

Selected articles (February 20, 2020)

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1a)

End torture and medical neglect of Julian Assange

By Stephen Frost, Lissa Johnson, Jill Stein and William Frost on behalf of 117 signatories

The Lancet

February 17, 2020

[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(20\)30383-4/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(20)30383-4/fulltext)

"On Nov 22, 2019, we, a group of more than 60 medical doctors, wrote to the UK Home Secretary to express our serious concerns about the physical and mental health of Julian Assange. In our letter, we documented a history of denial of access to health care and prolonged psychological torture. We requested that Assange be transferred from Belmarsh prison to a university teaching hospital for medical assessment and treatment. Faced with evidence of untreated and ongoing torture, we also raised the question as to Assange's fitness to participate in US extradition proceedings....]"

"[...]In the interests of defending medical ethics, medical authority, and the human right to health, and taking a stand against torture, together we can challenge and raise awareness of the abuses detailed in our letters. Our appeals are simple: we are calling upon governments to end the torture of Assange and ensure his access to the best available health care before it is too late. Our request to others is this: please join us. [...]"

1b)

Slow Motion Murder of Julian Assange by US/UK Regimes

By Stephen Lendman

February 20, 2020

<https://www.globalresearch.ca/slow-motion-murder-julian-assange-us-uk-regimes/5704142>

"[...] At Tuesday's press conference in London, Australian MP, co-chair of the Bring Julian Assange Home parliamentary group Andrew Wilkie said the following:

His imprisonment, torture and abuse on dubious charges "establish(es) a precedent that if you are a journalist who does anything that offends any government in the world then you face the very real prospect of being extradited to that country" for prosecution, adding:

"This is a political case and what is at stake is not just the life of Julian Assange."

"It is about the future of journalism" and individuals practicing it with honor and dedication to truth-telling on issues mattering most."

1c)

Julian Assange Must Be Freed, Not Betrayed

By John Pilger

February 17, 2020

<https://consortiumnews.com/2020/02/17/john-pilger-julian-assange-must-be-freed-not-betrayed/>

„This Saturday, there will be a march from Australia House in London to Parliament Square, the centre of British democracy. People will carry pictures of the Australian publisher and journalist Julian Assange who, on Feb. 24, faces a court that will decide whether or not he is to be extradited to the United States and a living death. [...]"

1d)

Assange's Extradition Case Is Critical Moment for Anti-War Movement

By Nozomi Hayase

February 17, 2020

<https://consortiumnews.com/2020/02/17/assanges-extradition-case-is-critical-moment-for-anti-war-movement/>

"Jeremy Corbyn and other politicians are speaking up for the WikiLeaks' publisher, writes Nozomi Hayase. Will more U.S. presidential candidates join them? [...]"

1e)

JOURNALISTS SPEAK UP FOR JULIAN ASSANGE

<https://speak-up-for-assange.org/journalists-speak-up-for-julian-assange/>

1235 SIGNATURES FROM 99 COUNTRIES SO FAR (February 19, 2020)

<https://speak-up-for-assange.org/signatures/>

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2a)

Munich conference reveals East-West divide

By Pepe Escobar

February 19, 2020

<https://thesaker.is/munich-conference-reveals-east-west-divide/>

„Few postmodern political pantomimes have been more revealing than the hundreds of so-called “international decision-makers,” mostly Western, waxing lyrical, disgusted or nostalgic over “Westlessness” at the Munich Security Conference. [...]"

„[...] Only two sentences would be enough to give away the MSC game: “In the post-Cold War era, Western-led coalitions were free to intervene almost anywhere. Most of the time, there was support in the UN Security Council, and whenever a military intervention was launched, the West enjoyed almost uncontested freedom of military movement.”

There you go. Those were the days when NATO, with full impunity, could bomb Serbia, miserably lose a war on Afghanistan, turn Libya into a militia hell and plot myriad interventions across the Global South. And of course none of that had any connection whatsoever with the bombed and the invaded being forced into becoming refugees in Europe. [...]"

