

**The Libyan People's Committees should be
the foundation of a new life, not just an
interim measure**

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The struggle of the Libyan people, as part of the wave of popular rebellions spreading like fire in all of the Arab world, is taking a really dramatic turn, with the people advancing their struggle against a regime bent on staying in power by whatever means necessary.

Gadafi, in spite of his past as a thorn in the side of the US, had become a key ally in their War on Terror, as was proved by the late and clumsy reaction of the US to the events unfolding in Libya and the late suspension by the EU of their considerable trade in weapons with the Libyan regime. While the US and the Western powers re-discover, for public image purposes, that they really did not like Gadafi after all (after a decade of friendly relations), talks have started about a possible intervention and US carriers have moved into waters close to the Libyan shores. The result of such a prospect would be terrible to say the least. In the meantime, the US and their Western allies are exploring the way to make sure that the revolt of the Libyan and the Arab masses does not settle down in revolutionary terms, as well as making sure that their economic and strategic interests are served in the best possible way in the post-Gadafi scenario.

To understand better what is going on there, we held another dialogue on February 27th with our friend and comrade, the Syrian anarchist Mazen Kamalmaz.

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What is actually happening in Libya and the rest of the Arab world?

It is a revolution. After 42 years of being governed by the Qaddafi regime, the masses took out to the streets. The bad thing here is that because of the brutal repression of the regime, the revolution was successful only in the eastern part, which also consists of different tribes from the western and middle parts of Libya. Soon the forces of the regime overcame the surprise factor and put down the revolt in Tripoli, the capital, and the rest of Libya by extreme and brutal force. The masses tried to go out again last Friday, which was really a day of outraged protests in a lot of Arab countries and cities, but they couldn't overcome the forces of the regime. Now there is a status quo between the two powers, that of the people and that of the regime, although both are trying to gather momentum again.

Beside Libya, Yemen is on fire for weeks now. In this country there are lots of tribes and sectarian minorities, beside the conflict between the governing north and the marginalized south that demands autonomy. University and High school students could manage, with their full devotion for freedom for all and their willingness to sacrifice for that cause, to gather all of the factions of the nation around the objective of removing the dictatorship there.

Last Friday was very hot also in Iraq, where thousands of Iraqi youth, from both Sunni and Shi'a background -that were on the verge of civil war few years back-, took to the streets protesting against the corrupt pro-American government. Policemen used the same repressive measures as happened elsewhere, which caused the death of some of the protesters.

The Sultanate of Oman just joined the rest of revolting countries now, the youth there took to the street chanting, as everywhere else, for jobs, more freedom and decent life conditions.

Many still see Gadaffi as a socialist and an anti-imperialist... is this true?

This is a very misleading and deluded statement, created by the authoritarian left before and still alive now. And this is due, partly, to the revival of this authoritarian left by figures like Chávez.

We have to keep in mind that Qaddafi's regime relations with the main Western powers improved significantly after 2003 and after the Libyan dictator gave up his nuclear programme, the then US secretary Condoleezza Rice declared steps as a model of restoring normal relations between US and the Third World states, including those labelled as rogue by the US. This paved the way for Berlusconi, Blair and Sarkozy to visit Libya, to sign multi – billion contracts, including arms trade, with Western companies. This led Qaddafi to attend a G8 summit where he met Obama. Like Ben Ali and Mubarak, the big capitalist powers simply ignored human rights violations of the Qaddafi regime against his own people. Even when Qaddafi was declaring himself an anti – imperialist, long ago, it was just a lip service while he engaged, as an authoritarian, in trivial terrorist acts that never meant to support the libertarian objectives of the victims of imperialism.

We have to differentiate between being anti-American, anti-capitalist and being a real socialist, as there are lot of anti-Americans who are as authoritarian and repressive as the system of global corporate fascism or the pro-American regimes. Here we have to keep Stalinism in mind. Qaddafi himself came to power when Arab nationalism was on its peak, that was anti-imperialist in rhetoric only, while it led Arab countries from one defeat to another in all its confrontations against imperialism and its most important local agent, Israel. The last one was in 2003 in Iraq. After the June 1967 defeat of Egypt, Syria and Jordan by Israel, many leftists came to the conclusion that the regimes' repression and its exploitative nature were responsible for that defeat. Next year, the Egyptian youth and students started their demonstrations against the Nasser regime, which had libertarian character. The fact is that Egypt under Nasser, Iraq under Saddam and Syria under Assad, all were mere examples of bureaucratic state capitalism, namely, regimes that repress and exploit their own people.

