

Will there be war against Syria?

The Arab Press evaluates the UN report

Oct. 22, 2005

Most people who follow world affairs, especially those of us in the Middle East and in the US who have a special interest in what is happening in the Eastern Mediterranean corner of the world, have become very alarmed at the recent efforts by the US Government to escalate diplomatic action against Syria at the United Nations.

Many of us are afraid of a new war brewing.

Even if we know that the US military is stretched too thinly for it to make sense, even if we know that the US economy would be dealt a severe blow by a new war, we still know that the US leadership is immune to reason. It is totally immune to sanity. There is a real danger of war because – despite what the “official” Left says - the motives for this aggression are not in the realm of objective reality.

In recent weeks there have been more and more military operations by US forces on the border of Syria and Iraq. There were several incidents which threatened incursion and a spread of the war across the border. Also, there were several incidents in which the US occupation forces have tried to blame the Government of Syria for alleged support of the Iraqi resistance. The truth, of course, is that the Government of Syria is not doing anything to support the resistance – even though it should. It has in fact collaborated with the US to arrest ex-officials of the former Iraqi regime, and have sealed the border to block the way for resistance fighters who might like to use it for their purposes.

It's bad enough that there is a US military threat right on the Syrian border; now the US is pushing the United Nations to adopt a policy of sanctions, possibly an embargo or a blockade and boycott of the Syrian economy, just like the blockade policy against Iraq which was supported by the United Nations. The sanctions had directly caused the death of half a million innocent children and led up to a full scale invasion and occupation of the country.

The United Nations have still not apologized to the people of Iraq and to the world people of the world for that atrocity.

Neither has the US. The former US Ambassador to the United Nations Madeleine Albright who spoke on US television about the half a million children who had died in Iraq due to the sanctions, was asked: “...that is more children than died in Hiroshima. And, you know, is the price worth it?”

Ambassador Albright responded, “I think that is a very hard choice, but the price, we think, the price is worth it.”

Let's not forget that most of the mainstream organizations of the Left in the US had also supported the embargo against Iraq, when they popularized the fake anti-war slogan in the early nineties “Yes to sanctions, No to war”.

How is it that our people and our organizations become so easily lost and so out of touch with reality?

How long will it take before some “progressive” organizations begin to call for sanctions against Syria to “punish” that country for its intervention in Lebanon? Or for an invasion to “liberate” the Syrian people from themselves?

The people of Lebanon must certainly be allowed the grace and dignity of self- government. Also, to cultivate the tools of self- administration without foreign intervention by any outside forces. That is the true meaning of sovereignty and self- determination. The Government of Syria has just completed a voluntary pull- out of thousands of its troops which had been stationed in Lebanon since the civil war there. Wasn't that a significant move toward peace and liberty in the Middle East? Have we heard much applause over that by the Corporate media or by the Governments of the globalized Empire? Hardly. How often does a country remove its troops from foreign soil without armed struggle?

And yet, it's still possible that Syria will be successfully painted as the new “enemy” and the dogs be unleashed against it. Sactions, embargo, blockade, perhaps invasion, who knows? How do we propose to counter these moves? Do we understand the situation well enough to take meaningful positions on it?

One dimension of the problem (the least important, but still important), is information. The mainstream media sources hide the truth, disseminate lies, and twist reality out of proportion to promote the interests of authoritarian State and Corporate powers.

Well, that's easily countered in this age of information.

Below is a sampling of reactions and commentary from some of the Arab press on the new and provocative UN report on Syria. For those who do not have an opportunity of contact with the Arab world and who need, or want, to know about the variety of sentiments at this particular juncture, we reprint below a summary of views published in some of the Arab press, collected by the BBC.

Also below, links to two articles related to how Madeleine Albright views her “...price is worth it” statement about the deadly effects of sanctions, and how the US media dealt with it.

And we have a link to another fine article by Lloyd Hart titled “Saddaming the House of Assad” which is a good overview of the actions and interconnections of media and Israeli/US intelligence operations, government policies, and the politics of oil, domination and genocide.

Of course, it does not end with information. Even if we might form a totally clear picture for ourselves, the US might still take more aggressive steps. We need organization, independent mobilizations, clarity of purpose, multiple and flexible tactics which include direct action of all levels, and better ways to cultivate deeper unity among us. How else to resist the madness?

Petros Evdokas

Cyprus IndyMedia volunteer

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Arab press weighs UN report

The UN report implicating Syria in the killing of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri has elicited a mixed response in newspapers across the Arab world.

