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Craig

Murray in rubble in Baalbek, Lebanon, Nov. 22, 2024. (Niels Ladefoged via craigmurray.org.uk)

Twisting the terrorism narrative

By Craig Murray (Posted Jan 09, 2025)

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There was absolutely nothing stopping them. But not one single member of Western mainstream media ever visited a bomb site in Lebanon to verify whether Israeli claims it was a Hezbollah base or missile site were true because they knew the answer is negative, as I found across dozens of bomb sites, and that is not the narrative they are paid to promote.

But when a narrative they are paid to promote came to the fore, they flocked to Damascus—driving right past the bombed civilian homes, ambulance centres and schools of Lebanon’s Bekaa Valley to get there—to promote Syria’s new Israel-, U.S.A- and Turkey-sponsored “democratic” government of entirely “reformed” HTS (Hay’at Tahrir al-Sham) Wahhabists.

Now in the past I had unfortunate arguments with some who broadly take a similar view of politics to me—Vanessa Beeley comes to mind—because I was never a fan of the Assad regime and its human rights record. Nevertheless, I consistently preferred Assad to the NATO-, Gulf- and Israel-sponsored extremist Wahhabi “rebels” who were fighting him.

But you can acknowledge Assad’s human rights abuses without subscribing to the ludicrous atrocity propaganda that spewed out of the mainstream media—150,000 prisoners in one jail, 100,000 people in a mass grave, the “body press” whose plywood-pressing surfaces were peculiarly unstained, the suntanned American prisoner who had been “locked in a room for seven months”, the splendidly groomed dissident prisoner “rescued” by CNN.

Atrocity propaganda is as old as warfare. Like the “60 beheaded babies” of Oct. 7, or the 100,000 prisoners in a mass grave, it will doubtless recur indefinitely despite being nonsense. The installation of HTS by the NATO powers and Israel was a propaganda orgy of “joy” and “liberation.”

Western Media Moved On



Syrians celebrate the fall of Assad at the Umayyad mosque, Dec. 14, 2024. (Voice of America, Wikimedia Commons, Public domain)

Undoubtedly some people did feel joy and liberation. But the Western media have not stayed around since to report the subsequent numerous incidents of beatings and summary executions of non-Sunnis; that the “democratic revolution” will start to think about an election only in four years’ time; that women judges have all been dismissed; that starting Monday there are official Sharia patrols on the streets of Damascus “advising” women to cover their hair, and that for the first time, also starting yesterday, the hijab is official compulsory uniform in most Syrian state schools.

Still less have they reported that HTS has done nothing whatsoever to oppose the Israeli invasion of Southern Syria, which as of today controls the dams that supply 40 percent of Syria’s potable and agricultural water.

Israel is constructing 13 permanent military bases in the newly occupied Syrian territories, putting in concrete emplacements and building or improving fenced roads between them. It is building gun emplacements around dams.



Israeli convoy advancing into Syria, December 2024. (IDF Spokesperson’s Unit, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0)

HTS has—while not opposing the Israeli invaders—however managed to make several incursions into Lebanon including direct attacks on the Lebanese Army. In some cases these attacks by HTS on Lebanon have occurred within five miles of illegal Israeli outposts of soldiers within Syria—a clear indication of which side HTS is on.

Western Security Services' Agenda

The new HTS government has of course been fêted by the global neoliberals. The agenda of the Western security services has nowhere been more obvious than in the linkage of the HTS and Ukrainian causes, and the second foreign delegation received by the new HTS government was indeed from Ukraine.

Uzbek militants formed a significant section of HTS' Wahhabi army, and it is not a coincidence that around the same time, it was an Uzbek militant who murdered a key Russian general on behalf of the Ukrainian government.

The Ukrainian delegation to the HTS government was closely followed of course by the ubiquitous harpy [German Foreign Minister] Annalena Baerbock, the most outspoken and enthusiastic advocate outside the state of Israel of the massacre of Palestinians.

As some kind of counterweight to the Western support of Al Qaeda/Al Nusra/HTS in Syria, which the public was entitled to find somewhat confusing, we have the narrative of the "ISIS-inspired" terrorism attack in New Orleans, just to reassure that Muslims are still the official enemy.

