

The U.S. and Israel have made a Joke of the United Nations Security Council

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Glenn Greenwald is a prominent American journalist, author, lawyer and blogger. His writings and articles have appeared on several newspapers and magazines including The New York Times, the Los Angeles Times, The American Conservative, The National Interest and In These Times. Greenwald has received different awards including the first Izzy Award for independent journalism in 2009, and the 2010 Online Journalism Award for Best Commentary.

Until a few months ago, he was a columnist and blogger for Salon.com, but he left his job there and continued cooperating with The Guardian newspaper which he has been contributing to since June 2011.

Greenwald has published four books which include "How Would a Patriot Act?" and "A Tragic Legacy." A progressive journalist, Glenn Greenwald is an outspoken critic of the U.S. military expeditions in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya and its war threats against Iran.

He has written extensively on the underground operations taken by Israel and the United States to empower and finance the exiled Iranian terrorist group MKO which has declared as one of its key objectives the overthrowing of Iranian government. With regards to the U.S. Department of State's decision in taking the name of MKO off the list of foreign terrorist organizations, he says: "[t]his shows that anything the United States government says about terrorism and really the whole concept of terrorism itself should be viewed as nothing more than a ridiculous joke. MKO is a classic group that is a terrorist organization. They have engaged in violence against innocent civilians, they have devoted themselves to overthrow a government using violence and there are credible reports that they are the ones who are working with Israelis and are behind the assassination of civilian scientists in Iran that included the shooting of not only the scientists, but also in two cases their wives."

I had the opportunity to talk to Glenn Greenwald for an exclusive interview which was originally appeared in Persian on Tasnim News Agency. What follows is the full text of my interview with Glenn Greenwald in which we discussed a variety of topics pertaining to the international political and military developments.

Q: What do you think about President Obama administration's plans for shaping a new Middle East based on the national interests of the United States and dominating the vast oil reserves of these countries?

A: A crucial part of the Obama administration's strategy and the strategies of all the prior administrations in the United States was to basically put into place dictatorships in the

Muslim world that would keep the population suppressed and serve the interests of the U.S. government, particularly in the countries with remarkable oil and energy resources. So you see the relationships the United States has with the [Persian] Gulf states such as Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Jordan. These are the governments which suppress their population, but serve as loyal allies of the United States and make oil available to the U.S. and the Obama administration continues supporting them.

Q: In the recent months, we have been witness to the continued killing of the pro-democracy protesters and imprisonment of political activists in Bahrain. However, the U.S. government hasn't taken any practical steps to stop bloodshed and persuade the Al Khalifa regime to stop using force and violence. What's your idea in this regard?

A: Well, this is a perfect example of what I was describing. The governments which I named and the Bahraini government are unbelievably oppressive. They murder protesters who are demonstrating peacefully, put people in prison and torture them and the Obama administration does nothing about that and continues to strengthen that regime through financing it and even sending it a lot of arms, while the regime is cracking down on the citizens in such a brutal way. The reason the U.S. government supports Bahrain is that the regime allows the U.S. to maintain a very large fleet of naval resources off the coast of Bahrain that can be used to threaten Iran and that generally allows the U.S. government to dominate the [Persian] Gulf region, and so in extreme for the regime in Bahrain, that is basically the puppet and client government of the United States, the U.S. government supports the regime as it murders its own citizens and suppresses of all forms of freedoms. And Bahrain is a perfect example of the strategy the Obama administration has adopted to just dominate the region militarily and help the dictators of the region suppress their populations.

Q: One of the electoral promises of President Obama was to close the Guantanamo bay detention facility within one year after being elected. However, on January 7, 2011, he signed the 2011 Defense Authorization Bill which placed restrictions on the transferring of detainees to the U.S. or other countries, thus impeding the closure of the underground detention camp. What's your take on that?

A: The excuse the Obama administration gave was that the people in the Congress refused to allow Obama to close down Guantanamo. But the truth is that from the beginning, Obama's plan was to keep the system of Guantanamo in place and transfer the detainees to the U.S. while people from all around the Muslim world still are allowed to remain in prison without charges of any kind and without due processes at any time. But to remove them from Guantanamo and placing them in a new prison inside the United States would only add some sort of a symbolic aspect to it. So it was always the Obama administration's plan to keep the Guantanamo open. They simply wanted to move it, not to close it. And this Defense Authorization Bill which you ask about was passed in December 2010 and January 2011 is a sort of legislation that empowers the president whoever he wants on accusations of terrorism, without having to charge that person with any crime, without having to in any way offer the person the opportunity to contest the allegations or present compelling evidence, and President Obama has signed a law that actually strengthened this system of indefinite lawless detention.

