

UN Security Council resolution on “foreign terrorist fighters” targets democratic rights

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25 September 2014

The United Nations Security Council passed a broadly worded resolution on Wednesday targeting the flow of “foreign terrorist fighters” internationally. While presented as a response to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), the resolution is aimed at legitimizing a raft of antidemocratic measures as part of a renewed “war on terror.”

Significantly, the resolution does not purport to authorize the bombing of Syria that began early Tuesday morning. The United States and other imperialist powers, together with their allies among the Gulf monarchies, have launched the new war—directed ultimately at the government of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad—without even seeking UN sanction.

On Wednesday morning, President Barack Obama defended these actions in a bellicose speech before the United Nations General Assembly, pledging not only an intensified military campaign in the Middle East, but also issuing fresh threats against Russia.

Security Council Resolution 2178, passed in a unanimous 15-0 vote, directs all countries in the UN to “prevent and suppress the recruiting, organizing, transporting or equipping of individuals who travel to a State other than their States of residence or nationality for the purpose of the perpetration, planning, or preparation of, or participation in, terrorist acts or the providing or receiving of terrorist training, and the financing of their travel and of their activities.”

The resolution was adopted under Chapter 7 of the UN Charter, making it legally binding on all member countries. Chapter 7 governs the Security Council’s response to any “breach of the peace or act of aggression,” including authorizing military or nonmilitary action. While the resolution does not explicitly mention military action, it will no doubt be cited in the future for this purpose.

To this end, the definition of “terrorism” is left for individual countries to determine. In her own comments before the Security Council, Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė, citing unrest in Europe, insisted that ISIS was not the only target. This was a clear reference to Ukraine, where the right-wing government installed by the US and Germany earlier this year has called pro-Russian separatists in the east “terrorists.” In August, Grybauskaitė declared that Russia was in a “state of war against Europe” over the conflict in Ukraine.

At the same time, under the guise of opposing “extremism,” all the major powers are intensifying the assault on democratic rights within their borders. Obama, who personally chaired the Security Council meeting, said the resolution “must be followed by tangible commitments” and urged all countries to take “concrete steps...to counter extremist ideologies in our own countries.”

The passage of the resolution comes as the media in the US, Europe and Australia is engaged in a nonstop propaganda campaign over supposed terrorist threats against the “homeland.” In the United States, news programs have been filled with scare-mongering over Khorasan, a group that US military officials claim is in the “advanced stages” of planning a terrorist attack in the US or Europe. The police presence in New York and other major cities was beefed up on Wednesday in response to these unsubstantiated threats.

Already, a number of countries, including France, Australia, Canada and Britain, have proposed or begun implementing measures to strip individuals of citizenship and take away their passports on the basis of allegations of participating in terrorist or “extremist” organizations. There are ongoing discussions within the United States over similar proposals.

Last month, following the beheading of US journalist James Foley by ISIS, British Prime Minister David Cameron laid out a series of proposals, including the seizure of passports and the removal of citizenship. Government actions, he said, would target “all types of extremism,” which a British government agency has defined as “vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs”—a definition that could be used to cover almost any opposition group.

The UN resolution is also part of efforts to utilize ISIS to strengthen state spying powers and deflect public outrage over the illegal and unconstitutional National Security Agency (NSA) programs revealed over the past year. In his remarks before the Security Council, Obama said that the resolution “will strengthen cooperation between nations, including sharing more information about the travel and activities of foreign terrorist organizations.”

An article published in *Foreign Policy* on Wednesday spelled out part of the motivation behind the resolution. Under the headline, “The Islamic State Makes Electronic Surveillance Respectable Again,” columnist Colum Lynch noted that the resolution “would require governments to grant law enforcement authorities wider scope to monitor and suppress the travel and other activities of suspected local jihadists.”

The article states that Congressional legislation on NSA spying, which includes token restrictions that nevertheless allow the spying to continue, has stalled. Moreover, Lynch notes, “The debate in France and other European countries reflects the degree to which discussions about surveillance on the continent no longer fixate on the NSA’s massive electronic spying that contractor Edward Snowden revealed when he leaked the spy agency’s internal documents.”

The *Foreign Policy* article cites Andrea Prasow of Human Rights Watch, who says the UN resolution is “rampant” with potential violations of due process. “Nowhere does it articulate by what process would [suspects] be denied their right to travel,” she says. Some provisions, moreover, “promote the idea that people can be prosecuted for their thoughts and their beliefs, but not their actions. It does not articulate any actual criminal conduct as a prerequisite for detention.”

As in the “war on terror” launched after the

September 11, 2001 attacks, the real targets of all of these measures are not Islamic fundamentalist groups (in this case ISIS, which is a direct product of the civil war incited by the CIA in Syria), but any opposition to the foreign and domestic policies of the imperialist ruling classes.

In other developments Wednesday, British Prime Minister David Cameron announced that he was recalling parliament for a special session to vote Friday on UK involvement in the US-led bombing campaign in Iraq. The move came after Labour Party Leader Ed Miliband gave his assurances that his party would support the Conservative-Liberal Democrat government.



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