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Saudi Atrocities Go Unnoticed

By Chris Ernesto

April 5, 2015

In December 2011, the United States sold \$30 billion worth of weapons to the monarchy of Saudi Arabia. Included in the sale were 84 F-15 fighter jets, which are now “at the core” of the Saudi war in Yemen.

This fact, and numerous others about the Kingdom have received scant attention from proponents of the Saudi attack on Yemen.

Here’s a look at five things about Saudi Arabia that US officials and the establishment media are neglecting to talk about as Saudi bombs continue to drop on the people of Yemen with the support of the United States:

1. Sharia Law runs the country.
2. Saudi Arabia is an authoritarian dictatorship: There are no national elections, no parties, and no rights.
3. People are publicly beheaded in the Kingdom.
4. Human rights for Saudi women are among the worst in the world.
5. The monarchy is a cash machine for terrorists.

1. Sharia Law runs the country

The following quotes are directly from Saudi Arabia's *Basic Law of Governance*:

- “The King shall rule the nation according to the Sharia.”
- “The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a sovereign Arab Islamic State. Its religion is Islam. Its constitution is Almighty God’s Book, The Holy Qur’an...”
- “Monarchy is the system of rule in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Rulers of the country shall be from amongst the sons of the founder King Abdulaziz bin Abdulrahman Al-Faisal Al-Saud, and their descendants.”
- “The Courts shall apply rules of the Islamic Sharia in cases that are brought before them.”
- “The aim of education is to implant the Islamic Creed in the hearts of all youths.”

“The Hanbali school, Islam’s most orthodox which spawned the Wahhabi and Salafi branches, is embraced in Saudi Arabia and by the Taliban,” according to the Council on Foreign Relations.

2. Saudi Arabia is an authoritarian dictatorship: There are no national elections, no parties, and no rights

On January 27, 2015, RT reported, “There are no national elections, no parties, and no parliament – only a symbolic advisory chamber, known as Majlis al-Shura. Criticism is strictly forbidden: only last year, prominent opposition activist Abd al-Kareem al-Khoder joined hundreds of the country’s political prisoners, when he was sentenced to eight years for demanding the changeover to a constitutional monarchy. Just days before King Abdullah’s death, blogger Raif Badawi was given the first 50 of his 1,000 lashes – for calling for free speech on his blog.”

“Saudi Arabia’s infamous religious police are employees of the Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice. Their job includes ensuring that men and women do not mix socially, that people do not dress immodestly and that businesses close during prayer time,” wrote Adam Taylor of the *Washington Post*.

Saudi Arabia was rated as “not free” and was given the lowest possible score in a January 2015 report by Freedom House, a nongovernmental organization that tracks human rights.

Also in January, Human Rights Watch published a report stating that, “Saudi Arabia imprisoned ... activists on broad, catch-all charges designed to criminalize peaceful dissent, such as breaking allegiance with the ruler and setting up an unlicensed organization.”

And last month, the Islamic Human Rights Commission reported that there are an estimated 30,000 political prisoners in Saudi Arabia.

3. People are publicly beheaded in the Kingdom

Saudi Arabian courts “continued to use corporal punishment as a judicial penalty, including floggings and amputation, as well as public execution by beheading,” according to a 2012 US State Department report.

In 2013, Amnesty International condemned the “disturbing” rise in Saudi executions, including public beheadings and the practice of crucifixion, which “refers to the court-ordered public display of the body after execution, along with the separated head if beheaded.” There were at least 79 executions in 2013, according to Amnesty.

The Kingdom publicly beheaded 19 people in the first half of August 2014 for offenses that ranged from drug smuggling to sorcery.

Included was Mohammed bin Bakr al-Alawi who was beheaded for allegedly practicing black magic sorcery, the *Saudi Gazette* reported. Another Saudi man was beheaded in 2012 for “sorcery and witchcraft.”

4. Human rights for Saudi women are among the worst in the world

Women are not allowed “to leave the house, make a purchase, sign any legal document – in fact perform almost any official action, from agreeing to surgery, to signing up to a class – without the consent of a guardian, either the husband or the father.”

“Yet, even these suffocating measures give only scant impression of the status of Saudi women in a society where even their court testimony is worth half of that of a man,” RT reported.

There are many other things women in Saudi Arabia are not allowed to do, including:

- Drive a car
- Go for a swim
- Compete freely in sports
- Try on clothes when shopping
- Enter a cemetery
- Read an uncensored fashion magazine

According to the 2013 World Report by Human Rights Watch, “punishment for domestic violence remain[s] lax [in Saudi Arabia.] The government failed to enact a 2011 draft law to combat violence against women and children. In May, Jeddah’s Summary Court convicted a man for physically abusing his wife to the point of hospitalization, but sentenced him to learning by heart five parts of the Qur’an and 100 sayings of the Prophet Muhammad.”

In 2014, the World Economic Forum ranked Saudi Arabia 130 out of 142 countries in its annual report on gender equality.

5. The monarchy is a cash machine for terrorists

In a 2009 secret paper released by WikiLeaks, Hillary Clinton said, “Donors in Saudi Arabia constitute the most significant source of funding to Sunni terrorist groups worldwide...more needs to be done since Saudi Arabia remains a critical financial support base for al-Qaeda, the Taliban, LeT and other terrorist groups.”

“Saudi Arabia, and the other Sunni countries in the Middle East, have been financially and morally supporting the growing and evolving Sunni insurgency against Shias in the region for years. They have intentionally bankrolled groups whose mission it is to wipe out the Shia minority in the region. First they started with al-Qaeda, and then they bankrolled what became ISIS,” wrote Thom Hartmann, although the Saudis vehemently deny support of ISIS.

The Atlantic reported in June 2014, the success of ISIS “is in part due to the support they have received from two Persian Gulf countries: Qatar and Saudi Arabia,” though there remains much debate about whether or not the Kingdom is in fact supporting ISIS.

Why isn't Washington being transparent?

If the United States chooses to support, and provide weapons to an un-elected Saudi government that is among the world's worst human rights violators, it should at least do so transparently.

Would the people of the United States go along with the Saudi attacks in Yemen if it knew how the Saudi monarchy operates?