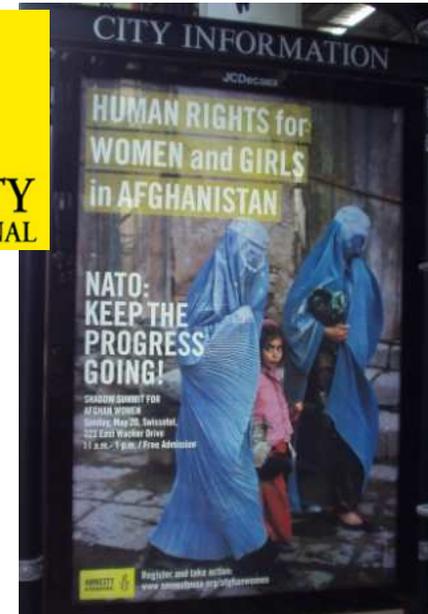


How Amnesty International betrayed the cause of human rights



January 2012: Amnesty International hires a new Executive Director, Suzanne Nossel, direct from the US State Department, where she had worked since the 1990s, helping shape US policies of ‘humanitarian intervention’, including the 2011 bombing of Libya.

May 2012: On the same day as an anti-war rally, Amnesty launches a major campaign urging NATO to ‘keep the progress going’ in Afghanistan. Amnesty invites former US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright to be keynote speaker at the launch. The *Huffington Post* suggests Afghanistan might represent “the first feminist war”.

The idea that NATO’s military occupation might help Afghan women was promoted by Laura Bush, wife of former President Bush. It has been rejected by the Afghan women’s group RAWA and former Afghan MP Malalai Joya, who says the NATO occupation has simply added a third enemy, on top of the Taliban and the warlords.

Focusing on Amnesty’s role, former US army Colonel Ann Wright and former FBI agent Coleen Rowley say that, in citing dubious claims of progress for women, Amnesty is backing the US State Department’s campaign, ‘to convince otherwise good-hearted people (especially women) to support (or at least tolerate) war and military occupation, now known to encompass the worst of war crimes, massacres of women and children [and] torture.’ See: <http://consortiumnews.com/2012/06/18/amnestys-shilling-for-us-wars/>

The claims of progress for women in Afghanistan are certainly dubious. Maternal mortality in Afghanistan is the equal worst on earth. See: <http://stopwarcoalition.org/nato-amnesty-and-maternal-mortality-in-afghanistan/>

War is a travesty of human rights; so why is Amnesty International backing ANY war?

Amnesty's double standards on Cuba



The screenshot shows the Amnesty International website interface. At the top, there is a yellow header with the Amnesty International logo and the text "AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL". To the right of the logo is a search bar with the text "In your country: Select country" and a "GO" button. Below the header is a navigation menu with links for "HOME", "WHO WE ARE", "HOW YOU CAN HELP", "LEARN ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS", and "NEWS". The main content area displays the title "Cuba: List of prisoners of conscience declared by Amnesty International" and a table with the following data:

	NAME	DATE ARREST	CHARGE	SENTENCE
1	AGUIAR RAMIREZ, Nelson Alberto	20.03.2003	Art.6.1 (Law 88)	13 yrs
2	ARGUELLES MORAN, Pedro	19.03.2003	Art Law 88	20 yrs

In March 2003, as the US invaded Iraq, the Cuban Government arrested 75 'dissidents' and charged them with collaborating with Washington against the Cuban state. Amnesty rapidly declared 71 of them 'prisoners of conscience' and two months later produced a 99 page report saying: 'the conduct for which dissidents were prosecuted was not self-evidently criminal; it was non-violent and seemed to fall within the parameters of the legitimate exercise of fundamental freedoms' ('Cuba 'essential measures'?, 2 June 2003, p.4). Most had been charged with taking money from a US program designed to overthrow the Cuban constitution, a serious crime in the US, were it aimed at the US Government (USC, CCP Chapter 115). All 75 were released between 2004 and 2010. Nevertheless, as at December 2012, Amnesty still listed 54 on their website as 'prisoners of conscience'.



