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U.S. Double Standards Human Rights: Thailand vs. Saudi Arabia

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Mondialisation.ca, 01 avril 2016
New Eastern Outlook 31 mars 2016

Région : Asia
Thème: Media Disinformation, Police State & Civil Rights

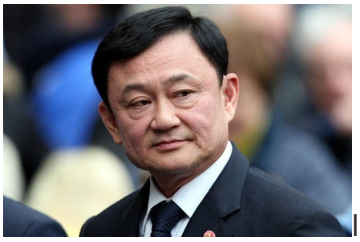
The Southeast Asian nation of Thailand has found itself repeatedly in the spotlight regarding labor practices, and in particular those among its shrimp and fishing production industry where Western media sources continue to focus on the use of migrant workers and the appalling conditions they toil under.

However, the West's sudden fascination with Thai shrimp and fishing industries should strike the world as somewhat suspicious, or at least hypocritical.

After all, the West, and the United States in particular, imports a sizable percentage of its oil from Saudi Arabia, a nation with the absolute worst human rights record on Earth – where enemies of the state are literally beheaded in public by a regime that has reigned for decades absent any semblance of democracy or interest in the will and well-being of its own people. Yet despite that, media campaigns like that aimed at Thailand since 2014, are utterly absent regarding Saudi Arabia – and it has been that way for decades – transcending various presidential administrations.

What's most ironic about Thailand's current human rights situation is that the current government is in the middle of undoing a decade of corruption, abuses, and rackets created by a very much US-backed regime ousted from power in 2014 – a regime these same Western media interests knew was overseeing human rights abuses, and for years helped it cover them up just as it does in Saudi Arabia today.

The Rest of the Story



In Thailand on May 22, 2014, over a decade of impunity was brought to an end when the regime of US-backed dictator Thaksin Shinawatra [image right] was finally ousted from power in the second military coup aimed at uprooting him and his political networks.

Thaksin Shinawatra had, since coming to power in 2001, aided and abetted the US in

everything from the invasion and occupation in Iraq by sending Thai troops to participate, to hosting the US CIA's abhorrent rendition program, to an attempt to illegally pass a US-Thai free trade agreement that was ultimately defeated by Shinawatra's opponents.

In return for Shinawatra's infinite utility to Wall Street and Washington, he and his political networks have been endowed with immense US backing, ranging from a myriad of Washington lobbyists working on Shinawatra's behalf in the Western media, to US State Department funded nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to this day attempting to undermine and overthrow Thailand's various institutions working against Shinawatra and the special interests from abroad he represents. The US ambassador himself has attempted to intervene on multiple occasions on behalf of pro-Shinawatra agitators.

At the time of the 2014 coup, Shinawatra was already in self-imposed exile in Dubai, United Arab Emirates after a 2006 coup ousted him from power – while his sister, Yingluck Shianwatra symbolically held the office of prime minister in his absence. There was never any doubt, however, over whether or not Thaksin Shinawatra was still running his powerful political network from afar, which included among other things, control over the nation's police.

Under the Shinawtra crime family, a myriad of abuses took place which included human trafficking, exploitation of labor, and just before being ousted, the robbery of over a million of Thailand's rice farmers of their annual harvests which were stockpiled by the regime in warehouses, sold on the black market, and promised subsidies never paid. Shinawatra's control over the nation's police ran deep, with Shinawatra himself having been a high-level bureaucrat within the police force before becoming prime minister in 2001.

It would be the incoming military-led government that ousted Shinawatra that would finally pay back the farmers and begin undoing the criminal networks including those among the police that flourished under Shinawatra's rule.

This included attempting to enforce long-standing laws aimed at cleaning up the fishing industry, which includes Thailand's lucrative shrimp harvesting and processing sectors. After the 2006 coup, the military-led government even then attempted to reform migrant labor laws. The attempt was unsuccessful. The same year the laws were passed, Shinawatra's proxies would find their way back into power. And despite the fact that migrant labor was a burning issue even then, the silence from the West was not only deafening, it was telling.

While a regime sat in power that bent to Wall Street and Washington's every whim, it was rewarded with silence from the West's media and NGOs who for years silently documented migrant worker abuse but did nothing to bring attention to it. Ironically, it is only now, with a government attempting to finally enforce longstanding migrant labor laws targeting human trafficking and slavery US mega-retailers have long benefited from, that the West has decided to put pressure on the Thai government.

As a matter of fact, the coup was in May of 2014, and the first salvos aimed at the incoming government were fired by the Western press beginning the very next month.

Hypocrisy, Not Human Rights

The suspicious timing of the West's sudden concern is no coincidence. The West is pressuring Thailand, even threatening sanctions not because of human rights abuses it has suddenly found out about, but because of human rights abuses it knew about for a decade and ignored until a government it didn't like came into power.

Pressure on Thailand over migrant labor issues is only one facet of a much larger, concerted campaign to undermine the current government and help return the Shinawatras to power.

The current military-led government has brought Thailand on an entirely alternate – and for Washington – an unacceptable path.

Bangkok is pivoting toward Beijing, economically, politically, and militarily. As the US attempts to shun the new government in Bangkok by rolling back military cooperation, the Thai and Chinese air forces held their first ever joint exercise. A myriad of weapon and infrastructure deals have also been struck or are in the process of being negotiated with China.

Last year, Thailand refused Western demands that Uyghurs fleeing China, suspected of terrorism, be allowed to continue on to Turkey where Beijing accused them of seeking to join the ranks of the notorious Islamic State terrorist organization.

Only months after sending the suspected terrorists back to China, Bangkok suffered a terrorist attack itself, carried out by NATO-backed terrorists from Turkey as reprisal. Since then, two Washington-backed "activists" from China were also sent home to face justice, despite Western demands the two be allowed to travel onward to Canada to seek political asylum.

The move was condemned publicly by the US ambassador to Thailand, and followed by a flurry of media attacks on all fronts, including among other things, aviation safety reviews, hotel labor conditions, and migrant labor reforms among Thailand's shrimp industry.

All of this leads us right back to Saudi Arabia.

The United States imports double digit percentages of its oil from Saudi Arabia. It, along with its European allies, also exports billions in weapons to the regime in Riyadh.

Reports in the news about Saudi Arabia's barbaric regime and the abhorrent human rights conditions that exist within Saudi Arabia are nonexistent in the West. Saudi Arabia has existed as an unquestioning, unflinchingly obedient proxy of US foreign policy in the Middle East for decades, waging multiple proxy wars at great personal expense on behalf of Wall Street and Washington. In exchange, the West has clearly granted Saudi Arabia with unlimited impunity within which it has created one of the most depraved states in modern existence.

It is clear the West does not care about human rights. What's worse, is that it not only selectively enforces penalties for those it accuses of violating human rights, in the case of Thailand, it is targeting the only government in over a decade that has attempted to improve human rights through not only new legislation, but through actually trying to enforce it.

Recent headlines aimed at further undermining Thailand's current government, even admit deep within their reports that progress is indeed being made.

At the end of the day, whether it is the petroleum one finds in their gas tank, or any given item on the shelf in one of America's many Walmarts, one would be hard pressed to find anything that has not been produced and put there through the exploitation of human labor under conditions unacceptable anywhere in the West itself. If foreign labor was toiling under favorable conditions and fairly compensated, there would be no point of using foreign labor in the first place. Large multinational corporations importing these goods from all over the developing world know this which is why they outsourced labor overseas to begin with.

It is the West itself that has, and still does, eagerly encourage this unjust disparity everywhere it can – and only "takes a stand" when politically profitable, and in Thailand's case, when the exploitation that has gone on for years may finally come to an end.

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