

Iran's Green Opposition endorses imperialist intervention in Syria

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As the Western powers and Turkey prepare for an intervention in a developing civil war in Syria, key figures in the Iranian “Green” opposition have denounced Tehran for refusing to support the so-called “Syrian Revolution.” By backing the West and its Syrian proxy forces, these Greens are again highlighting their role as propagandists of imperialist war and plunder of the Middle East.

The Green movement was assembled before Iran's 2009 presidential election, to mobilize affluent sections of the urban population in Tehran and other large cities behind the campaign of former “reformist” Prime Minister Mirhossein Mousavi. This movement received financial and logistical support from Iranian oligarch and ex-President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, and the political backing of Washington. It also received the backing of large layers of petty-bourgeois “left” parties in the West.

One of the prominent Green figures calling for Western military intervention in Syria is the former secretary of the Islamic Student Association (*Tahkim Vahdat*), Ali Afshari. Afshari was brought to the US in 2004 and in 2006, as a representative of the student movement in Iran; he spoke at a panel discussion organized by Senators Rick Santorum and Joe Lieberman at the US Capitol. He regularly publishes articles on web sites and online news agencies affiliated with the Greens, particularly those run by “liberal” student groups, and appears in *Voice of America's* Persian-language programs.

In October he wrote an article titled “Libya and Humanitarian Intervention,” dismissing oil as a factor in NATO's war against Libya. Advancing the absurd claim that a market-based global economy leaves no place for colonialist policies, he welcomed more such wars to come. He wrote that he was hopeful that

improved tactics would “lead to perfection of humanitarian intervention in future instances”.

Afshari went on to glorify the alleged motives of the Libyan war, which caused an estimated 50,000 deaths and installed a pro-Western puppet regime in Tripoli. He wrote: “the purpose of humanitarian intervention is to stop state oppression and create an equal and fair playground for the struggle between pro-government and opposition forces. Humanitarian intervention [as in Libya] is different from the US invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan, since in those countries foreign forces intervened militarily in the absence of any popular protest.”

Such a formula, effectively legitimating imperialist intervention any time popular protests confront an authoritarian regime, gives a blank check for the US to attack any Middle Eastern country where the working class emerges in political struggle. This expresses the profound class antagonism between the working class and the social layer represented by the Greens. On this basis, they give their support to imperialist campaigns for waging war in Syria and preparing war with Iran.

Thus in December, in an interview with Human Rights Activists News Agency (HRANA), Afshari said that the “international community should destroy the state repression apparatus of Bashar Assad”. He demanded the “imposition of a no-fly zone and destruction of armored vehicles and tanks to stop Assad's blood-shed.”

Another high profile figure of the Greens, Shirin Ebadi, is a lawyer who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2003. Ebadi went into exile following the 2009 presidential election protests and has taken an active role in Western propaganda against the regime's crackdown on the Greens. Over the last year, she has written repeatedly to defend Western intervention in

Syria, hoping that it could boost the Greens' influence inside Iran itself.

In April, in a speech at the Institute for Middle Eastern Studies at George Washington University, she expressed the hope that the fall of Assad in Syria would “spur democracy in Iran”. In that speech, she followed the US policy of stoking sectarian tensions, describing the rule of the secular Ba’ath party as the imposition of the will of minority Shiites over majority Sunnis. She also repeated claims that Iran is sending forces to suppress the Syrian uprising.

She has now taken this position to its logical conclusion, explicitly endorsing the campaign of sanctions and imperialist provocations by the Western powers against Iran.

In an opinion piece in the *Wall Street Journal* of December 30, she writes: “Only the Security Council, with coercive levers at its disposal, can meaningfully pressure Iran’s rulers to stop their violations of citizens’ fundamental rights. International sanctions against Iran’s human-rights abusers should also be expanded and deepened. Policy makers in the U.S. and Europe deserve praise for sanctioning leaders of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, agents of the intelligence ministry, and other top officials responsible for the violent crackdown that followed the 2009 uprising.”

The Greens leaders who are still inside Iran know very well that explicit calls for “humanitarian intervention”—that is to say, imperialist attacks—in Iran would be politically suicidal, further alienating the population and exposing them to charges of treason from the Iranian regime. Nonetheless, they are repeating the same basic points, albeit in a thinly disguised way.

In October the coordination committee of the Green movement, which is in direct contact with Mousavi, sent their warmest greetings to the Supreme Council of the Syrian Revolution, a component of the Western-backed Syrian National Council. It stressed the solidarity of the Green movement with the Syrian protests. The Greens have also launched a Facebook campaign of “Iranian support for the Syrian revolution”, uncritically posting Western propaganda against the Assad regime.

Mostafa Tajzade, a leading architect of the Green movement and post-election demonstrations, wrote an

open letter to Shiite clerics in August, from Evin prison. In that letter, he argued against Iranian support for the “blood-thirsty” regime of Bashar Assad. He claimed that such support sows hatred in the hearts of the Middle Eastern masses and gives Turkey a pivotal role as a representative of democratic, moderate Islam.

He then continues, “such policies pursued by the Iranian and Syrian governments are setting the stage for military intervention and spread anti-Iranian and anti-Shiite sentiments among the Middle-Eastern masses”. He states that “the Iranian nation should consider the Syrian protest movement as part of its own struggle against autocracy, such as the June 2009 uprising [post-election protests], and declare its solidarity with the uprisings of Libyan, Egyptian, Yemeni and Syrian masses”. Finally he urges Shiite clerics to issue *fatwas* calling for peaceful protests as a corrective measure to autocratic governments to avoid a confrontation with the US.

These positions are definitely adopted in coordination with imperialist maneuvers in the region to isolate and ultimately align the Iranian regime with US interests if possible and if not, to destabilize it. The Iranian opposition, particularly the Greens, are hoping to instigate fresh protests on the eve of 2012 parliamentary elections

Such protests would provide the opportunity for further imperialist intrigues among leading circles in Iran, and potentially provide a justification for imperialist intervention, as in Libya and Syria.

It is in this context that Afshari, in his latest article of January 2 on the upcoming elections, refers to them as an opportunity for new protests. “Since election is the largest political season in Iran, it should not be treated indifferently. Though by election, I mean an atmosphere which consists of more than just ballot boxes”. He argues that launching protests and demonstrations against the election can revive the Green movement in Iran.



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