By contrast, Amnesty's first major report on the more than 500 prisoners held without charge or trial by the US Government at Guantanamo Bay (US-occupied Cuba) came three years after they had been detained. Amnesty began to make short statements of 'concern' in 2004, then finally produced 'Guantanamo: an icon of lawlessness', in January 2005. Campaigns to close the prison developed; but at December 2012 it remained open. Amnesty International has never declared any of Washington's Guantanamo Bay prisoners, some held for many years, as 'prisoners of conscience'.

Do these double standards represent weakness, or something worse?

Amnesty and the 'regime change' bombing of Libya

In the 2011 lead up to NATO's 'regime change' bombing of Libya, Amnesty campaigned strongly against the government of Muammar Gadaafi. Amnesty's **Genevieve Garrigos** claimed Gadaafi was threatening Libyan civilians and had used 'black mercenaries' to kill civilians. In fact, *Al Jazeera* (owned by Qatar, and backing Libya's Islamist groups) told lies about the February 17 shootings at a demonstration in Benghazi. As later video demonstrates (right), it was a pro-government rally that was attacked.



YouTube: 'Libya protest: Aljazeera lies about killing in Benghazi'

Garrigos (below right) was forced to admit five months later (after Gadaafi was publicly murdered – below left) that there was 'no evidence' to support Amnesty's claims over 'black mercenaries' (YouTube: 'Humanitarian Intervention' in Libya - the duplicitous game). Yet these claims led to the killing of a number of black Libyans and immigrants – an issue which Amnesty would protest, but without admitting responsibility for promoting the rumours. All 'facts and figures' about civilian killings were provided by Libyan opposition groups, which took over after the NATO bombing (see YouTube: 'Humanitarian Intervention' in Libya - the duplicitous game').



Amnesty later claimed it had not backed the NATO intervention, a claim rejected by human rights lawyer Daniel Kovalik (see: 'Amnesty International and the human rights industry').



Amnesty backs NATO's jihadis in Syria

Syria was to be 'Libya 2' : 'civilian massacres' followed by NATO intervention. Amnesty flew the jihadi 'Free Syrian Army' flag on its posters (right). Joined by other groups (Avaaz, Human Rights Watch) funded by billionaire George Soros, Amnesty backed UN Security Council Chapter Seven (armed) action against Syria (below left), while claiming it was 'even-handed'. The stress was on civilians: 'the main victims of a campaign of relentless and indiscriminate attacks by the Syrian army.' (AI 19/9/12).



In August 2012 Amnesty issued a report claiming an 'assault by state forces on Aleppo is the culmination of months of a brutal crackdown on dissident voices' (1/8/12). In fact, Aleppo was by under heavy attack from an armed force of mainly foreign jihadis, paid by Qatar and the Saudis. These gangs posted many of their own atrocities online (see YouTube: 'Syrian Rebels Execute Tribal Leaders in Aleppo'; 'FSA terrorists throwing post office workers off a building in Aleppo'; 'FSA Terrorists took bodies from hospital to stage Al-Houla Massacre - Syrian Nun Exposes FSA'; 'FSA Terrorists Bomb Al Watani Hospital in Qusayr, Homs '). These graphic images made some of the western media, for the first time, begin to question the 'FSA' and NATO's alliance with these Al-Qaeda styled groups.



Russian and Chinese resistance at the Security Council, and Syrian resistance at home, slowed things down. With exposure of atrocities by the jihadi and foreign armed gangs, Amnesty often retreats to criticising 'both sides'. However the group has well demonstrated that it is deeply embedded with the big powers, and is ready to help legitimise the next Washington-backed 'revolution'. Pity about Amnesty's well meaning volunteers, they will have no say.

Further reading: Daniel Kovalick (2012) Amnesty International and the Human Rights Industry, *CounterPunch*, 8 Nov
Diana Johnstone (2012) Pussy Riot and Amnesty International: The Decline of Political Protest, *CounterPunch*, 28 August
Ann Wright and Coleen Rowley (2012) Amnesty's Shilling for US Wars, *ConsortiumNews*, 18 June