

SteveLendmanBlog

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ABOUT ME



Name:
Steve Lendman

I was born in 1934 in Boston, MA. Raised in a modest middle class family, attended public schools, received a BA from Harvard University in 1956 and an MBA from the Wharton School at the University of PA in 1960 following 2 years of obligatory military service in the US Army. Spent the next 6 years as a marketing research analyst for several large US corporations before becoming part of a new small family business in 1967, remaining there until retiring at the end of 1999. Have since devoted my time and efforts to the progressive causes and organizations I support, all involved in working for a more humane and just world for all people everywhere, but especially for the most needy, disadvantaged and oppressed. My efforts since summer 2005 have included writing on a broad range of vital topics ranging from war and peace; social, economic and political equity for all; and justice for all the oppressed peoples of the world like the long-suffering people of Haiti and the Palestinians. Also co-hosting The Global Research News Hour, occasional public talks, and frequent

MONDAY, APRIL 13, 2009

ICRC's Damning Expose of US Torture

ICRC's Damning Expose of US Torture - by Stephen Lendman

On March 12, Mark Danner, in a New York Times op-ed and The New York Review of Books, wrote about the ICRC's revelations of "US Torture: Voices from the Black Sites." He said George Bush (in 2007) "informed the world that the United States had created a dark and secret universe to hold and interrogate captured 'terrorists,' " - at locations outside America, Guantanamo and elsewhere.

Operated by the CIA, it "used an alternative set of procedures....designed to be safe, to comply with our laws, our Constitution and our treaty obligations. The Department of Justice reviewed the authorized methods extensively and determined them to be lawful."

He lied to conceal what this writer called "Torture As Official US Policy" in a July 18, 2008 article. It was authorized at the highest government levels and confirmed by a virtual blizzard of official documents beginning with a September 17, 2001 secret finding empowering CIA to "Capture, Kill, or Interrogate Al-Queda Leaders." It authorized establishing a secret global network of facilities to detain and interrogate them without guidelines on proper treatment.

It was followed on November 13 by Military Order Number 1 that amounted to a coup d'etat on constitutional freedoms and hinted at what would follow. It let the president, on his say alone, capture, kidnap or arrest anyone, anywhere in the world, then hold them indefinitely in secret locations, without charge, evidence, or due process in a court of law.

Various other documents, findings, Executive Orders, and memos authorized interrogation practices amounting to torture. Most infamous were two memos by John Yoo (as deputy assistant attorney general), Alberto Gonzales (as White House counsel), Jay Bybee (now a federal judge), and David Addington (as Dick Cheney's chief of staff and legal counsel).

On August 2, 2002, they argued for letting interrogators use harsh measures amounting to torture, OK'd them against "terrorists" during wartime, and said US and international laws don't apply for overseas interrogations.

On March 14, 2003, the same quartet issued another memo titled "Military Interrogation of Alien Unlawful Combatants Held Outside the United States." It became known as the "Torture Memo" because it erased all legal restraints and authorized military interrogators to use extreme measures amounting to torture. It also gave the president "the fullest range of power....to protect the nation (and stated he) enjoys complete discretion in the exercise of his authority in conducting operations against hostile forces."

In December 2002, Donald Rumsfeld, as Defense Secretary, approved a menu of illegal interrogation techniques consisting of anything short of what would cause organ failure. He issued direct orders to military commanders to conduct them against "suspected terrorists," meaning anyone in their custody.

Under George Bush, torture was official policy. It remains so under Barack Obama in defiance of US and international laws that prohibit it under all circumstances, at all times, with no exceptions allowed ever. Under the Constitution's Article VI (the supremacy clause), international law is part of US law, and US presidents take an oath under Article II, Section 1, Clause 7 to "preserve, protect and defend the Constitution." Article II, Section 3 requires the president to "take Care that the Laws

appearances on radio and at times television.

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be faithfully exercised."

The US Code's Title 18, Chapter 113C (2340) defines torture as follows:

-- any "act committed by a person acting under the color of law specifically intended to inflict severe physical or mental pain or suffering....upon another person within his custody or physical control;"

-- it includes "infliction or threatened infliction" of severe mental or physical pain and suffering, including use of "mind-altering substances;"

-- threatening "imminent death;" and/or

-- "the threat that another person" will be subjected to any or all of the above listed offenses.

Various US laws prohibit torture in any form for any purpose, including the 1994 Torture Statute and 1996 War Crimes Act. Numerous international laws do as well, including the:

-- (US 1994 ratified) Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment;

-- four Geneva Conventions; the first two protect the sick and wounded in battle; the third defines who is a prisoner of war and establishes minimum treatment standards, and the fourth protects civilians and requires that they be treated humanely - not falsely called "unlawful enemy combatants" to get around the law, which doesn't apply anyway as all forms of torture and mistreatment are strictly banned.

The four conventions have a Common Article Three that prohibits all forms of "violence to life and person," including cruel abuse, torture, and all types of humiliating and degrading treatment among other provisions.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

Established in 1863, it states its purpose as follows:

The ICRC "is an impartial, neutral and independent organization whose exclusively humanitarian mission is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of war and internal violence and to provide them with assistance." It also strives "to prevent suffering by promoting and strengthening humanitarian law and universal humanitarian principles." It has a "legal mandate" to do so under the 1949 Geneva Conventions.

The ICRC report was labeled "confidential" and intended only for senior US officials. On February 14, 2007, it was sent to John Rizzo, the CIA's acting general counsel. Danner got hold of it, reported individual accounts in the The New York Review of Books, and stated:

"Because these stories were taken down confidentially in (detainee) interviews by (ICRC) professionals, and not intended for public consumption, they have an unusual claim to authenticity" - all the more so because all prisoners were isolated, yet corroborated each other's accounts.

On April 9, The New York Review of Books published the full report of what ICRC interviewers learned from visitations with 14 CIA-held "high value detainees" transferred to Guantanamo in September 2006. This article summarizes its findings and recommendations.

It's Titled: "ICRC Report on the Treatment of Fourteen 'High Value Detainees' in CIA Custody"

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**The Iraq Quagmire:
The Price of Imperial
Arrogance**

**By Stephen Lendman and
J.J. Asongu**

This book makes a bold statement about US failures in Iraq. The authors take the view that apart from deposing and killing Saddam Hussein, there is absolutely no way the Iraq War can be considered a success.

While holding the Bush administration and its British ally responsible for the present quagmire, the book is also very critical of the Democratic leadership in congress - accusing it of half-baked opposition to the war.

In a simple, yet captivating analysis, the authors explore American Imperialism, questioning whether the country can survive the resource wars. This is a must read for people on both sides of the Iraq War debate; a fresh perspective on the hottest issue of the day.

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The ICRC "consistently expressed its grave concern over the humanitarian consequences and legal implications of (America's practice) of holding persons in undisclosed detention in the context of the fight against terrorism."

Beginning in 2002, it made regular "written and oral" requests for information on them - to "various levels of the US Government" without response.

On September 6, 2006, George Bush publicly announced that 14 "high value" detainees were transferred to the Guantanamo-based, CIA-run High Value Detainee Program. Earlier they were at undisclosed locations. Prior to this announcement, ICRC had no knowledge of them or a CIA detention program - even though it requested information on 13 by name.

From October 6 - 11, 2006, ICRC met with all 14 in private for the first time, then again from December 4 - 14. This report described their arrests, transfers, incommunicado detention, and treatment in detail, initially and later on. It also explained their health care, the role of the medical staff, legal ramifications of secret incarcerations, other CIA detainees, and the "future use of the CIA detention program." The Defense Department got a separate report.

Main Elements of the CIA Detention Program

All 14 prisoners described harsh treatment, from the start, lasting for days or months, amounting to physical and psychological torture - "with the aim of obtaining compliance and extracting information." When considered in total and for their duration, the evidence is "all the more disturbing." In addition, all 14 accounts were consistent, adding to their credibility. By "ill-treatment," ICRC meant, singly or in combination, they "amounted to torture and/or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment."

Arrest and Transfer

Listed by name, they were arrested in four different countries (Pakistan, Thailand, Dubai and Djibouti) between March 2002 and May 2005, reportedly by their police or security forces, sometimes in the presence of US agents. They were initially held by the arresting country, then transferred elsewhere (reportedly Afghanistan), then on to other nations. US and/or national authorities interrogated them, but America controlled the process. They were in up to 10 locations prior to Guantanamo.

Transfer procedure was as follows:

- detainees were photographed clothed and naked prior to and after transfer;
- body cavity checks were conducted;
- in some cases suppositories were administered;
- diapers and tracksuits were worn;
- earphones were used through which loud music was sometimes played;
- blindfolds and black goggles were applied and, in some cases, cotton was taped over their eyes; in one case, the head gear was so tight it caused wounds to the nose and ears;
- hands and feet were shackled;
- sitting positions were reclined with hands shackled in front;
- trips lasted for one to 30 hours;

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-- toilet visits were denied for their entirety so necessary urination and defecation were into diapers;

-- some transport placed detainees flat on the plane's floor with their hands cuffed behind their backs; it caused severe pain and discomfort; and

-- the entire experience was disorienting and created feelings of futility, isolation, and helplessness "making them more vulnerable" to the torture described.

Continuous Solitary Confinement and Incommunicado Detention

Throughout their incarceration (lasting 16 months to four and a half years), all 14 were in solitary confinement. "They had no knowledge of where they were (and had) no contact with persons other than their interrogators or guards." They had no legal or family contacts or access to news from outside, except for some later on. They were effectively disappeared.

Other Ill-Treatment Methods

It was especially harsh during the first few days or months and included:

-- waterboarding "suffocation by water poured over a cloth placed over the nose and mouth, alleged by three of the fourteen;"

-- prolonged stressed standing, naked, with arms extended and chained above their heads, alleged by 10 of the 14, continuously for two or three days, and intermittently up to three months;

-- beatings by use of a collar around their necks used to forcefully bang their heads and bodies against the wall, alleged by six of the 14;

-- beating, kicking, slapping, punching to the body and face, alleged by nine of the 14;

-- confinement in a severely restricting box, alleged by one detainee;

-- prolonged nudity from several weeks to several months, alleged by 11 of the 14;

-- sleep deprivation lasting days, alleged by 11 of the 14;

-- forced stress positions, standing or sitting, cold water, and use of repetitive loud noise or music, alleged by 11 or the 14;

-- exposure to cold temperature, in cells and interrogation rooms, alleged by most of the 14; three had cold water poured over their bodies;

-- prolonged shackling of hands and/or feet, alleged by most detainees;

-- threats of ill-treatment to them and their families, alleged by nine of the 14;

-- forced head and beards shaving, alleged by two of the 14;

-- deprivation and restrictions of solid food from 3 days to a month after arrest, alleged by eight of the 14; and

-- also deprived of access to open air, exercise, appropriate hygiene facilities, and other basic items as well as restricted Koran usage.

Suffocation by Water

Alleged by three of the 14, it was done as follows: they were strapped to a tilting bed with a cloth over their face, nose and mouth. Water was then continuously

poured over the cloth, saturating it so they couldn't breathe to create the effect of suffocation, panic, and feeling they would die. At an appropriate point, the cloth was removed and bed rotated into a head-up, vertical position with the person left hanging by straps securing him to the bed. The procedure was repeated two or more times during interrogation and again in subsequent sessions.

Prolonged Stress Standing

Alleged by 10 of the 14, their wrists were shackled to a bar or hook in the ceiling above the head continuously for up to three days and intermittently for two to three months. They were naked throughout the process. Some were allowed to defecate in a bucket. Others at times wore a diaper, had to urinate and defecate in it, and not have it changed.

Detainees said the procedure caused their legs and ankles to swell. For the most part, they couldn't sleep, but when they did it let their full body weight be suspended, causing added pain to their arms and shoulders.

Beating by Use of A Collar

Alleged by six of the 14, a thick collar/neck roll was placed around their necks, then used to slam them against walls, often concrete. The process was done repeatedly during interrogation and in corridors en route to it.

Beating and Kicking

Alleged by nine of the 14, it involved body and face slapping, punching, kicking, and having their heads banged against solid objects, initially for days, and severe enough to cause bleeding and bruising. It continued for about 30 minutes, then repeated throughout the day and on subsequent days. The technique continued for up to three months.

Confinement in a Box

Alleged by one of the 14, it was specially designed to constrain movement. One was tall and narrow, another shorter, forcing him to crouch down. The stress on legs was very painful, and inside it was hard to breathe. The combination of sweat, pain, and friction from the slightest movement made it even more uncomfortable. The process was repeated for about a week in combination with other forms of torture.

Prolonged Nudity

Alleged by 11 of the 14, it continued for extended periods for up to several months intermittently, during interrogation and regular detention. Detainees said being allowed clothing depended on their degree of cooperation.

Sleep Deprivation and Use of Loud Music

Alleged by 11 of the 14, it was used during initial interrogation for seven continuous days, then intermittently for up to three months. It was done in various ways, including loud repetitive noise or music, long interrogation sessions, prolonged stress standing, and/or spraying with cold water.

Exposure to Cold Temperature and Cold Water

During their initial months, they were kept naked in extremely cold cells and interrogation rooms. Requests for clothing and blankets were denied. Cold water dousing was also used - with buckets or by a hose-pipe while they were in a stress standing position with their arms shackled above their heads for prolonged periods.

Prolonged Use of Handcuffs and Shackles

Detainees reported they were used continuously for long periods, even inside their cells, and in one case for six months.

Threats

Alleged by nine of the 14, they were against them and their families. They threatened waterboarding, electric shock, infection with HIV/AIDS, sodomy, arrest and rape of his family, torture to the point of death, and "no rules applied" interrogations.

