



Grayzone challenges Guardian reporter on US state-funded Syria smears

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Aaron Maté (AM): Welcome to Pushback, I'm Aaron Maté. First, let me apologise to regular listeners and viewers of the show, and especially my supporters on Patreon for the lack of frequency. I'm working on a book about Russiagate and how it helped lead to the Ukraine crisis. It's taking up a lot of my time, and I also don't do Pushback until I feel I have something worthwhile for you; worth your time. So today I do, and that is a recent disinformation/smear effort that was directed against me and other people who cover Syria, especially the issue of the OPCW Syria cover up scandal [Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons]. Where there was an article put out in The Guardian that called myself and others Russia backed conspiracy theorists who spread disinformation. And this is the article. It's called "Network of Syria conspiracy theorists identified". Initially the headline was "Russia-backed network of Syria conspiracy theorists identified", but they quickly corrected that. Probably upon realising that it was libellous. But there's many other libellous claims in this article that are said about me and others, and what it says is this. It says, quote, "A network of more than two dozen conspiracy theorists, frequently backed by a coordinated Russian campaign, sent thousands of disinformation tweets to distort the reality of the Syrian conflict and deter intervention by the international community, new analysis reveals." And this new analysis is put out by a think tank called the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, along with another group called the Syria Campaign. And they put out a report called Deadly Disinformation that makes these claims about me and others. And The Guardian just basically parroted them. So I actually confronted The Guardian reporter who wrote this story- his name is Mark Townsend- in a phone call that I recorded that I'm going to play for you shortly. But first, let me just say a few words about the so-called report and the so-called journalism that The Guardian did. The report that The Guardian based this article on contains zero evidence for any of its claims. So they call me "the most prolific spreader of disinformation" when it comes to Syria, but they don't identify a single example of this alleged disinformation or try to demonstrate that anything I've ever said about the topic of Syria is false. And The Guardian, accordingly, does not identify a single example of my

alleged disinformation or provide any evidence for its claims. The Guardian also didn't contact me before they published all this, which is just journalistic malpractice 101. If you're going to lodge a serious allegation against someone, you contact them first. The Guardian didn't do that. And accordingly, this led to this long back and forth between me and The Guardian, where finally, after three or four weeks, they finally printed my reply, the reply that they didn't seek before publishing this about me. And of course, they still watered down and censored my reply, but at least they published it and they acknowledged that they should have contacted me first, which I'll get to. So anyway, that's the background to all this. And also one more thing, The Guardian also didn't identify, that its source for this claim, the study from the Institute for Strategic Dialogue and the Syria Campaign that both of these groups that made this claim about me in this so-called study with no evidence, both these groups are heavily state tied and heavily biased. The ISD, the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, is funded by a number of governments that were belligerents in the Syria proxy war. It's also funded by the US government cut out such as the National Democratic Institute, the International Republican Institute, all these groups that have been involved in promoting US foreign policy, a.k.a. regime change abroad. And The Guardian didn't mention that; that their source was state backed. The other source is a group called the Syria Campaign, and that was funded by a billionaire financier of the Syrian opposition. And the Syria Campaign has worked as essentially a PR group for a group called the White Helmets, which is another US, UK, etc. state funded group that has actively been involved in regime change efforts in Syria, heavily used to lobby for regime change and works openly with sectarian death squads inside Syria that the US and its allies are also support. The Guardian didn't mention any of that when relying on these groups' claims about me for their so-called journalism. So when I called up Mark Townsend, the reporter on the story, I put to him some of the issues raised by his reporting. Why didn't he contact me?! Why didn't he name a single piece of disinformation that I've allegedly spread?! Despite calling me the most prolific spreader of disinformation. And why didn't he name the severe conflicts of interest of the sources he's relying on here?! And you'll see from this recording that Mark Townsend couldn't answer any of these questions. Now, I should say that because I'm doing journalism now about Mark Townsend, I did what Mark Townsend didn't do for me; which is before I published this segment and this recording, I wrote to him and I told him that I recorded our phone conversation and I'm going to publish it. And I'd like to give you the opportunity to answer the questions you wouldn't answer on the phone call or to say anything else, and I will publish it. And in fact, I promised him that, unlike The Guardian, I'm not going to edit your response in any way. And I haven't heard back from Mark Townsend as I'm recording this right now. If that changes, I will update this video. So with that, here is my phone call with Mark Townsend of The Guardian.

