

Authoritarian Regimes (Like the U.S. and Britain) Treat Reporters Like Terrorists

By [Washington's Blog](#)

Theme: [Police State & Civil Rights](#)

Global Research, February 19, 2014

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The U.S. Government Condemns Authoritarian Regimes Which Use Anti-Terror Laws to Stifle Journalism

It is [widely known](#) that authoritarian regimes use “anti-terror” laws to crack down on journalism.

But this extreme tactic is becoming more and more common. The Committee to Protect Journalists [reported](#) a year ago that terrorism laws are being misused worldwide to crush journalism:

The number of journalists jailed worldwide hit 232 in 2012, 132 of whom were held on anti-terror or other national security charges. Both are records in the 22 years CPJ has documented imprisonments.

The American government has rightly condemned such abuses. For example, the U.S. State Department [noted](#) last April:

Some governments are too weak or unwilling to protect journalists and media outlets. Many others exploit or create criminal libel or defamation or blasphemy laws in their favor. They misuse terrorism laws to prosecute and imprison journalists. They pressure media outlets to shut down by causing crippling financial damage. They buy or nationalize media outlets to suppress different viewpoints. They filter or shut down access to the Internet. They detain and harass – and worse.

The State Department [condemned Burundi](#) in 2012 for treating journalists as terrorists.

The 2012 State Department [human rights report on Turkey](#) criticized the country for imprisoning “scores of journalists...most charged under antiterror laws or for connections to an illegal organization.”

The State Department rightly [announced](#) in 2012:

We are deeply concerned about the Ethiopian government’s conviction of a number of journalists and opposition members under the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation. This practice raises serious questions and concerns about the intent of the law, and about the sanctity of Ethiopians’ constitutionally guaranteed rights to freedom of the press and freedom of expression.

The arrest of journalists has a chilling effect on the media and on the right to freedom of expression. We have made clear in our ongoing human rights dialogue with the Ethiopian government that freedom of expression and freedom of the media are fundamental elements of a democratic society.

As Secretary Clinton has said, “When a free media is under attack anywhere, all human rights are under attack everywhere. That is why the United States joins its global partners in calling for the release of all imprisoned journalists in every country across the globe and for the end to intimidation.”

Last October – in response to respected Moroccan journalist Ali Anouzla being [arrested under an anti-terror law](#) for linking to a Youtube video – the State Department said:

We are concerned with the government of Morocco’s decision to charge Mr. Anouzla. We support freedom of expression and of the press, as we say all the time, universal rights that are an indispensable part of any society.

U.S. and U.K. Do the Exact Same Thing

Unfortunately, the American and British governments are doing the exact same thing.

The British High Court just [ruled](#) that Glenn Greenwald’s partner could be treated like a terrorist because he was trying to deliver leaked documents to reporters.

Amnesty International [writes](#):

It is clearly deeply troubling if laws designed to combat terrorism can be used against those involved in reporting stories of fundamental public interest. There is no question the ruling will have a chilling effect on freedom of expression in the future.

Indeed, the British government [considers](#) the following activities to constitute terrorism:

The disclosure, or threat of disclosure, is designed to influence a government [or] made for the purpose of promoting a political or ideological cause.

The ACLU’s Ben Wizner satirically [writes](#):

Relax, everyone. You’re not terrorists unless you try “to influence a government.” Just type what you’re told.

The U.S. government is targeting whistleblowers in order to keep its hypocrisy secret ... so that it can [keep on doing the opposite of what it tells other countries to do](#).

As part of this effort to suppress information which would reveal the government’s hypocrisy, the American government – [like the British government](#) – is [treating journalists as terrorists](#).

Journalism is not only [being criminalized](#) in America, but investigative reporting is [actually treated like terrorism](#).

Veteran reporters and journalists say that the Obama administration is the [most “hostile to media” of any administration in history](#).

The government *admits* that journalists could be [targeted with counter-terrorism laws](#) (and [here](#)). For example, after Pulitzer Prize winning journalist Chris Hedges, journalist Naomi Wolf, Pentagon Papers whistleblower Daniel Ellsberg and others sued the government to enjoin the NDAA’s allowance of the indefinite detention of Americans – the judge asked the government attorneys *5 times* whether journalists like Hedges could be indefinitely detained simply for interviewing and then *writing about* bad guys. The government [refused to promise](#) that journalists like Hedges won’t be thrown in a dungeon for the rest of their lives without any right to talk to a judge

After the government’s spying on the Associated Press made it clear to everyone that [the government is trying to put a chill journalism](#), the senior national-security correspondent for Newsweek [tweeted](#):

Serious idea. Instead of calling it Obama’s war on whistleblowers, let’s just call it what it is: Obama’s war on journalism.

Moreover:

- The Pentagon smeared USA Today reporters because they [investigated illegal Pentagon propaganda](#)
- Reporters covering the Occupy protests were [targeted for arrest](#)
- The Bush White House worked hard to smear [CIA officers](#), [bloggers](#) and anyone else who criticized the Iraq war
- In an effort to protect Bank of America from the threatened Wikileaks expose of the bank’s wrongdoing, [the Department of Justice told Bank of America](#) to hire a specific hardball-playing law firm to assemble a team to take down WikiLeaks (and see [this](#))
- The NSA and its British counterpart [treated Wikileaks like a terrorist organization](#), going so far as to target its employees politically, and to spy on visitors to its website

And the American government has been instrumental in locking up journalists in [America](#) (and [here](#)), [Yemen](#) and elsewhere for the crime of embarrassing the U.S. government.

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