

Five reasons to oppose imperialist intervention in Libya

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With the capture of UK special forces troops in Libya, **John Bowman** explains why the proposal for intervention by imperialist troops into Libya for "humanitarian reasons" must be opposed

With two US warships ordered to sail closer to Libya, and various countries discussing the introduction of a 'no-fly' zone over the country, the possibility of foreign forces entering Libya is becoming increasingly likely.

So why, when dictator Colonel Gaddafi is launching such a brutal war against his own people, would socialists oppose foreign armies? be it a unilateral US led force, NATO or UN intervention? entering Libya?

Imperialism

It is the height of hypocrisy when leaders in the west condemn the regime and call for its removal, when countries like the US and Britain have spent years strengthening diplomatic ties with the Gaddafi family in return for lucrative oil and weapons export deals.

In fact, Britain has put particular effort into inviting leaders of the Libyan regime to arms fairs to sell them the very same weapons that are now being used against their own people.

Leaders of the last Labour government publicly embraced Gaddafi and universities such as LSE received donations from the regime in return for honorary qualifications, sparking occupation by students this month.

So don't be fooled when British and American governments say they want to help Libyan people. They have spent many years, and lots and lots of money keeping them down, reaping the benefits of a regime that has provided them with high-grade oil and a happy ally in the Middle East prepared to stifle opposition to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and Israel's continued oppression of the Palestinians.

Their real concern is that opposition forces have seized 80% of Libya's oil production capacity, and that they won't see this lucrative resource piped westwards in years to come.

Dictatorship

In opposition held areas, ordinary people are taking control of their hospitals, schools, factories and workplaces, with moves to link up the liberated cities in the east of the country.

Ordinary people, having rid themselves of Gaddafi's military and para-military forces are building their own structures, providing their own policing, making their own rules free from Gaddafi's diktat.

If foreign ground troops are sent in to occupy Libya and 'restore order' this would not be the case.

Foreign military forces will not tolerate ordinary civilians carrying their own weapons, deciding on the best way to coordinate their security and the running of local infrastructure.

Rules will be made according to the military chain of command, not according to the democratic will of the Libyan people.

This has now been the case for years in occupied Iraq, Afghanistan and Palestine: subject to army checkpoints, searches, and a denial of the freedom of movement on every street corner.

But even this is not the full story. If Libya faces full foreign occupation, foreign forces will want to see an infamous 'transition to democracy.' In Iraq and Afghanistan, this meant disaster for the people.

In Iraq, a fast-track privatisation scheme sold off Iraq's services and industry to foreign (mostly American) multinational companies with close links to the republican Bush government. Billions of dollars meant for 'reconstruction' after the war went straight into the hands of American companies like Blackwater (now Xe services due to a PR disaster) and Halliburton.

In Afghanistan, imperialist forces installed the Hamid Karzai government, which, despite being world renowned for rigging elections remains in power to this day, failing to provide Afghans with their economic needs, and oppressing women as a concession to Islamist forces in the country. Karzai retains a close relationship with the British and American governments.

Sectarianism

Said Gadaffi warned the people of Libya in a televised address that the removal of the regime would cause sectarian tensions between different Libyan tribes and political forces.

Iraqis protest against divided communities

In fact, the opposite is the case. The mass movement against Gadaffi has united millions of people across the whole country in a bid to oust the regime.

But in Iraq and Afghanistan, foreign occupiers deliberately encouraged sectarianism to divide the countries, weaken them and make it easier for the military to rule.

In Afghanistan, the first attempts by the US to weaken the Taliban government were to use the CIA to bribe tribal warlords, and make them turn their guns on the government. But after the Taliban was gone, this led to the now well-funded regional leaders to turn their guns on each other in a bid for more power.

In Iraq, systematic attempts were made to divide the country. The USA-led transitional government, after the fall of Saddam Hussein, was carved up between Kurdish, Sunni and Shi'ite delegates so they would fight themselves, rather than work together as a unified national government.

Different community areas of Baghdad were even walled off to separate the three main ethnic and religious groups, destroying what were previously mixed communities, and leading to spates of sectarian terrorist attacks.

The same must not be allowed to happen in Libya.

Seizure of economic power

Although many people in Libya live in poverty and in poor conditions, Libya is not a poor country.

Not only does it have vast oil reserves, it also produces the best quality oil in the world, perfect for refining petroleum that allows goods to be transported from one place to another all over the world.

The resources can be used to provide the Libyan poor and workers with better pay, services, living and working conditions, when under Gaddafi, Libya's wealth went towards the dictatorship and into the bank accounts of foreign oil companies.

That's why the movement in Libya is not just about democracy, it's about taking control of the country's economy, and using it to aid not only Libyans, but ordinary workers, and the rural and urban poor all over the Middle East and the world.

This is also the worst nightmare of international big business, who see the Libyan revolution as a threat to their profits across the whole region.

Bloodbath

But there is more to it than this too. The rich countries, the imperialist nations, are in a battle between themselves to come out at the top of the food chain in a period of history still dominated by the effects of the 2007-8 world recession.

Big business in those countries, which can seize control of Libya's wealth will come out on top. Those which cannot, will lose status. And this struggle, shown by all modern history, can lead to the most horrific violence possible.

That's what makes the system of imperialism, and foreign intervention in Libya, something we must do all in our power to oppose and fight against by any means necessary.

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