

Reporter dragged from Blinken's final press briefing for asking about US support for Gaza genocide

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On Thursday, during Secretary of State Antony Blinken's final press conference, Jordanian-Palestinian journalist Sam Hussein was forcibly removed by security personnel after he insisted that Blinken answer questions about US support for the Israeli genocide in Gaza.

As he was being carried out of the State Department briefing room by four security guards, Hussein shouted at Blinken, "Criminal! Why aren't you in The Hague," a reference to the location of the International Criminal Court.

Hussein began peppering Blinken with questions about the US role in Israeli war crimes in Gaza, interrupting the secretary of state just as he was reviewing the ceasefire and hostage deal between Israel and Hamas and calling it a "success."

As Blinken was saying the White House was celebrating the return of hostages in Gaza, including Americans, without mentioning the slaughter of tens of thousands of Palestinians by Israel, Hussein interrupted, "Do you know about the Hannibal Directive?"

Hussein followed up his question by saying that State Department spokesman Matt Miller said, "he doesn't know about the Hannibal Directive," which is clearly a lie.

Although it has been kept secret and never publicly acknowledged by Israel, the Hannibal Directive is well-known and dates back to the 1980s. It states that overwhelming force is to be used by Israel Defense Forces (IDF) to prevent the capture of soldiers and in hostage situations, including the mass murder of civilians and killing of the soldiers and hostages involved.

According to *Haaretz*, a report July, issued the Hannibal Directive and ordered the use of force to prevent soldiers from being taken into captivity at three army facilities infiltrated by Hamas on October 7, 2023. Massive force was used in buildings where hostages were known to be held, and orders were given to fire on civilians in buildings and open areas. The directive implied that the IDF should kill Israelis rather than allow them to fall into the hands of Hamas.

While Blinken claimed he would answer questions at the end of his statement, State Department staff and security descended on Hussein. As the independent reporter continued to demand that Blinken answer his questions, saying, "He's made a lot of speeches. Let him answer some questions," the staff threatened to remove him.

To their shame, the assembled corporate media representatives refused to come to his defense and remained silent while Hussein insisted, "I am justified in what I am doing."

Numerous videos have been published on social media that show what happened next. The security guards began grabbing Hussein and lifting him out of his chair while he said repeatedly, "Get your hands off me," and "You are hurting me," while Blinken told him to "respect the process."

As he was being hauled out of the briefing room, Hussein maintained his composure and continued to put questions to Blinken about US support for genocide and violation of the Geneva conventions in Gaza.

In a subsequent post on Twitter/X, Hussein said he had been released unharmed and thanked those who had supported him. Hussein also wrote the following:

My intention was to ask tough questions at every opportunity during the news conference which State personnel obviously cut short:

* Was the point of the May 31 announcement to block implementation of the May 24 ICJ [International Court of Justice] order?

* Why do you refuse to recognize the Geneva conventions as applying to Gaza?

* Everyone from Amnesty International to the ICC accuses Israel of extermination and genocide. Why are you not in the Hague?

* Why was your stepfather Pizar connected to both Maxwell and Jeffrey Epstein?

* Miller here pretends not to know about the Hannibal directive - do you know about the Hannibal directive?

* Why do you not even acknowledge Israel's nuclear weapons?

In the space of several minutes, Hussein exposed the complicity of the corporate media in the crimes of the Biden administration over the past 15 months. The official journalists of the major daily newspapers and television news broadcasters have refused to characterize the Israeli operation in Gaza as genocide, and, instead, bolstered the White House narrative that "Israel has a right to defend itself" by murdering tens of thousands of Palestinians, most of whom are women and children.

Earlier in the briefing, Max Blumenthal, editor of the *Grayzone*, also asked Blinken, "Why did you keep the bombs flowing when we had a deal in May?," before he was escorted out.

Sam Hussein is the communications director of the Institute for Public Accuracy, a D.C.-based nonprofit group that promotes alternative news sources. He was formerly at the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee and at the media watch group Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting. Hussein has written articles for a variety of publications, including *CounterPunch*, *The Nation*, the *Washington Post*, *USA Today* and *Salon*.

CNN, reporting on the events in the State Department briefing room, called the two reporters, "hecklers" and "activists." CNN chief national security correspondent Alex Marquardt, who was in the briefing room, claimed that it was "unclear as to who those people were."

Marquardt then went on to claim that the silencing of Hussein was "a testament to American democracy," because less mainstream journalists are allowed "to go to the State Department, to go to the White House and to ask questions of that administration," and "there is a relatively open policy" in the press rooms.



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