mail to the public prosecutor (ASAP) the following text of protest: ([Read the complete article](#))



## At Least 21 Killed in Bomb Attack on Shia Muslims in Nigeria



More than 20 people have been killed in a bomb attack targeting Shia Muslims during an annual religious procession in the northern Nigerian state of Kano. ([Read the complete article](#))

## Cuba

### Alan Gross's Improbable Tales on 60 Minutes

November 30, 2015

By Matt Peppe

In a dramatic segment on CBS News' 60 Minutes titled "The Last Prisoner of the Cold War," former United States Agency for International Development (USAID) subcontractor Alan Gross tells of horrifying experiences in captivity: "They threatened to hang me, they threatened to pull out my fingernails, they said I'd never see the light of day."



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Gross portrays a harrowing ordeal. He purports to have feared for his safety and his life, as if he was chained in a medieval dungeon at the whims of an arbitrary monarch. This description likely sounds credible to many Americans who view the Cuban government as their own government and media have portrayed it for the last 55 years: a totalitarian dictatorship with no respect for human rights or the rule of law.

The opportunistic Gross, who earned more than \$500,000 from his work for USAID, undoubtedly understands that he could cash in on the American public's preconceptions of Cuba by dramatizing his experience there. Perhaps this occurred to Gross during his imprisonment, when he told a second cousin that "when he comes back he's going to have a big book deal." One might even venture to guess his 60 Minutes interview might be an audition for such a pay day.

Such nightmarish conditions have certainly been documented in Cuba. Whistleblowers have described "sexual abuse by medical personnel, torture by other medical personnel, brutal beatings out of frustration, fear, and retribution ... torturous shackling, positional torture" and other practices – in Guantanamo Bay, by U.S. military personnel on detainees kidnapped and held indefinitely without charges or due process.

In the rest of Cuba, which is governed by the Revolutionary regime, such stories are virtually unheard of. Professor and author Salim Lamrani compared human rights reports among Latin American countries and found many credible accusations of torture, but for Cuba he observed: "Not a single case of torture against prisoners is noted by Amnesty International. It has to be emphasised that all of all the reports by Amnesty about the countries of Latin America, the report on Cuba is by far the least condemnatory."

"Since the year 1959, there has not been one single case of extra-judicial execution, enforced disappearance or torture," stated Maria Esther Reus, Minister of Justice of the Republic of Cuba, in the Cuban government's presentation to the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review of the U.N. Human Rights Council. "The prison system constitutes an example of Cuba's humanism. Cuba has developed programmes that are directed towards transforming prisons into schools. The goal is to ensure that human beings who have served their sentences are fully reintegrated into society."

While the latest Amnesty report on Cuba notes that the government has not granted permission for a visit by the U.N. Special Rapporteur on torture and

other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment, Cuba is far from alone.

The U.N. Special Rapporteur himself noted in his latest report that the U.S. government had not allowed him access to the Guantanamo Bay detention center. Additionally, he has not been granted access to visit U.S. federal and state prisons. He did not mention the Cuban government at all in the report.

#### Gross's Covert Mission

Narrating the 60 Minutes segment, Scott Pelley says, "Gross was hired by the U.S. Agency for International Development. USAID is America's charity, delivering aid all around the world. But in Cuba its mission was different. USAID asked Gross to set up independent internet connections for the Jewish community. Only five percent of Cubans were online. But bypassing government censorship was illegal."

Actually, according to the World Bank, 14.3 percent of Cubans had internet access in 2009 when Gross was imprisoned. This number has more than doubled over the last six years as the Cuban government has expanded internet access through programs such as public WiFi zones. Of course, this was done independently without any help from the U.S. government or subcontractors like Gross working on their behalf.

Pelley's claim that Gross's mission was merely to help the Jewish community in Cuba obtain internet access is easily debunked. During each of his five trips to Cuba, Gross traveled under a tourist visa and represented himself as a member of a Jewish humanitarian group, rather than an agent of the U.S. government. Jewish leaders in Cuba said they already had access to the internet, and were not aware of Gross's connections to the U.S. government.

An Associated Press investigation discovered that Gross was well aware the misrepresentation of his activities in the country put him at serious risk. The AP quotes Gross saying that "(t)his is very risky business in no uncertain terms," and "(d)etection of satellite signals will be catastrophic."

Gross's employer, Development Alternative, Inc. (DAI), had received a \$28 million contract from USAID to carry out a democracy project in 2008. Tracey Eaton writes in his Along the Malecón blog that "Gross said in court documents he was coordinating some of his activities with the Pan American Development Foundation, or PADF, another organization that had received U.S. government funds to try to hasten Cuba's transition to democracy."

In a memo to DAI, Gross wrote that the "ICTs Para la Isla pilot project" was designed to "lay a practical groundwork (emphasis in original) that will facilitate and enable the better management of larger-scale and more comprehensive transition-to-democracy initiatives." Therefore, Gross's mission was clearly political, rather than humanitarian. His professed mission to help Jewish groups was merely a cover for his clandestine activities on behalf of a government whose official policy for more than half a century has been the replacement of the Revolutionary government in Cuba.

Gross was bringing into the country highly sophisticated computer equipment including satellite phones and a mobile phone chip to disguise satellite signals. Cuban law prohibits importing such equipment without legal authorization.

60 Minutes' claim that "Cuban authorities locked (Gross) up for helping its citizens get unrestricted Internet access" is at best a vast oversimplification, if not an outright fabrication. In reality, Gross was convicted under Cuba's Article 11 of Law 88, "Protection of National and Economic Independence."

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Alan Gross's Improbable Tales on 60 Minutes

The law stipulates imprisonment of 3 to 8 years for anyone who “directly or through a third party, receives, distributes or participates in the distribution by financial means, materials or of another nature, proceeds of the Government of the United States, its agencies, dependencies, representatives, functionaries or other private entities.”

As Lamrani points out, “(t)his severity is not unique to Cuban legislation. US law prescribes similar penalties for this type of crime. The Foreign Agents Registration Act prescribes that any un-registered agent ‘who requests, collects, supplies or spends contributions, loans, money or any valuable object in his own interest’ may be liable to a sentence of five years in prison.”

#### Gross's Detainment and Treatment By Cuban Authorities

Gross was held not in a regular prison but in a military hospital for the duration of his detainment. Cuban authorities not only took pains to ensure Gross was granted appropriate medical care, but were extremely accommodating to allow him time with his wife Judy.

It seems unlikely that Gross was abused or mistreated while serving his sentence. According to the Associated Press, Gross's lawyer Jared Genser said Judy “arrived in Cuba on Sept. 5 (2012) and was allowed to visit her husband on four days, three at the military hospital and once at a guarded home near the capital. He said there is no sign that Gross is being ill-treated.” He also told the AP “(Gross) is being treated fine.”

Gross, who suffered from arthritis, lost significant weight while held in confinement and developed a mass in his shoulder. He was treated by Cuban medical staff, and there is no evidence poor conditions contributed to his medical issues.

New York rabbi and gastroenterologist Elie Abadie was allowed to visit Gross in the military hospital, where he determined “through the exam he personally performed and also through the extensive information supplied by the team of Cuban doctors who have attended (Gross)” that Gross was in a good state of health.

Gross petitioned to see his mother before she passed away from cancer, but as Cuban Ministry of Foreign Affairs official Josefina Vidal noted: “neither the Cuban penitentiary system nor the U.S. penitentiary system provide the possibility for inmates to travel abroad, no matter the reason.” The week after his mother died, Gross's wife was allowed to visit him again in Cuba.