Q: What's your perspective on the U.S. drone attacks on Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia and its violation of Iran's airspace last year in December 2011 and in the last week?

A: The drone attacks on Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia have repeatedly killed all sorts of innocent civilians; women, children and innocent men, and the Obama administration simply believes that it has the right to kill anyone it wants anywhere in the world regardless of who dies, and this is the policy that the Obama administration has actually pursued even more aggressively than the Bush administration and the drone attacks have increased significantly under President Obama. He has used drones on six different Muslim countries; Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Libya, Somalia and Yemen. I should point out that President Obama has extremely aggressive beliefs that in the name of combating terrorism, he can kill whoever he wants or attack anyone he wants without regard to any nation's sovereignty. The ironic part about that is that it's precisely the drone attacks which cause terrorism in the first place.

The reason why there are so many people in the world, especially in the Muslim world want to attack the United States is precisely because they watch on a regular basis the United States attacking their countries, killing their children, innocent men and women and they come to the conclusion that the only way to stop this is by having the violence go both ways. The drone attacks not only kill innocent people, but they make the problem of terrorism far worse. As far as the drones in Iran are concerned, Iran has the absolute right, like any other country does, to take down surveillance instruments that fly over their land without permission. What strikes me is the way this is reported and discussed here in the United States, and that is when Iran successfully shoots down or disables a U.S. drone that has entered its airspace, it's talked of as if it's some sort of aggressive action on the side of the Iranian government.

But of course if Iran ever sent a drone anywhere near the airspace of the United States, let alone into the United States, not only that drone would be immediately shot down, but everyone in the United States would talk of it as if it was a horrible act of war and would probably result in bombs being dropped on Iran in retaliation. So you see here this extreme double standard that the United States thinks that it has the right to send drones on Iran's airspace, but nobody in the United States and almost nobody would think that Iran would have the right to do the same to the United States.

Q: The United States has always called itself a champion of combating terrorism and frequently criticizes other countries for their alleged sponsorship of terrorist groups. But in a controversial decision, they took the name of Mujahedin-e-Khalq Organization off the State Department's list of foreign terrorist organizations, and there's credible evidence showing that Washington has been supporting MKO in its terrorist operations, both militarily and financially. Isn't this a hypocritical approach in dealing with the issue of terrorism?

A: This shows that anything the United States government says about terrorism and really the whole concept of terrorism itself should be viewed as nothing more than a ridiculous joke. MKO is a classic group that is a terrorist organization. They have engaged in violence against innocent civilians, they have devoted themselves to overthrow a government using violence and there are credible reports that they are the ones who are working with Israelis and are behind the assassination of civilian scientists in Iran that included the shooting of not only the scientists, but also in two cases their wives. And because this group has paid so

many influential politicians in the United States and also because this group now carries out terrorist operations on behalf of Israel and the United States in promotion of the interests of Israel and the United States, they have been removed from the list of terrorist organizations by the Obama administration and this really shows that the United States is not against terrorism.

The U.S. government uses terrorism continuously to serve its interests. The United States government says that it is against terrorism only because terrorism is the word that applies to anybody who opposes or impedes the agenda of the United States, and the willingness to remove the name of MKO from the list of terrorist organizations even though they are committed to the use of violence and killing of Iranian officials proves how worthless the United States' claims about terrorism are.

Q: What do you think about the humanitarian impacts of the anti-Iranian sanctions? In one of your articles, you alluded to some facts regarding the scarcity of foodstuff and other goods in Iran as a result of the sanctions. I'll add the medicine, travel restrictions and unsafe aviation fleet to your list. Isn't it some sort of violation of human rights by the United States?

A: Of course. One of the worst crimes that the United States has committed over the last several decades was the sanctions regime that it imposed on Iraq which killed several hundred thousands of children, deprived people of basic food and medicine and strengthened Saddam Hussein by making everybody in the country poor and dependent on him. This is now repeating itself in Iran, not to the same extent yet but it has its own effects where there are poor Iranian children who are sick and unable to get medicine and are dying as a result. Obviously the American officials openly brag about the destruction of Iranian economy and the collapse of Iranian currency which they are causing with their sanctions regime, and you see it's a kind of collective punishment to terrorize the Iranian people for the alleged crimes of their government; the kinds of crimes that the United States has condemned the other countries for committing for many decades. So absolutely the sanctions regime which the United States is leading is really an act of war and a way of making Iranians and innocent civilians suffer greatly, and absolutely a kind of collective punishment that should be judged by the decent people.

