
Hypocrisy Laid Bare / The Crimes the New York Times Believes Should Go Unpunished

06/04/2015



The editorial, titled “The Crimes of Terrorists” ([4/2/2015](#)), should more accurately be titled “The Crimes of the U.S. and Its Allies Should Go Unpunished.”

In the last several months alone, the *Times* has repeatedly failed to condemn crimes by the U.S. government and its allies in Yemen, Iraq, Syria and the Palestinian territories.

When the *Times* writes that “the Islamic State’s campaign of religious and cultural cleansing has shocked the world and terrified the peoples of Iraq and Syria who don’t fit into the group’s fanatical vision of a neo-Islamist caliphate” and that the Security Council should address the “shameful impunity of the Islamic State, and refer the group to the I.C.C.,” they are stating the obvious.

That crimes should be punished is beyond dispute. Condemning the crimes of official enemies of the United States does not take particular moral or political courage. Whether it was the Soviet Union during the Cold War, the Taliban after 9/11, or Iraq before the 2003 invasion, a media organization would be hard pressed to find a less controversial editorial position.

What would take courage is opposition to the criminal actions of the U.S. government and governments and groups it aligns itself with. This is something the *Times* has failed to do for decades. You don’t have to go back in time to find multiple examples.

Just two days before the editorial on the Islamic State, the *Times* published another editorial

titled “Saudi Arabia’s Ominous Reach Into Yemen” ([3/3/2015](#)). The *Times* does not condone the Saudi-led bombing campaign. They state that: “Rather than bombing, Saudi Arabia should be using its power and influence to begin diplomatic negotiations, which offer the best hope of a durable solution.” They note the pitfalls of the Saudi military intervention by claiming it “threatens to turn what has been a civil war between competing branches of Islam into a wider regional struggle involving Iran. It could also destroy any hope of stability in Yemen.”

But the strongest position the *Times* can muster is to encourage President Obama to push for a “political solution.” They fail to mention that the Saudi military intervention *is itself a crime*, no different than the crimes of the Islamic State they would oppose two days later with such vigor. Bombing a sovereign nation is indisputably a violation of [Article 2 of the United Nations Charter](#): “All members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state.”

Violation of the prohibition against the use of force in the UN Charter amounts to the [crime of aggression](#), which was defined in the Nuremberg Trials as “not only an international crime; it is the *supreme* international crime, differing only from other crimes in that it contains within itself the accumulated evil of the whole” (italics added).

On the same day the *Times* published its editorial, [Amnesty International](#) reported: “There is growing evidence that the Saudi Arabian-led military coalition is failing to take precautions to prevent civilian deaths amid ongoing airstrikes around Yemen.” They reported that “at least six civilians, including four children, were among 14 people who burned to death in further airstrikes.”

[The Guardian](#) reported that it had obtained images from a humanitarian worker in Yemen that “showed gruesome scenes – charred bodies immolated by the blast, mangled corpses in plastic bags, and wounded children being treated,” The humanitarian worker “said he saw scattered limbs littering the area nearby.”

Yet the *Times* does not even mention these Saudi crimes ([backed by the U.S. government](#)), much less demand accountability. They do not claim that Saudi Arabia enjoys “shameful impunity” they way they do for the Islamic State.

Neither does the *Times* condemn Israeli crimes against Palestinians, especially last summer’s slaughter in Gaza, euphemistically called “Operation Protective Edge” by the Israeli government. In a New York Times editorial titled “Keeping Palestinian Hopes Alive” ([3/24/2015](#)) the editorial board calls for a two-state political solution to the conflict in order to *avoid* Palestinians seeking justice in the I.C.C.

The call for a two-state solution is disingenuous and hollow. With more than 500,000 Israeli settlers now squatting on stolen land in the West Bank, there is no practical way to implement such a plan. Furthermore, this nominal “solution” has been the U.S.-Israeli policy for more than 20 years since the Oslo Accords and has led nowhere. A call for a two-state solution is nothing more than an appeal to continue the status quo indefinitely while using different language.

