

# DEFYING THE RULES OF GRAVITY, OBAMA DIRECTS SANCTIONS SOLELY AGAINST ISRAEL'S ENEMIES

In conjunction with his speech at the Holocaust Museum yesterday and announcement of the Atrocities Prevention Board, President Obama also rolled out sanctions against those who use IT to repress human rights. The Treasury Department named the sanctions GRAHVITY (I think they get it from "GRAVe Human rights abuses Via Information TechnologY" or some such Orwellian acronym).

There's a problem with that. We are all subject to gravity.

But only Israel's enemies—Iran and Syria—are subject to GRAHVITY.

This exclusive application was set up in yesterday's speech when Elie Wiesel suggested the point of remembering the Holocaust was to guarantee the strength of Israel and ensure its enemies—in this case, Syria and Iran—are removed from office (and deprived of the same weapons Israel stockpiles against them).

Have you learned anything from it? If so, how is it that Assad is still in power? How is it that the Holocaust Number 1 denier, Ahmadinejad, is still a President, he who threatens to use nuclear weapons—to use nuclear weapons—to destroy the Jewish state?

[snip]

Now, I hope you understand, in this place [the Museum], why Israel is so important, not only to the Jew that I am and the Jewish people, but to the world. Israel cannot not remember. And because

it remembers, it must be strong, just to defend its own survival and its own destiny.

Obama's focus was broader. In his speech, he listed Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia, Darfur, Côte d'Ivoire, Libya (with no mention of the civilian casualties NATO caused), the Lords Resistance Army.

But Obama, too, focuses primarily on Syria.

In this speech, the sole reason to ensure internet freedom, according to Obama, is to bring about regime change in Syria.

And when innocents suffer, it tears at our conscience. Elie alluded to what we feel as we see the Syrian people subjected to unspeakable violence, simply for demanding their universal rights. And we have to do everything we can. And as we do, we have to remember that despite all the tanks and all the snipers, all the torture and brutality unleashed against them, the Syrian people still brave the streets. They still demand to be heard. They still seek their dignity. The Syrian people have not given up, which is why we cannot give up.

And so with allies and partners, we will keep increasing the pressure, with a diplomatic effort to further isolate Assad and his regime, so that those who stick with Assad know that they are making a losing bet. We'll keep increasing sanctions to cut off the regime from the money it needs to survive. We'll sustain a legal effort to document atrocities so killers face justice, and a humanitarian effort to get relief and medicine to the Syrian people. And we'll keep working with the "Friends of Syria" to increase support for the Syrian opposition as it grows

stronger.

Indeed, today we're taking another step. I've signed an executive order that authorizes new sanctions against the Syrian government and Iran and those that abet them for using technologies to monitor and track and target citizens for violence. These technologies should not empower – these technologies should be in place to empower citizens, not to repress them. And it's one more step that we can take toward the day that we know will come – the end of the Assad regime that has brutalized the Syrian people – and allow the Syrian people to chart their own destiny.

Two things were lacking from this presentation.

There was no mention—not a peep—of the equally urgent repression targeted at Shias, notably those America's ally Bahrain is brutally repressing. With the Formula 1 fiasco, Bahrain is actually the subject of more intense news coverage right now. But not, apparently, the subject of protections against atrocities.

Also lacking from Obama's speech was any application of the rules of GRAHVITY to the United States itself. When Wiesel invoked the innocent children who were victims of the Holocaust, did he also ask about the children killed in America's drone strikes? Did Obama promise not to spy on Americans who participate in Occupy Wall Street, Muslims who practice their faith, or journalists and whistleblowers seeking to hold the government accountable?

We used to believe in human rights that—like gravity—applied equally to all people. But Obama is rolling out something new, GRAHVITY, targeted solely at those who threaten Saudi hegemony, Israel's dominance of the Middle East, and with both of those, America's empire. It is a sick perversion of universal rights wielded selectively as a weapon, not a protection.