

<https://www.internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article5479>



Syria

No to Assad, No to all imperialism and solidarity with the Syrian popular classes!

- IV Online magazine - 2018 - IV519 - April 2018 -

Publication date: Saturday 28 April 2018

Copyright © International Viewpoint - online socialist magazine - All rights reserved

The US government, in alliance with the United Kingdom and France, launched air strikes in Syria in mid April 2018, officially in response to the Assad regime's use of chemical weapons against the population in the city of Douma, in eastern Ghouta, a few days earlier, killing about 70 civilians and wounding few hundreds. This attack on the chemical weapon led to the decision of the forced withdrawal of the fundamentalist Islamic militia Jaysh al-Islam in a few days to the north of Syria in an agreement with the regime of Damascus. As a reminder, following the conquest of Eastern Ghouta by regime's forces, some 66,000 persons, in majority civilians, have been forcefully displaced to Idlib and Aleppo governorates. The UN estimates that some 100,000 – 140,000 individuals remain in east Ghouta, 50,000 – 700,000 of them are estimated to reside Douma.

The bombings of the three western powers reportedly targeted three sites in Damascus and Homs, where the Syrian regime was accused of developing, fabricating and stockpiling chemical weapons.

These strikes caused no casualties and most of the installations were evacuated a few days before the attack, thanks to warnings from Russia. The United States, the United Kingdom and France said that the strikes were not aimed at paralyzing the Syrian regime's defences or provoking a "regime change". They were aimed solely at trying to dissuade Bashar al-Assad from using chemical weapons. The three allies said the operation was only a "one time shot". Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov also declared that before the US strikes against Syrian targets, Russia had told US authorities which parts of Syria represented "red lines" for Moscow, and that US military action had not cross over these lines.

This was in many ways a "remake" of the Washington bombing operation a year before against a Syrian base (emptied a few hours earlier) in April 2017 following chemical attacks by the Assad regime against the locality of Khan Cheikhoun, in northwestern Syria.

Although the US and Russian speeches were more virulent the days following the Western strikes, US President Donald Trump invited his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin to the United States on a phone call on Friday, April 20, and said he would be happy to see Putin at the White House.

These strikes did not change the overall balance of power on the ground. The Damascus regime still controls a little over half of Syrian territory and over 80% of the population, and has continued its offensives and bombing on various areas beyond its control. The night after the Western bombings, the Syrian regime's air force led raids on the Idlib and Hama regions, under the control of various groups of the armed opposition. Syrian military operations and airstrikes continued in various areas since then, including targeting massively notably Yarmouk camp occupied by Islamic state, but in which between 300 to 1000 civilians still remain. Since April 19, 5,000 of the estimated 6,000 civilians left in Yarmouk when the offensive against IS began have fled to the nearby village of Yalda, according to the United Nations. While they are no longer under fire, they are also in dire need, as Chris Gunness, spokesman for UNRWA, said many of the new arrivals to Yalda are "begging for medicine and are sleeping in the streets".

In other words, the Assad regime and its allies can continue the massacres against civilian populations with "conventional weapons".

Doubts about chemical weapons?

Following the Western bombing, a team of experts from the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) were prevented until April 21, two weeks after the alleged attacks, to enter the city of Duma to investigate because of restrictions imposed by the Syrian and Russian authorities, while several doctors claimed to have been pressured by the Syrian regime, which threatened them with reprisals if they revealed anything to the press or the inspectors and forced them to get rid of all samples taken.

As a reminder, in November 2017, one month after a fact-finding mission led by the OPCW and the UN Security Council, which had concluded that Damascus had committed a sarin attack on Khan Sheikhoun, in north-west of Syria, which had killed at least 83 people, Russia had blocked the renewal of the investigators' mandate which had just ended.

Since 2014, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) has reportedly investigated 70 cases of gas attacks in Syria, out of a total of 370 reports, almost all of them by the Syrian regime with some exceptions from the jihadist group of the Islamic State.

