

WILLIAM BLUM: Sucking Liberals into a New Cold War

Out of fury against President Trump, many liberals have enlisted in the ranks of the New Cold War against Russia, seeming to have forgotten the costs to rationality and lives from the first Cold War, warned the late William Blum.

*A memorial service was held on Sunday in Washington for William Blum, a former State Department official whose disillusionment with the Vietnam War turned him into a fierce critic of U.S. foreign policy. In books such as Killing Hope: U.S. Military and CIA Interventions Since World War II; Freeing the World to Death: Essays on the American Empire and Rogue State: A Guide to the World's Only Superpower, as well as on his blog, [The Anti-Empire Report](#), Blum educated a generation of Americans about the rapacious aims of the U.S. abroad, debunking the myth of Washington's good intentions for the peoples of the world. Blum died on December 9, 2018. He was a contributor to **Consortium News** and we reprint one of his last articles that appeared here. Originally published on Dec. 6, 2017.*

By [William Blum](#)

Cold War Number One: 70 years of daily national stupidity.
Cold War Number Two: Still in its youth, but just as stupid.

“He said he absolutely did not meddle in our election. He did not do what they are saying he did.” – President Trump re Russian President Vladimir Putin after their meeting in Vietnam. [*Washington Post*, Nov.e 12, 2017]

Putin later added that he knew “absolutely nothing” about

Russian contacts with Trump campaign officials. "They can do what they want, looking for some sensation. But there are no sensations."

Numerous U.S. intelligence agencies have said otherwise. Former Director of National Intelligence, James Clapper, responded to Trump's remarks by declaring: "The president was given clear and indisputable evidence that Russia interfered in the election."

As we'll see below, there isn't too much of the "clear and indisputable" stuff. And this of course is the same James Clapper who made an admittedly false statement to Congress in March 2013, when he responded, "No, sir" and "not wittingly" to a question about whether the National Security Agency was collecting "any type of data at all" on millions of Americans. Lies don't usually come in any size larger than that.

Virtually every member of Congress who has publicly stated a position on the issue has criticized Russia for interfering in the 2016 American presidential election. And it would be very difficult to find a member of the mainstream media who has questioned this thesis.

What is the poor consumer of news to make of these gross contradictions? Here are some things to keep in mind:

How do we know that the tweets and advertisements "sent by Russians" -- those presented as attempts to sway the vote -- were actually sent by Russians? The Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS), composed of National Security Agency and CIA veterans, recently declared that the CIA knows how to disguise the origin of emails and tweets.

The *Washington Post* has as well reported that Twitter “makes it easy for users to hide their true identities.”
[Washington Post, Oct. 10, 2017]

Russians! Russians! Russians!

Even if these communications were actually sent from Russia, how do we know that they came from the Russian government, and not from any of the other 144.3 million residents of Russia?

Even if they were sent by the Russian government, we have to ask: Why would they do that? Do the Russians think the United States is a Third World, under-developed, backward Banana Republic easily influenced and moved by a bunch of simple condemnations of the plight of blacks in America and the Clinton “dynasty”? Or clichéd statements about other controversial issues, such as gun rights and immigration? If so, many Democratic and Republican officials would love to know the secret of the Russians’ method. Consider also that Facebook has stated that 90 percent of the alleged-Russian-bought content that ran on its network did not even mention Trump or Clinton. [Washington Post, Nov. 15, 2017]

On top of all this is the complete absence of even the charge, much less with any supporting evidence, of Russian interference in the actual voting or counting of votes.

After his remark suggesting he believed Putin’s assertion that there had been no Russian meddling in the election, Trump – of course, as usual – attempted to backtrack and distance himself from his words after drawing criticism at home; while James Clapper declared: “The fact the president of the United States would take Putin at his word over that

of the intelligence community is quite simply unconscionable.” [Reuters, Nov. 12, 2017]

Given Clapper’s large-size lie referred to above, can Trump be faulted for being skeptical of the intelligence community’s Holy Writ? Purposeful lies of the intelligence community during the first Cold War were legendary, many hailed as brilliant tactics when later revealed. The CIA, for example, had phony articles and editorials planted in foreign newspapers (real Fake News), made sex films of target subjects caught *in flagrante delicto* who had been lured to Agency safe houses by female agents, had Communist embassy personnel expelled because of phony CIA documents, and much more.

The *Post* recently published an article entitled “How did Russian trolls get into your Facebook feed? Silicon Valley made it easy.” In the midst of this “exposé,” The *Post* stated: “There’s no way to tell if you personally saw a Russian post or tweet.” [Washington Post, Nov. 2, 2017]

A Case or Not?

So ... Do the Cold Warriors have a case to make or do they not? Or do they just want us to remember that the Russkis are bad? So it goes.

An organization in Czechoslovakia with the self-appointed name of European Values has produced a lengthy report entitled “The Kremlin’s Platform for ‘Useful Idiots’ in the West: An Overview of RT’s Editorial Strategy and Evidence of Impact.” It includes a long list of people who have appeared on the Russian-owned TV station RT (formerly *Russia Today*), which can be seen in the U.S., the U.K. and other countries.

Those who've been guests on RT are the "idiots" useful to Moscow. (The list is not complete. I've been on RT about five times, but I'm not listed. Where is my Idiot Badge?)

RT's YouTube channel has more than two million followers and claims to be the "most-watched news network" on the video site. Its Facebook page has more than 4 million likes and followers. Can this explain why the powers-that-be forget about a thing called freedom-of-speech and treat the station like an enemy? The U.S. government recently forced *RT America* to register as a foreign agent and has cut off the station's Congressional press credentials.

The Cold War strategist, George Kennan, wrote prophetically: "Were the Soviet Union to sink tomorrow under the waters of the ocean, the American military-industrial establishment would have to go on, substantially unchanged, until some other adversary could be invented. Anything else would be an unacceptable shock to the American economy."

Writer John Wight has described the new Cold War as being "in response to Russia's recovery from the demise of the Soviet Union and the failed attempt to turn the country into a wholly owned subsidiary of Washington via the imposition of free market economic shock treatment thereafter."

So let's see what other brilliance the New Cold War brings us. ... Ah yes, another headline in the *Post* (Nov. 18, 2017): "British alarm rising over possible Russian meddling in Brexit." Of course, why else would the British people have voted to leave the European Union? But wait a moment, again, one of the British researchers behind the report "said that the accounts they analyzed – which claimed Russian as their

language when they were set up but tweeted in English – posted a mixture of pro-‘leave’ and pro-‘remain’ messages regarding Brexit. Commentators have said that the goal may simply have been to sow discord and division in society.”

Was there ever a time when the *Post* would have been embarrassed to be so openly, amateurishly biased about Russia? Perhaps during the few years between the two Cold Wars.

In case you don’t remember how stupid Cold War Number One was ...

- 1948: The *Pittsburgh Press* published the names, addresses, and places of employment of about 1,000 citizens who had signed presidential-nominating petitions for former Vice President Henry Wallace, running under the Progressive Party. This, and a number of other lists of “communists,” published in the mainstream media, resulted in people losing their jobs, being expelled from unions, having their children abused, being denied state welfare benefits, and suffering various other punishments.
- Around 1950: The House Committee on Un-American Activities published a pamphlet, “100 Things You Should Know About Communism in the U.S.A.” This included information about what a communist takeover of the United States would mean: ?Q: What would happen to my insurance?? A: It would go to the Communists.? Q: Would communism give me something better than I have now?? A: Not unless you are in a penitentiary serving a life sentence at hard labor.
- 1950s: Mrs. Ada White, member of the Indiana State

Textbook Commission, believed that Robin Hood was a Communist and urged that books that told the Robin Hood story be banned from Indiana schools.

- As evidence that anti-communist mania was not limited to the lunatic fringe or conservative newspaper publishers, here is Clark Kerr, president of the University of California at Berkeley in a 1959 speech: "Perhaps 2 or even 20 million people have been killed in China by the new [communist] regime." One person wrote to Kerr: "I am wondering how you would judge a person who estimates the age of a passerby on the street as being 'perhaps 2 or even 20 years old.' Or what would you think of a physician who tells you to take 'perhaps 2 or even twenty teaspoonsful of a remedy'?"
- Throughout the cold war, traffic in phony Lenin quotes was brisk, each one passed around from one publication or speaker to another for years. Here's *S. News and World Report* in 1958 demonstrating communist duplicity by quoting Lenin: "Promises are like pie crusts, made to be broken." Secretary of State John Foster Dulles used it in a speech shortly afterward, one of many to do so during the cold war. Lenin actually did use a very similar line, but he explicitly stated that he was quoting an English proverb (it comes from Jonathan Swift) and his purpose was to show the unreliability of the bourgeoisie, not of communists. "First we will take Eastern Europe, then the masses of Asia, then we will encircle the United States, which will be the last bastion of capitalism. We will not have to attack. It will fall like an overripe fruit into our hands." This Lenin "quotation" had the usual wide circulation, even

winding up in the *Congressional Record* in 1962. This was not simply a careless attribution; this was an out-and-out fabrication; an extensive search, including by the Library of Congress and the United States Information Agency failed to find its origin.

- A favorite theme of the anti-communists was that a principal force behind drug trafficking was a communist plot to demoralize the United States. Here's a small sample: Don Keller, District Attorney for San Diego County, California in 1953: "We know that more heroin is being produced south of the border than ever before and we are beginning to hear stories of financial backing by big shot Communists operating out of Mexico City." Henry Giordano, Commissioner of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics, 1964, interviewed in the *American Legion Magazine*: Interviewer: "I've been told that the communists are trying to flood our country with narcotics to weaken our moral and physical stamina. Is that true?" Giordano: "As far as the drugs are concerned, it's true. There's a terrific flow of drugs coming out of Yunnan Province of China. ... There's no question that in that particular area this is the aim of the Red Chinese. It should be apparent that if you could addict a population you would degrade a nation's moral fiber." Fulton Lewis, Jr., prominent conservative radio broadcaster and newspaper columnist, 1965: "Narcotics of Cuban origin – marijuana, cocaine, opium, and heroin – are now peddled in big cities and tiny hamlets throughout this country. Several Cubans arrested by the Los Angeles police have boasted they are communists." We were also told that along with drugs another tool of

the commies to undermine America's spirit was fluoridation of the water.

