

Syria: Obama Threatens U.S. Military Intervention

By [Sara Flounders](#)

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In-depth Report: [SYRIA](#)

President Barack Obama on Aug. 18 demanded that Syrian President Bashar al-Assad step down, saying that the Syrian leader's days are numbered. The governments of Britain, France and Germany joined in this demand. This statement is blatant imperialist interference in Syria's internal affairs. More than that, it is an open threat to intervene militarily in another country in that region, just as the U.S. and its European allies have done already in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Somalia, with rockets and bombs. It is a threat against the Syrian people of something like the last five months of slaughter of the Libyan people.

Two weeks earlier, on Aug. 5, Russia's envoy to NATO Dmitry Rogozin told the media that NATO is planning a military campaign against Syria to overthrow the Assad regime. In an interview with Russia's Izvestia daily newspaper, Rogozin said the North Atlantic Treaty Organization is also probably establishing a long-reaching goal of preparing an attack on Iran. (Reported in Xinhua, Aug. 5)

When U.S. imperialism engages in an attack on any government or movement, as it is now on Syria, it is cowardly to be neutral. It is rank betrayal to stand on the same side as the imperialist octopus, which seeks to dominate the world. This has been an ABC for workers' movements through 150 years of class-conscious struggles. It is the very basis of Marxism. Whatever one's assessment of the government under attack, any attempt at imperialist intervention, whether through sanctions or through armed attack, must be opposed.

Obama's double standard

The Obama administration has called out only for the governments of Libya and Syria to resign. You would think there are no other governments that are using the force of the state against a portion of the population.

Look across the Atlantic to Washington's closest ally, in London. That government just sent 16,000 police against the rebellious people of the capital city. They sent people to jail for four years for sending messages with blackberries. These same police killed 333 civilians in England over the last 13 years. And the state power in Spain fired rubber bullets at demonstrators camped out on Plaza Catalunya in Barcelona. In Greece they repress strikers and demonstrators. And Washington cheers on the state power in all three allied capitals for punishing these legitimate rebellions.

Even more blatant is the repression in Bahrain, a country of a half-million people where the U.S. Fifth Fleet is stationed. With dozens of protestors killed and hundreds arrested and tortured, the monarchy there has received no criticism from Washington. And that's even after Saudi troops invaded the island to help put down the uprising.

Syria's internal situation may be difficult to understand, but in this unfolding struggle clear statements against U.S. destabilization efforts have come from Hugo Chávez in Venezuela, Hezbollah Secretary General Seyyed Hassan Nasrallah in Lebanon and several exiled leaders of Hamas, the Palestinian organization that was elected by the people of Gaza. These political leaders have experienced first-hand U.S. destabilization campaigns that used corporate media fabrications, externally financed opposition groups, targeted assassinations, "special operations" sabotage and well-trained Internet operatives.

The threat to Syria is connected to the social explosion shaking the Arab world. U.S. imperialism 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 imperialist domination of the region.

The U.S. and its collaborators are also trying to divide and undermine the two main wings of the forces resisting imperialist domination — the Islamic forces and the secular nationalist forces — which together overthrew the U.S.-backed dictatorships in Egypt and Tunisia. There is now a concerted U.S. effort to turn these same political forces against two regimes in the region that have opposed U.S. domination in the past — Libya and Syria.

Both Libya and Syria have their own developmental problems, which are exacerbated by the general global capitalist crisis and decades of compromise imposed on them as they tried to survive in a hostile environment of unrelenting attacks — political, sometimes military and including economic sanctions.

The U.S./NATO bombing of Libya has clarified where imperialism stands regarding that country. Syria is also targeted by imperialism — because of its refusal to recognize the Zionist occupation, its assistance to Hezbollah in their struggle to end the Israeli occupation of Lebanon and its strategic alliance with Iran.

On the side of the supposedly "democratic opposition" are such reactionaries as Sen. Joseph Lieberman, chair of the powerful Senate Homeland Security Committee, who called on the U.S. to bomb Syria next, after Libya. Outspoken supporters of the opposition in Syria include James Woolsey, former CIA director and adviser to Sen. John McCain's presidential campaign.

Wikileaks exposes U.S. role

An article entitled "U.S. secretly backed Syrian opposition groups" in the April 18 Washington Post described the Wikileaks report on U.S. diplomatic cables. 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," which began under President George W. Bush and continued under President Barack Obama. Now Obama's open declaration against Assad makes it no longer necessary to see secret cables to know where U.S. imperialism stands.

The Syrian government has charged that snipers fired into demonstrations, shooting army and police in an effort to have police open fire on demonstrators. Weapons have been

smuggled in from Lebanon, Turkey and Iraq. Rumors, anonymous Internet postings and satellite television reports aimed at heightening sectarian differences are part of the destabilization campaign.

Dual character of Syria

It is not difficult to see why U.S. imperialism and its pawns in the region, including Israel and the corrupt dependent monarchies of Jordan, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, would 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 is allied closely with Iran and with the Hezbollah organization in Lebanon.

Syria today is not socialist nor a revolutionary country. Capitalism with its resulting inequality has not been overturned. There is a capitalist class in Syria. Many within it have benefited from “reforms” that sold formerly state-owned industries to private capital. Thus, the Syrian state represents contradictory forces.

Years of U.S. sanctions and past destabilization efforts have also had a cumulative effect. The state apparatus, ever fearful of continuing outside intervention, has become fearful of change.

Impact of Iraq war

To escape the last eight years of U.S. occupation, more than 1.5 million Iraqis have flooded into Syria, whose population in 2006 was 18 million. According to a 2007 report by the office of the U.S. High Commissioner for Refugees, this influx impacted all facets of life in Syria, particularly the services offered by the state to all citizens and refugees.

The unexpected arrival of these Iraqi refugees has strained Syria’s infrastructure, including guaranteed free elementary and high schools, free health care, housing availability and other areas of the economy and has increased 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.

Iraqi refugees also benefited from Syrian state subsidies in gasoline, food, water and other essential goods provided to everyone. Such a large mass of unemployed people led to the lowering of wages and increased competition for jobs. The impact of the global economic downturn during this difficult period added to the problems. (Middle East Institute, Dec. 10, 2010, report on Refugee Cooperation)

The diverse nationalities, religions and cultural groupings in Syria, the unemployed youth and impoverished sectors of the population, have every right to be part of this process. But what they need most is an end to constant, unrelenting U.S. and other imperialist intervention. U.S. and Europe: Hands off Syria!

Sara Flounders is co-director of the International Action Center

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Articles by: [Sara Flounders](#)

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