

Trade unions call for end to war on Libya

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The UK's two biggest unions—Unite and Unison—and the Scottish TUC call on the governments of the UK, France and the US to halt the air attacks on Libya.

Unite the Union: Statement on the war in Libya

Unite the union believes the attack on Libya by British, French and US forces is wrong and should be halted.

While holding no brief for Colonel Gaddafi and his regime, and strongly supporting the movements now developing for democracy and freedom across the Arab world, Unite believes the present military intervention is a mistake because:

It risks killing Libyan civilians while doing nothing to end hostilities on the ground.

It prolongs a civil conflict when what is needed is a ceasefire followed by mediation.

It raises the possibility of escalation leading to military occupation of all or part of Libya, when similar occupations in Iraq and Afghanistan have shown how disastrous and counter-productive such interventions are. This could lead to a wider war in the region.

The action has little or no Arab involvement, and is opposed by, amongst others, Russia, China and India, leaving it dependent on those western powers whose policies have aroused deep hostility throughout the Middle East.

It stands in contrast to the indulgence shown by the government to the autocrats in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and elsewhere who have been allowed to repress movements for democracy in their own countries with impunity.

We urge the British government to think again, call a halt to the military action and urge a general ceasefire to be followed by international mediation.

Unison: Statement on the war in Libya

“The record of the Gaddafi regime and the serious concerns over the safety of civilians in the areas of Libya that supported the revolt against his regime led to the United Nations Security Council resolution establishing the no-fly zone. However, the intervention of NATO forces potentially risks

prolonging a civil conflict and a division on Libya, instead of a lasting solution that meets the legitimate aspirations of the Libyan people.”

Scottish Trade Union Congress: Statement on the war in Libya

This Congress supports the right to protest for people around the world and expresses its solidarity with people in Libya who seek democracy and regime change. Congress, however, is not convinced that the current military action is contributing to a positive solution for the Libyan people.

Congress is concerned that the military action taken by British, French and US forces goes beyond the scope of the UN resolution and has resulted in civilian casualties. Furthermore, this action is likely to lead to further and significant ‘mission creep’ increasing the humanitarian costs and resulting in large numbers of refugees fleeing the area. It may also result in Britain becoming involved in a long and drawn out ground offensive, to the detriment of the Libyan people. The belief that Gaddafi’s regime would crumble in the face of international pressure has become less likely with each passing day and this Congress believes that the current military action has precipitated a stalemate.

Furthermore, this activity does not contribute to the development of civil society organisations, such as independent trade unions, which are required to build democracy and ensure lasting change for Libya.

Congress, therefore, urges the UK Government to:

work towards a cessation of the current military action in Libya and towards a diplomatic solution that will allow for a peaceful transition to democracy; and
encourage the growth of an independent civil society in Libya and other Middle Eastern nations, including support for the development of truly independent trade unions.