- Mickey Spillane was one of the most successful writers of the 1950s, selling millions of his anti-communist thriller mysteries. Here is his hero, Mike Hammer, in "One Lonely Night," boasting of his delight in the grisly murders he commits, all in the name of destroying a communist plot to steal atomic secrets. After a night of carnage, the triumphant Hammer gloats, "I shot them in cold blood and enjoyed every minute of it. I pumped slugs into the nastiest bunch of bastards you ever saw. ... They were Commies. ... Pretty soon what's left of Russia and the slime that breeds there won't be worth mentioning and I'm glad because I had a part in the killing. God, but it was fun!"
- 1952: A campaign against the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) because it was tainted with "atheism and communism," and was "subversive" because it preached internationalism. Any attempt to introduce an international point of view in the schools was seen as undermining patriotism and loyalty to the United States. A bill in the U.S. Senate, clearly aimed at UNESCO, called for a ban on the funding of "any international agency that directly or indirectly promoted one-world government or world citizenship." There was also opposition to UNESCO's association with the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights on the grounds that it was trying to replace the American Bill of Rights with a less liberty-giving covenant of human rights.
- 1955: A U.S. Army 6-page pamphlet, "How to Spot a Communist," informed us that a communist could be

spotted by his predisposition to discuss civil rights, racial and religious discrimination, the immigration laws, anti-subversive legislation, curbs on unions, and peace. Good Americans were advised to keep their ears stretched for such give-away terms as "chauvinism," "book-burning," "colonialism," "demagogy," "witch hunt," "reactionary," "progressive," and "exploitation." Another "distinguishing mark" of "Communist language" was a "preference for long sentences." After some ridicule, the Army rescinded the pamphlet.

- 1958: The noted sportscaster Bill Stern (one of the heroes of my innocent youth) observed on the radio that the lack of interest in "big time" football at New York University, City College of New York, Chicago, and Harvard "is due to the widespread acceptance of Communism at the universities."
- 1960: U.S. General Thomas Power speaking about nuclear war or a first strike by the U.S.: "The whole idea is to *kill* the bastards! At the end of the war, if there are two Americans and one Russian, we win!" The response from one of those present was: "Well, you'd better make sure that they're a man and a woman."
- 1966: The Boys Club of America is of course wholesome and patriotic. Imagine their horror when they were confused with the Dubois Clubs. (W.E.B. Du Bois had been a very prominent civil rights activist.) When the Justice Department required the DuBois Clubs to register as a Communist front group, good loyal Americans knew what to do. They called up the Boys Club to announce that they would no longer contribute any money, or to threaten violence against them; and sure enough an

explosion damaged the national headquarters of the youth group in San Francisco. Then former Vice President Richard Nixon, who was national board chairman of the Boys Club, declared: "This is an almost classic example of Communist deception and duplicity. The 'DuBois Clubs' are not unaware of the confusion they are causing among our supporters and among many other good citizens."

- 1966: "Rhythm, Riots and Revolution: An Analysis of the Communist Use of Music, The Communist Master Music Plan," by David A. Noebel, published by Christian Crusade Publications, (expanded version of 1965 pamphlet: "Communism, Hypnotism and the Beatles"). Some chapters: Communist Use of Mind Warfare ... Nature of Red Record Companies ... Destructive Nature of Beatle Music ... Communist Subversion of Folk Music ... Folk Music and the Negro Revolution ... Folk Music and the College Revolution
- 1968: William Calley, U.S. Army Lieutenant, charged with overseeing the massacre of more than 100 Vietnamese civilians in My Lai in 1968, said some years later: "In all my years in the Army I was never taught that communists were human beings. We were there to kill ideology carried by – I don't know – pawns, blobs, pieces of flesh. I was there to destroy communism. We never conceived of old people, men, women, children, babies."
- 1977: Scientists theorized that the earth's protective ozone layer was being damaged by synthetic chemicals called chlorofluorocarbons. The manufacturers and users of CFCs were not happy. They made life difficult for the lead scientist. The president of one aerosol manufacturing firm suggested that criticism of CFCs was

“orchestrated by the Ministry of Disinformation of the KGB.”

- 1978: Life inside a California youth camp of the ultra anti-communist John Birch Society: Five hours each day of lectures on communism, Americanism and “The Conspiracy”; campers learned that the Soviet government had created a famine and spread a virus to kill a large number of citizens and make the rest of them more manageable; the famine led starving adults to eat their children; communist guerrillas in Southeast Asia jammed chopsticks into children’s ears, piercing their eardrums; American movies are all under the control of the Communists; the theme is always that capitalism is no better than communism; you can’t find a dictionary now that isn’t under communist influence; the communists are also taking over the Bibles.
- The Reagan administration declared that the Russians were spraying toxic chemicals over Laos, Cambodia and Afghanistan – the so-called “yellow rain” – and had caused more than ten thousand deaths by 1982 alone, (including, in Afghanistan, 3,042 deaths attributed to 47 separate incidents between the summer of 1979 and the summer of 1981, so precise was the information). Secretary of State Alexander Haig was a prime dispenser of such stories, and President Reagan himself denounced the Soviet Union thusly more than 15 times in documents and speeches. The “yellow rain,” it turned out, was pollen-laden feces dropped by huge swarms of honeybees flying far overhead.
- 1982: In commenting about sexual harassment in the Army, General John Crosby stated that the Army doesn’t care

about soldiers' social lives – “The basic purpose of the United States Army is to kill Russians,” he said.

- 1983: The U.S. invasion of Grenada, the home of the Cuban ambassador is damaged and looted by American soldiers; on one wall is written “AA,” symbol of the 82nd Airborne Division; beside it the message: “Eat shit, commie faggot.” ... “I want to fuck communism out of this little island,” says a marine, “and fuck it right back to Moscow.”
- 1984: During a sound check just before his weekly broadcast, President Reagan spoke these words into the microphone: “My fellow Americans, I am pleased to tell you I have signed legislation to outlaw Russia, forever. We begin bombing in five minutes.” His words were picked up by at least two radio networks.
- 1985: October 29 BBC interview with Ronald Reagan: asked about the differences he saw between the U.S. and Russia, the President replied: “I’m no linguist, but I’ve been told that in the Russian language there isn’t even a word for freedom.” (The word is “svoboda.”)
- 1986: Soviet artists and cultural officials criticized Rambo-like American films as an expression of “anti-Russian phobia even more pathological than in the days of McCarthyism.” Russian filmmaker Stanislav Rostofsky claimed that on one visit to an American school “a young girl trembled with fury when she heard I was from the Soviet Union, and said she hated Russians.”
- 1986: Roy Cohn, who achieved considerable fame and notoriety in the 1950s as an assistant to the communist-witch-hunting Sen. Joseph McCarthy, died, reportedly of AIDS. Cohn, though homosexual, had denied that he was

and had denounced such rumors as communist smears.

- 1986: After American journalist Nicholas Daniloff was arrested in Moscow for “spying” and held in custody for two weeks, New York Mayor Edward Koch sent a group of 10 visiting Soviet students storming out of City Hall in fury. “The Soviet government is the pits,” said Koch, visibly shocking the students, ranging in age from 10 to 18 years. One 14-year-old student was so outraged he declared: “I don’t want to stay in this house. I want to go to the bus and go far away from this place. The mayor is very rude. We never had a worse welcome anywhere.” As matters turned out, it appeared that Daniloff had not been completely pure when it came to his newsgathering.
- 1989: After the infamous Chinese crackdown on dissenters in Tiananmen Square in June, the U.S. news media was replete with reports that the governments of Nicaragua, Vietnam and Cuba had expressed their support of the Chinese leadership. Said the *Wall Street Journal*: “Nicaragua, with Cuba and Vietnam, constituted the only countries in the world to approve the Chinese Communists’ slaughter of the students in Tiananmen Square.” But it was all someone’s fabrication; no such support had been expressed by any of the three governments. At that time, as now, there were few, if any, organizations other than the CIA which could manipulate major Western media in such a manner. [Sources for almost all of this section can be found in William Blum, *Freeing the World to Death: Essays on the American Empire* (2005), chapter 12; or the author can be queried at bblum6@aol.com]

NOTE: It should be remembered that the worst consequences of

anti-communism were not those discussed above. The worst consequences, the ultra-criminal consequences, were the abominable death, destruction, and violation of human rights that we know under various names: Vietnam, Chile, Korea, Guatemala, Cambodia, Indonesia, Brazil, Greece, Afghanistan, El Salvador, and many others.

William Blum (1933-2018) was an author, historian, and renowned critic of U.S. foreign policy. He is the author of *Killing Hope: U.S. Military and CIA Interventions Since World War II* and *Rogue State: A Guide to the World's Only Superpower*, among others. [This article originally appeared at the Anti-Empire Report, <https://williamblum.org/> .]

Billions of Swedish Krona Supported Anti-Apartheid Struggle

Birgitta Karlström Dorph was on a secret mission in South Africa between 1982 and 1988, writes Ida Karlsson.

By **Ida Karlsson** in Stockholm

Inter Press Service



Between 1982 and 1988 Birgitta Karlström Dorph was on a secret mission in South Africa. “Why didn’t they stop us? Probably they were not aware of the scope of the operation. The money was transferred through so many different channels. We were clever,” Karlström Dorph says.

The work was initiated by the Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme and the Swedish government, the details of which were

not discussed in public.

Altogether, Sweden's financial support for the black resistance against apartheid in South Africa between 1972 and 1994 amounted to more than SEK 4 billion (\$443 million) in today's value and that is an underestimation, according to figures reported by SIDA, the [Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency](#).

"On my first morning in South Africa I went to Burgers Park, in the center of Pretoria. A black worker was cleaning a path in the park. Suddenly I came across a bench and on it was written: 'Whites only'. And I looked at it. I was appalled. I gathered up my courage and spat on the bench," Karlström Dorph recalls.

From 1982, a Swedish humanitarian committee, headed by the general director of SIDA, handled a huge aid effort whose secret elements the government perhaps was not fully aware of. Karlström Dorph's work in South Africa was twofold comprising her official diplomatic posting and her secret mission.

"My family didn't know what I was doing."

She followed what was going on in the resistance movement to see if she could find people and organizations who could receive Swedish aid.

"The documents that show what we did to support the underground resistance are still classified," she explains.

Money from Sweden was transferred to leaders within the black resistance in South Africa. Sweden paid for Nelson Mandela's lawyer, including while he was incarcerated on

Robben Island. Sweden also provided the priest and anti-apartheid activist Beyers Naudé with funds when he was subjected to a banning order.

