

Amnesty International's "Kangaroo Report" on Human Rights in Syria

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In-depth Report: [SYRIA](#)

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Introduction

Amnesty International (AI) has done some good investigations and reports over the years. This has won them widespread support. However, less well recognized, Amnesty International has also carried out faulty investigations contributing to bloody and disastrous actions. One prominent example is in Iraq, where AI ["corroborated"](#) the false story that Iraqi soldiers were stealing incubators from Kuwait, leaving babies to die on the cold floor. The deception was planned and carried out in Washington DC to influence the public and Congress.

A more recent example is from 2011 where [false accusations](#) were being made about Libya and its leader as Western and Gulf powers sought to overthrow the Gaddafi government. AI leaders joined the campaign claiming that Gaddafi was using ["mercenaries"](#) to threaten and kill peacefully protesting civilians. The propaganda was successful in muting criticism. Going far beyond a UN Security Council resolution to "protect civilians", NATO launched sustained air attacks and toppled the Libyan government leading to chaos, violence and a flood of refugees. AI later refuted the "mercenary" accusations but the damage was done.

The Sensational New Amnesty International Report

On 7 February Amnesty International released a new report titled "Human Slaughterhouse: Mass Hangings and Extermination at Saydnaya Prison". It has received huge uncritical review in mainstream and liberal media.

Like the Iraq/Kuwait incubator story and the Libyan 'mercenary' story, the "Human Slaughterhouse" report is coming at a critical time. The consequences of the AI report are to accuse and convict the Syrian government of horrible atrocities against civilians. AI explicitly calls for the international community to take "action".

As will be shown below, the AI report is biased and partial. To the extent that it is resulting in a widespread kangaroo conviction of the Syrian government, the AI release can be called a "Kangaroo Report".

Problems with the Report

1) The Amnesty International report on Syria violates their own research standards. As

documented by Prof Tim Hayward [here](#), the Secretary General of Amnesty International, Salil Shetty, claims that Amnesty does its research *‘in a very systematic, primary, way where we collect evidence with our own staff on the ground. And every aspect of our data collection is based on corroboration and cross-checking from all parties, even if there are, you know, many parties in any situation because of all of the issues we deal with are quite contested. So it’s very important to get different points of view and constantly cross check and verify the facts.’* As documented below, the Amnesty report fails on all counts: they rely on third parties, they did not gather different points of view and they did not cross-check.

2) The report conclusions are not based on primary sources, material evidence or their own staff; they are solely based on the claims of anonymous individuals, mostly in southern Turkey from where the war on Syria is coordinated.

3) Amnesty gathered witnesses and testimonies from only one side of the conflict: the Western and Gulf supported opposition. For example, AI consulted with the [Syrian Network for Human Rights](#) which is known to seek NATO intervention in Syria. AI “liased” with the Commission for International Justice and Accountability. This organization is funded by the West to press criminal charges against the Syrian leadership. These are obviously not neutral, independent or nonpartisan organizations. If AI was doing what the Secretary General claims they do, they would have consulted with organizations within or outside Syria to hear different accounts of life at Saydnaya Prison. Since the AI report has been released, the [AngryArab](#) has published the account of a Syrian dissident, Nizar Nayyounf, who was imprisoned at Saydnaya. He contradicts many statements in the Amnesty International report. This is the type of cross-checking which Amnesty International failed to do for this important study.

4) Amnesty’s accusation that executions were “extrajudicial” is exaggerated or false. By Amnesty’s own description, each prisoner appeared briefly before a judge and each execution was authorized by a high government leader. We do not know if the judge looked at documentation or other information regarding each prisoner. One could argue that the process was superficial but it’s clear there was some kind of judicial process.

5) Amnesty’s suggestion that all Saydnaya prisoners are convicted is false. Amnesty quotes one of their witnesses who says about the court: *“The judge will ask the name of the detainee and whether he committed the crime. Whether the answer is yes or no, he will be convicted.”* This assertion is contradicted by a former Saydnaya prisoner who is now a refugee in Sweden. In [this](#) news report the former prisoner says the judge “asked him how many soldiers he had killed. When he said none, the judge spared him.” This is evidence that there is a judicial process of some sort and there are acquittals.

6) The Amnesty report includes satellite photographs with captions which are meaningless or erroneous. For example, as pointed out by Syrian dissident Nizar Nayyounf, the photo on page 30 showing a Martyrs Cemetery is “silly beyond silly”. The photo and caption show the cemetery doubled in size. However, this does not prove hangings of prisoners who would never be buried in a “martyrs cemetery” reserved for Syrian army soldiers. On the contrary, it confirms the fact which Amnesty International otherwise ignores: Syrian soldiers have died in large numbers.

7) The Amnesty report falsely claims, based on data provided by one of the groups seeking NATO intervention, *“The victims are overwhelmingly ordinary civilians who are thought to*

oppose the government.” While it’s surely true that innocent civilians are sometimes wrongly arrested, as happens in all countries, the suggestion that Saydnaya prison is filled with 95% “ordinary civilians” is preposterous. Amnesty International can make this claim with a straight face because they have effectively “disappeared” the reality of Syria. Essential facts which are completely missing from the Amnesty report include:

a) western powers and Gulf monarchies have put up billions of dollars annually since 2011 to fund, train, weaponize, provide salaries and propaganda in support of a violent campaign to overthrow the Syrian government; b) tens of thousands of foreign fanatics have invaded Syria;

c) tens of thousands of Syrians have been radicalized and paid by Wahabi monarchies in the Gulf to overthrow the government;

d) over 100 THOUSAND Syrian Army and National Defense soldiers have been [killed defending their country](#). Most of this is public information yet ignored by Amnesty International and other media in the West. They have done a massive distortion and cover-up of reality.

