

This Celebrated Western-funded Nonprofit Collaborated with al-Qaeda to Wage Lawfare on Syria

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Mainstream reporting on Syria has relied heavily on the work of the Commission for International Justice and Accountability (CIJA), a Western government-funded regime change group whose investigators collaborated with al-Qaeda and its extremist allies to drum up prosecutions of Syrian officials.

Western corporate media reporting on the war in Syria has relied extensively on partisan and dubious research produced by a cottage industry of opposition-linked groups posing as neutral monitors.

In part one of this investigation, we explored one the key cogs in this disinformation machine: the [Syrian Network for Human Rights \(SNHR\)](#), a foreign government-funded, pro-military intervention opposition front group.

In this installment, we will probe a group that has not only helped shape Western media reporting on Syria, but which is at the forefront of an emerging strategy to bleed the Syrian government even as the war comes to a close. It is called the Commission for International Justice and Accountability, or CIJA.

CIJA is often presented as an “independent” legal group committed to dispensing justice for war crimes. Its work has been the subject of glowing profiles in The New York Times, [NBC News](#), The Guardian, and The New Yorker.

A shocking report in May on “[Syria’s secret torture prisons](#),” by the New York Times’ former Beirut bureau chief Anne Barnard, was based heavily on documents and research provided by CIJA. Barnard described the organization simply as a “nonprofit,” with no further information.

In reality, CIJA is bankrolled by the very same Western governments that have fueled the proxy war against Syria, and was founded to supplement the regime-change operation that those states initiated in 2011.

CIJA’s investigators in Syria collaborated with and even paid foreign-backed Salafi-jihadist militias – including members of the al-Qaeda affiliate Jabhat al-Nusra – to steal files from Syrian government buildings in areas that had been taken over by armed militants. These

stolen documents are what lawyers hope to use in prosecutions of Syrian officials.

Indeed, top corporate media outlets like The New York Times have published major reports based on leaked Syrian government documents without disclosing the fact that these files were first stolen by Syrian al-Qaeda militants, and then handed over to a Western government-funded group committed to regime change.

Were this chain of custody publicized more widely, it would immediately call into question the reliability and veracity of the news reports that have relied on this group, and might even set off an international scandal.

But leading outlets have ignored CIJA's methods of acquisition, depicting the group almost without exception as an impartial NGO whose leadership consists of noble humanitarians. A closer look shows the seamy side this organization.

CIJA's executive director operates a for-profit consulting firm that has raked in lucrative contracts in conflict zones, including through CIJA's work in Syria, while advising mining companies in Africa. And the commission's deputy director openly touts their work with the US Department of Homeland Security and FBI on border security.

CIJA is also closely advised by a former State Department lawyer who has helped oversee the so-called "Caesar file," a deceptive operation aimed at proving the Syrian government guilty of mass extermination, but which involved further collaboration with extremist militias in Syria as well as extensive funding from Qatar.

As the following investigation by The Grayzone will show, the Commission for International Justice and Accountability is anything but an independent group committed to human rights above all else.

'Transitional justice,' the latest tool in the regime-change toolbox

The Syrian opposition and its supporters abroad have spent the past eight years doing everything in their power to lobby the United States to launch a direct military intervention to topple the government of President Bashar al-Assad. They have deployed red lines, [White Helmets](#), and a constant stream of white lies to argue that the US military has a "responsibility to protect" Syrians from their government.

Despite [billions of dollars](#) poured into a cataclysmic proxy war, this monumental effort failed: Syria has largely been stabilized, and refugees are slowly trickling back in. In frustration, a motley crew of veteran regime-change warriors and lawyers are resorting to a new and largely untested strategy.

Their efforts amount to legal warfare, or lawfare, and the Commission for International Justice and Accountability is a key player in the new campaign.

[To read the complete report by GrayZone click here](#)

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