

Down with Gaddafi! No to US-NATO intervention!

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The *World Socialist Web Site* supports the struggle of the Libyan masses to overthrow the regime of Muammar Gaddafi, a right-wing bourgeois dictatorship that has long collaborated with the imperialist powers, and replace it with a democratic and genuinely popular government. But we entirely reject the claim that the overthrow of Gaddafi either should be achieved or can only be achieved through the intervention of the United States and NATO.

The instrument for the liberation of the Libyan people is the Libyan working class in alliance with the masses throughout North Africa and the Middle East.

It is a long-established principle of the socialist movement to oppose imperialist interventions. The experiences of the past decade in Iraq and Afghanistan, not to mention the entire antecedent history of the twentieth century, have underscored the correctness of this principle.

The overthrow of Gaddafi by a US-NATO intervention rather than by the working class in the leadership of the oppressed masses would not only mean the abortion of the revolution, but the installation of yet another colonialist regime. It would position imperialist military forces on the borders of both Tunisia and Egypt, where popular uprisings forced out longstanding dictators but as yet have left the state machinery and the capitalist social structure untouched. It would set the stage for further incursions against the revolutionary struggles being generated by the breakdown of world capitalism.

This is, in fact, the major motive behind the plans to directly intervene militarily against Gaddafi, not sympathy for the Libyan people.

As a NATO defense ministers' conference opens today, the United States and the European powers are debating an intervention. American, British, French, Italian and German military forces are on the move, preparing for measures such as the imposition of a no-fly zone, the landing of military supplies to Libyan rebel forces, and

direct naval and air strikes against the government of Gaddafi.

The campaign for military intervention in Libya was reinforced Wednesday by an editorial in the *New York Times*, the principal editorial voice of US imperialism. Its open endorsement of military action is shameful, reactionary and dishonest.

The editorial begins by criticizing the Obama administration for not moving fast enough to organize and justify an American military role in the civil war that has erupted in the oil-rich country over the past three weeks. Obama is chided for “conflicting messages” and “public hand-wringing” by officials who have pointed out some of the practical pitfalls of imposing a no-fly zone.

Then the *Times* gets down to business, making the case on “humanitarian” grounds for US intervention in Libya. While rejecting the use of ground troops—few of which are available in any case, given the demands of ongoing wars in Afghanistan and Iraq—the editorial declares that “some way must be found to support Libya’s uprising and stop Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi from slaughtering his people.”

This posture of concern over civilian casualties in Libya has no credibility whatsoever. There have been no editorial pronouncements from the *Times* demanding US military action to stop previous massacres in Tunisia and Egypt or the ongoing killing of opposition protesters in Iraq, Yemen, Bahrain, Oman, Algeria, Morocco or Saudi Arabia.

Nor did the *Times* denounce Israel for bombing civilians in Gaza and Lebanon. Or, for that matter, the US government for its repeated bombing of civilians in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Seeking to distinguish its support for intervention in Libya from the Bush administration’s launching of an unprovoked war on Iraq, the *Times* declares that to give a new American military adventure in the region legitimacy, “A credible endorsement from the Arab world

seems absolutely essential.”

To that end, the *Times* praises the Gulf Cooperation Council, the Saudi-dominated alliance of Persian Gulf monarchies, for its support for the imposition of a no-fly zone in Libya. The Council includes Bahrain and Oman, where police have murdered opposition demonstrators with impunity, as well as Saudi Arabia, where protests are illegal on pain of death.

All of these regimes to which the *Times* appeals are dictatorships that are hated by their own people.

The *Times* urges the Arab League foreign ministers to follow the example of the Gulf Cooperation Council, noting that if a no-fly zone is imposed, “Egypt and some other member states have the military resources to participate.” This has the most sinister implications. The Egyptian military was the basis of the Mubarak dictatorship and continues to rule Egypt after Mubarak’s resignation, acting as the watchdog for both the Egyptian capitalist class and its imperialist overlords.

Engaging Egypt in the enforcement of a no-fly zone in Libya would mean the establishment of direct operational contacts with the Pentagon, providing the Egyptian military additional resources and strengthening it for the inevitable confrontation with the Egyptian workers and peasants.

While the editorial repeatedly praises the Libyan rebels, it fails to take into account the disparate forces involved in the opposition to Gaddafi. On the one hand there are the oppressed workers and peasants who are driven by hatred for the despotic regime. On the other there are spokesmen and leaders who until a few weeks ago were part of Gaddafi’s government and entourage. It is precisely from among these elements that the most insistent calls for imperialist intervention have come.

Among the rebel forces themselves there is widespread distrust of the imperialist powers and their maneuvers to secure their political influence and access to Libyan oil. One rebel spokeswoman, Iman Bugaighis, told the *Guardian*, “The youth don’t want military intervention. The revolutionary council took that on board. As Arabs, we have a very bad history of enduring foreign military intervention. People think of it as an invasion.”

The *Times* editorial concludes, “It would be a disaster if Colonel Gaddafi managed to cling to power by butchering his own people.” But how else do US puppets like Maliki in Iraq and Karzai in Afghanistan stay in power? The *Times* does not regard as a “disaster” the survival of the Saudi monarchy, where beheading is the standard treatment for political opposition, particularly from the

more oppressed layers.

What is the real role of American imperialism in the Libyan events? After currying favor with Gaddafi for the last decade, in return for lucrative oil concessions and contracts, the United States has seized on a popular movement that erupted February 15 in Benghazi and very quickly made it the pretext for intervention by the imperialist powers.

Special forces, naval vessels and military aircraft from a dozen countries have already violated Libyan sovereignty repeatedly, first to “rescue” foreign nationals trapped by the fighting, then for the supposed purpose of providing humanitarian aid to Libyan civilians.

Far from working to reduce the death toll, however, the imperialist powers have incited civil war, spurring the rebel forces to race across the desert towards Gaddafi’s heavily fortified strongholds in Surt and Tripoli. The bloodbath inevitable in such unprepared collisions, many involving civilians with no military training, has provided fodder for the media campaign promoting US-NATO military intervention.

There is no attempt by the *Times* or other advocates of a US-NATO attack on Libya to deal with the contradictions in their own arguments. Unrest has swept North Africa and the Middle East, and in every case but Libya the imperialist powers have sided with the entrenched right-wing regimes.

The aggressive stance on Libya, however, is dictated by economic interests and geopolitical strategic considerations that have nothing whatever to do with the human rights of the Libyan people. Indeed, if the United States and the European powers ultimately conclude, however much to their chagrin, that their threats to intervene militarily were ill-timed and ill-considered, they will return to doing business with Gaddafi.

Neither in Libya nor any other part of the world can the overthrow of local dictators—who rule, in the final analysis, on behalf of imperialism—be outsourced to the military machines of the United States and Europe.

As Marx and Engels insisted at the dawn of the socialist movement: The liberation of the working class is the task of the working class itself.

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