8) Without providing evidence, Amnesty International accuses the highest Sunni religious leader in Syria, Grand Mufti Ahmad Badreddin Hassoun, of authorizing the execution of “ordinary civilians”. The Grand Mufti is a personal victim: his son was murdered by terrorists near Aleppo. Yet he has consistently called for reconciliation. Following the assassination of his son, Grand Mufti Hassoun gave an eloquent speech expressing forgiveness for the murderers and calling for an end to the violence. What does it say about Amnesty International that they make these kind of specific personal accusations, against people who have personally suffered, yet provide zero evidence?

9) Amnesty uses sensational and emotional accusations in place of factual evidence. The title of the report is “Human Slaughterhouse”. What goes with a “slaughterhouse”? Why of course a “meat fridge”! The report uses the expression “meat fridge” seven separate times, presumably in an attempt to buttress the association. Even the opening quotation is hyperbolic: “Saydnaya is the end of life – the end of humanity”. This report is in sharp contrast with fact-based objective research and investigation; it is closer to perception management and manipulation.

10) Amnesty International accusations that the Syrian government is carrying out a policy of “extermination” are contradicted by the fact that the vast majority of Syrians prefer to live in government controlled areas. When the “rebels” were finally driven out of East Aleppo in December 2016, 90% of [civilians rushed into government](#) controlled areas. In recent days, civilians from Latakia province who had been imprisoned by terrorists for the past 3 years have been liberated in a prisoner exchange. The following [video](#) shows the Syrian President and first lady meeting with some of the civilians and gives a sense of the joy.

11) The Amnesty report is accompanied by a 3 minute [cartoon](#) which gives the false narrative that Syrian civilians who protest peacefully are imprisoned and executed. The cartoon is titled “Saydnaya Prison: Human Slaughterhouse”. Apparently Amnesty International is in denial of the fact that there are many tens of thousands of violent extremists in Syria. They set off car bombs, launch mortars and otherwise attack civilian areas every day. While there are mistakes from time to time, and also cases of corruption and bribery, it makes no sense that Syrian security or prison authorities would be wasting

time and resources with non-violent civilians when there are tens of thousands of foreign sponsored actual terrorists in the country. The AI accusation is also contradicted by the fact that there are many opposition parties in Syria. They compete for seats in the National Assembly and campaign openly for public support from both the right and left of the Baath Party.

12) The Amnesty claim that Syrian authorities brutally repress peaceful protest is also contradicted by the Syrian reconciliation process. For the past several years armed opposition militants have been encouraged to lay down their weapons and peacefully rejoin society. This is largely unreported in western media because it contradicts the false stereotype presented by Amnesty International and western media in general. A recent example is reported [here](#).

13) The Amnesty report cites the “Caesar” photographs as supporting evidence but ignores the fact that nearly half the photographs show the opposite of what was claimed. The widely publicized “Caesar photographs” was a Qatari funded hoax designed to sabotage the 2014 Geneva negotiations as documented [here](#).

14) The Amnesty report makes many accusations against the Syrian government but ignores the violation of Syrian sovereignty being committed by western and Gulf countries. It is a curious fact that big NGOs such as Amnesty International focus on violations of “human rights law” and “humanitarian law” but ignore the crime of aggression, also called the crime against peace. According to the Nuremberg Tribunal, this is “the supreme international crime, differing only from other war crimes in that it contains within itself the accumulated evil of the whole.” Former Nicaraguan Foreign Minister and former President of the U.N. General Assembly, Father Miguel D’Escoto, is someone who should know. He says, *“What the U.S. government is doing in Syria is tantamount to a war of aggression, which, according to the Nuremberg Tribunal, is the worst possible crime a State can commit against another State.”* Amnesty International ignores this.

Background and Context

The co-author of this Amnesty International report is Nicolette Waldman (Boehland). She was uncritically [interviewed](#) on DemocracyNow on 9 February. The background and previous work of Waldman shows the inter-connections between influential Washington “think tanks” and the billionaire foundation funded Non Governmental Organizations that claim to be independent but are clearly not. Waldman previously worked for the “Center for Civilians in Conflict”. This organization is directed by leaders from George Soros’ Open Society, Human Rights Watch, Blackrock Solutions and the Center for a New American Security (CNAS). CNAS may be the most significant indication of political orientation since it is led by Michele Flournoy, who was predicted to become Secretary of Defense if Hillary Clinton had won the election. CNAS has been a [leading force](#) behind neo-conservatives plan to escalate war in Syria. While past work or associations do not always define new or future work, in this case the sensational and evidence-free accusations seem to align with neoconservative political goals.

Conclusion

Amnesty International has previously published false information or “corroboration” which justified western aggression against Iraq and Libya. This seems to be the same role they are playing now in Syria.

The Amnesty International report is a combination of accusations based on hearsay and sensationalism. Partially because of Amnesty's undeserved reputation for independence and accuracy, the report has been picked up and broadcast widely. Liberal and supposedly progressive media outlets have dutifully echoed the dubious accusations. In reality this report amounts to a Kangaroo court with the victim being the Syrian government and people who have borne the brunt of the foreign sponsored aggression. If this report sparks an escalation of the conflict, which Amnesty International seems to call for, it will be a big step backwards not forwardjust like in Iraq and Libya.

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