Forced Head and Beard Shaving

Alleged by two of the 14, it was done abusively, and according to one, made to look undignified.

Deprivation/Restricted Provision of Solid Food

Alleged by eight of the 14, they got none for up to a month. After that, it was restricted, limited, and given as an incentive for cooperation. Items included rice and potatoes or bread and gravy.

Further Elements of Detention

Done to increase its harshness, they included continuous solitary confinement, incommunicado detention, no contact with family or third parties, and other above-listed elements. In combination, it made conditions intolerable.

Basic items were denied, including toothbrushes, toothpaste, soap, towels, showers, toilets, toilet paper, clothes, underwear, blankets, and for up to three months mattresses. Things then provided depended on cooperation, but were removed to apply more pressure or for no reason at all. In addition, their prayer schedule and Korans were restricted or denied.

Conditions of Later Stage Detention

To some degree, they improved, depending again on cooperation. Also, after the initial interrogation stages, they got clean clothes on a weekly basis, solid food one to three times a day but of poor quality and in limited amounts. Some got English or their native language books and magazines.

After about eight months of detention, they got in-cell toilet facilities, washbasins, and showers weekly or more often. After several months to up to two and a half years, they could move from their cells to closed indoor areas to use exercise machines. Cell temperatures were also at proper temperatures, and in their final detention period prior to being transferred to Guantanamo, some could watch a weekly film and/or use a portable DVD. Although an improvement from earlier months, they still endured harsh confinement.

Health Provision and the Role of Medical Staff

Detainees said medical personnel:

- monitored their regular torture and directly participated in the use of certain methods; they also instructed interrogators to continue, adjust, or at times stop particular procedures; they told detainees that treatment depended on their cooperation; condoning and participating in torture is a serious breach of medical ethics;

- performed medical checks before and right after each transfer; and

- treated the effects of torture as well as ailments and injuries during incarceration.

Legal Aspects in Relation to Undisclosed Detention

The report noted "a basic tenet of international law" - that "any person deprived of liberty must be registered and held in an officially recognized place of detention," not somewhere in secret. International humanitarian law has provisions for registering persons deprived of their liberty. It requires that organizations like ICRC get access and prohibits forced disappearances.

The 14 in question were denied these rights "outside the protection of the law during the time they spent in CIA custody." They had no access to judicial or administrative review, were denied contacts with their families, and had no idea why they were held or so badly treated. "The totality of the circumstances in which the fourteen were held effectively amounted to an arbitrary deprivation of liberty and enforced disappearance, in contravention of international law."

Their treatment was "severe and multifaceted," absent any "scrutiny by an independent entity, including the ICRC."

Fate of Other Persons Who Passed Through the CIA Detention Program

Post-9/11, many hundreds of them were victimized like the 14 here in question. Some were returned to their home countries "for prosecution or detention by their governments," according to George Bush. Washington provided ICRC no information about them so it's unable to monitor their treatment and "ensure communication with their families."

Given how the above 14 were treated, ICRC expressed grave concerns that many others were subjected to similar tortures and mistreatment.

Future Use of the CIA Detention Program

US authorities told ICRC that "no persons were held in the (program) as of October 2006." Such claims are false given that George Bush (in September 2006) said CIA detentions hadn't been discontinued and could be used at any time in the future.

The same holds under Obama. He pledged to protect CIA, military and Bush officials from investigation and prosecution as well as continue its foreign wars and occupation. The CIA's Director of Public Affairs, Mark Mansfield, told The New York Times that agency chief Leon Panetta said "repeatedly that no one who took actions based on legal guidance from the Department of Justice at the time should be investigated, let alone punished."

Now it's policy in Panetta's April 9 internal memo announcing the administration's blanket amnesty for all Bush officials torturers and war criminals. It's the same position Obama took on ABC's January 11 This Week that he intends "to look forward as opposed to looking backward....we have to focus on getting things right in the future (not) looking at what we got wrong in the past."

He assured continuity from one administration to the next, repeated violations of domestic and international laws, and torture remaining official US policy along with foreign wars, occupation, counterterrorism, and subversion with the largest ever FY 2010 defense budget to pursue them, way exceeding \$1 trillion, and excluding extras, 78% more than for FY 2000 at a time America has no enemies.

Conclusion

The above 14 prisoners:

-- "were subjected to (numerous transfers to) unknown locations and continuous solitary confinement and incommunicado detention throughout" their entire captivity;

-- they were force disappeared and deprived of their liberty and rights "in

contravention of international law;"

-- "they were subjected to systematic physical and/or psychological" torture and mistreatment;

-- they endured "severe physical and mental pain and suffering" as well as loss of their human dignity; and

-- participation of medical personnel in their treatment "constituted a gross breach of medical ethics" and lawlessness.

"In light of the above, the ICRC remains gravely concerned (for) the fate of" other CIA detainees, "who remain unaccounted for." It also worries that Washington intends to continue its current practices, in secret, with no accountability, or respect for the law.

It urged the Bush administration to reverse this decision and recommended the following:

-- end secret detentions and use of torture and mistreatment;

-- act humanely at all times in accordance with the law;

-- let detainees communicate with their families;

-- assure they have legal representation;

-- notify ICRC of all arrests;

-- grant it access to all persons held;

-- assure allegations of torture and mistreatment are properly investigated, and "take steps to punish the perpetrators;" and

-- provide all names of those held under CIA detention; if appropriate, the countries where they were sent, and "other relevant details to allow the ICRC to seek access to these persons."

The report's Annex I provided verbatim detainee statements as evidence of their gross mistreatment. Abu Zubaydah's was one of them. He's an alleged high-ranking Al-Qaeda member supposedly close to Osama bin Laden. Excerpts are as follows:

"I woke up, naked, strapped to a bed, in a very white room (about 4m x 4m). The room had three solid walls, with the fourth wall consisting of metal bars separating it from a larger room." After several days, "I was transferred to a chair where I was kept, shackled by hands and feet for what I think was the next 2 to 3 weeks....I developed blisters (under) my legs due to constant sitting."

A bucket was his toilet. Water for cleaning was from a plastic bottle. "I was given no solid food during the first two or three weeks." His liquid food at first made him vomit until he accustomed to it.

"The cell and room were air-conditioned and were very cold. Very loud, shouting type music was constantly playing....twenty-four hours a day," sometimes "replaced by a loud hissing or crackling noise." Guards, not interrogators, wore masks. "I could not sleep at all for the first two to three weeks (as) guards would come and spray water in my face" if I tried.

"After about two or three weeks, I began to receive food, rice (once daily). I could eat with my hand, but I was not allowed to wash....I remained naked and in shackles, but I could sleep a little. It went on like this for about another one and a half months."

He went on to describe torture and mistreatment of the kinds described above. Only later did conditions improve somewhat.

ICRC revelations heighten the need to hold Bush administration torturers (and war criminals) accountable and for Attorney General Eric Holder to appoint an independent special prosecutor to do it. Jameel Jaffer, ACLU National Security Project director called it an "imperative" and said: "Government officials who violated the law should not be shielded from investigation." It starts at the top, including George Bush, Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, complicit White House officials, ones in the Justice Department, and all others criminally involved.

A Spanish court took the first step by initiating (torture charge) proceedings against Alberto Gonzales, John Yoo, Douglas Feith, David Addington, Jay Bybee, and William Haynes. It's time for Obama to stop stonewalling and do it as well - against all parties guilty of torture and war crimes.

On April 7, The New York Times reported that "A three-judge panel of Peru's Supreme Court convicted former president Alberto Fujimori of human rights abuses and sentenced him to 25 years in prison" - on charges of murder, aggravated kidnapping, battery, and crimes against humanity. Should we in America expect less!

A Final Comment

On April 9, The New York Times Scott Shane headlined: "CIA to Close Secret Prisons, Scenes of Harsh Interrogations." He cites CIA claiming it'll "decommission the secret overseas prisons (infamous for their) brutal interrogation methods, bringing to a symbolic close the most controversial counterterrorism program of the Bush administration."

This announcement flies in the face of clear evidence that refutes it. In his confirmation hearings, new CIA director Leon Panetta told senators "extraordinary renditions" will continue, and no-holds barred interrogations remain policy for anyone and in any situations warranting them.

Despite Obama's pledge to end torture and close Guantanamo, conditions at the prison are unchanged. Further, Afghanistan's Bagram Air Base is undergoing a \$60 million expansion to hold 1100 more prisoners, above the 600 now there. Also, other detainees are likely held at any number of the hundreds of US bases globally plus a fleet of at least 17 prison ships - out of sight, anywhere at sea, holding unnamed detainees, and subjecting them to the same harsh and brutal treatment.

Closing Guantanamo, Thai, Polish, and other offshore prisons means moving their detainees elsewhere, not ending the "war on terror" or ways chosen to pursue it. Nothing short of that is acceptable.

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Also visit his blog site at sjlendman.blogspot.com and listen to The Global Research News Hour on RepublicBroadcasting.org Monday - Friday at 10AM US Central time for cutting-edge discussions with distinguished guests on world and national issues. All programs are archived for easy listening.

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posted by Steve Lendman @ [3:15 AM](#)

FRIDAY, APRIL 10, 2009

Obama's New World Order

Obama's New World Order - by Stephen Lendman

This article addresses Washington's financial coup d'etat in the context of discussing Michael Hudson's important, very lengthy and detailed April 5 Global Research.ca one titled: "The Financial War Against Iceland - Being defeated by debt is as deadly as outright military warfare." It reviews its key information in advance of Hudson's April 15 scheduled appearance on The Global Research News Hour to discuss.

What's true for Iceland holds everywhere, including the developed world, the idea being to enrich finance capitalism through state-sponsored debt bondage and neo-feudal impoverishment. The global economic crisis was no accident. It was long ago hatched, and has been brewing for years, gestating, percolating, then bubbling into the 2000 tech crash, a mere prelude for today's greater one spreading everywhere like a cancer but hitting the developing world and most indebted nations hardest.

Hudson: "Iceland is under attack - not militarily but financially."

Like many others, "It owes more than it can pay" and is bankrupt. It was planned that way, and the idea is to strip-mine the nation and its people of their resources, enterprises, assets, land, homes, jobs and futures through perpetual debt bondage. Bankers get enriched. Nations and people, however, are discarded like trash, with the IMF as enforcer, to be reinvigorated with an additional (G 20-pledged) \$750 billion, quadrupling its resources to \$1 trillion if fulfilled.

Wall Street and Western European bankers planned it and now ordered the government "to sell off the nation's public domain, its natural resources and public enterprises to pay (its) financial gambling debts." Also, raise permanent taxes at the worst possible time, then suck the maximum wealth from the country leaving behind an empty hulk and impoverished, desparate population. It's called dystopia Merriam-Webster defines as: "an imaginary place where people lead dehumanized and often fearful lives," the opposite of utopia under conditions of deprivation, poverty, disease, violence, oppression, and terror, much like in Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four.

Permanent debt bondage "is as deadly as outright military" defeat. Loss of livelihoods and assets leave people vulnerable to sickness, despair, and early deaths, much like what happened to post-Soviet Russia under Washington-imposed "shock therapy:"

-- 80% of farmers went bankrupt;

-- around 70,000 state factories closed;

-- unemployment became epidemic;

-- a permanent underclass was created;

-- poverty rose from two million in 1989 to 74 million by the mid-1990s, and in half the cases it was desperate;

-- alcoholism and drug abuse soared;

-- so did HIV/AIDS 20-fold;

-- suicides also and violent crime four-fold; and

-- the population declined by 700,000 a year; by 2007 it was 10% lower than in 1989 because of sharply reduced life expectancies.

Iceland, the developing world, and the West take note. This cancer is heading everywhere, courtesy of banker-imposed diktats, mainly from America and the UK. They insist Iceland "impoverish its citizens by paying debts in ways (they'd) never follow" even though the government has no way to do it.

No matter. "They are quite willing to take payment in the form of foreclosure on the nation's natural resources, land and housing, and a mortgage on the next few centuries of its future" - perpetual debt bondage no different than the spoils of war under permanent occupation.

However, in this case, debtors are convinced to pay voluntarily "to put creditor interests above the economy's prosperity (and) national interest." Their indebtedness comes at a huge cost - "chronic currency depreciation (and) domestic price inflation for many decades to come."

Contrast this to how developed countries, like America, handle debt - by inflating (not deflating) their way out to pay it off with cheap (reduced purchasing power) money because inflation erodes its value. It's simple - by printing money and running budget deficits the way Washington did after Nixon closed the gold window in August 1971, ended the 1944 Bretton Woods Agreement, and no longer let dollars be backed by gold or converted into it in international markets. A new monetary system creates money like confetti, and lets us spend and live beyond our means, then have developing and indebted nations pay the price.

In recent years, dollar weakness and price inflation "wiped out much of the US international debt." The Iceland model turns "this inflationary solution inside out....in violation of traditional credit practice." Instead of currency inflation, Iceland "inflate(d) its way into debt, not out of it, (by) indexing (it) to the rate of inflation," thus guaranteeing "a unique windfall for banks at the expense of wage earners and industrial profits." The result: destruction of its traditional way of life.

Iceland must "repudiate this debt bomb" to escape. It's indexed to inflation and "will never lose value." It's caught in a destructive whirlpool creating economic shrinkage, falling assets and wages in the face of perpetually burgeoning debt, the same global model needing to be exposed and renounced "now." Otherwise, economies will be hollowed out, "capital formation will plunge," people will be impoverished, and many won't survive.

Hudson's Background

His expertise comes from "having been an insider to imperial-style plundering....for forty years" - as an economist for Chase Manhattan Bank, Arthur Andersen, and the UN Institute for Training and Development (UNITAR). He's also taught economics since 1969, heads a Harvard-based economic and financial history group, is a Research Professor at the University of Missouri, and organized the first sovereign-debt fund in 1990 at Scudder, Stevens and Clark.

