

America and Israel: Police States Writ Large

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Wikipedia calls a police state one “in which the government exercises rigid and repressive controls over the social, economic, and political life of the population.”

Merrian-Webster’s definition is “a political unit characterized by repressive governmental control of political, economic, and social life usually by an arbitrary exercise of power by police and especially secret police in place of regular operation of administrative and judicial organs of the government according to publicly known legal procedures.”

The Oxford dictionary calls it “a totalitarian state controlled by a political police force that secretly supervises the citizens’ activities.”

Post-9/11, America enacted a disturbing array of police state laws. National and Homeland Security Presidential Directives supplement them.

So do secret memos and memoranda, as well as executive orders and other presidential diktats. George Bush called the Constitution “just a goddamn piece of paper.”

Effectively he declared it null and void. International rule of law principles were called quaint and out-of-date.

On 9/11, a state of emergency was declared. It’s renewed annually. It currently exists. Bush usurped special powers.

He declared himself a “unitary executive.” The late Chalmers Johnson called it a “ball-faced assertion of presidential supremacy dressed up in legal mumbo jumbo.”

Continuity of Government (COG) was established. It created a shadow government. It’s believed to currently exist.

Congress is kept out of the loop. Nonexistent terrorist threats justify extrajudicial powers.

COG is defined as “a coordinated effort within the Federal Government’s executive branch to ensure that National Essential Functions continue to be performed during a Catastrophic Emergency.”

It gives the executive unprecedented police state powers. They can use them to bypass Congress, declare martial law, suspend the Constitution, and govern extrajudicially.

It lets Homeland Security operate more than ever as a national Gestapo.

Obama operates like Bush. He exceeds the worst of his policies. He's waging war on freedom. He's waging it on humanity. He targets whistleblowers. He wants vital truths suppressed.

Thousands of political prisoners languish in America's gulag. It operates at home and abroad. Innocence is no defense. Freedom is fast disappearing.

Jeremy Hammond is one of many victims. Some call him the other Bradley Manning. He founded the web site [HackThisSite](#). In 2003, he created it after graduating from high school.

On March 5, 2012, FBI agents arrested him in Chicago. They'd been investigating the Anonymous hactivist group. They use computers for political activism. They're connected to likeminded organizations.

Hammond is a patriot. He supports right over wrong. He believes government transparency is fundamental. He's no criminal. He's no terrorist. He did what's important to do.

Sarah Harrison is a British journalist. She's a legal researcher. She's an activist. She works with WikiLeaks Legal Defense. She helped Edward Snowden reach Moscow. She said the following:

"In these times of secrecy and abuse of power, there is only one solution - transparency."

"If our governments are so compromised that they will not tell us the truth, then we must step forward to grasp it."

"If our governments will not give this information to us, then we must take it for ourselves."

Hammond was charged with one count of computer hacking conspiracy, another relating to computer hacking, and one more for conspiracy "to commit access device fraud."

He pled guilty to one count of computer fraud and abuse. He was jailed for 15 months awaiting sentencing. A major campaign to free him failed.

He said the following:

"...I did work with Anonymous to hack Stratfor, among other websites. Those others included military and police equipment suppliers, private intelligence and information security firms, and law enforcement agencies."

"I did this because I believe people have a right to know what governments and corporations are doing behind closed doors. I did what I believe is right."

Former Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR) President Michael Ratner calls Harrison and Hammond "incredible heroes and believers in transparency and truth."

Harrison left Britain. She was advised it's too unsafe to stay. She's targeted for her activist journalism. Britain equates it to terrorism. She's in Berlin. Hammond awaited sentencing.

In May, he accepted a non-cooperating 10-year sentence guilty plea. He did it to avoid the

potential 37-year maximum. He issued the following [statement](#), saying:

“Today I pleaded guilty to one count of violating the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act. This was a very difficult decision.”

“I hope this statement will explain my reasoning. I believe in the power of the truth. In keeping with that, I do not want to hide what I did or to shy away from my actions.”

“This non-cooperating plea agreement frees me to tell the world what I did and why, without exposing any tactics or information to the government and without jeopardizing the lives and well-being of other activists on and offline.”

“I was looking at a sentencing guideline range of over 30 years if I lost at trial. I have wonderful lawyers and an amazing community of people on the outside who support me.”

“None of that changes the fact that I was likely to lose at trial. But, even if I was found not guilty at trial, the government claimed that there were eight other outstanding indictments against me from jurisdictions scattered throughout the country.”

“If I had won this trial, I would likely have been shipped across the country to face new but similar charges in a different district.”

“The process might have repeated indefinitely. Ultimately I decided that the most practical route was to accept this plea with a maximum of a ten year sentence and immunity from prosecution in every federal court.”