2b)

Munich conference drops Russophobic bias to plunge into anti-Chinese one - diplomat

Maria Zakharova pointed to the anti-Chinese rhetoric voiced at the Munich Security Conference by the world leaders and representatives of government foreign policy institutions, as well as of international organizations

February 16, 2020

<https://tass.com/politics/1120699>

"[...] "They spoke about that country as a threat to entire humankind. They said that China's policy is the treat of the 21st century. I have a feeling that we are witnessing, through the speeches delivered at the Munich conference in particular, the revival of new colonial approaches, as though the West no longer thinks it shameful to reincarnate the spirit of colonialism by means of dividing people, nations and countries into those deserving sympathy and support <...> and those that can wait, those that need no sympathy and no support in times of trouble," Zakharova noted. [...]"

2c)

Munich Security Report 2020

Westlessness

https://securityconference.org/assets/user_upload/MunichSecurityReport2020.pdf

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3)

Mistrial Is Another Blow to US Coup In Venezuela Our Work Continues

By Kevin Zeese and Margaret Flowers

February 16, 2020

<https://dissidentvoice.org/2020/02/mistrial-is-another-blow-to-us-coup-in-venezuela/>

“Last week we, along with Adrienne Pine and David Paul, were unsuccessfully prosecuted by the Trump administration for our protection of the Venezuelan embassy in Washington, DC from April 10 to May 16, 2019. The jury was unable to reach a unanimous decision and so we remain innocent of the charge of interfering with the protective functions of the US Department of State. The judge declared a mistrial. It was a partial victory and we greatly appreciate the jurors who were able to see through the cloud of misinformation in the courtroom and vote to acquit us. [...]”

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4)

Trump Plans to Keep U.S. Troops Permanently in Iraq

By Eric Zuesse

February 17, 2020

<http://thesaker.is/trump-plans-to-keep-u-s-troops-permanently-in-iraq/>

„[...] America invaded Iraq not only directly for its international corporations to profit, but also in order to have its hundreds of bases there from which to control the entire Middle East — bases that are supplied out of the world’s largest Embassy building (from which even other U.S. embassies are supplied), which building was constructed in Baghdad after the 2003 invasion. Trump’s plan now is to bring in NATO allies, so that they will help out in the Middle East, more than in the past. Trump wants America’s vassal-nations to absorb some of the financial burdens of imposing empire, so that America’s taxpayers won’t need to fund the full cost of it, for the benefit of the billionaire owners of international corporations that are based in the United States and in its allied (or vassal) (including other NATO) countries. This is why Stoltenberg has been working, for months, to effectuate Trump’s plan. [...]“

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5a)

Syria - Aleppo Is Fully Liberated But The War Will Continue

Moon of Alabama

February 17, 2020

<https://www.moonofalabama.org/2020/02/syria-aleppo-is-fully-liberated-but-the-war-will-continue.html#more>

„Since last week’s post on the Syrian Idlib campaign the Syrian army has again made extraordinary progress. [...] The M5 highway is under full control of the Syrian Army. The Jihadis, under threat of an encirclement, fled from the area west of Aleppo city. The suburbs and villages west of Aleppo have all been liberated. Last night the people of Aleppo celebrated. Nearly eight years after the 2012 invasion of east-Aleppo by Jihadists they will no longer have to endure random mortar and missile attacks. The international airport of Aleppo will now be reopened. The first flights are planned for Wednesday. [...]“

5b)

NATO Wars Against Freedom, Justice and Humanity

By Mark Taliano

February 19, 2020

<https://www.globalresearch.ca/nato-wars-against-freedom-justice-humanity/5703971>

„NATO commits Supreme International War Crimes Against Peace as military doctrine. The criminality is normalized. Perceptions are inverted and Western populations are hypnotized to believe that NATO and its serial war crimes are making us safe.

Hidden from view is the fact that 90% of people killed in modern wars are civilians. (1) War is not an “adventure”. All of these terms, “rebels”, “adventure” serve warmongering psychopaths alone, sitting in their rocking chairs.

