

Syria: UN report reveals opposition crimes as imperialist powers push for intervention

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A United Nations (UN) report presented yesterday by the International Commission of Inquiry on Syria (ICIS) in Geneva sheds light on the increasing brutality of the Syrian war and its potential to trigger a major international crisis.

The contents of the report are a devastating indictment of the imperialist powers in the United States and Europe and their regional allies, which have fueled a sectarian-based civil war in Syria for more than two years to topple the government of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

According to the report, 6.8 million people are “trapped in conflict-affected and opposition-held areas.” The number of internally-displaced Syrians is now 4.35 million, and 1.6 million Syrians have been forced to flee the country. On May 15, the UN estimated that 80,000 people had died in the war.

“Syria is in free fall,” Paulo Pinheiro, the chairman of a commission of inquiry investigating the hostilities in Syria, said at the news conference in Geneva. He added, “Crimes that shock the conscience have become a daily reality. Humanity has been the casualty of this war.”

The report points to the international dimension of the conflict, stating that “the current political impasse and military escalation are the by-product of the regional and international stand-off between the Government’s backers and its opponents, translating into arms consignments and political backing to both sides by their respective allies.”

The report refers to the “European Union’s decision to allow a ban on weapon deliveries to the Syrian opposition to lapse on June 1, and Russia’s announced shipment of S-300 missile batteries to the Government.” It also points to the increasingly sectarian nature of the conflict and warns that it “even

became more complex as violence spilled over into neighboring countries, threatening regional peace and stability.”

The report states, “Hezbollah fighters are openly supporting the Syrian military during operations” near the key strategic town of al-Qusayr along the Lebanese border “while members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine—General Command have done the same around Yarmouk camp in Damascus.”

Describing “new levels of cruelty and brutality,” the report admits that the opposition in Syria is dominated by violent Islamist elements responsible for horrific crimes against the Syrian population.

“The on-going violence has accelerated radicalisation among Anti-Government fighters, allowing radical groups, in particular Jabhat al-Nusra, to become more influential.” The report identifies Al Nusra as the opposition’s military backbone against Assad, indicating that it has received increasing “external support... in terms of recruits and equipment” with “foreign fighters with jihadist inclinations, often arriving from neighboring countries.”

While the report claims that the opposition’s crimes did not “reach the intensity and scale” of those committed by the Assad regime, the facts it reports suggest otherwise. The report depicts the “rebels” as ruling the areas it controls through murder and despotic terror.

“Anti-Government armed groups have committed war crimes, including murder, sentencing and execution without due process, torture, hostage-taking and pillage. They continue to endanger the civilian population by positioning military objectives in civilian areas,” the report explains. It describes how “civilians and *hors de combat* [i.e., disarmed] Government soldiers were sentenced and executed without due

process” in the governorates of Aleppo, Damascus, Dara'a, Idlib, Dayr Al-Zawr and Al-Raqqah.

The report refers to some of the numerous massacres and executions committed by the “rebels,” documented in graphic videos posted on YouTube. In Dayr Al-Zawr, an infamous leader of Jabhat Al-Nusra, Qassoura Al-Jazrawi, executed at least eleven men “who were kneeling in front of him, hands tied and blindfolded.” In another incident, “video footage emerged showing a child participating in the beheading of two kidnapped men.” The report estimates that “following investigation, it is believed that the video is authentic.”

While the reported crimes are only a small portion of the atrocities committed by the Syrian opposition, they explode the lies that the United States and the European powers are fighting for a democratic government in Syria. In fact, the imperialist powers are backing oppressive Islamist forces to overthrow Assad and install a pro-Western regime in Syria.

However, during the past weeks, the Syrian government—increasingly supported by the Lebanese Hezbollah militia—has been beating back the rebels on the ground.

On Tuesday, the Saudi-owned, pro-opposition news channel Al-Arabiya admitted that “Syrian troops advanced toward the center of the strategic town of Qusayr near the border with Lebanon and chased rebels from another key district on the edge of Damascus.” A government official in Homs province said that the Syrian army is “approaching victory” in Qusayr. Last week, Assad declared in an interview that that “the balance of power [in Syria] is now with the Syrian army.”

As the Western-backed “rebels”—lacking any significant support amongst the Syrian population—face a crushing defeat, the imperialist powers are seizing upon the UN report to argue for military intervention, based on lies and unsubstantiated claims about weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Ten years after bogus claims about WMD were used as a pretext for the criminal US war in Iraq, similar “big lie” techniques are being used to threaten war with Syria.

The report claims that “there are reasonable grounds to believe that chemical agents have been used as weapons.” However it adds that “the precise agents, delivery systems or perpetrators could not be identified.” At the news conference in Geneva, the ICIS

demanded of the Syrian government that the UN investigation commission be “granted full access to Syria” to test samples taken directly from the victims and the sites of alleged attacks.

The report’s assessment clearly contradicts earlier statements by a well-informed member of the ICIS. Last month, Carla del Ponte stated that Sarin gas used in Syria was fired by the opposition, not the Assad regime.

After the UN report was presented in Geneva, the imperialist powers immediately intensified their propaganda, with France—the former colonial power in Syria and Lebanon—leading the campaign. French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius claimed that tests carried out on samples in Paris showed that “there is no doubt that it’s the regime and its accomplices” who were responsible, he told France 2 TV.

Fabius said that the test results had been handed over to the UN and “all options are on the table.” That “means either we decide not to react or we decide to react including by armed actions targeting the place where the gas is stored.”

Asked about Fabius’ statements, State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki said she is familiar with the reports, adding that the US is “seeking more information.” For “the time being, I would refer you all to the French government,” she said.

White House Press Secretary Jay Carney stressed the need “to establish a body of information that can be presented and reviewed, and upon which policy decisions can be made.”

He added, “I can assure you that we are working very diligently as an administration with our allies and the Syrian opposition on this matter.”

Last summer, US President Barack Obama declared the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian government would cross a “red line” and provoke a US attack.



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