

Syria: One Country, Two Stories

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The battle that has been raging in the southern Syrian city of Homs and that now seems to have been resolved with a 'win' for the government, though it would seem at a terrible cost in lives, is now the subject of a follow-up by the Mainstream Media (MSM); how to care for the survivors, and, what exactly went on in Homs? This is how the BBC reported it:

"Red Cross convoy is refused permission to deliver supplies to the Baba Amr district of Homs, which has been subjected to a month-long bombardment by Syrian forces." — [Red Cross Convoy stopped on Homs](#), BBC News, 2 March 2012[1]

Why has the BBC described the battle between two forces, both heavily armed as "a month-long bombardment by Syrian forces" when the reality on the ground is obviously nothing like the Beeb's simplistic, government-inspired newsspeak? The statement is not a lie but it's not the truth either.

"Access to the area has been closed by the authorities for security considerations. The Red Cross humanitarian convoy suspended the evacuation of the wounded from the city on February 26th, when it failed to obtain security guarantees from the warring factions." (my emph. WB) Voice of Russia 3 March 2012

One witness to events in Homs had this to say:

"I saw with my own eyes the killing, the bloodshed and the bodies on the streets. Many of the people in Homs have not sided with the government or rebels they just want to be left alone and survive. From what I saw the blame for the violence lies equally with the government and opposition rebels, who also fired missiles indiscriminately at government forces." — 'Self-appointed revolutionaries shooting people in the streets. (Homs eyewitness', Ekaterina Kretova, [RT](#), 2 March 2012 (my emph. WB)

And another:

A Russian resident of Homs told RT by phone that while in the town the [rebels acted barbarously](#). "They kill both young and old. They steal people from their homes and chop them into pieces, put them in plastic bags and throw them out!" — (Ibid)

"Aisling Byrne of the Conflicts Forum in Beirut, told RT the Red Crescent twice

sent ambulances to Baba Amr, but both times they were blocked by the FSA [Free Syrian Army]. — (ibid)

The FSA is engaged in an armed rebellion against the Syrian state and doing it from inside a city, with the inhabitants caught in the middle. In reality they are being held hostage by the FSA, itself a war crime. So how is the government to respond to an armed insurrection and most certainly *not* a popular revolution whatever grievances the people have?

The BBC of course is still punting the “activists say...” line

“Footage on state TV on Thursday and Friday showed snow and destruction in Baba Amr and activists’ video showed residents in Bab Sbaa” — [Red Cross Convoy stopped on Homs](#), BBC News, 2 March 2012

The BBC slants the story by implying the regime wants to clean up the mess first:

“The delay has given rise to opposition allegations that government forces were trying to get rid of evidence of summary killings.” (ibid)

Or could it be that the FSA wants to ‘get rid of evidence of summary killings’? Either way, it’s a horrendous situation but one caused directly by the Western military alliance which is supporting, encouraging and arming groups like the FSA and the Syrian National Council to wage war on the government. The prelude is the year-long campaign to destabilize the Syrian regime, using the not inconsiderable force the US/EU has brought to bear via its ‘diplomatic’ sanctions, embargoes, arm-twisting, threats and no doubt bribes if past experience is anything to go by.

Let’s cut to the thrust: There are two issues here: The first, and for the West, the most important issue is the removal of the Assad regime by one means or another regardless of their record on human rights. Something the [record shows](#) has been a consistent approach by the West since the 1950s during which time it has alternately courted and tried to thwart the Assad regime.

The second issue is that of the behavior of the Assad regime and, our self-assumed right to dictate to Syria what it should and shouldn’t do as a ‘sovereign’ state no matter how much we deplore (or support) the policies of the Assad regime.

The two issues of course have been joined at the hip by the West. Hence as long as a country gives the West a free access to its economy and its resources, the kind of government it has is irrelevant in the world of *real politik*. Else why is the Empire not pushing for sanctions and isolation of the autocratic and brutal regimes of Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Kuwait, all, not coincidentally, involved in the attempt to overthrow the Assad regime?

Defend or not, the Syrian government. Those of you on the left who are crying for revolution in Syria, are firstly most fortunate not to be doing it *in* Syria, where a life and death battle is going on between the right to national independence or de facto serfdom to Western capitalism. Of course this not how the 4th International views things. According to *Socialist Resistance*, the voice of the Fourth International:

“The Syrian people have lived for decades under the repression of a bloody and corrupt oligarchy. Power is monopolized by the Baath party, under the aegis of the family of former dictator Hafez el Assad who has been succeeded by his son Bashar.”

No doubt true, but by no means the worst transgressor of human and civil rights in the region (or the world). But,

“After the beginning of the revolutions in the Arab region, some may have thought that this regime would escape the process, due to its mask as a resistant to global imperialism and to the State of Israel, and the strength of its repressive apparatus. — [‘Solidarity with the Syrian Revolution’](#), Socialist Resistance, 3 March 2012. From a statement by the International Committee of the Fourth International

Note the phrase “mask as a resistant to global imperialism” because according to the 4th International, Syria is not a ‘real’ anti-imperialist state merely pretending to be one (though to what end I have to ask?). Are Cuba and Venezuela pretending to be anti-imperialist states as well? Was Libya? Syria is a ‘real’ anti-imperialist state that lives in a *real* imperialist world and it’s a wonder that there are still any ‘real’ anti-imperialist states left, let alone any real ones.

Juvenile stuff. As far the 4th Int. is concerned it’s all or nothing. “Either you’re for revolution or you’re a counter-revolutionary” nonsense and all of it predicated not on the *real* situation that Syria finds itself in but the 4th Int.’s futile cry for ‘real’ revolutions (in other peoples’ lands).

Am I defending the Assad regime by taking this line? No, not at all, I’m defending the right of the Syrian people to control their own fate, insofar as they can in a world dominated by the Empire and, one might add, in spite of the ‘assistance’ being offered by the Western left.

For finally, when *Socialist Resistance* writes “The Syrian people have lived for decades under the repression of a bloody and corrupt oligarchy”, it could just as well have been the mainstream press talking. It serves no other purpose than to reinforce the imperial ‘Right to Protect’ doctrine. Who needs enemies with friends like these?

And surely this is the back story to the R2P scam, one that targets a Western left that has blown hot and cold on the issue of human and civil rights and thus feels particularly vulnerable to the accusation that it supports ‘authoritarian dictatorships’ eg, Cuba, Venezuela and perhaps, but not quite? North Korea. It’s a case of ‘the devil you do, the devil you don’t’.

What an irony! ‘Human rights’ for the West is a malleable notion, utilized as a political and ideological weapon to be applied most selectively and discriminately, according to which ‘side’ the government of any particular country happens to be on (and of course, it’s ability to resist). And it can perform this double act in full knowledge of the fact that the state/corporate media will faithfully push R2P. After all, who isn’t *for* human rights? But perhaps not for all?

Note

1. For a 'blow-by-blow' analysis of this process at work read *Media Lens* excellent account: ['Iran Next In Line For Western Intervention?'](#)

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