Q: What's your idea about the U.S. mainstream media's portrayal of the developments in the Middle East and especially Iran? They don't allow the citizens to be aware of the fact that, for example, the economic sanctions are paralyzing the daily life of ordinary Iranian citizens, as they did with regards to the Iraqi people. Why do the American media want to leave their people in ignorance and unawareness?

A: The role of the U.S. media in general is to serve the interests of the U.S. government. They claim that we have a free media, but for a lot of different reasons, these media are owned by the corporations and these corporations are very well to the U.S. government. And so part of what any government wants to do when it wants to be aggressive on other countries is to dehumanize their population; to depict them in very simplistic ways. What the U.S. media generally show of Iran is nothing more than the claims that they have evil, extremist leaders and almost never talk of the complexities of Iran and tens of millions of Iranian citizens who produce a complicated and difficult to caricature society.

Q: How do you perceive the relationship between Obama and the Israeli lobby?

How much influence has the Israeli lobby had on Obama and what role has it played in the reelection of Obama? Do you think that Obama was at odds with Netanyahu on such cases as settlement constructions, or they were simply superficial conflicts and they were practically close allies?

A: Any differences between Obama and Netanyahu are, as you said, superficial and symbolic and never resulted in meaningful action. If you turn to Israelis, they will tell you that the relationship between the United States and Israel under Obama is closer than it has ever been under any prior U.S. President. We saw that with the Israeli attack on Gaza, the Obama administration 100 percent justified and stood behind Israel, and just in the two recent votes in the United Nations, one on Palestinian statehood and the other that demanded Israel to open its nuclear stockpile to inspection, the United States sided with Israel and isolated itself in almost the entire world.

So you have this extremely loyal relationship between Obama and Israelis including Netanyahu, and it's in large part because as many prominent American columnists including Jewish and pro-Israel commentators have observed there's a very strong pro-Israeli lobby in the United States which is very well-funded and very powerful and that basically keeps both the political parties completely on the side of Israel in every single controversy or dispute, even when doing so harms the United States, they force both political parties to choose loyalty to Israel over the interests of the United States and as a result, neither political party is able, even if they want to, to in any meaningful way pressure the Israelis or challenge them.

And despite all the loyalty that the United States has to Israel, Israelis continue to pursue policies that the United States doesn't want them to do, like the expansion of settlements in the West Bank and yet the United States is unwilling to punish them or sanction them because of the domestic political pressures.

Q: Iran has assumed the three-year presidency of the Non-Aligned Movement in the 16th summit of the organization which was held in Tehran in August 2012. What's your viewpoint regarding the importance of this summit for Iran which the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and Egyptian President Muhammad Morsi along with several leaders from across the world attended?

A: I think it's significant because one of the main objectives of Israel and the United States was to depict Iran as isolated from the rest of the world. But what we are seeing is that to some extent, they are Israel and the United States that are increasingly being isolated from the rest of the world. And the refusal of so many countries in denouncing Israel and the United States' calls for not attending the summit and otherwise isolating the Iranian government is very significant in that regard as are the two votes that just took place in the UN that overwhelmingly sided against Israel. So I think the Israelis have become their own worst enemies through their extreme pursuance of the ideological vision, their refusal to compromise, their expansion of settlements that are illegal and their use of violence and aggression have alienated a huge part of the world, much more than Iran has, and if there's anyone in the danger of isolation, I think it's Israel.

Q: And finally, what's your viewpoint regarding Israel's aggressive war rhetoric against Iran and its continued threats of using force against Iran? These war threats clearly violate the UN Charter, but the Security Council hasn't taken any practical steps to criticize and punish Israel for its illegal behavior. What's your

take on that?

A: Well, I think that UN Security Council's enforcement of those roles is practically impossible because almost everybody knows that the United States will veto any resolution to condemn Israel for its use of those threats. It's also the case that many countries that are in the Security Council, mostly the United States, but also Russia and China also use threats against other countries in violation of the UN Charter, so everyone is a little bit afraid of punishing Israel for violating rules that those countries themselves like to violate, but it's really the case that the United States and Israel have made a joke of the UN Charter and continuously threaten Iran to use military force against Iran, to bomb Iran, to keep all options on the table including a military strike, and this is a clear violation of the UN Charter and everything that it was intended to stand for. As long as the U.S. has the veto power, the Security Council will be completely unable to act against Israel's violation of the UN Charter.

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