#### The Obama Administration's Rejection of Cuba's Humanitarian Proposal

In early 2014, Gross began a hunger strike because of what he called “mistruths, deceptions, and inaction by both governments ... because of the lack of any reasonable or valid effort to resolve this shameful ordeal.” He ended his hunger strike a week later, stating he would not resume his protest “when both governments show more concern for human beings and less malice toward each other.”

Despite Gross assigning blame to both governments, there is ample evidence that the Cuban government made much more than a reasonable effort to resolve his case, while it was the U.S. government – alone – that refused to do so.

Two years earlier in 2012, the highest ranking Cuban diplomat in Washington, Jorge Bolaños, had proposed a prisoner swap of Gross for the Cuban Five (more on them shortly). Bolaños expressed his government's desire to “find a humanitarian solution to the case on a reciprocal basis.” But the Obama administration flatly said no, and continued to unilaterally demand Gross's release without engaging the Cuban government on their offer.

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Alan Gross's Improbable Tales on 60 Minutes

On Dec. 17, 2014, the negotiated solution that freed Gross was the exact same deal the Cuban government had proposed three years earlier. It bears repeating that this offer was on the table all along and could have been agreed to by the Obama administration at any time.

If the agreement was fair last December, why was it not fair when it was first offered three years before? The U.S. government alone holds the blame – with Obama, as the head of his administration, owning the lion's share – for rejecting a clearly reasonable offer that resulted in Gross remaining detained unnecessarily for two and a half extra years.

Without any controversy, the U.S. government could have secured his release before he developed health complications, before his mother died, and before he began his hunger strike. The U.S. government obstinately refused, continuously, for three years to even consider a deal that later appeared to be a no-brainer for both sides.

Faulting both governments for the delay in obtaining Gross's release is asinine historical revisionism. It is merely an unmerited attempt to create a fictional balance based on the assumption that the U.S. government in its righteousness must be justified in its quarrels with other governments.

#### The Cuban Five

One cannot discuss the case of Alan Gross without at the same time discussing the aforementioned Cuban Five, who Gross was eventually swapped for. Unlike Gross, who was acting as a mercenary assisting the U.S. government carry out covert political operations, the members of the Cuban Five were fighting a very real threat of terrorism against the Cuban people emanating from the United States. Their operation was not in any way politically subversive, and did not interfere with the U.S. government's sovereignty.

They were in Florida to infiltrate terrorist organizations and disrupt plots these groups were planning on Cuban territory. Thousands of Cubans have been killed by contra-revolutionary terrorism since 1959 by groups who enjoy safe haven inside the United States, including 73 people whose plane was blown up over the Caribbean in 1976 and an Italian man killed in a restaurant bombing in Havana in 1997. As author Stephen Kimber writes, if the roles were reversed and the Cuban Five were working for the U.S. government, they "would be American heroes."

The Five – as they are known in their home country – were convicted on trumped up conspiracy charges. The group's leader Gerardo Hernández was convicted on the most outrageous, unfounded charge of conspiracy to commit murder. He received two life sentences plus fifteen years.

By any objective comparison, the conditions the Cuban Five faced in confinement were far worse than those of Gross. Each member of the Five was held in solitary confinement for 17 months prior to trial. They spent nearly three years without being able to communicate with each other or their families. The U.N. Working Group on Arbitrary Detention concluded in 2005 that "the deprivation of liberty of these five persons" was "arbitrary."

Olga, the wife of René González, and Adriana, the wife of Hernández, were denied visas to visit their husbands for 10 years, until after the Cuban government allowed Judy Gross to visit her husband. The U.S. government had previously deemed the Cuban wives "a threat to the stability and national security of the United States."

Amnesty International stated its concern "that such a blanket or permanent bar on visits with their wives constitutes additional punishment and is contrary

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Alan Gross's Improbable Tales on 60 Minutes

to international standards for the humane treatment of prisoners and states' obligation to protect family life."

González, the first member of the group to be paroled, was freed after 13 years. The three members of the Five who were released in December 2014 had spent more than 16 years in prison. That is, more than three times longer than Gross.

Needless to say, 60 Minutes does not make this comparison between Gross and the Cuban Five. But 60 Minutes – a standard bearer of American journalism – does achieve an important function of the American Free Press: demonizing official enemies while keeping the microscope away from one's own government, lest any inconvenient analysis might raise doubts about their inherent superiority and benevolence.

Matt Peppe writes about politics, U.S. foreign policy and Latin America on his blog. You can follow him on twitter.

<http://www.counterpunch.org/2015/11/30/alan-grosss-improbable-tales-on-60-minutes/>

**Source: Counterpunch**

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## Argentina

### Prosecutors in Argentina Set Date in Court for Carlos Aznárez

November 26, 2016

From VICENTE ZITO LEMA:  
To my colleagues, friends,  
compañeros:

Proposal of Solidarity

In my capacity as Co-Director of the Resumen Latinoamericano newspaper I am making an appeal urging you to stand in solidarity with my colleague, the journalist Carlos Aznárez

and to repudiate this new maneuver to limit freedom of expression in our country. The prosecutors have already set up a date for the investigation against Carlos for this Monday, but because of the last minute appointment, his lawyers have requested postponement and we are assuming that they will stretch it out one more week, but it is clear that they are obviously in a big hurry to carry out this procedure.

We want to ask all the compañeros, media workers and other supportive people to join us in our protest against the encroachment on freedom of expression, which is being by mail to the public prosecutor (ASAP) the following text of protest:

To Prosecutors' Office # 25

Case # 7271/15

I am Registering a Protest against the Attempt to Criminalize Journalist Carlos Aznárez and Restrict his Right of Freedom of Expression

I want to register a protest against the opening by the Delegation of Israelite Associations of Argentina (DAIA), of a criminal case against the journalist



**Solidaridad con el Director  
de Resumen Latinoamericano**

and director of "Resumen Latinoamericano", Carlos Aznárez, who is being harassed for exercising his right to report and publicly express his solidarity with the Palestinian people.

The abuse has become more serious and significant by legal proceedings requiring him to turn over all his private Google e-mails as a journalist and the e-mails of the media he represents from July 2014 to date. This measure itself violates the right of privacy and the protection of sources of information that any professional communicator has in Argentina and in the world.

For these reasons I am asking you to cease this persecutory attempt that explicitly violates constitutional rights regarding freedom of expression and opinion. I express my complete solidarity with the journalist and Human Rights activist Carlos Aznárez, urging the prosecutors to stop the legal measures directed against him. I also request that cases like this are not repeated against any other media worker whose inherent function is to inform and to express their ideas freely.

Sincerely,

Signature

Name

DNI

Profession

Country

Please send the letter to the Prosecutors email address at: [equi-poh@jusbares.gov.ar](mailto:equi-poh@jusbares.gov.ar)

Also send a blind copy of the letter to: [gremialdeabogados@yahoo.com.ar](mailto:gremialdeabogados@yahoo.com.ar) and to: [resumen@nodo50.org](mailto:resumen@nodo50.org)

**Source: Resumen Latinoamericano**

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## Argentina

### Venezuela's Socialists Will Sue Opposition Party for Slander



November 27, 2015

Despite a lack of evidence, the secretary-general of an opposition party immediately blamed the ruling socialists for the death of a politician.

Venezuela's ruling PSUV party plans to file a formal lawsuit against the secretary-general of an opposition-aligned Democratic Action party for accu-

sing that PSUV members were behind the death of an opposition politician, a leading party official announced Thursday.

