

Cognitive Warfare: Israel Targets Journalists Who Threaten Its Reality-Creation Tactics

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They were shooting directly at the journalists: New evidence suggests Shireen Abu Akleh was killed in targeted attack by Israeli forces”. Thus read a [CNN headline](#) on May 26, 2022, for an article describing what may have been a “targeted killing,” – that is, assassination – of Al Jazeera journalist Shirleen Abu Akleh, a 51-year-old highly esteemed Palestinian-American journalist who had covered Israeli repression of the Palestinian population for about 25 years before she was killed.

With this killing and its aftermath, one knows that it is all hands on deck for an Israeli government cognitive campaign in the perpetual cognitive war Israel wages against the world, as will be explained below.

According to the *CNN* article, Abu Akleh was killed by a bullet to the head at around 6:30 a.m. on May 11, while standing with a group of journalists near the entrance of Jenin refugee camp as they covered an Israeli raid. “We stood in front of the Israeli military vehicles for about five to ten minutes before we made moves to ensure they saw us. And this is a habit of ours as journalists; we move as a group and we stand in front of them so they know we are journalists, and then we start moving,” a Palestinian reporter, Shatha Hanaysha, told *CNN*, describing their cautious approach toward the Israeli army convoy before the gunfire began.

Video recordings of the surrounding area showed the killing shots could have come only from the Israeli soldiers in specially designed “sniper” vehicles that were in direct line-of-fire positions to Abu Akleh that morning. Eyewitnesses told *CNN* that they “believed Israeli forces on the same street fired deliberately on the reporters in a targeted attack. All of the journalists were wearing protective blue vests that identified them as members of the news media.”

“Lawful Targets” in a “Cognitive War”

The “blue vests” might have been what ensured the journalists *would* be targeted by Israeli forces, if Israeli forces see journalists as “lawful targets” in the war they continue to wage against the Palestinians, in what is in fact a continuation of the 1967 War. That is, an unrelenting military occupation in violation of international law, which constitutes a continuation of the “war.” And the evidence shows Israeli military/intel forces do see journalists as “lawful targets,” as part of the “Cognitive War” they wage against the Palestinians, but more particularly against the global population in an attempt to legitimize their military oppression of the Palestinians in their ongoing effort of “population expulsion” of the Palestinians from Palestinian territory. As Benjamin Netanyahu’s father, Benzion, proclaimed shortly before he died, this is the objective of Israel Zionists like him.

In fact, while Abu Akleh was the only journalist killed that day by Israeli forces, she wasn’t the only Palestinian journalist shot. A group of four Palestinian reporters was fired upon as well, with one also injured in the gunfire. That was not because Israeli forces had an obstructed view; footage showed a direct line of sight between the reporters and the Israeli convoy. That only one of the four was hit, besides Abu Akleh, is probably taken by military superiors as a sign that their marksmanship must be improved.

A firearms expert told *CNN*: “The relatively tight grouping of the rounds indicate Shireen was intentionally targeted with aimed shots and not the victim of random or stray fire.”

But an indication of how the Israeli military sees journalists, other than “reliable” Israeli press, was revealed on the day of the shooting by an Israeli military spokesperson, Ran Kochav. Kochav [told](#) Army Radio that Abu Akleh had been “filming and working for a media outlet amidst armed Palestinians. They’re armed with cameras, if you’ll permit me to say so.” And if they are “armed,” they are “lawful targets” in “war.”

In fact, the killing of journalists has [been openly called for](#) in the “flagship publication” of the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs, [The Journal of International Security Affairs](#), by retired U.S. Army Officer Ralph Peters. The odious 2009 article – potentially a war crime in itself – stated: “Although it seems unthinkable now, future wars may require censorship, news blackouts, and, ultimately, military attacks on the partisan media.”

The Power of “Cognitive Warfare”

The Israeli military [said](#) it was conducting an investigation into the killing of Abu Akleh, and added, “assertions regarding the source of the fire that killed Ms. Abu Akleh must be carefully made and backed by hard evidence. This is what the IDF is striving to achieve.” In fact, obfuscating that is what the IDF and its Cognitive Warfare component must be seen as “striving to achieve” – at least if Israeli Cognitive War theorists, one of whom is quoted at length below, are to be believed.

Leaving it to those few journalists who report honestly to provide more facts on this assassination – as Abu Akleh would have, giving motive to Israeli forces to particularly target her with lethal fire – “Cognitive Warfare” should be explained further.

The best source for understanding the concept is Israel’s own doctrinal statements about the “cognitive domain” of warfare. A clue to that was presented when an Israeli lawyer filed a lawsuit [alleging](#) that “Israel’s Ministry of Strategic Affairs [is] carrying out a global

propaganda campaign on behalf of the Israeli government that violates human rights and is acting without authority to do so... Attorney Schachar Ben Meir's petition demands that the High Court of Justice order a halt to the activities carried out by the Ministry of Strategic Affairs, headed by Gilad Erdan."

