

War Propaganda and Women's Rights: The Arab Emirates (UAE) Exploit First Woman Pilot to Lead the Bombing Campaign Against ISIS

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The United Arab Emirates (UAE) had recently announced that a female fighter pilot led the United Arab Emirates Air Force (UAEAF) bombardment of ISIS on Syrian territory. According to the UAE's online news source 'The National' based in Abu Dhabi confirms its nation's first female pilot leading the fight against the Western created terrorist group ISIS reported that:

"Yousef Al Otaiba, the UAE's ambassador to the United States, confirmed on Thursday that the country's first female fighter pilot was involved in recent action against ISIL." He also said that "I can officially confirm that the UAE strike mission on Monday night was led by female fighter pilot Mariam Al Mansouri," he said. "She is a fully qualified, highly trained, combat-ready pilot and she is on a mission."

First, I must say that the pilot, Maj. Mariam Al Mansour who is employed by the government of the UAE leading the way by attacking ISIS targets in Syria deserves no praise or glory for participating in the bombardment of a sovereign nation. Syria is a target for regime change. The US, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the UAE and Bahrain have collaborated to bomb multiple ISIS targets in Syria. Of course Washington is the main culprit that wants to destabilize Syria as they did to Libya to keep segments of the population fighting with each other while their natural resources such as oil and gas continue to flow to Western corporations. Israel will attempt to expand while Washington and the military-industrial complex will continue to profit from the chaos they themselves created. Now the point I want to make regarding Maj. Mariam Al Mansour, leader of the UAE's bombing squad is pure propaganda. If Adolf Hitler was a female named Alice Hitler, would that have meant that Nazi Germany was a progressive country for women? I don't think so. However, the UAE is a US ally. In 1990-91, the UAE joined with the United States militarily to force Iraq out of Kuwait. The UAE already had become a major element for Washington's strategic monopoly over the Gulf region.

Women's rights in the Gulf States are hideous regardless of the UAE's actions it has taken to involve women in their military ranks. The mainstream media in the West is quick to jump on the women's rights issue in the Gulf; they even praised Saudi Arabia for sending members of the Royal family to battle. *The Week*, a British news magazine published a story called *"Why the West should applaud these autocratic kingdoms with dubious human rights records"* by Peter Weber. The subtitle read *"Saudi Arabia is sending its princes to fight ISIS. UAE is sending women. The Persian Gulf kingdoms are in this battle now, come hell or high water."* Weber does admit that Saudi Arabia, Qatar and other Gulf states which have some of the worst human rights violations have been both directly and indirectly involved in the

creation of ISIS. What choice did he have? It is on record. Almost every human rights organization in the world has reported that the Gulf States are the most undemocratic governments in the world, especially for women. Weber started his opening statement as follows:

Without countries like Saudi Arabia and Qatar, Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) might not even exist. Qatar has credibly been accused of financing ISIS and al Qaeda, or at least turning a blind eye to their domestic fund-raising, and Saudi Arabia not only houses some of ISIS's big financial backers but also promotes and bankrolls the ultra-conservative Wahhabi school of Islam that forms the basis of ISIS's murderous, archaic theocratic vision. The Arabian Peninsula kingdoms and emirates are also autocratic places with few civil liberties and dubious human rights records.

What Mr. Weber said is true including the fact that the Saudi Royals and women from the UAE have joined the fight against ISIS in Iraq and Syria. France and the U.S. and now Great Britain (the majority of the British parliament just voted 'yes' to enter the campaign against Syria) has partnered with the Gulf States to ultimately remove President Assad from power.

Still, when the U.S. started its risky bombing campaign against ISIS in Syria on Monday night, it was the Saudis and three other Gulf Arab nations — United Arab Emirates, Jordan, and Bahrain — that flew alongside U.S. warplanes. Qatar assisted in other ways.

France is bombing ISIS targets in Iraq and Britain's Parliament is voting today on whether to join in, but in this fight, European allies — even pacifistic modern German — don't count for that much, at least diplomacy-wise. Substantively and symbolically, this needs to be a battle where Muslim Arabs — Sunni Arabs, like ISIS — are taking the fight to ISIS. Now they are. Let's give them credit for that.

Yes, give them credit for participating in aerial strikes against ISIS. Let's also give them credit for creating ISIS along with U.S., Turkey and Israeli intelligence. Let's give them credit regardless of their involvement in numerous sponsored terrorist activities in the Middle East especially by the Saudi Monarchy? According to Weber, regardless of their human rights record, or their involvement in the creation of ISIS, they are doing something right. But according to Weber's analysis:

And they're not only sending a dozen or so fighter jets, they're also sending some big guns, metaphorically as well as literally. Two of Saudi Arabia's pilots are members of the royal family, including the son of Saudi Crown Prince Salman bin Abdulaziz, the defense minister as well as heir to the Saudi throne. The kingdom emphasized its skin in the game by releasing photos of the smiling prince, Khaled bin Salman, in the cockpit of his Tornado fighter jet. The very public participation of Prince Salman is seen as a signal to the Saudi public and the world that Saudi Arabia is a committed partner in the ISIS fight.

