



Abby Martin Confronts Sec. of State Blinken Over Israeli Murder of Shireen Abu Akleh

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On June 7, Abby Martin attended an event with Secretary of State Antony Blinken during Biden's "Summit of the Americas".
Blinken's speech was about how the US protects free press around the world.

Abby Martin (AM) in Video: Secretary Blinken, what about Shireen Abu Akleh? She was murdered by Israeli forces, right?! CNN just agreed to this. These are your two greatest allies in the Middle East, Saudi Arabia and Israel.

Antony Blinken (AB) in Video: Yes.

AM in Video: They have murdered American journalists and they have been absolutely no repercussions. And you're sitting up, you're talking about the freedom of press and democracy. The United States is denying sovereignty to tens of millions of people around the world with draconian sanctions for electing leaders that you do not like. Why is there no accountability for Israel or Saudi Arabia for murdering journalists? It is one of the most dangerous places in the world to be a journalist in Palestine.

AB in Video: I deplore the loss of Shireen. She was a remarkable journalist, an American citizen, as we all know. And there, too, we are very determined to follow the facts and get to the truth of what happened.

AM in Video: The facts have been found Secretary Blinken. With all due respect. It is conclusive.

AB in Video: No, it is not been established.

AM in Video: Yes, it has.

AB in Video: No, they've not. We are looking for an independent, credible investigation. When that investigation happens we will follow the facts where they lead. It's as straightforward as that. That has not yet happened, but something that be very much want to see happen.

Speaker in Video: And we'll have time to say more about this.

AM: Hey, everyone. This is one of my first Instagram lives, but I just went to such a weird event that I felt like I had to talk about what happened. Yeah. So for people who don't know, the Biden administration is hosting this massive Summit of the Americas in Los Angeles this week, a huge weeklong event with basically all of the Latin American countries that are completely subservient to the US. And of course, excluding all of the countries that it is trying to overthrow actively, so Nicaragua, Cuba, Venezuela. Tens of millions of people who are represented by those countries were, you know, are basically erased from the conversation and completely obfuscated. And the entire Summit of the Americas is just Biden's way to just preach this absurd hypocritical rhetoric about human rights and democracy and freedom. And it's just the most hypocritical insanity ever. So, first of all, the entire summit has been a joke. It's been very poorly attended. There's been a huge upset with the fact that they barely invited world leaders until like several days before the event started. And also Obrador, the president of Mexico, actually did not come. He basically said he's not going to come because he was very offended at the fact that several countries were completely excluded from the conversation and not invited. And this is all under the auspices of human rights and democracy and freedom. Meanwhile, of course, as we know, the United States empire is closely allied with some of the most totalitarian regimes on the planet. In fact, its two closest allies- actually, let's look at every region of the world, and see who is the US allied closely with. Uganda, right?! Horrific human rights abuser. Colombia, horrific human rights abuser sponsored by tons of US money, military aid, huge US bases there and it is one of the most dangerous places in the world for activists and journalists. So, of course, Israel and Saudi Arabia in the Middle East are responsible for killing American journalists. And recently, of course, Shireen and in years past, Jamal Khashoggi. So it's just completely absurd, right? We all know this. So anyway, there was a breakout event at the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism sponsored by ASU [Arizona State University] in downtown L.A. and I was lucky enough to go with the BreakThrough News team. Everyone go subscribe to BreakThrough News, check out their channel, they're doing excellent coverage and they're here for a counter summit called the People's Summit. It's going to be a three day event starting tomorrow with 225 organisations that are all representing the people who have been excluded from the conversation. It's going to be an incredible event and I'm really excited to go. So anyway, there is this breakout event at this journalism's school and I went with the BreakThrough

