

Egyptian Death Sentences: Human Rights Travesty or Price of Freedom?

Global Research News Hour Episode 65

By [Michael Welch](#) and [Tony Cartalucci](#)

Global Research, May 08, 2014

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [GLOBAL RESEARCH NEWS HOUR, US NATO War Agenda](#)

"This is injustice writ large and these death sentences must be quashed. Imposing death sentences of this magnitude in a single case makes Egypt surpass most other countries' use of capital punishment in a year."

-Hassiba Hadj Sahraoui, Deputy Middle East and North Africa Programme Director at Amnesty International.[1]

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In recent weeks, the governing authority in Egypt has escalated their crackdown on supporters of deposed president Mohammad Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood.

In March, news agencies widely reported that after a two day trial, 529 people, many of whom were tried in absentia, were sentenced to death over an attack on a police station in which a police officer was killed. [2]

In late April, 683 alleged supporters of the Brotherhood, including spiritual leader Mohammed Badie were sentenced to death over their supposed role in the August 14 incident. [3]

Likewise, the Egyptian courts have banned the April 6 movement, considered a pro-democracy group which played a role in instigating and organizing the Arab Spring movement which overthrew President Mubarak in 2011. [4] Numerous journalists have been jailed as well under the rationale that they are "spreading false news" and "part of a terrorist organisation." [5]

This week's Global Research News Hour examines two perspectives on the repressive measures being taken by the Egyptian military government against the Muslim Brotherhood,

the April 6 movement, and other critics of the current authorities.

Film Maker John Greyson was one of two Canadians who got caught up in last summer's mass arrests. After fifty days of detention without charge, he and his companion Tarek Loubani were released. [6] Greyson spoke to the Global Research News Hour about his harrowing ordeal, the conditions he and other prisoners faced, and about the need to intervene on behalf of other innocents being wrongfully held.

A geo-political analyst and frequent Global Research contributor who goes by the name **Tony Cartalucci** has a different perspective. He believes the repressive actions being taken by the military government and the courts need to be seen in the context of an ongoing foreign orchestrated insurgency not dissimilar to those that led Libya and Syria to disaster. Cartalucci engaged the Global Research News Hour in an email interview which is reprinted below in its entirety.

The email dialogue was voiced, for radio purposes, by Global Research guest host Jon Wilson and regular host Michael Welch.

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Notes:

1) Amnesty International, March 24, 2014, "Egypt: More than 500 sentenced to death in 'grotesque' ruling";

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/egypt-more-500-sentenced-death-grotesque-ruling-2014-03-24>

2) Al Jazeera, March 25, 2014, "Muslim Brotherhood members sentenced to death";

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/03/muslim-brotherhood-members-sentenced-death-201432481112672803.html>

3) Democracy Now, April 30, "Egypt is a Police State: Senior Muslim Brotherhood Member Condemns New Mass Death Sentence for 683";

http://www.democracynow.org/2014/4/30/egypt_is_a_police_state_senior

4) ibid

5) Al Jazeera, March 25, 2014, "Muslim Brotherhood members sentenced to death";

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/03/muslim-brotherhood-members-sentenced-death-201432481112672803.html>

6) CAROL BERGER, Oct. 10 2013 , Globe and Mail, "Egypt clears Canadians Greyson, Loubani to leave";

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/greyson-loubani-free-to-leave-egypt-reports-say/article14796228/>

Tony Cartalucci interview (Transcript)

Interview on Egypt, and the spectre of cruel and unusual punishment of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Global Research: Much of the media, including progressive alternative media outlets like Democracy Now in the US are portraying the mass death sentences in Egypt as outrageous violations of human rights and the basic norms of due process. The Human Rights watchdog Amnesty International was cited as calling the mass death sentences handed out quote, "a grotesque example of the shortcomings and the selective nature of Egypt's justice system."

In your recent writings on Egypt, you seem conciliatory toward the military regime taking these actions. Your thesis seems to be that these steps are being taken to mitigate the kind of foreign sponsored disasters that have befallen Syria and Libya.

I'll give you a chance to develop that argument in a minute, but first I wanted you to clarify your views about the steps taken by the Egyptian authorities. You call the Military regime's harsh crackdown on Morsi supporters 'logical'. Does that mean you believe them to be acceptable or defensible?