The UAE made a potentially even bigger statement, sending a female pilot, Maj. Mariam Al Mansour, as leader of the UAE's bombing squad. That's a pretty powerful refutation of ISIS's misogynistic ideology. The U.S. pilots of a tanker plane were so surprised to hear a woman respond to their call about refueling, UAE ambassador Yousef Al Otaiba said on MSNBC, "they paused for 20 seconds."

“I think it’s important for us moderate Arabs, moderate Muslims, to step up and say this is a threat against us,” Otaiba added. America strongly agrees.

Of course America agrees with Mr. Otaiba. After all, they were the ones who were behind the so-called moderate Arabs who splintered into other terrorist organizations including Al-Nusra, ISIS and now the Khorasan? This gets better all the time.

The Reality of Women’s Rights in the Gulf and U.S. Foreign Policy

The worst countries for women’s rights are located in the Gulf region. Many countries around the world do have women’s rights issues that not have been addressed regardless of numerous reports produced by human rights organizations. No country is perfect when it comes to women and human rights in general. But to use Maj. Mariam Al Mansour to demonstrate that the UAE is committed to women’s rights is pure propaganda. They are using her to show the world that they care about the women’s rights abuses committed by ISIS in Syria and Iraq. They want to demonstrate that there is equality for men and women no matter what profession they are in. None of the Gulf States practice any meaningful progress for women. A woman serving in the military as an equal to a man does not mean progress. It is propaganda to justify their actions against ISIS in Iraq and Syria where civilians including women and child have been massacred. Now the UAE wants to flaunt their first woman pilot leading a squadron against ISIS who follow strict Sharia law who oppress women. According to Syria Deeply online:

Shortly after the Sunni militant group the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) retook control of Raqqa earlier this year, it created the al-Khansaa’ Brigade, an all-female unit operating in the city. Its purpose is to apprehend civilian women in Raqqa who do not follow the organization’s strict brand of Sharia law, including a mandate that all women be fully covered in public and that they be accompanied by a male chaperone.

“We have established the brigade to raise awareness of our religion among women, and to punish women who do not abide by the law,” says Abu Ahmad, an ISIS official in Raqqa. “There are only women in this brigade, and we have given them their own facilities to prevent the mixture of men and women.”

The world is aware of the treatment of women by ISIS and its enforcement of Sharia law. But it is a fact that women in the Gulf are not treated any better than ISIS. According to Reuters last year ‘Factbox: Women’s rights in the Arab world’ In the UAE “Women have access to education and health services but traditional gender roles are ingrained. Many foreign female domestic workers are trafficked and abused and women run the risk of being imprisoned for adultery when reporting sexual violence.” The report also said that “marital rape is not recognized and the law permits men to discipline their wives physically.” Reuters also reported what positive actions were taken by the UAE when it came to government and labor, it stated that “four women sit on the 22-member cabinet of the Federal National Council” and that “women represent 14 percent of the total workforce.” Saudi Arabia on the other hand has some of the most hideous human rights violations according to the report. It stated that “Saudi Arabia polled third-worst overall and ranked last for political representation and inheritance rights. Despite stirrings of progress, the kingdom’s guardianship system severely limits women’s freedoms.” Other violations indicate that “women are banned from driving and need a guardian’s permission to travel, enroll in education, marry or undergo healthcare procedures.” Besides Saudi Arabia being the only

country in the world that does not allow women to drive, it has no freedom of speech, press and religion. Saudi Arabia also practices capital punishment with public beheadings with a sword, stoning and execution by a firing squad if they are convicted for crimes including murder, rape, adultery, armed robbery, witchcraft and sorcery. If someone is convicted of robbery, Saudi Arabian officials will amputate your hands and feet. You can receive lashings for lesser crimes such as having sex with a prostitute or for being drunk in public.

For expat women in the UAE, civil law works against them if a dispute or domestic violence occurs with their husbands. A story headlined in the Telegraph last month 'Human Rights Watch warns expat women about the UAE' that there were concerns regarding domestic abuse:

The campaigning organisation Human Rights Watch has highlighted the problems women in the United Arab Emirates can face if they become embroiled in a legal dispute with their husband" the report said. "HRW accused the authorities in the UAE - home to large numbers of British expats - of "failing to respond adequately to reports of domestic violence". It also highlighted the use of Islamic law, which discriminates against women.

To women's right activists, Maj. Mariam Al Mansour is not a breakthrough for women. Yes, women now can enter the military in the Gulf States ruled by the monarchies where for centuries women have been treated as second class citizens. But a woman who is fighting for an unjust cause for Western Imperial powers to control the natural resources is not a reason to celebrate. Our mothers, sisters and daughters deserve better. Advancing women's rights to fight unjust wars for countries run by dictatorships is not progressive. It is propaganda. Mariam Al Mansour proved that a woman can do the same job as a man, but at what cost? Killing innocent civilians for Western powers that seek to control the Middle East, including men, women and children? If she were leading protests against war, or were to educate the public on what the government was doing in their name, then Mariam Al Mansour would become an inspiration to other women alike. Truth and justice is a cause worth celebrating, not war, no matter what gender the person is.

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