



Benjamin Sisko: War Criminal

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Let's take it for granted that if you are reading my blog, you know my thoughts about the United Federation of Planets as dystopian nightmare state. Today I will build on this argument with an example from *Deep Space Nine*.

DS9 gave us the Federation at war, and war can often bring about the worst in even the most benevolent of governments. My example, however, isn't about the Dominion War, a war so brutal it struck at the very ethos of Federation culture. Today, I'm interested in speaking for the Maquis. Let us turn to Captain Sisko, himself, for some context.

"On Earth there is no poverty, no crime, no war. You look out the window at Starfleet Headquarters and you see paradise. Well, it's easy to be a saint in paradise. But the Maquis do not live in paradise. Out there, in the Demilitarized Zone, all problems have not been solved yet. There are no saints, just people; angry, scared, determined people who are going to do whatever it takes to survive, whether it meets with the Federation approval or not."

In canon, the aforementioned DMZ was the by-product of a treaty that ended nearly twenty years of border skirmishes between the United Federation of Planets and the Cardassian Union. The apocrypha of this treaty is too long to detail. Sufficed to say, the Federation cut a deal with the Cardassians that saw Federation border worlds ceded to the Cardassian Union. The Federation colonists, however, refused to abandon their homes and soon found themselves forced to live under the Cardassian regime, stripped of their Federation citizenship. In response to Cardassian hostility and a Federation policy of non-interference in the DMZ, some disaffected colonists and former Starfleet officers formed the Maquis. The Maquis became the self-defence force/armed militia of the DMZ colonies.

The ultimate Maquis-Federation conflict, in my humble opinion, occurs in the episode *For The Uniform*. Sisko responds to growing Maquis aggression, under the leadership of Michael Eddington, through a heretofore unseen level of force from a Starfleet officer. Sisko detonates a photon torpedo loaded with Trilithium resin in the atmosphere of Solosos III. This act poisons the planet's atmosphere, rendering it uninhabitable for fifty years. The attack drives the Maquis from the planet, but also reduces hundreds of thousands of civilians on the planet to refugees. Sisko threatens continue bombing planets with Trilithium until the Maquis and Michael Eddington surrender.



I submit, Captain actions constitute a war crime.

Let's review, Captain Sisko, a decorated Starfleet officer, used weapons of mass destruction against an entire planet to send a message to an armed militia. Granted, one could make a case that the Maquis are the aggressors in their conflict with the Federation and the Cardassian Union. Granted, the Maquis attacked Federation starships prior to Sisko's bombing of Solosos III. However, a legitimate and right-thinking government does not suspend the rules of war because they are dealing with an enemy engaging in asynchronous warfare.

To frame Sisko's crime, I would turn to the Geneva Conventions, specifically the protocol additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I), 8 June 1977.

Article 51 – Protection of the civilian population

1. The civilian population and individual civilians shall enjoy general protection against dangers arising from military operations.

Sisko, by his own admission, attacked a planet to punish the Maquis for their aggression against two Starfleet ships and two Cardassian colonies.

2. The civilian population as such, as well as individual civilians, shall not be the object of attack. Acts or threats of violence the primary purpose of which is to spread terror among the civilian population are prohibited.

Not only did Sisko bomb Solosos III, but he also threatened a campaign of bombing in the DMZ unless Michael Eddington surrendered to Starfleet.

3. Civilians shall enjoy the protection afforded by this Section, unless and for such time as they take a direct part in hostilities.

Not all DMZ colonists are members of the Maquis, just as not all people who live in Afghanistan are members of the Taliban.

4. Indiscriminate attacks are prohibited. Indiscriminate attacks are:

(a) those which are not directed at a specific military objective;

Granted the Maquis base is the military objective, Sisko attacked the entire planet to get at it.



(b) those which employ a method or means of combat which cannot be directed at a specific military objective; or

Again, he attacked the planet, not the Maquis.

(c) those which employ a method or means of combat the effects of which cannot be limited as required by this Protocol; and consequently, in each such case, are of a nature to strike military objectives and civilians or civilian objects without distinction.

Same as above.

If the Federation is a benign and socially progressive organization, as we are lead to believe, then surely it is not unrealistic to expect their rules for warfare to be in-line with those established during the 20th century.

Were this the case, one might have expected an actual objection to Sisko's order from Lt. Commander Worf or Lt. Commander Dax. I won't hold Major Kira to the same standards as she's a member of the Bajorian Militia. The fact that Worf and Dax, senior Starfleet officers on the Defiant, execute the order without a formal protest tells me one of two things:

1) Starfleet's rules for protecting civilian lives during a war are less progressive than the Geneva Conventions; in which case I submit that Federation is as monstrous a regime as any modern nation who rejects said conventions e.g. North Korea. Also, QED on Sisko as a war criminal.

2) The Federation's and Starfleet's rules for protecting civilian lives during a war *are* comparable to our own; in which case Sisko and his crew were content to throw out the rule book. The senior staff, save Kira, are war criminals, and the rest of the bridge crew, right down to Cadet Nog, are complicit in their guilt.

The prosecution rests.