There are a number of things about this narrative which are just too pat to sit easily with me. The killer, Shamsud-Din Jabbar, helpfully aided identification by being equipped with an ISIS flag which, despite being an important item in a multiple murder investigation, was somehow unguarded and available to the media to photograph.

It was plainly and clearly laid out in line with the flagstone pattern and not lying as it fell. Why is the crime scene tape strewn around like this?

A further interesting question is why the flag is upside down on the makeshift staff. If somebody cared enough about the cause to kill and die for it, presumably they would know which way up the flag goes?

It is worth noting that the official story is that Jabbar was "inspired by ISIS", not that he actually had any form of contact with anyone from ISIS. Maybe nobody told him which way the flag goes. But it also transpires he had Arabic language books, including the Koran, at home, so he plainly would have known the writing was upside down.

Entirely weird is this report from *The New York Post*, where their reporter is able apparently to walk around the completely unsecured apartment of Jabbar and poke about evidence at will. Again it is all delightfully perfect—the Koran is open at a page about fighting and being killed, and the camera lingers on a helpfully hung Palestinian keffiyeh, while there are lots of chemicals and apparent bomb-making areas.

I am not positing a theory as to what happened. I am saying that the package of information being presented is remarkably full and neat.

It took the British police five solid days of investigation at Charlie Rowley's and Dawn Sturgess' house [after they were poisoned] before they discovered the perfume bottle of "novichok" [nerve agent] in plain sight on the kitchen counter.

In 24 hours, by contrast, the F.B.I. had so comprehensively taken all required evidence from Jabbar's apartment, and presumably had carried out all forensic investigation needed for traces of possible accomplices there, that they were able to let a journalist and crew contaminate the scene as much as they wish.

Is this not all a bit strange?

Jabbar & Livelsberger

I am sure that by now you are aware of all the coincidences in career and in car hire between Jabbar and Matthew Livelsberger, who made a kind of explosion at a Trump hotel in Las Vegas the same day. I am not sure this actually proves a connection between the two, beyond the fact that being in the U.S. military is more likely than anything else to turn you into a potential psychotic killer.

But there are very weird things in the Livelsberger case. What strikes me most is that Livelsberger was not a toy soldier: he was an active service member of special forces with substantial combat experience. He would certainly have been able to make a more viable bomb, as his family suggested.

Perhaps more to the point, Livelsberger would certainly have known that what was in the truck was not a viable bomb.

It is also worth noting that this U.S. special forces soldier is officially noted as having served in Ukraine— not an everyday admission.

There is no previous example of a suicide bomber who deliberately killed himself before his attack came to fruition. What we have here, if we believe the official narrative, is a highly proficient active combat veteran who shot himself before his non-viable IED went off.

This too strikes me as a most peculiar narrative. To which I will add that, in the great tradition of terrorist attacks, while Livelsberger's body was burnt beyond recognition, his passport survived in the cab, next to him.

So we have the Western powers active in installing terrorists in power in Damascus, and some almost immediate examples of terrorist blowback in the U.S.A from members of the U.S. military, and with some very strange details.

None of which is, however, really stranger than the Western rush to sanctify the HTS government in Damascus, when HTS remains a proscribed terrorist organisation pretty well everywhere, but certainly in the U.K. and U.S.A.

The "terrorism" incidents in the U.S.A—particularly the "Islamic terrorism" incident in New Orleans—make it still harder to process the normalisation of terrorist organisation HTS.

I am returning to Beirut after having been back in Scotland for Christmas and the New Year. To be perfectly frank with you, I was expecting to get arrested on arrival here under the Terrorism Act, as has happened to me before and has happened recently to so many decent journalists with a pro-Palestinian stance.

Just telling the truth about the genocide of the Palestinians, and the creation of Greater Israel, has until now been treated by the U.K.'s counter-terrorism police as expressing an opinion that may

cause others to support proscribed organisations Hamas and Hezbollah, and therefore grounds for arrest and seizure of property.