The South African government looked at Naudé as an enemy as he played a crucial role in supporting the underground resistance movement.

“I wanted to understand what was going on in the country. Naudé was my key to the whole opposition. He provided me with contacts,” Karlström Dorph explains.

Channeling the Money

Funds were channeled from SIDA to organizations and small groups in Sweden and then into accounts of community organizations in South Africa.

“I provided Swedish organizations with bank account numbers and contact information to organizations in South Africa, for example in Soweto,” she adds.

Karlström Dorph says she drove around and met people every day.

One of the most important objectives was to build a civil society that eventually could negotiate with the government; individuals and organizations that eventually could take over.

“We established a program for scholarships. The Swedish Ecumenical Council, an umbrella organization of churches of all denominations, administered about 500 scholarships. People got money transferred into their accounts directly from Sweden. We tried to find relevant organizations

throughout the black community," she says.

People organized themselves and formed a more united opposition in South Africa. UDF, the United Democratic Front, was an umbrella organization for about 600 member organizations against apartheid. Many of the UDF leaders received money through the scholarships.

"We gave money to those who were arrested and were tortured and interrogated. They needed legal help. A lot of money went to competent lawyers. I also met with wives of those who were imprisoned," Karlström Dorph explains.

According to Horst Kleinschmidt, a former political activist, Sweden contributed between 60 and 65 percent of the budget of the International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa, or IDAF, an anti-apartheid organization. Between 1964 and 1991 the organization brought 100 million British Pounds into South Africa for the defense of thousands of political activists and to provide aid for their families while they were in prison.

The defense of political prisoners meant that when the prosecutor demanded capital punishment, the sentence was reduced to life in prison. Between 1960 and 1990 this effort saved tens of thousands of lives, according to the Swedish author Per Wästberg, who was involved in IDAF's work.

Karlström Dorph got in touch with Winnie Mandela and visited her while Nelson Mandela was imprisoned.

"We sat down and talked a lot about her husband and the struggle, and various contacts," Karlström Dorph says.

Before they left, she mentioned that she had a book about

Nelson Mandela in the car ?a book that was banned. Winnie Mandela immediately asked for it.

“I said: ‘If I give you the book, I am committing a crime,’” Karlström Dorph recalls.

But Winnie Mandela insisted and Karlström Dorph finally went to the car to get it.

“If our activities had been exposed, many of those who were involved in our work would have found themselves in a serious predicament,” Karlström Dorph says.

The apartheid regime killed affiliates of the ANC, the African National Congress, within the country and also in Zimbabwe, Botswana and Mozambique. Oftentimes during the national State of Emergency, the police and army were stationed or brought into the segregated, black urban living areas to rule with their guns. People, some of whom were unarmed, were beaten and shot for protesting against apartheid. Police even tore down the housing areas where black people lived.

They Went in with Bulldozers’

“They went in with bulldozers and people did not have time to collect their belongings but had to flee,” Karlström Dorph recalls.

She never visited ANC offices or attended anti-apartheid conferences.

“The ANC was forbidden. Members of ANC were imprisoned or killed,” she says making a throat-slitting gesture.

“We never talked about ANC during all these years,” she

adds.

Her very close association with Naudé would have made Karlström Dorph a prime target.

“I was never scared. You just had to be careful,” she says.

There was one time when they had a very strange break-in in their house.

“They had turned the house upside down, but they just took one of my dresses and one of my husband’s shirts. They had slept in our beds and left white fingerprints on the hairdryer. My friends said it was typical of the security police. They wanted to show: ‘We know who you are. We keep an eye on you.’”

When they moved to a new apartment, she found a bullet on the floor in the hallway and there was a hole in the window. Someone had shot through it.

“They obviously tried to intimidate us. I took the bullet and threw it in the bin,” she says.

Once they were being followed on the motorway and a car tried to drive them off the road, but they managed to get away.

Many experienced the brutality of the apartheid regime. One of Karlström Dorph’s contacts, a 25-year-old young man in Pretoria, was found dead.

“We transferred some funds to his organization. Someone contacted me and told me that they had thrown him down an old mine shaft in Pretoria,” she says.

'Palme's Secret Agent'

In the Swedish documentary "Palme's secret agent," Popo Molefe, co-founder of UDF, explains Karlström Dorph's role.

"Without the support of a strong and committed personality like Birgitta Karlström Dorph I do not think we would have been able to form the United Democratic Front, a coalition of social forces," he says.

Molefe later became the leader of South Africa's North Western Province.

Between 1972 and 1994 the exiled ANC received about SEK 1.7 billion, or \$188 million, in today's value. At the time the ANC was considered a terrorist organization by the governments in the United Kingdom and the United States. The financial support from Sweden was more or less kept secret until the beginning of the 1990s.

In 1994, South Africans took their first step together into a very new democracy after decades of white supremacist, authoritarian rule in the form of apartheid. Sweden's involvement had been stronger and much more far-reaching than what was ever reported officially.

Ida Karlsson is Stockholm editor for the Inter Press Service news agency.

THE ANGRY ARAB: Why Ilhan Omar is a Dangerous Woman for the US

Washington doesn't like its Muslims or Arabs to take pride

in their heritage or oppose the Israeli occupation, writes As'ad AbuKhalil.

By **As'ad AbuKhalil**

Special to Consortium News



Washington was not expecting the arrival of Reps. Ilhan Omar or Rashida Tlaib. The nation's capital has seen Arabs and Muslims before but they were not like these two new assertive and defiant members of Congress.

The White House, under Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama, hosted Iftar dinners for Ramadan and invited a variety of Muslims (including of course the Israeli ambassador because he is wildly popular among the world's Muslims), but they were of a different brand. The Bush administration even employed Muslim Arabs or Muslim-born Americans who preached Bush's doctrine to anyone who would listen in the Middle East.

But those were different Arabs. They were the "non-threatening" Arabs who made Westerners feel comfortable in their racism and bigotry. The Arabs who are welcomed in the halls of Congress are usually mimics of the late president of Egypt, Anwar Sadat, and the current king of Jordan. They are the type of Arabs who praise Western wars and downplay Arab anger at the long record of Israeli occupation and aggression.

Some of those Arabs in D.C. are employed as correspondents for Gulf-regime media. Some had even received their training at the research arm of the Israeli lobby, while others work for racist Congress people. They are the kind of Arabs who

are paraded before Western audiences to show them that there are Muslim Arabs who are exceptions: the ones who are willing to insult other Arabs and Muslims, and who tell tales about how they were saved from the terrorism of the religion or the culture of the region.

But Minnesota's Ilhan Omar and Michigan's Rashida Tlaib are different. The Muslims whom Washington has been used to receiving from Lebanon or from Gulf embassies are Muslims who are embarrassed about their religion and about their culture. They are the Muslims who apologize day and night for the terrorism of Muslims, as if all Muslims are responsible for the crimes of the few. (The blaming of all Jews for the crimes of Israel is certainly anti-Semitic—just as the blaming of all Muslims for the crimes of the few Muslims is Islamophobic.)

Ilhan Omar, from the second she entered Congress, has made her audience feel uncomfortable, and the press has had a hard time dealing with her.

Acceptable Extremism

Acceptable and subservient Muslims or Arabs are allowed to hold extremist views and to express hatred and hostility to Jewish people as long as they don't offend Israel or Western governments. Anwar Sadat's background as an anti-Semitic Nazi was never an issue for Israel or Western Zionists. In fact, Stuart Eizenstat, Jimmy Carter's domestic policy advisor, downplays the Nazi sympathy of Sadat and attributes it dismissively to anti-British sentiments, in his [recent book](#), "President Carter."

And when Mahmoud Abbas, the president of Palestine, agreed

after the assassination of Yasser Arafat to serve Israeli occupation interests, his anti-Semitic past (his PhD dissertation in Moscow contained Holocaust denial) was also forgiven. The Saudi regime, the largest-by far-purveyor of anti-Semitic propaganda among Muslims in the last century is also forgiven.

It is not about anti-Semitism, as evidenced by Israeli alliances with evangelical Christians and European far-right groups. Zionists object to anti-Semitism—real or concocted as is the case with Omar—when there is criticism of Israel and calls for boycott, divestment and sanctions on Israel, or BDS.

Ilhan Omar also doesn't look the part. Westerners prefer whiskey-drinking Muslims who are willing to mock fellow Muslims, and who are willing to denigrate Palestinian political aspirations for the amusement of the Zionist think-tank crowd in D.C.

And what is rarely mentioned about Ilhan Omar is that she wears the veil. At least in France, where Islamophobia has become the national secular religion of the republic, the hostility to the veil has become unmasked at all points of the political spectrum, left, right and center.

Hostility to the veil has been less vocally expressed in D.C. (veiled Muslim women have numerous stories of harassment and abuse to tell). But Congress had to change its rules to allow Omar to wear the veil under its roof, even though exceptions to the longstanding hat ban had reportedly been made for the wearing of yarmulkes.

It would have been less irksome for Omar's haters if she did

not wear the veil. Westerners prefer Muslims to be atheists or non-practicing Muslims. (In the second teaching position I held at Tufts University, the most senior member of the department of political science once rushed to my office and asked me hurriedly: "You are not Muslim, are you?" I said: "Well, I am from a Muslim family but I am personally an atheist." He said: "Oh, that is good," and left.)

Unacceptable Candor

And Omar speaks in a refreshingly candid language that does not stick to the rhetorical clichés of D.C. politicians.

By contrast, New York's Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez has learned to censor herself. Ever since she was attacked for previous remarks she had made about Palestinians, Ocasio-Cortez has resorted to speaking in the vague generalities that U.S. diplomats also use to avoid the wrath of Israel and its supporters. She no longer seems to even utter the word Palestine. She has become too aware of the price to be paid.

Omar and Rashida Tlaib have also supported BDS, which is the biggest sin, as far as Israel and AIPAC are concerned. The U.S. has made it very clear that BDS has emerged as the second danger to Israel after the threat of military resistance to Israeli occupation and aggression.

The endorsement of BDS by two members of Congress bestows official legitimacy on a movement that Israel has been desperately trying to paint as an anti-Semitic reincarnation of Nazism. But this has been the history of Israeli propaganda: all enemies of Israel, communists, Arab nationalists, Palestinian nationalists, rightists, leftists,

have been labeled as anti-Semitic. Even the secular Arab nationalist leader, the late Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt, was accused of anti-Semitism by Israel when none of his speeches ever contained an anti-Semitic word.