Hammond was treated harshly. He spent weeks in solitary confinement. He was denied contacts with family and friends. He lost other privileges.

He thanked his friends and supporters. He did so “for their amazing and ongoing gestures of solidarity.”

Ratner attended his bail hearing. It was very hostile, he said. Two criteria were at issue - flight risk and/or danger to the community.

Proceedings were orchestrated to deny. Judge Loretta Preska “probably decided this case before the arguments went on, because she essentially read an opinion after an hour and a half into the record, denying bail to Hammond,” said Ratner.

He was entrapped. FBI officials used an informant named Sabu. “He set up the crime for Stratfor. The FBI gave him the computer that Stratfor documents were actually uploaded to.”

“There’s a pretty clear case of entrapment.” They’re trying to get WikiLeaks the same way.

Entrapment occurs when law enforcement officials or agents induce, influence, or provoke crimes that otherwise wouldn’t be committed.

It doesn’t apply in cases of willful lawless intent. Government may aid, abet, or facilitate doing so.

Entrapment involves government officials or agents initiating the idea. It’s when they

persuade victims to go along. Sabu was used for that purpose. Hammond was lawlessly entrapped.

Prosecutors must prove beyond a reasonable doubt they didn't do so. Otherwise due process convictions are prohibited.

When Washington wants them, judicial fairness seldom occurs. Guilt by accusation suffices. Complicit judges enforce injustice.

From the moment he was targeted, Hammond never had a chance.

On November 15, he got the bad news. Preska threw the book at him. He was sentenced to 10 years. Under his plea agreement, it is the maximum allowed.

Preska should have recused herself. She had an obvious conflict of interest. Her husband is Thomas Kavalier. He works for Cahill Gordon & Reindel. It's an internationally known financial/corporate law firm.

Hacking unrelated to Hammond revealed his password. Doing so made his emails accessible. Preska clearly was hostile. According to Ratner:

“(I)f there's any appearance of impropriety, appearance of – you know, of a closeness to the case, that basically you have to recuse yourself.”

“You have to do it automatically, even if the defendant doesn't make a motion.”

Hammond's lawyers failed to force Preska's recusal. She lied claiming no conflict of interest. Federal courts notoriously deny justice.

It bears repeating. Hammond never had a chance. He faces 10 years hard time. He does so for doing the right thing. Police states operate that way. America's by far the worst.

Israel largely matches its harshness. Israeli forces willfully attack Palestinian civilians. They do it maliciously. They do it systematically.

Crimes against humanity continue daily. In the week ending November 14, two Palestinians were murdered in cold blood. Two others were wounded.

Excessive force was used against peaceful West Bank protesters. Two children were wounded. Dozens suffered tear gas inhalation effects.

Israeli forces conducted 68 community incursions – on average nearly 10 a day from November 8 through the 14th.

At least 46 nonviolent Palestinians were arrested. Their numbers included eight children.

On November 16, Israeli forces targeted Kfar Qaddum village. They did so lawlessly. They arrested four young children. They were aged 5 to 9.

They were brutally treated. They were handcuffed. They were terrorized. Murad Ashtiyeh represents Kfar Qaddum's Popular Struggle Coordination Committee.

Weekly peaceful protests were ongoing, he said. Israeli security forces intervened violently.

“Four children who were present in the area had stun grenades thrown at them.”

“Then the soldiers arrested them and tied their hands behind their backs using plastic strips.” They were later released.

These type incidents repeat with disturbing regularity. In July, seven IDF soldiers and an officer terrorized a 5-year old boy. They threatened him and his parents.

They handcuffed and blindfolded his father. They handed the boy over to police. They wrongfully accused him of stone-throwing. Many other children face similar charges.

Guilt by accusation is policy. Justice is a four-letter word. Fines, detention or longer-term imprisonment follow.

Israel terrorizes Palestinians brutally. It does so with impunity. It’s longstanding policy. Children are treated like adults. Age and gender make no difference.

Torture is official policy. Forced confessions are extracted. Under international law, adulthood begins at age 18. Under militarized occupation, criminal responsibility begins at age 12.

Israeli security forces are prohibited from arresting anyone younger. They do so anyway. Human rights organizations document numerous incidents.

UNICEF’s March report is titled “[Children in Israeli Military Detention](#).” It calls Israel the only country trying children in military courts.

It said Israeli practices include “cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment.”

“Ill-treatment of Palestinian children in the Israeli military detention system appears to be widespread, systematic and institutionalized.”

On average, Israel arrests and detains “two children each day.”

Police states operate this way. Israel matches some of the worst anywhere. Palestinian children suffer its harshness. They do so before they’re old enough to know why.

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