

Protests grow across Libya as Gaddafi sends in mercenaries

Joana Ramiro Sat, 19/02/2011 - 22:06

Joana Ramiro

Gaddafi has unleashed his thugs against the pro democracy movement in Libya, reports Joana Ramiro

In the last 24 hours Colonel Gaddafi has been swift in adopting a mix of 'appeasement' and repressive tactics in the attempt to smother the Libyan revolutionary insurgences.

While the use of heavy weaponry was reported in Benghazi and Al-Bayda and the death toll has now reached 84, in Tripoli, capital and home of one million Libyans, Muammar Gaddafi has fought to maintain tranquility by galvanizing reactionary forces onto the streets. Benghazi saw thousands of people attending a funeral for protesters recently killed in the street demonstrations. Hired mercenaries opened fire on the funeral crowds, killing 15. Such violence will rebound on Gaddafi in such a way that he will not be able to withstand the fury. Footage was released of yellow hat wearing men, who it was claimed were mercenaries, and other armed men opening fire into the crowds.

The regime-supportive Revolutionary Committees 'names which bear no relation to the revolution which is actually happening on the streets now - has recently published a statement in its paper, Azzahf Al-Akhdar, threatening protesters that 'the response of ' the Revolutionary Forces to any adventures by these small groups will be sharp and violent?. Oppressive statements like these clearly outline the attitude of the pro Gaddafi supporters to the protest movement. Such statements will only enrage the pro democracy movement.

The 'rapidly deteriorating situation,' as diplomats have cynically reported it, sees Libyan official news silenced and the country's internet cancelled. Speaking to the BBC, former British ambassador Oliver Miles reported that while in Tripoli life seems to run as per usual in half to a dozen cities across the country revolutionaries, military and even some police units fraternize. In Benghazi many parts of the city have been seized by protesters, including a captured radio station which now broadcasts the revolution across the country.

And while Libya suffers from a regime and a leadership unafraid of using the most brutal force to suppress the cries for freedom, it is blatant to all that the city of Tripoli stands alone as the last obstacle to revolution. The deconstruction of once hallowed signifiers has already started. Amateur footage shows youngsters knocking down statues of the Green Book ' Gaddafi's authored ideological legacy. Today the longest surviving dictator of the Arab world is threatened with a massive revolt - he will try to crush it through force, he will go through all the stages that Mubarak went through in his attempt to suppress the revolution.

If Tripoli's pro-Gaddafi stand is challenged we could see the takeover of the Libyan banking, finance and communication centre. Despite the decentralization of Libyan political bodies (most ministries being located outside of Tripoli) it is still in Tripoli that political power lies among popular consciousness. If the

people of Tripoli take the streets in the quest for accountability and democracy; if the workers strike; if the people take back their Congresses and Committees, the fall of the regime is eminent. However, the control of major cities without seizure of the capital (and consequent alienation of a great number of urban working class Libyans) could become a major misjudgment undermining the whole project. An unshaken Tripoli means the establishment of a base for the counter-revolution.

The prospect of revolution in Libya depends on mass organized direct action in general and coordinated workers action in particular. However, it also depends greatly on the strategic takeover of the capital city, Tripoli.

Source URL: <https://fifthinternational.org/content/protests-grow-across-libya-gadaffi-sends-mercenaries>