News team. So we go there thinking that it's going to be this huge event, you know, hundreds if not thousands of journalism students, because Secretary of State Antony Blinken was the main speaker tonight, as well as Luis Almagro, who is the head of the Organisation of American States. This is the organisation that's paraded around, it's basically a puppet institution of the US empire that facilitates regime change efforts in Latin America. Remember, these people call Latin America their backyard. So that's basically what they think of it. They want to reinstall the Monroe Doctrine, and that was the whole attitude tonight. When we saw Almagro, you know, who was instrumental in facilitating the Bolivian coup, installing the fascist dictatorship that overthrew democratically elected Evo Morales. And so we were excited to have the opportunity to potentially ask questions to these people. You know, knowing the hypocritical nature of the US and how it talks about how much it cherishes press freedom, but then barely allows any sort of real journalism to take place. Barely allows access to any journalists or accepts real questions. But we wanted to go anyway and just see- of course, how could we miss the opportunity?! So we get there and there was no one there. It was a complete ghost town. We were totally blown away. We were like, Why is no one here? Where are all the journalism students? How is no one interested in this event? It was just kind of like a couple of dozen people from different press offices milling around in the main lobby. And me and my friend Eugene [Puryear] and our cameraman, we were just like, How is this possible? Like, how is no one here? It's pretty embarrassing for Biden. You know, the Summit of the Americas in general is pretty poorly attended. And so it's already been kind of ridiculed in the mainstream press at how ridiculous the event is. So it was already really poorly attended the entire summit itself. So we were just really shocked that these two really high profile politicians were speaking and there was barely anyone there. So we were like, Okay, this is super weird. There must be buses of people coming in at the last second that are going to confront these people or, you know, just watch them at the very least, like what is happening. So the time goes by, there's a couple of breakout sessions and workshops and there's like three people participating, and we're like, This is so strange. So anyway, Luis Almagro finally is about to speak and so we go into the main room and there's barely 30 people there. It was the most pathetically attended event ever. It was shocking. It was really a reflection of just how embarrassing this entire Biden summit is and how much of this was just a complete farce and just a total photo op for these politicians to just say their piece, get the word out, take some photos with the canned journalists who were handpicked to ask them really softball questions and then just get paraded out of there. There was no plan to engage with the audience. There was no plan to answer questions and of course, no plan to actually have a free exchange of information with the journalists that they constantly talk about and use as a foil of like, Oh, look, we're such a beacon of freedom, free press and democracy. So we're sitting there and within the first 20 minutes of Luis Almagro speaking, first of all, he's a horrible speaker. He can't even get through a sentence. He can't even explain why he is in charge of the OAS, what he is doing, why he's passionate about press freedom. It was frankly embarrassing. The person who was questioning him was the former editor of National Geographic, and her questions were just so patently absurd. It was just like, What made you interested in free press? Like, why do you

like this issue? Like, it was just it was painful, right, to sit through. And so amazingly, a guy from PSL [Party for Socialism and Liberation] actually gets up in the middle of Luis Almagro talking and does a huge confrontation and just starts going off about the Bolivia coup. His name's Walter [Smolarek]. You can check out the video on BreakThrough News. It was the most incredible uninterrupted disruption I have ever heard in my life. This is coming off the heels, of course, a couple of months previous of my partner Mike Prysner interrupting former President George W. Bush about being a war criminal. So he got escorted out, of course, immediately. Walter [Smolarek] was able to speak for like four minutes uninterrupted, went off about all the people who were killed in the Bolivian coup, the fact that Luis Almagro backed the coup, this fascist took over. Evo Morales was democratically elected. All of these municipalities that experienced all the mass deaths, a journalist who was beaten to death in his home, he got it all out there and still no one was doing anything. So he just started talking about Venezuela. He was like: And then Juan Guaidó, why have you recognised this illegitimate leader Juan Guaidó? This is like, it's absurd. It's ridiculous that you still recognise this guy the majority of Venezuelans don't even know about. And it was just amazing. I was just like, Oh my God, how is this able to happen? Like there was no plan at all about dealing with anyone there, like they had no idea. They thought it would just be a completely setup propped up event and everyone would just be patting themselves on the back and just bowing down to these people. So eventually, of course, you know, these Secret Service guys come up and just kind of pat Walter [Smolarek] on the shoulder, like, Okay, are you done? Like, please stop talking. And he just wouldn't stop. And so he eventually gets dragged out and he just screams: You are nothing. You're nothing but a murderer and a puppet of the United States. Pretty powerful disruption. Very, very powerful. It was amazing to see that happen. I never thought that I would see someone as powerful as Luis Almagro be confronted about something, you know, so pointed, which is his participation in the Bolivian coup. And so he [Walter Smolarek] gets dragged out. Luis Almagro could not get through his sentence after that. At the beginning of his talk, he was so flustered, even just publicly speaking, before the disruption, that he actually took out a piece of paper. One of the questions that the moderator asked him [inaudible] like fighting disinformation. All they care about is bemoaning, like the repression of Cuba's so-called abuse of free press and journalists, and also highlighting how they need to funnel all this money and resources and efforts into fighting disinformation online. We all know what that means. It means just solidifying the State Department narrative and eliminating voices who are contradicting it. We just saw what happened with all Russia affiliated journalists. We know what happens with any person who is affiliated with regimes, or I'm sorry, governments that the US doesn't like. Of course, if you act on behalf of, you know, the narratives of regimes that the US does like, you're completely fine to do what you will. So the whole event was just so strange that it was all hyper focussed on disinfo and Twitter. Instead of like, look, there are actual journalists being assassinated in Colombia, one of the US's greatest allies. And the fact that an American journalist was just assassinated in Israel mere weeks ago. How dare you get up there and lecture? So Luis Almagro can barely get through the rest of his speech, it was extremely embarrassing. He ends up basically just barely able to sputter out a sentence after that because he was so mortified. And all he could

