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Debate: Libya/Britain

Socialist Resistance adopt statements on Arab revolutions and Libya

- Debate - Problems of the Arab and Middle East regions -

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Socialist Resistance, British section of the Fourth International, held a successful and well attended national conference on the 2nd/3rd April 2011, with a session on the impact of the Arab revolutions and the imperialist intervention in Libya. Two resolutions were adopted on the Arab revolutions which are below.

Victory to the Arab Revolutions! Arm the Libyan Resistance! End the Imperialist Intervention!

The wave of uprisings and revolutions sweeping across the Arab world constitutes one of the strongest challenges yet posed to capitalism's neo-liberal globalisation project. The looming economic crisis faced by western capital has disproportionately affected peripheral countries, dependent on the west both as a market for raw materials and as a source of cash remittances from migrant workers. The price of food and other commodities continues to increase, in part due to the impact of ecological events. The brutal autocracies which have long ruled in the region have all, to a greater or lesser extent, been supported politically, economically and militarily by the imperialist powers.

These risings have been inspired by, and have themselves inspired, mass mobilisations in the western countries against austerity plans. Although the description of the "Facebook revolution" is a gross oversimplification of the processes underway, it is nevertheless true that new means of communication have aided in organising mass movements. One trigger, in particular, was the revelation in Wikileaks documents, of the immense scale of corruption of many of the ruling families. Although this was not really new, the authenticity and scale of these revelations proved too much even for some of the most ardent western backers of these regimes.

Although the timing and course of these risings could not have been predicted, left activists and observers had long argued that the question was when, rather than whether, the Arab people would rebel. But bourgeois observers, tied to their essentialist and orientalist miss-readings of Arab society, were taken by surprise. "The Arabs" have long been seen as politically and culturally immature and irrational, and the west has seen the choice for the region as either military dictatorship or Islamic fundamentalism. This view led to support for "secular" military coups against perceived Islamist threats in Algeria and Turkey, as well as for brutal regimes seen as anti-Islamist, including the discredited Palestine Authority.

The risings have given the lie to this conception. From one end to the other of the region, masses have risen against the despots. The protesters are from different religions and ethnic origins; women, youth and workers have been prominent in the risings. Although Islamist parties were in many countries the largest organised opposition, they appear to have played little part in these events. In societies where political debate and activity has long been constrained, mass popular movements are emerging, and creating new political forces.

Socialist Resistance stands in unconditional solidarity with the revolutionary uprisings in the Arab region. We call for the overthrow of the reactionary regimes, the arming of the resistance, and the establishment of popular regimes which will take over the wealth and resources of the region for the benefit of its people. Such regimes would inevitably face threats from the imperialist powers and capitalists currently exploiting these resources and this wealth.

The opposition movements appear to be very diverse involving consistent foes of the despots and recent "converts" to the cause. The class nature and orientation of these movements is still in flux. In Libya, the opposition initially took a position against foreign intervention - under the graphic banner "No to foreign intervention, the Libyan people can manage it alone". Under the brutal heel of Gaddafi's military assault, this position was drowned by voices calling for a

no-fly zone. While we understand the pressures which led some in the resistance to make this call, and defend their right to do so, we do not agree with their decision.

We do not believe that there is any progressive role that western powers with their oil-soaked agenda could play in support of these uprisings. Their interest is to maintain control over the region's resources; they are not tied to any one leader, but can be guaranteed to support and promote whoever will best further this interest. We oppose any western military intervention the logic of which is to divert the revolution towards western interests. Nor can their "humanitarian" actions be detached from either their historic or present role in the region. This includes the misnamed "No-Fly Zone", which was designed and has been used in order to give a spurious "legality" to such intervention. We call for an immediate end to the NATO bombing of Libya, and the withdrawal of any undercover forces. At the same time, we call for the arming of the revolutionary forces, in Libya, Syria, Bahrain, Yemen and elsewhere, in order that they can resist state oppression.