[Recorded phone call]

Mark Townsend (MT): It's Mark Townsend.

AM: Hey, Mark, it's Aaron Maté calling. How are you doing?

MT: Hey, good thank you.

AM: Good, quick question for you. Why didn't you contact me before publishing in The Guardian that I'm the leading purveyor of disinformation on Syria?

MT: Well, it was in the report we were reporting on. And I think you've got an email anyway from The Guardian if you want to talk about it.

AM: No, I didn't get an email.

MT: ...you can do that.

AM: I did send an email and I got your order reply. So I'm calling you now. And also, can you tell me why you also- okay. So can you also tell me why you didn't identify a single piece of disinformation?

MT: I think you've gotten a response from our readers editor who says if you want to add something to the piece then go for it.

AM: I did not actually get a response. No, I didn't.

MT: Well, you'll get one soon.

AM: So will you not explain, Mark, why you didn't contact me? And why you didn't name a single piece of disinformation I have allegedly spread? It's pretty simple. Can you explain that for me?

MT: You'll get one soon.

AM: Well, but why didn't you do it when you wrote the article?

MT: It will be articulated to you in the email that you'll receive.

AM: Can I ask you why you didn't articulate it when you wrote the article? Just, why not? Because you yourself have complained.

MT: That's not the way it goes.

AM: You yourself have complained that the Home Office didn't contact you before they tweeted about one of your articles. So I'm asking you, why didn't you contact me before writing such a consequential claim about me? It's pretty simple; why not?

MT: As I said, you'd be getting an email.

AM: Do you think it's fair journalism?

MT: You should have got it already.

AM: No, I haven't gotten it. It's been over a week, so I'm calling you now.

MT: It should be arriving very shortly.

AM: So, Mark. Let me ask you, can you name for me right now...Mark, can you name for me a single piece of disinformation that I've spread on Syria? Can you do it right now? Can you name for me? Can you name for me? Go ahead.

MT: Look, I've got to dash. Lovely. I've got a meeting.

AM: Sure. Right.

MT: An email should be arriving soon so you can respond to.

AM: Mark, can you identify a single piece of disinformation that I've spread on Syria?

MT: Okay. Is that okay?

AM: You can't.

MT: Look I've got to dash to this meeting. This email will be completely responding [unclear].

AM: So, sorry Mark, you took the time to write a whole article about me. Can you not answer a couple of questions? Just give me a straight answer.

MT: ...[unclear] why you're doing this.

AM: Well, you called me the leading purveyor of disinformation.

MT: That was in a report.

AM: It was in a report that you didn't. And by the way, can you also explain why you didn't include in your article that the report is funded by states that are actually belligerents in the topic you're writing about, which is Syria?

MT: Look, look, look.

AM: Why not mention that?

MT: Why didn't I mention that? Okay, look.

AM: Are you answering the question, or no?

MT: I've got to dash, OK? You'll get this email...

AM: Of course you do.

MT: ...and it will respond to that in a proper manner.

AM: Well, I'm calling you right now, so I'd love to hear just one- I'd love to hear one answer. Why not contact me? Why not include the fact that the report you're being a stenographer for is funded by belligerents in the Syria proxy war? And why not name a single piece of disinformation I've spread when you're calling me the top spreader of disinformation on Syria. Just name one. Can you do that?

MT: Okay. As I've said. Respond to the email. It should have arrived. It will very shortly. I mean, that's... It will be all explained to yourself.

AM: Oh, so you're going to answer these questions in an email. Is that what you are saying?

MT: We'll do it in a proper forum, yeah.

AM: So you're saying you're going to answer the questions of why didn't you contact me prior to printing this?!

MT: An email will be arriving.

AM: Okay, you're not answering my question. Are you going to answer the questions that I've laid out?

MT: Look, look. With all due respect. We're going to run in circles, okay.

AM: Yeah, because you can't give me a single answer. Because you can't give me a single answer.

MT: As I said, I'm not going to keep repeating myself.

AM: And what you're repeating is that you're not going to answer any questions. That's what I'm hearing from you.

MT: That's not what we're saying at all. I'm saying you're going to get a chance to respond.

AM: Will you be answering the questions? Okay, Mark. Okay, can you give me one straight answer? What's your answer?

MT: I'm not going to go round in circles.

AM: Mark, will you answer the questions that I've laid out for you in both writing and in this phone call, in an email? Will you answer those questions?