Tony Cartalucci: Clearly, the situation in Egypt has been poorly framed to begin with. The Muslim Brotherhood's history is one of violence, foreign-backed subversion, and the triggering of costly, protracted, armed conflicts that have taken their toll on the respective nations they have been active within. In Algeria, the "Black Decade" for instance cost the life of some 200,000 civilians. In Syria, the confrontation between the government then led by Hafez al-Assad and the Muslim Brotherhood, by the West's own accounts, led to sectarian extremists fleeing the country and forming the beginnings of what many now call "Al Qaeda."

Therefore the Muslim Brotherhood is a terrorist organization. It is dangerous. It is armed. And worst of all, it is funded by foreign interests who seek to use their fanatical support base to destabilize and destroy existing political orders across the Arab World.

From this framing, it is very clear that the government in Egypt was quite “logical” in moving against them as they did. While the Western media covers up the violent nature of the Muslim Brotherhood, leaving question marks as to how hundreds from Egypt’s security forces are being killed, in Egypt and to observers who recall how a similar scenario unfolded in Syria in 2011, see the beginning of widespread armed militancy, and logical steps being made to counter it.

GR: Is this in your view essentially a ‘lesser of two evils’ argument?

TC: No. A nation has the right to protect itself from foreign aggression, be it clearly marked military forces marching over their borders, or proxy militants being armed and funded within their midst. Ideally, Egypt should commit to due process and proportional punishments as it wages its war against this foreign-backed militant front, but in reality it may not be able to, even if it wanted to.

To claim a government operating in the wake of 3 years of foreign-backed political destabilization that has left thousands dead and the country teetering on the edge of a Syrian-style conflict is “evil” or even the “lesser of two evils” would be poor judgement.

GR: Your point seems to be that The Muslim Brotherhood is acting as a proxy for US interests undermining the Egyptian military government, according to the same pattern that witnessed the overthrow of the Qaddafi government in Libya, and is undermining the Assad government in Syria. What evidence is there that the Muslim Brotherhood is advancing the interests of the West?

TC: The evidence is clear. The United States starting in 2008 began paving the road for their political comeback. The Arab Spring in 2011 was admittedly the work of the National Endowment for Democracy as stated in the New York Times and verified by NED’s own documentation of their work. The protests in Tahrir Square while led by presentable opposition party members like Mohammed El Baradei, consisted almost entirely of protesters mobilized by the Muslim Brotherhood – again, admitted by the West’s own reports at the time. The violence that swept the nation, from Cairo to Alexandria was carried out by the Muslim Brotherhood. Buildings were ransacked and burned, police killed, all done by armed groups. The only organization with both the means and the track record of carrying out such violence is the Muslim Brotherhood.

The West’s agenda was clearly to oust Mubarak and in that regard the Muslim Brotherhood demonstrably advanced their interests. Additionally, we saw as early as 2007 the US, Israel, and Saudi Arabia assembling a united sectarian front to wage regional war against Iran and its allies in Syria and Lebanon – a war now openly playing out in Syria and to a lesser extent in Lebanon. In Seymour Hersh’s 2007 report “The Redirection,” the US was admittedly funding the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria for this very purpose. The goal of placing the Muslim Brotherhood into power in Egypt would expand this sectarian front into one of the largest most powerful Arab nations in the Middle East-North African region and pose a formidable threat to Iran and its arch of influence.

GR: Could you explain the background of the Muslim Brotherhood and how it came to be formed? Is the Muslim Brotherhood a creation of Western interests, like the Mujehedeens in

Afghanistan, or was it an autonomous entity that is being exploited, or co-opted or otherwise utilized by the West to further its aims?

TC: There will be debates on how and who created the Muslim Brotherhood. What it has been used for over the decades, however, is not up for debate. It has been a wedging force across Arab nations, arresting progress and dividing nations against themselves, leaving them weak, vulnerable, and susceptible to foreign exploitation and meddling. Whether it was from the very beginning or somewhere shortly thereafter that the British, and eventually the Americans began backing the Muslim Brotherhood to industrialize this regional divide and conquer methodology is irrelevant. Today, they are admittedly funding and arming networks either directly controlled by the Brotherhood or in league with them. This can be seen transparently in Syria, and increasingly so in Egypt.

