

# Letters on Amnesty International and the Kosovo War

30 June 2000

*Below we post a selection of letters about the June 19 WSWs article "Amnesty International charges NATO with war crimes"*

Dear Editor,

I just had to share my irony and note that Amnesty International was one of the primary institutions calling for Western intervention in Yugoslavia. It demonized the Serbs and portrayed the Kosovo Albanians as helpless victims. I could do some digging to validate my claims, but if I remember correctly, their Internet site and its archives will corroborate my statements.

(Thank you for a wonderful newspaper; I especially cherish Dave Walsh's film reviews.)

Regards,

MS

19 June 2000

While some may applaud the efforts of Amnesty International in exposing war crimes committed by NATO in its attack against Yugoslavia, I for one am concerned that it has come over a year after the events took place. The atrocities of NATO were ignored by AI when they were happening and why their tardy response is so timid. For me, one has to ask, "What is the purpose of their criticism long after the bodies and destruction have grown cold?" Why are they doing this now?

Amnesty International appears to be a large organization with sections in 76 countries. They have a paid staff and there are several job openings now. They publish a large number of well-produced pamphlets with stories and pictures. A major part of their publicity is aimed at getting contributions of money. One would have to assume that they have "done some good work" in the area of "human rights abuses" but I would like to concentrate on their response to the vicious, brutal, illegal, ruthless attacks by NATO against Yugoslavia.

Over a year since the actual events have occurred, AI,

in their current press release, stated: "NATO violations of the laws of war during Operation Allied Force must be investigated." They're calling for an investigation. If my memory serves me well, AI had no comment whatsoever concerning NATO's attack when it was occurring. They seemed totally unconcerned about US, Canadian and Western Europe attacking a small, poor country and killing thousands of civilians and soldiers and destroying hundreds of "targets." Maybe I missed their concern but I didn't see any outcry about cluster bombs being dropped on refugee convoys, hospitals and old folks homes being bombed, bridges and plants with people smashed and dismembered, innocent victims incinerated—there is a long list of several dozen nonmilitary targets that were destroyed. To me the atrocities are well known, documented and in many cases admitted to by NATO so what purpose an investigation would serve is a mystery to me.

Further on in their press release AI states, "In a report released today, 'Collateral Damage' or Unlawful Killings? Violations of the Laws of War by NATO during Operation Allied Force, Amnesty International examines a number of attacks indicating that NATO did not always meet its legal obligations in selecting targets and in choosing means and methods of attack." It is hard to imagine a more mild, limited and really pathetic response to the horrors committed by NATO. Beside the obvious point that the United Nations never approved the war and that it violates NATO's charter, Amnesty International gives the impression that NATO was somehow "irresponsible" and not "conforming to International Law."

The AI critique seems to be along the lines of "some mistakes were made" and that NATO was "careless." To me the NATO campaign against Yugoslavia was basic terrorism: they could not defeat or even punish the Yugoslavian army so they turned their bombs on

civilian targets, which were more accessible and defenseless. This is an effective technique used by military leaders since the beginning of “civilization”—killing, maiming, destroying the civilian population until the army gives up—civilian targets are easy to hit and they don't fight back. Amnesty International would have us believe that the atrocities committed against the people of Yugoslavia were somehow an irresponsible accident and not deliberate terrorism.

So what is one to think about Amnesty International's critique of NATO's war against Yugoslavia—why are they writing such a modest, timid, circumscribed report calling for an investigation over a year since the events occurred when they had nothing to say when they were happening?

Amnesty International is not concerned with stopping wars or war crimes or human rights abuses; they are concerned with writing about abuses that have already happened. They do this to get support and solicit contributions (i.e., get money for their operation and salaries). They knew that the war was widely popular in “the media” and with politicians so did not want to oppose it especially since it was portrayed as “humanitarian intervention” which is AI's business—intervention for humanitarian purposes. Now that the bodies have been cold for over a year, they come out with their paper report to show they really cared about the atrocities committed by NATO—now when it is safe to criticize their liberal friends and supporters (i.e., contributors). I don't believe it took them over a year to do a careful, detailed analysis of the bombing in Yugoslavia—it all seemed particularly obvious when it was happening and the bodies were still warm.

LR

17 June 2000

Just read the article by Julie Hyland on AI accusations against NATO, and I am astonished that I have seen not a speck of a report of this on the nightly news (while I don't get cable, I do peruse the Internet).

Very logical and well written.

Why not just come out and revisit definitions of what constitutes fascism—whether as a nationalist or global phenomenon—and, having analyzed Henry Kissinger as the preeminent post-war globalizing fascist, or proto-fascist, review his writings and public utterances, and

the political results of the prior activation of his policies, such as the China operation and the “secret” bombing of Cambodia, and then show the results? After all, we experience them daily right now ...

38,000 air sorties against Yugoslavia??? Compared with what American state, how big is Yugoslavia? Er, pardon me, but was this a declared war? Or, now that the United Nations is part of the fascist enterprise, does this mean that the US Congress no longer needs to declare war as the Constitution would seem to require? Is this Vietnam all over again, with Clinton needing to prove that, like those before him, he has the wherewithal to pretend to patriotism while abrogating all law?

That is one definition of fascism ...

Thanks for publishing that article.

DS

20 June 2000



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