Luis Manuel Díaz, who was affiliated with the Democratic Action, or AD party, was killed Wednesday during a campaign rally in the town of Atagracia de Orituco. AD's Secretary-General Henry Ramos Allup Ramos immediately took to

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Venezuela's Socialists Will Sue Opposition Party for Slander

Twitter claiming Diaz had been killed "by armed PSUV gangs from a vehicle."

However, Ramos has been unable to provide any evidence to back his assertion. Instead, a preliminary investigation by Venezuelan authorities revealed that the attack on Diaz may have been carried out by criminal groups with whom he had dealings with.

Jorge Rodriguez, a senior figure within the PSUV, or United Socialist Party of Venezuela, said his party will visit the office of the attorney general Friday to submit its complaint against Ramos for libel and slander.

"Luis Manuel Diaz was unfortunately well known for his long record of criminal activity in the state of Guarico. He was the last member of a criminal gang called the Plateados (silver plated), which was involved in extortion, contract killings, and kidnapping in that state," Rodriguez said.

"In an irresponsible way, in a deceptive way, Mr. Ramos Allup points to (alleged) armed PSUV groups. It would be very important for him to tell us and he would have to show how it can be determined that members of the United Socialist Party of Venezuela committed such serious acts," said Rodriguez.

Private media outlets and the U.S. government have been quick to condemn the killing of Diaz, parroting the claims made by the opposition that the homicide was aimed at intimidation.

Government supporters have highlighted the sharply different reactions of the media and foreign governments to the news of Diaz' killing to those of murders of hundreds of Indigenous activists, rural leaders, and pro-government unionists, as well as various PSUV leaders, such as legislator Robert Serra last year.

President Nicolas Maduro has repeatedly warned there is a concerted and orchestrated campaign to de-legitimize the upcoming parliamentary elections Dec.6.

The opposition coalition has refused to commit to recognizing the results, leading to speculation that they may cry fraud should they fail to win.

<http://www.telesurtv.net/english/news/Venezuelas-Socialists-Will-Sue-Opposition-Party-for-Slander-20151127-0018.html>

**Source: teleSUR**

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## Ecuador

### Cubans Who Bought Plane Tickets will Have Visas to Ecuador



November 28, 2015

Ecuadorean Foreign Minister Ricardo Patiño said on Saturday that the Cubans who bought plane tickets before November 26 will get their visas to travel to Ecuador.

According to the head of Ecuadorean diplomacy on his Twitter account, the regulation will be announced by the Foreign Ministry in

the next few hours.

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Cubans Who Bought Plane Tickets will Have Visas to Ecuador

The Constitution of Ecuador defends the free movement of people. On Thursday Ecuador decided that as of December 1, all Cuban citizens who will travel to that country as tourists will have to apply for visas through the internet.

We established a visa system for Cuban citizens because of the disorderly and dangerous movement that violates their human rights, said Patino on Twitter, referring to the fact that many Cuban travelers use Ecuador as a springboard to try to reach the United States, encouraged by the Cuban Adjustment Act.

By virtue of that regulation, Washington grants immediate residence to all Cubans arriving on US territory, regardless of the means they used to get there, a treatment that differs from the one granted to immigrants from other countries.

[http://www.prensa-latina.cu/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=4389711&Itemid=1](http://www.prensa-latina.cu/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=4389711&Itemid=1)

**Source: Prensa Latina**

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## Nigeria

### At Least 21 Killed in Bomb Attack on Shia Muslims in Nigeria

November 28,  
2015

More than 20 people have been killed in a bomb attack targeting Shia Muslims during an annual religious procession in the northern Nigerian state of Kano.



On Friday, a bomber detonated his explosives among a crowd of Shia Muslims participating in a march organized by followers of the Islamic Movement of Nigeria in Dakasoye village south of Kano, the capital of the province with the same name.

Organizers of the procession said several people were also injured in the attack which happened days before Shias in Nigeria commemorate Arbäeen, the 40th day since the anniversary of the martyrdom of Imam Hussein -- an important religious event.

An eyewitness to the attack said the assailant "was dressed in black like everyone else. His accomplice was initially arrested and confessed they were sent by Boko Haram."

Boko Haram has not claimed responsibility for the attack, but Nigerian officials usually blame the Takfiri terror group for such assaults.

<http://www.radiohc.cu/en/noticias/internacionales/77224-at-least-21-killed-in-bomb-attack-on-shia-muslims-in-nigeria>

**Source: Radio Habana Cuba**

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## Russia

### Russia Accuses Turkey of Downing Jet as Planned Provocation



November 25, 2015

The Russian foreign minister says U.S.-controlled NATO is covering up Turkey's gunning down of the Su-24.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said Wednesday that Turkey's downing of the Su-24 on Tuesday was a planned act of provocation.

He also announced the cancellation of his trip to Ankara.

"We have serious doubts that this act was unintentional. It looks very much like a pre-planned provocation," Lavrov said, according to RT.

However, Lavrov said Russia would not give in to acts of provocation and would not wage a war against Turkey in what was the first time since the 1950s that a NATO member has gunned down a Russian or Soviet military warplane.

Lavrov said all the evidence, including footage of the incident, indicates that Turkey planned the act ahead of time. He also cited Turkey's failure to maintain proper communication with Russia.

According to RT, Lavrov accused NATO of attempting to cover up the incident in favor of Turkey, but also highlighted the fact the behind closed doors, the Western military bloc condemned Ankara for the action.

Turkey claimed the plane had strayed into its territory and that the pilots were given multiple warnings. Russia maintains the plane was within Syria's borders, where Russia is carrying out military operations against militants in coordination with the Syrian government.

Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu fueled the increasing tensions by slamming Russia for "attacks on Turkmen," Syria. The Turkish government said that attack preceded the downing of the Russian fighter jet.

"Turkey is interested in buying Islamic State group oil"

Lavrov replied saying the region is not only home to Turkmen people, and said there are hundreds of foreign fighters affiliated with "known terrorist groups and elements of their infrastructure like weapons and command points."

**ANALYSIS: US Points Bloody Finger to Russian 'Intervention' in Syria**

Lavrov pointed out that Turkey is carrying out actions in that region due to their interest to protect "this ('terrorist') infrastructure from destruction."

The foreign minister explained that the Russian warplane was gunned down shortly after destroying Islamic State group oil convoys and facilities. "This, because Turkey is interested in buying their oil."

The Moscow diplomat also criticized NATO for not expressing their condolences to Russia over the loss of lives of its troops.

"Very strange statements were voiced after a NATO meeting called by the Turks, which didn't express any regret or condolences and in effect were aimed at covering up what the Turkish air force did yesterday," Lavrov said.

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“Similar reaction came from the European Union.”

The Russian pilot who survived the downing of the jet was picked up by the Syrian Army, the Russian ambassador to France confirmed Wednesday.

The Russian military had confirmed in a statement earlier that one of the pilots was killed after parachuting from the Su-24 fighter jet; a Syrian rebel group released video Tuesday of one of the Russian pilots, lifeless and incapacitated on the ground.

President Vladimir Putin described the Turkish act as a “stab in the back” and warned Ankara that it would have serious consequences on the ties between the two nations.

Turkey imports half of its natural gas from Russia and the two countries have several trade agreements. However, following the Incident, Foreign Minister Lavrov told Russians to avoid traveling to Turkey due to “terrorist threats.”

Following his comments, Natalie Tours, one of the biggest Russian tours operators, suspended sales for Turkey tours.

In September, Moscow ordered airstrikes against Islamic State group in Syria upon the request of the the Syrian government of President Bashar Assad, and has since destroyed thousands of Islamic State group targets.

