

THE MOST DAMNING VIDEO IN SYRIA IS A FAKE

March 5th. The publicly-owned British TV Channel 4 broadcasts an “exclusive” video the speaker claims is “one of the most damning videos coming from Syria”, “evidence of the criminal conspiracy of the regime”. The film, “Syrian doctors ‘torturing’ patients”

(<http://www.channel4.com/news/exclusive-syrian-doctors-torturing-patients>), allegedly proves that “doctors torture civilian victims of the violence” in the Homs military hospital where “because of government order, every civilian injured during the demonstration is taken.” The video (“which we cannot independently verify”) is an example of the pleonastic formula used by Anglo-Saxon media). It was allegedly filmed in secret by an employee of the hospital who risked his life to testify to the world how the hospital— which belongs to the Ministry of Defense— has become “a torture chamber”.

The video, however, seems fake, a montage. Not only because torture is usually carried out in hidden places and not in hospitals – although potentially in military ones – which are open to the public and can easily be visited. Images out of focus and choppy show a row four unnamed men (the “civilians injured in demonstrations”) on beds with white sheets. Their heads and eyes are wrapped in white bandage as if they had been injured (which would seem strange; and indeed the employee does not say that, and the speaker speaks of “blindfolded”). Their ankles are shackled in “rusty chains”, as the speaker underlines (why are they also rusty?). On the small table, easily within view are tools “for the torture” (“electric wire”, “rubber tube”). The most shocking image is that of the bare chest of one of the men that is marked with burns from a whip, which could have been painted. No recent tortures anyway. Interesting: among the men we can see but out of focus is another person: doesn’t he see that his colleague is making a video?

Channel 4 interviews a forensic doctor (who by the way works for the International Criminal Court (<http://www.debretts.com/people/biographies/browse/p/10568/Derrick+John.aspx>) who confirms that of course, the injuries on the chest are made by flexible instruments, like the rubber tube shown, and states that to torture people who are already injured (what about the others?) is the ultimate desecration of human rights.

The author of the video is then interviewed, his face and body hidden, “in a safe place”, from the same low-resolution video camera. Where is he? The man is shown near a medicine chest and medical tools, as to suggest that he is still in the hospital? Which seems incredible: an interview by another man inside this risky place. The man describes horrible atrocities, Nazi-style: a doctor who put alcohol on a 15 years old boy, and then sets him on fire. Doctors are operating with no anesthesia. Doctors are torturing even in those in intensive care... Also he says that the few “decent doctors” who insist on treating the injured, face persecution.

The video goes on to say that because of the fear of being tortured, many injured peace protestors are not going to hospitals and are therefore treated in makeshift structures without proper equipment (but they show the images of the makeshift hospital in another video on Homs; it is a hospital that is used to treat the injured fighters).

One wonders: “*cui prodest?*” Is it a good idea to torture people in a hospital for a government that is already under harsh pressure by almost the whole world? Let us remember also that in October Syrian doctors were accused in an Amnesty International Report, *Health Crisis: Syrian Government Targets the Wounded and Health Workers*, of mistreating patients if they were from the opposition. But this report was made solely from interviews with opposition members and on the basis of Youtube “evidence” and was fiercely slammed by Syrian doctors.

<http://uprootedpalestinians.blogspot.com/2011/10/confusing-syria-with-libya-fact.html>).

What is even more interesting is that this “most damning video” few hours after it was broadcasted received the endorsement of the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights Navi Pillay. With a press release sent “*urbi et orbi*” the Office states that “The pictures shown on Channel 4 last night are truly shocking, and unfortunately very much in accordance with evidence that has been accumulated in the Human Rights Council-mandated Fact-Finding Mission and Commission of Inquiry reports on Syria”. The press release quotes its reports that...are based on interviews with opponents and deserters, always outside of Syria as stated by the reports themselves.

http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/countries/SY/Syria_Report_2011-08-17.pdf;

http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/SY/A.HRC.S-17.2.Add.1_en.pdf;

http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/RegularSession/Session19/A-HRC-19-69_en.pdf

The Pillay Office states that there is also a problem in Bahrain: “Torture was documented in the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry report (also known as the Bassiouni report).

The Special Rapporteur on Torture, Juan Mendez, was due to visit Bahrain this week, but his visit has been postponed. He issued a statement about this. However, it is important to note that the scale of torture in Syria is of another order”.

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