

Selected articles (January 03, 2020)

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1)

'I'm slowly dying here': 'Sedated' Assange tells friend during Christmas Eve call from UK prison as health concerns mount

December 31, 2019

<https://www.rt.com/uk/477138-assange-prison-awful-sedated-uk/>

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2a)

The Freedom Flotilla Will Make its 35th Attempt to Sail to Gaza in 2020

The solidarity mission is scheduled for the summer of 2020, and, like most of the 35 previous attempts, the Flotilla is likely to be intercepted by the Israeli navy.

By Ramzy Baroud

December 25, 2019

<https://www.mintpressnews.com/road-gaza-freedom-flotilla-will-sail-2020/263736/>

2b)

Torture of Palestinian Detainees Prevails in Israeli Jails

By Ramona Wadi

December 29, 2019

<https://ahtribune.com/world/north-africa-south-west-asia/palestine/3767-torture-of-detainees-in-israeli-jails.html>

"[...] The recent update notes: "According to the Public Committee Against Torture in Israel (PCATI), about 1,200 complaints of torture during Israeli interrogations have been filed since 2001. All the cases were closed without a single indictment." Addameer also notes that torture is classified as a war crime – a pertinent point as Israel faces a possible investigation at the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Interestingly, Addameer quotes a statement by Nils Melzer, the UN special rapporteur on torture, who draws comparisons in terms of occupation and torture, between the US presence in Guantanamo and Israel's colonial entrenchment in Palestine. Both Israel and the US, he states, are setting an example of impunity when it comes to the torture of detainees.

Since 1967, 73 Palestinian prisoners were killed by torture in Israeli jails. Torture survivors have no recourse to justice, as it is Israel who decides whether an investigation should be opened. Meanwhile, the international community continues to ignore such flagrant violations of human rights – war crimes, to use the current assertions levelled against Israel. Indeed, if the international community paid less importance to Israel's security narrative, and concerned itself primarily with the violations justified through its purported right to defend itself, it is possible that there will be more cohesion regarding the legal importance of holding Israel accountable for its repression of the Palestinian people."

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3)

The Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act: Why Washington Is Both Corrupt and Ignorant

By Philip Giraldi

January 2, 2020

<https://www.strategic-culture.org/news/2020/01/02/the-caesar-syria-civilian-protection-act-why-washington-is-both-corrupt-and-ignorant/>

"[...] So, is the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act just another bit of nonsense, like Chalabi and Magnitsky? Probably, and all it will do is punish the Syrian people by trying to wreck the country's economy while also limiting the ability of Americans to go independently to the region and see for themselves what

is actually going on. It will prolong the pain being experienced by all involved while the legitimate government in Damascus seeks to restore its pre-war borders. It is, unfortunately, a prime example of the United States government in action. [...]"

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4a)

Sat Jan 4: National Day of Action U.S. Troops Out of Iraq!

<https://www.codepink.org/01042020>

"On Saturday, January 4 the ANSWER Coalition, CODEPINK, Muslim Peace Fellowship, Veterans for Peace, United AntiWar Coalition (UNAC), United for Peace & Justice (UFPJ), Feminist Foreign Policy, World Beyond War, Popular Resistance and Voices for Creative Nonviolence are calling on people from around the United States to organize local demonstrations to demand: NO MORE U.S. TROOPS TO IRAQ OR THE MIDDLE EAST! U.S. OUT OF IRAQ NOW! and NO WAR/NO SANCTIONS ON IRAN! [...]"

4b)

U.S. Will Come To Regret Its Assassination of Qassim Soleimani

Moon of Alabama

January 03, 2020

<https://www.moonofalabama.org/2020/01/us-will-come-to-regret-its-assassination-of-qassim-soleimani.html#more>

"[...] Soleimani had arrived in Baghdad on a normal flight from Lebanon. He did not travel in secret. He was picked up at the airport by Abu Mahdi al-Muhandes, the deputy commander of the al-Hashd al-Shaabi, an official Iraqi security force under the command of the Iraqi Prime Minister. The two cars they traveled in were destroyed in the U.S. attack. Both men and their drivers and guards died. [...]"

"[...] No Iraqi politician will be able to argue for keeping U.S. forces in the country. The Iraqi Prime Minister Abdel Mahdi has called for a parliament emergency meeting to ask for the withdrawal of all U.S. troops: "The targeted assassination of an Iraqi commander is a violation of the agreement. It can trigger a war in Iraq and the region. It is a clear violation of the conditions of the U.S. presence in Iraq. I call on the parliament to take the necessary steps." [...]"

4c)

Qassem Soleimani assassination: Trump's new year fireworks will backfire

Those in Washington hoping for a quick Iranian reaction to the surprise killing will be sorely disappointed as Iran continues its long game

By Marco Carnelos

January 3, 2020

<https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/qassem-soleimani-iraq-iran-us-trump-war>

"[...] In other words, if this US escalation was a deliberate choice to push Iran into a reckless reaction in order to blame it for the start of a new regional war - quite an easy task with the current state of mainstream journalism - some sorcerer's apprentices in the Beltway may be sorely disappointed.

Iran will simply continue to do what it has always done, in Afghanistan, Yemen, Lebanon, Iraq, Syria and Gaza, indefinitely testing the patience of its enemies, willing to spend years weaving a carpet.

