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## *The Beat Goes On Against Protest in Saudi Arabia*



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It has always been dangerous to be a protester and activist for human rights in Saudi Arabia. Readers will recall that Saudi Arabia was a nation created out of whole cloth by the West once its deposits of oil were discovered. Many died during World War II for Winston Churchill's objectives of exploiting the Middle East oil deposits and keeping that oil in the hands of those colonial powers not endowed with fossil fuels.

It was only this past June (2018) when women finally were granted the right to drive cars in Saudi Arabia, but many women who long-championed that cause were mercilessly harassed and often dumped into jail. The former Soviet Union was not the only place for show trials!

Now, Shia protesters from the country's eastern Qatar region are being held, and will be tried, for "incitement to protest," "chanting slogans hostile to the regime," "attempting to inflame public opinion," "filming protests and publishing on social media," and "providing moral support to rioters." Of course, their major crime is agitating for human rights as the minority Shia population in a nation where the government reflects and supports and exports religious extremism (["Saudi Prosecution Seeks Death Penalty for Female Activist," Human Rights Watch, August 21, 2108](#)).

Six activists, including Israa al-Ghomgham, are facing execution in an extremist nation that provided most of the September 11, 2001 hijackers to Osama bin Laden. And here's the kicker: They're being tried by the country's so-called "terrorism tribunal." Talk about Orwellian doublespeak! Their protests for human rights in Saudi Arabia have been entirely peaceful. Many readers of *CounterPunch* may want to reflect on the fact that their activism and protest would have landed them in the dock in Saudi Arabia also facing the death penalty.

The *Real News Network*, in ["Whitewashed Saudi "Reformer" Prince Boosts Authoritarian Crackdown on Dissent,"](#) September 13, 2018, illustrates how Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed ibn Salman has been touted as a reformer while he cracks down on all manner of dissent, including now criminalizing "satire on social media with 5 years in prison."

The latter is no laughing matter, as was the clownish and cartoonish presentation of Ibn Salman earlier this year at the White House by Donald Trump with illustrations of U.S. weapons sales to Saudi Arabia that would have been an embarrassment to a fifth-grade social studies project!

But the mass media in the U.S. must have its days of propaganda. Here's *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman in November 2017 as reported on the *Real News Network* (September 2018): "The most significant reform process underway anywhere in the Middle East today is in Saudi Arabia." Of course, the hidden agenda here is, in part, support of Israel's alliance with Saudi Arabia. There is also the relentless march toward war with Iran by Trump and his sycophants that is favored by some in the U.S. media.

If a three-time Pulitzer Prize winner says it (that Saudi Arabia is a nation where reform is taking place) in the mainstream media, then it must be true. If the clown prince who sits in the Oval Office wants to sell massive amounts of deadly arms to Saudi Arabia, including arms used in their immoral war in Yemen, then it must be good for the United States. The beat does go on...