But HTS is also a proscribed organisation, and the entire British Establishment has very openly been “expressing an opinion which could cause others to support it.” The former head of MI6, Sir John Sawers, has been on television advocating that HTS should no longer be proscribed because it is such a decent organisation. Rory Stewart and Alastair Campbell have been openly praising it on their blog.

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Al Qa’ida (AQ) - Proscribed March 2001

Inspired and led by Usama Bin Laden, its aims are the expulsion of Western forces from Saudi Arabia, the destruction of Israel and the end of Western influence in the Muslim world.

The government laid Orders, in July 2013 December 2016 and May 2017, which provided that the “al-Nusrah Front (ANF)”, “Jabhat al-Nusrah li-ahl al Sham”, “Jabhat Fatah al-Sham” and “Hay’at Tahrir al-Sham” should be treated as alternative names for the organisation which is already proscribed under the name Al Qa’ida.

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(Via CraigMurrayUK)

There are three ultra-draconian aspects of Section 12 of the Terrorism Act:

1. You can get 14 years in jail for merely “expressing an opinion”.
2. Intent is expressly not required. If your opinion could cause somebody else to support a proscribed organization, whether you intended that or not, you are guilty if “reckless”, i.e. you did not positively avoid expressing any such opinion.
3. It is entirely up to the government to determine what is a proscribed organisation. If you disagree that an organisation should be proscribed, to argue that case is almost certainly an offence. If the government decided to proscribe the Girl Guides, the Girl Guides would—in law—be a terrorist organisation.

You may notice the parallels in law to the Rwanda case, where the courts ruled that Rwanda did not become a safe country for asylum seekers merely because a government minister said it was. There has however been no successful legal challenge to the effect that a resistance movement does not become a terrorist organisation merely because a government says it is.

But here is the rub. In the U.K., it still remains at least the legal fiction that governments have to obey their own laws. The entire purpose of chopping off the head of Charles I was to show that the executive cannot arbitrarily break the law of the land, and that seemed to make the point pretty clearly.

Until the government, through an Order in Council, actually removes the proscription of HTS as a terrorist organisation, it is still illegal to support it in the U.K.—and it is illegal for government ministers to support it, let alone ex-functionaries like John Sawers, Alastair Campbell and Rory Stewart.

Now in practice, there is nothing to prevent the massive hypocrisy of the Terrorism Police harassing, and the CPS prosecuting, people for very tangential “support” of Hamas and Hezbollah, while much more blatant and open support of HTS goes unpunished.

But it is not a good look and juries are likely to be unhappy.

I therefore suspect the decision not to go for me again under the Terrorism Act may be because the widespread official support for proscribed organisation HTS has brought the law into disrepute. That might also explain why recently the police have been using the Public Order Act against speakers at the regular demonstrations at the Israeli Ambassador’s residence in London, whereas previously they have used the Terrorism Act in identical circumstances.

The range of anti-free speech legislation available to the authorities in the U.K. is now extensive and bewildering. We are still seeing the legacy cases against Richard Barnard and Tony Greenstein under the Terrorism Act progressing. But Section 12 may prove to be an example of draconian legislation which dies of shame.

There will be many twists and turns yet to come, as the negative impact of the Western states actively participating in the Gaza genocide plays out in Western societies. All of this is against the background of crumbling political systems and fast-unravelling social cohesion and consent of the governed, due to massive increases in inequality of wealth and blocking of social mobility—at least upwards.

In returning to Beirut to give independent witness to events in the Middle East, I hope also to be able to access Syria—although that of course brings new levels of danger from its authorities and militias. This independent investigative journalism is only available with your financial support.

To be blunt, our two months in Lebanon before Christmas made a slight financial loss. I was delighted with the output of four mini-documentaries and numerous short video reports and articles, some of which individually had millions of viewers. But to date the model of reader-sponsored real overseas journalism is not proven nor stable.

If you have not yet contributed financially, I should be grateful if you could do so. If you have contributed, perhaps you could help further by encouraging others to do so. I would as always stress I do not want anybody to contribute if it causes them the slightest financial hardship.

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About Craig Murray

Craig Murray is an author, broadcaster and human rights activist. He was British Ambassador to Uzbekistan from August 2002 to October 2004 and Rector of the University of Dundee from 2007 to 2010.