Some expressed doubts about the regime's use of chemical weapons, because of its current military superiority, and that there was therefore no point in using it. This is to say the least a quite weak argument: Israel is militarily superior to the Palestinians, but that does not prevent it from using white phosphorus. And what about the United States, which has confirmed that it fired white phosphorus shells in IS-controlled areas in Mosul, Iraq, and possibly in Raqqa, Syria? The main purpose of using chemical weapons is to spread terror among local populations in Syria and elsewhere.

No to all imperial and regional powers!

The military intervention of the Western powers only sought to serve their internal and external national political interests of these ruling elites. The United States, the United Kingdom and France do not care about Syrian civilians or other popular classes in the region. Their previous military interventions in different parts of the world and support for dictatorships in the region testify to the lack of considerations regarding civilians and human rights violations. In the recent past, for example, the invasion and the American and British occupation of Iraq in 2003 caused the death of millions of people. These same states did not welcome massively Syrian refugees and other nationalities, on the contrary, very often pursuing racist and security policies against them. The Mediterranean Sea was transformed in a big cemetery by the European Unions with thousands of people dying trying to reach European countries by sea.

More generally, we must denounce all the foreign interventions that oppose the aspirations of democratic changes in Syria, whether in the form of support for the regime (Russia, Iran, Hezbollah) by participating in its violent and deadly war against the Syrian civilians or claiming to be "friends of the Syrian people" (Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey), but supporting the most reactionary forces of the opposition, particularly Islamic fundamentalist movements that oppose the original objectives of the popular uprising started in March 2011.

Just as we must denounce the multiple military interventions in Syria of for example the Turkish led invasion of Afrin and violation of human rights in these areas, especially against Kurdish civilian population, the US led International coalition bombing civilians in Syria and Iraq, the Russian bombing of Idlib and and other areas targeting civilians.

Similarly we should oppose Assad's military operations leading to much suffering, destructions and forced

displacement of civilians.

This does not mean that we don't oppose similarly the reactionary organisations such as Hay'at Tahrir Sham, Islamic state and other Islamic fundamentalist movements present in some areas outside of regime controlled areas and committing as well Human Rights violations against civilians.

To choose one type of imperialism or authoritarianism over another is to guarantee the stability of the capitalist system and the exploitation and oppression of peoples.

Some say that we do not condemn Russia and Iran in Syria because they are invited by the Assad regime, unlike the United States for example. Let's be clear about the illegality, from the point of view of international law, of the presence of US forces in Syria to fight IS (and not the Syrian regime) is a reality. But the legality of the presence of Russian (or Iranian) troops – invited by the Assad regime – does not make them more legitimate. For if we accept this logic, the intervention of the Armed Forces of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Cooperation Council in Bahrain should be regarded as legal in order to quell the popular revolt, since it was conducted at the invitation of the Manama's regime.

Selective anti-imperialism can't be basis to develop a political discourse and practice against all forms of interventions and all international and regional powers, but on the opposite it weakens it, especially when it is used to develop in order to deny or obscure the crimes of a dictatorship.

Again as progressive, we can't ignore the need to support peoples struggling for their liberation and emancipation, even if they are a minority, while opposing all foreign imperialist and regional forces and authoritarian groups.

Faced with the crimes of the Assad regime that continue on a daily basis in the silence and the complicity of the international and regional powers that are focused on dividing Syria in regions of influence... we must show our solidarity with the Syrian popular classes!

Source: [Syria Freedom Forever 27 April 2018](#).

PS:

If you like this article or have found it useful, please consider donating towards the work of *International Viewpoint*. Simply follow this link: [Donate](#) then enter an amount of your choice. One-off donations are very welcome. But regular donations by standing order are also vital to our continuing functioning. See the last paragraph of [this article](#) for our bank account details and take out a standing order. Thanks.