MT: As I've said, I'm not going to keep repeating myself.

MT: Can I get one straight answer? Will you answer those questions?

MT: Look, for the 18th time, you're going to get an email in which you can respond properly.

AM: Okay. And when can I expect this email?

MT: It's as simple as that, okay? I can't keep saying that, over and over again.

AM: Well, what you're saying is, but you're saying, you're going to send me an email, but you won't even commit to answering my questions.

AM: Look I have to dash to a meeting, OK?

AM: Yeah, okay. Right. I understand you have a meeting. I understand you're pressed. For some reason, you didn't have the time to call me before printing a really incendiary claim about me. But I understand now you have to dash for a meeting, so I'm sorry if I'm not very sympathetic to you.

MT: You don't have to be like that. You'll get an email which will explain it all, okay?

AM: Which will explain what? Will it answer my questions? Will the email answer my questions? Can you, can you tell me that?

MT: ...and then you can respond.

AM: Hey, Mark. Will the email answer the questions you haven't answered yet? Will it? Yes

or no?!

MT: You'll get the email.

MT: We're just wasting each other's time.

AM: Yes, because you won't answer a question. You won't answer a question.

MT: It's not that at all. As I said, we've got process. You're going to receive an email from the readers' editor.

AM: Process- Does the process, hey -

MT: ...and you can respond to that properly. I can't say that again. So just please digest that.

AM: Mark, does the process- okay.

MT: And let's move on.

AM: Let me ask you a question. Does your journalism entail, does your journalistic process entail contacting people before printing?

MT: This is so tiresome I'm afraid. I've got this meeting.

AM: Yeah, of course it's tiresome. Of course it's tiresome.

MT: Like I said, we've got a process. You're going to get a response from my editor.

AM: [Laughs] But let me ask you: Does usually your journalistic process entail contacting people before printing a serious allegation against them? Yes or no?

MT: Look, it's been good talking to you.

AM: Yeah, you can't answer a question.

MT: Like I said, you will get this email from the readers' editor, and...

AM: I'm sorry, Mark, you can't stand by your journalism

MT: It's okay. I've got to dash. We can't- there is no point. Your journalism is no point wasting our time.

AM: Yeah, of course there's no point, because you're not being honest. You're not being honest. You can't identify a single piece of disinformation that I spread on Syria...

MT: I've got to dash.

AM: ...and you can't justify not contacting me first.

MT: Are you going to say anything different?

AM: Are you going to say anything substantive that can defend your journalism? The answer is no, you're not.

MT: As I said. Well, I can't remember how many times. You'll be getting an email from the readers' editor and basically, in due course - it may have arrived by now as I keep saying. But it will be arriving very soon.

AM: Uh huh.

MT: Then you can then respond to that.

AM: Okay, so I just want to establish here...

MT: I've gotta dash as I keep saying.

AM: Of course you have to go. Of course you do.

MT: I appreciate the call, and you're going to get a chance to respond.

AM: Mark, if you appreciate the call, then try to appreciate how I feel by not being contacted by you before you printed a claim about me. So do you appreciate this call? Try to remember that feeling of how you appreciate being contacted by someone who has questions, who is making - who is doing journalism rather than just printing claims about you without contacting you first. So, I do hope you appreciate that. Can you process this thought?

MT: Look. I'll process that, okay?

AM: Yeah, sure you will. Okay, okay great. Thank you.

MT: ...the email will arrive soon. Alright look, I appreciate the call.

AM: Yeah, sure you do.

MT: Cheers.

AM: Bye now.

MT: Thanks Aaron. Thank you.

[Phone call ends]

