

Whistleblower SMEARED ONLINE After Calling Out Gaza Aid Site Atrocities

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Glenn Greenwald (GG): Let me ask you about this – what I consider – reporting you did. I don't know if you consider it journalism. I definitely consider it journalism. And I'm a big fan of independent journalism. And to me what you did is a classic vibrant case of why it's so important. So just to quickly set it up and I'll let you tell the story, but there is a Green Beret who was working with the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, which is the organization that Israel and the United States created to keep the UN and all other groups out to deliver food. It's been an utter disaster on every level, responsible for not just famine, but people being massacred when they line up to get food, starving people over and over and over, including into this week. And he basically came out and denounced the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation in a lot of very compelling ways, and made a big media round. And of course, as always happens to anybody who effectively criticized Israel, he became the subject of an immediate smear campaign, much of which was false and the main attack on him was false and proven so by the work that you did. So can you just tell the story of how that happened, how that caught your attention and why you decided to go do the work you did to debunk this?

Melissa Witte (MW): Yeah, sure. So like I said, I was married to a Green Beret. So when I hear people kind of talk about – you know, my dad was in the military, I was younger when he retired, but still. I've just kind of been around the military my entire life. I know how the American military is, and I'm not saying it's perfect by any means. Of course, I'm vehemently against the Iraq War, a lot of American foreign policy and whatnot. But our soldiers – and just something that's arced me for years is when people say the IDF is the best moral army, right? When American politicians in particular say that, because I think, number one, it's such a slap in the face to the American military. It's just gross. But also I personally know, I've heard the stories for years from soldiers and whatnot – our soldiers don't do these things. Our soldiers don't dress up in lingerie when they're doing house sweeps, right? They don't smash little kids' toys and record themselves and, you know, post these things or even take pictures or souvenirs of these things. That just doesn't happen. And if it did happen, there would be serious consequences for it. We have actual systems set up in place. Throughout the war on terror we have tried soldiers for crimes – you know, like premeditated murder, setting things

up, even theft of personal property when they were on raids and whatnot. I know of actual prosecutions that happened because of that. So when I hear that, it enrages me. But what I encountered with this thing: So, when Tony Aguilar first came out, number one, I didn't need to hear his story. I already believed the Palestinians because they've been telling us that these things have been happening for at this point, it's been two months, so I believed him because I already believe Palestinians because they've already shown. I mean, they're the ones posting the videos every day, right? But I came across this account that was really trashing him. So I called my ex-husband and I asked him, do you know this guy? And he knew of him, didn't really know him but he had heard the name and knew who he was.

GG: Tony or the person attacking him?

MW: No, I mean, that was an anon account. Apparently, they're supposed to be a Green Beret, but no. Anyway, he knew the name. And I asked him if he knew anything about him. He's like, no, I asked them if he had heard any of this stuff and he's, like, No, definitely not. So I knew that he would know if this guy was super bad, right? Then what happens is is that

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GG: Before you get to the attacks on him, can you just summarize what his whistleblowing was about in general? You said, you know, you didn't need to hear his story. But what was his story in general?

MW: So he's part of the GHF, which is the Gaza Humanitarian Fund, and they have now set up four distribution sites in Gaza. Right? So what these are, they're to distribute food, not water. We learned from him later. But they are these four sites that they're the only distribution sites there. I'm so sorry, my dog.

GG: Trust me, we understand.

MW: Of course. I have no idea where everybody else is at.

GG: We don't mind dog interruptions. We like them. Go ahead.

MW: So they had these four sites set up. And the way that the system is set up right now, because they only have the four, is that they announce when they're going to open on their Instagram, WhatsApp and excuse me, not Instagram, but Telegram, WhatsApp and Facebook pages, the GHF. Right? So Palestinians are not allowed to hang out around the distribution centers. They have to go home, they have to disperse. And then so what you have is you have people walking every day, sometimes miles to come to these distribution centers, and then it's announced online when it's going to open. And then they're open anywhere from six to 15 minutes with an average opening of 11 minutes. And it's like a free for all. People just run in and they grab whatever they can. Right? So technically it's set up to draw Hamas out, right? So it's set up as this survival of the fittest kind of thing, because you have to be strong and fast, essentially, to get the most supplies, right? So that's the idea behind it. They're running

facial recognition the whole time. And this is why the UN wouldn't participate in any of these distribution centers, because they said they were being used as bait and it goes against humanitarian law. It's antithetical, it's unethical. Everything about it is just wrong. So this is why the UN won't participate. And this is actually why the initial company, I believe, that was contracted by the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, they backed out at the last minute. They just said that this was not neutral, it was unethical and that they could not abide by humanitarian law by participating in this setup. Regardless, a new company comes in, I believe it's UG solutions.

