

Obama's hypocrisy over Ahmed Mohamed, the boy who brought a clock to school

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The handcuffing and arrest of 14-year-old Ahmed Mohamed for bringing a digital clock to school in Irving, Texas, a Dallas suburb, was a repugnant act that smelled of racism and xenophobia. Irving's mayor, Beth Van Duyne, made a name for herself in right-wing circles last year by suggesting that Muslims were attempting to circumvent US laws and identified herself with the reactionary "American Laws for American Courts" bill introduced into the Texas state legislature.

Ahmed's humiliation in front of his classmates and interrogation at the hands of the Irving police evoked widespread outrage. On the day following the incident, #IStandWithAhmed was getting 2,000 tweets a minute. By Friday, Ahmed's own Twitter account, set up by his older sisters, had 1.2 million followers.

Various right-wing gutter politicians, Sarah Palin and the like, weighed in, defending the police, who arrested the boy after determining that the object was a clock, and the school, who suspended Ahmed for three days. That is entirely predictable. These elements are continually working the political ocean floor, attempting to stir up everything vile and backward.

The response of HBO's Bill Maher, talk show host and alleged comic, was also predictable, given his history of anti-Muslim bigotry. In October 2014, Maher proclaimed that Islam was "the only religion that acts like the Mafia, that will f***ing kill you if you say the wrong thing, draw the wrong picture or write the wrong book."

On his program Friday, Maher defended Ahmed's arrest, asserting it was justified "Because for the last 30 years it's [Islam] been a culture that has been blowing s**t up over and over again."

Maher is a self-satisfied, reactionary moron. One "culture" has indeed "been blowing s**t up over and over again" for the past several decades ... and that is

the US military, CIA and White House. American imperialism is directly responsible for millions of deaths in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia and Yemen, and indirectly for vast suffering in Syria, Libya and elsewhere. There is no force on earth that remotely compares with the US for destructiveness and mayhem, all in the pursuit of its selfish geopolitical interests.

The chief organizer and perpetrator of this massive global violence and plundering at present, much of it occurring in the Muslim-dominated and oil-rich countries of the Middle East, is Barack Obama.

This did not prevent Obama from tweeting: "Cool clock, Ahmed. Want to bring it to the White House? We should inspire more kids like you to like science. It's what makes America great."

The hypocrisy is extreme. In the first place, the Obama administration, like its predecessor, has done its best to whip up anti-Muslim sentiment, as part of the effort to justify predatory wars in the Middle East and Central Asia. White House programs like "Countering Violent Extremism" are aimed at encouraging Americans to be on the alert for "suspicious" behavior. The fact sheet for the program warns that "Violent extremist threats can come from a range of groups and individuals, including domestic terrorists and homegrown violent extremists in the United States, as well as terrorist groups like al-Qaeda and ISIL."

In remarks delivered in April 2014, "Countering Violent Extremism and the Power of Community," Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Lisa O. Monaco commented: "What kinds of behaviors are we talking about? For the most part, they're not related directly to plotting attacks. They're more subtle. For instance, parents might see sudden personality changes in their children at home—becoming confrontational. Religious leaders

might notice unexpected clashes over ideological differences. Teachers might hear a student expressing an interest in traveling to a conflict zone overseas. Or friends might notice a new interest in watching or sharing violent material.” This is the new form of McCarthyism, celebrating the informer and stool pigeon.

The foul atmosphere in which someone like Ahmed Mohamed could be handcuffed and jailed for his clever invention was generated by the American political establishment as a whole, starting with the president and his cabinet.

Second, the blood of countless Arab, Central Asian and African children are on the president’s hands.

One might begin with one of the most prominent murders, by CIA drone strike, of 16-year-old Abdulrahman Anwar al-Awlaki, an American citizen, in October 2011. Abdulrahman, who had no connection whatsoever with terrorism, was killed while eating at an outdoor restaurant in Yemen. He was in Yemen searching for his father, Anwar al-Awlaki, also a US citizen, who had been killed in another drone strike two weeks earlier, without charges having been filed against him or any judicial due process.

Abdulrahman’s grandfather, Nasser al-Awlaki, told the media: “I never expected, you know, that a small boy who was born in America, who was a citizen of America, would be killed by the United States government, his own government.”

One could also take the case of Omar Khadr, a Canadian citizen, who was captured by US forces at 15 on the battlefield in Afghanistan and held, abused and tortured for 10 years, first, at Bagram Air Base and then in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Among others, the United Nations denounced the prosecution of a minor for “war crimes” by the US military and the Obama administration.

Drone warfare was sharply stepped up by Obama when he took over the presidency in 2009. According to the Bureau of Investigative Journalism, between 2,500 and 5,000 civilians have been killed in Pakistan alone in drone strikes since 2004. Approximately 200 of them have been children. Dozens more children have been murdered by the CIA in Afghanistan and Yemen.

In November 2014, 13-year-old Uzair and 15-year-old Suleman Qudoos were killed in a drone strike in the Pakistan-Afghanistan region. They were the sons of an

alleged Al Qaeda official. A doctor was killed in the same strike.

The first reported drone strike of 2015 “killed three people travelling in a vehicle in central-southern Yemen. A child was reportedly among the dead.” The US military, as is its practice, identified this “child” as a militant. According to the Bureau of Investigative Journalism, “It subsequently emerged [Mohammed Taeiman] al Jahmi was a child. He was reportedly either 12 or 15 years old. ... Yemeni rights group the National Organisation for Drone Victims (NODV) said Taeiman was ‘a normal kid’. He was in the sixth grade at school and had recently received treatment in hospital after being kicked by a camel, the group added.”

Obama, according to a May 2012 *New York Times* report, presides over “kill lists” every Tuesday, containing the names of those who have been condemned to die by the CIA and the US military. The *Times* explained what one Tuesday’s targets looked like: “This was the enemy, served up in the latest chart from the intelligence agencies: 15 Qaeda suspects in Yemen with Western ties. The mug shots and brief biographies resembled a high school yearbook layout. Several were Americans. Two were teenagers, including a girl who looked even younger than her 17 years.”

The names of the vast majority of the hundreds of children killed by US drone strikes have not been reported.



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