AM: So that is Mark Townsend of The Guardian. As you can see, not being able to answer really any basic questions about his journalism, because I think the answer is clear: he did no journalism. He just essentially acted as a stenographer for a really flawed and biased report that provided no evidence, as you can see from his answers. He can't point to any evidence at all for the claims that he made about me. Now, a day later, after I spoke to Mark Townsend, I did get an email from his readers' editor. The readers' editor didn't really address the bulk of the issues that I raised with Mark Townsend. Most critically, can you identify for me a single piece of disinformation that I've spread. So no one from The Guardian can account for that claim that they've made, that I spread disinformation. But the readers' editor did acknowledge that they should have contacted me before printing that libellous claim. So, well yes, they did defame me; they've at least now acknowledged that they should have contacted me first, which I guess is better than nothing. So that led to this long, protracted back and forth where they asked me to provide a response which they promised to add to the end of the article. But they asked that it be under 200 words and they tried to repeatedly water it down. So I'll first just read you what I wrote to them, keeping to their 200 word guideline. I had a lot more to say, but I wanted to get this published, and so I kept it to 200 words and this is what I wrote: "Without contacting me, The Guardian has parroted a study's claim that I am 'the most prolific spreader of disinformation' on Syria among a 'network' of 'conspiracy theorists.' Yet neither the study or The Guardian offer any evidence for these defamatory assertions. The study does not even attempt to refute a single claim of mine. It faults me for arguing that the OPCW 'investigation into the Douma chemical attack was flawed'. It cannot contest this argument because my reporting on the OPCW's Douma cover-up scandal is based on damning OPCW leaks. They reveal that veteran inspectors found no evidence of a chemical attack in Douma, and that expert toxicologist ruled out chlorine gas as the victims' cause of death. But these findings were doctored and censored by senior OPCW officials. The Guardian also did not disclose that the study authors are state-tied and non-neutral: The Institute for Strategic Dialogue is funded by governments that were belligerents in the Syria proxy war; and the Syria Campaign was founded by a billionaire financier of the Syrian opposition. In promoting the study's evidence-free claims; omitting its conflicts of interest; and failing to contact its targets, The Guardian has spread disinformation against independent journalism on Syria". So that was my response to The Guardian, as they requested. They didn't print most of that, but they printed some of it. And specifically they took issue with printing anything about the OPCW leaks, which I find so telling and hilarious. And really what all of this is about. Because for more than two years now, I've been reporting on at The

Grayzone this explosive scandal at the OPCW, where the OPCW covered up its own investigation, when that investigation found no evidence of a chemical attack in Douma in April 2018. And the allegation that Syria was guilty of the chemical attack in Douma in April of 2018, that was the basis for the US, Britain and France bombing Syria that same month. And what these leaks from the OPCW show was that the investigators who went to Douma found no evidence of a chemical attack. Found evidence that pointed to this incident being staged on the ground by insurgents. And that expert toxicologist who they consulted even explicitly ruled out chlorine gas as the victims cause of death. But all of this was covered up by the OPCW. And that's what we've been reporting on. Nobody has written an article to date contesting my reporting. We've broken a lot of news on this story based on these leaks, and nobody has challenged them. So all they can do is accuse me of being a conspiracy theorist, russia backed, spreading disinformation; with no evidence. And this The Guardian article and the study it's based on to me was a part of it. So, because outlets have done such a good job of acting as state propagandists and refusing to acknowledge and grapple with the contents of the OPCW leaks; I think The Guardian, when I responded to them here, was nervous about me even mentioning them as well. Because once you look at the contents of these leaks and it's not just at The Grayzone, there's also a huge trove that's been published at WikiLeaks, they're so overwhelmingly damning. And they show, at minimum, a huge effort to cover up the Duma probe and doctor its findings. That's just uncontested at this point. So The Guardian resisted letting me even mention the OPCW leaks. And so when they first published my response, they kept any mention of the OPCW leaks excluded. The problem with that though was in the process to twist my words and to omit the OPCW leaks they misquoted me the first time. Which is not worth going through here, but basically they misquoted me. So then I wrote them, and then finally they published some approximations of what I initially said. So this is, I'll just read the note that they added to their story: Footnote added on July 10th, and so this comes nearly a month after the story was first published on June 19th. So on July 10th, they wrote: "Aaron Maté, who was not contacted prior to publication of this article, responded afterwards." Yes, I responded afterwards because that's the first time that you gave me the chance to respond to that, not before. "Maté said that, 'neither the study or the Observer offer any evidence [for the assertion that I am the 'most prolific spreader of disinformation' on Syria amongst a 'network' of '28 conspiracy theorists']"; he said the study did not substantiate that anything he had shared was disinformation and 'does not even attempt to refute a single claim of mine'. Maté said it faulted him for arguing that the OPCW 'investigation into the Douma chemical attack was flawed'" and by the way, let me just zoom out for a second. Calling it flawed is an understatement. It was a massive cover up. So even there they are actually watering down my words here. It wasn't flawed. It was a cover up, a scandalous one. Going back to the statement: "but he defended his reporting, suggesting the ISD study 'cannot contest' an argument that was based on OPCW leaks." So finally, I'm allowed to mention the damning OPCW leaks. "He also believed there was a conflict of interest because the ISD's funders included some western governments that had been involved in the war in Syria and because the Syria Campaign was founded by 'a billionaire financier' who was a supporter of the Syrian opposition." Again, that's putting it mildly, but