GG: It's a contractor. It's like a private corporation.

MW: Right.

GG: It's not part of the government.

MW: Right. But they are willing to do it and this is what they set up. And this is what Tony Aguilar becomes a contractor for. From what I've read online, it's pretty good pay. It's about a ten thousand dollar sign on bonus and then it's \$1500 a day. And so they get these guys, these kind of retired, you know, special forces, retired military types that go over there. And they are the armed guards, essentially, right? So they're helping to set this up. But yet again, it's this free for all where people are just running in and it's only open for a very, very limited amount of time. So what happened with Aguilar is he's there – number one, he's very disturbed by the setup. And then, I believe it was the second day, because it opened on May 28th, I believe it was the 29th he said he had – I'm sorry, let me go back real quick. When the site closes, the IDF is using live fire to disperse the crowds. And this is how we are ending with people getting shot and killed every day from these distribution centers. And it's anywhere from 50 to 100 people every single day. I mean, I think I've seen as high as 149 people in one day. It just violates every law of consciousness, of humanitarian law, international law. But we won't even go there. Tony Aguilar witnesses this one day. I believe it's May 29th, the second day it's open. He sees this little boy walking. Because this little boy is late to the free for all. And there's nothing left because, of course, it's set up for men – the strongest, the fittest. And he's only able to grab, I guess, like a handful of rice and lentils or something like that, or it's a torn bag of rice. And he walks up to Aguilar and he's – sorry. He is really grateful and he walks up to Aguilar and he gives him a hug and tells him thank you in English. And this little boy who is clearly malnourished, dehydrated. And it really bothers him that he's... You know, he's taken aback. And then the boy walks away. I don't know if it was that day or it was the next day, but there's some kind of dispersal fire. And anyways, this little boy who's like five years old gets shot. And that really impacted Aguilar. And he becomes very bothered by it. And he starts voicing problems with this setup. He doesn't like it. He knows, number one, that that they are in violation of international law. These are war crimes that are being committed. He is a witness to a war crime. And I guess more importantly for him on a personal level is the fact that he is in Gaza on a tourist visa. He has no diplomatic immunity to what he's witnessing, right? So these men, as of right now, these Americans over there, they don't actually have any international protection from prosecution.

So he becomes concerned. He starts voicing dissent. And the GHF doesn't like that very much. So what happens is they end up firing him, I guess. He has some back and forth with them. He comes home – I haven't watched all of the Tucker Carlson interview, but I believe that at some point he conversed with his wife and she said, you need to go forward. You need to tell people what happened. And that's when he decided to blow the whistle. And I believe his first interview was with BBC.

GG: Right. And so that obviously makes a big impact. I mean, as you say, it shouldn't have taken that – for a lot of people it did, though – because the Gazans themselves have been documenting this. And of course, Israel has blocked any international media from entering Gaza. So they are purposely hiding what they're doing. And we rely on Gazans not just to say what's happened, but to document it. But in this case, here you have a former Green Beret who was very credible in how he tells the story. He's clearly emotionally affected, as anybody minimally decent would be. And he makes a big impact. And for that reason, he has to have his reputation destroyed. So one day there emerged online this tweet that, of course, went viral because all the Israel supporters madly spread it, basically saying that he is somebody who is a wife beater, that he had actually been prosecuted and convicted for beating his wife. And I saw this tweet everywhere. And I just assumed because there was like attached to it was a reported legal document, which purported to be the criminal case where he ended up either pleading guilty or being convicted of beating his wife. And you took that and began investigating it because it didn't seem right to you. And what led you to go investigate that? And what is it that you found ultimately?

MW: So I used to work as a paralegal in North Carolina. So I know the North Carolina law very well. And I'm pretty sure it's actually all 50 states that this is, but if you are convicted of assault on a female, you cannot own a gun. And you can't get a top secret security clearance from that. I mean, you are screwed if your job is that you have to hold a gun, essentially. So the idea that this lieutenant colonel had been convicted of assault on a female and then gotten a job as a contractor, that just wouldn't happen. It just would not. He would never pass. They would never hire him. And I highly doubt even just to work in Gaza, in another country, I don't believe that they would, that an American company would have hired him to begin with. So I knew that the conviction, the allegation that he had been convicted, I knew that was BS to begin with. I am a little familiar with it because I'm in Cumberland County, but I grew up in Harnett County, which is where –.

