

Amid diplomatic offensive against Syria, France presses for war

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During an official visit to Washington on Tuesday, French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius said he regretted that Washington had not gone to war with Syria last autumn and again advanced unsubstantiated accusations that Syrian President Bashar al-Assad had used chemical weapons against the Syrian people.

In making these accusations, Fabius was directly pressing for war in Syria. He recalled US President Barack Obama's "red line" pledge to go to war if Assad used chemical weapons. Falsely claiming that the Syrian regime had used poison gas last August in the Damascus suburb of Ghouta, Fabius said he regretted that France could not go to war with Syria because Washington and London decided not to attack Syria in September.

"It was out of the question for France to act alone," Fabius said. "We regret that, because we believe it would have changed many things, in many respects."

Fabius' accusations of chemical weapons use were a deliberate, politically criminal falsification. He ignored the fact that, when the British Parliament voted against war in Syria last September, British Prime Minister David Cameron himself admitted that the Western powers did not have proof that the Assad regime had carried out the Ghouta attacks.

Fabius also ignored the devastating report by veteran investigative journalist Seymour Hersh, which established that it was the Turkish government, a US and French ally, that organised the Ghouta attack. Its purpose, as with Fabius's statements today, was to provide a pretext for launching war in Syria. (See: "New exposé by Seymour Hersh: Turkey staged gas attack to provoke US war on Syria")

Fabius's statements are a warning to the international working class. Not only does France's Socialist Party (PS) government want war in Syria—which could

escalate into a global war involving Syria's main regional allies, Iran and Russia—but it is working closely with Washington and other NATO powers to launch it.

There are numerous signs of a renewed diplomatic push for war. Talks on Syria are starting today in London, headed by Kerry along with ministers from France, Germany, Britain, and several Arab countries, as well as Syrian opposition leader Ahmad Jarba. Jarba just spent over a week in Washington in high-level meetings aimed to strengthen US support for the opposition in their battle against Assad.

On Tuesday, Lakhdar Brahimi, the UN-Arab League peace envoy for Syria, announced his resignation after serving in that post since 2012.

Fabius's accusations of chlorine gas use by Assad echoed a report published Tuesday by the US-based Human Rights Watch (HRW) organization. HRW's report alleged that pro-Assad forces used chlorine gas packed into crude bombs in attacks in mid-April on three towns in northern Syria, killing 11 people and wounding as many as 500. Neither HRW nor Fabius advanced any reliable factual evidence to support their allegations.

HRW claimed that it "cannot independently confirm" allegations of poison gas use, which it said were based largely on charges advanced by the Western powers' far-right Islamist proxy fighters inside Syria.

As for Fabius, at a press conference with his US counterpart, Secretary of State John Kerry, he said: "We have at least 14 indications that show us that, in the past recent weeks again, chemical weapons in a smaller scale have been used, in particular chlorine." Cynically claiming it had been difficult to obtain definitive proof because chlorine evaporates too fast to collect samples, he said: "Right now we are examining

the samples that were taken.”

Kerry echoed Fabius’s remarks, denouncing Assad “who will not negotiate, who absolutely refused to negotiate at every single session... This represents a continuation of the stubborn clinging to power of a man who is willing to drop barrel bombs on his people, to gas them, to shell artillery on innocent civilians, to starve people in their homes, and somehow claim a right to be able to run a country.”

Fabius’s “regret” that the Western powers did not launch a war with Syria, together with the new fabricated charges of chemical weapons use by the Assad regime, show that the Western powers are again mobilizing for war against Syria. It also underscores the significance of the military build-up Washington, Berlin, Paris and their allies are carrying out throughout Eastern Europe aimed at Russia, ostensibly over the Ukraine crisis.

Russia, a key ally of Syria, emerged as the critical obstacle to launching a war against Syria last September, vetoing UN Security Council resolutions prepared to justify a US-led war against Syria. Now, Russia faces not only the hostile, far-right Ukrainian regime in Kiev that emerged from the NATO-backed, fascist-led putsch this February, but NATO troops stationed all along its western border. It is in a far weaker position to oppose a war against Syria, its main ally in the Arab world, by Washington and Paris.

In pressing for such a conflict, which directly threatens to provoke a world war, the PS government of French President François Hollande is demonstrating its utterly reactionary and anti-working class character. It is trampling on deep public opposition to war in the French working class. During the war scare last September against Syria, polls found that 64 percent of the French population opposed going to war.

Hollande is pushing for war nonetheless, seeking to divert the escalating internal class tensions caused by his attacks on the working class—which have made it France’s most unpopular government since World War II—into the cauldron of war.

In his two years in power, Hollande has pursued aggressive wars in Africa, including military interventions in Mali and Central African Republic, as well as in the Middle East. As they launched the war in Mali, PS officials repeatedly stated that a major goal in launching the wars was to shift the political atmosphere

in France and permit Hollande to move ahead with unpopular attacks on the working class.

They openly commented that they were modelling their wars on the 1982 British Falkland Islands war. In this war, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher sought to boost support for her government in the middle classes and prepare for austerity measures against the workers, including the crushing of the 1984-5 miners strike. (See: “France seizes on murder of RFI journalists to intensify Mali war”).

With such policies, Paris is setting in motion the drive towards either a catastrophic war, or a confrontation between the PS and the working class with revolutionary implications. As the imperialist pyromaniacs in Paris seek to resolve their intractable internal problems by staking everything on war, they are tobogganing with eyes closed towards catastrophe.



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