whatever, at least they printed it. And then in response to that, what's funny is they felt compelled to try to add a note to rebut me, to rebut my response. Which actually I suggested that they do, and this is what they said: Editor's note: "Both the ISD and the Syria Campaign list a diverse range of funders and describe themselves as 'fiercely independent.'" Which is an amazing line. So if someone describes themselves as fiercely independent, then that means that they're fiercely independent?! If Russian state television or if a Russian state funded think tank describe themselves as fiercely independent, would The Guardian take that at face value?! Probably not. And the other references there to a diverse range of funders is really funny. Let's look at the ISD's and Syria Campaign's diverse range of funders. So these diverse funders include the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. We also have the International Republican Institute, which is US government funded. We also have the National Democratic Institute, which is US government funded. We also have the US Institute for Peace, which is US government funded. We also have Open Society Foundations, which is the foundation of regime change oligarch George Soros. And we have the foundation of regime change oligarch Pierre Omidyar called the Omidyar Group. And Pierre Omidyar was involved in funding US backed groups inside Ukraine; so played a role in fomenting the coup in 2014. And Omidyar is also the owner of The Intercept, which I think helps explain why The Intercept has never acknowledged the existence of the OPCW whistleblowers and the damning OPCW leaks, while previously having promoted the claim that Syria was guilty of a chemical attack in Syria. And since they've done that, they've never once acknowledged the existence of the OPCW leaks. So that's the conduct of our fearless and adversarial progressive journalism site. The Intercept is not even acknowledging the OPCW whistleblowers and being owned by a billionaire who is funding propaganda studies aimed at journalists who actually report on these leaks that they will not acknowledge. So that's one set of funders of the Institute for Strategic Dialogue. But there's more. There's more diverse funders. There's the Australian Government, there is the Council of Europe, the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I'm skipping over a couple for our radio audience because there's so many governments here, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the European Commission, the Finnish Interior Ministry, the German Federal Agency for Civic Engagement, Global Affairs Canada the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS- that's the US government- the London Mayor's Office, New Zealand, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ofcom- that's British, I believe- Public Safety Canada and on and on and on. There's also the UK Foreign Office, the UK Home Office, the US Department of Homeland Security and the US state Department. So that, according to The Guardian, is the diverse range of funders behind the Institute for Strategic Dialogue. We have NATO governments, NATO government cutouts and allied regime change based foundations funded by billionaire oligarchs. Those are The Guardian sources here. And then the Syria Campaign, as I mentioned, founded by a major supporter of the Syrian opposition. And they work to promote the White Helmets, which is essentially a regime change organisation that works with Syrian death squads; was involved actually in the staging that occurred in Douma as the BBC's Riam Dalati reported that the White Helmets staged a hospital scene. And is also funded by the US, the UK and other state governments. So these are The Guardian's sources here. And it's so

