

Events in Syria -taking sides against imperialist intervention

By [International Action Center](#)

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U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates' declared on March 25, 2011 - that there are 3 repressive regimes in the Middle East that must be condemned - Syria, Libya and Iran. Why is the U.S. targeting these particular countries?

The progressive political movement must avoid being just an echo and a justification of Pentagon war policy, especially whenever any developing country is in the cross hairs of a U.S. attack.

Consider: isn't Israel a criminally repressive regime against the Palestinian population? Aren't Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Morocco, Jordan, Yemen, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, Pakistan, Iraq, Afghanistan repressive regimes, military dictatorships and/or corrupt monarchies? All of these brutally repressive regimes have killed of thousands of their own population and could not survive one day with out decades of U.S. military, economic, diplomatic and political support. Is the U.S., with the largest prison population in the world and more weapons than the rest of the world put together, a repressive regime? It is the source of repression, destabilization, dictatorships and wars.

It is within this context that progressives must view the demonstrations that have been taking place for two months against the Bashar Assad government in Syria. The regime has both acknowledged that reforms are essential and responded with force. The actual character and the social forces involved in these demonstrations remains unclear, as does the political direction of the Syrian opposition.

The events in Syria are connected to the social explosion shaking the Arab world. Washington and all the old regimes tied to it in the region are trying desperately to manage and contain this still unfolding mass upheaval into channels that do not threaten their domination of the region.

The attitude of the U.S. government towards these upheavals has varied widely. When the U.S. supports the government, it takes a "hands-off" or even a hostile approach to the uprising, as in Bahrain and Yemen. The U.S. and Saudi Arabia made every effort to save the Saleh dictatorship in the face of a massive uprising. But when the country has taken an independent course from that desired by the U.S., Washington supports peoples genuine grievances with intense military, political, diplomatic support, new sanctions, sabotage teams, covert actions and extensive media coverage. All focused to further destabilize and inflame the situation.

The corporate media and the U.S. State Department give the impression that most of Syria has taken to the streets against Assad. Unlike her benign attitude toward the monarchy in Bahrain, and the 32 year dictatorship in Yemen, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton constantly criticizes and attacks the Syrian government. Anyone trying to understand the developments in that region has to ask, "Why the difference?"

It is clear that the U.S. and its allies are trying to use these protests in Syria to their own advantage. This has nothing to do with any demands raised by Syrian workers, who are suffering from an austerity plan imposed by the International Monetary Fund in 2006. Despite the difficulties for many Syrian workers, many Middle East pundits, even those from the establishment, admit that the Syrian government has a strong base of support in the population.

More than 6,000 aerial sorties and 3,700 U.S./NATO bombings of Libya has clarified where imperialism stands regarding that country. But Syria is also targeted by imperialism, even if it is not yet the target of U.S.-NATO air force. Decades of Zionist occupation of Syrian land has put Syria on the front line, and Damascus has supported and is currently supporting the Palestinian resistance and its refusal to recognize the Zionist occupation. The imperialists also condemn Syria's assistance to Hezbollah in their struggle to end the Israeli occupation of Lebanon and they condemn Syria's strategic alliance with Iran. The NATO Powers want to stamp out all support for any form of resistance to their domination and make these countries again, as captives of Western imperialism, mere day laborers for multi-national corporations.

Wikileaks exposes U.S. role

An article entitled "U.S. secretly backed Syrian opposition groups" by Craig Whitlock (Washington Post, April 18) described in great detail the information contained in U.S. diplomatic cables that Wikileaks had sent to news agencies around the world and posted on its web site. The article summarizes what these State Department cables reveal about the secret funding of Syrian political opposition groups, including the beaming of anti-government programming into the country via satellite television.

The article describes the U.S.-funded efforts as part of a "long-standing campaign to overthrow the country's autocratic leader, Bashar al-Assad." These efforts began under President George W. Bush. They continued under President Barack Obama, even though Obama claimed to be rebuilding relations with Syria and posted an ambassador to Damascus for the first time in six years.

It is not difficult to see why the U.S. and its clients in the region, including Israel and the corrupt dependent monarchies of Jordan, Qatar, United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, want to see "regime change" in Syria.

Syria is one of the few Arab states that have no relations with Israel. Several Palestinian resistance organizations have offices-in-exile in Syria, including Hamas. Syria has been allied closely with Iran and with Hezbollah in Lebanon.

The Syrian state represents contradictory forces. It has at times tried to defend the gains won in the anti-colonial struggles and upheavals by the Arab masses in 1960s and 1970s. But the regime in Syria has also harshly repressed efforts of mass movements based in

Lebanon and Syria that wanted to take the struggle further in the mid-1970s.

Years of U.S. sanctions and past destabilization efforts have also had a cumulative effect. The state apparatus, facing the real threat of outside intervention, has acted conservatively to avoid change.

Syria has also had to provide for more than 500,000 Palestinian refugees and their descendants for the past 63 years. Unlike in Lebanon and Jordan, Palestinians in Syria have access to health care, education and housing.

The U.S. occupation of Iraq stimulated sectarian violence, which created the refugee crisis and displaced more than 25 percent of the Iraqi population. More than 1.5 million of these Iraqi refugees have flooded into Syria. This was a huge influx for a country with a population in 2006 of 18 million.

The unexpected arrival of these Iraqi refugees has had a dramatic impact on the infrastructure, on guaranteed free elementary and high schools, on free health care, on housing availability and other areas of the economy. It has led to a rise in costs across the board. The prices of foodstuffs and basic goods have gone up by 30 percent, property prices by 40 percent and housing rentals by 150 percent. (Middle East Institute, Dec. 10, 2010 report on Refugee Cooperation) The regime's acceptance of IMF demands also increased inequalities and suffering among Syria's workers and poor.

The diverse nationalities, religions and cultural groupings in Syria and especially its workers and poor have every right to raise demands of the regime. But just as the other peoples of the region, what the Syrians need most is an end to constant, unrelenting U.S. intervention.

Antiwar activists, trade union and community activists and progressives fighting for social justice must take a firm stand against all forms of U.S. and European intervention in Syria and against all countries in the region

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