"All these jobs (except his current professorship) involved analyzing the limited ability of debtor countries to pay - how much could be extracted from them through foreign-currency loans and how much public infrastructure (could) be sold off (through) voluntary virtual foreclosure (under) creditor-dictated rules."

He advises countries not to borrow in foreign currencies, instead "monetize their own credit for domestic spending and investment." Iceland broke "the cardinal rule of international finance: Never borrow in a foreign currency for credit" that can freely be created at home. "Governments can inflate their way out of domestic debt," not the foreign kind.

Post-Soviet economies did it the wrong way, now suffer, and recent riots highlight their problems. "Instead of helping them industrialize and become more efficient," Western bankers loaded them with debt and exploited them - not for manufacturing and infrastructure development, as loans against existing real estate and infrastructure, to suck as much wealth out quickly.

It produced "bubble economies built on debt-financed real estate and stock market inflation," illusory wealth "bubbles (that) always burst." The only sustainable

financing of imports is through enough exports for a favorable balance of trade.

De-industrialization destroys economies by shrinking them, the result of plunging property valuations, rental income, and exchange rates. Foreign currency mortgage costs exceed property values producing defaults and losses for lenders.

It's hitting Sweden, Austria and leading creditor states like America and the UK. Real estate, stock market and employment are declining "in a straight line unprecedented even in the Great Depression." It's turned neoliberalism into a nightmare.

"Just as individuals can't live off a credit card forever, neither can nations. As any classical economist knows, societies that only manufacture debt are unsustainable." Eventually they collapse into bankruptcy just like a business or household. The old saying applies. Things that can't go on forever, won't.

No matter. Predator banks want to prolong the game as long as possible, grab all the wealth they can, force debtor nations to sell state enterprises at distress prices, then get new business by lending to investors who buy them on the cheap. Will it work? Only if targeted countries go along. In the case of Iceland, its very future is at stake.

Sound v. Imprudent Banking

For centuries, banks created credit responsibly - loaning money for sound investments to debtors able to repay with interest. No one imagined a world like today's with massive defaults occurring globally. In America, one-third of home mortgages are in "Negative Equity;" that is, "the mortgage exceeds the (property's) market price pledged as collateral."

US national debt tripled in one year, from \$5 - \$15 trillion, and according to some economists like John Williams, it's much higher under GAAP accounting - including unfunded liabilities around \$65.5 trillion, an amount exceeding world GDP through FY 2008, meaning America is bankrupt. Williams also puts unemployment at 19.8% by reengineering it to include discouraged and involuntary part-time workers and excluding fictitious birth-death rate ratio inclusions.

Blunt Truths about the "Dismantling of Industrial Capitalism"

Instead of extending credit to construct and grow them, financial oligarchs turned indebted nations into "casinos (through) debt-leveraged gambles," redistributing wealth upward and creating "debt peonage for most citizens." Even in America, nearly half the population has no net worth, and the gulf between richest and the rest is unprecedented.

"This is the unfair system that the world's top creditors would export to Iceland - if they can convince its voters (and leaders) to accept neoliberal debt pyramiding as a way to get rich." It's not working throughout post-Soviet states that see it as the road to hell, if public riots are a gauge.

"Better alternatives (are) the only defense" as it's impossible for "astronomically indebted economies to 'work their way out of debt.'" "Trying will 'collapse the currency's exchange rate," divert huge amounts of revenue and property to creditors, and produce "a new kind of post-capitalist (unjust, unsustainable) non-production/consumption economy" too gruesome to imagine or tolerate.

Iceland's financial crisis is the result of lawless predation, an "international (austerity demanding) Ponzi scheme" under rigged market rules imposing public and private "asset stripping" to pay debt. A simple scheme transfers wealth.

Economies and populations are trapped on a "debt treadmill from which there is no escape. (Lenders) pile on credit and let debts grow (through) the 'magic of compound interest,' knowing that loans cannot be repaid - except by asset sell-offs."

They're strip-mined through unending debt service so the parasite keeps feeding on its food source. The idea is to get it all, leaving empty hulks behind, then on to the new victims. It's "euphemistically dubbed post-industrial wealth creation," the kind that's collapsing economies globally and destroying people. Obama is commander-in-chief of the process.

America as Lead Predator

It's a viciously ugly scheme that's "trapped other countries into a nightmarish system in which (they're practically forced) to recycle their excess balance-of-payment dollar inflows back to the US," mainly as loans to the Treasury.

"When foreign central banks receive dollars for their exports (or asset sales)," their choices are limited. "Congress won't let them buy important domestic companies or resources," or get paid with US gold reserves. The alternative is buy Treasuries and mortgage-backed securities like Fannie and Freddie debt.

Icelanders and other nations must remember that America is the world's largest debtor, and as Adam Smith explained in *The Wealth of Nations* - "no nation ever repaid its debt," and he never envisioned one large as America's. We grow it by issuing paper for real assets and services. Until other countries demand more than confetti, this "Madoff-Ponzi scheme" will persist - for tiny states like Iceland (population 319,000 as of January 2009) until nothing is left to hand over.

Today's road to riches isn't through capital investment. It's by "foreclos(ing) at pennies on the dollar and mak(ing) 'capital gains' by flipping property onto (central bank-inflated) world financial markets." In a word, socializing risks, privatizing profits, preying on the weak, and getting "a free lunch" at public expense.

It's a zero-sum game. One side's gain is another's loss, and when it matches America against Iceland, it's easy exerting pressure, but no certainty it'll prevail. As a sovereign state, Iceland can choose. More on that below.

Throughout the process, "financialized wealth is extractive, not productive...because loans, stocks and bonds are claims on wealth," not the kind produced by making things.

This is Iceland's dilemma. "Homeowners are paying tribute, not in taxes to (an occupier), in interest to (debt pyramid, international creditor) sponsors of "over-financialization," aiming to strip-mine the country of everything, the way it's worked in many developing states. "Yet many Icelanders are heading into this future voluntarily" with little understanding of the trap, propelling them toward debt peonage destitution under the guise of an IMF rescuer - like a spider to a fly.

It shouldn't happen and won't if countries refuse to be trapped and extricate themselves in time. Iceland is at a crossroads, still able to avoid what ruined Russia, other post-Soviet states, South Africa, and many other nations misjudging America and the IMF are saviors, not world class predators.

"Back to the Future" - A New Age of Neo-feudal Debt Bondage

Conventional banking works by extending credit in the form of interest-bearing loans and seizing collateral only in cases of default. Central banks were created to finance governments and commercial ones to "expand trade, related infrastructure, mining and shipping," and develop other forms of business and industry.

More recently, "financial managers persuaded many countries to sell off public enterprises, like their water or energy supplies, mainly to pay debts or cut taxes" for the rich. It's turned debtor nations into "tollbooth economies in which basic services become a vehicle to extract greater and greater portions of national income and wealth for the benefit of the few."

It's the opposite of how classical economists define "free markets." Today, financial interests control them to extract labor and capital investment-produced surpluses - for themselves under the guise of "economic democracy." The result "pushed much of the Third World into poverty since the 1960s," and now the same cancer is heading everywhere.

Financial Warfare As Deadly As by Armies

Today's financial strategy is "multilateral (with) the IMF (and World Bank) act(ing) as enforcer(s) for global creditors to appropriate the income of real estate, national infrastructure and industry" by masquerading as a helping hand and seducing borrowers to believe it.

Here's how neo-feudal banking works. It doesn't create credit for manufacturing. Retained earnings and equity do it. It "create(s) credit primarily against (existing) collateral, and by so doing, "extract(s) money from the economy (and) undercuts industrial growth for "short-term speculative gains." This hegemony "took thousands of years to achieve," and it wasn't easy inducing nations into poverty through "debt pyramiding as good economic strategy." It's like prescribing gorging as a way to lose weight or a junk food diet to stay healthy.

Iceland made it worse by "protecting the claims of creditors against debtors," including most wage-earners. As post-bubble home prices plunged, creditors held their own and even "strengthen(ed) their hand by increasing their take," thus making a bad situation worse. Its people own a shrinking equity in their homes vis-a-vis bankers having the lion's share. Its law shifts homeowners to "Negative Equity," and it works by keeping people in the dark.

But it's much the same in the US to hide the root cause of today's crisis - Wall Street/Washington's engineered housing and debt bubble fraud amounting to financial piracy of the greatest magnitude. In America, Iceland, and elsewhere it's turned "ownership" societies into "loanship" debt trap ones. Until recently, it was unthinkable to let economies be crippled by interest payments. Now it's de rigueur through clever manipulation to convince people and nations to go along with their own demise.

For Iceland, its debt burden threatens its national identity and "loss of its future" the way Adam Smith explained - through bankruptcy when it's too great to repay. "Today, creditors and bondholders care about foreign economies only to the extent that they can charge (enough) interest (to) absorb their entire economic surplus." Getting it all is today's credo, and nothing too outlandish is irresponsible. Get in trouble. Socialism comes to the rescue, for bankers, not people or easy targets like Iceland.

Its "ethic is mutual aid and prosperity for all....a highly socialized attitude (yet how tragic that it's) lead the nation to (buy into) the snake oil (of) debt peonage." Economic growth never keeps pace with accruing debts that get recycled into greater ones, but end games are the same. "Debts that can't be paid, won't be," while bankers too big to fail get bailed out at the expense of public interests and sound economics. Yet Hudson explains: "Creditor mismanagement is the most important problem that any country should strive to avert."

Most important is to foster a free and open market of ideas, to extract the best and discard the others. But that's not how Western societies work, especially banker-run ones. A "free market" for them is "free" of ideas laying bare their snake oil.

"Most societies throughout history provide(d) credit... without oligarchy." Today it's the opposite. Predatory finance erased centuries of reform and did it at warp speed. As a result, our freedom is threatened and very close to being lost.

What's needed is a return to "basics, and a call for transparent statistics," socially progressive ideas "of a just society free of economic privilege, free of prices in

excess of socially necessary costs of production and of rentier income and wealth without effort," earned "in their sleep," not through their labor.

It means wealth should be based on "what one creates - not land and natural resources, or monopoly privileges to extract income via control of roads, the right to create money and other natural monopolies." Reform depends on purging this privilege. "The way to do it is to treat banking like transportation and broadcasting, as a public utility," not something privatized for "rentiers (to) tax society" for what rightfully belongs to everyone.

In the hands of predators, progressive reforms are impossible as financial giants "preserve their special privileges by law, minimizing taxes on themselves by shifting the burden onto labor and industry." Financialization:

-- "raise(s) the cost of living (and) doing business;"

-- frees bankers' "major customers - mortgage borrowers - from taxation to leave (maximum) surplus (for) interest;"

-- collects public sector revenue "by capitalizing it into interest charges" and inflating housing, other real estate, and other business prices;

-- "shift(s) taxes onto labor and industry, thereby raising prices and undermining the competitive power of financialized economies."

This is predation, the very opposite of "classical free market policy." Keynes concluded his General Theory by calling for "euthanasia of the rentier." His followers advocate banking as a public utility "to steer debt creation to fund growth in the means of production, not economic overhead by inflating property bubbles." None of that's in sight. Maybe someday after the inevitable demise of the current system that will eventually crumble under its own weight.

Lessons for Iceland and Other Nations

Iceland "is under financial attack from outside as well as within - by foreigners supported by a domestic banking class. To succeed (they need) to convince the population that all debt is productive, and that the economy benefits to the extent that its net worth rises (that is, make its asset values appear greater than its debt)."

The fact is that prices don't fall, "and if they do, debts should (remain), even (at the expense of) negative equity." Icelanders are being manipulated to believe they have "no alternative but to pay debts that a few insiders (accumulated, ones) that accrue interest when (they're) unpaid." In fact, demanded debt amounts exceed what the country can pay, but the strategy is to conceal this as long as possible "to proceed with the foreclosure and voluntary pre-bankruptcy sell-off of national assets to pay" predators.

What's true for Iceland, holds everywhere Wall Street and the IMF target, and here's the scheme:

-- shrink economies;

-- shift wealth and property upwards to a financial oligarchy; and

-- price "labor and industry out of world markets as a result of the heavy financial charges built into (the) pricing system."

Iceland is a "model test case for economic justice." Hopefully it will "confront reality sooner than later" and not get trapped into perpetual debt bondage by succumbing to global creditor pressure or seduction. What benefits them harms people, and everyone needs to know it. Bankers "aim (for) a return to 'normalcy,' defined as new exponential (debt volume) growth" producing more destructive bubbles like the

last ones.

Iceland must reject Wall Street's medicine or perish, and the same holds elsewhere, including in America. Bankers, not nations or people, should take the pain. Hudson asks: "How can Iceland (or Hungary, Latvia, Ukraine, or many other nations) pay its debts without bankrupting itself, (in Iceland's case) abandoning its social democracy and polarizing its (people) between a tiny creditor oligarchy and" everyone else? They're threatened by "a new ruling class that will control (their) destiny for the next century" or beyond. It's their choice to reject it and stay free.

Their "foreign currency loans should be denominated in domestic currency at written-down (and de-indexed) interest rates, or repudiated outright." The guiding principle should be to annul debts taken out under (destructive and extractive) terms benefitting creditors at the expense of their prey.

They aim to dominate societies - "above all...to maximize the power of debt over labor. The worse the economy does, the stronger" they get. It's a vicious cycle "recipe for economic suicide (from perpetual) debt peonage." Iceland can be a test case model against it. It comes down to whether it will back its people or, like America, surrender to financial predators. It's much the same globally, the result of the greatest ever economic crisis opportunity for plunder. The perpetrators love it. It's high time they got their comeuppance.

