

Obama: Crimes Are Crimes - No Matter Who Does Them

Saturday 29 May 2010, by [Collective / Multiple signers](#) (Date first published: 27 May 2010).

This full-page ad was placed in the May 27th issue of *The New York Review of Books* and will appear in the June 14th issue of *The Nation*, signed by Cindy Sheehan, Cornel West, Mark Ruffalo, Chris Hedges, Daniel Ellsberg, Noam Chomsky, Ray McGovern, Carl Dix, Bill Quigley, William Blum, Joyce Kozloff, Ann Messner, David Swanson, Sunsara Taylor, Stephen Rohde, Fr. Bob Bossie, Peter Phillips, Jed Stone, Tomás Olmos, Peter McLaren, Jodie Evans, Margaret Lawrence, Matthis Chiroux, Larry Everest, Andy Worthington, Blasé Bonpane, William Ayers, Dahr Jamail, Kathy Kelly, Mike Gravel, Rev. Dr. George F. Regas, Donald Freed, Frank Summers, Rocky Anderson, Tom Morello, Ann Wright, Edward Asner, Sarah Kunstler, Emily Kunstler, Michael Ratner, James Cromwell and M. Cherif Bassiouni. To sign or for more information: www.worldcantwait.net

In the past few weeks, it has become common knowledge that Barack Obama has openly ordered the assassination of an American citizen, Anwar al-Awlaki, because he is suspected of participating in plots by Al Qaeda. Al-Awlaki denies these charges. No matter. Without trial or other judicial proceeding, the administration has simply put him on the to-be-killed list.

During this same period, a video leaked by whistleblowers in the military showing U.S. troops firing on an unarmed party of Iraqis in 2007, including two journalists, and then firing on those who attempted to rescue them - including two children - became public. As ugly as this video of the killing of 12 Iraqis was, the chatter recorded from the helicopter cockpit was even more chilling and monstrous. Yet the Pentagon said that there would be no charges against these soldiers; and the media focused on absolving them of blame - "they were under stress," the story went, "and after all our brave men and women must be supported." Meanwhile, those who leaked and publicized the video came under government surveillance and are targeted as "national security" threats.

Also during this period, the Pentagon acknowledged, after denials, a massacre near the city of Gardez, Afghanistan, on February 12, 2010, in which 5 people were killed, including two pregnant women, leaving 16 children motherless. The U.S. military first said the two men killed were insurgents, and the women, victims of a family "honor killing." The Afghan government has accepted the eyewitness reports that U.S. Special Forces killed the men, (a police officer and lawyer) and the women, and then dug their own bullets out of the women's bodies to destroy evidence. Top U.S. military officials have now admitted that U.S. soldiers killed the family in their house.

Just weeks earlier, a story broken in Harper's by Scott Horton carried news that three supposed suicides of detainees in Guantánamo in 2006 were not actual suicides, but homicides carried out by American personnel. This passed almost without comment.

In some respects, this is worse than Bush. First, because Obama has claimed the right to assassinate American citizens whom he suspects of "terrorism," merely on the grounds of his own suspicion or that of the CIA, something Bush never claimed publicly. Second, Obama says that the government can detain you indefinitely, even if you have been exonerated in a trial, and he has publicly floated the idea of "preventive detention." Third, the Obama administration, in expanding the use of unmanned drone attacks, argues that the U.S. has the authority under international law to use such lethal force and extrajudicial killing in sovereign countries with which it is not at war.

Such measures by Bush were widely considered by liberals and progressives to be outrages and were roundly, and correctly, protested. But those acts which may have been construed (wishfully or not) as anomalies under the Bush regime, have now been consecrated into "standard operating procedure" by Obama, who claims, as did Bush, executive privilege and state secrecy in defending the crime of aggressive war.

Unsurprisingly, the Obama administration has refused to prosecute any members of the Bush regime who are responsible for war crimes, including some who admitted to waterboarding and other forms of torture, thereby making their actions acceptable for him or any future president, Democrat or Republican.

We must end the complicity of silence and say loud and clear:

The things that were crimes under Bush are crimes under Obama.

Outrages under Bush are outrages under Obama.

All this MUST STOP.

And all this MUST BE RESISTED by anyone who claims a shred of conscience or integrity.
