

The Yemen Tragedy and the Ongoing Crisis of the Left in the United States

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... it is Western propaganda that is capable of mobilizing the masses for whatever ends or goals anywhere in the world. For whatever reasons, it can trigger coups, conflicts, terrible violence, and 'strive for change.' It can call the most peaceful large country on earth the most violent; it can describe it as the real threat to world peace; and it can call a bunch of Western nations that have been, for centuries, terrorizing the world, the true upholders of peace and democracy, and almost everybody believes it. Almost all people in the West believe it. – Noam Chomsky and Andre Vltchek, [On Western Terrorism: From Hiroshima to Drone Warfare](#)

"... trenches of ideas are more powerful than weapons." – José Martí

After months of horrific scenes of migrant deaths in the Mediterranean where literally thousands of human beings were dying at sea, European public opinion was finally mobilized to respond to this movement of people. However, the anguished expressions of concern from the general public and government leaders in Europe was a far cry from the response that met the first wave of migrants that was largely African.



In response to that migration, European authorities openly talked of launching military attacks on the boats in Libya to stop the "flood" of these "illegal" immigrants into Europe, even after experts cautioned them that military attacks would result in even more deaths at sea.

What changed? The racial composition of the majority of the migrants shifting away from Sub-Saharan Africans to refugees from the various conflict zones of Iraq and Syria, captured in the image of the globally disseminated image of Aylan Kurdi, the Kurdish child from the devastated city of Kabani. But even more importantly, European and U.S. propaganda could exploit this flow of humanity from Syria politically.

This example is pertinent to the discussion here because it raises two issues related to Yemen: first, the ease in which public opinion is influenced by Western propagandists (I include both the official state entities responsible for psy-ops directed at the public and the corporate media that largely collaborates with these efforts because of shared ideological positions and worldviews), and secondly, how humanitarian concerns are selectively manipulated to prepare and justify military attacks from the U.S./EU/NATO axis of domination.

In Yemen, six months of relentless and seemingly indiscriminate bombing by the repressive

Wahhabaist dictatorship of Saudi Arabia has cost the lives of over four thousands human beings, who according to the [United Nations](#) and major [human rights organizations](#) have been primarily civilians.

Along with this wanton murder, the Saudi government and its allies from the contemptuous gang of corrupt Arab monarchies known as the Gulf Cooperation Council benefit from the diplomatic cover and military support from the equally contemptuous U.S. state. Together, they have created a humanitarian catastrophe in one of the poorest nations on the planet.

Yet, for the majority of the people in the U.S., the carnage in Yemen simply does not exist because it has not been in the interests of the rulers to draw the attention of the American people to it.

Therefore, the U.S. public is unaware that the U.S. is participating in the naval blockade of a country that imports 80% of its food by sea. They don't know that the bombing, blockade, and massive displacement has resulted in widespread famine with more than [78% of the population](#) now in need of humanitarian assistance. They never read the report from Peter Maurer, the head of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), [who said](#) that "Yemen after five months looks like Syria after five years."

And while U.S. propagandists are preparing the people for an even more direct intervention into Syria, using the absurd pretext that somehow the imposition of a "no fly zone" is an appropriate response to the humanitarian concerns of refugee flows from Syria to Europe, the humanitarian emergency created by the war in Yemen is largely uncovered and outside the bounds of polite conversation in the U.S.

This conspiracy of silence has translated into impunity for war crimes and crimes against humanity. It has meant that the central role played by the U.S. in this criminal assault occurred without any opposition from mainstream politicians or most radicals and leftists in the U.S.

Do Non-European Lives really Matter to White Leftists?

The political reaction to the killing spree in Yemen that now eclipses the murderous assault on Gaza by Israel, has not only been met with indifference but many leftists and radicals in the U.S. have given their support to Bernie Sanders who said very clearly that under his administration the Saudi's would be given even more latitude to carry out military operations in the Middle-East. The Sanders' position is that the Saudi's needed to get their "[hands a little dirty](#)." For Bernie and his supporters, the mischief that the Saudi government and private individuals have been engaged in across the region financing groups like ISIS [wasn't dirty enough](#).

After years of drone attacks from the U.S., the end of the agony of the people of Yemen is nowhere in sight. These attacks targeted weddings, funerals, first responders to an initial drone attack and so-called signature strikes where an anonymous person is murdered because he fits the behavior profile of a "terrorist." After pounding the country into rubble with six months of terror from the sky, the Saudi's are now involved in ground operations in Yemen that will only increase the death toll and the humanitarian disaster.

This is the world that a President Sanders promises—continued war crimes from the sky with drone strikes and Saudi led terror in support of the Western imperial project.

This is not to suggest that everyone who might find a way to support Sanders is a closet racist and supporter of imperialism. I know plenty of folks of all backgrounds who “feel the Bern.” There is, however, an objective logic to their uncritical support that they cannot escape and which I believe represents the ongoing crisis of radicalism in the U.S. and Europe.

The Sanders’ campaign, like the Obama phenomenon before it, does not offer a program or strategic direction for addressing the current crisis and contradictions of Western capitalist societies. Instead, it is an expression of the moral and political crisis of Western radicalism. This crisis – which is reflective of the loss of direction needed to inform vision, and fashion a creative program for radical change – is even more acute in the U.S. than Western Europe. Yet, what unites both radical experiences is a tacit commitment to Eurocentrism and the assumptions of normalized white supremacy.

In their desperate attempt to defend Sanders and paint his critics as dogmatists and purists, the [Sanders supporters](#) have not only fallen into the ideological trap of a form of narrow “left” nativism, but also the white supremacist ethical contradiction that reinforces racist cynicism in which some lives are disposable for the greater good of the West.

And as much as the ‘Sandernistas’ attempt to disarticulate Sanders “progressive” domestic policies from his documented [support for empire](#) (even the Obamaite aphorism “The perfect is the enemy of the good” is unashamedly deployed), it should be obvious that his campaign is an ideological prop – albeit from a center/left position – of the logic and interests of the capitalist-imperialist settler state.

The [silence of the left on Yemen](#) is not a trivial matter. The fact that so many white leftist supporters of Sanders can politically and psychologically disconnect his domestic program from his foreign policy positions that objectively support U.S. and Western neoliberal hegemony means that not only have they found a way to be comfortable collaborating with imperialism, but that they have also decided that they can support the implicit hierarchy that determines from an imperial perspective that lives in the White West matter more than others.

What this means for those of us who are internationalists and believe in the equal value of all life is that we have to question the sincerity of individuals who claim that black lives matter while supporting someone who clearly believes that Israeli lives matter more than Palestinian and Yemeni lives. And that the pro-democracy fighters in Bahrain should be subjected to the policing and murderous assault by the gangster regime in Saudi Arabia.

It means that if today leftists in the U.S. can find a way to reconcile the suffering of the people of Yemen and Gaza and all of occupied Palestine for the greater good of electing Sanders, tomorrow my life and the movement that I am a part of that is committed to fighting this corrupt, degenerate, white supremacist monstrosity called the United States, can be labeled as enemies of the state and subjected to brutal repression with the same level of silence from these leftists.

And since tomorrow has already happened in the past with the repression of the Black Liberation Movement, when it happens again we will not be surprised – but this time we will be ready.

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