



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on May 17, 2012

Obama Order Backing Yemen Dictator Threatens Free Speech, Critics Say

President Obama is under fire after passing a so-called "[Executive Order](#)" threatening anyone, including American citizens, who interferes even "indirectly" with the transition to power of the new U.S. government-backed dictator of Yemen. Analysts expressed concern that the measure could be an attack on the First Amendment protection of free speech rights, suggesting that journalists and activists who oppose the Yemeni regime might find themselves targeted by the administration's newly super-charged terror war.



The almost certainly unconstitutional dictate, signed on Wednesday following a string of controversial orders in recent months, declares a "national emergency" to justify the almost-unprecedented restrictions on political activity. The order purports to give Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner broad powers to, among other measures, freeze the assets of whoever the administration claims is attempting to undermine "the peace, security and stability" of Yemen or obstruct the new regime's consolidation of power. No trial is required. And the mandate applies to Americans, Yemenis, or anyone else, but excludes U.S. government officials and contractors.

"This Executive Order will allow the United States to take action against those who seek to undermine Yemen's transition and the Yemeni peoples' clear desire for change," read a White House statement issued with Obama's latest decree. "The President took this step because he believes that the legitimate aspirations of the Yemeni people, along with the urgent humanitarian and security challenges, cannot be addressed if political progress stalls."

The small Arabian nation recently [overthrew its previous U.S. government-backed tyrant](#), "President" Ali Abdullah Saleh, and held new so-called "elections" to replace him after he [agreed to step down following decades in power](#). Citizens were allowed to vote for only one candidate — the former despot's "Vice President," Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi. And despite fierce criticism and ridicule of the so-called "democratic" process by analysts around the world, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton praised the largely symbolic vote as "successful."

To ensure that the new "President" of Yemen retains firm control of the restless population, the Obama administration recently [sent U.S. Special Forces](#) to the nation while showering the new regime with vast amounts of military and terror-war aid. Meanwhile, opponents of the new ruler — dubbed "militants" and "extremists" by American officials — have been [ruthlessly bombarded by U.S. drones](#). Last year, even a 16-year-old U.S. citizen was murdered by an Obama drone in Yemen. And now, critics of the Yemeni government's consolidation of power could be in the crosshairs no matter where they reside.

"This is a big umbrella set of authorities that can be used as necessary," State Department



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spokesperson Victoria Nuland [explained](#) without citing any constitutional basis for the usurpation of the powers. “Again I am not going to name names here, because we haven’t designated anybody yet, but it is definitely meant today as a message to those who are trying to block transition that we have this tool to use against them and that they should think again about the policies they are pursuing.”

The administration has hinted that the move could be used to target former officials in Yemen. Critics from across the political spectrum, however, expressed alarm about the controversial edict and its potential implications. One of the most serious concerns is whether or not the executive order targets speech and political activism — an area that had largely remained off-limits even as the U.S. government worked fiendishly to restrict other rights in the name of terror.

>“This Executive Order appears to be an attack on Americans’ 1st Amendment Rights and Yemenis’ rights to self-determination,” [observed](#) national-security correspondent Jeremy Scahill, who has written extensively about the situation in Yemen over the last year of turmoil. “What if a Yemeni citizen doesn’t believe in a one candidate ‘election’ and is fighting to change their government? U.S. sanctions?”

Scahill, who writes for *The Nation*, also wondered how the U.S. government would determine whether an American was “indirectly” threatening the stability of Yemen’s new regime. “What if an American citizen doesn’t support Yemen’s government and agitates for its downfall? Sanctions from U.S. Treasury? Wow,” he [wrote](#) in a widely cited post on Twitter.

Other commentators were similarly disturbed by the implications of Obama’s latest decree, warning that yes, even journalists and political activists could technically be swept up under the scheme. Considered together with other recent usurpations of power by the administration — extra-judicially murdering people without charges or trial, for example — the consequences seem even more ominous, according to analysts.

“When paired with the indefinite detention provisions of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), the President has been designated the arbiter of safety here and abroad,” [noted](#) Joe Wolverton in a recent article for *The New American* dealing primarily with the unconstitutional decision to send American troops to Yemen. “Should anyone, U.S. citizen or foreigner, be found to have aroused the suspicion of the White House, there is now ‘legal authority’ to have those unfortunate individuals lose their homes, their money, and their freedom — all without being charged, tried, or convicted.”

The Obama administration, of course, claims to be hunting “Al Qaeda” in Yemen. But recent events would appear to render that justification absurd on its face. In Libya, for example, the U.S. government [armed, trained, and provided air cover to known leaders of the terror organization](#) as part of Obama’s unconstitutional “regime change” mission to overthrow Moammar Gadhafi. In Syria, a [similar situation is developing](#). Obama has also been [openly aiding an Islamo-Marxist group](#) that is officially designated as a “terrorist organization” despite federal statutes defining such support as a felony.

And despite [endless hollow platitudes](#) about fighting wars for “democracy” and “freedom,” Obama’s actions have made clear that the real agenda has nothing to do with either. Consider the fact the Obama himself [personally intervened to ensure that a Yemeni journalist who exposed U.S. government lies](#) and massacres in the war-torn nation would remain in prison — even when the former dictator of Yemen was preparing to pardon the reporter and release him from jail.

But the truth has never been a high priority — and in Yemen, there is official proof. American diplomatic cables released by WikiLeaks [showed](#) that the U.S. government and the Saleh regime ruling Yemen at the time had conspired to lie about several important facts. Most notably, perhaps, the despot



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promised to say that the bombs raining down across the country were being dropped by his regime. In reality, the U.S. government was responsible. And according to human rights groups and observers on the ground, civilians were [massacred by the dozens](#).

“There seems to be little question that the Obama administration is devoted to imposing dictatorial order on Yemen through the use of force and liberty abridgment,” [wrote](#) Glenn Greenwald in a piece about the new executive order for *Salon*. “In the meantime, not only endless militarism and war march on unabated, but so, too, does the erosion of core liberties which it entails.”

Meanwhile, rather than “liberation,” the populations of nations where the U.S. government has intervened over the last decade or more have suffered immensely — [particularly Middle Eastern Christians](#). According to analysts, Yemen will more than likely suffer a similar fate. And without a massive outcry, Americans, rather than being more “safe,” will undoubtedly experience further blow back, as well as the continual erosion of the very same liberty the alleged terrorists supposedly hate so much.

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Photo: Sana’a, the capital of Yemen



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