Imagine tiny Iceland taking the lead and fighting back against what another former high-level Wall Street and government insider warns - Catherine Austin Fitts, Assistant Secretary of Housing and Federal Housing Commissioner under GHW Bush and Dillon Read & Co. Managing Director and board member.

In her latest quarterly review, she predicts that "Obama will do more to help bankers achieve centralized control and one world government than any (previous) US politician." In less than three months in office, he's shown bankers they can count on him - to the tune of trillions of dollars, further open-ended checkbook amounts on request, and global "diplomatic" pressure on targeted nations to surrender. It's for public rage, tiny Iceland, and other over-indebted nations to demand "no more." Hopefully enough of them have backbone to do it.

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Daniel McGowan - Another "War on Terrorism" Victim

Daniel McGowan, Another "War on Terrorism" Victim - by Stephen Lendman

Of so-called "eco-terrorism" in his case, a term believed coined by Ron Arnold, executive director of the Center for the Defense of Free Enterprise (CDFE), a radical right wing group established on July 4, 1976 "to continue (the) Revolution of liberty, free enterprise and individual initiative....without hindrance by government."

According to Sourcewatch:

"Arnold blurred the boundaries between nonviolent civil disobedience and more

contentious tactics such as vandalism and sabotage," (mostly rejected by environmentalists) by equating property damage to "terrorism as a societal threat."

More recently, he linked up with self-styled "eco-terrorism" expert Barry Clausen and Nick Nichols, retired chairman of the PR firm Nichols-Dezenhall. They were instrumental in initiating the (stalled in committees) 2004 Ecoterrorism Prevention Act that led to the passage of the 2006 Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act (AETA). In broad and vague language, it criminalizes First Amendment activities advocating for animal rights like peaceful protests, leafleting, undercover investigations, whistleblowing and boycotts, and made it easier to call civil disobedience "eco-terrorism" with far stiffer penalties for comparable offenses under other laws.

In the late 1980s, Arnold also founded the so-called Wise Use movement - a pro-business funded anti-environmentalist group, mainly involved with western timber and mining issues.

In December 1991, he told New York Times reporter Tim Egan: "We want to destroy environmentalists by taking away their money and members." Days later, to Toronto Star writer Katherine Long, he said "Our goal is to destroy, to eradicate the environmental movement. We're mad as hell. We're not going to take it anymore. We're dead serious, we're going to destroy them. We want to be able to exploit the environment for private gain...."

Environmental studies professor Bron Taylor contends that "Radical environmentalism is best understood as a new religious movement that views environmental degradation as an assault on a sacred, natural world." Nonetheless, he concluded in a 1998 Terrorism and Political Violence journal paper that:

"there is, even after 18 years of radical environmental action, little evidence that radical environmentalists intend to maim and kill their adversaries or foster 'terror' among the general population."

Fronting for corporate America, right wing groups like the Center for the Defense of Free Enterprise, Wise Use, the Competitive Enterprise Institute, and their lobbyists and PR flacks claim otherwise in their relentless war on the greens, backed by federal and state authorities calling saving the earth "eco-terrorism" and managing to get activists like Daniel McGowan sent to prison.

Some Brief Background on McGowan

Born in Queens, New York, he was active in sports in high school, then attended the State University of New York (SUNY), Buffalo where he received a BA in business administration and Southeast Asian studies. After several months in Asia, he worked in New York as a paid and volunteer for various environmental and non-profit organizations, then in 1998 relocated to the Pacific Northwest to continue his environmental and social justice work.

Back home in 2002, he worked as a web and office administrator for Rainforest Foundation US and became active in projects for rainforest preservation, national forest protection, and biodiversity.

In 2005, he entered a Tri-State College of Acupuncture graduate program to become a healing practitioner, to be able to offer it free or at low cost to make it affordable for everyone. At the same time, he worked for Womenslaw.org, a non-profit organization helping battered women through legal recourse. His activism also included support for political prisoners, human rights, social justice, and involvement in numerous local events, dedicated to helping people.

Those who know him say he's one of "the most wonderful, expressive, caring, thoughtful and compassionate people in this world" - yet Bush prosecutors targeted, incarcerated, and made him a political prisoner through a gross miscarriage of justice.

The Support for Daniel McGowan Web Site - A Resource for Information on His Case

McGowan was victimized by "green scare," a term likely first used in 2002, referring to legal and extralegal government actions against animal liberation and environmental activists. The Spirit of Freedom prisoner support network defines it as "tactics the government and (their enforcement agencies use) to attack ELF/ALF (Earth Liberation Front and Animal Liberation Front members) and specifically those who publicly support them."

The term also refers to the 2005 arrests, indictments and convictions from the FBI's Operation Backfire (OB) against alleged ELF/ALF activists - charging them with damaging property, conspiracy, arson, and using destructive devices. The FBI included these organizations among their top domestic threats, calling them "eco-terrorists."

The 2001 USA Patriot Act created the federal crime of "domestic terrorism," broadening the definition and applying it to US citizens as well as aliens. It let OB target McGowan on December 7, 2005 when federal agents arrested him at the WomensLaw.org office, then imprison him in the "terror wing" of lower Manhattan's Metropolitan Correctional Center (MCC).

On the same day, New York Indymedia reported:

"Federal marshals arrested six environmental activists (today) in a series of coordinated raids in four states in apparent response to a string of arsons in Oregon and Washington attributed to the Earth Liberation Front (ELF), including simultaneous attacks in 2001 at the University of Washington's Urban Horticulture Center and the Jefferson Poplar Farms in Clatskanie, Oregon. Daniel McGowan, 31, was arrested in New York City. Authorities also stated that there will be more arrests, with at least one indictment immediately outstanding."

McGowan was held pending his extradition to Eugene, OR for his arraignment. Without evidence, prosecutors alleged he was an ELF member, a group dedicated to saving the earth pro-actively. More recently it abandoned arson as "a dangerous and irrational strategy," and now works "within the system (to) "build consensus and public support (for) a better world and future." Its unofficial motto: "ELF Resistance Forever....Live on....No Evil."

The evening of his arrest, agents raided McGowan's apartment seizing computers, personal photographs, tax records, textbooks, school work, videotapes, DVDs and more. The next day, he appeared in US District Court for the Eastern District of New York, after which he endured a two week odyssey taking him to federal detention facilities in Oklahoma, California and Sheridan, Oregon.

After his January 25, 2006 hearing, he was released on \$1.6 million bail, spent the next seven months under house arrest, on November 9 pled guilty to minor charges, then on June 4, 2007 was sentenced (without trial) to seven years in prison - for offenses warranting no more than a fine and suspended sentence.

Charges in "United States of America v. Daniel Gerard McGowan" and Twelve Other Defendants

After initially being charged on December 19, 2005, a superseding May 18, 2006 indictment (against him and 12 others) accused them of "willfully and knowingly conspir(ing) and agree(ing) to commit the following offenses against the United States:"

Count 1

-- "On or about January 2, 2001, at Glendale, Douglas County, Oregon," four of the defendants, including McGowan, "unlawfully and willfully caused and aided, abetted,

counseled, commanded, induced, and procured the malicious damaging and destroying, by means of fire and an explosive, of a building and other real and personal property used in interstate commerce and used in activities affecting interstate commerce, namely, a building and its contents located at Superior Lumber Company (in) Glendale, Douglas County, Oregon;"

-- these same defendants "traveled in separate vehicles to a predetermined staging area....where they dressed in dark clothing and put on their radio earpieces and masks;"

-- they "traveled to Superior Lumber Company building, set up lookouts, positioned the 'pick-up' vehicle, placed the time-delayed incendiary devices, and returned to the staging area;"

-- there they disposed of their dark clothing; and

-- McGowan and seven others "unlawfully and willfully caused and aided, abetted, counseled, commanded, induced, and procured the malicious damaging and destroying, by means of fire and an explosive, of buildings, vehicles and other real and personal property used in interstate commerce....at Jefferson Poplar Farm (in) Clatskanie, Columbia County, Oregon.

Count 2

Said defendants, including McGowan, conspired "to commit arson and destruction of an energy facility" by the manner and means so outlined, "to influence and affect the conduct of government, commerce, private business and others in the civilian population by means of force, violence, sabotage, mass destruction, intimidation and coercion...." By so doing, they endangered "human life and property that constituted violations of the criminal laws of the United States and of individual states."

Counts 3 - 13

Excluded McGowan of charges for various other incidents.

Count 14 and 15

Pertained to the January 2001 Superior Lumber Company destruction.

Counts 16 - 52

Excluded McGowan.

Count 53

Charged him with "using and carrying a destructive device in relation to a crime of violence (pertaining to) Jefferson Poplar Farm."

Count 54

Charged him with arson at the Jefferson Poplar Farm Vehicle Shop.

Count 55

Charged him with arson at the Jefferson Poplar Farm shop and office.

Count 56

Charged him with arson of a Jefferson Poplar Farm vehicle.

Counts 57 - 65

Charged him in more detail for the vehicle arson.

Signed:

Kirk A. Engdall
Assistant United States Attorney

In total, McGowan was charged with two counts of conspiracy to commit arson, 14 counts of arson, and two counts of use or possession of a destructive device. If tried and convicted of the latter two, he faced a minimum 30 year sentence. For all counts, he faced a mandatory life sentence - even though he neither hurt or intended to hurt any person or animal and acted only to defend the earth against real environmental terrorists against whom no charges were brought.

Given the possibility of life in prison, McGowan pled guilty to minor arson offenses against Jefferson Poplar Farm and Superior Lumber in return for the Justice Department dropping the more serious charges, including using destructive devices.

He did so on condition that he wouldn't implicate or identify anyone but himself. Three other co-defendants did the same. In his statement to the judge he "accept(ed) full responsibility for (his) actions and at the same time remain(s) true to (his) strongly held beliefs."

He said his "actions were not those of (a) terrorist but of a concerned young man who was deeply troubled by the destruction of Oregon's beautiful old-growth forests and the dangers of genetically modified trees." Yet he realized after participating in two actions that "burning things down (violated his) visions or belief about how to create a better world. So (he) stopped committing these crimes."

He "never intended to hurt people (and expressed) great remorse....for the harm that (he) caused." He then thanked the court for letting him express his thoughts and feelings. His role was to be a lookout on one of the incidents. On the other, he helped set the fire.

His lawyers asked for a maximum 63 months imprisonment, or no more than 18 months higher than for another co-defendant. On June 4, 2007, McGowan was sentenced to seven years, and is now at the newest Communications Management Unit (CMU) at the US Penitentiary (USP), Marion, IL.

US Federal Prison Communication Management Units (CMUs)

Several times, this writer addressed the Federal Correctional Institution (FCI), Terre Haute, IN's CMU, most recently on March 18, and described it as a facility for so-called "high-security risk" Muslim and Middle Eastern prisoners in violation of federal law that prohibits severely limiting or cutting them off entirely from other inmates as well as outside contacts and communications.

US Prison Bureau regulations ban the practice, and so did the Supreme Court in *Johnson v. California* (February 2005). Nonetheless, it exists. The Bush Department of Justice established it. Obama's has done nothing to address it.

In early 2007, it was learned that FCI Terre Haute had a CMU. Now, so does US Penitentiary (USP), Marion, IL. Because they're illegal, they're kept secret so perhaps others also exist in federal and/or state facilities. And for cover, they include one or more non-Muslims like McGowan, briefly held at Terre Haute and since early February at Marion. He, like them, was investigated, arrested, prosecuted, and interned as a political prisoner. They for being Muslims at the wrong time in America. He as a victim of USA Patriot Act "justice" that established the crime of "domestic terrorism" and included "eco-terrorism" as an offense.

At Marion, like at Terre Haute, he's segregated from the general prison population and treated like a terrorist, which he is not, nor is he violent. He also comes under

special rules for CMU prisoners that violate Federal Bureau of Prison regulations.

He's subjected to severe communication restrictions - with family, friends, and, at the discretion of prison authorities, other inmates, as follows:

- all communications are monitored and copied;
- outgoing and incoming mail and emails are delayed and censored;
- visitations must be approved, are non-contact only through a glass partition, and restricted to twice monthly two hour sessions compared to other prisoners getting weekly or bi-weekly all-day visitations; according to McGowan, "The most depressing part of the CMU is not being able to hug and kiss your wife" and, of course, children and other loved ones;
- other prisoners are allowed 300 phone minutes a month; CMU inmates only one 15 minute call a week on weekdays between 8AM - 2PM (when children are in school) with no exceptions made for holidays, birthdays or other special occasions;
- communications must be in English;
- prisoners sleep on thin mattresses atop concrete slabs; and
- prison officials have ad hoc authority to bend rules as they please, be more or less lenient, but generally impose added hardships or punishment for any reason or none at all;
- according to Eugene Weekly's Camilla Mortensen, McGowan was the first environmental activist in a "terrorist" unit where he was transferred for stating his beliefs at the low security FCI Sandstone, MN prison. Also for being the subject of a documentary film and appearing on a calendar featuring political prisoners; she also reported that media access to him was denied, including from the LA Times;
- CMU conditions are harsh with regard to rules and punishment imposed, food quality and amount, medical care, and the ability of prison officials to do as they please in an environment conducive to toughness; and
- according to McGowan, "I object to the way I was sent here (in the middle of the night with no notice); I object as well to the institution itself, as I find it to be either a Muslim unit and we are there to give them some credibility in denying it or it's just a plain old political prison." Correct on both counts and the reason these units are secret and illegal.