funny to see them try to double down and pretend as if they are, in their words, fiercely independent. So then we have this line from The Guardian's response to me. "In 2020, the OPCW rebutted claims about its investigation into the Douma incident". And they link to an article in The Guardian from 2020 called "Inquiry strikes blow to Russian denials of Syrian chemical attack". Now notice how vague the sentence is: "In 2020, the OPCW rebutted claims about its investigation". What claims did it rebut? Did it rebut the claims that I've made, which is that there was a massive cover up and that critical findings were censored; such as the findings of toxicologists who ruled out chlorine gas as the cause of death. No, this inquiry or this supposed inquiry by the OPCW basically tried to character assassinate the dissenting OPCW whistleblowers that we know about, Ian Henderson and Dr. Brendan Whelan, by claiming that they had a minor role in the investigation and incomplete information. Now, I've already rebutted those things before in multiple articles in The Grayzone, which I will link to; no need to relitigate them here. But the point is, that enquiry did not rebut the core claims at the heart of this whole scandal; whether or not the OPCW doctored its own findings. They tried to change the subject to false claims about the inspectors role, the dissenting inspectors role, and they did that because they could not address the actual evidence of doctoring and censoring of the probe. So when The Guardian says that the OPCW rebutted claims, there's a reason they don't say the OPCW rebutted claims about a cover up is because the OPCW did not report those claims about a cover up at all. They tried to change the subject by making false claims, in falsely minimising the inspectors role in the probe. And in the case of Dr. Brendan Whelan, that line of attack was especially disingenuous because Dr. Brendan Whelan was the chief scientific coordinator of the Douma probe when the OPCW went to Douma. And accordingly he wrote the original report. So to pretend as the OPCW did that he had a minor role in the probe is contradicted by the facts. Including the fact that he authored the team's original report, the one that got censored because it reached the wrong conclusions and said the wrong things. So that's the state of The Guardian. And look, they have not retracted their story. They have not substantiated a single claim that they made. As you can see from my phone call with Mark Townsend, they can't. But at least they acknowledge that they should have contacted me first and they let me publish somewhat of a reply. So what is all this really about? This is not just trying to smear me and smear other people who report accurately on the OPCW scandal and the broader dirty war in Syria that it was a part of. This also is about trying to lay the groundwork for censoring us. Because they can't challenge us on the merits. So if you read this report, Deadly Disinformation, there's a section at the end where they essentially call for us to be censored. They talk about the harm that this causes in the real world. And they even claim that we've made it harder for western policymakers to make decisions, because somehow our disinformation has muddled the information space. That's actually what they say in this report. And what they're trying to do there is justify censoring us. Getting our Twitter accounts banned, getting our YouTube accounts banned; that's what I really think that this is about. And that speaks to how damning this OPCW scandal is. Because it's so overwhelmingly damning to the narrative. The narrative that has been used to help justify a decade long, dirty war in Syria in which the US and its allies spent billions of dollars arming

sectarian death squads to overthrow the government and to justify murderous sanctions that have crippled Syria and to justify airstrikes on Syria. A big part of that narrative was that the Syrian government was guilty of chemical weapons attacks. And Douma in 2018 was not the first time this allegation was made. But Douma in 2018 is the first time that the OPCW actually got on the ground and investigated for itself an alleged chemical attack. Because every single other chemical weapons investigation by the OPCW in Syria has entailed the OPCW not being allowed to visit the site. Because that site was controlled by rebels and sectarian death squads and it was too dangerous to get there. And when they tried to get to some of these areas, they've actually come under attack. So in those investigations, the OPCW has in fact relied on the White Helmets, which works hand in hand with insurgent groups, to give them samples from the scene. And the OPCW has pretended that somehow that evidentiary chain of custody is valid when previously, before all this happened, the OPCW had said they would never, ever rely on evidence that they can't collect for themselves. And this time in Douma, they did collect the evidence for themselves. And the result was, as the OPCW leaks show, that they found no evidence of the chemical attack in Douma and they found evidence pointing to this incident being staged. So this investigation is so damning to the narrative and accordingly, that's why it was covered up. Which raises another aspect of the story that people in establishment circles don't want to get out. Which is that not only was this allegation against Syria that it carried out a chemical weapons attack baseless, but also the OPCW was compromised to cover that, which makes this scandal even worse. Because you have the US and its allies bombing Syria on false grounds, as the OPCW leaks show, but then you also show the OPCW being compromised by these same governments to cover up the damning evidence. So that's a major scandal. And because it's so damning to the narrative, you see media outlets across the spectrum refuse to report on the story. The Grayzone has, a few other smaller outlets have. But otherwise, if you look at western media, The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Intercept, which has never acknowledged the OPCW leaks, Democracy Now!, I mean, across the spectrum, you have a refusal to grapple with this scandal. The BBC, to the extent it's covered this story, has put out propaganda attacking the whistleblowers and attacking people like myself and a group of British academics, and my colleague Max Blumenthal and others who have tried to bring attention to the story. We've debunked that podcast before here at The Grayzone. But that's the extent of media coverage of this issue; its' attempts to minimise and whitewash the OPCW scandal and attack those who report on it. And The Guardian, in choosing to act as a stenographer for a state backed study becomes the latest example of that. And it's telling to me and just interacting with them, whether it's that phone call with Mark Townsend or in my long email exchange with their editor and trying to get a correction, just how committed they are to not acknowledging the basic facts of the story and to smearing those who report on it. So that's what it is. We'll have more on the OPCW scandal soon. I have more reporting to come. As always, thank you for supporting us here at The Grayzone and stay tuned.

END