The Su-24 is a supersonic aircraft operated by two pilots and it is armed with laser guided missiles and three gun pods capable of firing 9,000 rounds per minute. The jet is also equipped with guided air-to-surface missiles, guided, cluster and incendiary bombs.

<http://www.telesurtv.net/english/news/Russia-Accuses-Turkey-of-Downing-Jet-as-Planned-Provocation-20151125-0010.html>

**Source: teleSur**

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## United States

### 30 Seconds, 16 Shots, 400 Days: The Murder of Laquan McDonald



November 26, 2015

By Amy Goodman and Denis Moynihan

On the night of Oct. 20, 2014, Laquan McDonald, a 17-year-old African-American teenager in Chicago, was walking down the street when two police cruisers sped up to him. Officers jumped out, and at least one of

them, Jason Van Dyke, began firing. Laquan fell to the ground, his final, painful moments caught on the dashboard video camera of a third police vehicle that had arrived just seconds before. Laquan spun as he was shot. Two bullets hit him in the back. As the video clearly shows, the bullets were pumped into him, evidenced by clouds of dust exploding off the pavement. This week, on the day the video was released to the public by court order, Officer Van Dyke was charged with first-degree murder — 400 days after he killed Laquan McDonald.

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The official scenario that the Chicago Police Department (CPD) offered sounded like so many others: The teen was armed with a knife and lunged at Officer Van Dyke and his partner. Van Dyke, the official story holds, fired on the youth only to protect himself and his partner from a potentially lethal attack.

Independent media took that scenario and turned it on its head. Jamie Kalven is the founder of the Invisible Institute and a freelance journalist in Chicago. He uncovered the autopsy report showing that Laquan McDonald was shot 16 times and first reported on the existence of the video of the shooting. Many prominent news outlets sought the dashboard video footage through Illinois's Freedom of Information Act laws, but were denied.

Brandon Smith is an award-winning independent reporter, based, as his biography on his blog states, "wherever my suitcase sits." Smith challenged the CPD's denial of the FOIA requests in Cook County Court. Judge Franklin Valderrama heard the case, and ordered the city to release the footage by Nov. 25.

The footage clearly debunks the official story. Just one day before the deadline to release it, Cook County State's Attorney Anita Alvarez announced that Officer Van Dyke was being charged with first-degree murder. Within hours, the video was released.

Citizens have filed between 17 and 20 complaints against Van Dyke over the course of his 14 years with the CPD, for issues ranging from excessive force to improper use of a weapon to racial slurs. He was never disciplined. After the killing of Laquan McDonald, Officer Van Dyke was not indicted. Rather, he continued to be paid while assigned to desk duty until his arrest.

It also has been widely reported that additional video footage may have been destroyed. Police entered a nearby Burger King restaurant shortly after the shooting, asking for the password to their surveillance video system. They left after three hours. Eighty-six minutes of surveillance video had been deleted, it was later noticed, encompassing the time during which the shooting occurred. Burger King District manager Jay Darshane told NBC: "We had no idea they were going to sit there and delete the files. I mean, we were just trying to help the police."

Activists have been especially critical of Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel, who has urged calm in the wake of the video's release. Charlene Carruthers, national director of the Black Youth Project 100, told me on the Democracy Now! news hour: "The city has very specific interests around what happened. And they're very concerned with the city remaining peaceful. But unfortunately, the community, the target that is being told to remain peaceful, is not the Chicago Police Department."

The shooting occurred just two weeks before Rahm Emanuel was facing a tight re-election race. Several months after he won re-election over a progressive challenger, Chicago offered a \$5 million settlement to Laquan McDonald's family, without them even filing suit.

Meanwhile, in Minneapolis, outrage over yet another police killing of a young, unarmed African-American male has led to a public occupation outside a police precinct. Hundreds have maintained a peaceful vigil demanding accountability and justice for the victim, Jamar Clark. The police have responded with a show of paramilitary force clearly intended to intimidate. Last Wednesday, an officer was photographed dressed in military fatigues, pointing his rifle at a protester with his hands in the air. The protester happens to be the son of Minneapolis Congressman Keith Ellison, the co-chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus and the first Muslim member of Congress in history.

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30 Seconds, 16 Shots, 400 Days: The Murder of Laquan McDonald

Then, in a shocking escalation, several masked white men came to the protest Monday, and shot and injured five Black Lives Matter activists in what is being investigated as a hate crime. In response, close to 1,000 people marched in Minneapolis Tuesday night, the same night that hundreds marched in Chicago against police violence.

Despite the difficult circumstances, proud father and Congressman Keith Ellison is hopeful: "There is a surge going on across this country among diverse populations craving justice, demanding fair treatment. ... We have to have a more just society."

[http://www.democracynow.org/blog/2015/11/25/30\\_seconds\\_16\\_shots\\_400\\_days](http://www.democracynow.org/blog/2015/11/25/30_seconds_16_shots_400_days)

**Source: Democracy Now**

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## United States

### From Mizzou to Yale: The Resurgence of Black Student Protest

November 25, 2015

By Barbara Ransby

Over the past few weeks, Black-led student protests have disrupted business as usual on dozens of US college campuses, with tactics ranging from sit-ins and vigils to hunger strikes and mass rallies. Much of this activity occurred under the banner of the hashtag

#StudentBlackOut. Trig-

gered by events at the University of Missouri (Mizzou), where students mobilized in response to several racist incidents, including a swastika written in feces on a bathroom wall, Black students and supporters across the country have rallied to demand change.

Protesting students are fed up with duplicitous campus cultures that tout diversity and tolerate pervasive racism.

On most campuses, there was a specific incident that sparked protests, but the real issues are much broader and ongoing. The protesting students are not simply angered by a single incident or racial epithet; they are fed up with duplicitous campus cultures that tout diversity and tolerate pervasive racist practices, symbols and policies. Many of the protests revolved around the issue of hostile or inhospitable campus climates, but some demands have gone further.

While every historical moment is unique, this wave of anti-racist campus protests is reminiscent of past struggles in its focus on points of connection between campus and community issues. The wide range of tactics and organizations involved in the current protests is also reminiscent of past student struggles, as is the backlash that students are facing from conservatives and liberals alike - a backlash that attempts to trivialize student complaints and derail



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organizing efforts.

Black student struggles historically have had deep roots and strong ties to movements beyond the campus. In the 1960s, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee organized students to leave school and work full-time in the Southern-based Black freedom movement alongside maids, sharecroppers and local griots who taught them more about race, politics and justice than they could have possibly learned in their classrooms. At Columbia University in 1968, in the 1980s anti-apartheid struggle there, and in the more recent successful prison divestment campaign, students linked with community organizers around access to resources, racial profiling of Black people in the neighborhood (and Black students), as well as unethical and racist investment practices.

Yale students too have been linked to a broader set of issues. They have been involved in a prolonged and intense struggle over racial profiling and a hostile campus climate. What is significant here is the intimate connection between community grievances, racist policing and the Black student experience. For example, while much attention has been given to the fact that students took offense at two professors' defense of racist Halloween costumes, the real day-to-day issues are much deeper. Remember in January 2015, African-American Yale student Tahj Blow, the son of New York Times columnist Charles Blow, was detained at gunpoint after leaving the library because he "looked like a burglary suspect." It's not a trivial event, and this type of profiling is all too common.

Black-led, campus-based struggles have never been isolated to the campus or solely focused on students.

