

The Close-Knit Relationship between Britain and Saudi Arabia. Crown Prince Bin Salman's Visit to London

An interview with Dr. Marcus Papadopoulos

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Yemen Press: Can you describe, for the Yemen Press Agency, the situation in the UK ahead of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's visit?

Dr. Marcus Papadopoulos: Saudi Arabia is one of Britain's closest allies and friends in the world. Political, economic and military relations between Riyadh and London are intense, and these have become all the more close-knit because of the conflicts in Syria and in Yemen. Regarding Syria, the Saudis and the British have armed, trained and financed Wahhabist terrorist groups in the country, such as Al-Nusra and the FSA, to try and overthrow the Syrian Government, while in Yemen, the British have sold billions of pounds worth of weapons to Riyadh so that the Saudi military can continue prosecuting its campaign of terror against Yemeni civilians.

Turning to Saudi influence in Britain, this is frighteningly high. Many British politicians have close ties to Saudi Arabia and defend the Saudis to the bone. So, for instance, in October 2016, the Labour Party put forward a motion in the House of Commons calling on the British Government to withdraw UK support from Saudi Arabia's war on Yemen. Vast numbers of Conservative MPs voted against the motion, while approximately 100 Labour MPs were absent from the vote. Unsurprisingly, the motion was defeated. The actions of those Conservative and roughly 100 Labour MPs was an affront to humanity and shameful. Those politicians have the blood of Yemeni civilians, including babies and children, on their hands. But, what that vote demonstrated is how powerful Saudi influence is at the UK Houses of Parliament.

Together with Saudi Arabia wielding immense clout at Westminster, there are huge sums of Saudi money invested in London, especially in the stock exchange and in the property sector. And it is believed that most mosques in the UK are under the control of the Saudis, who use this power to indoctrinate British Muslims with the poison that is Wahhabism. Indeed, as Ahmad Badreddin Hassoun, the Grand Mufti of Syria, recalled about his visit to the UK over 20 years ago: "I spoke at a mosque, as well as the biggest Jewish synagogue in London. I warned that the terrorists are very close and that British mosques are in the hands of Saudis and the Muslim Brotherhood. I said the same thing in Oxford. But nobody seems to have taken any notice."

YP: Can you name the main political parties in Britain and whether any of these are planning to protest against Mohammed bin Salman's visit?

DMP: The political landscape in the UK is dominated by the Conservative and Labour parties, and Saudi influence can be found in both of these parties, especially the Conservative one. Regarding protests by British politicians against the visit to London by Mohammed bin Salman, these will be, regrettably, rather insignificant. There will be, undoubtedly, protests by some Labour politicians who are on the left of the Labour Party. As regards protests by Conservative politicians, I doubt there will be any at all.

Sadly, Britain does not have a free and independent press, so many Britons, including politicians, are not aware of the horrors that Saudi Arabia is inflicting on the people of Yemen, using British weapons in doing so. But we must never lose sight of the fact that many British politicians are very aware of what the Saudis are doing in Yemen but remain indifferent so as not to jeopardise their ties with Riyadh. That is a truly disgusting and despicable reality.

YP: Some people are accusing you of being an ally to Iran, especially after your interview with Sky News where you described the US-backed fighters in East Ghouta, Syria, as being Al Qaeda. How do you reply to that?

DMP: I am an ally to the Syrian people and, indeed, all peoples who have suffered at the hands of Wahhabist terrorists, including my own people, the British. At the scene of every terrorist attack in the world, be it New York, Bali, Madrid, London, Paris or Manchester, there was a sign pointing to Saudi Arabia. I wish that more Britons would become aware that their own Government is endangering their lives because of its close relationship with Saudi Arabia. In my opinion, mosques in the UK should be prohibited from preaching Wahhabism, airing sermons from Saudi Arabia and selling Wahhabist DVDs and literature. Wahhabism should be made a criminal offence in the UK. If I was a politician, I would be calling on the British Government to sever its relationship with Saudi Arabia and clamp down on Wahhabist activities in the UK.

YP: How do you see American influence in the Middle East?

DMP: American dominance of the Middle East is a reality and one that will not change, even though Russia has now resumed its role in exerting considerable influence in the region, as it did in Soviet times. The US is Saudi Arabia's most important ally and friend; no America, no Saudi Arabia – it is as simple as that. So Saudi Arabia is able to extend its malignant tentacles across the world – killing mass numbers of people in doing so and poisoning the minds of countless others- because of America's political, economic and military relationship with Riyadh. Furthermore, if you thought that US-Saudi ties could not become any closer, then think again because Donald Trump has personal ties to Saudi Arabia and this helps to explain why, in just the first few months of his presidency, he signed contracts – economic and military – with the Saudis to the tune of hundreds of billions of dollars' worth. Alas, the export of Wahhabism to the world will continue to flourish.

YP: Are Londoners planning to organise a protest against Mohammed bin Salman's visit to London?

DMP: Yes – there is a planned protest by some ordinary Britons and by some human rights groups to demonstrate against the visit of Mohammed bin Salman, a most wretched of human beings. But that will be it. British media will not tell the UK public of the true nature of this man and his loathsome actions against civilians in Yemen, while British Ministers and

other politicians, alike, will line up to see him – and, undoubtedly, in an obsequious way. What a perverted world we live in.

The Metropolitan Police will, of course, be present at the protests to ensure that they are legal and peaceful, which I hope, and believe, they will be. Of course, if there was any justice in Britain, the British police would arrest Mohammed bin Salman the second he sets foot on UK soil.

YP: Could you introduce yourself for the Yemen Press Agency's readers, especially your timeline of supporting Yemen?

DMP: I hold a doctorate in Russian history and specialise in Russia and the rest of the former Soviet Union, as well as specialising on the former Yugoslavia. I am also the editor of *Politics First*, a non-partisan publication for the UK Houses of Parliament – a magazine written by politicians for politicians.

As regards my support for the Yemeni people, I have been vocally supporting them ever since Saudi Arabia embarked on its murderous and depraved military campaign in Yemen, three years ago now. To the people of Yemen, I have this message: I am so sorry for the actions of my Government in supplying arms to the Saudis which have then been used to murder your family members and friends; I only wish I could do more to help you at this perilous time.

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