The substance of the claim was that the Israeli government had approved the payment of NIS 128 million (\$38 million) to a private organization called Kela-Shlomo to carry out "mass consciousness activities" within the framework of what the Ministry of Strategic Affairs calls "extra-governmental discourse." That is, publication of government propaganda on social networks and newspapers often carried out through private businesses and non-profit organizations operating in Israel and abroad.

But to determine the correct "messages" to promote or counter requires "surveilling citizens and conducting illegal operations intended to influence and manipulate public opinion." That is what constitutes "mass consciousness activities" – a fascist type of governmental activity if there ever was one, but "updated" to utilize "private contractors" to conduct operations, in addition to governmental military/intel assets. This explains the proliferation of "private Israeli intelligence/influence" firms.

The Musings of a Cognitive Warfare Theorist

The current Minister of Diaspora Affairs, Nachman Shai, who in the past was a spokesperson for the Israeli military, explained and promoted the higher level to which cognitive warfare has been taken from its origins as mere "propaganda" or "hasbara," in his book "Hearts and Minds: Israel and the Battle for Public Opinion."

He explained that, in the expected 21st-century wars of Israel and the United States, the "principal effort will be the battle for consciousness." He explained further:

[There] are various terms to describe the battle for consciousness. In Britain, it is called the fight for hearts and minds. The U.S. military uses the expressions psychological warfare, perception management, influence management, and information operation. The idea speaks about consciousness: the strategy of limited conflict is to win a decision of consciousness in the society with the help of military means. The battle is for the society's consciousness and for national resilience."

Furthermore, according to Shai: "Consciousness is not a natural and inherent concept but rather a structured process, continually shaped by interested parties and by those who wield wealth and power." How this is done in its current terminology is described in a [publication](#) of the Israeli "Institute for National Security Studies" entitled: "The Cognitive Campaign: Strategic and Intelligence Perspectives." Its Preface states:

It is important to distinguish between cognition and the cognitive campaign. Cognition is the set of insights that an individual or individuals have regarding the surrounding reality and the way they want to shape it, derived from the set of the values and beliefs through which they examine and interpret their environment and work to confront its inherent challenges, and even to change it. In contrast, the cognitive campaign involves the actions and tools that entities that are part of a certain campaign framework use to influence the cognition of target audiences or to prevent influence on them. The purpose of the cognitive campaign is to cause target audiences to adopt the perception of reality held by the side wielding the effort, so that it can more easily advance the strategic and/or operational objectives that it

sees as critical. The cognitive campaign can be negative, that is, prevent the development of undesirable cognitive states, or positive, with an attempt to produce the desired cognition.

That the “cognitive campaign can be negative, that is, prevent the development of undesirable cognitive states,” is why Julian Assange has been imprisoned for years now, with no likelihood he will ever be freed by the U.S. government and why Edward Snowden was forced to take refuge in a foreign country to avoid the same fate. The U.S. must silence them and other dissidents, lest an “undesirable cognitive state” develops in the U.S. population – as one eventually developed over the [Vietnam War](#), and eventually forced the U.S. out of Vietnam.

Thus it is reasonable to believe that is why Israel has targeted so many journalists over the last couple of decades – as has the U.S. It would be foolish and/or naïve not to believe that when retired military officers openly call for “targeted killings” of journalists, that they aren’t already being targeted!

Making Our Own Reality

When Karl Rove was alleged to have said how the United States is now “an empire, we make our own reality,” he was not just making a hubristic statement. Rather, it can be seen as an indication that he was aware of how powerful a “cognitive campaign” is. In fact, such campaigns were always how the CIA conducted post-World War II coups, and it can be speculated that “cognitive campaigns” were [introduced](#) into U.S. political campaigns by Arthur Finkelstein and his “Six-Party Theory” in the 1972 Nixon campaign, down to the 2016 Trump campaign, based upon cognitive warfare principles drawn from CIA coups and the Israeli military occupation.

The authors of “[The Cognitive Campaign: Strategic and Intelligence Perspectives](#)” wrote:

The cognitive campaign is not new, and it is an inseparable aspect of every strategic and military conflict. In recent years, this struggle has played a much more important role than in past conflicts; at times it takes place without a direct military context and is not even led by military bodies. The cognitive campaign is a continuous campaign; thus, its prominence is greater in the period between wars (as a part of the “campaign between wars).”

In fact, as these authors know, there is no such thing as “between wars” in Israel or the United States, with both countries in “Perpetual War” regardless of the level of aggressive kinetic war they are waging at any given moment.

Carl von Clausewitz wrote in “On War” that two different motives make men fight one another: hostile feelings and hostile intentions. Inciting those “feelings” is done by both Israel and the U.S. continuously, by multifarious networks to “condition” their populations with “hostile feelings and hostile intentions.” As has been done in the U.S. to incite hatred of Russia, China, Iran, et al., so that a war with either one, or all, can explode at any moment. Israel does the same against Iran and the Palestinians. Mission Accomplished!

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