

## Al-Shabaab, Death and Somalia

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*U.S. corporate media deploy the most technically sophisticated information delivery systems in the world – yet fail to tell even a semblance of the truth when it comes to American crimes abroad. Satellites brought images of horror from a shopping mall in Nairobi, but “Americans know nothing about Kenya or its role as American partner in keeping Somalia in a constant state of war.”*

“Does al Shabab Pose a Threat on American Soil?” So read a headline in the New York Times’ blog, [Room for Debate](#). Despite its name, Room for Debate rarely shows any true differences of opinion on whatever issue of the day is considered significant to the Times’ editors. None of the supposed debaters on this topic actually addressed the central issue of al-Shabaab’s existence and what it says about the United States behavior around the world. A better question would be why the United States turned Somalia into a ruin and why does it keep killing people there.

Sometimes we get the opportunity to see violence up close as in the recent al-Shabaab attack on the [Westgate](#) shopping mall in Nairobi, Kenya. But in the absence of good reporting, scenes of carnage tell us nothing. Thanks to liar presidents and their partners in the corporate media, Americans know nothing about Kenya or its role as American partner in keeping Somalia in a constant state of war.

Americans don’t know that their government instigated an Ethiopian invasion of Somalia in 2006 which destroyed that nation and prevented it from emerging from turmoil and humanitarian disaster. They don’t know that Kenya was enlisted in this occupation in 2011 and also gained the enmity of the al-Shabaab resistance. They don’t know that the United States government prevented food from reaching [starving people](#). They don’t know that the so-called [pirates](#) in Somalia are fighting in vain to keep European nations from stealing even the fish they need to survive.

Al-Shabaab is dedicated to resisting American aggression and to punishing anyone who assists in that process. There is nothing mysterious about this group’s motives. They are fighting their oppressors be they in the United States or Kenya.

Of course we are shown pictures of murder victims at the Westgate mall in Kenya and hear the word al-Shabaab linked to their deaths. It is justifiable to show that suffering but the media never show the victims of American violence. They remain unseen and therefore unknown.

Various forms of media are now accessible to every person at any time of day or night, but we must hunt to see images of Iraqi, Afghan, Somali, Yemeni, Libyan, Palestinian, Haitian,

and Syrian victims of American and American sponsored violence. Because they have been disappeared the American public are kept in a bubble of ignorance without knowing the role that their government plays in creating bloodshed.

When we do see the victims lying bloody in a Nairobi shopping mall we obviously feel sadness about their fates and perhaps anger at the perpetrators. Seeing people killed who were merely engaged in the mundane activities of life is terribly tragic. It would be enlightening and no less tragic to see the images and hear the stories of people who were going about their daily business when suddenly death struck them because of the American empire.

The consequence of propaganda and omissions in reporting mean that al-Shabaab are labeled as fanatical Muslims and evil terrorists and not people who have reason to be angry with Kenya for joining in the evisceration of their country. Their legitimate grievances aren't addressed by killing weekend shoppers but unless all these facts are acknowledged the cycle of violence can only continue.

Al-Shabaab exists because of the terror the United States brought to Somalia. In 2011 more than 250,000 people died in that nation because of a drought, and an American policy of [starving civilians](#) in order to starve al-Shabaab fighters.

So the question isn't whether al-Shabaab threatens America. The question is how Americans think they can be held harmless when their government goes on killing sprees and creates hatred and a desire for revenge.

When we need hard facts we get propaganda instead. Hollywood is using Somalia again as its backdrop for [grotesque stories](#) of exceptionalism and supremacy. A new film, Captain Phillips, tells the story of one brave American who with the help of overwhelming fire power and Navy SEALs overcame three Somalians in a life boat. It is doubtful that the Somalian side of the story will be told. One unlucky Somalian young man, Abduwali Abdukhadir Muse, received a 33 year prison sentence when he chose to surrender instead of fighting the world's only super power.

The truth is that our government bears responsibility for the loss of life at the Kenyan mall and for attacks on American vessels. Americans may live in ignorance but the rest of the world knows better. The United States first brought death to Somalia and is responsible for creating even more of it.

**Margaret Kimberley's Freedom Rider column appears weekly in BAR, and is widely reprinted elsewhere. She maintains a frequently updated blog as well as at <http://freedomrider.blogspot.com>.**

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