

# US steps up pressure for intervention in Syria

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Top US officials are stepping up pressure for an imperialist intervention in Syria, whose goal would be the overthrow of President Bashar al-Assad and the installation of a quisling government to do the bidding of Washington and its European allies.

In a speech Thursday in Denmark, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton warned that the Syrian upheaval could create a “major crisis” in the Middle East and condemned Russian opposition to more aggressive action. Russia and China both blocked a resolution by the United Nations Security Council Wednesday that would have opened the door to military action against Syria.

Clinton confirmed that the US government was actively preparing for armed intervention in Syria, though it viewed the conditions as more difficult than in Libya because of Syria’s larger population and the greater military preparedness of the Assad government. “We are thinking about all of this,” she said. “There are all kinds of both civilian and humanitarian and military planning going on.”

Responding to Russian warnings that outside intervention could provoke a regional war, Clinton admitted, “The dangers we face are terrible.” The conflict “could morph into a civil war in a country that would be driven by sectarian divides, which could then morph into a proxy war in the region because remember you have Iran deeply embedded in Syria. We know it could actually get much worse than it is.”

The second-ranking US diplomat, Susan Rice, US ambassador to the UN, gave a more strident warning to Syria the previous day, after the Security Council deadlock over a US-backed resolution invoking Chapter 7 of the UN Charter.

In an interview with NBC News, she said that the most probable scenario in Syria was that “the violence escalates, the conflict spreads and intensifies,” leading to “a proxy conflict with arms flowing in from all

sides.”

“It involves countries in the region, it takes on increasingly sectarian forms, and we have a major crisis not only in Syria but in the region,” she said. “And members of this council and members of the international community are left with the option only of having to consider whether they’re prepared to take actions outside of the Annan plan and the authority of this council.”

This amounts to a tacit threat that the US would act unilaterally or on the basis of a “coalition of the willing,” the formula used by George W. Bush to justify his war of aggression against Iraq. The US would be joined by Britain, France and any other country willing to contribute troops or warplanes, to evade opposition in the UN Security Council to another US-led war of aggression in the Middle East.

Rice claimed that Washington was ruling out direct US arming of the various rebel groups in Syria. Compared to Libya, she said, “in Syria, we know much, much less about the nature of this opposition. It’s not coherent. There’s not a unified command and control. It’s a series of different groups in different cities. There’s, clearly, also an extremist element that is trying to infiltrate.”

These comments are primarily political disinformation, aiming to conceal the ongoing intervention of US imperialism in Syria. It has been widely reported that the US is coordinating a massive international program by right-wing regimes in Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and the Persian Gulf feudal states to arm the Syrian “rebel” forces. (See also: US prepares multi-front proxy war against Syria).

To the extent that Rice’s comments convey any element of truth, however, it is that the Obama administration is reluctant to subcontract the overthrow of Assad to groups it deems ineffective and unreliable. As the US and its allies move towards direct military

intervention, US officials are seeking to prepare the conditions for it, both internationally and within the United States itself.

These statements followed the blunt comment by General Martin Dempsey, who told Fox News Sunday, in response to reports of the killing of more than 100 people, many of them children, in the town of Houla: “Of course, there is always a military option. ... it may come to a point with Syria because of the atrocities.”

Reports of killings in Syria on Wednesday provided further fuel for denunciations of the Syrian regime by the imperialist powers and their allies. UN observers said that 13 bodies had been found in eastern Syria, near the city of Dair Alzour, all men who had been bound and shot, many of them execution-style, with a bullet in the head.

There is no way of knowing, however, whether they were opponents of the Assad regime executed by his security forces, or victims of armed “rebel” groups that have repeatedly carried out assassinations and terrorist attacks inside Syria.

Israeli officials publicly condemned the Assad regime and called for its overthrow Wednesday. Defense Minister Ehud Barak praised the ouster of Syrian diplomats from the United States and 10 other Western countries.

He added that the massacres like those at Houla “are crimes against humanity and it’s impossible that the international community is going to stand aside.”

Deputy Prime Minister Shaul Mofaz, whose Kadima party joined the Netanyahu government only this month, said outside intervention in Syria was now unavoidable. “The West must intervene, either directly or indirectly,” Mofaz said. “We, too, have to think about ways we can help, and it is worth at least preparing for an eventuality where we could also open up an aid corridor.” He suggested this could involve opening the border with Syria along the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights.

Stripped of its euphemistic, pseudo-humanitarian phraseology, an Israeli policy of “aid corridors” would entail Israel in openly and publicly violating Syrian sovereignty to send aid to “rebel” forces operating against the Syrian government.

The purported outrage of Israeli officials over the death toll of Syrians is in sharp contrast to their own record. During Operation Cast Lead, the invasion of

Gaza in December 2008-January 2009, Israeli troops killed more than 1,300 Palestinians in one month—a rate of killing exceeding anything the Assad regime has been accused of.

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[31 May 2012]



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