

Syrian opposition, Western powers push for regime change in Syria

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The Western powers and the pro-imperialist Syrian opposition are intensifying their campaign for regime change in Syria. On Monday the Syrian opposition reiterated its calls for military intervention in Syria, demanding more weapons to fight the regime of President Bashar al-Assad.

In a joint news conference with the Spanish Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Garcia-Margallo, Abdel Basset Sayda, the leader of the Syrian National Council (SNC), said: “I am going to be very clear, we are requesting military intervention in order to protect Syrian civilians who have been constantly murdered over the last year and a half. I have the duty of asking for weapons that will allow us to defend against the Syrian armor and weapons that are killing civilians all the time.”

Sayda added that the SNC is “seeking very quick action by the international community” and proposed that “the European Union should take the initiative and pressure Russia ... so we can lay down some protected areas for refugees.”

The Syrian opposition wants the NATO powers to establish a no-fly zone over Syria. Syria’s allies Russia and China have so far vetoed resolutions in the Security Council that would set the stage for foreign intervention. While presented as a humanitarian intervention, enforcing a no-fly zone requires military action and would be the starting point of a Libyan-style bombing campaign to oust Assad and install a pro-Western regime in Syria.

Responding to Sayda, Garcia-Margallo pledged to “do all we can to provide humanitarian help to the Syrian people. ... In Syria we are clearly talking about a change of the regime, Bashar cannot carry on a moment longer for humanitarian reasons.”

Margallo urged the Syrian opposition to unify as a

precondition for regime change. He said that “the disappearance of al-Assad cannot be transformed into a power vacuum that could be used by factions.” He added that “Spain is worried about the unity of the democratic forces. ... Our desire: that the democratic forces come together, including all the minorities except for those that opt for violence.”

While all the Western powers support regime change in Syria in principle, some are concerned that the splintered and unpopular Syrian opposition could not form an effective government.

At a meeting with Sayda and the Minister of State of the United Arab Emirates, Reem al-Hashimi, at the German Foreign Ministry in Berlin on Tuesday, German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle stressed that a unified platform is urgently needed. He called on the opposition “to create as fast as possible the conditions for ... a transition government.”

The meeting in Berlin is part of a campaign to destroy the Assad regime and install a pro-Western stooge regime. The meeting was held in the framework of the “Economic Reconstruction and Development” working group under the umbrella of the “Friends of Syria group.”

The working group is developing plans to set up a free-market economy after Assad’s overthrow and plunder the country’s resources. Significantly, the former deputy oil and mineral wealth minister of Syria, Abdo Hussameddin, attended the meeting. Hussameddin was a member of Assad’s Baath party until he defected in March 2012 and joined the pro-imperialist opposition.

Germany has been working behind the scenes to unify the opposition and prepare for the post-Assad period. Last Thursday German and American think tanks—the US Institute of Peace (USIP) and the German

Institute for International and Security Affairs (Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, SWP) – revealed that they have been meeting in secret with the Syrian opposition since January to prepare for the time after Assad.

According to a document published by “The Day After Project” group last Thursday, “the group included individuals associated with the Syrian National Council, the Local Coordination Committees, the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, and other organized elements of the Syrian opposition” including “individuals with experience in the Free Syrian Army.”

Westerwelle also indicated that Berlin prefers a military intervention sanctioned by the UN Security Council. Asked about Turkish calls for a no-fly zone by the *Frankfurter Rundschau* on Tuesday, Westerwelle said that he wants “to act very deliberately.” He explained: “A no-fly zone must probably be enforced militarily, and there is no UN mandate for this at the moment.”

Westerwelle expressed his hope that Germany’s strategic partners Russia and China would make a “reappraisal of the situation,” saying: “I call upon China and Russia not to protect Assad any longer.”

Sayda took a more aggressive tone, warning that Assad’s allies could not expect anything under a post-Assad regime. “The Syrian people are not bound by any contract signed by the regime after the beginning of this revolution, or any sale of treasury bonds or purchase of weapons or contracts with any country,” he said.

Westerwelle made clear that the German government wants to see Assad’s fall: “There can be no doubt, the days of the regime are numbered: it has lost all legitimacy to represent the Syrian people, it is crumbling from inside. On the international level it is increasingly isolated. The overwhelming majority of countries reject the massive violation of human rights. There is no future for Bashar Assad in a new Syria.”

The preparations to oust Assad are far advanced. On Monday, French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius threatened military intervention in an interview on French radio.

Repeating previous warnings by US President Barack Obama about Syrian weapons of mass destruction, he said that if Syria uses chemical or biological weapons “our response ... would be massive and blistering.” He stated that Western powers would be ready to “step in”

immediately. Fabius added that France is “discussing this notably with our French and English partners.”

France is the former colonial power of Syria and has already bombed Damascus twice, in 1926 and 1945, to suppress mass anti-imperialist struggles and safeguard its interests in the Levant.

As long as intervention plans are not finalized, the imperialist powers continue to rely on their proxy forces inside Syria—the Turkish based Free Syrian Army (FSA) and Sunni extremist groups armed and financed by the Gulf monarchies—to destabilize the Assad regime.

In recent days, terrorist attacks with car bombs increased, mainly targeting the Christian and Druze minorities and members of the Sunni majority reluctant to join the opposition. On Monday, the UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) reported that a car bomb exploded in the mainly Christian and Druze Damascus suburb of Jaramana on Monday, killing at least five people.

Last week 27 people attending a funeral were killed by another bomb. The opposition justified the attack, claiming that the mourners were connected to the regime.



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