

# WHEN THE CURE IS WORSE THAN THE DISEASE

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Various organisations such as Amnesty International (AI) and Human Rights Watch (HRW) claim to exercise an objective critical eye on countries that tend to violate human rights. Generally, their definition of human rights is limited to legal rights, with little attention given to social rights, that is, the right to a job, to earning a wage, to the provision of housing, education, medical treatment, access to land and water rights, physical security, and so on. This list can also include the right to be free from such threats as drug trafficking, sex trafficking, as well as corrupt and abusive officials. In other words, there are many abuses that are occurring all over the world, including within the United States (or that are perpetrated by US agencies and operatives in other countries) and these phenomena are never considered as violations of democracy.

The many killings of black males

by white racist police in American cities constitute a problem that is not even listed as a human rights violation. The US State Department puts up a yearly report rating the human rights record of countries all around the world, but makes no rating or report of the United States itself because it maintains that the US does not violate human rights. This is not at all the sentiment held by US protesters and dissidents who have been beaten, arrested, and jailed for speaking out against US-perpetrated wars in places like Iraq. Nor is it the sentiment of those prisoners who have been held in Guantánamo for years without any charges laid or the right to a trial.

The ratings that are published by international organisations receive wide coverage in the western mass media as a way of demonstrating the supposedly "superior" democratic development of the western nations, especially the United States. Ordinary Americans certainly have been indoctrinated in the notion that the US is the most free, most democratic nation in the world. The truth is that there are other countries that have better developed legal rights and social rights. Some Americans are so brainwashed that they are shocked to even hear of it.

We should make it clear that no country or organisation has the right to violently attack and destroy another nation in the name of "humanitarian" war, as the NATO forces did in the case of Yugoslavia, and as the US has done in the case of Iraq. **In such instances, the "cure" has been worse than the disease. The patients have suffered terribly and have died.** There is an old saying: "Physician heal thyself." The western nations, especially the United States, should spend less time condemning other countries and presuming to rescue them (through the use of bombs and bullets), and more time taking care of their own immense social problems.

By no means can Russia be con-

sidered a perfect democracy. There is both corruption and cronyism in Russia and, like as in many other countries, there are various forms of the abuse of power and, there is also significant inequity. However, at the same time, Russia is characterized by open debates and public demonstrations and dissenting publications. As well, the voice of the opposition is heard in the national parliament. The last two presidencies within Russia - those of Putin and Medvedev - have enjoyed as much, if not more, popular support than the last two presidencies in the USA (those of George Bush Jr. and Obama). **The readiness of international organisations to categorise Russia as an oppressive oligarchy fits in with the imperial propaganda that is spewed out by the US ruling elite with respect to any country that is not willing to be a vassal of US policy.** Thus, I would have to conclude that criticisms of Russia can be made, of course, but the tone and the scope of criticism today is indeed motivated largely by a political bias in the West, especially in Washington.

**I hope that the non-Western understanding of democratic development will, in contrast to the Western understanding of the phenomenon, be more oriented towards social democracy as well as electoral democracy. That is to say, dedicated to substantive democracy rather than just procedural democracy.** By substantive democracy I am referring to the basic rights of people everywhere to live in a clean non-toxic environment, to avoid the cruel congestion that comes with overpopulation, to have employment that offers people more than a life of poverty and hunger, and all of the other basic social rights that I mentioned earlier, such as medical care, education, adequate housing, and freedom from abuse on the part of entrenched power and wealth. ■

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