



Syria War Lobby the Hosted Genocide Advocate Campaigns to Censor Book Exposing its Operation

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A neoconservative-allied lobbying group that has spent years pushing for US military intervention in Syria helped lead a campaign to silence an award-winning anti-war journalist. This same group previously hosted an opposition activist who publicly called for the genocide of the Alawite religious minority in Syria.

The Syrian American Council, which openly advocates for US bombing of Syria, led a campaign of intimidation to pressure the independent DC bookstore Politics and Prose to cancel an event with Max Blumenthal, the editor of The Grayzone.

Blumenthal was going to speak on April 3 about his new book "The Management of Savagery: How America's National Security State Fueled the Rise of Al Qaeda, ISIS, and Donald Trump," but Politics and Prose buckled under the weight of the pro-war lobby.

The whistleblowing journalism organization WikiLeaks raised concern over the censorship of Blumenthal, writing in response to Politics and Prose, "Publishers and book sellers should defend freedom of expression."

The Syrian American Council has for years demanded that the US government bomb Syria and further arm anti-government militants, many of whom are hardened Salafi-jihadists or are linked to extremist Takfiri groups like ISIS and al-Qaeda.

Although it claims to be a voice for moderate democrats, the Syrian American Council has given a platform to genocidal fanatics. In 2015, the lobby group hosted Maher Sharafeddine at an anniversary event in Washington, DC. Sharafeddine has publicly incited mass violence and ethnic cleansing against Syria's Muslim Alawite minority.

In a debate on Al Jazeera Arabic in 2015, Sharafeddine declared, "I am warning the Alawites to get out of the country or they will all be slaughtered."

"There can be no reconciliation with the Alawites," Sharafeddine said. "The only way for us to take [power] from them is over their dead bodies."

Sharafeddine was welcomed on Al Jazeera Arabic's flagship show The Opposite Direction, which is hosted by Faisal al-Qassem, who has repeatedly called for the mass murder and ethnic cleansing of Shia in Syria, while whitewashing ISIS and Israel.

In the interview with the Syrian American Council ally, al-Qassem called the Alawite minority “stupid animals,” “dogs,” and “scum.” He proclaimed, “The Alawites don’t need demonization; they are demons. Even Satan, the devil himself, is ashamed of them.”

“It is the right of the [Sunnis] to demand the slaughter of the Alawites,” al-Qassem said. Sharafeddine replied, “Of course, of course.”

Leading Lebanese newspaper The Daily Star noted that the program with Sharafeddine featured “explicit calls to collectively ‘punish’ Syria’s Alawites.” It described the show as “more of a two-against-one diatribe against the Alawites, as Kassim and Sharafeddine resorted to vulgar rhetoric and sweeping generalizations.”

Lobbying for more war

In addition to giving platforms to genocide advocates like Maher Sharafeddine, the Syrian American Council relentlessly lobbies for direct US military intervention on Capitol Hill.

Syrian American Council employees have published dozens upon dozens of op-eds in major corporate media outlets calling for the US to intensify its regime-change war on Syria.

“America should hit Assad now,” wrote the Syrian American Council’s director of government relations, Mohammed Alaa Ghanem, in Politico in 2014. “President Obama must also take decisive action against the Assad regime,” Ghanem added. “He should have taken such action long ago.”

This pro-war lobbying continued even under far-right anti-Muslim President Donald Trump. In April 2018, the Syrian American Council issued a call for “immediate US action against Assad” by “grounding Assad’s air force.”

At every turn, the Syrian American Council has lobbied the US government for more war and escalation, not peace and deescalation. When Trump ended the billion-dollar CIA program arming and training militants in Syria, the Council angrily called it a “foolish move.” When Trump announced a potential withdrawal of US troops from Syria, the Syrian American Council strongly pushed back, demanding a continued military occupation to stop “supercharged Iranian regional influence.”

While amplifying the rhetoric of Saudi regime officials, the Syrian American Council also staunchly opposed the historic US nuclear deal with Iran, insisting Obama “must act now to check Iran’s insidious influence in Syria.”

Syrian American Council policy and advocacy officer Shlomo Bolts has frequently deployed pro-Israel talking points to argue for more aggressive action against Syria’s government, writing, “Trump and Netanyahu should hold Putin’s feet to the fire about these Russian actions and broken promises to remove Iranian proxies during their meetings on Syria.”

Working closely with neocons and hawks

Genocidal fanatics like Maher Sharafeddine are only some of the Syrian American Council's unsavory allies. The group has also worked closely with neoconservatives and hawkish liberal interventionists in Washington.