The *Times* states that “a clear Security Council statement in favor of a two-state solution would be an important benchmark. If the United States and other major powers quickly show commitment to that approach, they might be able to keep Palestinians from pressing a complaint against Israel in the International Criminal Court.” This, the editorial board claims, “would poison relations even more and alienate many Americans.”

Even if a two-state solution were feasible, why would implementation of such a plan preclude justice in a court of law for the nearly [2,200 Palestinians](#), including more than [500 children](#), who were killed, most of whom were [civilians](#)?

Human rights organizations have found extensive evidence of war crimes and reckless disregard for human life by the Israeli military in Gaza during the 50-day war.

[Amnesty International](#) reported on “extensive, wanton and unjustified” targeting of civilian infrastructure including multi-story buildings by Israel in Gaza.

“Both the facts on the ground and statements made by Israeli military spokespeople at the time indicate that the attacks were a collective punishment against the people of Gaza and were designed to destroy their already precarious livelihoods,” states Philip Luther, Director of the Middle East and North Africa Programme. Collective punishment is a war crime under the Geneva Conventions.

In a report on Israeli attacks against inhabited homes, [Amnesty International](#) found that “whole families were killed or injured by these targeted strikes.” The report focuses on eight cases “in which targeted Israeli attacks resulted in the deaths of at least 111 people, of whom at least 104 were civilians, including entire families and 62 children, and destroyed civilian homes.”

Amnesty recommended, “given Israel’s long-standing failure to investigate and prosecute alleged war crimes ... that the international community should ensure that possible crimes under international law, including war crimes, committed during Operation Protective Edge” should be pursued in court in states exercising universal jurisdiction or through the I.C.C.

This is the opposite of the position taken by the *Times*. When it comes to official enemies, the *Times* righteously claims that their crimes have “shocked the world” and “terrified” the local population. But when it comes to the U.S. and its allies, the *Times* believes that equivalent crimes should be swept under the rug.

The New York Times has had a long-standing record of this type of hypocritical logic. As the NYTimes Examiner noted last year in an article titled “The New York Times Excoriates ‘Aggression’: The Washington Exception” ([3/5/2014](#)):

Over the last quarter century the *New York Times*’ Editorial board has made editorial decisions that illustrate a peculiar pattern. *Times* readers could otherwise overlook the pattern in everyday reading. However, when viewed through a wider historical lens, the pattern lays bare biased reporting that should concern readers.

In five editorial pieces, spanning a period from December 1989 to March 2014, and encompassing nearly 3,000 words, the *Times*’ Editorial board has weighed in on cross-border military actions. The selectivity of their language shows a political bias in favor of upholding what they believe is best for Washington’s interests and therefore, under the guise of ‘objectivity,’ report expectedly in opposition to Washington’s adversaries.

Indeed, in editorials on Panama (“Why the Invasion Was Justified”) ([12/21/1989](#)), Yugoslavia (“Air Campaign Against Yugoslavia”) ([3/25/1999](#)), and Iraq (“The War Begins”) ([3/20/2003](#)),

the *Times* stood firmly behind American use of military force.

Despite the fact that each of these military attacks were clear cases of aggression, the “supreme international crime,” the *Times* never once broached the idea that the U.S. government should face repercussions for their many severe violations of international law.

Even in their most ambivalent stance, on Iraq, they stated that “even those who sharply disagree with the logic behind this war are likely to end up feeling reassured, almost against their will, by the successful projection of American power.”

There is the hypocrisy laid bare. For the *Times* editorial board, as for much of the American public, blind worship of American power is more important than their professed concern for the rule of law. That concern is reserved only for those who do not enjoy the support of the U.S. government, and who can thereby be excoriated for their crimes relentlessly.

Matt Peppe writes about politics, U.S. foreign policy and Latin America on his [blog](#). You can follow him on [twitter](#).
