

America has Become a Police State

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In the far past, I used to look skeptically at those who believed and maintained that the United States is moving in the direction of becoming a rogue, police state. After all, nearly every single American media outlet propagates this belief that the United States is a “beacon of freedom”, and many people around the globe tend to accept it. Moreover, every year, thousands of people from different parts of the world immigrate to the States in search of a better and more prosperous life, having believed in the hidden power of this beacon of freedom in revolutionizing their lives. But now, I’ve come to the understanding that this is not the whole story, and even those who wishfully move to America to realize their dreams, find after a while that their hopes were in vain.

It may be the case that the United States is a plural society, where people from different races, languages, nationalities and religions live and have learned to get along with each other. It’s also true that the American citizens enjoy a relative level of economic welfare provided to them by the government. But does this mean that social freedoms, civil liberties and human rights are protected and enshrined by the U.S. government equally for all the citizens living in the States, regardless of their faith, color, religion and nationality? The answer is a big NO.

It’s been a long time, at least since the deadly 9/11 attacks, that the U.S. government has embarked on a mission of militarizing the American society and suppressing the voices that challenge its hegemony and the military-industrial complex that pushes the White House to more and more wars and conflicts in different parts of the world. The U.S. government, either deliberately, or under the pressure of the multinational corporations and the interest lobbies, has stridden on a path that propels it to warmongering, bullying and law-breaking. The decisions made by the U.S. government in the years following the 9/11 attacks bespeak of a growing restriction of the social freedoms and unwarrantable violation of the essential human rights of the American people and other nationals living in the United States.

The persecution of Muslims under the pretext that they were the Muslims who attacked the twin towers of the World Trade Center on 9/11, and that they pose a serious threat to the U.S. national security is one of several instances showing that the United States is no longer a liberal and normal society which treats its citizens on equal footing and honorably. The American Muslims, which comprise a 3-million-strong community in the United States, have occasionally reported that they were subject to different types of harassment, unlawful searches and seizures, extrajudicial detention, espionage plots and entrapments.

Khalifah al-Akili, a 34-year-old American Muslim from the Pittsburgh area recounted in March 2012 the story of his being unintentionally involved in an entrapment case schemed by the FBI counterterrorism executives who wanted to lay the groundwork for arresting him,

which they finally did. He was approached by a seemingly fellow Muslims while saying prayers in the district mosque. The so-called Muslim fellow called Shareef had offered to undertake the expenses for al-Akili to open a restaurant in a nearby district, and in return, he should have bought a rifle. Al-Akili refused to buy the gun, which he had considered a wrongdoing. Then Shareef tried several times to arrange a meeting between Al-Akili and someone introduced as Mohammed. Again he refused; but as soon as he obtained a phone number for Mohammed, he searched it on the web, and to his utmost surprise, found out that the number belonged to someone called Shahed Hussain, an undercover FBI operative. He called Hussain and asked him whether he worked with the FBI. Hussain hung up on him, and then disappeared from the district a few days later, leaving the home he owned there vacant.

An important report by the Mother Jones magazine and the Investigative Reporting Program in 2011 examined the prosecution of more than 500 defendants in terrorism-related cases in the United States. The report showed that “nearly half the prosecutions involved the use of informants,” motivated by money or “the need to work off criminal or immigration violations.” Moreover, “sting operations resulted in prosecutions against 158 defendants. Of that, 49 defendants participated in plots led by an agent provocateur — an FBI operative instigating terrorist action.” So, according to the report, “With three exceptions, all of the high-profile domestic terror plots of the last decade were actually FBI stings.”

Hence, it can be inferred that making efforts to portray Muslims as criminals or embroiling them in terrorist activities with the aim of demonizing and criminalizing them is a routine modus operandi of the U.S. government and military, intelligence apparatus. But this is not the entire story. The detention of Muslim citizens on baseless charges and without due judicial course, the destruction of mosques and preventing Muslim women from wearing headscarves are other examples of how the U.S. police state is treating the Muslims in a discriminatory manner. Many civil rights organizations in the United States have warned in the recent months against the intensification of furtive intelligence operations against the Muslims and espionage plots in the mosques and Muslim communities.

Muslims in the United States complain that they are not free to practice their religious rituals in public. They are repeatedly scorned and insulted and like the African-Americans who bear the brunt of being demoralized and derogated upon by the whites, the Muslims have become accustomed to being offended and called terrorists in the public sphere.