say was like, He's lying, he's lying. And this is part of the disinformation that we're talking about. This is why we need to fight disinformation, because this guy brought up the Bolivian coup and it's false and the elections were fraudulent and just goes on and on. We know that the elections were not fraudulent. There were several conclusive reports that came out that proved that Evo Morales was the legitimate leader and that it was all a farce staged by the OAS. So right after Luis Almagro leaves the stage, Antony Blinken comes on with [inaudible] from this institution, the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism, you know, sitting down like they're all prepped, ready to interview him at this roundtable. And Blinken gets up and starts to give his opening statement about how much he reveres press freedom and how much the US is fighting for democracy and how much it is working to hold countries accountable. Like Cuba, where you cannot do journalism there. [Ironic:] Oh, but you can do journalism in Israel, right?! I mean, one of the most dangerous places in the world to do journalism is Palestine. Anyone who's watched "Gaza Fights for Freedom" knows that even the UN report from the "Great March of Return" conclusively showed that Israeli snipers deliberately targeted and assassinated several journalists and permanently disabled several others. This is a very common occurrence, and it is just horrific to hear these leaders go on and on and on and mask this interventionism and human rights and democracy. It is so insulting to anyone's intelligence that knows anything about the true nature of the US empire. So Antony Blinken is going on and on and on. Immediately me and my friend Eugene Puryear realise that they're not going to be any questions facilitated toward the audience at all. There's not going to be any moment where we are going to be able to ask him a real question. And so we just sit through this really painful statement from Blinken, just so hypocritical, just dripping with hypocrisy. And so, you know, at the end of it, there was just one moment before he [Blinken] goes and sits down with these journalism students that we had. You know, and so Eugene stands up right then and confronts him about Haiti. The fact that, you know, Haiti, they never investigated the fact that the prime minister was assassinated. And then, of course, the US backed coup in Haiti and all of these things. And he also brings up the fact that these countries were completely excluded from the Summit of the Americas. And so Blinken just has a very canned response and he's like, Yes, we are very concerned about that. And we're looking into that. It's like, well, this should have happened a long time ago, and I'm pretty sure that you're not looking into shit, dude. And in the moment that I had, that I knew that I had, that I could say something to him face to face I just brought up Shireen. I was just like, What about Shireen? What about Shireen? I was just like this- CNN even verified that she was killed by Israeli forces. You know, like, how dare you continue to claim that you don't know that this is an inconclusive investigation? Of course, he gave the canned response that it's inconclusive that, Oh, she's so dear to us- right... [Ironic:] We really care about her reporting. This American journalist who was purposely executed by Israeli forces, that we know no investigation further needs to be had. We know the truth. Okay. And Israel has said that they're not going to investigate further. So how dare you, this incredibly revered journalist and yeah, Palestinians get killed constantly there. The fact that there's an American journalist and you are actually, have the gall to pretend like you give a shit about her life and her legacy. And so I was able to ask about that and of course, bring up

