

Scandal erupts over Dutch state's funding of Islamist terror group in Syria

Kumaran Ira
14 September 2018

On Monday, Dutch public TV show “Nieuwsuur” (News Hour) reported that the Dutch government has been financing a jihadist group in Syria that public prosecutors have labeled a “terrorist” organisation.

The affair is a devastating exposure of the criminal character of the war for regime change stoked by Washington and the European Union (EU) in Syria since 2011. It follows the scandal involving Franco-Swiss construction conglomerate Lafarge, which financed the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) militia that carried out terror attacks in Europe.

“Nieuwsuur” reported that Amsterdam gave “non-lethal assistance” to 22 jihadist opposition groups fighting Syrian government forces. This included providing uniforms and pick-up trucks to the Jabhat al-Shamiya militia in 2017 as part of a secret programme providing assistance to rebel groups in Syria from 2015 to early this year.

Until the affair was exposed, the Dutch Foreign Affairs Ministry claimed that it only supported “moderate groups” in Syria. It told the Tweede Kamer (Dutch House of Representatives) that so-called “moderate groups” respect “humanitarian law of war,” don’t cooperate with extremists, and pursue an “inclusive political solution” for Syria.

However, a scandal erupted after the trial of a Dutch man charged with joining the Jabhat al-Shamiya militia in 2015. Prosecutors branded Jabhat al-Shamiya a terrorist organisation, calling it a “Salafist and jihadist” group that “strives to set up a caliphate” and insisting that it could not be qualified as anything other than a “criminal organisation of terrorist intent.”

It turned out, however, that the Netherlands were part of a coalition of NATO powers that funded the Jabhat al-Shamiya, also known as the Levant Front, an umbrella group for Turkey-backed rebel fighters in

northern Syria, founded in 2014. In 2016, Amnesty International accused the group of carrying out summary executions and establishing courts enforcing a strict Islamic-based penal code.

The scandal comes as the NATO bid to impose regime change in Syria faces imminent military defeat. The Assad regime, with Russian air support, is taking over rebel-held areas and launching a new offensive in Idlib to capture the last Islamist strongholds.

Just a few days before, the Dutch parliament announced the government had decided to end its support for Syrian rebel groups, saying it did not provide the “expected results.” A September 7 letter to the House of Representatives signed by the foreign and trade ministers declared, “The possibility of rapidly changing the situation [in Syria] is very weak.”

It revealed Amsterdam had spent €70 million on so-called “stabilization” projects to support the Syrian opposition militias. Amsterdam has offered €25 million to a “non-lethal” assistance fund, €12.5 million to the White Helmets and another €15 million to the Access to Justice and Community Security (AJACS) programme. The September 7 letter admitted that this commitment, however, failed, because Syrian pro-government forces are on the verge of victory.

Russian state media reported that the AJACS programme was involved in backing the controversial Free Syrian Police project, which was the subject of a BBC documentary that reported that “a lot of funding from London destined to it ended up in the hands of jihadist elements.”

The “humanitarian” pretensions of NATO’s bloody war for regime change in Syria have completely collapsed. While they branded ISIS as a dangerous militia and claimed that they were fighting it as part of a “war on terror,” the NATO powers actually used

terrorist organisations as their foreign proxies to pursue their imperialist interests and fan the flames of war in the Middle East.

They relied on Islamist militias in the 2011 war in Libya and then in Syria, working with Persian Gulf oil sheikdoms like Saudi Arabia to funnel billions of dollars into Islamist terror networks. They recruited tens of thousands of fighters from Europe, the Middle East and Asia to carry out shooting or bombing raids in both countries. In 2012, the Pentagon designated one proxy militia, Al Nusra, as a terrorist group and Al Qaeda affiliate, though it has continued to receive NATO support.

The revelations in the Netherlands expose the fraudulent character of the police-state measures imposed by European powers—like the state of emergency in France, placing Brussels on lockdown or putting armed law enforcement on the streets in Britain—after ISIS terror attacks in those countries. In fact, the same governments were funnelling massive amounts of public funds into the terror networks that carried out the attacks.

These police-state measures were not directed at stopping terrorism but suppressing rising social opposition to war and austerity.

The revelation of official Dutch complicity in Islamist terrorism again confirms the correctness of the WSWs analysis. It noted that the terrorists involved in each attack were “drawn from a broad pool of active fighters in the wars in Iraq, Syria and other countries, and who have been financed with the support of NATO and intelligence agencies in both Europe and the United States.” Such attacks “are facilitated by sections of the state for whom terrorist acts in Western countries serve the purpose of shifting foreign and domestic policy—or some combination of the two.”

These events also expose the pro-war policy of the pseudo-left organisations like France’s New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA) and the International Socialist Organization (ISO) in the United States, who bear political responsibility in the imperialist crimes in the Middle East. They promoted NATO-backed Syrian rebels as “revolutionaries,” and pushed imperialist aggression and proxy wars waged by terrorist groups as a “humanitarian” war for “democracy.” These lies are now completely exposed.

The war in Syria has now escalated into a conflict

that threatens to engulf the entire region and world in a violent conflict between the world’s main nuclear powers. Ahead of the Syrian regime’s assault on rebels in Idlib, Russia reinforced its naval forces in the Mediterranean off the Syrian coast, deploying several frigates in Moscow’s largest naval buildup since it entered the Syrian conflict in 2015. Moscow has accused Washington of building up its own forces in the Middle East in preparation for a possible strike on Syria.

Despite the US-NATO debacle, Washington and the European powers are preparing a new military offensive in Syria. Last Friday, over 100 US Marines flew into the country to participate in live fire exercises, signalling to Moscow and Damascus that Washington will not tolerate the planned offensive against Islamist militias in Idlib.

Moscow has alleged that US-backed, Al Qaeda-linked Islamists are planning to stage yet another chemical weapons attack as a justification to trigger a NATO intervention. In April 2017 and April 2018, the US, Britain and France launched cruise missiles and air strikes following fabricated charges that the Assad regime had used chemical weapons. The chemical weapons attack, according to multiple reports, were staged by Syrian rebels, with the White Helmets involved in the incident in Douma on April 7.

US General Joseph Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, declared: “The president expects us to have military options in the event that chemical weapons are used.”

The scandal in the Netherlands underscores that these threats are part of a broad, criminal collaboration between the imperialist powers and the Islamist terror militias fighting for regime change in Syria.



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)