

Arab League calls for UN intervention in Syria

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The Arab League met in Cairo Sunday. They called on the United Nations Security Council to send “peacekeepers” to Syria to intervene in escalating fighting between the Syrian government and opposition forces led by the US-backed Syrian National Council (SNC).

A delegation from the SNC attended the meeting at the League’s headquarters, in an effort to secure full diplomatic recognition.

The Arab League’s meeting comes as heavy fighting continues in the Syrian city of Homs, where US-backed opposition groups have battled for months with the army and security forces of Syrian President Bashar Assad.

The US-backed armed opposition is acting increasingly openly to use methods of assassination and terrorism to destabilize the Assad regime. Syrian state media reported that Brigadier General Issa al-Kholi, a senior military physician, was shot dead by three gunmen outside his home in the Syrian capital Saturday.

This follows a terrorist bombing against Syrian security forces in Aleppo, a city that has seen few protests against Assad. (See, “Bomb blasts in Aleppo, Syria kill 28”)

The leader of Al Qaeda, Ayman al-Zawahiri, praised US-backed forces fighting in the spreading civil war in Syria. In a recently released video message, al-Zawahiri called the government in Damascus a “cancerous regime that suffocated the free people of Syria.” He advised Syrian opposition forces to seek aid from other Islamists.

Comments by officials at the Arab League meeting in Cairo made clear that a major topic of the meeting was preparing for international military intervention in Syria to support the SNC. “We have been very

reassured of everyone’s agendas,” SNC spokesman Basma Kadmani told reporters about the Cairo meeting. “It is a priority to deal with the Syria issue.”

Arab League Secretary General Nabil al-Arabi told reporters that the League has discussed making an open call for international “peacekeepers” to be sent to Syria.

Dominated by Saudi Arabia and its allies in the Persian Gulf sheikdoms, the Arab League seeks the overthrow of Assad and his Ba’ath Party regime. The tone of Sunday’s discussions in Cairo had already been set at a meeting of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) last week, an occasion for Saudi and Qatari officials to continue their campaign against the Assad government.

The GCC circulated a draft resolution at the United Nations General Assembly last week, similar to the one vetoed by Russia and China in the Security Council, demanding the resignation of Assad and the formation of an interim government that includes the foreign-backed Syrian opposition groups.

The head of the Arab League’s observer mission to Syria resigned on Sunday. Mohammed al-Dabi, a Sudanese general, criticized the decision by Saudi Arabia and Qatar to call an early halt to the mission, which ran for twenty-three days from late-December until January. The Gulf sheikdoms and the imperialist powers hoped the mission would find evidence of atrocities by Assad and thus provide fuel for the imperialist campaign for military intervention in Syria.

Instead, to the dismay of the Gulf sheikdoms and the Western powers, the observers produced evidence that the Assad regime was facing a well-armed, foreign-backed movement, and that opposition reports of casualties were frequently exaggerated. (See, “Report of Arab League mission to Syria contradicts Western

propaganda”)

The maneuvers of the Arab League and the United States against Syria are a virtual replay of their role in the NATO-led war against Libya last year. At that time, the Arab leaders lined up with the Western efforts to topple the Libyan regime and replace it with one based on the anti-Gaddafi “rebels” of the National Transitional Council (NTC).

That this “humanitarian” war in Libya led to a humanitarian disaster—with an estimated 50,000 people killed, and thousands more maimed or turned in refugees—is of no concern to the NATO powers or their Arab allies. Factional fighting continues in Libya between NTC rivals, while torture and other human rights abuses are rife.

Washington and its allies seek the overthrow of Assad to install a stooge regime in Damascus and subordinate Syria even more directly to the dictates of Western imperialism, including breaking Assad’s ties to Iran. This is part of a broader strategy to bring about regime-change in Tehran, which Washington has long viewed as a major obstacle to efforts to dominate the energy-rich regions of the Persian Gulf and the Caspian Basin.

This also involves Washington in an escalating confrontation with Russia and China, which vetoed last week’s UN Security Council resolution aiming to provide a fig leaf for war against Syria. The Kremlin in particular has responded to the US-led effort to topple Assad by shipping arms to Syria, deploying an aircraft carrier battle group off the Syrian coast, and sending high-profile diplomatic missions to Damascus.

The SNC and its military wing, the Free Syrian Army, are based in Turkey and backed by Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United States and the European powers. Israeli security web site DEBKAFfile has reported that British and Qatari Special Forces are training Free Syrian Army fighters in urban warfare at camps in Turkey and providing “tactical advice” to opposition fighters inside the city of Homs.

There are reports of Sunni Islamist fighters from Libya and other countries coming into Syria to join with local Sunni militants opposed to Assad’s Ba’athist regime, which is nominally secular but comprised largely of members of the Alawite branch of Islam.

The fighting in Syria is spreading to neighboring

Lebanon. On Saturday, Sunni Muslims clashed with Alawites in the city of Tripoli. The Associated Press reported gunfire and rocket-propelled grenade fire during the clashes, leading to two deaths at least 12 injuries.

The working class in Syria and internationally must oppose the machinations of the Arab League and the US and other imperialist powers in Syria. The only social force that can sweep away the regime in Damascus on a progressive basis is the Syrian proletariat, fighting for a socialist program in alliance with the rural poor and their fellow workers internationally against imperialism.



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