the fact that Saudi Arabia is also not held accountable. So Israel and Saudi Arabia, the two closest allies to the US, are these despotic regimes that freely kill American journalists with complete impunity. And also the fact that these draconian sanctions are imposed on several countries, that for the sheer punishment and the only reason that they don't elect leaders that the US likes, and that is why they are punished in the way that they are. And, of course, Blinken just gave me the canned response about how we were looking into it. We're looking into it. And I was just like, you know, With all due respect, Sir, like the investigation is over. The investigation is over. We know who killed her. Like, this is a joke, you know?! And so I just assumed that Eugene and I would get, like, removed, because I think that they didn't interrupt us, and they both let us ask a follow up question because they couldn't- like with the entire farce of the event being this journalism event, they could not with good conscience, stop us and be like, Shut up and sit down. Like, they probably wanted to. So they just had no choice. I mean, it was like tunnel vision just staring at Anthony Blinken's dead eyes and having him just lie to my face was just really beyond the pale. And right after that happened, I sit down. A journalist in front of me turns around, and she was just like, Thank you, thank you for doing that. And I feel a hand on my shoulder and I look over and it's Ned Price, former press secretary, who's that wiry, dorky arse dude who's just a super expert in being able to avoid questions. And he was just like, thank you. I didn't know if he was trying to get me to walk out. I was just like, I'm sorry, am I being escorted out or am I allowed to stay here? And I just tried to ignore him and keep looking straight. And it was just the most surreal thing ever. After Walter [Smolarek] did that huge epic disruption, like, all these crazy armed security came in and started surrounding the place. And we were just like, Oh God, what's going to happen here? But I think that because it was this event, coined as this free press event, they really wanted to just, they had no choice but to just let journalists try to talk. And of course, he immediately sat down. That was the only moment that we had to confront him. He immediately sits down and just his interview, the most absurd softball, grovelling interview from these three women. It was very embarrassing, frankly, especially after these two real questions were asked. And the whole room, you can just feel it, it was palpable, like people were pissed. And I think a lot of foreign press was there just realising that it was just a complete joke, being like, How is this real? You know, how is this event real? And so these girls were just going on and on and on. The whole conversation was about Twitter and about fighting disinformation. And how can we, like, solidify the State Department's message? Like, literally, one of the "journalists" was like, Blinken, you know, I have been looking at your Twitter feed and how do we get the message out better? Like, how do we combat the disinformation, a.k.a., how could we just parrot the State Department propaganda better and crack down on the people who are bucking what you guys are trying to do? Like all the good you guys are trying to do. And it was just like, how is this real? How are these people, journalism students, how on earth is this what you are going to ask the secretary of state if you have a chance to sit down in a roundtable discussion with him? That's crazy. And really, it just reinforces how all of this journalism is accessed journalism and how a lot of corporate media is just earnest people trying to climb the ladder. They want continuous access and they want to get beneficial relationships with these politicians, so they will be admired, respected,

and they'll be the people who can have those one on one interviews with them just throwing softballs at them. It's a totally quid pro quo relationship. And I saw it first hand tonight. I saw it when I lived in D.C. and it never ceases to disgust me because it's the complete antithesis of what journalism is supposed to be. And these people have the gall, have the gall to sit up there and lecture the world. What gives them the right to dictate who countries can elect and what they can do for themselves to undermine the sovereignty of tens of millions of people around the world? It is offensive and should be offensive to any legitimate journalist covering what is happening, the atrocities happening around the world. What the US's closest allies are doing to activists and journalists and the citizens of those countries is abysmal. It is abysmal. And these journalists should be ashamed of themselves. And the whole conversation was a joke. At some point, one of the journalists was just like, What do we do when people just read headlines? And Blinken was just like, At one point in my life, I wanted to be a New York Post, sensational tabloid headline writer. I was just like, really? Like, that's what you wanted to do with your life and somehow you became Secretary of State. What is going on? How is this real? It honestly was just like a cartoon. It was a complete parody of itself. And the entire thing was destroyed and wrecked by not only this huge destruction, but then, of course, two journalists asking real questions. And they were not expecting that because they never expect that. And they think all these things go off without a hitch. They can tightly control who gets in and out in D.C. and they know all the journalists in the press pool and they will deny them access for the rest of their lives if they are ever embarrassed. And this time we slipped in. We slipped by. We were able to ask real questions. Of course, we knew that they weren't going to give us real answers. But that's what we need to do. We need to continue to not let them have a moment's peace and just be able to pontificate and lie. Lie, because that's what they do. We need to hold them accountable in every way that we can. And this was just one small effort to try to expose the hypocrisy of the United States and to expose the fact that these people continue to lie and continue to weaponize, weaponize a sacred notion of human rights and democracy for their own benefit, to control the rest of the planet, to impose US imperialism hegemony and the countries that don't bow down to capitalism will be punished because that's what this is. That's what this is. The mask is fully off. The emperor has no clothes. This is the United States empire. This is the true nature of the US and Biden's Summit of the Americas is a complete embarrassment. So if you live in L.A., if you're anywhere near the L.A. area, please come to this incredible three day [People's] Summit starting tomorrow, we're going to be tabling there for Empire Files. I'm speaking on Thursday night about this resource theft and debt and privatisation model of neoliberalism across not only Latin America but the planet and how destructive imperialism is. Go to BreakThrough News, check out the disruption [from today's event]. Check out Eugene Puryear's show the Punch-Out. He's an excellent journalist. I was so honoured to be alongside him tonight, bringing attention to issues like Haiti and Palestine. It was really, really important. And we just need to keep the pressure up, guys, because that's the only way we're going to make a change and come to the People's Summit. Start organising in your community. And we got to start mobilising. We got to start mobilising a real opposition. And that's the only way we're going to win. Power to the people, y'all. Thanks for tuning in.

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