Readers are encouraged to visit the supportdaniel.org web site for photos and more information about him, his case, and how to help. US federal and state prisons are full of inmates like him, interned for their beliefs, activism, and commitment to social justice, not their supposed crimes.

Given the severe economic crisis, its toll on growing millions, and likely civil disobedience in response, the nation has been militarized with combat troop readiness and over 800 FEMA detention camps in every state. It means defending our rights or the earth is now hazardous and a crime at a time we're all Daniel McGowans.

A Personal Note and Related Comments

In October 2008, I wrote about Seyed Mousavi: Guilty of Being Muslim in Police State America. Until late March, he was incarcerated at Terre Haute federal prison's CMU. He's now in Marion's segregated facility along with other Muslims and McGowan. He's innocent, a "war on terror" victim, and my friend since we established regular contact and now exchange emails as prison officials allow.

Recently, a group of supporters came together in his behalf. Below are edited portions of his response:

"My dear friends and Justice Seekers

Thank you very much for coming together and supporting me and my family. This gives me hope and makes me believe the truth will come out and justice will take place.

Our message today is very clear.

The government must know:

- You reject what they did to us and our families;
- They must stop setting up plots and terrorizing people;
- They must stop framing innocent people and destroying their families;
- They must stop politicizing the justice system;
- They must stop targeting the Muslim community and its organizations, centers and Mosques;
- They must stop jailing peaceful family men for election propaganda;
- They must stop wasting your tax money by following, watching and wiretapping law-abiding people.

There is no room in this country for secret courts and secret evidence.

It's the duty of government to protect citizens and legal residents; to protect the law and Constitution; protect peoples' rights, freedoms and property.

Muslims must have the right to practice their religion freely and not live in fear.

The courts must remain independent and protect people, not be government tools; they must correct their mistakes for the sake of justice.

We must renounce war; all nations must live together in peace; America must lead by example, not force.

Again, thank you very much for your time and support. Please stay committed for freedom and justice.

May Allah bless you all."

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Also visit his blog site at sjlendman.blogspot.com and listen to The Global Research News Hour on RepublicBroadcasting.org Monday - Friday at 10AM for cutting-edge discussions with distinguished guests on world and national issues. All programs are archived for easy listening.

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posted by Steve Lendman @ [3:16 AM](#)

MONDAY, APRIL 06, 2009

Obama's War on Labor

Obama's War on Labor - by Stephen Lendman

Voters expecting change keep getting rude reminders of what kind, none they can believe in reiterated again on March 30 in Obama's remarks to the auto giants. While stating "We cannot....must not (and) will not let (this) industry vanish," he laid down a clear marker. Labor, not business, is targeted. More on that below.

"We (won't) excuse poor decisions," he said. "We cannot make the survival of our auto industry dependent on an unending flow of taxpayer dollars." In rejecting their aid request, he added: "These companies - and this industry - must ultimately stand on their own, not as wards of the state....What we are asking is difficult. It will require hard choices by the companies. (Their plan doesn't go) far enough to warrant the substantial new investments these companies are requesting."

Imagine the hypocrisy - open-checkbook trillions for Wall Street criminals v. a thinly disguised war on organized labor by scolding the auto giants for not forcing their workers to make greater sacrifices.

They're needed, said Obama. Their "best chance for success" is a "surgical" bankruptcy lasting for as little as 30 days - meaning workers will lose everything while CEOs get seven-figure compensation for betraying them.

A March 31 New York Times Michael de la Merced/Johathan Glater article suggested that Washington may seek a "controlled" bankruptcy - somewhere between "prepackaged (and) court chaos by persuading creditors to agree" to divide GM in two pieces, sort of like a good and bad bank to create a healthier company, free of its troubled assets and liabilities.

Under the plan, GM would declare a prearranged bankruptcy. Then, the bankruptcy code's Section 363 would authorize selling off desirable assets to a new government-financed company. Details are being discussed so it looks like a done deal, either prepackaged or through a bankruptcy court, either way very worker-adverse with UAW bosses pressured to go along, take it or leave it.

The administration also decided Chrysler can't survive alone. It was given 30 days to ally with Fiat SpA or with another automaker if that fails, even though such a deal may combine two dogs into a bigger one with even greater problems than going it on their own.

Obama drew a line in the sand for "workers who have already made painful concessions to make even more" through additional restructuring sacrifices, including:

- permanent job losses;
- lower wages;
- gutted work rules, including health and safety protection on the job;
- forfeited security through lost benefits and pensions, including for retirees, on top of everything given up in fall 2007 negotiations when the UAW leadership surrendered to management, then muscled the rank and file to go along; and
- more sacrifices the Bush \$25 billion bailout demanded, unreported in the mainstream: banned GM and Chrysler strikes, meaning effectively on the big three; more wage and benefits cuts; ending the UAW's "jobs bank" that provided help to furloughed workers and more.

It's a dark age for US auto workers and a prelude for what's coming - compared to earlier times when they earned substantial wages, got cost of living and productivity

increases, and had impressive benefits, including medical coverage with defined extras, employer-funded pensions, improved safety and health benefits, paid vacations, and supplemental unemployment insurance guaranteeing up to 95% of pay if laid off.

Replacing them was a two-tiered wage and benefit package with new skilled hires getting little more half the previous arrangement and for a new non-core category even less.

Much more was lost as well:

- plant closures resulting in permanent job losses; for GM alone it meant 85% fewer production jobs than in 1990 over a period when high-paying manufacturing ones disappeared, offshored, or were replaced by machines;

- for new hires, an ill-conceived 401k arrangement replacing employer-paid pensions with one dollar invested in company stock for each hour worked that turned out to be worthless two years later as the companies head for bankruptcy;

- major health care concessions under a union-run VEBA (voluntary employee beneficiary association) putting UAW bosses in the healthcare business for potential big profits at the expense reduced worker benefits and companies relieved of their obligations after putting up an initially-funded amount;

- employee buyouts, early retirements and other downsizing efforts to replace high-wage workers with cheaper new ones; and

- Chrysler workers getting even less overall than their GM and Ford counterparts.

A final coup de grace is planned with disturbing implications for all workers - after decades of hard won gains. The UAW alone lost almost one million jobs from 1979 through 2007 (from 1.5 million to about 512,000). At yearend 2008, membership stood at 431,000, and tens of thousands more may now go given industry conditions and administration demands. In addition, more major concessions are coming through the back door - by a prepackaged bankruptcy or court-appointed judge to relieve Obama of responsibility.

If GM and/or Chrysler go down either way, prearrangers or the court will do the honors. The current union contract will be replaced by new demands, meaning 60 years of gains will be lost with the stroke of a pen, and no negotiations can mitigate them. It gets worse.

Whatever's decided will be a model for all industry. The idea isn't to end unions, just neutralize them, then leave workers out in the cold with poor wages, few if any benefits, self-funded only retirement plans if any, and other management-demanded concessions in a new dark age for labor heading it back to its earliest days when all gains gotten were hard won and few achieved until the mid-1930s under the Wagner Act.

Labor always struggled and learned the hard way that winning meant organizing, pressing their demands, taking to the streets, going on strike, holding boycotts, battling police and National Guard forces supporting management, and paying with their blood and lives to get results.

They were impressive - an eight-hour day, a living wage, generous increases, good benefits, and pensions because strong unions went head-to-head with management and won. It's world's different today with government in bed with business, Democrats as bad as Republicans, weak unions under corrupted bosses, millions of high-paying jobs already lost, and a global economic crisis stripping workers of all bargaining power and heading them for sweatshop serfdom under a leader even more anti-labor than his predecessor.

He appointed an auto task force (headed by Tim Geithner and Larry Summers) to be judge, jury and executioner, then let them (quietly) or a bankruptcy judge pull the switch to absolve him of responsibility, be able to declare victory, and apply the same terms across industry as every sector struggles to survive, the result of a Washington/Wall Street-created crisis.

Their scheme is to:

- crush world economies;
- recapitalize the IMF to entrap developing ones in perpetual debt bondage, neo-feudalism, a virtual dystopia;
- structurally adjust their populations to a living hell - impoverishment through "shock therapy" loss of employment, essential benefits, and democratic freedoms;
- tank financial markets;
- destroy competitors;
- use trillions of taxpayer dollars to consolidate the FIRE sector (finance, insurance and real estate);
- buy other assets on the cheap;
- toxic ones from each other, mostly with public money paying the cost and assuming the risk;
- declare war on labor; and
- force companies to downsize, then strip workers of their rights and futures.

Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid are next to supply more funds for Wall Street, selected corporate favorites, and generous amounts for military adventurism, global imperialism, and a homeland police state apparatus to quell restive opposition when it erupts. Obama's promised change is betrayal of the constituency that elected him. Looking ahead, things appear very grim.

Promised Hope from the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA)

EFCA legislation was first introduced on November 21, 2003 in the 108th Congress as S. 1925 (with 37 co-sponsors) to: "amend the 1935 National Labor Relations (Wagner) Act to establish an efficient system to enable employees to form, join, or assist labor organizations, to provide for mandatory injunctions for unfair labor practices during organizing efforts, and for other purposes." It was referred to the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee but never passed.

It was reintroduced on April 19, 2005 in the 109th Congress as HR 1696 (with 215 co-sponsors) for the same purpose. It got as far as the Employer-Employee Relations Subcommittee but not passed.

It was again introduced on March 1, 2007 in the 110th Congress as HR 800 for the same purpose. It easily passed in the House (241 - 185), then was blocked in the Senate when supporters couldn't get the required 60 votes to end debate and bring it to a vote.

On March 10, the 111th Congress revived it for the fourth time as S. 560 (with 39 co-sponsors), again for the same purpose. It's been read twice and referred to the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee where it's pending.

Facts about EFCA

Change to Win aims "to unite the 50 million workers whose jobs cannot be outsourced and who are vital to the global economy. (It represents) seven unions and six million workers united....to build a new movement of working people to meet the challenges of the global economy and restore the American Dream (for) a paycheck that supports a family, universal health care, a secure retirement, and the freedom to form a union to give workers a voice on the job." It strongly backs EFCA and states:

"EFCA respects that the right to join a union is a fundamental freedom, just like freedom of speech or religion, and that employees should be able to do so without interference from management (or government)."

If enacted, it will change federal law for the better at a time worker rights are in tatters. Overall, it would be a boon for organizing with a free and fair "card check" system under which workers merely sign them in support of a union. They may do it openly or in secret, their choice free of company coercion or intimidation. If a majority do, companies must recognize it. Unlike current rules, they presumably can't veto the decision, coerce or bribe employees to vote "no," or fire those who do.

Current law requires good faith bargaining. But it's eroded to near worthlessness and become a mere shadow of the landmark Wagner Act. It guaranteed workers the right:

"to self-organization, to form, join, or assist labor organizations, to bargain collectively through representatives of their own choosing, and to engage in concerted activities for the purpose of collective bargaining or other mutual aid and protection." In other words, it leveled the playing field to let workers bargain on equal terms with management, but never easily.

From the start, its provisions were attacked, then severely restricted under the 1947 Taft-Hartley Act. In the "national interest," it lets presidents stop strikes by court-ordered injunctions for 80 days, and it's been done numerous times, 10 alone by Harry Truman who opposed the law but used it against organized labor.

It also allows stiff penalties for union violations but minimal ones for companies. It enacted a list of "unfair (union) practices prohibiting jurisdictional strikes (relating to worker job assignments), secondary boycotts (against firms doing business with others struck), wildcat strikes, sit-downs, slow-downs, mass-picketing against scabs, closed shops (in which employees must join unions), and more while legalizing employer anti-organizing interventions.

It eroded worker power that continues to this day. It's so weak that employers can (illegally) fire union sympathizers with only minor fines if proved. They can fire workers for any reason or none at all, and, of course, offshore high-paid jobs, freely move to low-wage "right-to-work" law states that restrict organizing under Taft-Hartley, and use those threats to extract more concessions from unions, easily intimidated or coerced to go along.

The result is that union membership declined steadily from the 1950s, and since the 1970s, worker wages and benefits have eroded under rigged market-based rules against them.

EFCA aims to restore labor rights affirmed by the Supreme Court in decisions like *Virginian Railway Co. v. Railway Employees* (March 29, 1937) when it ruled that "employees (have) the right to organize and bargain collectively through a representative of their own selection, doing away with company interference and 'company union.' "

It reaffirmed the right in *National Labor Relations Board v. Jones & Laughlin Steel Corporation* (April 12, 1937) by ruling: "the corporation (engaged in unfair labor practices by) discriminating against members of the union with regard to hire and

tenure of employment, and was coercing and intimidating its employees in order to interfere with their self-organization."

It added that:

"Employees have as clear a right to organize and select their representatives for lawful purposes as the respondent has to organize its business and select its own officers and agents. Discrimination and coercion to prevent the free exercise of employees to self-organization and representation is a proper subject for condemnation by competent legislative authority. Long ago we stated (that) labor organizations were organized (of necessity); that a single employee was helpless in dealing with an employer; that union (representation) was essential (to resist unfair treatment and) give laborers opportunity to deal on an equality with their employer."

We've come a long way from a friendly High Court. The current Roberts one is "supremely" pro-business. It's why passing EFCA is essential even given enough congressional votes to kill it and an anti-labor president who won't mind.

Today, over 90% of employers oppose unions with government on their side. Nearly 50% threaten to close plants or other work sites. Many coerce, threaten and/or bribe workers to be union-free, and around 30% illegally fire pro-union employees and get away with it.

Current election law mandates secret ballots one month after organizers collect enough signatures, but in the interim, companies can discourage, threaten and/or coerce employees to vote "no." They can also deny union recognition even if 100% of them want it.