Syrian commentators argue that the findings of UN investigator Detlev Mehlis are politically motivated and part of a campaign to discredit and destabilise Damascus.

One Lebanese paper welcomes the report as a crucial step forward, while another foresees trouble for Syria.

Many fear that the report will have dangerous consequences for the entire region.

Commentary in Syria's **Al-Thawrah**

“The report relies on statements and reports by Lebanese political and media figures that are hostile to Syria... This shows that there is a premeditated intention to politicize the investigation and have it take a specific course that serves the policy of pressure on Syria.”

Commentary in Syria's **Tishrin**

“All laws in the world regard a suspect as innocent until proven guilty; therefore, on what ground is Mehlis incriminating Syria if he himself says that what he has in his hands is only 'conjecture?'”

Article in Syria's **Al-Thawrah**

“Despite all Syria's cooperation with the investigation committee, the report alleged that Syria's cooperation was neither sufficient nor substantial... this just shows preconceived opinions and prefabricated accusations against Syria.”

Commentary in Lebanon's **Al-Safir**

“The Mehlis report is a crucial step forward and will not be the last on the long road to a trial.”

Editorial in Lebanon's **L'Orient Le Jour**

“A big sigh of relief at the spectacle of this long-awaited truth which has risen inexorably to the surface.”

Commentary in Lebanon's **The Daily Star**

“The report... makes mixed but powerful political and legal statements, which spell trouble for Syria and the wider debilitating tradition of security-run Arab regimes...

“The most important question... is whether indigenous Arab political and legal forces will be able to harness the credibility, power and courage to continue challenging and taming the modern Arab security state, now that the combination of mass Lebanese citizen activism and legitimate international intervention have paved the way for this historic possibility.”

Commentary in London-based **Al-Hayat**

“This investigation was a historic chance for Lebanon, and it is unlikely that such an event will be repeated. Those who were looking for 'the truth' should now use it to restore what the civil war has destroyed, especially with regard to people's minds and spirits.”

Editorial in **Saudi Gazette**

“The Arabs are in a quandary... The worst-case scenario... is the well-founded fear among Arabs that the UN report will be exploited by the US and Israel to further their agenda in the region, similar to what the infamous UN-led investigation into Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction has done.”

Editorial in Saudi **Arab News**

“When a respected neutral investigator names members of the inner circle of President Bashar Assad as involved in the dastardly murder, what Syria must do is to prove the charges wrong with evidence that will withstand judicial scrutiny.

But its first reaction has been one of angry denials. Damascus must do better than this, otherwise the serious allegations contained in the report will be a festering wound opening the way for further US-led moves for sanctions against Syria in the UN Security Council.”

Editorial in Saudi **Al-Watan**

“The Lebanese and Syrian governments should combine their efforts to study the report and cooperate, in order to find the true criminals and bring them to justice as soon as possible, as this is something in the interest of both countries.”

Editorial in Saudi **Al-Jazirah**

“While the Arab League strives to extinguish the eruption of Iraq's volcano, another volcano is about to erupt... since it is now expected that the UN Security Council will issue resolutions against Syria... This new phase of tension will give rise to violence that will affect the entire Arab region.”

Editorial in Egypt's **Al-Ahram**

“The Mehlis report was no ordinary one... and its consequences will be dangerous... It is important for all Arab countries to use logic and convincing arguments. As for resorting to the argument that the report is politicised and is part of a plot against Syria... these are just words that will not benefit anyone.”

Editorial in Egypt's **Al-Jumhuriyah**

“The Arab world, if it is truly united, should now stand by Syria and should not once again make the glaring mistake of keeping silent.”

Commentary in Jordan's **Al-Dustur**

“The Mehlis report, with its suggestions and implied accusations against Syria, is a new and reasonable pretext for US interference!... The report is a blatant example of international arrogance.”

Editorial in Sudan's **Al Ayyam**

“There is no doubt that Syria will face hard times in the near future, and tension will also spread in Lebanon... There is no other way out for Syria but to stick... to what the report stated, that is, all those mentioned in the report will remain innocent until proven guilty.”

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Story from BBC NEWS:

http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/middle_east/4367042.stm

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Albright “Apologizes”

<http://www.fff.org/comment/com0311c.asp>

"We Think the Price Is Worth It"

<http://www.fair.org/index.php?page=1084>

“Saddaming the House of Assad”

<http://lists.indymedia.org/pipermail/imc-cyprus/2005-October/1023-ya.html>

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