And now, the U.S. Congress, which sat silent about the wave of Islamophobia unleashed during and after the Trump campaign, suddenly sees the need to issue a proclamation against religious bigotry and racism.

It is a bitter irony that the U.S. Congress has, for the first time, condemned Islamophobia in a statement widely understood to be an attempt to discipline the first Muslim American female member of Congress. The resolution had nothing to do with ostensible congressional outrage against Islamophobia. (Since Sept. 11, many members of Congress have become vocal anti-Islam bigots, as is U.S. President Donald Trump, who advocated a ban on all Muslim visitors to the country). The reference to Islamophobia was added to appease those new progressive members of Congress and the African American members who protested against a very selective standard of outrage.

Weeks after Omar's election to Congress, the Zionist lobby succeeded in turning her into a caricature. They inserted the word "Jewish" every time she spoke against support for Israel (she did not once refer to Jews in her discourse about Israel and its supporters).

The word "trope" is now a convenient tool to turn someone's criticisms of Israel into grotesque anti-Semitic hatred. Even the progressive Michele Goldberg, one of the few refreshingly courageous columnists in *The New York Times*,

insisted that Omar resorted to anti-Semitic “tropes.”

The Israeli lobby and the government want to send a clear message through the mistreatment and abuse of Ilhan Omar: that progressive members of Congress, especially if they are Muslim Arab women of color, won't be allowed to express their views on Israel without mobilizing the entire AIPAC machinery in Congress against them.

Ilhan Omar is indeed dangerous. She has broken taboos, along with her colleague Rashida Tlaib. She is dangerous to the hegemony imposed on the nation's capital by the supporters of Israel (and evangelical Christian, not Jews, are now the most fanatical Zionists in U.S. politics). Because Omar is seen as dangerous, the abuse won't end. It has just started.

As'ad AbuKhalil is a Lebanese-American professor of political science at California State University, Stanislaus. He is the author of the “Historical Dictionary of Lebanon” (1998), “Bin Laden, Islam and America's New War on Terrorism (2002), and “The Battle for Saudi Arabia” (2004). He tweets as @asadabukhalil

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Africa's Sovereignty Over Food

Local food and seed systems must be rebuilt for Africans, write Mariam Mayet, Stephen Greenberg and Linzi Lewis.

**By Mariam Mayet, Stephen Greenberg and Linzi Lewis African
Centre for Biodiversity**

in Johannesburg

Inter Press Service

Africa is facing dire times. Climate change is having major impacts on the region and on agriculture in particular, with smallholder farmers –many of them women – facing drought, general lack of water, shifting seasons, and floods in some areas.

Smallholder farmers are often women because in the prevailing division of labor, women are generally responsible for food acquisition and diets. Smallholder farmers are facing the loss of agricultural biodiversity, deforestation, declining soil health and fertility, land and water grabs by the powerful, loss of land access, marginalization and loss of indigenous knowledge and generalized lack of essential services and support.

At the same time, economies are weakening and remain heavily dependent on foreign aid, with extractivist interventions from outside. There is a strong authoritarian orientation in governments in the region, with secrecy and lack of transparency and accountability, weak and fragmented civil society organization and top-down development interventions.

There has been corporate capture of key state institutions,

decision making processes and functions. Seed and food systems have been appropriated for multinational corporate profit.

Unchecked Corporate Power

At present, corporate power is almost unchecked in agricultural input supply. The dominant narrative of agribusinesses being indispensable for feeding the world holds great sway on the continent, where corporations have captured policy making processes.

Although most seed on the continent is sourced from farmers' own savings, sharing and local markets, this system is not recognized in policies and laws in most countries. Instead, farmer seed practices are marginalized and generally denigrated as poor quality and backward.

The predominant thrust of agricultural and seed policy and programming on the continent is to seek to replace them. Multinational corporate interests, with support from key continental, regional and national state institutions and agencies, are driving two trends. One is large-scale commercial industrialization by a global agribusiness coalition, or through a Green Revolution smallholder strategy to integrate a layer of smallholder farmers into corporate value chains for the export of bulk commodity crops such as maize and soya.

Women play an essential role in the selection, saving, and sharing of seeds, as part of a broader network within farmer-managed seed systems, shaping the agricultural diversity that meets needs of local populations. This applies to both staple crops, as well as other food crops.

In many ways, this pool of genetic resources, which women continue to develop and maintain, is the backbone of human society.

The restrictions placed over reproductive materials, i.e. seed (including all cultivation materials), and the centralized decision-making around reproduction towards uniformity, homogeneity, ownership, creates greater inequality, amplified vulnerability and a reliance on external inputs, which places the future of food production at greater risk.

Increasing restrictions on use, lack of support for these activities and even their criminalization makes production conditions more challenging for all smallholder farmers

Restrictions on seed use, what may and may not be produced and how, translate into limits on food diversity at the household level, which is a key element of nutrition.

Since the majority of seed cultivated on the continent is saved on farms, exchanged and locally traded by farmers, this provides a solid base for alternative seed sovereignty systems to thrive outside the credit and corporate market.

For small-holder farmers in Africa, the importance of farmer seed systems as central to conserving biodiversity, ensuring nutrition diversity and supporting livelihoods has been highlighted in a huge body of work over the past 30 or 40 years.

However, these systems can benefit from external support. A key priority for smallholder farmers in Africa is resilience in the face of harsh weather events. This requires seed

variety adaptation and greater agricultural diversity. Women are the primary custodians of our seed diversity, the custodians of reproduction, of life. This highlights the struggles of farmers' rights, of reproductive rights, to self-determination, and to maintain life-supporting systems.

An ecological, food-systems-transition coalition, based on agroecology and food sovereignty, has found some traction in Africa and globally, but remains relatively weak, fragmented and under-resourced.

Farmers, with support from civil society groups, are doing important work on agroecology and sustainable agriculture, but are often unable to break out of their localized practices.

These need to urgently connect with others on the continent into a bigger and more coherent movement for change, especially radical feminist movements on the continent.

Together, we can fight back and contest the hegemony of large-scale commercial farming and corporate agri-business. We must, together, rebuild and strengthen local food and seed systems for all Africans.

The [African Centre for Biodiversity \(ACB\)](#) is a nonprofit organization based in South Africa with staff in Tanzania. It carries out research and analysis, learning and exchange, capacity and movement building, and advocacy to widen awareness, catalyze collective action and influence decision making on issues of biosafety, genetic modification (GM) and new technologies, seed laws, farmer seed systems, agricultural biodiversity, agroecology, corporate expansion in African agriculture, and food sovereignty in Africa.

Return International Women's Day to its Radical Roots

This is no time for moderate calls for equality and balance, write Nana Darkoa Sekyiamah and Ana Inés Abelenda.

**By Nana Darkoa Sekyiamah in Accra and
Ana Inés Abelenda in Montevideo**

Inter Press Service

The theme for International Women's Day 2019 doesn't resonate with us. #BalanceForBetter brings to mind slow gradual change, and assumes that if you provide women and girls with equal access then the society will automatically be better. We know that's false.

Access to a broken capitalist system that privileges the richest 1 percent over the rest of the world means that the most marginalized communities (including women, girls, trans and gender nonconforming people) exist in unjust, precarious and fragile societies. This coupled with the increasing privatization of what should be common resources for everyone (including the basics of land and water), as well as the corporate takeover of many public services endangers the lives and wellbeing of poor people.

In a recent submission to the United Nations Secretary General, the African Women's Development Network for Communications (FEMNET) and the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) stated: "Neoliberal economic

policies promoted around the globe by a growing majority of governments with the support and pressure of international financial institutions (including through conditional loans), have intensified the commodification of life through privatization of basic public services and natural resources.”

Corporate Takeovers

This corporate takeover of services meant to benefit everyone, of the health and education sectors in particular, primarily affect women and girls. In a [2017 report](#), the United Nations special rapporteur on the right to education, stated: “Women and girls are frequently excluded from education. Families often favor boys when investing in education.”

The rights of girls to quality education, particularly those from the most underprivileged communities, are infringed when public schools are privatized. Research by feminist and women’s rights organizations has demonstrated the ways in which gender biases affect the choices parents make when they need to pay for education, and have to choose which children to send to school.

It’s in this light that one must view with great concern the increasing trend of handing over the education sector to the private sector. Ghana for example, recently announced that it was seeking to privatize the management of some basic schools. [This decision is being disputed](#) by a number of teachers’ unions including the Teachers & Educational Workers Union of Ghana, the Coalition of Concerned Teachers the National Association of Graduate Teachers and the Ghana

National Association of Teachers.

The general secretary of the Ghana National Association of Teachers described the move “as subtle and eventual privatization, commercialization and commodification of public education in Ghana.” This trend of government reaching out to the private sector to manage the education sector has also been witnessed in other parts of West Africa including [Liberia](#).

There is no doubt that significant investments in the education sectors are required. Sadly, governments in the Global South are looking for these resources in the wrong places. The landmark report by the [High Level Panel on Illicit Financial Flows from Africa](#) (also known as the Mbeki report) indicated that Africa is losing more than \$50 billion per year in [illicit financial flows](#).

As highlighted in a [report by AWID](#), IFFs have a severe impact on the development of the continent. These resources that are lost to the continent should rather be harnessed and invested into the social sector, including education and health.

Privatization of social services and reduced social protection is at the heart of South America’s wave of neoliberal governments promoting austerity policies that deepen structural gender inequalities. Coupled with the rise of the conservative right in South America – including Brazil’s fascist new government – feminist movements from the South understand this is no time for moderate calls for equality and balance.

In Uruguay, the #8M call to action states: [“Ante el](#)

fascismo, más feminismo" (In the face of fascism, we need more feminism!). It is a call for international feminist solidarity to resist daily threats that aim to bring us back centuries when it comes to social and gender justice and rights. It is also a warning that feminist movements are forging new realities not only about equality, but about radical change.

So on this International Women's Day we call for a return to its radical roots centered on workers' rights and justice. This doesn't call for balance. It calls for a radical transformation of society based on the twin principles of equity and justice.

Nana Darkoa Sekyiamah is director of information, communications and media, Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID)

Ana Inés Abelenda is economic justice coordinator, Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID)

Labour's Fight Over Israel Long Time in Coming

The party is being dragged into the modern world by Corbyn's anti-racist leadership towards Palestinians, writes Jonathan Cook.