EFCA turns the tables by enforcing fair collective bargaining under the following procedure. Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS) arbitrators get to write first contracts (for a two-year period) covering wages, benefits, and work rules. NLRB union certification will be based on "card check" majority votes. Employers must then make "every reasonable effort to conclude and sign a collective bargaining agreement" within 10 days of the union's request. If none is reached in 90 days, either party may ask FMCS to intervene. If resolution fails after 30 days, an arbitration board "renders a decision settling the dispute" - binding for two years, unless both sides agree in writing to amend the contract.

The NLRB will be empowered to take legal action to immediately reinstate workers fired for union activity and enforce triple damages on companies.

EFCA levels the playing field by letting workers vote up or down on whether to form a union - freely by majority vote without fear of employer retribution. Overall, it's the first pro-labor law since Wagner, if only a first step at a time their rights are greatly eroded. It's high time Congress reinstated them, but don't bet on it or that Obama will exert pressure to do it. Business fiercely opposes it with good reason. They've got it all their own way and resist change. EFCA will force it for the better at a crucial time for workers.

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FRIDAY, APRIL 03, 2009

GMO Proliferation Bills

GMO Proliferation Bills - by Stephen Lendman

Four in all so far plus another authorizing funding under a 2009 Omnibus Appropriations Act. One is HR 875: "Food Safety Modernization Act of 2009." Introduced in the House on February 4 by Rep. Rosa DeLauro, (D, CT) whose husband has ties to Monsanto, with 39 co-sponsors, it's been referred to the Agriculture and Energy and Commerce Committees for consideration as follows:

-- discussion,

-- possible hearings,

-- "mark-up" to make changes and add amendments,

-- then a vote on further action - to either table or send to the full chamber for a vote, the regular procedure for House and Senate legislation.

The bill's text is deceptively innocuous. Its header reads:

"To establish the Food Safety Administration within the Department of Health and Human Services to protect the public health by preventing food-borne illnesses, ensuring the safety of food, improving research on contaminants leading to food-borne illness and improving security of food from intentional contamination, and for other purposes."

Related bills include:

S 425: "Food Safety and Tracking Improving Act." Introduced on February 12 and referred to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry. It purports: "To amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to provide for the establishment of a traceability system for food, to amend the Federal Meat Inspection Act, the Poultry Inspections Act, the Egg Products Inspection Act. and the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to provide for improved public health and food safety through enhanced enforcement, and for other purposes."

HR 814: "Trace Act of 2009." Introduced on February 3 and referred to the House Energy and Commerce Committee. It's: "To amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act, the Federal Meat Inspection Act, the Poultry Inspection Act, and the Egg Products Inspection Act to improve the safety of food, meat, and poultry products through enhanced traceability, and for other purposes."

HR 759: "Food and Drug Administration Globalization Act of 2009." Introduced on January 28 and referred to the House Energy and Commerce Committee. It's: "To amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to improved the safety of food, drugs, devices, and cosmetics in the global market, and for other purposes."

If its critics are right, HR 875 (and the others) are what Linn Cohen-Cole calls "Monsanto's dream bill" to proliferate the world with GMO contamination and control its entire food supply.

In 2007, F. William Engdahl wrote an important book on the topic called "Seeds of Destruction: The Hidden Agenda of Genetic Manipulation." He explained how Washington and four agribusiness giants plan world domination by patenting all life forms to control food production globally - everything, crops and animals.

In 2003, Jeffrey Smith's "Seeds of Deception" explained the dangers of untested and unregulated GM foods exposing those who eat them to potential health risks. Reliable studies show that rats fed GM potatoes had smaller livers, hearts, testicles, brains, damaged immune systems, and showed structural changes in their white

blood cells making them more susceptible to infection and disease than other rats fed non-GM potatoes. They also had thymus and spleen damage, enlarged tissues, including the pancreas and intestines, liver atrophy, and other serious problems.

Humans may be harmed the same way because GMOs saturate our diet. Over 80% of all processed foods contain them as well as rice, corn, soybeans, soy products, vegetable oils, soft drinks, salad dressings, vegetables, fruits, dairy products, meat, and other animal products plus an array of hidden additives and ingredients in products like tomato sauce, ice cream and peanut butter.

Because labeling in America is prohibited, consumers don't know what they're eating or the risks from foods they believe safe. It makes everyone part of a mass human experiment, the results of which are unknown. Health problems may take years to show up. They'll be no way to trace the cause, and they may be serious, irreversible, and potentially life threatening.

Wheat so far is GM-free, and according to an April 1 Reuters report, Monsanto formally withdrew "submissions for its genetically modified wheat from all regulatory agencies except the US Food and Drug Administration, a company spokeswoman said. The withdrawal is the last step in Monsanto's (earlier) announcement that it would" delay but not shelve plans to introduce the world's first GM wheat.

Monsanto sought approval in America, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Russia, South Africa and Colombia. It's now delayed, not halted. The company wants GM control over wheat and all other foods, but its official pronouncements deny it.

Monsanto Answers Its Critics

"Monsanto According to Monsanto" is a company blog site. Responding to critics on March 20, it headlined, "HR 875: Monsanto's Dream Bill - Or Just a Hallucination?" It dismisses the notion that it's behind the bill that will "give incredible power to Monsanto by criminalizing seed banking, requiring 24 hour GPS tracking of animals, stripping away of property rights, and forcing industrialized farming on America."

Not so it says or that "Monsanto is behind the bill. (Further), nowhere is there any mention of seed banks, loss of property rights, or GPS tracking of animals. The bill seems to be nothing more egregious than a well-intentioned effort to improve food safety laws and processes."

The bill's presumed intentions will be discussed below, but one thing is clear. Businesses, not politicians, write and/or control virtually all legislation affecting them to assure their interests are served. Monsanto is an influential Ag giant, directly involved in all food-related laws, the company's denials notwithstanding. It's so powerful, it has virtual veto power over anything related to its operations and laws affecting them.

Yet it dismissively claims that the bill stems from "public concerns with relatively recent incidents with peanut butter, ground beef, (and) spinach, etc." False. The way to deal with these and related problems is simply enforce existing laws, not enact new ones. They're not because food giants object at a time they matter, not public health and safety that's of no concern to lawmakers.

Case in point: the USDA is woefully understaffed, under-budgeted, and only perfunctorily carries out inspections. A recent OMB Watch report highlights the problem. Headlined, "Federal Meat Inspectors Spread Thin as Recalls Rise," it explains that USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) is charged with ensuring safe meat, poultry and eggs, but its budget and staff haven't kept pace with its mandate.

In FY 1981, it had about 190 workers per billion pounds of meat and poultry inspected. By FY 2007, it was fewer than 88 or less than half as many. Yet under federal law, FSIS must inspect all meat, poultry, and egg products intended for

commercial use. Its web site states: "Slaughter facilities cannot operate if FSIS inspection personnel are not present (and) Only Federally inspected establishments can produce products that are destined to enter commerce."

Reality, however, belies the mandate as processors and manufacturers easily circumvent procedures, and according to inspectors interviewed, understaffing and lax policies contribute to the problem. An unsafe food supply results. Government policy is to blame, and current legislation is for other purposes, not a way to fix things. HR 875 and companion bills are for agribusiness, not improved food safety.

Some Likely Truths about HR 875

Several recent articles and the Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture (PASA) offered their analyses. They believe this and companion bills are vehicles to let agribusiness control the entire US food supply, destroy independent local farming, and end the production of healthy organic food. They may be right.

Linn Cohen-Cole calls HR 875 "monstrous on level after level - the power it would give to Monsanto (and other Ag giants), the criminalization of seed banking, the prison terms and confiscatory fines for farmers, the 24 hour GPS tracking of animals, the easement on their property to allow for warrantless government entry, the stripping away of their property rights, the imposition (of) "industrial" standards, (and) planned elimination of (independent) farmers through all (the above) means."

It's no secret that Ag giants want all foods to be GMOs so they have total control. It's an agenda going back decades that Engdahl explained in his book. The science came out of US research labs in the 1970s when no one noticed or paid attention. It became apparent when the Reagan administration decided to make America dominant in a friendly unregulated environment, unmindful of safety and public health concerns, that's persisted ever since under Republican and Democrat administrations.

Monsanto is the dominant producer, a company with a long record of fraud, cover-up, bribery, deceit, and disdain for the public interest, yet it has enormous clout in Washington. In the 1980s, and especially under GHW Bush, it got unregulated free reign for its operations. A Bush Executive Order assured it. It ruled GMO plants and food to be "substantially equivalent" to ordinary ones of the same varieties, such as corn, wheat or rice. "Substantial equivalence" became the standard for the GMO revolution by sweeping away all regulatory restraints in spite of early concerns about safety that were confirmed overwhelmingly later on.

PASA says don't be fooled by the bill's deceptive language that hides its true intentions. Code words like "traceability, source verification, and best farming practices with proven scientific results" will force farmers to tag every animal (the requirement for industrial farms is one per 800,000) and use drugs, pesticides and GM seeds.

Already an Ohio state agricultural department SWAT team raided an organic food coop. The same thing happened to Pennsylvania Mennonite farmers and Wisconsin Amish ones. Other independents have been terrorized by home break-ins, burglaries, and treetop helicopter over-flights scaring animals to death. Conventional seed farmers like North Dakota's Rodney Nelson have been sued by Monsanto for infringing on its patent rights because wind currents landed GM seeds on his land. In Poland, pro-agribusiness laws eliminated 60% of small farmers. Ones in the UK led to 60 suicides and in India to over 180,000.

From 1996 - 2004, worldwide GMO plantings expanded to 167 million acres, a 40-fold increase on 25% of global arable land. Over two-thirds of US farmland grows GMOs, more than 106 million acres. Argentina has 34 million acres, and production is expanding in Brazil, China, Canada, South Africa, Indonesia, Spain, Eastern Europe, and wherever else Ag giants have clout. They want it all, everywhere, and have complicit government allies to help them, here and abroad.

In Iraq, Paul Bremer's Order 81 covers patents, their duration, and stated: "Farmers shall be prohibited from re-using seeds of protected varieties or any (designated) variety." It gave Ag giants absolute control over farmers' seed usage for 20 years. They're now GMO, owned by the transnationals, and Iraqi farmers had to sign an agreement to pay a "technology fee" as well as an annual license fee. Plant Variety Protection (PVP) made seed saving and reuse illegal, and even "similar" seed plantings can result in severe fines and imprisonment. Agribusiness wants the same rights everywhere, including in America. If they get it, the future of organic and independent farming will be threatened.

PASA says HR 875 doesn't regulate, prohibit or penalize private gardens or farmers markets directly. It focuses solely on ensuring supermarket food safety. But it regulates seeds, harvesting, transporting, seed storage facilities, and seed cleaning equipment under "food safety" provisions to prevent contamination - from agricultural water and manure, not pesticides, fertilizers, or unsafe GM seeds.

Seed cleaning equipment is crucial as it's how organic seed is saved. It's used after plants "go to seed" to separate them from plant material so farmers can harvest and store them for future plantings. HR 875 doesn't mention seeds but PASA believes its intent is to criminalize their banking through code language and bill provisions. Already, some areas of the country ban seed cleaning. Monsanto is likely involved, and the scheme is to claim the equipment produces contamination.

To prevent it, Ag giants want provisions that require expensive storage facilities, per line of seed. Organic farmers can't afford them, and this has nothing to do with food safety. But HR 875 claims it does.

PASA says FDA and USDA targeted organic and other independent farmers for years, at least since the early 1980s when high interest rates drove many out of business. Today, pro-industry laws have the same effect because Ag giants like Monsanto demand them. If they succeed, biodiversity and organic farming are at risk along with public health and safety to a greater degree than already given the amount of tainted and dangerous foods allowed, not addressed in HR 875.

While bill language doesn't prohibit organic or independent farming, that's the likely aim. Its provisions are Ag business-friendly, but destructive to small competitors by establishing heavy fines, imprisonment, onerous rules, and letting regulators interpret them as they wish.

Bill language also doesn't mandate a national animal ID system (NAIS) but does it by claiming it's in current law. It's so deceptive that Congress and consumer and food safety groups support it. But some are industry funded so look the other way when they should know better.

HR 875 and its companion bills are under consideration in committees, not yet voted into law. Activists feel now is the time to stop them before it's too late. Agribusiness wants total control over every step in the production, processing, distribution, storage, and marketing of foods to consumers.

Using the ruse of food safety and security, they aim to eliminate competition to have it all and replace wholesome foods with unsafe GMOs. Congress is willing to go along. And why not. Representatives like DeLauro get large Ag business contributions. In return, they assure bills like HR 875 are passed. It's for concerned people to stop them.

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posted by Steve Lendman @ [3:10 AM](#)

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 01, 2009

Israel's Illegal Annexation of East Jerusalem

Israel's Illegal Annexation of East Jerusalem - by Stephen Lendman

So says a confidential EU report revealed on March 7 by The London Guardian's Rory McCarthy. It accuses Israel "of using settlement expansion, house demolitions, discriminatory housing policies and the West Bank (Separation) barrier as a way of 'actively pursuing the illegal annexation' of East Jerusalem." More still, including restrictive permits, "closure of Palestinian institutions," and various other ways to "increase Jewish presence in" the city, "impede Palestinian urban development, and separate East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank" incrementally to annex it.

It says plans are now accelerated and have undermined the Palestinian Authority's (PA) credibility as well as weakened support for peace. It calls "Israel's actions in and around Jerusalem....one of the most acute challenges to Israeli-Palestinian peace-making (yet) have limited security justifications." In addition, they're illegal.

Israel dismissed the criticisms as "a disinformation campaign" and claimed that "mayor Nir Barkat continues to promote investments in infrastructure, construction and education in East Jerusalem, while at the same time upholding the law throughout West and East Jerusalem equally without bias." Those comments, of course, have no basis in fact nor do any from Israeli officials with regard to Palestinians.