As the FI resolution says: "The NATO powers want to confiscate the revolutions in progress from the peoples of the region, and even to take advantage of the situation to occupy new positions, in particular concerning control of the oil resources. It is for this fundamental reason that it is necessary to reject any military intervention by US imperialism. It is up to the Libyan people, who have begun the job to finish it, with the support of the peoples of the region and all progressive forces on an international level must contribute to that by their solidarity and their support".

We believe the form of government in Libya, as elsewhere in the region, should be decided by the Libyan people, with no outside interference, and by means of a Constitutional Assembly elected through universal suffrage, and that mass popular mobilisations of the Libyan people will be necessary to continue the struggle for a society based on democracy and social justice, not private profit. We call for the cancelling of all contracts with the Gaddafi regime.

The repressive regimes have plundered the wealth of the region. We call for a freezing of all assets of these regimes, and of their leaders, and for arrangements to transfer these to the revolutionary forces.

These interconnected risings show once again that the problems created by imperialist rule of the Arab region can only be addressed on a region-wide basis. We believe that this requires the establishment of a socialist federation of the Middle East, which will guarantee the rights of all national and religious minorities.

Arm the resistance - Victory to the Libyan revolution - No to the NATO/UN No Fly Zone

This conference supports the statements from the Fourth International of the 3rd and 23rd March in solidarity with the people of Libya, and also expresses its unconditional solidarity with the revolutionary people of Libya in its uprising against the Gaddafi dictatorship.

This conference also believes that:

Our central slogan should be "Arm the Resistance - Victory to the Libyan revolution - No to the NATO/UN No Fly Zone". We campaign for this as an alternative to the NATO/UN No Fly Zone. The rebels should receive immediately all the necessary humanitarian and military aid for their struggle, and this aid should be without strings and under their direct control. A defeat for the Libyan revolution would be a defeat for the whole unfolding revolutions in the Middle East.

While opposing the NATO/UN No Fly Zone, we also support the right of the interim government to call for one in response to Gaddafi's threat of massacre but warn that the imperialist powers cannot be trusted and should be expected to take advantage of this opportunity to put their own interests above those of the Libyan people.

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Solidarity from neighbouring countries especially from revolutionary Tunisia and Egypt, is essential in encouraging the revolutionary forces, weakening the Gaddafi regime and preventing an imperialist invasion of Libya. The silence from the interim governments in Egypt and Tunisia is deafening. There are no large and public shipments of arms or brigades of volunteer fighters to support the revolution in Libya.

The UNSC resolution 1973 should be opposed as it intentionally leaves too much room for interpretation and is being used to push forward an imperialist agenda beyond its alleged "humanitarian" protection.

All the assets of Gaddafi's regime held outside of Libya should be seized and handed over to the revolutionary forces so that they can purchase arms, food and medical resources necessary in their fight.

The Transitional National Council (TNC) should be recognised as the interim government of the whole of Libya.

All oil and commercial contracts with the Gaddafi regime should be cancelled, and that zero-interest credit be given with no strings to the Transitional National Council for the purchase of arms and other necessities.

There should be no imperialist forces in Libya or the establishment of military bases.

The form of government in Libya is to be decided by the Libyan people, with no outside interference, and by means of a Constitutional Assembly elected through universal suffrage, and that mass popular mobilisations of the Libyan people will be necessary to continue the struggle for a society based on democracy and social justice, not private profit.

All the necessary financial aid should be given to Libya following a revolution without any "structural adjustment programmes" requiring privatisation and favourable treatment for western corporations.

As ecosocialists, we should, soon after the fall of Gaddafi, begin to raise with the Libyan people, and with the Transitional National Council and Feb 17 youth in particular, proposals and ideas for a post-oil society, including:

- 1) Demands upon the rich countries of the North that they pay compensation to Libya in return for keeping the oil under the ground, as per the Ecuadorian proposal.
- 2) Demands for massive investment in the development of Concentrated Solar Power in the deserts of Libya.