Tell the slaves digging tunnels for ISIS/al Qaeda that it is an “adventure”. Tell the people being terrorized, bombed, tortured, crippled, and beheaded by NATO death squads that it is an adventure. Tell the kids dying due to lack of medications and dirty water that it is an adventure. Tell the people being kidnapped and sold as sex slaves that it is an adventure.[...]“

5c)

Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov’s statement and answers to media questions during a joint news conference following talks with Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan Ayman Safadi, Moscow, February 19, 2020

https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/-/asset_publisher/ckNonkJE02Bw/content/id/4048982

„[...] I am talking about this in such detail because judging by the coverage of the situation in Idlib, you might think that nobody remembers what was agreed on in September 2018 – October 2019. Hysterical comments by some Western analysts may suggest the impression that at one time Russia and Turkey agreed to simply “freeze” the situation there, not to deal with the terrorists and let them do what they want, shelling everything around them from the so-called “de-escalation zone.” This is not true. Nobody has ever promised the terrorists that they won’t be touched in the Idlib zone. Read the agreements of President Putin and President Erdogan and everything will fall into place. [...]“

„[...] A stable settlement of the Syrian crisis implies the withdrawal of all armed contingents that are there illegally, as is required by UN Security Council Resolution 2254 that emphasises the need to fully respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic.“

5d)

Russia warns Turkey against rash moves in Idlib

By M.K. Bhadrakumar

February 19, 2020

<https://indianpunchline.com/russia-warns-turkey-against-rash-moves-in-idlib/>

„Moscow has taken with a pinch of salt Turkish President Recep Erdogan’s statement on Wednesday that a Turkish incursion into the northwestern Syrian province of Idlib is imminent.

Objectively speaking, Erdogan should be out of his mind to order a military offensive against the Syrian and Russian forces in Idlib. A Russian military delegation, which visited Ankara last week, had advised the Turks to back down, but Erdogan instead beefed up the deployments in Idlib.[...]“

5e)

An ‘Awareness’ Question: What Business Does Turkey Have in Syria?

President Tayyip Erdoğan said: “Whoever says, ‘What business does Turkey have in Syria?’ is either unaware or intentionally an enemy of this people.”

By Yusuf Karatas

February 17, 2020

<https://www.strategic-culture.org/news/2020/02/17/an-awareness-question-what-business-does-turkey-have-in-syria/>

5f)

Statement Made By İsmail Cem, Foreign Minister, On The Special Security Meeting Held Between Turkey And Syria October 20, 1998 (Unofficial Translation)

http://www.mfa.gov.tr/p_statement-made-by-ismail-cem_-foreign-minister_-on-the-special-security-meeting-held-between-turkey-and-syria_br_october-20_-1998_br_unofficial-translation_p_en.mfa

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6a)

Iran Foreign Minister Zarif: Full interview with NBC News’ Richard Engel

February 15, 2020

<https://www.nbcnews.com/video/iran-foreign-minister-zarif-full-interview-with-nbc-news-richard-engel-78791749964>

6b)

IS THE “AXIS OF RESISTANCE” IN A BETTER OR WORSE POSITION? THE MARTYR QASSEM SOLEIMANI

By Elijah J Magnier
February 15, 2020

<https://ejmagnier.com/2020/02/15/is-the-axis-of-resistance-in-a-better-or-worse-position-the-martyr-qassem-soleimani-achieves-even-more-than-the-major-general-did/>

„More than forty days ago a US drone assassinated Major General Qassem Soleimani, leader of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) – Quds Brigade and leader of the “Axis of the Resistance”. He was killed after midnight at Baghdad airport between the second and the third of January along with his companions. Has the “Axis of Resistance” been weakened by this event, and what has it achieved since then? [...]“

6c)

Toward a New Iran Nuclear Deal

By Volker Perthes

Volker Perthes is Chairman and Director of Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, the German Institute for International and Security Affairs, Berlin.