The EU report cites Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention that prohibits "Individual or mass forcible transfers, as well as deportations of protected persons from occupied territory...." Neither shall "The Occupying Power....deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies." In addition, numerous UN resolutions established "no legal validity" for settlement building or for East Jerusalem's annexation.

Yet settlement expansions continue at a "rapid pace" - in the past year alone with nearly 5500 new units submitted for public review, 3000 of which have been approved. Through yearend 2008, they number in total around 470,000, including 190,000 in Arab East Jerusalem.

Of particular concern are "settlements inside the Old City, where there were plans (for) 35 housing units in the Muslim quarter, as well as (more) for Silwan, just outside the Old City walls" - the idea being to connect East Jerusalem with Old City settlements, then "sever" them from the West Bank.

The Guardian's McCarthy states:

"There are plans for 3500 housing units, an industrial park, two police stations and other infrastructure in a controversial area known as E1, between East Jerusalem and the West Bank settlement of Ma'ale Adumin, home to 31,000 settlers." The EU report called Israeli E1 measures "one of the most significant challenges to the....peace process."

Israel responded as expected - that it's "committed to the continued development of the city for the benefits of all its population," and that East Jerusalem Palestinians are better off than those in the West Bank," according to Olmert spokesman, Mark Regev. The EU clearly disagrees. So do human rights activists and Palestinians throughout the Territories living under an oppressive military occupation where international laws are debased so none of their rights are observed.

More from the "EU Heads of Mission Report on East Jerusalem"

No longer confidential, the reports documents numerous abuses in spite of Israeli denials to the contrary. Besides the above:

-- in October 2008, a new synagogue was inaugurated "in the immediate vicinity of the Haram Al Sharif/Temple Mount" raising Palestinian concerns about Israel's plans to take over the sanctuary as extremist settlers are promoting;

-- the recent "Mufti's Grove" confiscation of 29 dunums (around seven acres) for settler development;

-- increased settler incursions into the Haram Al Sharif on the Temple Mount, at times protected by Israeli security forces;

-- Palestinian properties are being targeted and families evicted from their homes;

-- provocative settlement expansions are continuing "in the heart of the Palestinian population;"

-- Palestinian urban development is being impeded "by depriving East Jerusalem of most of the still vacant areas available for economic and demographic growth;"

-- land is being confiscated for road construction;

-- the Separation Wall and "permit regime" cause "serious humanitarian, social and economic impact on Palestinian life;" in addition, 86% of it is on stolen land inside the Green Line; "the Wall in the Jerusalem area de facto annexes 3.9% of the West Bank" and extends Israel's border illegally; by including "illegal settlements, (the Wall) cuts off 285,000 Palestinians," including East Jerusalem, from the West Bank creating enormous hardships as a result;

-- as more of the Wall is completed, "the checkpoint and permit regime imposed on West Bankers is being tightened;" only around 20% of farmers have permits for their land; the impact on their lives is "serious;" once the Wall is completed, it's "estimated that 35,000 Palestinians will need permits for their own homes" with no assurance they'll get them;

-- East Jerusalem's Al Quds University's Beit Hanina Campus is also affected; it reports a 70% drop in students;

-- fewer Palestinian Christians and Muslims have access to religious sites;

-- West Bank and East Jerusalem economies have declined with customers cut off from markets and services;

-- East Jerusalem hospitals providing specialist healthcare face "increasing difficulties providing services for (West Bank) patients" who can't access it without permits;

-- East Jerusalemities get miniscule budgets that greatly restrict essential public services - "in sharp contrast to areas where Israelis live both in West Jerusalem and East Jerusalem settlements;"

-- severe municipality restrictions impede "the building of Palestinian housing in East Jerusalem;" very few permits are issued for it;

-- "since Israel annexed East Jerusalem, more than 35% of its territory has been expropriated (more than 24 sq. km);" of the remainder, much is unzoned and off limits for construction; even in zoned areas, "development has been artificially 'capped,' leaving only 12% of East Jerusalem (mostly originally Palestinian owned land) for Palestinian residential purposes;"

-- building anywhere without permits means likely demolition, but getting one is onerous; authorities issue fewer than 200 a year, and "even these require a wait of several years and are usually a costly affair;"

-- various other obstacles and restrictions make life for East Jerusalem Palestinians difficult to impossible, yet Israel finds new ways of imposing them.

Bricup's "Report on East Jerusalem"

Bricup is the British Committee for the Universities of Palestine, "an organisation set up in response to the Palestinian Call for Academic Boycott" - with twin missions:

-- "to support Palestinian universities, staff and students," and

-- "to oppose the continued illegal Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands with its concomitant breaches of international conventions of human rights, its refusal to accept UN resolutions or rulings of the International Court (ICJ), and its persistent suppression of Palestinian academic freedom."

Undated but likely from mid to late 2005, its report calls "East Jerusalem...of central importance to the Palestinians in political, economic, social and religious terms. Several inter-linked Israeli policies are reducing the possibility of reaching a final status agreement on Jerusalem," and show Israel's clear intent to make its East Jerusalem annexation "a concrete fact" by:

-- completing the Separation Wall to encircle the city;

-- continuing illegal settlement expansions;

-- annexing East Jerusalem one demolished home at a time;

-- strictly enforcing rules separating East Jerusalem Palestinians from those in the West Bank, including by a reduced number of work permits; and

-- the Jerusalem municipality's discriminatory taxation, expenditure, and building permit policies.

Along with continued home demolitions, expanding the Ma'aleh Adumin settlement into area E1 threatens to completely encircle the city with Jewish settlements and split the West Bank in two. Once the Separation Wall is completed, East Jerusalem will be isolated physically, politically, commercially and socially. With justification, Palestinians fear that Israel will "get away with it," seriously erode any chance for peace, and radicalize "the hitherto relatively quiescent " East Jerusalem population.

Jerusalem remains one of the thorniest issues in reaching an equitable resolution to the Israeli - Palestinian conflict, yet Tel Aviv appears determined to make it harder. EU policy is based (if not enforced) on the provisions of UN Security Council Resolution 242 (November 1967) that calls for "Withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict." As a result, EU member states (nominally at least) reject East Jerusalem's annexation or any measures to change its status. Nonetheless, Israel continues to violate international laws, and as a result, creates huge humanitarian and political fallout, so far with impunity.

Bricup wants but hasn't gotten clear EU and Quartet statements for Israel to desist from all illegal and disruptive policies or face political consequences if it refuses. As long as that persists, resolution to the long-running conflict remains stymied with Israel in command and Palestinians faced with the continued loss of their rights and land.

Historical Background and Basic Information on Occupied Palestine and Jerusalem

In November 1947, six months before Israel became a state, the General Assembly Partition Plan (Resolution 181) gave Jews 56% of historic Palestine, Palestinians 42%, with 2% kept under internationalized trusteeship, including Jerusalem. Israel's 1948 War of Independence seized 78%. Then in December, UN Resolution 194 mandated free access to Jerusalem, other holy places, and granted Palestinians the right of return.

In May 1949, UN Resolution 273 gave Israel UN membership conditional on it accepting resolutions 181 and 194 and "unreservedly (agreeing to honor) the obligations of the United Nations Charter." However, earlier in June 1948, the Israeli cabinet (with no formal vote) barred Palestinian refugees from returning and adopted "Israelification" and "De-Arabization" as policy, especially with regard to Jerusalem. The same policy holds today to preserve Israel's "Jewish character" and confine Palestinians to isolation, confinement, and continued oppression under military occupation.

From May 1948 until June 1967, Israel controlled West Jerusalem's 38 square kilometers while Jordan governed East Jerusalem's six square km area. After the 1967 Six-Day War, Israel annexed 70 square West Bank km, including East Jerusalem, 28 Palestinian villages, and parts of Bethlehem and Beit Jala's municipalities to make Jerusalem Israel's largest city. Also its most controversial by creating a Jewish majority to solidify Israeli sovereignty over the city henceforth.

Palestinian villages were divided to exclude heavily-populated areas, and much of their land was expropriated for Jews. Remaining Palestinians became "permanent residents:"

-- unwanted on their own land;

-- treated like foreign immigrants;

-- denied most citizenship rights, even for native Jerusalemites with roots going back generations or longer; and

-- targeted by Israel for removal - one home demolition at a time to make way for new Jewish settlements.

As of year end 2005, Jerusalem's population was 723,700, according to B'Tselem - 482,000 Jews (67%) and 241,000 Palestinians (33%). The Jewish Virtual Library's numbers are even more one-sided at 582,700 Jews (69%), 240,900 Palestinians (29%), and 15,700 Christians (2%) for an 839,300 total.

Israel constrains a faster-growing Palestinian population by:

-- expropriating Palestinian land, by individual seizures and the Separation Wall;

-- physically isolating East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank;

-- employing discriminatory policies, including land expropriation, home demolitions, building restrictions including denial of permits, and other restrictive measures;

-- revoking residency and other benefits of Palestinians who stay abroad for seven years or who can't prove that Jerusalem is their home; and

-- providing East Jerusalem few services to cause severe deprivation and encourage its residents to leave; sanitation facilities are sorely lacking; sewage and drainage infrastructure is grossly inadequate; infrastructure overall is in disrepair; trash goes uncollected and piles up in streets; the postal service barely functions; few neighborhoods get fresh water; educational facilities are few and deplorable, and much more;

-- raising poverty to outlandish levels; in 2003, Central Bureau of Statistics data

showed the damage - 64% of East Jerusalem Palestinians lived in poverty; for children, it was 76%; today the numbers are likely higher; and

-- using police and security force harshness to exacerbate conditions through harassment, violence, terror, and killings.

East Jerusalem remains illegally annexed and occupied. In addition, all the above infringements violate Fourth Geneva law that requires an occupying power to provide essential goods and services and do nothing to restrict them. It also prohibits "violence to life and person (including) murder, mutilation, cruel treatment, torture (and) outrages upon personal dignity." It designates everyone under occupation as "protected persons" fully covered by law. It bans "Individual or mass forcible transfers, as well as deportations of protected persons (anywhere) or transfer (of) parts of its own population into the territory it occupies." Israel is in violation on all counts, and consider others as well below.

Obstacles to Palestinian Family Unification

Until May 2002, Israeli citizens, including Arabs, married to Palestinians in the Territories could live with their spouses in Israel, after completing a lengthy Ministry of Interior process to OK it. No longer after the government froze the application process and on July 31, 2003 passed the Nationality and Entry into Israel (Temporary Order) Law, 5763 - 2003. Thereafter, it was renewed.

The statute henceforth prohibits Israelis from bringing their Territory spouses into Israel, and children as well are harmed. Those residing in East Jerusalem who were born in the Territories are barred from residency in Israel.

As a result, tens of thousands are affected. Couples violating the law risk serious recriminations if caught, even in East Jerusalem, the West Bank or Gaza. Without a special permit, Israelis are forbidden to enter Gaza or Area A in the West Bank. However, couples who married before the law's enactment, in cases where Territory spouses hadn't yet received permanent Israeli status, may live together provided the Civil Administration issues a permit, something extremely hard to get and often cancelled.

Israel's "demographic bomb" is the problem - meaning the time when a faster-growing Palestinian population becomes a majority and threatens the Jewish State's character. Israel's solution is repressive laws and violent ethnic cleansing to prevent it, in Israel and the Territories.

The Association for Civil Rights in Israel, the Adalah Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, some Knesset members, and couples harmed by the law petitioned the Supreme Court to void it. However, on May 14, 2006, Israel's High Court of Justice upheld it in spite of several UN agencies (UNHRC, UNCERD, and UNCEDAW) and human rights organizations calling for its revocation.

Its opponents call it discriminatory, racist, and in violation of international law for infringing on family life, privacy, dignity, and equality by treating Jews one way and Palestinians another. Various international conventions to which Israel is a signatory prohibit the practice, including the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the Convention for the Rights of the Child. Nonetheless, so far it stands.

Annexation Through One Home Demolition at A Time

The Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHD) helps rebuild homes. It also resists "land expropriation, settlement expansion, by-pass road construction, policies of 'closure' and 'separation,' " destruction of agricultural land and crops, and the repressive effects of occupation, but its original mission was to oppose and resist house demolitions in the Occupied Territories.

From 1967 through December 2008, ICAHD estimates that 23,535 Palestinian homes overall have been destroyed from information gotten from the Israeli Ministry of Interior, the Jerusalem Municipality, the Civil Administration, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs(OCHA), other UN sources, Palestinian human rights groups, Amnesty International (AI), Human Rights Watch (HRW), and other sources. It classifies types of demolitions as:

- punitive as punishment for actions associated with the houses (around 8.7%);
- administrative for lack of a building permit (around 26.7%);
- land-clearing and by the military to clear land for any reason, achieve an IDF goal, or accompany extrajudicial assassinations (about 64.5%); and
- other reasons so far undefined.

Below is an account of one for lack of a permit - a clear testimony to the harshness of the practice.

On July 28, 2008, Hiba al-Almi gave this account about her family's dream to buy a home. In 2002, her father spent \$200,000 for an apartment, "all his savings. The contractor showed him the building permit he had received" to reassure him. In June 2006, "we moved in. The next day, policemen and Jerusalem Municipality officials came and handed us a demolition order." The building permit apparently wasn't valid.

On October 18, 2006, final demolition orders were posted on the building, "and we began to remove our furniture." With legal help, the order was postponed, and by November her family moved back. In July 2008, "teams of inspectors and Border Police forces came to the house a few times." They photographed the building without explanation.

