

UK Prime Minister Cameron calls for “hard military force” in Syria

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The British government is in the advanced stages of preparing a military onslaught on Syria. The ultimate aim of these plans is “regime change” and the removal of the elected government of Bashar al-Assad.

On Wednesday, just two days after Prime Minister David Cameron revealed that Britain’s Royal Air Force had carried out the unprecedented, unlawful targeted assassinations of two UK citizens, Reyaad Khan and Ruhul Amin, in Syria, he declared that the government was ready to step up military action.

Cameron said the massive flow of refugees into Europe was happening, “because Assad has butchered his own people and because ISIL [ISIS] has, in its own way, butchered others, and millions have fled Syria.”

Britain had to be part of an international alliance based on the approach that “Assad has to go, ISIL has to go”, he said, and “that will require not just spending money, not just aid, not just diplomacy—*it will, on occasion, require hard military force.*” [emphasis added]

The *Guardian* reported that the plans being hatched by the Cameron government entailed a “renewed diplomatic push that could see Bashar al-Assad remain president for a transitional period of six months.”

Whatever the accuracy of this report, various sources indicate that Cameron could ask parliament to endorse military action in Syria within weeks, with early October being circulated as a possible start date for operations.

In August 2013, concern over public opposition to a British war against Syria, along with divisions in ruling circles as to the efficacy of an operation limited to air strikes, led to parliament voting down military intervention.

Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond, speaking Wednesday before parliament’s foreign affairs select

committee said, “At the moment we are attacking an enemy in Iraq and if we formed the judgment that this air-based campaign was more efficacious if we attacked ISIL in Syria, we would ask parliament.”

He continued, “The logic of extending our mandate to cover ISIL targets in Syria would be very clearly a logic in support of the mandate we have in Iraq for the collective defence of that country.”

Within this context, it is clear that the resort to extrajudicial murder by the ruling elite is part of the plans for a significant escalation of British intervention in the region and intimidating the inevitable opposition that this will cause—both abroad and at home.

This time, the refugee crisis created by the imperialist powers’ criminal actions to date in the Middle East and North Africa are to provide the “humanitarian” pretext for war.

Befitting a ruling elite that has broken with the very concept of democracy and the rule of law, Hammond stated in the manner of a colonial overlord, “We are not saying Assad and all his cronies have to go on day one.” He added, “The international community cannot ... facilitate and oversee a set of elections in which somebody guilty of crimes on the scale that Assad has committed is able to run for office. That has to be clear. He cannot be part of Syria’s future.”

Just as in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya, what is intended is nothing less than the military conquest of Syria, to be followed by sham elections carried out under occupation and the installation of a puppet government subservient to the main imperialist powers.

The warmongering of Cameron and Hammond follows the speech Monday by French President François Hollande, in which he announced that France would start surveillance missions over Syria, under the guise of targeting ISIS, and called for the ouster of

Assad.

The imperialist powers and their proxies have wrought untold death and destruction in the Middle East over the last 25 years, with Britain playing a leading role, in the face of mass public opposition.

Cameron can only now proceed with further military action in Syria due to the total complicity of Britain's other parliamentary parties.

In Wednesday's parliamentary debate, the prime minister's admission that he had recently authorised the murder of two British citizens again passed without criticism. The only MP who even referred to it was Angus Robertson, the Scottish National Party's leader at Westminster.

Robertson merely stated, "We learnt this week of a new UK policy of drone strikes against terrorist suspects in regions where there is not parliamentary approval for general military action", without mentioning that the two were killed and they were British citizens.

A parliamentary vote on military action in Syria would require the votes of a section of the Labour Party, as it is expected that up to 20 Conservative MPs will not support it.

It has been claimed that the only reason Cameron has not yet called the vote, is because he is awaiting the announcement of the new Labour Party leader on Saturday. It is expected that the Labour "left" Jeremy Corbyn, who is on record as opposing military action in Syria, will win the contest.

No one should assume that a Corbyn-led party would automatically oppose intervention.

The "left" MP said nothing at all on Monday regarding the state-sanctioned execution of British citizens. Since then he has said only that he was "unclear as to the point of killing the individual by this drone attack" and that the prime minister "has some very difficult questions to answer about the legality of what he did."

At any rate, the BBC's Newsnight programme surveyed 14 Labour MPs who "would be willing to defy a Mr Corbyn-led party and instead vote with the Conservative leadership," the broadcaster reported. This would be sufficient for the vote to pass.

It noted that "Conservative whips currently believe fewer than 20 Conservative MPs will rebel", adding, "If the SNP, Lib Dems and Democratic Ulster Unionist

MPs all join forces to oppose Conservative plans, that means 13 Labour MPs would be needed to see the vote passed."

According to an article by George Eaton in the Labour-supporting *New Statesman* magazine, "Labour sources estimate that as many as 30 would vote for military action." Eaton's piece, headlined, "Will Labour's hawks allow Cameron to overcome the Tory doves on Syria?" cited the comment of one anonymous Labour MP who said, "Absolutely I'll support it and many others will, too." Of the vote in 2013, he added, "They feel completely ashamed by what we did two years ago."

Such is the craven support of Britain's media for the militarist agenda of the government that, with just a few exceptions, none have questioned the adoption of a policy of targeted assassination. In fact, for the most part, this alarming development was welcomed and even praised.

In keeping with this, there is little coverage of the advanced preparations for war against Syria and its implications.

This was despite Professor Christof Heyns, the United Nations special rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, stating Wednesday that the drone attack on British citizens had created a dangerous precedent.

"An important threshold is being crossed", he said. "[W]hat we have here is a targeted killing based on a very open ended justification—there is a continuing but not an imminent threat—and because there is no opportunity to arrest, deadly force is used."

"If this is permissible in Syria", he went on, "it must be permissible anywhere else—and for any government. This is the dangerous route of the global war on terror."

Hans Corell, a former senior legal counsel at the UN told the *Guardian*, "The moment you start using drones outside a battlefield that is a problem. If you go outside a battlefield and identify a terrorist suspect and fire a missile to kill someone, I'm concerned that can be murder."



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