The Syrian American Council had a close relationship with notorious warmonger John McCain, whom the lobbying organization described as “a hero for Syria.”

Another key figure in the pro-war lobby and close John McCain ally, Mouaz Moustafa, joined the Syrian American Council in trying to censor Max Blumenthal.

Moustafa is executive director of the pro-intervention Syrian Emergency Task Force, which is indirectly funded by the US government.

Around the same time Moustafa reported “hanging out” with CNN anchor Wolf Blitzer and MSNBC host Chris Matthews, he was pressuring Politics and Prose to cancel Blumenthal's book event.

While campaigning to censor American journalists, Moustafa has also continued to lobby the Donald Trump administration for action against Syria.

Moustafa in fact helped to plan a trip John McCain took to Syria to meet with US-backed militants. Moustafa boasted in an interview with CNN of his role in connecting the right-wing American senator with the rebels.

What Moustafa failed to mention is that, on this trip, McCain met and posed for a photo with extremists who kidnapped Shia pilgrims. This led the libertarian think tank the CATO Instituteto inquire, “Did John McCain Provide Material Support for Syrian Terrorists?”

McCain could thank the Syrian pro-war lobby for his dalliances with Salafi-jihadists in Syria. And the lobby returned the favor.

When the fanatically pro-war lawmaker died, the executive director of the Syrian American Council, Suzanne Meriden, published an op-ed titled “From Syria with Love, Senator McCain” for the warmongering DC think tank the Atlantic Council.

In their glowing Atlantic Council op-ed, the lobbyists described McCain as “a singular champion of the cause of freedom” and “a rare voice of truth and courage.” They lionized the man who joked about bombing Iran for being “the highest ranking American official—and the only US Congressman—to enter Syria to meet with US-backed Free Syrian Army rebels since the start of the conflict.”

Demanding ‘concrete military action’ and ‘wrestling the Russian bear’

The Syrian American Council enjoys a tight relationship with the Atlantic Council, which has served as a major voice for the Syrian opposition in Washington. The Atlantic Council is funded by the governments of the US and the UK, as well as NATO, the EU, and the monarchies of Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, and Bahrain. Top weapons corporations join these regimes in

bankrolling the Atlantic Council, as well Syrian-British billionaire oligarch Ayman Asfari, who has poured money into anti-Assad opposition groups.

In another [article](#) at the Atlantic Council website, the Syrian American Council's director of outreach, Omar Hossino, openly called for direct US military intervention against the Syrian government.

[“Can Military Action Save Syria?”](#) was the title of Hossino's June 2016 piece. And his answer was of course yes.

“Concrete military action against the regime is the only course of action available to the United States,” Hossino maintained. “Continued US passivity is the proven way to continue harming US interests in the region.”

In yet another June 2016 op-ed for the Atlantic Council's [Future NATO](#) website, the Syrian American Council's director of government relations, Mohammed Alaa Ghanem, issued a call for [“Wrestling the Russian Bear.”](#)

“NATO should no longer allow its fears of ‘wrestling the Russian bear’ to excuse inaction in Syria,” Ghanem said. “If America refuses to act, Europe should act alone.”

In this article at Future NATO, the Syrian American Council's Ghanem also cited NATO's top military commander to advance the dehumanizing conspiracy theory that “Russia was ‘weaponizing refugees’ by utilizing refugees flows to destabilize Europe,” blaming Moscow for racism and growing far-right forces in Europe.

Censoring anti-war journalists

The call by the Syrian American Council and Mouaz Moustafa to censor an award-winning American journalist was echoed by others in the pro-war lobby.

Many in the DC think tank bubble joined in the censorious campaign, including Ramah Kudaimi, director of programs and operations at the US Campaign for Palestinian Rights; Mai El-Sadany, the legal and judicial director of the Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy; Charles Lister, a regime-change advocate who frequents Gulf regime-funded think tanks, and whose confected research has been exposed by Blumenthal; and Evan Gottesman, the associate director of policy and communications at the Israel Policy Forum; along with Jett Goldsmith and John Arterbury, contributors to the website Bellingcat, which is funded by the US government's National Endowment for Democracy.

[James Le Mesurier](#), a former British intelligence officer and mercenary with close links to Gulf monarchies, additionally called for censoring Blumenthal. Le Mesurier founded the [White Helmets](#), which Blumenthal exposed as an arm of the pro-war lobby that has close links to al-Qaeda and other extremist Salafi-jihadist groups.

Ironically not a single one of these people read Max Blumenthal's new book, as “The Management of Savagery” was not even released when they initiated their campaign to silence him.