GG: This is North Carolina?

MW: Right. This is all North Carolina. And so I'm just really familiar with the area and whatnot. But I grew up in Harnett County. And again, the law office that I worked at, we worked in multiple counties around us. I know what certain things look like, right? So when I see this arrest warrant for Harnett County – and that's what it was, that is what was being posted online – a few things stuck out to me: number one, the zip code is a Fort Bragg zip code. And I know that right off the bat, because I used to have a marketing job and I oddly know all of the zip codes around this town. But the address was at Sanford, which is about 40

miles north. So that was wrong. Then I look at the docket number and it's missing the last three identifying numbers. That was wrong, I knew that right off the bat. And so I look up the address, but the address doesn't exist. So I'm like, OK, there's something weird here. I called up my podcast co-host Jenin. I ask her, she's like, well, let's look at the docket number and see if we can find anything. We look it up and nothing. It just comes up blank.

GG: Because she's a lawyer and she has access to those databases and knows how to research them.

MW: Right. And so I said, you know what, I'm just going to go down to the courthouse and see what they have, because if there's anything – because I don't want to tweet out this is fake unless I know 100 percent. So I go down to the court house and on their system I don't find anything on this. I start chatting with the clerk. She was super sweet. I showed her the picture of the mugshot. And she says oh, I think that's fake, because they don't put the date of birth on there. She said they only put the age. So we pulled up the Harnett County Sheriff's Arrest Warrant. And sure enough, it's a very, very similar format but there are little things that are just off. And one of them specifically is that it does not say the date of birth, it says the age. And of course, the other thing is the docket number and whatnot. So I start digging some more and I come across his divorce filings. Well, separation filings. And specifically there was a child custody battle and whatnot. So I start reading through this. And what I find is that there actually was a domestic incident that lines up with the date that's on this arrest warrant. And, you know, couples have problems sometimes and things happen and something happened here. There was clearly an issue and whatnot. But what actually happened is that the wife ended up writing a three page affidavit, kind of acknowledging, not kind of, she fully acknowledged that there was an incident involving alcohol and it was her fault, essentially. What happened is I guess she fell. I got the feeling maybe she fell down some stairs or whatnot. And her face was banged up. And then the next day she goes to work. They tell her, no, you have to go to the hospital. She gets to the hospital, and the hospital calls the sheriff. She tries to explain to the sheriff what happens that she had been drinking, they had gotten into a fight, she fell and of course, the Sheriff doesn't believe her, which I understand, but she's adamant about this, that, no, my husband has never touched me, my husband has never hit me, he is not abusive to me at all. And, you know, they have some problems and there's other things in the file that really confirm and back all of this up. It made me very confident in this letter, in this affidavit to the point where I was like, you know what, I have to – I called Jenin, I'm telling her. I'm having this kind of dilemma about – because I don't want to put these for people's personal lives out there, right? But at the same time, his credibility is very important and they're smearing this man. And after reading the file, I'm convinced he actually is innocent. He did not do it.

GG: And it was a fake document, right? There was no arrest warrant.

MW: I have not seen anything that – I know that this incident happened, right? But the thing with North Carolina is if she had just decided she wasn't going to cooperate with prosecution it wouldn't just have been dismissed by a judge. There would still be a record somewhere of

it. And yeah, whatever is online, that is not real. That is not what was put up with Harnett County. People are like, no, he definitely got arrested. And I'm like, well, somehow it got erased from existence. So now I actually do think it is fake. It's this weird thing, but I know 100 percent that he was not charged at all with this crime. So what I actually think happened is that someone knew that there was an incident between the two. And I do think that they made this fake kind of arrest warrant.

GG: And it viralized everywhere. I mean, every Israel supporter was retweeting.

MW: Everywhere, yeah. Yeah, everywhere – "he's a wife beater". I mean it was so nasty that I was like, you know, I have to go out there with this, that this didn't happen like this, number one. And I actually think that someone with information did take it and I do think they made this document. Again, I can't find it online, right? I can't find any record of it. I have looked through the whole Harnett county's – you know, they actually print a daily or a monthly report of all their felony and A1 arrests. It is not in that arrest, which should have been because assault on a female is an A1 misdemeanor. It should have been in that report, it's not in there. So it's scrubbed from existence. If that happened, which makes me think, no, he actually wasn't arrested.

