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U.S. Condemns Venezuela's Government Yet Commits Human Rights Abuses Across the Middle East

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"Americans have no idea of the extent of their government's mischief... the number of military strikes we have made unprovoked, against other countries, since 1947 is more than 250.'' Gore Vidal

Last Saturday U.S. Senator Marco Rubio, who is seen by many as being in charge of Trump's policy towards Latin America, threatened Veneuela's government with a military invasion for its numerous violations of human rights. The U.S. political elite is trying to exploit ordinary people's disgust at alleged human right's abuses to justify the potential invasion of another county.

Ordinary people taken in by humanitarian bombers such as Rubio need to be reminded that American loftiness over events in Venezuela stands in stark contrast to the indifference and complicity of the U.S. and its allies regarding human rights abuses in the Middle East.

Amnesty International has issued a new report, "Human Rights in the Middle East and North Africa: A review of 2018''. It reveals a grim picture of ruthless repression against civilian protestors, torture, and war crimes on a grand scale.

Saudi Arabia has been in the media spotlight since the murder of journalist Jamal Khosoggi in its Turkish embassy back in October 2018. Khasoggi's murder by a Saudi hit squad provoked a global outcry yet the House of Saud dictatorship has not faced any punitive action from the United States. President Trump has made it clear that U.S. arms sales and military support for the Saudi's genocidal war in Yemen will continue unabated.

Several European countries, such as Germany, Denmark, Netherlands, Norway and Finland, took the rare step of suspending arms sales to the Riyadh dictatorship and its UAE partner in crime. Yet major powers such as France and the UK continue to not only sell arms to the Gulf dictatorships but have even lobbied Germany to resume its arms sales again.

Heba Morayef who is Amnesty's Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa has commented:

> "It took Jamal Khashoggi's cold-blooded murder inside a consulate to prompt a handful of more responsible states to suspend arms transfers to a country that has been leading a coalition responsible for war crimes and has helped create a humanitarian catastrophe in Yemen. Yet even the global outcry over the Khashoggi case has not been followed by concrete action to ensure those

> responsible for his murder are brought to justice."

On a domestic level Saudi Arabia continues to imprison human rights activists, government critics and women's rights defenders. Many have been given lengthy prison sentences after being subjected to torture and grossly unfair trials that make a mockery of the term justice. Besides this, women and the Shia minority in Saudi Arabia continue to face systematic discrimination and violence. Freedom of expression and the right to peacefully protest offline and online are expressly forbidden.

Scores of government critics and human rights defenders are serving lengthy prison sentences. Meanwhile, the Saudi dictatorship routinely uses torture to obtain confessions, conducts grossly unfair secret mass trials and makes liberal use of death sentences to 'crush dissent'. Saudi Arabia's much vaunted reform allowing women the right to drive was somewhat diminished by the fact that many female activists who had campaigned for the right to drive remain in prison. Women still require the permission of a male guardian to seek employment, enrol in higher education, travel or marry.

On an international level Saudi Arabia and its coalition of the killing, that includes most of the Gulf dictatorships, continues to wage an illegal war in Yemen creating the worst humanitarian disaster in the world. The Saudi led coalition use weaponry supplied by the U.S., France and Britain to systematically destroy Yemen's food infrastructure and its water irrigation systems along with the deliberate targeting of residential areas in towns and cities. To compound matters, the Saudi led coalition has imposed a land, sea and air blockade of Yemen which is a deliberate attempt to restrict humanitarian aid getting into the starving population. The Saudi led siege of the Red Sea port of Hodeidah is intensifying the famine that has enveloped the country.

The Amnesty report makes it clear that:

> "Coalition [I.e.Saudi led] forces continued to be the main cause of civilian casualties, according to the UN. They committed with impunity serious violations of international human rights law and humanitarian law. They used imprecise munitions in some attacks, including large bombs with a wide impact that caused deaths and destruction beyond their immediate strike location.''

Besides this, Saudi led forces routinely use enforced disappearances, torture, secret prisons and other forms of ill-treatment that amount to 'war crimes'.

Saudi Arabia along with the United States and France continue to supply military aid for internal repression to the military dictatorship currently ruling over the Arab world's most populous nation Egypt. President Sisi who won 98% of the vote for his second term has presided over grossly unfair mass trials. Take for example, the mass trial that convicted 739 people for participation in the sit-in at Cairo's Rabaa al-Adawiya Square on 14 August 2013. During the sit-in the army shot dead over 900 people. Sisi's brand of justice led to 75 people being sentenced to death, 47 to 25 years in prison, and 612 to prison sentences ranging from five to 15 years. By the way over 22 children were convicted at this mass trial. In the same month another court upheld death sentences against 20 men.

Sisi has introduced laws that give the state total control over all forms of media, meanwhile his security services continue to use enforced disappearances against hundreds of people

together with the routine use of torture to obtain 'confessions'. Women and Egypt's Christian minority face systematic discrimination and harassment on a daily basis.

The current crusade by the Trump regime to bring about the overthrew of Venezuela's elected government, all in the name of defending human rights, resonates with many ill informed people. Perhaps, they should cast their minds back to 1945 when the American Empire was preparing for its domination of the post-war world.

In February 1945 at the Chapultepec (Mexico) Conference the United States laid down the basis for implementing the Monroe Doctrine in Latin America once World War 2 was over. The U.S. State Department was concerned that,

> "Latin Americans are convinced that the first beneficiaries of the development of a country's resources should be the people of that country.''

Chomsky has pointed out that for the United States such an idea was totally, "…unacceptable: the first beneficiaries must be US investors, while Latin America fulfils its service function.''

The next time we hear some corporate politician whining about human rights in Venezuela then we should remind ourselves of the quip once made by that great chronicler of American foreign policy William Blum. Blum observed that America's deadliest export since 1945 has been democracy.

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