While many are confused about the nature of the Brotherhood and the seemingly heavy-handed reaction of the government in Cairo today, a year from now if the West is successful, we will be united against yet another front of US-backed and armed sectarian extremists plying their deadly trade in yet another Arab nation – seeking regime change – and with no question in anyone’s mind as to which side the West is on.

GR: So what exactly was the Muslim Brotherhood’s involvement in Syria?

TC: Let me quote Seymour Hersh’s prophetic 2007 article, “The Redirection.” His article stated, “there is evidence that the [Bush] Administration’s redirection strategy has already benefited the Brotherhood. The Syrian National Salvation Front is a coalition of opposition groups whose principal members are a faction led by Abdul Halim Khaddam, a former Syrian Vice-President who defected in 2005, and the Brotherhood.”

Hersh would go on to explain how the US and Saudi Arabia were funding the Brotherhood and providing them with diplomatic support and how it was determined that if the West wanted to move against Damascus, the Brotherhood would be the ones to work with.

We must keep in mind that the “redirection” was the US strategy of funding and arming sectarian extremists to begin conflict with Hezbollah in Lebanon, overthrow the government of Syria, and confront Iran. Clearly the Muslim Brotherhood was the foundation upon which this conflict was engineered in Syria. The article would also mention that Egypt was expected to be unsettled by this policy. That is because while some may try to claim the Syrian and Egyptian Brotherhoods are two different entities, the Egyptian government knew they were not. Bolstering the Brotherhood in Syria would be bolstering it in Egypt and elsewhere.

I recommend everyone read Hersh’s 2007 article. It will wake people up seeing how this was all firmly laid out, and that the Muslim Brotherhood played such a prominent role in the West’s planning – this under a so-called “Conservative” US president who willfully sought to prop up and even expand the Brotherhood to advance US ambition across the Arab World.

GR: What evidence is there that the Arab Spring was foreign sponsored? OR was it in your view an autonomous uprising that was co-opted by the West?

TC: It was not autonomous. Starting in 2008, the leaders of the mobs in Tahrir Square were sitting in New York City in front of Hillary Clinton, getting training, cash, and marching orders alongside other “activists” that would lead (or try to lead) similar uprisings in their

respective countries. So obvious was it that the US was behind the Arab Spring, that the New York Times in an article titled, "U.S. Groups Helped Nurture Arab Uprisings," admitted that opposition groups were receiving training and financing long before the protests began.

Other admissions would trickle out, including by AFP which admitted up to 5,000 protesters from different countries received cash, training, and equipment up to two years before the protests began. There is nothing "autonomous" about any of it.

I have extensively documented the long lead-up to the Arab Spring in an article titled, "2011 - Year of the Dupe." I am confident that when readers follow the myriad of links to the organizations that helped facilitate the subversion, there will be no question left in their mind over whether the "Arab Spring" was an artificially engineered geopolitical ploy or not.

GR: If the West likes autocratic governments which protect their resource and other strategic interests, then please explain the overthrow of Mubarak which I understand to be the thrust of Arab Spring in Egypt. Mubarak was friendly to US interests was he not?

TC: The overthrow of Mubarak mirrors the overthrow of Iraq's autocratic government led by Saddam Hussein. While the West enjoys autocratic regimes, it enjoys them only in so far as they help them advance their agenda - not only domestically, but regionally and globally. While Mubarak may have been making concessions domestically and even partially across the region, the confrontation with Iran the West has been pushing for appeared to be beyond Mubarak's interest. We'll never know how Mubarak would have handled Egyptian-Syrian relations as the West's war with Damascus escalated and pressure was put on Arab nations to cut ties with the Assad government, but we do know what Morsi's policy was - to sever all ties, and call for regime change in tandem with the West.

One of the first orders of business of the military-led government in Cairo after ousting Morsi was reestablishing ties with Syria. Mubarak was friendly to US interests as a matter of self-preservation, but only to a point. What the US needed from him and his confidants was beyond their ability or interest to deliver. Just like Saddam who had been an ally of US interests at one time, the tides turned and regime change found its way into the cards.

GR: Was there an inevitability to the 'revolutions' across the Middle East and north Africa? Was Arab Spring essentially an effort by the west to control inevitable revolutions against tyrannical governments?