By JonathanCook

Jonathan-Cook.net



An announcement this week by the Jewish Labour Movement that it is considering splitting from the British Labour Party could not have come at a worse moment for Jeremy Corbyn. The Labour leader is already besieged by claims that he is presiding over a party that has become “institutionally anti-Semitic.”

The threats by the JLM should be seen as part of concerted efforts to oust Corbyn from the leadership. They follow on the heels of a decision by a handful of Labour MPs last month to set up a new faction called the Independent Group. They, too, cited anti-Semitism as a major reason for leaving.

On the defensive, Corbyn was prompted to write to the JLM expressing his and the shadow cabinet’s “very strong desire for you to remain a part of our movement”. More than 100 Labour MPs, including members of the front bench, similarly pleaded with the JLM not to disaffiliate. They apologized for “toxic racism” in the party and for “letting our Jewish supporters and members down.”

Their letter noted that the JLM is “the legitimate and long-standing representative of Jews in the Labour party” and added that the MPs recognized the importance of “calling out those who seek to make solidarity with our Jewish comrades a test of foreign policy.”

That appeared to be a swipe at Corbyn himself, who is the first leader of a British political party to prioritize Palestinian rights over the U.K.’s ties to an Israeli state that has been oppressing Palestinians for decades.

Just this week the Labour leader renewed his call for Britain to halt arms sales to Israel following a UN report

that said the Israeli army's shooting of Palestinian protesters in Gaza's Great March of Return could amount to war crimes.

Evidence Ignored

Despite the media attention, all the evidence suggests that Labour does not have a problem of "institutional anti-Semitism," or even a problem of anti-Semitism above the marginal racism towards Jews found in the wider British population. Figures show only 0.08 percent of Labour members have been disciplined for anti-Semitism.

Also largely ignored by the British media, and Corbyn's opponents, is the fact that a growing number of Jews are publicly coming out in support for him and discounting the claims of an "endemic" anti-Semitism problem.

Some 200 prominent Jews signed a letter to *The Guardian* newspaper calling Corbyn "a crucial ally in the fight against bigotry and reaction. His lifetime record of campaigning for equality and human rights, including consistent support for initiatives against antisemitism, is formidable."

At the same time, a new organization, Jewish Voice for Labour, has been established to underscore that there are progressive Jews who welcome Corbyn's leadership.

In the current hysterical climate, however, no one seems interested in the evidence or these dissenting voices. It is, therefore, hardly surprising that Corbyn and his supporters are on the back foot as they face losing from Labour an affiliate group of 2,000 members who represent a

section of the UK's Jewish community.

But paradoxically, the loss of the JLM may be inevitable if Labour is serious about becoming a party that opposes racism in all its forms, because the JLM has proved it is incapable of meeting that simple standard.

While the Labour Party has been dragged into an increasingly fractious debate about whether anti-Zionism – opposition to Israel as a Jewish state – equates to anti-Semitism, everyone has been distracted from the elephant in the room. In fact, it is political Zionism, at least in the hardline form adopted by groups such as the JLM, that is racism – towards Palestinians.

Zionism, we should recall, required the ethnic cleansing of 750,000 Palestinians to engineer a “Jewish state” on the ruins of Palestinians’ homeland. It fueled Israel’s hunger for an enlarged territory that led to it occupying the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem, and further dispossessing the Palestinians through illegal settlement building.

Zionism has made it impossible for any Israeli government to offer meaningful concessions to Palestinians on statehood to create the conditions necessary for peace. It has justified policies that view “mixing between the races” – between Jews and Palestinians – as dangerous “miscegenation” and “assimilation.”

Furthermore, Zionism has kept Israel’s Palestinian citizens a segregated minority, hemmed up in their own ghettoized communities, denied rights to almost all land in Israel, and corralled into their own separate and massively inferior school system.

Efforts to Oust Corbyn

All of these policies were instituted by Israel's Labor Party, the sister organization of the [JLM](#) in Britain. The JLM not only refuses to oppose these policies, but effectively shields Israel from criticism about them from within Britain's Labour Party.

The JLM has remained mute on the structural violence of Israel's occupying army, and the systematic racism – encoded in Israel's laws – towards the fifth of its population who are Palestinian citizens.

Meanwhile, the JLM's mother body, the [World Zionist Organization](#), has a division that – to this day – finances the establishment and expansion of settlements in the West Bank, in violation of international law.

Added to this, an *Al Jazeera* [undercover documentary](#) broadcast in 2017 showed that the JLM was covertly working with an Israeli government official, Shai Masot, to damage Corbyn because of his pro-Palestinian positions.

Israel, remember, has for the last decade equated to the ultra-nationalist government of Benjamin Netanyahu. His coalition allies seek not a two-state solution, but the takeover of most of the occupied territories and ultimately their annexation, again in violation of international law.

Ella Rose was [appointed](#) director of the JLM in 2016, straight from a post at the Israeli embassy.

Relic of Old Politics

Times – and politics – move on. The JLM is a relic of a period when it was possible to claim to be anti-racist while turning a blind eye to the oppression of the Palestinian people. Social media and Palestinians armed with camera phones – not just Corbyn – have made that evasion no longer possible.

Labour giving pride of place to groups such as the JLM or Labour Friends of Israel – to which 80 of its MPs proudly belong – is, in the current circumstances, as obscene as it would have been 40 years ago for British parties to host their own Friends of South Africa groups.

The Labour Party bureaucracy is being dragged, kicking and screaming, into the modern world by its members, who have felt liberated by Corbyn's leadership and his history of supporting all kinds of anti-racism struggles, including the Palestinian one.

While Britain has major and pressing issues to tackle, from dealing with its exit from Europe to imminent climate collapse, Labour's energies have been sidetracked into a civil war about Israel, of all things.

The old guard want to be allowed to support Israel, even as it heads towards full-blown fascism, while much of the membership want to dissociate from what looks increasingly like another apartheid state – and one whose leaders are seeking to stoke conflict across a volatile region.

Redefining anti-Semitism

Israel's most ardent supporters, and Corbyn's enemies, in

Labour will play dirty to protect Israel and their own role from scrutiny, as they have been doing all along.

The JLM led moves last year intended to divide the party by insisting that Labour redefine anti-Semitism to include criticism of Israel.

Rumblings of dissatisfaction from the JLM will be cited as further evidence of the membership's anti-Semitism, because that is the most powerful weapon they have to silence criticism of Israel and deflect attention away from their role in shielding Israel from proper scrutiny within Labour.

Politics is about choices and values. Labour has for many decades sided exclusively with Israel and ignored the rights of Palestinians.

In 1944 – four years before Israel's creation – Labour's annual conference recommended that the natives of Palestine, a large majority population, be ethnically cleansed to advance the goals of European Zionists colonizing their land. The resolution declared: "Let the Arabs be encouraged to move out, as the Jews move in."

That is exactly what Israel did by expelling 750,000 Palestinians, more than 80 percent of the Palestinian population, in events we now call the Nakba (Catastrophe).

For decades after Israel's creation, Labour Party members happily travelled to Israel to toil in agricultural communes, such as the kibbutz, that were built on stolen Palestinian land and which, to this day, refuse to allow any of the country's 1.7 million Palestinian citizens to live in them.

In a speech in 1972, after Israel seized yet more Palestinian lands, including East Jerusalem, Labour leader Harold Wilson urged Israel to hold on to these conquered territories: “Israel’s reaction is natural and proper in refusing to accept the Palestinians as a nation.”

This is the dark, dishonorable underbelly of Labour racism, and the party’s decades-long support for colonialism in the Middle East.

Labour created a hierarchy of racisms, in which concern about hatred towards Jews enjoyed star billing while racism towards some other groups, most especially Palestinians, barely registered.

Under Corbyn and a much-expanded membership, these prejudices are being challenged in public for the first time – and that is justifiably making the party an “unsafe” space for groups such as the JLM and Labour Friends of Israel, which hang on to outdated, hardline Zionist positions.

The JLM’s claim to speak for all Jews in Labour has been challenged by anti-racist Jews like those of the Jewish Voice for Labour. Their efforts to defend Corbyn and Labour’s record have been widely ignored by the media or, encouraged by JLM, dismissed as “downplaying” anti-Semitism.

The JLM’s discomfort may be unfortunate, but it cannot be avoided. It is the price to be paid for the continuing battle by progressives to advance universal rights and defeat racism. This battle has been waged since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was published in 1948 – paradoxically, the year Israel was established by violating the core principles of that declaration.

Israel's racism towards Palestinians has been indulged by Labour for too long. Now history is catching up with Israel, and with groups such as the JLM.

Labour MPs have a choice. They can stand on the wrong side of history or they can recognize that it is time to fully enter the modern era – and that means embracing a program of anti-racism that encompasses everyone, including Jews and Palestinians.

Jonathan Cook is a freelance journalist based in Nazareth. He blogs at <https://www.jonathan-cook.net/blog/>.

The Prisoner Says 'No' to Big Brother

The refusal by Australia's foreign ministry to honor the UN's declaration that Julian Assange is the victim of "arbitrary detention" is a shameful breach of the letter and spirit of international law, says John Pilger.

By **[John Pilger](#)**
in Sydney, Australia



Whenever I visit Julian Assange, we meet in a room he knows too well. There is a bare table and pictures of Ecuador on the walls. There is a bookcase where the books never change. The curtains are always drawn and there is no natural light. The air is still and fetid.

This is Room 101.

Before I enter Room 101, I must surrender my passport and

phone. My pockets and possessions are examined. The food I bring is inspected.

The man who guards Room 101 sits in what looks like an old-fashioned telephone box. He watches a screen, watching Julian. There are others unseen, agents of the state, watching and listening.

Cameras are everywhere in Room 101. To avoid them, Julian maneuvers us both into a corner, side by side, flat up against the wall. This is how we catch up: whispering and writing to each other on a notepad, which he shields from the cameras. Sometimes we laugh.

I have my designated time slot. When that expires, the door in Room 101 bursts open and the guard says, "Time is up!" On New Year's Eve, I was allowed an extra 30 minutes and the man in the phone box wished me a happy new year, but not Julian.

Of course, Room 101 is the room in George Orwell's prophetic novel, *1984*, where the thought police watched and tormented their prisoners, and worse, until people surrendered their humanity and principles and obeyed Big Brother. Julian Assange will never obey Big Brother. His resilience and courage are astonishing, even though his physical health struggles to keep up.