US allies in the region, who have always prayed and hoped that Washington would give a stern lesson to Iran such as the killing of Soleimani, may soon realise that the US's attention curve, which is generally not high, will be dangerously low in the coming months. [...]"

4d)

Qassem Soleimani assassination: Trump is playing with fire to save his presidency

By Nader Entessar, Kaveh Afrasiabi

3 January 2020

<https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/washington-and-tehran-are-collision-course-iraq>

"[...] Nonetheless, it is in the US's interests to prevent the deepening of the Iraq crisis that it has willfully generated, and yet lacks full control to contain.

Essentially, an outgrowth of the US-Iran crisis has played out inside Iraq, which could escalate well beyond "shadow wars" and the use of proxies, with unpredictable twists that present a clear risk to the thousands of US military personnel in the region - not to mention the health of the global economy, which is tied to the free flow of oil through the Strait of Hormuz.

Playing with fire to shore up his flagging presidency, undermined by the sting of impeachment, Trump is now showing all the symptoms of a trigger-happy president apt to cause another calamitous Middle East war, thus betraying his pledge to avoid getting the US entangled in another conflict.

Sadly, as his misguided policies with respect to both Iran and Iraq clearly show, Trump is not only repeating the impeachment ploy of his predecessor, but he is also on the verge of recycling the errors of the Bush-era wars in the Middle East."

4e)

How Russia is reading the killing of Qasem Soleimani

By Maxim A. Suchkov

January 3, 2020

<https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/01/russia-soleimani-iran-us-strikes-iraq.html>

"[...] Retired Col. Viktor Mukrakhovsky, editor of the military journal Arsenal Otechestva (National Arsenal), said Trump's decision to kill Soleimani opens a new chapter in the confrontation between Iran and the United States. "A statesman is killed, an official representative of his country that is a member of the UN and with which the US is not officially in a state of war. He was killed on the territory of a third country. This is not an undercover struggle of intelligence services. The US has thus openly committed an act of vengeance and is taking pride in this 'achievement.' It is testing the reaction of the international community in general and Iranian leadership in particular. Following failures in Venezuela, Syria and over talks with North Korea, after losing control of the situation in Afghanistan and ceding Iraq to Iranian militias, the US leadership has moved to raise the stakes," Mukrakhovsky said. [...]"

4f)

'Criminal American aggression': International reaction to the killing of Qassem Soleimani

The death of the head of Iran's elite Quds Force is expected to have major repercussions for the Middle East region

January 3, 2019

<https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/criminal-american-aggression-international-reaction-killing-qassem-soleimani>

4g)

Trump Regime Assassinates Iran's IRGC Quds Force Commander: An Act of State-Sponsored Terrorism

By Stephen Lendman

January 3, 2020

<https://stephenlendman.org/2020/01/trump-regime-assassinates-irans-irgc-quds-force-commander-an-act-of-state-sponsored-terrorism/>

"[...] Iran is highly unlikely to be drawn into a regional war for what happened.

Most likely, it'll respond in its own way at a time of its choosing that serves its strategic interests.

Retaliation in some form is clearly warranted. It's in Iran's best interest to enlist international support by adhering to high standards and norms against Washington's destructive agenda, Middle East nations and their people suffering most from its imperial rage. [...]"

4h)

US Assassination Of Top Iranian Military Official May Ignite World War

By Caitlin Johnstone

January 3, 2019

<https://caitlinjohnstone.com/2020/01/03/us-assassination-of-top-iranian-military-official-may-ignite-world-war/>

"[...] And now, as I sit as the mother of two teenagers watching what might be a third world war looming on the horizon, all I can think is about how infuriating it is that we've spent the last three years on Russia bullshit and sectarian political infighting instead of building an actual cohesive antiwar movement and pushing real opposition to Trump's warmongering.

Let's get it together, humans. We need big changes, and we need them yesterday."

4i)

Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's statement and answers to media questions at a joint news conference following talks with Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iran Mohammad Javad Zarif, Moscow, December 30, 2019

https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/-/asset_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/3988439

"[...] You have correctly noted that the US actions run counter to all conceivable standards of international law. The concerned parties reached the consensus agreement as a result of negotiations, and it was approved by the mandatory UN Security Council Resolution 2231. So a decision to withdraw from the agreement flagrantly violates every conceivable and inconceivable standard, principle and rule. And, as you know, the United States is forcing everyone else to avoid fulfilling what they pledged to do in response to Iran's compliance with the agreements that have been reached. Meanwhile it demands that Iran completely fulfill these agreements in violation of the specific terms under which the agreement was reached and formalised at the UN Security Council. [...]"

4j)

What Will The Trump Administration Do When Iraq Asks U.S. Troops To Leave?

Moon of Alabama

January 2, 2020

<https://www.moonofalabama.org/2020/01/what-will-the-trump-administration-do-when-iraq-asks-us-troops-to-leave.html#more>

"[...] The U.S. sees Iraq and Syria as the grounds on which it can fight Iran. Neither country wants to be in such a position.

The Iraqi government, its prime minister and its president, the major religious scholars in Iraq and the heads of major Iraqi parties have all condemned the U.S. attack. During the last few days the public mood in Iraq has changed from mild anti-Iranian to strong anti-U.S. sentiment. As there is no apology coming out of Washington, only more threats, the Iraqi parliament is likely to agree to ask the U.S. forces to leave. [...]"

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