TC: The leaders of these "tyrannical governments" do not wake up each day and arbitrarily decide to be "tyrannical." The West as a matter of systematic imperialism that can be traced back to its confrontation with the Ottoman Empire has intentionally sown economic ruination, social division, and inter-regional war across the Middle East as a means of "dividing and conquering." Confronting armed political fronts like the Muslim Brotherhood, or maintaining order with belligerent nations like Israel on or near one's borders requires a heavy hand.

The West didn't co-opt the conditions within which their engineered destabilization would flourish, they created these conditions in the first place. One needs only look at the Brookings Institution's 2009 document "Which Path to Persia?" where US policy makers openly conspire to sow the seeds of discontent by instituting crippling sanctions, arming opposition groups, and practicing covert subversion to undermine the government in Iran and create conditions that favor unrest and dissatisfaction across the Iranian population. They conspired to do so, and have visibly done so, in Iran, and elsewhere.

GR: In what ways is Iran's establishment as a relatively independent regional power in 1979 significant or pivotal in terms of US military, covert and other manoeuvres in the Middle

East?

TC: Iran presents a countervailing force in the Middle East whose influence stretches from Afghanistan to the Mediterranean Sea and many places in between. Its escape out from under Western hegemony in the late 1970's has been a source of ire for the West ever since. It could be argued that much of what the West has done since then has been attempts to encircle and contain Iran, and by proxy, Russia who has and is assisting it in many of its regional ambitions – the most apparent now being Syria.

GR: Another opposition group that has come under fire from the military government in Egypt is the April 6 Youth movement. Who are they? Are they a genuinely autonomous pro-democracy group or do you see foreign involvement evident in their development as well?

TC: April 6 was the opposition group sitting in New York City listening to Hillary Clinton, getting funds and training from the US State Department and receiving the full backing of the Western media monopoly from January 2011 onward. So clearly there is nothing genuine about them. They are a creation and perpetuation of American interests in Egypt, and the fact that they were co-occupying Tahrir Square with the Muslim Brotherhood should be a wake up call for those still laboring under the delusion that the Brotherhood is somehow some sort of legitimate anti-Western front. It could be argued that without the Muslim Brotherhood's numbers and armed factions menacing Egyptian security forces in early 2011, April 6 would have been a brief and distant memory few would recall.

GR: You seem to be pointing to Western sponsored popular movements, including coloured revolutions as a staple in Establishing Western control or influence in geo-strategically critical parts of the world. How long has the US and other Western States applied this formula? Do we have official documentation of the West's application of this as an actual tool of geo-strategy?

TC: Backing rabble within a targeted nation for the purposes of overthrowing and replacing a political order is as old as empire itself. The United States had attempted with limited success to politically reorder much of South America after World War II with similar methods and more recently, the Western media has admitted in retrospect that movements like the Ukrainian "Orange Revolution" in 2004 were entirely the work of US cash and training.

The closest thing to general "documentation" regarding this methodology is Gene Sharp's book, "From Dictatorship to Democracy" which through US foundation funding found its way into the hands of thousands of America's proxy "revolutionaries." A more specific example that covers everything from both the creation of conditions favorable for unrest, to the actual funding and arming of protesters, to the use of covert provocations to tip off war should the destabilization fail, is Brookings Institution's 2009 "Which Path to Persia?" report. It is lengthy, but again, will lay to rest any doubts or questions readers may have as to whether or not the US really engages in this sort of insidious behavior.

For very technical descriptions of the methods the US uses to weaken, subvert, and replace extraterritorial political orders, one might read any of the numerous "Counterinsurgency" manuals circulating online and throughout the various departments of the US political and military establishment. The process of "counterinsurgency" works both ways and upon reading US materials on the subject, readers will instantly recognize the role Western NGO's play in slowly and insidiously overturning targeted political order as we as done in the lead-up to the "Arab Spring."

GR: What about sectarian violence? IS this an incidental or planned outcome of these faux-revolts?

TC: “Divide and conquer” is the maxim of building an empire. For those causally browsing headlines, they will conclude that Sunnis and Shia’a and other minority groups in the Arab World including Jews and Christians have been fighting since the beginning of time. In reality, these people have been peacefully coexisting for centuries. Sectarian violence is the result of faux-theological groups like the Muslim Brotherhood and Al Qaeda intentionally fed a divisive and destructive ideology by extremist networks funded by Saudi Arabia – America’s closest Arab ally. The sectarianism is meant to further weaken and undermine the source of strength of any given nation by dividing its people against one another when otherwise they would stand united against foreign aggression. While the means may be sectarian, the motivation is political.

