

Libyan kangaroo court sentences Gaddafi's son and others to die

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29 July 2015

A court controlled by an Islamist militia in the Libyan capital of Tripoli on Tuesday sentenced the son of Muammar Gaddafi, the country's assassinated head of state, and eight others to death by firing squad.

Among the others condemned to die were Abdullah Senussi, Gaddafi's former intelligence chief, and two former prime ministers, Baghdadi Mahmudi and Abuzed Dorda.

Eight other former officials were condemned to life in prison in the mass show trial, while seven were sentenced to 12-year prison terms. Four were acquitted.

Saif Gaddafi, who was widely viewed as the second most powerful figure in the old regime, was taken prisoner while trying to flee Libya in November 2011 after a six-month US-NATO war had succeeded in toppling his father, who was captured, tortured and murdered by Islamist militiamen the previous month.

At the time, then-Secretary of State and present front-runner for the Democratic presidential nomination Hillary Clinton gloated over the gruesome killing, declaring amid laughter, "We came, we saw, he died."

Saif Gaddafi was tried in absentia, as he is being held by a militia in the northwestern Libyan city of Zintan, which rejects the authority of the regime in Tripoli. The latter regime was set up by the Islamist Libya Dawn militia a year ago after driving out a Council of Deputies, which was elected in June of 2014 with barely 18 percent of the electorate participating. The council fled to Tobruk and, while controlling little of the country, is recognized internationally as the government of Libya.

United Nations officials, human rights groups and even the rump regime exiled to Tobruk joined in condemning the trial and verdict as illegitimate.

While presented as a settling of accounts between the

US-orchestrated "revolution" and the old regime, the trial has been merely one more indication of the disintegration of Libya as a result of the war of aggression launched against the North African country four years ago. Civil war conditions that have killed thousands and turned millions into refugees have far overshadowed the rigged courtroom drama, which has been met with popular indifference in Libya.

Those placed on trial were accused of killings and repression carried out in the immediate run-up to the US-NATO intervention, which was promoted as a "human rights" intervention designed to stave off a supposedly imminent massacre in the eastern city of Benghazi, which had been overrun by US-backed Islamist rebels.

In reality, there was no evidence that such a mass killing was being prepared, and in the end, ten times as many people were killed by the US-NATO bombing campaign and the attacks of the Islamist militias than died at the hands of government forces in the clashes preceding the intervention.

To call the proceedings in which Saif Gaddafi and the other former regime officials were convicted a kangaroo court is an understatement. Gaddafi himself was not in the courtroom and had been able to follow the proceedings via video only three times at the trial's outset over a year ago.

No evidence implicating individual defendants in specific criminal acts was presented and there were no witnesses presented in open court for defense attorneys to cross-examine. The only evidence consisted of confessions extracted under torture.

Some of the defendants, including Senussi, did not even have lawyers. Those that did were denied access to their attorneys. Defense lawyers themselves were denied basic documents, while facing threats and even

physical assaults.

Indicating the conditions under which the trial was held, a UN trial monitor was taken prisoner by militia members in the courtroom and accused of practicing black magic.

John Jones, Saif Gaddafi's lawyer, appointed by the International Criminal Court, denounced the proceedings as "a complete show trial, a farce."

"This trial is effectively being run by Libya Dawn militias," Jones said. The prosecutors, he added, "are relying on confessions from defendants extracted by torture. It was condemned by Libya's own ministry of justice as illegal."

Senussi's London-based lawyer, Ben Emmerson QC, who like Jones was denied access to his client, issued a statement charging that "extreme fear, insecurity and intimidation" had dominated the trial. "The death sentence just handed down against Abdullah al-Senussi is the most deplorable decision in a case in which every one of his basic rights to a fair trial and due process have been completely ignored," he added.

This travesty of a trial only serves as further evidence of the real crimes against Libya that have yet to be prosecuted, those committed by US President Barack Obama, French President Nicolas Sarkozy and British Prime Minister David Cameron in launching an unprovoked war of aggression aimed at toppling the country's government and seizing control of its oil wealth, the greatest proven reserves on the African continent.

This seminal crime has produced an unending series of atrocities, from the vast increase in the number of migrants losing their lives fleeing Libya across the Mediterranean for Europe, to the sectarian murders and beheadings carried out by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), which has established a growing presence in a country where Islamist militias previously had no significant influence.

One of the worst recent terrorist attacks, the massacre of 39 tourists in Tunisia, was carried out by a Tunisian national who was trained in Libya and then sent to his own country to carry out killings.

An indication of the criminality of Western imperialist policy toward Libya came this week with the revelation in newly released documents in London that the British government spent 13 times as much money bombing Libya to bring about "regime change"

than it has since contributed to rebuilding the shattered country in the wake of the 2011 US-NATO war.

House of Commons library files have put the total cost of the 2011 British military intervention at £320 million, while in the four years since the military attack, the UK has given only £25 million for reconstruction and stabilization projects.

Previously the Cameron government had attempted to maintain a veil of secrecy over the cost of the intervention, with government ministers speaking in terms "tens of millions" spent on the war.

No doubt similar, if not worse, ratios exist for the US, France and all of the belligerent NATO powers.

The revelations have been joined with the announcement that the House of Commons is to launch an inquiry into Britain's role in toppling Gaddafi and its responsibility for the chaos that has engulfed Libya since.

Crispin Blunt, the Tory party chairman of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee, told the daily *Guardian*: "It has turned out to be a catastrophe for the people of Libya. And now it is a growing problem for us, with our undoubted enemy ISIS beginning to establish control of areas of Libya. Plus the migration crisis--any area where state authority collapses obviously poses problems for us all over the world."

Undaunted, Cameron, speaking during a state visit to Indonesia, indicated his willingness to renew British military attacks on Libya.

"If there is a threat to Britain or to our people or our streets and we can stop it by taking immediate action against that threat, then I as prime minister will always want to try to take that action and that's the case whether that problem is emanating from Libya, from Syria, or anywhere else," he said.

The Obama administration, meanwhile, is reportedly seeking an agreement with one or another of the surrounding North African countries to set up a base for US drones in order to carry out renewed strikes against Libya.



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