Black-led, campus-based struggles have never been isolated to the campus or solely focused on students. It is no coincidence that many of the Mizzou student activists are from St. Louis and Ferguson, Missouri, and were influenced by the sustained and militant protests following the shooting of unarmed teenager Michael Brown in August 2014. In general, this wave of protests is linked to the growing Black Lives Matter movement. Some students have taken up chants from the Black Lives Matter movement. Signs at some of the campus vigils echoed the quote by Black political exile Assata Shakur, first popularized by organizers in the Black Youth Project 100 (BYP100): "It is our duty to fight for our freedom. It is our duty to win. We must love each other and protect each other. We have nothing to lose but our chains."

The demands of contemporary student activists are diverse but again, they are not all student-centered. The Black Liberation Collective, a new coalition that helped to coordinate this recent wave of campus actions, is calling for universities to adopt ethical and anti-racist investment policies by "divesting from prisons and investing in communities." As part of this collective, activists at the University of Toronto have called for divestment from the US for-profit prison industry. Washington University students are demanding that the university "widen the pipeline to higher education for local K-12 students, many of whom attend schools with under-resourced college prep programs." At the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, student protesters are calling for the university to immediately institute a policy of a \$15 per hour minimum wage and support the unionization of all campus workers, a link to labor and the growing Fight for \$15 campaign.

Black student activism has a long history in the United States, and contemporary struggles rest squarely in this tradition. It is the militant and sustained Black-led campaigns at campuses like San Francisco State, Howard University, Harvard, UCLA and CUNY that led to the formation of Black studies, Afri-

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From Mizzou to Yale: The Resurgence of Black Student Protest

can American studies and Africana studies programs and departments across the country. This movement is outlined in historian Martha Biondi's 2012 book, *The Black Revolution on Campus*. The campus struggles of the 1960s and 1970s were inextricably linked to the broader Black freedom movement, as students demanded an end to nearby neighborhood segregation, opposed the war in Vietnam and brought national organizers onto campus for rallies, teach-ins and debates. In the 1980s and 1990s, Black students allied with campus workers, tenants organizations and groups opposed to university gentrification.

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Creative tactics are the hallmark of student protests. Students camped out in tents on the Mizzou campus to draw attention to their concerns. This echoed the anti-apartheid shanties built in solidarity with township dwellers in South Africa that marked hundreds of campus quads in the 1980s. These visual statements make the issues at hand hard to ignore. The longstanding tactic of building and office takeovers has also been employed by contemporary activists at Princeton, Towson and Virginia Commonwealth University. What does this accomplish? It disrupts business as usual, refuses to allow racism to remain routine and directs demands for change at top administrators, rather than focusing on the individual behavior of white students. Rallies and marches are also still a favored tactic. So, while 21st century organizers rely on social media and other technologies not available decades before, it still appears to be mass collective action and putting bodies on the line that galvanize campus movements, past and present.

Any movement that makes an impact will experience a pushback. Not surprisingly, contemporary student activists have suffered a sharp backlash from various quarters. Donald Trump labeled the Mizzou students' efforts as "disgusting." Some social media and mainstream media responses have belittled student grievances and maligned the students as pampered, entitled and petty. Some student leaders have even received death threats.

But it is supposedly liberal critics that have been some of the most vocal. In a recent New York Times opinion piece, 1960s activist Todd Gitlin maligns Black student leaders as whiners who lack confidence in their ability to counter offensive ideas and want protection from their elders. He counsels more courage and independence. He obviously does not know the 2015 youth leaders that I have witnessed close up. They are sharp and fearless. The fact that they are willing to expose both blatant and subtle forms of racism is a strength, not a weakness. They are unveiling the postracial myth that pervades so many liberal circles by rooting out old- and new-style racism.

The other liberal critique of Black student campaigns centers on the issue of free speech. Every institution has stated and unstated rules about the values and protocol that define it. Many of those rules and protocols sometimes deserve to be broken. However, it is significant that while students and faculty are expected to adhere to a set of practices that facilitate the smooth functioning of the university (not my rules, mind you), it is when racist behavior is involved that free speech becomes an absolute. While I don't support "speech codes," the reality is that we are all responsible for the implications of what we say, and speech never occurs in a vacuum. It is also important to historicize racial slurs and mocking and degrading jokes - the types of speech uttered by rowdy lynch mobs as they conjured the collective spirit to do serious damage to Black bodies. That reality is not so far removed from today.

From the Black Lives Matter movement and its dozen or so constituent organizations and campaigns, to the increasingly coordinated Black-led protests on college campuses, we are seeing a resurgent challenge to racism and white supremacy at a historic juncture when the violence of a crushing student

From Mizzou to Yale: The Resurgence of Black Student Protest

debt is forcing many Black working- and middle-class students out of college altogether, and rampant state violence is threatening the very survival of others. It is also a moment that is defined by hundreds of thousands of Black people under the control of the prison industry, declining quality of Black life for the majority of Black people (Black millionaires and elected officials notwithstanding), rising inequality overall, intensified surveillance under the rubric of anti-terrorism, and increased racism and xenophobia from pundits and political candidates alike. Black youth (not only students) are pushing back and finding their collective voice. We are witnessing a growing movement with varied demands and tactics - a movement that, if sustained, holds the promise of realizing a more hopeful future.

Acknowledgement: I want to thank Deana Lewis and Martha Biondi for contributing to this essay.

<http://www.truth-out.org/news/item/33785-from-mizzou-to-yale-the-resurgence-of-black-student-protest>

**Source: Truthout**

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## United States

### Dislike: Facebook Wrongly Removes Post Questioning Partial Coverage of Paris Attacks



Nov 17, 2015

Facebook removed a UK student's post criticizing the world for not responding to recent terrorist attacks in Lebanon and Africa with the same prayers and support as for Paris. The tech giant republished it, citing human error, after being approached by RT.

University of Sussex student Roua Naboulsi wrote a long Facebook post on Saturday morning in which she described her mixed feelings in the aftermath of the Paris attack.

While Naboulsi, 21, condemned the violence in France, she also lamented the lack of international attention given to the suicide bombing in Beirut the day before.

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Dislike: Facebook Wrongly Removes Post Questioning Partial Coverage of Paris Attacks

Her post received 9,000 shares and 12,000 likes before Facebook removed it on Monday for not meeting the company's Community Standards. Following inquiries by RT, the social media giant republished the post and admitted it had made a mistake.

In her post Naboulsi, who studies English Literature and Media Studies, said she stayed up late following news of the Paris attacks "in disbelief."

"What happened in Paris last night was awful," Naboulsi wrote. "The international community has responded, as predicted, by showing their unwavering solidarity with Paris."

"The night before that, a bomb went off in my country, Lebanon, killing 43 people. No one prayed for us. No one kept us in their thoughts. No world leaders made late-night statements about us. No one changed their profile pictures. There was no hashtag. No option to be 'marked as safe' by Facebook. Just silence."

Naboulsi went on to list the Syrian civil war and occupation of Palestine which she claims have been largely ignored by the West.

"73 Palestinians were killed by Israel in October alone. Silence. Nearly 100 people were killed by explosions at a peace rally in Ankara last month. Just silence. At least 3,500 people have been killed in Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger in conflict this year. Silence," she wrote.

She goes on to challenge western readers to question why the world is seemingly cold to the suffering of Middle Eastern and African people.

"But what about us? Don't we deserve to be mourned? Are we not human enough? Are we too Arab for you? Too black for you? Too Other for you? Do you find it impossible to empathize with us because of the color of our skin? There's a word for that," she said.

Despite receiving thousands of likes and shares, the post was suddenly removed by Facebook on Monday afternoon after a user reported it to the site.

When RT contacted Facebook for comment on Tuesday, a spokesperson said it would investigate the incident. Hours later the post was republished.

