

NATO declares formal end to criminal war on Libya

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1 November 2011

NATO formally ended its seven-month predatory war against Libya at midnight Monday, having achieved its aim of regime change and opened up the country to what its imperialist member states hope will be the unrestrained exploitation of Libya's huge energy resources by Western oil companies.

Speaking in Tripoli at a joint news conference with Mustafa Abdul Jalil, head of the NATO-backed National Transitional Council (NTC), Monday, NATO's secretary general, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, described the war as "a successful chapter in NATO's history," claiming that it had created "a new Libya based on freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law."

"Free Libya" lies in ruins. Much of its infrastructure has been destroyed and whole cities, like Sirte, the target of a barbaric NATO siege that ended barely one week ago, have been turned into ghost towns.

The war was launched in March of this year based on Resolution 1973, pushed through the United Nations Security Council on the false pretense that it was needed to authorize the imposition of a no-fly zone and other measures to protect civilians from repression by the Gaddafi regime.

At the time, the US and the Western European powers, echoed by the media and a whole layer of human rights organizations, liberal academics and pseudo-left groups, claimed that such an authorization was required to forestall an imminent massacre of thousands in the eastern city of Benghazi, the center of opposition to Gaddafi.

There was no evidence substantiating the claims of an imminent massacre. But the intervention launched in the name of saving human lives served to unleash a bloodletting in Libya that has surpassed even the worst predictions of those proclaiming the need for an

immediate "humanitarian" military intervention.

Now all of them have blood on their hands, from academic scoundrels like Professor Juan Cole of the University of Michigan, who declared himself ready to serve NATO, to pseudo-left groups like the New Anti-Capitalist Party in France, which tried to paint the imperialist intervention as a "revolutionary process." The Libya war has made it clear that an entire layer of ex-lefts and so-called liberals have become a vital constituency for imperialism, willing to justify and celebrate mass murder in the interests of their own ruling elites.

According to the estimates given by the NATO-backed NTC, anywhere between 30,000 and 50,000 Libyans have lost their lives in the last eight months. Another 50,000 are said to have been wounded. Many of these dead and wounded are victims of the relentless bombing campaign by NATO, which flew some 26,000 sorties during the war, demolishing entire buildings, with their residents buried in the rubble.

Others have died in bitter fighting between NATO-backed "rebels"—armed, trained and led by special forces units and intelligence operatives from France, Britain, the US and Qatar—and forces loyal to the Gaddafi regime. Still more have been massacred in tribal revenge killings. In Sirte alone, hundreds of bodies have been discovered over the past week in mass graves or left out in the open to rot, many of them with their hands tied behind their backs and bullet holes in their heads. In Sirte, the predictions of the Western powers of a massacre in Libya have been fully realized, but it is NATO and its local agents that have carried it out.

As Rasmussen was extolling the virtues of a "free Libya" based on "human rights and the rule of law," Human Rights Watch issued a report providing a

chillingly detailed account of the mass racist pogroms that have been carried out against black-skinned Libyans and immigrant workers from elsewhere in Africa.

The report centers on the fate of the people of Tawergha, a predominantly black town of 30,000 south of Misrata, whose residents have been ethnically cleansed from the area, many of them murdered, detained and tortured at the hands of NATO-backed militias for their suspected sympathy for Gaddafi. Tawergha has been emptied of its inhabitants, its buildings vandalized, burned and looted, and its residents still hunted down wherever they go.

The report describes the brutal fate of a number of Tawerghans who were tortured to death with whips, clubs, electric shock and other means of inflicting agony.

One man, who survived, described his ordeal: “They told me to confess that I raped five people. I don’t know why five people. They hung me with a pole between my legs and my arms. They beat me up. They used a whip for horses and told me to confess... That lasted five hours. They whipped me on my feet, my legs, my hands. There were lots of different people in civilian clothes. They were taking turns. The investigator was giving orders. After I was beaten, I passed out for five minutes. When I woke up they were standing over me, spitting and cursing at me, and saying, ‘We will send you back to Africa.’”

Human Rights Watch said that the scars all over the man’s body substantiated his account.

Others who had fled Tawergha described being hunted down by militiamen in the places they had taken refuge, with the gunmen calling them “slaves” and “monkeys.”

No one knows with any certainty how many have been killed in this manner or exactly how many thousands more are still being held in makeshift prison camps run by the NATO-backed “rebel” torturers.

One thing is certain, the gruesome lynch mob murder of Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi, the singular event that led to NATO’s declaration of “mission accomplished,” was no aberration. The frenzied beating and torture, which as cell phone videos have made clear, included the sodomizing of Gaddafi with a knife, followed by his cold-blooded execution, was representative of the brutal methods employed by

NATO-backed forces against thousands of Libyans.

A regime that takes power on such foundations can only be one of continued violence and repression that will make a mockery of Rasmussen’s invocations of “freedom” and “human rights.” Dominated by ex-Gaddafi ministers and long-time assets of Western intelligence agencies, the task posed to such a regime by its US and NATO masters is that of turning back the clock 42 years to the days of King Idris, when the US and British military combined with Big Oil effectively ran the country.

While NATO has declared an end to its intervention, the rape of Libya by the major Western powers has only begun. Qatar’s senior military commander reported last week that these powers have already set in motion the establishment of a “new alliance to continue supporting Libya.”

A critical role that NATO has played in the Libyan intervention was that of mediating the conflicting interests of rival imperialist powers— the US, France, Britain, Italy— all bent on securing the largest share possible of the country’s oil wealth at the immediate expense of the two powers that they aim to freeze out of North Africa: China and Russia. Whether the new alliance announced by the Qatari general can contain the tensions generated by the scramble for Libya’s resources remains to be seen.

One thing is certain, the NATO intervention for regime change in Libya has ushered in a new period of imperialist plunder, driven by the profound crisis of world capitalism and pointing inevitably toward new and far deadlier world conflagrations.

The struggle against the immense and growing threat posed by imperialist war can be waged only to the extent that it is based upon the independent political mobilization of the working class on an international scale in the struggle for the socialist transformation of society.

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