

Insanity and the Nobel Peace Prize: Obama and the Rule of Law

By [Felicity Arbuthnot](#)

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“The greater the power, the more dangerous the abuse.” Edmund Burke, 1729-1797.

“Oh God! That men should put an enemy in their mouths and steal away their brains.” Othello, William Shakespeare, 1546-1616.

Ten months of an Obama Administration seems an eternity away from the hope he had inspired in so many.

“Let’s seek a better world in our time”, said Obama, as he travelled Abraham Lincoln’s path to the January 20th inauguration – coincidentally paraphrasing Winston Churchill’s speech at Westminster College, Fulton, Missouri (5th March 1946) where he was introduced by President McClure.

As the President-to-be headed for Washington, to swear the oath on a bible used by Lincoln, did he ponder on Lincoln’s: “With malice toward none; with charity for all”?

In the inaugural address Barack Hussein Obama vowed: “To the Muslim world, we seek a way forward, based on mutual respect.” The following day, he stated: “Transparency and the rule of law will be the touchstone of this Presidency.” On 24th January, the (London) Independent opined: “With a stroke of the pen, Mr. Obama halted his predecessors ... policy to (bend) the U.S. Constitution and international legal obligations under the Geneva Conventions.”

Eight days in, he told Al-Arabiya: “My job to the Muslim world is to communicate that Americans are not your enemy” (as he prepared to send thousands more troops to cull humanity in the villages and valleys of Afghanistan.)

Reality crystallised thirteen days in. On 2nd February, an unnamed official stated that some of the tactics of George W. Bush’s “Crusade”, sorry, “anti-terror” frenzy, needed retaining : “Obviously you need to preserve some troops. You still have to go after the bad guys ... if done within certain parameters it is an acceptable practice.”

R.I.P., “The rule of law, touchstone ..” of the forty fourth Presidency.

The “folly bordering on insanity” of the Afghan invasion has entered it’s body-littered eighth year. The gulag that is Bagram (and its counterparts dotted around the globe) remain. The uncharged, condemned, rotting in Guantanamo, may be moved to rot in prisons in the US. Will the world know if any go missing to be spirited into the limbo of another unknown

destination? It is also reported that some may be sent to Saudi Arabia, where an Obama spokesman said in chilling Orwell-speak : “Excellent re-education facilities” have been developed.

In Iraq, pogroms, liquidations, summary executions, incarcerations, infanticide, rapes and depravities continue unabated, either at the hand of, or generated by, the U.S. invasion. Unsurprising that Roget’s definition’ under “killer” include : “slayer” and “soldier.”

“Yes we can”, now resonates with irony rather than hope, as sabres are also rattled against Iran; Pakistan is bombed by U.S. drones, in indiscriminate liquidations of families, villages, markets – and last month, the poorest of the poor incinerated or blown to infinity, as they syphoned gasoline from two mired tankers, to be bombed by U.S. ‘planes. Witness Mohammed Daud described: “Hands, legs and body parts” strewn far and wide.

(In a further oratorical coincidence, “Yes we can”, was the rallying cry of Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta, of the United Farm Workers Union who adopted the phrase for their demands during Chavez twenty four day hunger strike in 1972: “Se, se puedo.”)

The slogan has certainly been taken to heart. A little over a month ago, the President of the United States and former President of the Harvard Law Review, in the words of Chris Floyd: “... took a moment out of his busy day to sign an ‘execute order’. That is, he ordered American agents to kill a man without any legal procedure whatever: no arrest, no trial, ... no defence and no warning,” Quite an “I can.”

In an illegality of breath taking scale, on 24th September, reportedly in a multi-forces operation, which included US Navy Seals, six U.S. helicopters invaded Somali air space and attacked vehicles near the coastal town of Barawe seemingly killing Saleh Ali Saleh Nabhan, a twenty eight year old Kenyan Muslim and six others. Nabhan was alleged by the U.S. to have been involved in an attack on a hotel and Israeli airliner in 2002. Some reports have connected him to the 1998 bombings of US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. Naturally he is “believed to have connections with” a member of a terrorist group, Al-Shahab, which, inevitable “is believed” to have links with the ultimate bogeyman, al-Qaeda.

So no prosecution, trial, no reading of rights, no defence lawyer. A pile of allegations, six summary executions, illegal entry to a sovereign state (whatever its chaotic realities) two kidnappings, all topped off with a bit of body snatching. The dead and two reported to be alive, were flown to an American war ship off the coast and have not been heard of since.

“The U.S. has not provided official details on the raid or the number of people killed or where the bodies were taken.” (1)

Inspite of demands from a cross section of Muslim leaders demanding the bodies back from the Obama Administration, including The Council of Imams and the Preachers of Kenya Organising Secretary, Sheikh Mohammed Khalifa, seemingly no response has been forthcoming. Nabhan’s Mother, Aisha Abdallah has begged for her son’s body.

The President who understands and vowed to “communicate” with the Muslim world, who spent his formative years in a Muslim country, had a Kenyan Muslim father and played on both when, seemingly, it helped enhance his inclusive credentials on the road to election, ordered a gangster-style summary execution of a Kenyan Muslim and others in this foray at

the wheel of the ridiculous “war on terrorism”, with still over four months to go to his first anniversary in the White House.

In 1995, President Clinton signed Presidential Directive 39, which states:

“If we do not receive adequate cooperation from a state that harbours a terrorist whose extradition we are seeking, we shall take appropriate measures to induce cooperation. Return of subjects by force may be affected without the cooperation of the host government.” Afghanistan is seemingly a tragic example. The US as global judge, jury and executioner, as ever. And it was always said Obama was a quick learner.

And was “cooperation” even sought from Somalia? No bets on that.

On 9th of October President Obama was awarded this year’s Nobel Peace Prize for: “..his extraordinary efforts to strengthen international diplomacy and cooperation between peoples.”

It was Tom Lehrer who said that: “political satire became obsolete when Henry Kissinger was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.” Obama is a good runner up. Having said he was “humbled” to be nominated, he returned to discussing whether to send forty five thousand troops to the graveyard of empires (and Afghans) or, reports have suggested, even sixty five thousand.

And it was the day America bombed the moon.

“Throughout the world, on any given day, a man, woman or child is likely to be displaced, tortured, killed or “disappeared”, at the hands of governments or armed political groups. More often than not, the United States shares the blame.” Amnesty International 1996. (3)

Notes

(1) Al Jazeera, 16th September 2009.

(2) Rogue State, William Blum, 2002, Spearhead (updated edition.)

(3) Quoted William Blum, as above.

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