

Ask Libyans About “No-Fly Zones”. “A No-Fly Zone” in Syria is All Out War, Escalation...

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The implementation of a no-fly zone will inflame and escalate an already desperate situation

There is a growing demand from government politicians for a no-fly zone in Syria. Those calling for it, led by Conservative MP Andrew Mitchell, and echoed by Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson, are either culpably naive or more likely unconcerned about taking Britain into direct conflict not just with the Syrian military but with the Russians too.

The issue is not complicated. As today’s leaks show Hilary Clinton laid it out back in 2013 when she said, **“To have a no-fly zone you have to take out all of the air defenses, many of which are located in populated areas. So our missiles, even if they are standoff missiles so we’re not putting our pilots at risk— you’re going to kill a lot of Syrians.”**



Or, just last month, General Joseph Dunford, chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff admitted, “right now, for us to control all of the air space in Syria would require us to go to war against Syria and Russia; that’s a pretty fundamental decision”.

The situation in Aleppo and other parts of Syria is desperate. The idea of a no-fly zone can seem attractive because people rightly want there to be an effective humanitarian response. But as these two quotes outline, a no-fly zone would need to be secured by Western forces against opposition from Syria and Russia. Air defenses would have to be taken out and Syrian and Russian planes shot down. In the end a no-fly zone in Syria would work the same as the no-fly zone in Libya did, as a corridor for western military bombing.

The end result in Libya was a huge increase in the level of death and destruction in the country, the decapitation of the regime and the fragmentation of the country. In the case of Syria the added problem is that it would inevitably lead to confrontation with Russia. Incredibly, Andrew Mitchell shrugged off this risk on BBC’s Today programme on Tuesday by saying that Turkey had shot down a Russian plane and nothing happened.

People say the situation in Syria can get no worse, but they are wrong. As Emily Thornberry, Shadow Foreign Secretary explained today in parliament, “in a multi-played, multi-faceted civil war such as Syria, the last thing we need is more parties bombing”. Such action will inflame and escalate an already desperate situation leading not just to more agony on the ground Syria, but almost certainly to the break up of the country.

It is quite amazing that the views of MPs like Boris Johnson and Andrew Mitchell are taken seriously at all on issues of foreign policy. Andrew Mitchell voted for the Iraq War, for the intervention in Libya and twice for bombing in Syria. Johnson too has voted for every war he has been able to. If the daily reports of carnage and chaos in the news are not enough to convince people of the catastrophic effects of these escapades, they have been roundly condemned as chaotic disasters in a series of official reports, including Chilcot, the Select Committee Report on Libya, and the House of Commons Defence Committee report on the intervention in Syria.

These reports and the whole bloody history of the War on Terror are wilfully ignored in efforts to push for more war and presumably to try and undermine Jeremy Corbyn's anti-war Labour leadership. Each time we are told that this situation is different, that this time we are fighting a war for other peoples freedom. Each time the terrible death toll of the War on Terror multiplies and the anger against the West is further inflamed.

How many more innocent civilians are going to die, how many more catastrophes have to happen before the start the war coalition finally accept reality and admit that bombing foreign countries is not a path to peace or progress? What is needed is diametrically opposite; de-escalation and the most urgent push for a political solution.

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