On September 9, 2011, the prominent Egyptian-American journalist Mona Eltahawy wrote an article in The Guardian and explained her plight as a Muslim living in the post-9/11 America. She said that after getting divorced from her American husband following the 9/11 attacks, she remained in the States and started a battle to defend her religion against those who intended to portray it a wicked and dangerous faith: “Ironically, he [her husband] now lives in Asia and I’ve stayed in the U.S. I stayed to fight. To say that’s not my Islam. To yell Muslims weren’t invented on 9/11. Those planes crashing again and again into the towers were the first introduction to Islam and Muslims for too many Americans but we – American Muslims – are sick and tired of explaining. None of those men was an American Muslim and we’re done explaining and apologizing. Enough.”

In her article, she narrates the “challenge” of being a Muslim in the post-9/11 America. She writes that President George Bush did everything he could to punish the Muslims for the crime they had not committed: “military trials for civilians, secret prisons, the detention of hundreds of Muslim men without charge, the torture and harsh interrogation of detainees

and the invasions of two Muslim-majority countries.

“And the latest stain on the US civil liberties record: an Associated Press expose in August on ways the CIA and the NYPD are combining forces to spy on Muslims in New York City. The thought that someone could be following me to my favorite book shops or night clubs is as pathetic and sinister as when the Mubarak regime tapped my phone and had me followed when I lived in Egypt,” she added.

But as it can be easily guessed, they’re not only the Muslims who fall prey to the bigotry and prejudice of the U.S. police state. The U.S. government has taken a hard line on all of its citizens, not simply the Muslims or the non-American immigrants. In this light, the whistleblowers who remove the lid from the atrocities and crimes of the U.S. military and intelligence apparatus have come under the onslaught of the U.S. government, and aside from people such as Edward Snowden and Chelsea Manning whose stories have made the headlines, there are audacious freedom fighters like John Kiriakou, who have not only been illegally arrested and sentenced to long terms in prison, but were and are being unlawfully tortured and finding their dignity and esteem being trampled underfoot.

One of these whistleblowers is John Kiriakou, a former CIA analyst and case officer and senior investigator for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee who revealed that the United States government has authorized the use of brutal torture methods in the prisons for getting confession from the culprits. In a 2007 interview with the ABC News, John said that CIA was torturing prisoners and that this torture was official US government policy. Kiriakou was the first U.S. official who admitted that the Central Intelligence Agency has used the torturing method of waterboarding against the suspects kept at Guantanamo bay detention facility and other underground prisons maintained by the United States. On January 25, 2013, Kiriakou was sentenced to 30 months in prison, and his term began on February 28. There are conflicting reports that John Kiriakou, himself a former CIA employee, was tortured while being kept in jail.

In recent years, a growing number of authors, intellectuals, activists and even politicians in the United States who are concerned about the future of their country have been constantly warning that the United States is becoming a police state, and that the prospects of democracy and freedom in this country seems alarming and indeterminate.

John W. Whitehead, the President of The Rutherford Institute has extensively researched on and documented the evidence and cases which substantiate the idea that the United States is no longer a democratic and free society, but a rogue state. He has even written a book exclusively on this topic, entitled “A Government of Wolves: The Emerging American Police State.”

“With each tragic shooting that is shrugged off or covered up, each piece of legislation passed that criminalizes otherwise legal activities, every surveillance drone that takes to the skies, every phone call, email or text that is spied on, and every transaction that is monitored, the government’s stranglehold over our lives grows stronger,” writes Whitehead in an article for The Blaze magazine published on November 5, 2013.

He narrates the heartrending story of the 13-year-old Andy Lopez, a Santa Rosa teen who was shot dead by two sheriffs as they suspected him to be carrying an illegal assault weapon directed at them, while what was in his hands was a toy BB gun he had just shopped.

Whitehead says that according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, every year around 400 to 500 innocent civilians are killed by the U.S. police in such foolish confrontations. He also notes that the U.S. government has allocated unnecessarily excessive budgets to the local police departments in the different states and equipped them with advanced military warfare and even unmanned drones. He notes that the military budget of the United States exceeds that of the next 10 countries combined, and this is what singles out the United States as a country that has an unusual voraciousness for warmongering and militarism.

Militarism, expansionism and tyranny have become the hallmarks of the American civilization, and this is really sorrowful for a country whose leaders call a beacon of freedom. If we rely on Hollywood, Fox News and CNN to tell us what the United States is and what it is not, we will unquestionably come to believe that it's the most flawless, progressive, advancing and democratic empire of the world in which injustice and inequality are totally irrelevant. But let's open our eyes to find out what's really happening behind the scenes and what the mainstream, corporate media don't tell us about the emerging police state.

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