

# France, Turkey push for Syrian no-fly zone at UN

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31 August 2012

A push for Western military intervention in Syria is being spearheaded by France, in alliance with Turkey. But they are backed by the United States, Britain and a regional alliance of reactionary Sunni monarchies, such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar, intent on overthrowing the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in order to isolate Iran.

Yesterday a meeting of the United Nations Security Council heard an appeal by Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu for the creation of a no-fly zone in Syria. While portrayed as a humanitarian initiative and a means of stemming the flood of refugees, establishing such a zone involves military intervention against Syria. Turkey criticised countries that have opposed military intervention, above all Russia and China.

On Wednesday, Davutoglu told the media, “We expect the United Nations to engage on the topic of protecting refugees inside Syria and if possible sheltering them in camps there.”

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan said that failure to act indirectly supported oppression in Syria and called the vetoing of anti-Syrian Security Council resolutions by China and Russia a “fiasco.”

The proposal has no possibility of being accepted. The Security Council meeting was a factional gathering, made up of those powers intent on bringing down the Syrian government by force and those who only attended to register their opposition.

Billed as an emergency meeting of foreign ministers, hosted by France as council president, only Laurent Fabius and Britain’s William Hague attended out of the five permanent members. And less than half of all 15 council members sent ministers.

China and Russia all but boycotted a meeting whose sole aim is to legitimise hostilities against Syria. This was underscored by the invitation extended to Turkey,

Lebanon and Jordan, who are all helping shelter US-backed anti-Assad forces such as the Syrian National Council, Free Syrian Army and various Al Qaeda-style groups.

France was forced to acknowledge a “double refusal”—with the failure of US Secretary of State Hilary Clinton to attend. “The United States and Britain believe we have reached the end of what can be achieved at the Security Council, and Moscow and Beijing said that such a resolution would have been biased,” a diplomat said.

The implication of Clinton’s stand is that the Security Council meeting, which concludes today, will be declared as proof that the UN route is closed and a new Iraq-style “coalition of the willing” must act. US President Barack Obama, UK Prime Minister David Cameron and French President Francois Hollande have all in the past days stated that the use or threat of chemical weapons by Syria is a “red line” that would bring military intervention. Either this invocation of “Weapons of Mass Destruction” or a hyping up of rhetorical “humanitarian” concerns could be the *casus belli* for Washington, Paris and London to back a Turkish-led military intervention supported by Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

The Muslim Brotherhood has become a key instrument of US foreign policy in the region. The imperialist powers have backed its coming to power in the aftermath of the revolutionary working class struggles brought down two of Washington’s former allies, Zine el Abidine Ben Ali in Tunisia and Hosni Mubarak in Egypt.

Its usefulness was emphasised by the actions of the new Egyptian president, US-trained academic Mohammed Mursi, at a conference of the 120-nation Non-Aligned Movement in Tehran. Iran tried to utilise

the Non-Aligned Movement, formed in 1961 on the initiative of Yugoslav President Josip Broz Tito, as a platform from which to oppose its isolation by the US. But Mursi used his speech to the week-long event to denounce Assad's as an "oppressive regime that has lost its legitimacy" and to insist on "active interference by all of us."

Mursi demanded that Iran join a four-nation contact group including Egypt, Turkey and Saudi Arabia to negotiate an end to the Syrian crisis based upon Assad's ouster. His appeal is part of an on-going propaganda effort to justify forcible regime change in Syria under the tutelage of Washington.

An important element of this campaign of disinformation is the constant citing of ever escalating and wholly unverifiable casualty figures, coupled with accusations of endless massacres and atrocities by the Syrian Army.

In the run-up to the Security Council, allegations centred on opposition claims of a massacre in the town of Daraya. It was first reported Sunday that 200 mainly Sunni civilians had been killed. By Wednesday a figure of upwards of 400 was being cited.

Like similar claims of massacres in Houla and Qubair, made before previous Security Council meetings and also meant to justify action against Syria, the media's account of events in Deraya is already unravelling.

The first Western journalist into the town of Deraya was Robert Fisk of *The Independent*. He reported Wednesday that, far from being the result of an unprovoked massacre of civilians, several local residents told him of "hostage-taking by the Free Syria Army and desperate prisoner-exchange negotiations between the armed opponents of the regime and the Syrian army, before President Bashar al-Assad's government forces stormed into the town to seize it back from rebel control."

Residents explained that opposition fighters had kidnapped civilians and off-duty soldiers, killing many and offering others as hostages in an exchange of prisoners.

Writing of "atrocities" that were "far more widespread than supposed," Fisk cites a woman whom saw "at least 10 male bodies lying on the road near her home... adding that Syrian troops had not yet entered

Daraya."

Another man said that he believed most of the dead photographed lying in a graveyard and claimed as victims of the Syrian Army, "were related to the government army and included several off-duty conscripts."

The witness said, "One of the dead was a postman—they included him because he was a government worker."

Fisk comments, "If these stories are true, then the armed men—wearing hoods, according to another woman who described how they broke into her home and how she kissed them in a fearful attempt to prevent them shooting her own family—were armed insurgents rather than Syrian troops."

By uncritically trumpeting the statements of opposition sources and attributing all deaths in a civil war to the alleged misdeeds of one side, the media is acting as a weapon on behalf of the imperialist powers seeking to divide up the Middle East between them.



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