

US imperialist hypocrisy and the Libyan flood

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Over the weekend, former President Barack Obama urged his 132 million followers on Twitter (X) to make contributions to charitable organizations aiding the people of Derna, the Libyan city devastated by a flood that killed well over 20,000 people, according to estimates by local officials.

“If you’re looking to help people impacted by the floods in Libya, check out these organizations providing relief,” Obama wrote, citing an appeal from his own foundation.

This statement provoked a barrage of hostile comments on social media from those who justifiably cited Obama’s own responsibility for creating the conditions for the Libyan disaster. His government launched the US-NATO war in 2011 that destroyed the existing regime of longtime ruler Muammar Gaddafi. The bombing set in motion the protracted civil war, still ongoing, that has laid waste to a country that was once the richest in Africa.

Other top US officials responsible for the war in Libya include then-Vice President Joe Biden and then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who played the main role in publicly justifying the war. She gloated about US-NATO success in killing Gaddafi. “We came, we saw, he died,” she boasted at the time.

Now-President Biden issued his own sanctimonious appeal for support and sympathy for the Libyan people. “Jill and I send our deepest condolences to all the families who have lost loved ones in the devastating floods in Libya,” he said in a statement last week, adding that the US was sending emergency funds to relief organizations. No dollar amount has been announced yet, but it will be a drop in the bucket compared to the \$1.1 billion spent by the US on the 2011 war, let alone the tens of billions being spent on the war against Russia in Ukraine.

The total aid appeal announced by the United Nations is only \$71 million. This sum is dwarfed by the vast

human need, and by the enormous amounts squandered on the killing zone that Ukraine has become. The European Union, which has poured nearly \$40 billion into the war against Russia, pledged a mere \$537,000 in aid to the victims of the Derna flood.

The United Nations also bears responsibility for the Libyan tragedy. On March 17, 2011, the UN Security Council approved actions against Libya (with Russia and China abstaining rather than vetoing), authorizing member states to “take all necessary measures to protect civilians under threat of attack in the country, including Benghazi.” This language gave the UN seal of approval to the imperialist pretext for attacking Libya, the supposed threat of a massacre of the people of Benghazi by Gaddafi’s forces. Two days later, the US-NATO bombing began.

That war killed 25,000 Libyans, including Gaddafi, who was tortured and murdered by Islamic fundamentalists recruited, trained and armed by the Pentagon and CIA, as well as Britain and France. These fighters were then shipped by the CIA to Syria to join an insurgent movement against Syrian President Bashar al-Assad that became known as ISIS. The port through which these hardened guerrillas were transported was the city of Derna, now largely destroyed by the September 10 flood.

Other Islamists moved south, destabilizing most of the Sahel region, including Chad, Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso and the Central African Republic, and spreading violence into Nigeria, Africa’s most populous country.

Within Libya itself, the consequences of the US-led war were catastrophic. Economically, Africa’s most prosperous country before the US-NATO attack has been transformed into one of poverty and deprivation, with crumbling infrastructure. In 2010, the year before the war, Libya’s GDP was \$11,611 per capita. By 2021, this figure was cut nearly in half, to \$5,909 per capita. The country’s net wealth actually fell 21

percent from 2010 to 2021, in sharp contrast to African countries like Ethiopia (up 591 percent), Kenya (up 468 percent) and Nigeria (up 230 percent).

The US-NATO bombing of Libya was followed by a civil war between rival factions, each backed by a different constellation of outside powers vying for control of the country's vast oil and gas reserves, the largest in Africa. Libya has now been effectively partitioned between an eastern region headquartered in Benghazi and a western region controlled from Tripoli, the capital city.

Reportedly, the eastern region rulers, headed by Khalifa Haftar, once a CIA asset but now allied with France, Russia and the United Arab Emirates, looked with suspicion on the city of Derna because of its role in the activities of the Islamic fundamentalists and American intelligence operatives. They were not inclined to expend resources to repair and strengthen the infrastructure there, even after reports of visible cracks in the two dams that protected the city against possible flooding of the wadi, the riverbed, usually dry, which ran through its center.

It was these two dams that failed under the impact of Storm Daniel, the hurricane-sized weather event, likely strengthened by climate change, which poured more than 15 inches of water on the city, a year's average rainfall, in a few hours. The huge volume of water, freed from any constraint by the dam collapse, roared down upon the defenseless inhabitants of Derna and swept away or buried in mud an estimated one in four buildings in a city of nearly 100,000 people.

The American corporate media, of course, says nothing in its coverage of the disaster about the responsibility of the Obama-Biden administration and the US government for this colossal human tragedy. There will be no indictments, either politically or juridically, of the war criminals in Washington.

When the United Nations General Assembly convenes Monday in New York City, the leaders of the major powers will give complacent speeches about the urgency of mobilizing the world in support of Ukraine. They may even give lip service to the causes of fighting global hunger and disease, the need to assist the victims of "natural disasters" in Morocco, Libya, Turkey and countless other countries.

Coinciding with this event is the two-day conference sponsored by the Clinton Global Initiative, the

foundation run by Bill and Hillary Clinton. This boasts seven US governors, four Biden cabinet members, two former White House press secretaries, a genuine war criminal, former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, and reportedly the Pope. There is no mention in its voluminous agenda of either the Libyan disaster or Hillary Clinton's role in it.

There is silence likewise from the pseudo-left groups and "left" academics who backed the US-NATO war in Libya, and who now back the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine. None of these groups has the slightest independence from American imperialism or its European rivals. All of them, like Obama, Biden and Clinton, have blood on their hands, and bear political and moral responsibility for one of great crimes of the 21st century.

Only the *World Socialist Web Site* and the International Committee of the Fourth International have a political record of consistent opposition to imperialism and all its crimes. We seek today, as we did in 2011, and as we do every day in relation to the Ukraine war, to clarify the working class in every country on the necessity to wage a political struggle against imperialism and to unite internationally to do so.



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