Julian is a distinguished Australian, who has changed the way many people think about duplicitous governments. For this, he is a political refugee subjected to what the United Nations calls "arbitrary detention".

The UN says he has the right of free passage to freedom, but

this is denied. He has the right to medical treatment without fear of arrest, but this is denied. He has the right to compensation, but this is denied.

As founder and editor of WikiLeaks, his crime has been to make sense of dark times. WikiLeaks has an impeccable record of accuracy and authenticity which no newspaper, no TV channel, no radio station, no BBC, no *New York Times*, no *Washington Post*, no *Guardian* can equal. Indeed, it shames them.

That explains why he is being punished.

For example:

Last week, the International Court of Justice ruled that the British Government had no legal powers over the Chagos Islanders, who in the 1960s and 70s, were expelled in secret from their homeland on Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean and sent into exile and poverty. Countless children died, many of them, from sadness. It was an epic crime few knew about.

For almost 50 years, the British have denied the islanders' the right to return to their homeland, which they had given to the Americans for a major military base.

In 2009, the British Foreign Office concocted a "marine reserve" around the Chagos archipelago.

This touching concern for the environment was exposed as a fraud when WikiLeaks published a secret cable from the British Government reassuring the Americans that "the former inhabitants would find it difficult, if not possible, to pursue their claim for resettlement on the islands if the

entire Chagos Archipelago were a marine reserve.”

The truth of the conspiracy clearly influenced the momentous decision of the International Court of Justice.

WikiLeaks has also revealed how the United States spies on its allies; how the CIA can watch you through your Iphone; how Presidential candidate Hillary Clinton took vast sums of money from Wall Street for secret speeches that reassured the bankers that if she was elected, she would be their friend.

In 2016, WikiLeaks revealed a direct connection between Clinton and organized jihadism in the Middle East: terrorists, in other words. One email disclosed that when Clinton was US Secretary of State, she knew that Saudi Arabia and Qatar were funding Islamic State, yet she accepted huge donations for her foundation from both governments.

She then approved the world's biggest ever arms sale to her Saudi benefactors: arms that are currently being used against the stricken people of Yemen.

That explains why he is being punished.

WikiLeaks has also published more than 800,000 secret files from Russia, including the Kremlin, telling us more about the machinations of power in that country than the specious hysterics of the Russia-gate pantomime in Washington.

This is real journalism – journalism of a kind now considered exotic: the antithesis of Vichy journalism, which speaks for the enemy of the people and takes its sobriquet from the Vichy government that occupied France on behalf of

the Nazis.

Vichy journalism is censorship by omission, such as the untold scandal of the collusion between Australian governments and the United States to deny Julian Assange his rights as an Australian citizen and to silence him.

In 2010, Prime Minister Julia Gillard went as far as ordering the Australian Federal Police to investigate and hopefully prosecute Assange and WikiLeaks – until she was informed by the AFP that no crime had been committed.

Last weekend, the Sydney Morning Herald published a lavish supplement promoting a celebration of “Me Too” at the Sydney Opera House on 10 March. Among the leading participants is the recently retired Minister of Foreign Affairs, Julie Bishop.

Bishop has been on show in the local media lately, lauded as a loss to politics: an “icon”, someone called her, to be admired.

The elevation to celebrity feminism of one so politically primitive as Bishop tells us how much so-called identity politics have subverted an essential, objective truth: that what matters, above all, is not your gender but the class you serve.

Before she entered politics, Julie Bishop was a lawyer who served the notorious asbestos miner James Hardie which fought claims by men and their families dying horribly from asbestos.

Lawyer Peter Gordon recalls Bishop “rhetorically asking the court why workers should be entitled to jump court queues

just because they were dying.”

Bishop says she “acted on instructions ... professionally and ethically.”

Perhaps she was merely “acting on instructions” when she flew to London and Washington last year with her ministerial chief of staff, who had indicated that the Australian Foreign Minister would raise Julian’s case and hopefully begin the diplomatic process of bringing him home.

Julian’s father had written a moving letter to the then Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, asking the government to intervene diplomatically to free his son. He told Turnbull that he was worried Julian might not leave the embassy alive.

Julie Bishop had every opportunity in the UK and the U.S. to present a diplomatic solution that would bring Julian home. But this required the courage of one proud to represent a sovereign, independent state, not a vassal.

Instead, she made no attempt to contradict the British Foreign Secretary, Jeremy Hunt, when he said outrageously that Julian “faced serious charges”. What charges? There were no charges.

Australia’s Foreign Minister abandoned her duty to speak up for an Australian citizen, prosecuted with nothing, charged with nothing, guilty of nothing.

Will those feminists who fawn over this false icon at the Opera House next Sunday be reminded of her role in colluding with foreign forces to punish an Australian journalist, one

whose work has revealed that rapacious militarism has smashed the lives of millions of ordinary women in many countries: in Iraq alone, the US-led invasion of that country, in which Australia participated, left 700,000 widows.

So what can be done? An Australian government that was prepared to act in response to a public campaign to rescue the refugee football player, Hakeem al-Araibi, from torture and persecution in Bahrain, is capable of bringing Julian Assange home.

The refusal by the Department of Foreign Affairs in Canberra to honor the United Nations' declaration that Julian is the victim of "arbitrary detention" and has a fundamental right to his freedom, is a shameful breach of the letter and spirit of international law.

Why has the Australian government made no serious attempt to free Assange? Why did Julie Bishop bow to the wishes of two foreign powers? Why is this democracy traduced by its servile relationships, and integrated with lawless foreign power?

The persecution of Julian Assange is the conquest of us all: of our independence, our self respect, our intellect, our compassion, our politics, our culture.

So stop scrolling. Organize. Occupy. Insist. Persist. Make a noise. Take direct action. Be brave and stay brave. Defy the thought police.

War is not peace, freedom is not slavery, ignorance is not strength. If Julian can stand up to Big Brother , so can you: so can all of us.

John Pilger gave this speech at a rally for Julian Assange in Sydney on March 3, organized by the Socialist Equality Party. You can watch it here:

Video by Cathy Vogan

John Pilger is an Australian-British journalist and filmmaker based in London. Pilger's Web site is: **www.johnpilger.com**. In 2017, the British Library announced a John Pilger Archive of all his written and filmed work. The British Film Institute includes his 1979 film, "Year Zero: the Silent Death of Cambodia," among the 10 most important documentaries of the 20th century. Some of his previous contributions to Consortium News can be **found here**.

JOHN KIRIAKOU: Neither Rain, Sleet, nor Snow Will Stop the Post Office From Spying on You

It's called the "Mail Cover Program" and it's run by the U.S. Postal Service (USPS). Yes, even the Post Office is spying on us, writes John Kiriakou.

By **John Kiriakou**

Special to Consortium News



You may remember that last year some nut was arrested for **mailing bombs** to prominent Democrats, media outlets, and opponents of Donald Trump. Less than a week after the bombs went out, a suspect was arrested. Almost immediately, video turned up

of him at a Trump rally, wearing a “Make America Great Again” hat and chanting for the camera. He was soon tried, convicted, and jailed. End of story.

But it wasn't the end of the story. The investigation into the bomb incidents focused attention on an almost unknown federal surveillance program—one that poses a direct threat to the privacy and constitutional rights of every American. It's called the “Mail Cover Program” and it's run by the U.S. Postal Service (USPS). Yes, even the Post Office is spying on us.

The Mail Cover Program allows postal employees to photograph and send to federal law enforcement organizations (FBI, DHS, Secret Service, etc.) the front and back of every piece of mail the Post Office processes. It also retains the information digitally and provides it to any government agency that wants it—*without a warrant*.

In 2015, the USPS Inspector General issued a report saying that, “Agencies must demonstrate a reasonable basis for requesting mail covers, send hard copies of request forms to the Criminal Investigative Service Center for processing, and treat mail covers as restricted and confidential...A mail cover should not be used as a routine investigative tool. Insufficient controls over the mail cover program could hinder the Postal Inspection Service's ability to conduct effective investigations, lead to public concerns over privacy of mail, and harm the Postal Service's brand.”

Return to Sender

Not only were the admonitions ignored, the mail cover program actually expanded after the report's release.

Indeed, in the months after that report was issued, there were 6,000 requests for mail cover collection. Only 10 were rejected, according to the Feb. 2019 edition of *Prison Legal News* (P.34-35) .

I have some personal experience with the Mail Cover Program. I served 23 months in prison for blowing the whistle on the CIA's illegal torture program. After having been locked up for two months, I decided to commission a card from a very artistically-inclined prisoner for my wife's 40th birthday. I sent it about two weeks early, but she never received it. Finally, about four months later, the card was delivered back to me with a yellow "Return to Sender – Address Not Known" sticker on it. But underneath that sticker was a second yellow sticker. That one read, "Do Not Deliver. Hold For Supervisor. Cover Program."

Why was I under Postal Service Surveillance? I have no idea. I had had my day in court. The case was over. But remember, the Postal Service doesn't have to answer to anybody – my attorneys, my judge, even its own Inspector General. It doesn't need a warrant to spy on me (or my family) and it doesn't have to answer even to a member of Congress who might inquire as to why the spying was happening in the first place.

The problem is not just the sinister nature of a government agency (or quasi-government agency) spying on individuals with no probable cause or due process, although those are serious problems. It's that the program is handled so poorly and so haphazardly that in some cases surveillance was initiated against individuals for no apparent law enforcement reason and that surveillance was initiated by

Postal Service employees not even authorized to do so. Again, there is no recourse because the people under surveillance don't even know that any of this is happening.

Perhaps an even more disturbing aspect of the program is the fact that between 2000 and 2012, the Postal Service initiated an average of 8,000 mail cover requests per year. But in 2013, that number jumped to 49,000. Why? Nobody knows and the Postal Service doesn't have to say.

The question, though, is not how many cases are opened under the Mail Cover Program or even how many requests there are for the information. The real question is, "How is this constitutional?" Perhaps a secondary question is, "Why hasn't anybody challenged the program in the courts?" In general, Americans don't—or at least haven't—objected to a gradual loss of civil liberties and constitutional rights. That has to stop. When even the Post Office is spying on you, you know the republic is in trouble.