On July 27 at around 11:30AM, "my parents were abroad and I was home alone. The bell rang and when I opened the door, I saw three Jerusalem Municipality inspectors and a Border Police officer with high ranking insignias on his shoulder." They entered and inspected room to room.

Hiba slept that night at her aunt's house as she didn't want to be at home alone. At around 1AM, a neighbor called, said police might return that night, so "Around 2, I returned home with my aunt....Around 3:30AM, I heard" stun gun grenades exploding, then banging on the door. "When I opened (it), a few policemen burst in with black masks on their faces," accompanied by "five huge dogs...."

She and her aunt were ordered out of the building "immediately," not allowed to get dressed, sworn at, slapped, hit in the back, threatened by one of the dogs, then grabbed by the hair, thrown to the ground, and kicked. A policeman then pushed her out of the apartment and down the stairs. Other police were in the stairway, and they hit and punched her as well. She begged them to let her go back to retrieve valuables and a school project on her computer. They refused and said everything would be brought out with the furniture.

Her father returned the next day at 11:30AM but was prevented from entering the building. At around 6:30PM, there was a loud explosion after which the "whole building collapsed, and my life was buried with it. All my mementos and pictures of the family were buried in the ruins." All the furniture and much other property and valuables were lost. The family now lives in a rented house, deeply scarred by the incident, that's repeated many times throughout the West Bank and in East Jerusalem.

Denial of Social Rights to East Jerusalem Palestinians

To receive them, including health coverage, individuals must be an "Israeli resident." East Jerusalem Palestinians are not so are lawfully excluded from entitlements. Especially suspect are East Jerusalemites married to non-resident Palestinians so nearly always allotment request investigations are conducted to check their validity - to verify if applicants live in Jerusalem lawfully. They take months and are often denied in violation of residents' rights. When resident parents want to register children, additional investigations are begun that again take months so that thousands of resident minors end up denied services.

The idea is to toughen policies against East Jerusalem Palestinians and make their lives as harsh as possible toward the goal of reducing their numbers to provide more areas for Jews.

A Final Comment

Early in its history, Zionists chose confrontation over conciliation and used violence to achieve political aims. Thereafter came wars, state-sponsored terrorism, military occupation, ethnic cleansing, land theft, police state justice, and slow motion genocide to rid "Greater Israel" of Arabs and solidify its character as a Jewish state - most of all in Jerusalem, a "sacred city" for Zionists with lots of biblical nonsense and myths for support.

Ever since, Palestinians have suffered grievously for over six decades and under occupation since 1967. Sabbah Haitham's blog says it well:

"YOU take my water, burn my olive trees, destroy my house, take my job, steal my land, imprison my father, kill my mother, bomb my country, starve us all, humiliate us all....BUT....I am to blame: I shot a rocket back."

Nothing on the horizon promises Sabbah relief because world leaders, above all in America, exempt Israel from international law and give its government license to plunder, oppress, and terrorize defenseless Palestinians with impunity, separate them in isolated cantons, keep them under military occupation, starve them to death in Gaza under siege and ruthless bombings, and purge them relentlessly from the "sacred city" of Jerusalem.

That's where things stand today under new leadership in Tel Aviv, Washington, and a complicit West Bank coup d'etat Palestinian government serving Israel as its enforcer and in the process betraying its own people.

When will it end? When people everywhere say enough is enough and join the Global BDS (boycott, divestment, and sanctions) Movement to punish Israel until it complies with international law, recognizes Palestinian self-determination, ends its illegal occupation, disbands its settlements, demolishes the Separation Wall, grants Israeli Arabs equal rights as Jews, recognizes the right of return, and gives Palestinians their legal claim to Jerusalem for their capital. Global grassroots movements are determined to make it happen.

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posted by Steve Lendman @ [3:24 AM](#)

MONDAY, MARCH 30, 2009

Defending Zionism - Defending the Indefensible

Pro-Zionism: Defending the Indefensible - by Stephen Lendman

This article responds to a March 15 Los Angeles Times Judea Pearl one headlined: "Is anti-Zionism hate?" Pearl teaches computer science at UCLA, is the father of slain journalist Daniel Pearl, and president of the Daniel Pearl Foundation. It was "formed....to continue Danny's mission and to address the root causes of this tragedy in the spirit" of the man it represents, including "uncompromised objectivity and integrity....and respect for people of all cultures...."

Some of its honorary board member belie this purpose:

-- former president Bill Clinton, an unindicted war criminal and backer of neoliberal plunder;

-- Elie Wiesel, a shameless self-promoter, "Holocaust" exploiter, and apologist for the most outrageous Israeli crimes;

-- Jordan's Queen Noor, wife of King Abdullah II, who, like his father Hussein, rules with dictatorial police state powers; and

-- Christiane Amanpour and Ted Koppel, two notables in the corporate media who never let facts conflict with their views and support for the powerful.

Pearl calls anti-Zionism "hate more dangerous than anti-Semitism, threatening lives and peace in the Middle East." Zionism is precisely the opposite as numerous Jewish writers, including this one, have addressed.

In his book "Overcoming Zionism," Joel Kovel explained how it fosters "imperialist expansion and militarism (with) signs of the fascist malignancy;" that it turned Israel "into a machine for the manufacture of human rights abuses" led by terrorists posing as democrats. Kovel's book and his work got him fired from the Bard College faculty effective July 1 when his current contract expires - for daring to criticize Israel, its Zionist ideology, state-sponsored terror, and decades of lawlessness and egregious behavior.

Kovel expressed outrage that institutions like Bard aren't bothered; that they grant Israel impunity, suppress dissent, then marginalize, punish, and remove the "heretics," ones like Kovel who honorably and courageously write truths.

Pearl railed about a UCLA Center for Near East Studies symposium invitation to "four longtime Israel bashers" so they could attack Zionism's legitimacy and "its vision of a two-state solution...." - a scheme to consign Palestinians to isolated cantons and steal their most valuable land.

He equates legitimate Israeli criticism and anti-Zionism with "criminaliz(ing) Israel's existence, distort(ing) its motives and malign(ing) its character, its birth, even its conception." He cites "Jewish leaders (condemning) this hate-fest as a dangerous invitation to anti-Semitic hysteria" even though one has nothing to do with the other and conflating them masks the real issue - Zionism's corrosive effects and the myths on which it's based.

Ones Pearl ignores in stating "Anti-Zionism rejects the very notion that Jews are a nation - a collective bonded by a common history - and, accordingly denies Jews the right to self-determination in their historical birthplace. It seeks the dismantling of the Jewish nation-state: Israel, (what it) 'grants' to other historically bonded collectives (e.g. French, Spanish, Palestinians), the right to nationhood...."

Pearl can't accept the hard facts that Tel Aviv University Professor Shlomo Zand documented in his important 2008 book: "When and How Was the Jewish People Invented?" It exposes biblical nonsense comprising core Zionist beliefs about Jews:

- that ancient Romans expelled them;
- their exodus from Egypt, then left to wander the earth rootless;
- enslaved, oppressed, and tormented for centuries; and
- the myth that God bestowed a "Greater Israel" for Jews alone - "A land without people for a people without land."

According to Israeli journalist Tom Segev and others:

- there never was a Jewish people, just a Jewish religion;
- there was no exile, therefore no return, and much of the Jewish Diaspora was voluntary; and
- the story was a Zionist invention, a conspiracy to justify a future Jewish state, and now vilify Palestinian self-determination as a plot to destroy it.

With regard to other "bonded collectives," France, Spain, America and other states are nationalities, not religions. Israel is a Jewish state with rights for Jews alone. They matter. Others don't, and therein lies the difference. Palestinians, in contrast, are occupied, impoverished, oppressed, driven from their land, vilified for being Muslims, and victimized by slow-motion genocide to destroy them and any hope for self-determination.

"Are Jews a nation," asks Pearl? "Some philosophers would argue Jews are a nation first and religion second." He cites the usual mythology:

- the Exodus and return to the "promised land before they received the Torah at Mt. Sinai;"
- "the unshaken conviction in their eventual repatriation to (their) birthplace (since) the Roman expulsion;" and
- their "shared history, not religion (as) the primary uniting force behind the secular, multiethnic society of Israel" - favoring Jews alone in a quasi secular/religious state where practicing another one is dangerous.

The "Jewish identity today feed(s) on Jewish history (more precisely folklore and myths) and its natural derivatives -

- the state of Israel" despite its illegitimate birth and mythological roots;
- "its struggle for survival" in spite of being the world's fourth most powerful military, nuclear-armed; with no enemies except the ones it makes; and having a history of aggressive wars; violence over conciliation; confrontation, not diplomacy; and claiming self-defense as justification when there is none;
- "its cultural and scientific achievements," much of the latter involving militarism and hard line security; and
- "its relentless drive for peace."

Pearl like most others can't accept the fact that Israel disdains peace, thrives on violence, and needs it as justification. The very notion of peace and conflict resolution terrifies it. What prime minister Yitzhak Shamir once admitted about Israel's 1982 Lebanon war - that there was "terrible danger....not so much a military one as a political one" so a pretext was invented to attack when no threat or justification existed.

It took 18,000 lives and left South Lebanon occupied until Israel Defense Forces withdrew in May 2000, except for the 25 square km Shebaa Farms area illegally retained to this day.

Yet Pearl insists that "anti-Zionism targets the most vulnerable part of the Jewish people, namely, the Jewish population of Israel, whose physical safety and personal dignity depend crucially on maintaining Israel's sovereignty. Put bluntly, the anti-Zionist 'plan' to do away with Israel condemns 5.5 million human beings, mostly refugees or children of refugees, to eternal defenselessness in a region where genocidal designs are not uncommon."

He adds that "anti-Zionist rhetoric (shows) academic sophistication and social acceptance in certain extreme yet vocal circles. (It's also) a stab in the back to the Israeli peace camp (and) gives credence (to) the hidden agenda of every Palestinian (for) the eventual elimination of Israel."

Now some facts misrepresented, distorted, or unstated by Pearl and other like-minded apologists:

-- There never was nor is there now an "Israeli peace camp," as explained above.

-- Israel's sovereignty isn't the issue. It exists, is accepted, and anti-Zionists don't dispute it. Further, since at least the late 1980s, Palestinian leaders (including Arafat and Hamas) have been willing to extend recognition. But Israel rejects all peace and reconciliation overtures, yet the dominant media and Zionists won't mention it.

-- Palestinians and other Arabs don't target Israel and haven't since the 1973 war. However, they justifiably defend themselves when attacked as international law allows.

-- Anti-Zionists, like this writer, have no plan or desire to destroy Israel, harm its people, or render them defenseless. Demanded, however, is that Israel behave, act civilized, practice the democracy it preaches, observe international and its own laws, and be held fully accountable when it doesn't, including its leaders for their crimes of war and against humanity to deter future ones from committing similar violations.

-- Israel alone menaces Palestinians and other regional states, including Lebanon, Syria, and Iran. Those nations, nor any others, threaten Israel, yet again media and Zionist propaganda say otherwise.

-- Zionist ideology is extremist, undemocratic, and hateful. It claims Jewish supremacy, specialness, and uniqueness - God's "chosen people." It harms Jews and non-Jews alike. Former Israeli scholar, critic, and life-long human rights activist, Israel Shahak (1933 - 2001), explained the dangers of Jewish chauvinism, religious fanaticism, and its influence on America's polity.

He called the notion of self-hating Jews "nonsensical" and explained the definition of a Jew:

...."if either their mother, grandmother, great-grandmother (or) great-great-grandmother were Jewesses by religion; or if the person (converted) to Judaism in a way satisfactory to the Israeli authorities, and on condition that the person has not converted from Judaism to another religion." According to the Talmud and post-Talmudic rabbinic law, "conversion (must be) performed by authorized rabbis in a proper manner." For females, it entails an outlandish ritual - "their inspection by three rabbis while naked in a 'bath of purification' " to confirm it.

Shahak wrote extensively on how Israel discriminates in favor of Jews in most every aspect of life, including the three he called most important - "residency rights, the right to work (and to have) equality before the law."

Zionist ideology demeans non-Jews and denies them equal rights in Israel. A body of

law enforces it - to legally discriminate against non-Jewish Israeli citizens (for their religion) and Palestinians in the Territories, something unimaginable in all developed states and most others on every continent.

Shahak stated: "The obvious intention of such discriminatory measures is to decrease the number of non-Jewish citizens of Israel (to affirm its existence as a 'Jewish' state" quite hostile to and demeaning of other religious faiths.

This is the Zionist message and why growing numbers of Jews and many others oppose it. Supporting Zionism is repugnant, indefensible, and equivalent to defending cancer, a malignancy relentlessly destroying its host. It must be exposed, denounced, and once and for all expunged from the body politic. A CIA study suggested the alternative - that beyond 20 years, Israel won't survive in its present form.

The Agency predicts "an inexorable movement away from a two-state to a one-state solution, as the most viable model based on democratic principles of full equality that sheds the looming specter of colonial Apartheid while allowing for the return of the 1947/1948 and 1967 (Palestinian) refugees. The latter (is) the precondition for sustainable peace in the region."

According to international lawyer Franklin Lamb, "the handwriting....is on the wall....history will reject the colonial enterprise sooner or later."

The report also predicts the return of all Palestinian refugees to their homeland and the exodus of two million Israeli Jews to America in the next 15 years. They're fed up and want to leave. Omitted from the report, or at least unrevealed, is that short of an equitable resolution to the long-standing Palestinian conflict, Israel eventually will destroy itself. Nations that live by the sword, die by it, and Israel is no exception.

The alternative is peace and reconciliation, something Israel flatly rejects. Unless that changes, its very existence is at stake, what history teaches but Israel has yet to learn.

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