Facebook told RT it doesn't comment on individual cases, but said the post was deemed to have breached its Community Standards in error.

The company said its staff check more than one million reported posts each week and occasionally make mistakes.

Speaking to RT, Naboulsi said she was disappointed the post had been removed in the first place.

"I'm quite disappointed that Facebook both removed and republished the post without communicating with me at all.

"More importantly, their community guidelines were pretty straightforward and clear when I read through them so I don't see how a moderator could have mistakenly concluded that I was in breach of them.

"It seems to me that if I had stayed quiet about this nothing would have happened. Honestly, the whole situation just feels to me like they realized they couldn't get away with it and so they republished my post. I just can't know for sure what exactly happened but I'm glad it's back up of course," she added.

**Source: RT**

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## United States

### The Dirty War on Syria



November 27, 2016

By Prof. Tim Anderson

The following text is the introductory chapter of Professor Tim Anderson's forthcoming book entitled *The Dirty War on Syria*

Although every war makes ample use of lies and deception, the dirty war on Syria has relied on a level of mass disinformation not seen in living memory. The British-Australian journalist Philip Knightley pointed out that war propaganda typically involves 'a depressingly predictable pattern' of demonising the enemy leader, then demonising the enemy people through atrocity stories, real or imagined (Knightley 2001). Accordingly, a mild-mannered eye doctor called Bashar al Assad

became the new evil in the world and, according to consistent western media reports, the Syrian Army did nothing but kill civilians for more than four years. To this day, many imagine the Syrian conflict is a 'civil war', a 'popular revolt' or some sort of internal sectarian conflict. These myths are, in many respects, a substantial achievement for the big powers which have driven a series of 'regime change' operations in the Middle East region, all on false pretexts, over the past 15 years.

Dr. Tim Anderson

This book is a careful academic work, but also a strong defence of the right of the Syrian people to determine their own society and political system. That position is consistent with international law and human rights principles, but may irritate western sensibilities, accustomed as we are to an assumed prerogative to intervene. At times I have to be blunt, to cut through the double-speak. In Syria the big powers have sought to hide their hand, using proxy armies while demonising the Syrian Government and Army, accusing them of constant atrocities; then pretending to rescue the Syrian people from their own government. Far fewer western people opposed the war on Syria than opposed the invasion of Iraq, because they were deceived about its true nature.

In 2011 I had only a basic understanding of Syria and its history. However I was deeply suspicious when reading of the violence that erupted in the southern border town of Daraa. I knew that such violence (sniping at police and civilians, the use of semi-automatic weapons) does not spring spontaneously from street demonstrations. And I was deeply suspicious of the big powers. All my life I had been told lies about the pretexts for war. I decided to research the Syrian conflict, reading hundreds of books and articles, watching many videos and speaking to as many Syrians as I could. I wrote dozens of articles and visited Syria twice, during the conflict. This book is a result of that research.

Dirty wars are not new. Cuban national hero Jose Martí predicted to a friend that Washington would try to intervene in Cuba's independence struggle against the Spanish. 'They want to provoke a war', he wrote in 1889 'to have a pretext to intervene and, with the authority of being mediator and guarantor, to seize the country ... There is no more cowardly thing in the annals of free

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people; nor such cold blooded evil' (Martí 1975: 53). Nine years later, during the third independence war, an explosion in Havana Harbour destroyed the USS Maine, killing 258 US sailors and serving as a pretext for a US invasion.

The subsequent 'Spanish-American' war snatched victory from the Cubans and allowed the US to take control of the remaining Spanish colonial territories. Cuba had territory annexed and a deeply compromised constitution was imposed. No evidence ever proved the Spanish were responsible for the bombing of the Maine and many Cubans believe the North Americans bombed their own ship. The monument in Havana, in memory of those sailors, still bears this inscription: 'To the victims of the Maine who were sacrificed to imperialist voracity and the desire to gain control of the island of Cuba' (Richter 1998).

The US launched dozens of interventions in Latin America over the subsequent century. A notable dirty war was led by CIA-backed, 'freedom fighter' mercenaries based in Honduras, who attacked the Sandinista Government and the people of Nicaragua in the 1980s. That conflict, in its modus operandi, was not so different to the war on Syria. In Nicaragua more than 30,000 people were killed. The International Court of Justice found the US guilty of a range of terrorist-style attacks on the little Central American country, and found that the US owed Nicaragua compensation (ICJ 1986). Washington ignored these rulings.

With the 'Arab Spring' of 2011 the big powers took advantage of a political foment by seizing the initiative to impose an 'Islamist winter', attacking the few remaining independent states of the region. Very quickly we saw the destruction of Libya, a small country with the highest standard of living in Africa. NATO bombing and a Special Forces campaign helped the al Qaeda groups on the ground. The basis for NATO's intervention was lies told about actual and impending massacres, supposedly carried out or planned by the government of President Muammar Gaddafi. These claims led rapidly to a UN Security Council resolution said to protect civilians through a 'no fly zone'. We know now that trust was betrayed, and that the NATO powers abused the limited UN authorisation to overthrow the Libyan Government (McKinney 2012).

Subsequently, no evidence emerged to prove that Gaddafi intended, carried out or threatened wholesale massacres, as was widely suggested (Forte 2012). Genevieve Garrigos of Amnesty International (France) admitted there was 'no evidence' to back her group's earlier claims that Gaddafi had used 'black mercenaries' to commit massacres (Forte 2012; Edwards 2013).

Alan Kuperman, drawing mainly on North American sources, demonstrates the following points. First, Gaddafi's crackdown on the mostly Islamist insurrection in eastern Libya was 'much less lethal' than had been suggested. Indeed there was evidence that he had had 'refrained from indiscriminate violence'. The Islamists were themselves armed from the beginning. From later US estimates, of the almost one thousand casualties in the first seven weeks, about three percent were women and children (Kuperman 2015). Second, when government forces were about to regain the east of the country, NATO intervened, claiming this was to avert an impending massacre. Ten thousand people died after the NATO intervention, compared to one thousand before. Gaddafi had pledged no reprisals in Benghazi and 'no evidence or reason' came out to support the claim that he planned mass killings (Kuperman 2015). The damage was done. NATO handed over the country to squabbling groups of Islamists and western aligned 'liberals'. A relatively independent state was overthrown, but Libya was destroyed. Four years on there is no functioning government and violence persists; and that war of aggression against Libya went unpunished.

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Two days before NATO bombed Libya another armed Islamist insurrection broke out in Daraa, Syria's southernmost city. Yet because this insurrection was linked to the demonstrations of a political reform movement, its nature was disguised. Many did not see that those who were providing the guns – Qatar and Saudi Arabia – were also running fake news stories in their respective media channels, Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya. There were other reasons for the durable myths of this war. Many western audiences, liberals and leftists as well as the more conservative, seemed to like the idea of their own role as the saviours of a foreign people, speaking out strongly about a country of which they knew little, but joining what seemed to be a 'good fight' against this new 'dictator'. With a mission and their proud self-image western audiences apparently forgot the lies of previous wars, and of their own colonial legacies.

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I would go so far as to say that, in the Dirty War on Syria, western culture in general abandoned its better traditions: of reason, the maintenance of ethical principle and the search for independent evidence at times of conflict; in favour of its worst traditions: the 'imperial prerogative' for intervention, backed by deep racial prejudice and poor reflection on the histories of their own cultures. That weakness was reinforced by a ferocious campaign of war propaganda. After the demonisation of Syrian leader Bashar al Assad began, a virtual information blockade was constructed against anything which might undermine the wartime storyline. Very few sensible western perspectives on Syria emerged after 2011, as critical voices were effectively blacklisted.