John Kiriakou is a former CIA counterterrorism officer and a former senior investigator with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. John became the sixth whistleblower indicted by the Obama administration under the Espionage Act—a law designed to punish spies. He served 23 months in prison as a result of his attempts to oppose the Bush administration's torture program.

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JOHN PILGER: The War on Venezuela is Built on Lies

The reporter as clown – for whom the truth is too difficult to report – may be the final stage of much of mainstream journalism’s degeneration, writes John Pilger for **Consortium News**.

By **John Pilger**

Special to Consortium News



Travelling with Hugo Chavez, I soon understood the threat of Venezuela. At a farming co-operative in Lara state, people waited patiently and with good humor in the heat. Jugs of water and melon juice were passed around. A guitar was played; a woman, Katarina, stood and sang with a husky contralto.

“What did her words say?” I asked.

“That we are proud,” was the reply.

The applause for her merged with the arrival of Chavez. Under one arm he carried a satchel bursting with books. He wore his big red shirt and greeted people by name, stopping to listen.

What struck me was his capacity to listen.

But now he read. For almost two hours he read into the microphone from the stack of books beside him: Orwell, Dickens, Tolstoy, Zola, Hemingway, Chomsky, Neruda: a page here, a line or two there. People clapped and whistled as he moved from author to author. Then farmers took the

microphone and told him what they knew, and what they needed; one ancient face, carved it seemed from a nearby banyan, made a long, critical speech on the subject of irrigation; Chavez took notes.

Wine is grown here, a dark Syrah type grape. "John, John, come up here," said El Presidente, having watched me fall asleep in the heat and the depths of *Oliver Twist*.

"He likes red wine," Chavez told the cheering, whistling audience, and presented me with a bottle of "vino de la gente." My few words in bad Spanish brought whistles and laughter.

Watching Chavez with the people, *la gente*, made sense of a man who promised, on coming to power, that his every move would be subject to the will of the people. In eight years, Chavez won eight elections and referendums: a world record. He was electorally the most popular head of state in the Western Hemisphere, probably in the world.

Every major chavista reform was voted on, notably a new constitution of which 71 percent of the people approved each of the 396 articles that enshrined unheard of freedoms, such as Article 123, which for the first time recognized the human rights of mixed-race and black people, of whom Chavez was one.

Their First Champions

One of his tutorials on the road quoted a feminist writer: "Love and solidarity are the same." His audiences understood this well and expressed themselves with dignity, seldom with deference. Ordinary people regarded Chavez and his

government as their first champions: as theirs.

This was especially true of the indigenous, mestizos and Afro-Venezuelans, who had been held in historic contempt by Chavez's immediate predecessors and by those who today live far from the barrios, in the mansions and penthouses of East Caracas, who commute to Miami where their banks are and who regard themselves as "white." They are the powerful core of what the media calls "the opposition."

When I met this class, in suburbs called Country Club, in homes appointed with low chandeliers and bad portraits, I recognized them. They could be white South Africans, the petite bourgeoisie of Constantia and Sandton, pillars of the cruelties of apartheid.

Cartoonists in the Venezuelan press, most of which are owned by an oligarchy and oppose the government, portrayed Chavez as an ape. A radio host referred to "the monkey." In the private universities, the verbal currency of the children of the well-off is often racist abuse of those whose shacks are just visible through the pollution.

Although identity politics are all the rage in the pages of liberal newspapers in the West, race and class are two words almost never uttered in the mendacious "coverage" of Washington's latest, most naked attempt to grab the world's greatest source of oil and reclaim its "backyard."

For all the chavistas' faults – such as allowing the Venezuelan economy to become hostage to the fortunes of oil and never seriously challenging big capital and corruption – they brought social justice and pride to millions of people

and they did it with unprecedented democracy.

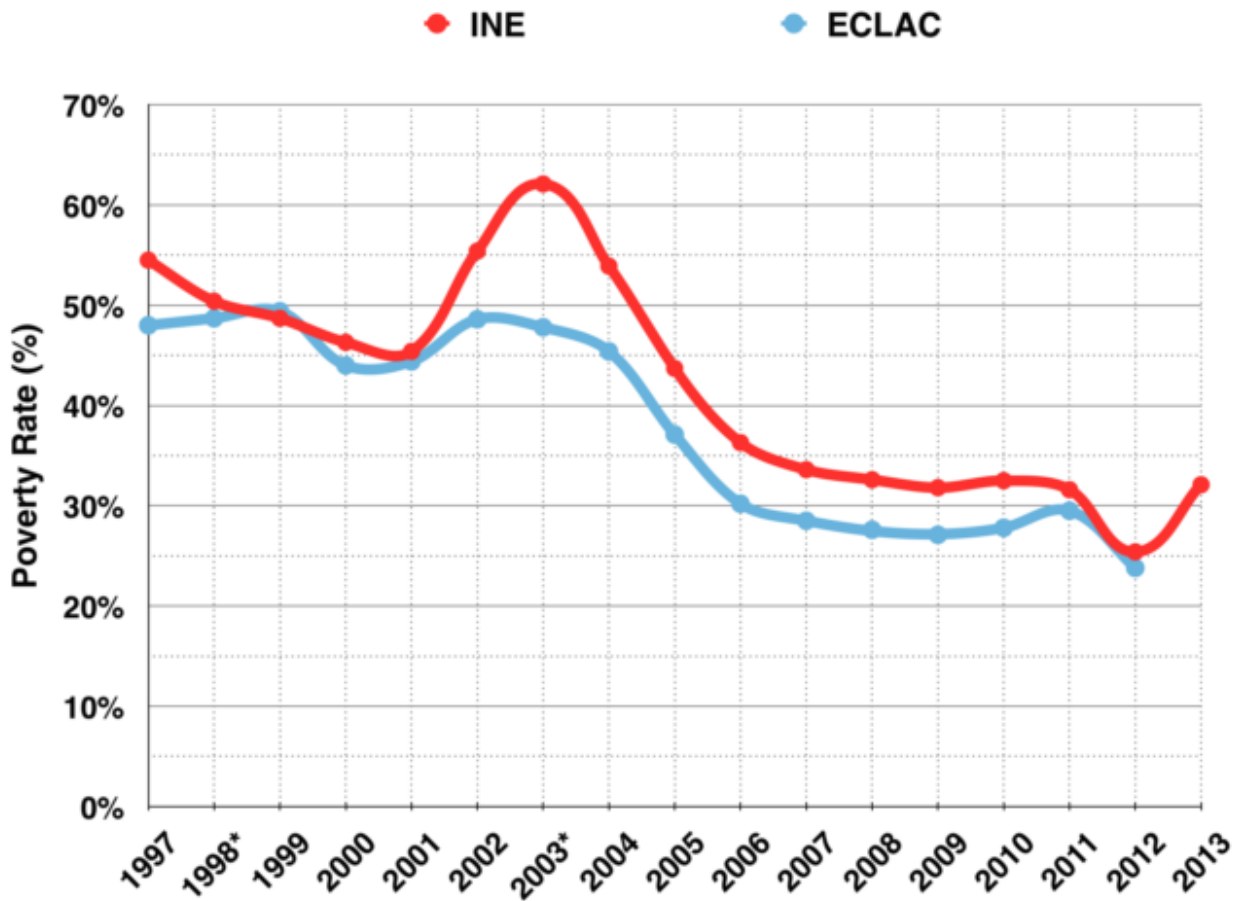
Stellar Election Process

“Of the 92 elections that we’ve monitored,” said former President Jimmy Carter, whose Carter Center, is a respected monitor of elections around the world, “I would say the election process in Venezuela is the best in the world.” By way of contrast, said Carter, the U.S. election system, with its emphasis on campaign money, “is one of the worst.”

In extending the franchise to a parallel people’s state of communal authority, based in the poorest barrios, Chavez described Venezuelan democracy as “our version of Rousseau’s idea of popular sovereignty.”

In Barrio La Linea, seated in her tiny kitchen, Beatrice Balzo told me her children were the first generation of the poor to attend a full day’s school and be given a hot meal and to learn music, art and dance. “I have seen their confidence blossom like flowers,” she said.

In Barrio La Vega, I listened to a nurse, Mariella Machado, a black woman of 45 with a wicked laugh, address an urban land council on subjects ranging from homelessness to illegal war. That day, they were launching Mision Madres de Barrio, a program aimed at poverty among single mothers. Under the constitution, women have the right to be paid as caregivers, and can borrow from a special women’s bank. Now the poorest housewives get the equivalent of \$200 a month.



In a room lit by a single fluorescent tube, I met Ana Lucia Fernandez, aged 86, and Mavis Mendez, aged 95. A mere 33-year-old, Sonia Alvarez, had come with her two children. Once, none of them could read and write; now they were studying mathematics. For the first time in its history, Venezuela has almost 100 percent literacy.

This is the work of Mision Robinson, which was designed for adults and teenagers previously denied an education because of poverty. Mission Ribas gives everyone the opportunity of a secondary education, called a bachillerato. (The names Robinson and Ribas refer to Venezuelan independence leaders from the 19th century).

In her 95 years, Mavis Mendez had seen a parade of governments, mostly vassals of Washington, preside over the theft of billions of dollars in oil spoils, much of it flown

to Miami. “We didn’t matter in a human sense,” she told me. “We lived and died without real education and running water, and food we couldn’t afford. When we fell ill, the weakest died. Now I can read and write my name and so much more; and whatever the rich and the media say, we have planted the seeds of true democracy and I have the joy of seeing it happen.”

In 2002, during a Washington-backed coup, Mavis’s sons and daughters and grandchildren and great-grandchildren joined hundreds of thousands who swept down from the barrios on the hillsides and demanded the army remained loyal to Chavez.

“The people rescued me,” Chavez told me. “They did it with the media against me, preventing even the basic facts of what happened. For popular democracy in heroic action, I suggest you look no further.”

Saddam Hussein Incarnate

Since Chavez’s death in 2013, his successor Nicolás Maduro has shed his derisory label in the Western press as a “former bus driver” and become Saddam Hussein incarnate. His media abuse is ridiculous. On his watch, the slide in the price of oil has caused hyperinflation and played havoc with prices in a society that imports almost all its food; yet, as the journalist and film-maker Pablo Navarrete reported this week, Venezuela is not the catastrophe it has been painted.

“There is food everywhere,” he wrote. “I have filmed lots of videos of food in markets [all over Caracas] ... it’s Friday night and the restaurants are full.”

