

Human Rights Watch Is Not about Human Rights

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Human Rights Watch (HRW) . . . a name that evokes thoughts of an organization that claims to defend and protect the rights of people around the globe.

If that's the case, how would one explain why HRW's actions and policies appear to be a reflection and support of U.S. policies, rather than an organization that offers an independent critique of U.S. actions? There is no other country that has violated international laws and human rights more than the U.S. And still, HRW remains silent.

There seems to be a contradiction between HRW's stated mission and their actual functioning.

An example: In 2009, President Obama announced that the U.S. will continue its "rendition" program, a program in which "terrorist" suspects were kidnapped and sent to allied countries to be interrogated and tortured. Tom Malinowski, one of HRW's executives stated, "Under limited circumstances, there is a legitimate place for renditions, and encouraged patience: They want to design a system that doesn't result in people being sent to foreign dungeons to be tortured," he said, "but designing that system is going to take some time." Is he joking . . . HRW justifying rendition and torture?

In 2013, HRW focused its attention on Hugo Chavez's Venezuela, stating that his country was unfit to serve on the UN's Human Rights Council because it did not meet the acceptable standards of human rights protection.

The U.S. served on the same council, yet HRW accepted that the U.S.'s human rights record was acceptable. After all, all "we" did was invade Iraq and Afghanistan without cause, send drones into Pakistan to fire missiles at suspected terrorists killing hundreds of innocent people, establish weekly meetings of Obama and his military advisors to determine who to kill that week, using drones in any country they chose ("kill list").

Tom Malinowski who was once the Washington Director of HRW is an interesting person and one whose selection to lead HRW was surprising. He was a speechwriter for Secretary of State Madeline Albright, renowned for her famous response to a question asked by a reporter regarding the deaths of approximately 500,000 Iraqi children during the U.S. blockade of Iraq. The questioner asked, "Was it worth it?" And, Madeline responded, without any hesitation, "Yes, it was." So much for human rights. Mr. Malinowski also served, from 1994 to 1998, as a speechwriter for Secretary of State Warren Christopher.

During his Senate confirmation hearing for assistant secretary of state for democracy, human rights and labor on September 24, 2014, Malinowski promised to "deepen the bipartisan consensus for America's defense of liberty around the world," and assured the

Foreign Relations Committee that no matter where the U.S. debate on Syria led, “the mere fact that we are having it marks our nation as exceptional.” He also served as senior director on the National Security Council. Does anyone continue to see HRW as an independent organization protecting the rights and the dignity of peoples around the world?

Mr. Malinowski is far from being independent of U.S. influence. Instead, he is deeply involved in and part of the U.S. establishment.

The current executive director of HRW is Kenneth Roth.

Under Roth’s leadership, Human Rights Watch has been criticized for perceived biases and misconstructions.

Over the years, he has been criticized by many progressives for his handling of critical events in Rwanda and in Venezuela.

Further, let us look at who serves on the HRW administration and Board of Directors.

The advisory committee for HRW’s Americas Division has even boasted the presence of a former Central Intelligence Agency official, Miguel Díaz. According to his State Department biography, Díaz served as a CIA analyst and also provided “oversight of U.S. intelligence activities in Latin America.”

Michael Shifter, who also currently serves on HRW’s Americas advisory committee, oversees \$4 million a year in programming, financed in part through donations from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the embassies of Canada, Germany, Guatemala, Mexico and Spain, and corporations such as Chevron, ExxonMobil, JPMorgan, Microsoft, Coca-Cola, Boeing, and Western Union.

Many HRW board members are simply investment bankers, like board co-chairs Joel Motley of Public Capital Advisors, LLC, and Hassan Elmasry, of Independent Franchise Partners, LLP. HRW Vice Chairman John Studzinski is a senior managing director at the Blackstone Group, a private equity firm founded by Peter G. Peterson, the billionaire who has passionately sought to eviscerate Social Security and Medicare.

Let us not forget George Soros, multi-billionaire, who is a major financial contributor to HRW. Mr Soros’ reputation as a liberal is a good example of what an oxymoron stands for. George Soros is one of the richest men in the world and he didn’t achieve that by worrying about you and me.

Soros recently criticized George W. Bush saying in an article in the Financial Times of London that his administration’s Iraq policies were “fundamentally wrong” and that they are premised on the “false ideology that U.S. might gave it the right to impose its will on the world.” Many of us in the peace movement would say, “He got that right!” We might be inclined to praise him and to believe that this confirms that he really is a man whose motives are honorable—an image, by the way, that he carefully cultivates, especially through various NGOs. In fact numerous non-profit organizations have received funds from his foundation because they have bought into that perception.

Why then did Soros take issue with George W.? Soros is angry not at Bush’s aims—of expanding Pax Americana and making the world safe for global capitalists like himself—but

with the crass and blundering way Bush went about it. Soros stated, “By making U.S. ambitions so clear, the Bush gang has committed the cardinal sin of giving the game away.” The “game” is the domination of countries and their resources throughout the globe.

But let us not continue to be fooled. Soros has established close working relationships with former National Security Director Zbigniew Brzezinski, former NATO Supreme Allied Commander Wesley Clark, former Israel lobby chief Stephen Solarz, as well as the renowned Bush team players Richard Perle and Paul Wolfowitz.

With this roster of people who make up the policy and decision-making folks in the organization (HRW), many of whom have participated in the exploitation and abuse of the human rights of people throughout the world, can we expect that their focus and mission will be to protect the rights of these same people?

Let us not be misled by the title this organization has assumed for itself, its true mission is to help implement U.S. policies through the backdoor and support U.S. interests. It is no different than right-wing, neo-fascist organizations that include words like “freedom” or “democracy” in their titles to give the impression that they are fighting for freedom and democracy.

HRW has attacked Venezuela, Cuba, and Ecuador, all countries that have moved towards a more socialist ideology, for not meeting the standards of human rights in their countries without ever mentioning the U.S.

When the U.S. supported attempted coups in Venezuela, Honduras, Haiti, and Guatemala, HRW remained silent. While African-Americans are being gunned down on a daily basis, HRW has remained silent. While people demonstrating peacefully in the U.S. have been pepper sprayed, HRW has remained silent. While many thousands of people, “illegals,” have been held in detention camps for years, HRW has remained silent. While Americans have been imprisoned for decades for non-violent crimes, HRW has remained silent.

Need I say more?

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