

Oppose the new imperialist war in Iraq!

The Socialist Equality Party (Australia)
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The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) unequivocally opposes the military intervention launched by the Obama administration in Iraq and Australia's involvement in it. As Washington steps up its air strikes against Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) militias, the Abbott government has committed military forces to an open-ended war in Iraq that is likely to spill over the border into Syria.

Canberra has already ordered military transport aircraft to make air drops inside Iraq and last weekend authorised their use to run guns and ammunition to Kurdish peshmerga forces in northern Iraq. Despite ruling out a commitment of combat troops, Prime Minister Tony Abbott has signalled his government's willingness to send Super Hornet fighters to boost the US air war, and to dispatch SAS special forces. Australian SAS troops were among the first invading troops inside Iraq in 2003 and their skills as scouts and assassins are highly prized in Washington.

Australian participation in a new war in the Middle East is being accompanied by a deluge of propaganda supporting the "humanitarian mission" to prevent the "genocide" of Iraqi minorities at the hands of the latest terrorist scourge. Yesterday in parliament, Abbott and opposition Labor leader Bill Shorten sought to outdo each other in denouncing ISIS as the devil incarnate. Abbott branded it "a death cult" and "pure evil." Shorten declared it "an enemy of humanity," a "barbaric organisation, driven by poisonous hatred and extremism."

No one should be duped by this cynical moralism, which has provided the pretext for imperialist war and "humanitarian" interventions, from the Balkans and East Timor in the 1990s to Libya and Syria. The denunciations of ISIS are designed to obscure the real interests at stake, as well as the role of the US and its allies in ISIS's creation. All these reactionary Islamist militias trace their origins to the CIA-sponsored jihad

in Afghanistan during the 1980s that led to the formation of Al Qaeda. ISIS, previously Al Qaeda in Iraq, was spawned by the genocidal sectarian war unleashed by the 2003 invasion of Iraq, and gained in strength as a result of the US-backed regime-change operation in neighbouring Syria from 2011 onward.

ISIS, Al Nusra and other Islamist militias, funded, armed and backed by the US allies in the Gulf States, have been carrying out sectarian atrocities in Syria for years. ISIS is only being branded as "pure evil" now that it has crossed the border into Iraq, threatening the US puppet regime in Baghdad. The objectives of US imperialism remain the same as in 2003: to secure its dominance in the energy-rich Middle East. The only difference is that instead of the lies about weapons of mass destruction, a humanitarian pretext is being exploited in a bid to stampede public opinion.

The Australian political establishment as a whole has lined up behind the latest military intervention. The Labor opposition has backed Abbott to the hilt, voting with the government to block a Greens' motion in the Senate for a debate. Both Labor and the Coalition insist that war is an executive decision that should not be subject to public discussion, even in the limited forum of parliament. As for the Greens, who are trying to position themselves as a lightning rod for anti-war opposition, their empty posturing about a parliamentary debate cannot obscure the fact that they do not oppose the military intervention.

Far more is at stake than in 2003. The ongoing global economic breakdown that erupted in 2008 has fuelled geo-political tensions that are even deeper and more poisonous. The Obama administration has ramped up a confrontation with China through the military build-up associated with the "pivot to Asia." Together with Germany, it engineered the fascist-led coup in Kiev in February that provoked the civil war in Ukraine and threatens war with Russia. In its determination to

ensure global hegemony, US imperialism is inflaming dangerous flashpoints that could trigger a new world war—Iraq being the latest.

The Abbott government, like the previous Labor government, is not simply trailing behind Washington but is an active and aggressive protagonist—expanding access to Australian military bases for US forces in Asia, exploiting the crash of MH17 in Ukraine to ratchet up the confrontation with Russia, and being one of the first to join Obama’s new “coalition of the willing” in Iraq. With the exception of isolated critics feebly urging caution, the political establishment has concluded that Australian imperialism’s interests are best served by supporting and encouraging the reckless US drive for global dominance.

Canberra’s deep integration into the global US war plans is underscored by President Obama’s decision to name Australia as an enhanced NATO partner at this week’s NATO summit. Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop will attend the gathering in Wales to further crank up the pressure on Russia by lobbying for its exclusion from the G20 summit in Brisbane later this year.

Imperialist provocation and war abroad goes hand in hand with the whipping up of militarism, nationalism and anti-Muslim xenophobia, the expansion of police-state powers, and a deepening assault on the social position of the working class. The Abbott government’s first budget, most of which was unanimously passed in the Senate, expands spending on the military, intelligence agencies and federal police, while imposing savage austerity measures on the poorest and most vulnerable sections of society. As the gulf between rich and poor widens, war serves to project the immense social tensions outward against a foreign enemy.

The ruling class is acutely aware that Australian involvement in another war, in Iraq in particular, is deeply unpopular. Both Abbott and Shorten have attempted to draw a distinction between the US invasion in 2003 and now, conscious that a decade ago millions of people in Australia and around the world joined the biggest anti-war protests in history.

Workers and youth must draw the necessary lessons from that experience. Those protests failed to halt the US war, not because of any lack of size or determination. They were politically derailed. The

various liberal figures and pseudo-left organisations that led the rallies and marches restricted the opposition movement to pressuring the United Nations, or rival imperialist powers like France, or their own governments to stop the war. All these efforts proved completely futile.

The truth is that the only viable means for stopping militarism and war is the independent mobilisation of the international working class to put an end to the profit system that is war’s root cause. The SEP and its sister parties of the International Committee of the Fourth International are alone in campaigning to build a global anti-war movement based on the fight for socialist internationalism. In opposing the new war in Iraq, the SEP appeals to workers and youth in Australia and around the world to join our ranks and provide the necessary political leadership for the revolutionary struggles ahead.



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