In that context I came to write this book. It is a defence of Syria, not primarily addressed to those who are immersed the western myths but to others who engage with them. This is therefore a resource book and a contribution to the history of the Syrian conflict. The western stories have become self-indulgent and I believe it is wasteful to indulge them too much. Best, I think, to speak of current events as they are, then address the smokescreens later. I do not ignore the western myths, in fact this book documents many of them. But I lead with the reality of the war.

Western mythology relies on the idea of imperial prerogatives, asking what must 'we' do about the problems of another people; an approach which has no basis in international law or human rights. The next steps involve a series of fabrications about the pretexts, character and events of the war. The first pretext over Syria was that the NATO states and the Gulf monarchies were supporting a secular and democratic revolution. When that seemed implausible the second story was that they were saving the oppressed majority 'Sunni Muslim' population from a sectarian 'Alawite regime'. Then, when sectarian atrocities by anti-government forces attracted greater public attention, the pretext became a claim that there was a shadow war: 'moderate rebels' were said to be actually fighting the extremist groups. Western intervention was therefore needed to bolster these 'moderate rebels' against the 'new' extremist group that had mysteriously arisen and posed a threat to the world.

That was the 'B' story. No doubt Hollywood will make movies based on this meta-script, for years to come. However this book leads with the 'A' story. Proxy armies of Islamists, armed by US regional allies (mainly Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey), infiltrate a political reform movement and snipe at police and civilians. They blame this on the government and spark an insurrection, seeking the overthrow of the Syrian government and its secular-pluralist state. This follows the openly declared ambition of the US to create a 'New Middle East', subordinating every country of the region, by reform, unilateral disarmament or direct overthrow. Syria was next in line, after Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya. In Syria, the proxy armies would come from the combined



## The Dirty War on Syria

forces of the Muslim Brotherhood and Saudi Arabia's Wahhabi fanatics. Despite occasional power struggles between these groups and their sponsors, they share much the same Salafist ideology, opposing secular or nationalist regimes and seeking the establishment of a religious state.

However in Syria Washington's Islamists confronted a disciplined national army which did not disintegrate along religious lines, despite many provocations. The Syrian state also had strong allies in Russia and Iran. Syria was not to be Libya Take Two. In this prolonged war the violence, from the western side, was said to consist of the Syrian Army targeting and killing civilians. From the Syrian side people saw daily terrorist attacks on towns and cities, schools and hospitals and massacres of ordinary people by NATO's 'freedom fighters', then the counter attacks by the Army. Foreign terrorists were recruited in dozens of countries by the Saudis and Qatar, bolstering the local mercenaries.

Though the terrorist groups were often called 'opposition', 'militants' and 'Sunni groups' outside Syria, inside the country the actual political opposition abandoned the Islamists back in early 2011. Protest was driven off the streets by the violence, and most of the opposition (minus the Muslim Brotherhood and some exiles) sided with the state and the Army, if not with the ruling Ba'ath Party. The Syrian Army has been brutal with terrorists but, contrary to western propaganda, protective of civilians. The Islamists have been brutal with all, and openly so. Millions of internally displaced people have sought refuge with the Government and Army, while others fled the country.

In a hoped-for 'end game' the big powers sought overthrow of the Syrian state or, failing that, the creation of a dysfunctional state or dismembering into sectarian statelets, thus breaking the axis of independent regional states. That axis comprises Hezbollah in south Lebanon and the Palestinian resistance, alongside Syria and Iran, the only states in the region without US military bases. More recently Iraq – still traumatised from western invasion, massacres and occupation – has begun to align itself with this axis. Russia too has begun to play an important counter-weight role. Recent history and conduct demonstrate that neither Russia nor Iran harbour any imperial ambitions remotely approaching those of Washington and its allies, several of which (Britain, France and Turkey) were former colonial warlords in the region. From the point of view of the 'Axis of Resistance', defeat of the dirty war on Syria means that the region can begin closing ranks against the big powers. Syria's successful resistance would mean the beginning of the end for Washington's 'New Middle East'.

That is basically the big picture. This book sets out to document the A story and expose the B story. It does so by rescuing some of the better western traditions: the use of reason, the maintenance of ethical principle and the search for independent evidence in case of conflict. I hope it might prove a useful resource. Here is a brief overview of the chapters.

Chapter 2, 'Syria and Washington's 'New Middle East'' puts Syria in context of the US plans for a 'New Middle East', the latest chapter in a longer history of US attempts to dominate the region.

Chapter 3, 'Barrel Bombs, Partisan Sources and War Propaganda' addresses the problem of reporting and reading the Syrian crisis. Media channels have shown a hyper-reliance on partisan sources, committed to the war and denigrating the Syrian Army. This is the key barrier to understanding the controversies around chemical weapons, civilian massacres and the levels of support for or opposition to President Assad.

Chapter 4, 'Daraa 2011: Another Islamist Insurrection' reconstructs, from a

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range of sources, the Saudi-backed Islamist insurrection in Daraa in March 2011. Those armed attacks were quite distinct from the political reform rallies, which the Islamists soon drove off the streets.

Chapter 5, 'Bashar al Assad and Political Reform' explains the political reform movement from the time Bashar assumed the presidency in the year 2000 to the beginning of the crisis in 2011. From this we can see that most opposition groups were committed to reform within a Syrian context, with virtually all opposing attacks on the Syrian state. The chapter then reviews the role of Bashar as a reformer, and the evidence on his popularity.

Chapter 6, 'The Empire's Jihadis' looks at the collaboration between Salafist political Islam and the imperial powers in the Middle East. Distinct from the anti-imperial Islamic currents in Iran and south Lebanon, Salafist political Islam has become a sectarian force competing with Arab nationalism across Egypt, Palestine and Syria, and drawing on long standing collaborative relations with the big powers. This history provides important background to the character of Syria's Islamist 'revolution', and its various slogans.

Chapter 7, 'Embedded Media, Embedded Watchdogs' identifies the propaganda techniques of media channels and the network of 'human rights' bodies (Human Rights Watch, Avaaz, etc) which function as megaphones and 'moderators' for the Washington agenda. Many have become fierce advocates for 'humanitarian war'. A number of newer western NGOs (e.g. The Syria Campaign, The White Helmets) have been created by Wall Street agencies specifically for the dirty war on Syria. A number of their fabrications are documented here.

Chapter 8, 'The Houla Massacre Revisited' considers in detail the evidence from the first major massacre designed (following success of the technique over Libya) to influence UN Security Council consideration of military intervention. While the first UN inquiry group, actually in Syria, found contradictory evidence on this massacre, a second UN group outside Syria and co-chaired by a US diplomat, tried to blame the Syrian Government. Yet more than a dozen witnesses blamed Farouq FSA Islamists, who killed pro-government villagers and took over the area, holding it for some months. Several other 'false flag' massacres are noted.

Chapter 9, 'Chemical Fabrications: the East Ghouta Incident' details the second major 'false flag' incident of international significance. This incident in August 2013, which nearly sparked a major escalation involving US missile attacks on Syria, was used to accuse the Syrian Government of killing hundreds of civilians, including children, with chemical weapons. Within a fairly short time multiple sources of independent evidence (including North American evidence) disproved these accusations. Nevertheless, Syria's opponents have repeated the false accusations, to this day, as though they were fact.

Chapter 10, 'A Responsibility to Protect and the Double Game' addresses a recent political doctrine, a subset of 'humanitarian intervention' popularised to add to the imperial toolkit. The application of this doctrine in Libya was disastrous for that little country. Fortunately the attempts to use it in Syria failed.