February 14, 2020

<https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/iran-nuclear-deal-dispute-resolution-by-volker-perthes-2020-02>

„The 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action with Iran is in jeopardy. European governments should use the JCPOA’s dispute-resolution mechanism both to pursue immediate measures to de-escalate regional tensions and to explore a follow-up agreement – or an alternative should the current deal collapse. [...]“

„[...] That said, any future deal with Iran should still be an arms-control agreement that is not overburdened with other contentious matters. Issues regarding sovereignty, security, and safety, such as the use and arming of militant proxies, missile proliferation, or the safety of waterways, would be best addressed in a regional context.

Given the recent interest of most regional actors in de-escalating tensions, now may be the right time to go beyond bilateral talks and initiate a regional Conference on Confidence-Building, Security, and Cooperation. Such a process would complement renewed and probably lengthy nuclear negotiations between Iran and the major international powers.“

6d)

Why Saudi Arabia need to negotiate with Iran?

By: Fatemeh Salehi
February 19, 2020

<https://en.mehrnews.com/news/155786/Why-Saudi-Arabia-need-to-negotiate-with-Iran>

„Recent remarks by the Iranian and Saudi officials on the dialogue between the two countries highlights significant points regarding the prospects for bilateral relations between Tehran and Riyadh. [...] US, Zionist regime, UAE and Turkey will not approve better relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia and do whatever they can to stop it. Ultimately, if Saudi Arabia seeks to strengthen its regional position and reduce tensions in the Middle East to safeguard its economic and political interests, there is no other way except working with regional countries, especially Iran.“

6e)

IS IRAN ILL-ADVISED TO FINANCE ITS REGIONAL ALLIES WHILE UNDER SANCTIONS?

By Elijah J. Magnier
February 20, 2020

<https://ejmagnier.com/2020/02/19/is-iran-ill-advised-to-finance-its-regional-allies-while-under-sanctions/>

„[...] The US wants Iran without missiles, without armed drones, and without access to intelligence warfare. These vital programs have proved crucial to protecting the country and preventing it from becoming vulnerable. If Iran did not have the allies it has today and the missiles it has manufactured, the US would already have retaliated without hesitation.

The war is far from over. Iran and its allies are still in the heart of the struggle, and the US and Israel are not sitting idly by. [...]“

6f)

White House memo says strike on Iranian commander responded to past attacks

Reporting by Patricia Zengerle; Editing by David Gregorio

February 14, 2020

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iran-report/white-house-memo-says-strike-on-iranian-commander-responded-to-past-attacks-idUSKBN2082J3>

„President Donald Trump ordered a drone strike that killed a top Iranian military commander last month in response to past attacks, the White House said in a memo released on Friday, despite previous administration assertions that it was due to an imminent threat.[...]“

6g)

Iran on the Boil in the IAEA Boardroom: Russia, the West, and NPT Obligations

By Mark Hibbs

The European Leadership Network (ELN); Policy brief

February 17, 2020

<https://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/about/>

<https://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Mark-Hibbs-ELN-Feb-2020-FINAL-1-3.pdf>

„[...] In this policy brief, Mark Hibbs argues that the IAEA Secretariat should explain to member states on the board why it is important and urgent that Iran cooperate with the IAEA. In addition, underlined by a mutual US-Russian understanding, Russia could prevent crisis escalation by conditioning its support for Iran upon Iran’s cooperation with the IAEA. More generally, Hibbs argues that Washington and Moscow should attempt to reestablish common nonproliferation understandings at the IAEA; what for several decades beginning during the Cold War had been comprehensive and lasting comity between the two countries is now broken.“

6h)

How Iran’s millennials are grappling with crippling US sanctions

By Manata Hashemi

February 10, 2020

<https://theconversation.com/how-irans-millennials-are-grappling-with-crippling-us-sanctions-129610>

„[...] As someone who has studied the lives of Iran’s working classes, I know just how damaging economic warfare has been. It’s hit young Iranians, who comprise a large portion of the population, particularly hard. High rates of inflation – on the order of 38.6% over the past 12 months – and a youth unemployment rate of 28.6% have drastically reduced their ability to purchase basic goods and feel any semblance of financial security.