In 2018, Maduro was re-elected president. A section of the opposition boycotted the election, a tactic tried against Chavez. The boycott failed: 9,389,056 people voted; 16 parties participated and six candidates stood for the presidency. Maduro won 6,248,864 votes, or 68 percent.

On election day, I spoke to one of the 150 foreign election observers. "It was entirely fair," he said. "There was no fraud; none of the lurid media claims stood up. Zero. Amazing really."

Like a page from Alice's tea party, the Trump administration has presented Juan Guaidó, a pop-up creation of the CIA-front National Endowment for Democracy, as the "legitimate President of Venezuela." Unheard of by 81 percent of the Venezuelan people, according to *The Nation*, Guaidó has been elected by no one.

Maduro is "illegitimate," says Donald Trump (who won the U.S. presidency with 3 million fewer votes than his opponent), a "dictator," says demonstrably unhinged Vice President Mike Pence and an oil trophy-in-waiting, says "national security" adviser John Bolton (who when I interviewed him in 2003 said, "Hey, are you a communist, maybe even Labour?")

As his "special envoy to Venezuela" (coup master), Trump has appointed a convicted felon, Elliot Abrams, whose intrigues in the service of Presidents Reagan and George W. Bush helped produce the Iran-Contra scandal in the 1980s and plunge central America into years of blood-soaked misery.

Putting Lewis Carroll aside, these "crazies" belong in

newsreels from the 1930s. And yet their lies about Venezuela have been taken up with enthusiasm by those paid to keep the record straight.

On Channel 4 News, Jon Snow bellowed at the Labour MP Chris Williamson, "Look, you and Mr. Corbyn are in a very nasty corner [on Venezuela]!" When Williamson tried to explain why threatening a sovereign country was wrong, Snow cut him off. "You've had a good go!"

In 2006, Channel 4 News effectively accused Chavez of plotting to make nuclear weapons with Iran: a fantasy. The then Washington correspondent, Jonathan Rugman, allowed a war criminal, Donald Rumsfeld, to liken Chavez to Hitler, unchallenged.

Overwhelming Bias

Researchers at the University of the West of England studied the *BBC's* reporting of Venezuela over a 10-year period. They looked at 304 reports and found that only three of these referred to any of the positive policies of the government. For the *BBC*, Venezuela's democratic record, human rights legislation, food programs, healthcare initiatives and poverty reduction did not happen. The greatest literacy program in human history did not happen, just as the millions who march in support of Maduro and in memory of Chavez, do not exist.

When asked why she filmed only an opposition march, the *BBC* reporter Orla Guerin tweeted that it was "too difficult" to be on two marches in one day.

A war has been declared on Venezuela, of which the truth is

“too difficult” to report.

It is too difficult to report the collapse of oil prices since 2014 as largely the result of criminal machinations by Wall Street. It is too difficult to report the blocking of Venezuela’s access to the U.S.-dominated international financial system as sabotage. It is too difficult to report Washington’s “sanctions” against Venezuela, which have caused the loss of at least \$6 billion in Venezuela’s revenue since 2017, including \$2 billion worth of imported medicines, as illegal, or the Bank of England’s refusal to return Venezuela’s gold reserves as an act of piracy.

The former United Nations Rapporteur, Alfred de Zayas, has likened this to a “medieval siege” designed “to bring countries to their knees.” It is a criminal assault, he says. It is similar to that faced by Salvador Allende in 1970 when President Richard Nixon and his equivalent of John Bolton, Henry Kissinger, set out to “make the economy [of Chile] scream.” The long dark night of Pinochet followed.

The Guardian correspondent, Tom Phillips, has tweeted a picture of a cap on which the words in Spanish mean in local slang: “Make Venezuela fucking cool again.” The reporter as clown may be the final stage of much of mainstream journalism’s degeneration.

Should the CIA stooge Guaidó and his white supremacists grab power, it will be the 68th overthrow of a sovereign government by the United States, most of them democracies. A fire sale of Venezuela’s utilities and mineral wealth will

surely follow, along with the theft of the country's oil, as outlined by John Bolton.

Under the last Washington-controlled government in Caracas, poverty reached historic proportions. There was no healthcare for those could not pay. There was no universal education; Mavis Mendez, and millions like her, could not read or write. How cool is that, Tom?

John Pilger is an Australian-British journalist and filmmaker based in London. Pilger's Web site is: www.johnpilger.com. In 2017, the British Library announced a John Pilger Archive of all his written and filmed work. The British Film Institute includes his 1979 film, "Year Zero: the Silent Death of Cambodia," among the 10 most important documentaries of the 20th century. Some of his previous contributions to Consortium News can be [found here](#).

The End of the Observer Mission in Hebron

It acted as a restraint on the settlers' worst excesses, writes Jonathan Cook.

By **Jonathan Cook**

Jonathan-Cook.net



You might imagine that a report by a multinational observer force documenting a 20-year reign of terror by Israeli soldiers and Jewish settlers against Palestinians, in a city

under occupation, would provoke condemnation from European and U.S. politicians.

But you would be wrong. The leaking in December of the [report on conditions](#) in the city of Hebron, home to 200,000 Palestinians, barely caused a ripple.

About 40,000 separate cases of abuse had been quietly recorded since 1997 by dozens of monitors from Sweden, Norway, Switzerland, Italy and Turkey. Some incidents constituted war crimes.

Exposure of the confidential report has now provided the pretext for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to expel the international observers. He shuttered their mission in Hebron this month, in apparent violation of Israel's obligations under the 25-year-old Oslo peace accords.

Israel hopes once again to draw a veil over its violent colonization of the heart of the West Bank's largest Palestinian city. The process of clearing tens of thousands of inhabitants from central Hebron is already well advanced.

Any chance of rousing the international community into even minimal protest was stamped out by the U.S. last week. [It blocked a draft resolution](#) at the United Nations Security Council expressing "regret" at Israel's decision, and on Friday added that ending the mandate of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH) was an "internal matter" for Israel.

The TIPH was established in 1997 after a diplomatic protocol split the city into two zones, controlled separately by

Israel and a Palestinian Authority created by the Oslo accords.

The “temporary” in its name was a reference to the expected five-year duration of the Oslo process. The need for TIPH, most assumed, would vanish when Israel ended the occupation and a Palestinian state was built in its place.

Israel Granted Free Hand in Hebron

While Oslo put the Palestinian Authority formally in charge of densely populated regions of the occupied territories, Israel was effectively given a free hand in Hebron to entrench its belligerent hold on Palestinian life.

Several hundred extremist Jewish settlers have gradually expanded their illegal enclave in the city center, backed by more than 1,000 Israeli soldiers. Many Palestinian residents have been forced out while the rest are all but imprisoned in their homes.

TIPH faced an impossible task from the outset: to “maintain normal life” for Hebron’s Palestinians in the face of Israel’s structural violence.

Until the report was leaked, its documentation of Israel’s takeover of Hebron and the settlers’ violent attacks had remained private, shared only among the states participating in the task force.

However, the presence of observers did curb the settlers’ worst excesses, helping Palestinian children get to school unharmed and allowing their parents to venture out to work and shop. That assistance is now at an end.

Burial Plot of Abraham

Hebron has been a magnet for extremist settlers because it includes a site revered in Judaism: the reputed burial plot of Abraham, father to the three main monotheistic religions.

But that same place in Hebron became central to Muslim worship centuries ago, with the Ibrahimi mosque established at the site.

Israel's policy has been gradually to prise away the Palestinians' hold on the mosque, as well the urban space around it. Half of the building has been restricted to Jewish prayer, but in practice the entire site is under Israeli military control.

As the TIPH report notes, Palestinian Muslims must now pass through several checkpoints to reach the mosque and are subjected to invasive body searches. The muezzin's call to prayer is regularly silenced to avoid disturbing Jews.

Faced with these pressures, according to TIPH, the number of Palestinians praying there has dropped by half over the past 15 years.

In Hebron, as at Al Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem, a Muslim holy site is treated solely as an obstacle – one that must be removed so that Israel can assert exclusive sovereignty over all of the Palestinians' former homeland.

The Massacre of 1994

A forerunner of TIPH was set up in 1994, shortly after Baruch Goldstein, an Israeli army doctor, entered the Ibrahimi mosque and shot more than 150 Muslims at prayer,

killing 29. Israeli soldiers aided Goldstein, inadvertently or otherwise, by barring the worshippers' escape while they were being sprayed with bullets.

The massacre should have provided the opportunity for Yitzhak Rabin, Israel's prime minister of the time, to banish Hebron's settlers and ensure the Oslo process remained on track. Instead he put the Palestinian population under prolonged curfew.

That curfew never really ended. It became the basis of an apartheid policy that has endlessly indulged Jewish settlers as they harass and abuse their Palestinian neighbors.

Israel's hope is that most will get the message and leave.

With Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in power for a decade, more settlers are moving in, driving out Palestinians. Today Hebron's old market, once the commercial hub of the southern West Bank, is a ghost town, and Palestinians are too terrified to enter large sections of their own city.

TIPH's report concluded that, far from guaranteeing "normal life," Israel had made Hebron more divided and dangerous for Palestinians than ever before.

In 2016 another army medic, Elor Azaria, used his rifle to shoot in the head a prone and badly wounded Palestinian youth. Unlike Goldstein's massacre, the incident was caught on video.

Israelis barely cared until Azaria was arrested. Then large sections of the public, joined by politicians, rallied to his cause, hailing him a hero.

Despite doing very little publicly, TIPH's presence in Hebron had served as some kind of restraint on the settlers and soldiers. Now the fear is that there will be more Azarias.

Palestinians rightly suspect that the expulsion of the observer force is the latest move in efforts by Israel and the U.S. to weaken mechanisms for protecting Palestinian human rights.

Netanyahu has incited against local and international human rights organizations constantly, accusing them of being foreign agents and making it ever harder for them to operate effectively.

And last year U.S. President Donald Trump cut all aid to UNRWA, the United Nations' refugee agency, which plays a vital role in caring for Palestinians and upholding their right to return to their former lands.

Not only are the institutions Palestinians rely on for support being dismembered but so now are the organizations that record the crimes Israel has been committing.

That, Israel hopes, will ensure that an international observer post which has long had no teeth will soon will soon lose its sight too as Israel begins a process of annexing the most prized areas of the West Bank – with Hebron top of the list.

Jonathan Cook is a freelance journalist based in Nazareth. He blogs at <https://www.jonathan-cook.net/blog/>.