Chapter 11, 'Health and Sanctions' documents the NATO-backed Islamist attacks on Syria's health system, linked to the impact of western economic sanctions. These twin currents have caused great damage to Syrian public health. Such attacks carry no plausible motive of seeking local popular support, so we must interpret them as part of an overall strategy to degrade the Syrian state, rendering it more vulnerable to outside intervention.

Chapter 12 'Washington, Terrorism and ISIS: the evidence', documents the

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links between the big powers and the latest peak terrorist group they claim to be fighting. Only evidence can help develop informed opinion on this contentious matter, but the evidence is overwhelming. There is little ideological difference between the various Salafi-Islamist groups, and Washington and its allies have financed and armed every one of them.

Chapter 13, 'Western Intervention and the Colonial Mind' discusses the western cultural mindset that underlies persistent violations of the rights of other peoples.

Chapter 14 'Towards an Independent Middle East', considers the end-game in the Syrian crisis, and its implications for the Middle East region. At tremendous cost the Syrian Arab Republic, its army and its people, have successfully resisted aggression from a variety of powerful enemies. Syria's survival is due to its resilience and internal unity, bolstered by support from some strong allies. The introduction of Russian air power in late September 2015 was important. So too were the coordinated ground forces from Iran, Iraq and Lebanon, in support of an independent Syria.

When the attacks on Syria abate the Middle East seems set to be transformed, with greater political will and military preparedness on the part of an expanded Axis of Resistance. That will signal the beginning of the end for Washington's 15 year spree of bloodshed and 'regime change' across the entire region.

Dr Tim Anderson is a Senior Lecturer in Political Economy at the University of Sydney. He researches and writes on development, rights and self-determination in Latin America, the Asia-Pacific and the Middle East. He has published many dozens of chapters and articles in a range of academic books and journals. His last book was Land and Livelihoods in Papua New Guinea (Australian Scholarly Publishing, Melbourne, 2015).

<http://www.globalresearch.ca/the-dirty-war-on-syria/549185>

**Source: Global Research**

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## Palestine

### Israel Using Dutch Dogs to Terrorize Palestinians



November 27, 2015

By Adri Nieuwhof

A video shows Israeli forces using a dog to attack and injure 20-year-old Ahmad Shteivi as he participated in an anti-occupation protest in the West Bank village of Kufr Qaddoum, near Nablus, in March 2012.

It is one of numerous instances of Israeli forces setting dogs on unarmed Palestinian civilians, including children – a violent tactic reminiscent of US police practices against Black citizens.

The Palestinian human rights group Al-Haq and Dutch lawmakers are calling on the Netherlands to immediately halt the annual export of dozens of police and military dogs to Israel.

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## Israel Using Dutch Dogs to Terrorize Palestinians

Such dogs “are intentionally used by Israeli occupying forces to terrorize and bite Palestinian civilians, especially during protests and night house raids,” Al-Haq director Shawan Jabarin wrote to Dutch foreign minister Bert Koenders and trade minister Lilianne Ploumen earlier this month.

## Attacks on children

After the images of the 2012 attack on Shteivi emerged, causing embarrassment to Israel, the army announced it would temporarily stop using dogs at demonstrations.

But Israel’s use of the animals against Palestinians has not stopped. In March, a video emerged of Israeli soldiers setting dogs on a Palestinian child in Beit Ommar in December 2014:

Military Court Watch, an organization that monitors the treatment of children in Israeli military detention, collected further evidence of Israel’s use of dogs against Palestinians.

In one instance, a 15-year-old Palestinian boy detained by Israeli occupation forces last August and taken to an Israeli settlement, said an interrogator threatened to “bring dogs into the room and that he would deny me food,” if the child did not confess to throwing stones.

The Israeli human rights group B’Tselem also documented at least eight cases of Israeli army dogs being used to attack and injure Palestinian civilians in 2011-2012.

## “Lethal weapons”

Israel’s use of dogs against civilians recalls infamous scenes from the US Civil Rights struggle, when white supremacist police used dogs to attack Black citizens demanding their rights.

But it also remains a present-day similarity, as highlighted in the US Department of Justice investigation into the Ferguson Police Department, launched after the lethal shooting of unarmed Black teenager Michael Brown in August 2014 sparked nationwide protests against police racism and brutality.

The report of the investigation, published in March, found that police in the Missouri town “exclusively set their dogs against Black individuals, often in cases where doing so was not justified by the danger presented.”

In one case, the report states, “officers deployed a canine to bite an unarmed 14-year-old African American boy who was waiting in an abandoned house for his friends,” causing puncture wounds to his arm.

The American Civil Liberties Union says that police dogs are “lethal weapons capable of biting at 2,000 pounds pressure per square inch.”

The civil rights group adds that “their handlers have been implicated in a vicious form of racial profiling” that has led to legal action across the US in recent years.

In the early 1990s, for instance, the ACLU of Southern California documented hundreds of mostly Black and Latino citizens being bitten by Los Angeles Police Department dogs. It alleged that the dogs, trained to “attack and maul,” were routinely sent into nonviolent situations.

## Trained to terrorize

Police dogs trained in the Netherlands to bite civilians have been exported to Israel for more than two decades.

Tonny Boeijen, owner of Four Winds K9, boasts that 90 percent of the dogs

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used by the Israeli military are trained by his company, based near the eastern city of Nijmegen.

He told the newspaper NRC that he has delivered dozens of dogs to Israel every year for 23 years.

Another 15-30 dogs are provided to Israel annually by Engelbert Uphues, a trainer in the German city of Ramsdorf, NRC states.

The Dutch government requires firms to obtain licenses to export so-called "strategic goods." But a license will be denied if a correlation can be established between the export and human rights violations.

Military and police dogs are not considered strategic goods, but the Dutch police and defense ministry classify them as "means to violence," just like pepper spray and handguns.

The Netherlands considers Israel to be a sensitive country for exports – along with Iran, Eritrea, South Sudan and others accused of human rights abuses or violations of international humanitarian law. "The dogs are absolutely used by Israel as weapons against Palestinians and their export must be banned," human rights lawyer Liesbeth Zegveld told NRC.

"It is common sense that service dogs fall under the rules on strategic goods," Wassila Hachchi, a member of parliament for the center-left D66 party, has said. She is among a group of lawmakers from several parties urging the government to stop the exports to Israel. The Dutch customs service has already halted the export of strategic goods to Israel including handguns, camouflage paint and infrared cameras.

Trade minister Lilian Ploumen told parliament last month that she is willing to stop the export of military dogs as well.

She said that although the dogs do not fall under European rules governing strategic goods, she would look into establishing a national system to regulate their export. She added that she would also discuss a common approach with European counterparts. But given the ongoing and widespread complicity of EU governments in Israeli abuses, it is likely that sustained pressure will be needed to translate words into action.

## Risk of legal action

Israel's use of dogs to intimidate and terrorize civilians is prohibited by the Fourth Geneva Convention, which governs Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Al-Haq states in its letter to the Dutch government.

It adds that the use of service dogs for torture would rise to the level of a war crime under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

Individual executives from complicit companies such as Four Winds K9, and even Dutch customs or other officials, could therefore be held accountable for aiding and abetting war crimes, Al-Haq warns.

Dutch human rights attorney Liesbeth Zegveld says she's already looking into whether she can sue Four Winds K9 and the Dutch state on behalf of Palestinian victims.

Ali Abunimah contributed research.

<https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/adri-nieuwhof/israel-using-dutch-dogs-terrorize-palestinians>

Source: The Electronic Intifada

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