What has been the role of the US and of the EU in this crisis? It is known that Gadaffi has been in very good terms with them for the last while...

In the Cold War both repressive superpowers, the US and the USSR, practiced a double play: they were repressing people in their dominant sphere and “supporting” the peoples' struggle for freedom in the sphere dominated by the opponent. Thus, the Soviet Union supported the Vietnamese people struggle against American intervention and the Cuban revolution, as well as other rebellions in South America and places which were under US backed dictatorships. On the other hand, the US and the capitalist bloc supported the wave of revolts in Eastern Europe, etc. This double game is still played until now. The US is ready and willing to support such rebellions in Iran for example, but never, never in Saudi Arabia for example. In Iraq, the Bush administration helped Saddam to regain power in Iraq after his defeat in the first Gulf War 1991, while he was facing a massive popular revolution and only a small part of Iraq was under his power. They

wanted to overthrow him when it looked easier, and when doing so did not compromise its regional dominance.

But things are happening all the time, sometimes against the will of the US, as it happened in Egypt and Tunisia. Despite all of its best efforts to maintain Ben Ali and Mubarak in power, the masses there created a new reality, and the US is trying to adapt to it. In Libya it looks somewhat different. The US is now like a predator, as Qaddafi's regime looks very weak and so much hated by his own people, and above all, because the Libyan territory is full of oil, it looks a very easy and big target. Besides that, this can help the main supporter of dictatorships in our region, the US, to look like a freedom fighter liberating a helpless nation from its bloody dictator, one they regarded until recently as a new friend. The bad thing about being a predator is that it cannot resist easy targets, despite all past and painful experiences. One very important thing about this possible US plan is that no one in Libya today, nor the revolting masses, nor even the Libyan opposition that resides in the West, accepts any foreign military intervention.

Of course, this would be a blow for the whole struggle of the Libyan nation, not only it would damage its independent fight for its freedom, but it would also threaten its future. The Libyans are near to overthrow the regime and regain possession of their oil and their life, I don't think they, at least most of them, are ready to sacrifice what they gained up to now for the sake of an easy victory that isn't their victory.

What's the nature of the civilian-military government declared today in Benghazi?

Still there are no clear State institutions as such in the liberated areas. There are some trying to install their elite leadership, but until this very moment, not successfully yet.

Just recently, American and pro-American Arab press started talking about an interim council in Benghazi headed by an ex-minister of Qaddafi's cabinet, just to highlight their welcoming position of a possible US intervention. Aside for this so called interim council, no other force or group in the liberated areas accepts or calls for such an intervention.

What's the role of the Libyan People's Committees? Are the masses creating their own means for direct democracy?

In fact, these committees became part of every revolution everywhere in the Arab world. I accept that these are good examples of direct democracy, the whole liberated areas are run in this way now, as was the situation after the fall of Ben Ali regime in Tunisia and after Mubarak ordered his security forces to pave the way for thugs to practice looting everywhere to intimidate the revolting masses. What is needed now is to make this a way of life, not just an interim measure: this must be our message to the masses.

Flags of the monarchy had been raised... Do you see the spectre of a comeback of the old regime of Idris?

To tell the truth, anything can happen. I think that the revolting Libyans themselves don't have clear idea about who will and how to run their country after they manage to overthrow Qaddafi. They have to learn their way. What I feel is that this is difficult to happen, that they will never submit easily to any new regime. They got to know their strength and this is not easy to be taken away from them again .

What's the immediate prospect for this revolt?

It depends. Still the battle against the dictatorship isn't over, not yet won . But we have to realize the high potential that there is. The victory of the revolution will make a big difference in the region. We have to keep in mind that the new world order was declared and implemented here for the first time during the 1990–1991 Gulf crisis. This region, since then, replaced Southern America for Washington's backyard. Added to what already has happened in Tunisia and Egypt, the changes will be deep and lasting. There are two main possibilities as ever, either to install a new elite regime, or that the masses could make their way to a really free society, organised on the model of these popular committees that the people themselves have created in the heat of the struggle.

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