This could be seen most prominently in Iraq where Sunnis and Shia’a had initially supported each other in some of the most pivotal battles against occupying Western forces including the first sieges of Fullujah and Baghdad’s Sadr City. Even as sectarian violence spiraled out of control later on during the occupation, prominent clerics from both sides pleaded for unity – calls that were intentionally drowned out by the Western media.

GR: What then is the geo-strategic significance of Egypt to Western Powers?

TC: Egypt is a huge country. It has a population of over 80 million, it is militarily strong, and has significant geopolitical importance both due to its history and its geographical position. This includes its proximity to the Suez Canal and the fact that it straddles the Middle East and North Africa while sharing a border with the West’s premier beachhead in the region, Israel. Transforming it into a sectarian extremist safe-haven like neighboring Libya would pose a huge counterweight to Iran and its arch of influence. For that alone, it is significant and of great interest to the West.

One can only imagine what the West could do if it were able to transform the Sinai or other regions into a Benghazi like pipeline for terrorists headed to confront Iran, Syria, and Lebanon, or even Russia in its Caucasus region.

GR: A US sponsored military intervention into Syria appears to have been frustrated for the time being. Do you see other Western imperial defeats looming or will the West recover their advantage?

TC: It appears that in Syria, the West has all but lost. The government in Damascus has made significant gains all the way up to the borders where foreign militants have been flowing in. Despite threats of further arming militants with sophisticated weapons, whatever the West could have sent the militants, they have done so already and without much success.

The inability for the West to intervene directly in the conflict, even for the establishment of what they called limited “buffer zones” is indicative of an overall weakening of their global influence abroad as well as faltering trust and legitimacy at home.

The West’s failure in Syria is a sign of much wider, and perhaps irreversible decline. Their initiative elsewhere, say Ukraine for example, seems to exist in ever briefer windows of opportunity – perhaps so brief that nothing can be accomplished. While world leaders like Russia’s President Vladimir Putin enjoys immense popularity at home, Western leaders have never been so unpopular. To regain any sort of advantage would require first to recognize the faults that have brought the West to its current predicament – but when these faults include arrogance and megalomania, “seeing” anything becomes difficult if not impossible.

GR: Assuming you are correct in your assessment of Western geo-political manouevring in

Egypt, how do you see things playing out over the next few years? Will Egypt successfully defy the West or will it end up like Libya or Syria or something else altogether?

TC: The speed at which the Egyptian military has moved may avert a protracted and destructive Libyan or Syrian-style conflict. Their disregard for the opinion of the “international community” means they either recognize a window of opportunity they must exploit, or perceive weakness across the West – or perhaps a combination of both. For now they have the advantage.

What will most likely transpire is a protracted, low intensity terrorist campaign aimed at the military in hopes of peeling away support within the government in Cairo, and undermining popular support across greater Egypt. Simultaneously, the West will attempt to lure Cairo into making concessions with the promise of stemming the bloodshed, improving ties, and through offering military and economic incentives. This would be the familiar “carrot and stick” formula the West has regularly employed elsewhere – aid being the carrot, foreign-funded terrorism and economic ruination being the stick.

GR: Do you have any other thoughts about what’s happening in Egypt that you’d like to bring to the attention of our listeners?

TC: To understand the future, we must understand the past. This requires tuning out the hysteria being broadcast about Egypt today, and instead learning where the Muslim Brotherhood has come from, what it has done for the Arab World, what role it has played in the destruction of Syria, and what role it is playing in the increasing violence now unfolding in Egypt. We are watching the “Arab Spring” trying to replay itself in Egypt, minus the Tahrir Square crowds and skipping straight to the armed militants now ruling Libya and currently gutting Syria.

The tired adage of “those who cannot learn from history are doomed to repeat it” applies here – only the “history” of the “Arab Spring,” of how it turned out to be a foreign-engineered plot covering for long-planned militancy aimed at regime change favorable to Wall Street and London, is relatively fresh. While some people are going to fall for the same ploys yet again, especially those calling themselves journalists or analysts, it appears that leadership beyond the West’s “international order” have decided they will not.

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