

Daniel Nolan Tue Jan 29 2013 05:00:00 4 Comments 3 Recommend

Journalist Fisk takes Western media to task

Famed and outspoken British journalist Robert Fisk says the argument that the Arab Spring revolutions across the Middle East were the product of new technology is "rubbish" and he says the war on terror against al-Qaeda does not exist.

"What on earth are we still fighting a war on terror for?" Fisk said in Hamilton Monday night.

"I do not believe the war on terror exists. I'll say this now ... al-Qaeda thrives and exists because of injustice and, while we do not permit the people of that region to have justice, and we have no intention of giving it to them ... there will be some kind of al-Qaeda out there. Produce dignity and justice out there and that will make al-Qaeda evaporate."

Fisk, who has covered the Middle East for The Independent for more than three decades, also says the Arab Spring actually began in Lebanon in 2005, not in Tunisia in 2011, and that there was a mini-revolt in a community outside Cairo, Egypt in 2006 led by a trade union seeking better pay and conditions for its members.

His points were part of a talk he gave that is part of a 10-city tour across organized by the Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East. It is entitled Arab Awakening, But Are We Hearing the Truth? About 300 people came to hear him at the First Unitarian Church.

Fisk, who has run afoul of Israel supporters for writing that foreign press are guilty of a pro-Israel slant that minimizes Palestinian deaths, said technology such as Twitter played a role in the Arab revolts, but not as prominent as some in the Western media reported it. The 67-year-old, who is based in Beirut, said education played a bigger role in the Egyptian revolt.

He gave short shrift for some media covering the Middle East, accusing them of just parroting government pronouncements. He was particularly harsh on TV journalists for "going along with this same, distressing drift." But he threw fire at some major Canadian and American newspapers also.

"When I first went to Egypt under 37 years ago, and I interviewed students at the University of Cairo, their standard of learning was deplorable," he said. "There were only a few hundred books in a library for 5,000 or 6,000 students. When I went there in 2008 to give a talk ... their standards of education were first class."

He said the other main reason was that Egyptians had become travellers and tourists where before only the elite travelled and "very few had even been to the (Persian) Gulf."

"They've been to Europe, they've been to America and they've come back and realize that Egypt is not the world," Fisk said.

Fisk addressed accusations he is biased against Israel, which he acknowledged is "a famous dispute." He said he has reported about terrorist bombings in Jerusalem and has written about the Jewish victims of those attacks, not the bombers. He says he also has written stories about atrocities committed against the Palestinians in the same vein.

"The Middle East is not a football match," Fisk said. "It's a bloody tragedy and I believe that journalists who work in the Middle East should be neutral and objective on the side of those who suffer."

He compared his reporting to covering the slave trade in the 19th century or the liberation of a Nazi death camp at the end of the Second World War. He said a reporter would not give editorial space over to a slave ship captain or those who ran the death camps.

"That makes perfect sense, but over and over again we are told that if we don't give 50 per cent to the other side ... then we are not being fair, we are being biased," he said.

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Author-journalist Robert Fisk visited Hamilton Monday.

Photo courtesy Glynn Griffiths

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TheSpeculator

Jan 29, 2013 11:06 AM

Abbas is no different from the other dictators now setting the Middle East on fire

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas wants all of Israel and he, like all other ME dictators, want infidels like Christians, Hindus, Jews, Buddhists, etc, to live as dhimmis or be expelled/killed. They then wipe out all history. See what is happening in Egypt, Mali, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, etc? Abbas is from a long tradition of fascists who were aligned with Hitler during WWII.

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TheSpeculator

Jan 29, 2013 10:36 AM

You might not like the facts contained in international agreements but they exist and they work to Arab's advantage in that Arabs got 99% of ME

All international and UN agreements make the "West Bank" or Judea-Samaria Jewish land. You might not like the British Mandate, San Remo and Belfour and the redistribution of Ottoman lands, including most of the ME that went to Arabs but they exist and they hold. If we start picking and choosing what agreements we like and which we don't then the entire post-colonial world will have to be redefined

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StumpysGarden
Jan 29, 2013 10:10 AM

Speaking of One-Sided...

"Arabs live freely in Israel but Jews are not allowed to live in Gaza nor PA lands."?! What do you call the continually growing number of settlements in the West Bank and beyond? You may not like what he has to say but Mr. Fisk, in my humble opinion, is the definition of journalist - unbiased and well-respected. Be careful what you think you know and believe, most of it is a lie.

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TheSpeculator
Jan 29, 2013 8:09 AM

Fisk filters world events through his deep prejudice and one-sided journalism

Terrorism creates poverty, poverty does not make people into terrorists. Wealth abounds in some Arab states. Arabs have for the past 100 years wanted to evict/kill Jews in Israel. Arabs refused any sharing arrangement and attacked many times. They have a religious hatred for Jews that blocks reason and good solutions. Arabs live freely in Israel but Jews are not allowed to live in Gaza nor PA lands

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