

## **The Next Stage - Exonerate and Pardon War Criminals**

by Robert Fisk via stacey - The Independent UK *Sunday, May 19 2019, 8:51pm*

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It's True that war crimes prosecutions hang over the heads of all war criminals from guilty government administrators to the brainwashed stupid errand boys and girls doing the killing and torturing in the field.

New LAWS and conventions were drafted and established internationally regarding these horrendous crimes after the prosecutions of Nazis post WWII, these laws remain and it's not possible to waive them, as most of the civilised world are signatories, including today's leading civilian killing nation, America. So if Trump has been ordered to Pardon heinous criminals that is another blow on American plummeting integrity BUT international courts are NOT affected and the culpable could be brought to trial at any time.

The fact that Bill Clinton and following US presidents, particularly G. Bush, actually delighted in their ILLEGAL, mass murdering, invasive wars -- for the profit of the few -- makes it no surprise that America has decided to Pardon their murdering criminals, probably due to the fact that the military would balk if ordered to commit these crimes, and know full well that the criminal Pentagon would scapegoat the lower ranks, not the real perpetrators in Washington.

America continues to lead the world (combined) in killing innocent civilians -- which makes it by definition the world's leading terrorist State -- and is not likely to stop this overt criminal practice, in fact the opposite is the reality, as Washington has now seen fit to exonerate and pardon its war criminals, as future wars are planned and America needs its mass murderers to murder freely without the threat of prosecution hanging over their warped, psychopathic heads - at least at home.

However, America's invasive, preemptive, resource thieving wars BASED ON LIES and propaganda, are not fought at home therefore American mass murderers continue to be exposed to International Courts in the war zones of the WORLD, notwithstanding the Hague courts are thoroughly corrupted as not ONE American has ever been accused, charged, or pursued for war crimes by the Hague courts, of which crimes the entire world is aware, Iraq is the most horrid example of a criminal war from the start to finish(?) though other interfered with sovereign nations come a close second.

America's highly sophisticated propaganda machine is not up to the task of neutralising war crimes, so Washington has chosen to Pardon in the vain hope that its worse for wear, military, suffering huge morale, suicide and veteran care problems, continues to fight and murder efficiently. It won't happen, America's decline and loss of stature/influence/prestige is far too rapid for quick criminal fixes like "pardons," which in effect prevents international travel for life, among other negative consequences.

Following is detailed story from acclaimed journalist, Robert Fisk on the subject:

### **Western States [attempt to] Avoid Culpability for War Crimes**

When is a war crime not a war crime? When it's committed by us, of course.

But this truism is taking on a new and sinister meaning today – and not just because Trump and his crackpots may be planning another clutch of atrocities in the Middle East.

For there is now a dangerous slippage becoming apparent in which western states are more ready than ever to countenance military crimes against humanity, to accept them, approve of them and to expect us to connive at these gross and sickening breaches of international law.

I'm not just talking about the pathetic and grotesque behaviour of our latest minister of defence's "amnesty on historical prosecutions" – which means we can murder Iraqis and Afghans and get away with it, but must be a bit more restrained in Northern Ireland. Not much more restrained, mind you, for just look at the snapping young Tory elites and the desiccated ex-generals who are yelping to extend this kill-by-permission to those who have killed British citizens in Belfast and Derry.

Not only is this an insult to the humanity of Irish men and women in Northern Ireland who happen to have British citizenship; it is also placing them in a limbo-world between brown-eyed Muslims in the Middle East who can be forgotten 10 years after they have been liquidated, and blue-eyed Brits, whose murder would have squads of policemen and anti-terror squads racing through the streets of the nation to hunt down and bring to justice their killers.

It's not just a difference between the DNA of our victims, of course. It's that word "historical". For what Penny Mordaunt and her roughnecks are proposing is a statute of limitations on war crimes – something which thousands of ex-Nazis sought and prayed for after the Second World War.

No, British army soldiers are not Nazis, the US marines are not the Wehrmacht, the RAF and the USAF are not the Luftwaffe (although we might have to lay aside Hamburg and Dresden here). I am talking about parallels, not comparisons, about the sudden growth of a dangerous and warped mindset which proposes to exonerate murderers before they commit their crime.

But let's move away from Britain's tawdry struggle in the northeast of Ireland, albeit that many Brexiteers are quite prepared to return to it. Instead, let's cross the Atlantic to the larger lunatic asylum in Washington where Trump has just awarded a full pardon to US army first lieutenant Michael Behenna.

He murdered an Iraqi man called Ali Mansur on 16 May 2008. Behenna was ordered to drive Mansur back to his home after he had been interrogated by US intelligence operatives about the killing of two American soldiers in a roadside bombing. They found no evidence of his guilt. But Behenna drove his prisoner into the desert, stripped him, interrogated him again at gunpoint and then shot him in the head and chest. The case was straightforward – or so you might think. Behenna was convicted of unpremeditated murder and sentenced to 25 years in prison. But then the US justice department reduced his sentence from 25 years to 15 years, and paroled him in 2014.

Behenna was a model prisoner, admired by his friends in his native Oklahoma. And just 10 days ago, Trump granted this army killer a full pardon. No surprise from Trump's point of view, of course. He has said that "torture works" and believes that mass murder works too.

"You have to take out their families, when you get these terrorists, you have to take out their families," the US president said in a 2015 interview. Behenna committed murder just over 10 years ago, so no protests from Mordaunt and her chums in London: his crime was committed just after her 10-year limitation on murder in the Muslim world would have expired.