GG: Also, with all this information that you just recounted, all the documents that you found, you went and reported online what you had discovered that this was basically a lie and a fabricated document.

MW: Oh, it was definitely a lie, it was definitely an exaggeration. And what I think is that someone knew that there had been an incident.

GG: Right. But created like a fake arrest warning from it.

MW: Right. And then just created this whole fake thing. And you have this account, this anonymous Green Beret Nap something. I don't even understand what it is. This guy's really stupid. I know he has had multiple meltdowns in my mentions.

GG: But this is the point, so that viralized fake document, you then posted your proof that this was fake and your reporting also viralized. Like everybody was retweeting it as well because of how widespread this fake accusation was and this document was. And he then came in your replies to try and argue with you and you destroyed him. He had no idea what he was talking about. Nothing he was saying made sense. But what I'm saying is, had there been proof, like, had there really been an arrest warrant back this up, this would be out there by now because it became very important to Israel supporters. And I do think – I mean, first of all, as you say, people who beat their wives definitely are guilty of something very immoral. We should use that to judge their character.

MW: Right.

GG: But it doesn't actually inform one way or the other about the credibility of his claims. But that's always the idea. You know, they did that with Daniel Alberg. He had the Pentagon papers showing the US government had lied for a decade about the Vietnam War. And they tried to break into his psychoanalysts office to find private life dirt on him, knowing that it would distract attention and it would make him look bad. People would want to look at the findings. That's what they always do. And it just is amazing how. How vicious and dirty they are that you criticize Israel in an effective way. And obviously, Green Beret, who went there and is telling a firsthand story that is very emotionally affecting, is a real danger to their whole narrative. And within days they have this fake document that they're circulating everywhere, accusing him of having been convicted of wife beating. And it's really amazing how much you put yourself in jeopardy if you criticize Israel in a meaningful way.

MW: Right. It's concerning because who wants to put themselves through that? Who wants to put their family through that, right? Who wants to put their children, their wife, anything like that? And the thing about Tony Aguilar is he's extremely convincing. Like I said, I didn't need his testimony because I'm very invested, I follow this stuff every day. But to your normie who doesn't follow any of it, he's very convincing, right? He has this kind of aura about him in that he's very confident in the way he speaks. And you don't feel like he's trying to manipulate you when you hear him talk. He's just telling it like it is. And he is this kind of no nonsense soldier. And so I definitely can see why he's such a threat to them. And so it just bothered me that the way that they were – it definitely bothered me this kind of really personal attack. Then when I started digging into all of this stuff, it just was so scummy. And we have to defend these people. We have to make it so that people can come out and blow the whistle and say what's wrong. So, yeah, I was like, well, I'm just going to do it. Thankfully, it did go viral. It got a lot of views, it got a lot of big accounts tweeting it and whatnot. And interestingly enough, I actually had about, I'd say maybe like 15 or 20 people saying that they're Green Berets and sending me dm's saying thank you for doing this and I knew this guy, this anonymous account, I knew he was full of crap, but yeah, this is really important that you did that and thank you. And, you know, even two people said that they had actually known Tony. They didn't understand why these attacks were coming on him. They both of them said they didn't know him that well, but they're like, he always kind of just seemed kind of straight laced to us. So I was grateful once, especially with those kinds of private messages and whatnot, but it makes it so – I still worry that it'll make it so that people don't want to speak out, still. Because who wants to put themselves through that?

GG: Well, you see what's happening. You know, I mean, Tucker Carlson three years ago was unanimously admired by the entire conservative movement. And now half the people spend every day accusing him of being a Qatari agent and an antisemite. And they've relied for so long on making examples of people who criticize Israel, and they've done a very effective job of it. They're thugs and bullies and they use the dirtiest techniques imaginable. But it's kind of spiraled out of control as we talked about before. There's just too many people seeing the light of day. The more stuff like this is done, you know, conditioning disaster preparedness funds from the US government on promising not to support or boycott Israel, the more

censorship for Israel, you know, the more people are going to be waking up and it's going to really cause a backlash. You already see it. I think it's going to get a lot worse.

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END

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