Over the past 12 years, I’ve studied various groups of lower-class young people and their families in their homes, neighborhoods and workplaces, in shops, and in parks. I’ve also interviewed 44 youth between the ages of 15 and 29 who have been sidelined to the socioeconomic margins.

I wanted to know how they cope with prolonged insecurity and the constant threat of crisis. [...]“

6i)

New York Times visits anti-Iran terrorist group's lair, observes cult-like modus operandi

PressTV

February 17, 2020

<https://www.presstv.com/Detail/2020/02/17/618870/Iran-MKO-New-York-Times-visit>

„The New York Times has been given access to inside a secretive facility housing anti-Iran Mujahedin-e-Khalq Organization (MKO) terrorists in the Albanian capital, Tirana, noticing and recounting the cult-like nature of the group. The Times' Patrick Kingsley described his observations from a recent visit as well as discrepancies between what he was told by a few members at the camp and confessions of former members living independently in Albania in an article on Sunday. [...]“

6j)

Iranian illegally detained in Germany returns home with FM Zarif

PressTV

February 17, 2020

<https://www.presstv.com/Detail/2020/02/17/618867/Iranian-detained-Germany-returns-Zarif>

„Iranian national Ahmad Khalili, who had been detained in Germany over allegations of violating illegal United States sanctions on Iran, has been released and returned home following extensive diplomatic work. Abbas Mousavi, spokesman for Iran's Foreign Ministry, said on Monday that Khalili was freed on Sunday night "after a series of intensive diplomatic consultations and with the effective cooperation of the Judiciary and the Intelligence Organization of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC)." He said Khalili had been arrested in Germany at the request of the US on the pretext of violating Washington's illegal sanctions and had been planned for extradition to the US. [...]“

6k)

Companies complying with US anti-Iran sanctions not welcome back: Iran deputy FM

PressTV

February 17, 2020

<https://www.presstv.com/Detail/2020/02/17/618836/Companies-anti-Iran-not-welcome>

„Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister has said that foreign companies complying with US sanctions against the country will "not be placed in priority" in regards to the future of the Iranian economy. [...]On Friday, South Korea's tech giants Samsung and LG Electronics reportedly pulled down their last advertisement banners in Iran. [...] According to reports, Samsung and LG's affiliated companies in Iran - Sam and Gplus respectively - will continue production by relying on domestic production lines and by turning to alternative international trade partners. [...]“

6l)

Callamard: Soleimani killing breached international norms

BBC

February 18, 2020

<https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-middle-east-51548734/callamard-soleimani-killing-breached-international-norms>

„The killing of Iran's military leader General Qasem Soleimani in a US drone strike breached international norms on extraterritorial military operations and sets a dangerous precedent that could "be a recipe for disaster", Agnes Callamard, the UN special rapporteur on extra-judicial executions has said. She told Hardtalk's Stephen Sackur: "The UN Charter was predicated on the notion that we should do all we can to prevent armed conflict and that the use of force should be very much narrowed down to very few scenarios. "The targeted killing of Mr Soleimani completely swept away the standard related to extraterritorial use of force by a state. It targeted a state official while in the past it was mostly non-state actors or only non-state actors that had been targeted."“

6m)

Khamenei tells Iranians voter turnout a religious duty

By Al-Monitor Staff

February 18, 2020

<https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/02/iran-supreme-leader-khamenei-voter-turnout-elections.html>

„Three days before Iran’s parliamentary elections, the country’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei renewed his call on the nation for a show of support to the clerical establishment. Khamenei told Iranians again in a Feb. 18 speech in Tehran that voting was not just a national responsibility but a religious duty as well. [...]“

6n)

Iran All Set to Hold Legislative Polls after A Frenzied Week of Campaigning

By Alireza Hashemi

February 20, 2020

<https://siasateparsir.ir/en/news/2783>

„With the campaign season ending Thursday morning, the countdown to the 11th vote for the Islamic Consultative Assembly has begun. For over a week, candidates were trying hard to appeal to nearly 58 million Iranians who are eligible to cast votes in the country of 83 million. [...]“