

## France admits it directly supplied arms to Syrian “rebels”

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President François Hollande confirmed in a *Le Monde* interview on August 19 that France has been directly supplying arms to the “rebels” of the Free Syrian Army (FSA) in its proxy war to remove the regime of President Bashar al-Assad. This came ahead of the recent US decision to intervene militarily in Syria, ostensibly to crush the Islamic State (IS) opposition militia operating in Iraq and Syria.

French imperialism has been arming Syrian Islamist opposition forces since at least the spring of 2013. According to *Le Monde*, it provided weapons including 12.7-mm machine guns, rocket launchers, body armour and communications equipment—but “nothing”, according to a *Le Monde* source, “which ‘could have been turned against us’ such as explosives”. The same weapons are also being shipped to the Peshmerga Kurdish militias in northern Iraq to stop the progress of the IS takeover, a direct product of the US war in Iraq.

The Hollande government’s role in Syria in arming the “rebels” is yet another devastating exposure of France’s pseudo-left parties, such as the New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA), that backed the imperialist proxy war in Syria. Promoting the Socialist Party’s (PS’s) foreign policy, the NPA repeated the lie that the FSA was leading a “democratic revolution” and attacked Hollande for not arming the Syrian opposition. In fact, the NPA was simply pressing Hollande to deepen the reactionary policy he was already carrying out.

An NPA National Committee resolution on Syria last September stated: “The Western powers have done everything since the start of the uprising to avoid a new military adventure.... We must support the demand for food, basic necessities, medical aid...but also arms for the most democratic sectors.”

Also last September, NPA spokesman Olivier

Besancenot on RFI called on Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius “to graciously give weapons to the Syrians”. He cautioned the government not to listen to “Those who say ‘we should above all not give weapons because they will end up with the jihadists’, well that is already the case” (see: “ISIS offensive in Iraq exposes French pseudo-left’s support for Syria war”).

The NPA’s pro-war hysteria reflects the deeply cynical policies of its reactionary affluent middle class base, which supports French imperialism’s drive to re-colonise Syria but wants to falsely posture as critics of the Hollande government to disorient working class opposition. It may be safely assumed that, whatever tactical objections they make to the course of French war policy, they will continue to support the escalating intervention in Syria.

In his *Le Monde* interview, Hollande underlined France’s determination to intervene in Syria, remarking: “We must not relax the support that we have granted to the rebels, who are the only ones participating [in the war] with democratic intentions.”

The presentation by Hollande and the NPA of the Syrian opposition forces backed by the Western powers and their allies as democratic is a vile fraud. The IS and large parts of the FSA are composed of Islamist groups using terror bombings and mass killings to conduct a brutal civil war that left nearly 190,000 dead and millions of refugees. Indeed, it is precisely these crimes that Washington is now cynically exploiting to claim it has to intervene in Iraq and Syria in order to crush the IS.

Hollande turned reality on its head, claiming the growth of the IS in Syria and its sectarian wars was due to the NATO powers’ decision not to go to war with Assad.

“The international community carries a heavy

responsibility in what is taking place in Syria. If two years ago there had been action to install a transition, we would not have had the Islamic State. If one year ago, there had been a proportionate reaction of the great powers to the use [by al-Assad] of chemical weapons, we would not be faced with this terrible choice between a dictator and a terrorist group,” he said.

Indeed, President Hollande and the US bear a “heavy responsibility”, but it is for fomenting the civil war, using reactionary jihadist forces such as the FSA and IS as proxies.

The lawlessness of Hollande’s PS government was witnessed in August 2013, when it clamoured for the bombing of Syria for regime change over a threatened Russian veto in the UN Security Council. War was averted at the last minute, due to deep splits in the foreign policy establishment and broad popular opposition to the war reflected in a vote against war in the British parliament—much to the chagrin of Hollande’s government, which was prepared to risk provoking a war with Russia and Iran.

The growth of the jihadist forces in Syria is the direct result of the arming and financing by the CIA, France and the Gulf monarchies as proxy forces to overthrow Assad. Substantial sections of the FSA, which Hollande cynically called “democratic,” have defected to the Al Qaeda-linked Al Nusra Front.

France has openly stoked the flames of civil war ever since 2012, when Hollande recognised the Syrian National Coalition—on which the FSA sits, together with representatives of various Islamist groups and liberal opponents of Assad—as Syria’s government. Hollande’s PS government is one of the most bellicose warmongers on the planet—launching wars in Mali and the Central African Republic in a drive to re-colonise Africa, and backing Washington and Berlin in their proxy war with Russia over Ukraine.



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