Another American combat veteran from Iraq put the lie to this nonsense the day after war criminal Behenna was blessed with freedom by Trump. Waitman Wade Beorn was a cavalry officer who told his soldiers to treat Iraqi civilians as if they were neighbours rather than enemies. In a remarkable article in the Washington Post, Beorn wrote that the US commander-in-chief had preferred to overlook serious war crimes "in favour of a warped notion of patriotism and heroism". Trump subscribed to the "bad things happen in war mentality", which is odd for a man who avoided military service.

But Beorn is unique in that he has also written a book about the German army's participation in the Holocaust. Even given the premeditated, racist and highly ideologically driven environment of the Wehrmacht, he concluded, "the culture of each unit and the institutional leadership most directly influenced whether war crimes were committed. Murderous leaders led murderous units."

Beorn is not comparing the US military with the Wehrmacht. He talks – albeit a trifle mawkishly – about America's "systems of military education that highlight our values and the law of armed conflict" and their "strong ethical foundation".

But he does highlight Adolf Hitler's infamous "Jurisdiction Order" of May 1941, just before the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union, which informed German troops that "for offences committed by members of the Wehrmacht and its employees against enemy civilians, prosecution is not compulsory, not even if the offence is at the same time a military crime or violation".

As Beorn notes, "soldiers were literally told that they would not be tried for behaviour that would be a crime anywhere else in Europe".

Which is – really – frighteningly close to our minister of defence's theoretical proposals. Letting killers off the hook if they murder Afghans or Iraqis – although only after a decent interval – but not if they kill Brits, might have seemed rather familiar to Wehrmacht veterans. When a US president champions war criminals as brave patriots who are merely victims of political correctness, he "condones unethical and criminal behaviour," Beorn writes. And there you have it. Suddenly, Bloody Sunday slides into view. And the 1971 Ballymurphy mass killing inquest in Belfast this week, which heard a former British soldier describe some of his Parachute Regiment comrades in truly fearful terms. He praised good and professional soldiers, but then added: "There were also psychopaths in there, there were people who were dangerous to have around."

You bet there were. "Rogue soldiers were out of control, killing people on the street and knowing that they would be protected," said witness M597 at the Belfast inquest – although just how "rogue" these soldiers were, after Bloody Sunday less than a year later, is debatable. But remember, Ballymurphy was 48 years ago, Bloody Sunday 47 years ago. This is the kind of thinking that is now getting lost among those British politicians who would wipe the slate clean.

Trump has publicly supported US major Matt Golsteyn, who is currently charged with premeditated murder in the shooting of an unarmed man and the burning of his body in Afghanistan in 2010. Trump has called him a “US military hero”.

Beorn has also taken up the case of Trump’s support for former Navy Seal Edward Gallagher, another alleged war criminal who, according to The New York Times, “shot a girl in a flower-print dress who was walking with other girls on the riverbank” of the Tigris in Mosul in 2017.

She fell to the ground clutching her stomach and was dragged away by the other women. Beorn recalls that in the same year – and we are now talking of less than two years ago – Gallagher allegedly killed a wounded teenager by stabbing him several times in the neck and once in the chest.

“Trump has tweeted that Gallagher would be given better conditions in confinement ‘in honour of his past service’,” Beorn wrote, “an honour many would say he threw away long ago.”

Well, thank God, you may say, for the Beorns of this world. But what of our meek acceptance of the official body counts of our armies and air forces in the Middle East? “Coalition” forces say that they conducted 34,464 strikes in Iraq and Syria since August 2014, unintentionally killing 1,257 civilians. But Amnesty International has investigated the civilian casualties of just one city – Raqqa in Syria – over a mere four-month period in 2017 alone, and come up with a civilian death toll of more than 1,600.

Far more disturbing – more fantastical, is perhaps the right word – is the Royal Air Force claim that it killed 1,019 “enemy fighters” in Iraq and Syria over four years. But only one civilian. Just one – only a single civilian – was killed among 1,020 deaths. These figures, which cover the period between September 2014 and January this year, were handed out by the British Ministry of Defence under a Freedom of Information request from the charity Action on Armed Violence. And all this was based, according to the MOD, on “the best available post-strike analysis”.

Almost as distressing as this palpably ridiculous figure was that the BBC reported this on 7 March as a straightforward news story, only qualifying its utterly incredible contents later in its story with the charity’s comment that this must be “a world record in modern conflict”.

The BBC’s defence correspondent then remarked that these were “extraordinarily precise figures” but that battlefield analysis is “not a precise science”. Which would mean – again at face value – that the RAF killed only one of the 1,257 civilians “unintentionally” killed in coalition air strikes in the same period.

I have to say that statistics of this kind are not just unbelievable, incredible and insulting to anyone who reads or studies them. They are obviously miraculous, nonsensical, irresponsible, preposterous, bizarre, weird, out-of-this-world, dreamlike and – for anyone who has covered wars for the past four decades – totally untrue. Anyone who actually believes this tiddlypush must also have a total conviction in the existence of Martians, Father Christmas or little green men at the bottom of the garden.

Yet the British Ministry of Defence got away with it. Killing civilians in air raids can be

no less a crime than that of a soldier who individually murders civilians. And killing civilians “unintentionally” from the air – by planes or drones – does not let military forces claim innocence.

Amnesty’s investigation of the Raqqa attacks says that the real civilian death toll was not only shocking but totally unnecessary.

However, we have grown used to this. From the sky, from the street, in the desert, we kill and absolve ourselves.

No, “prosecution is not compulsory”. We can even call the killers heroes. These days we get away with murder – and we don’t even complain. We connive at it.

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