

Syria: Internal Popular Demands, External Political Agendas

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The Syrian people demand democratic change, but are western powers intervening to promote such a change? The context of Syrian policies supporting Arab resistance must be understood as the framework and motivation of current western intervention, and not a true desire to promote Syrian democracy. Nassar Ibrahim explains.

What is going on in Syria requires a clear-headed analysis. Naive or evasive approaches which play on emotions, words, blood and tears are not useful when the danger of a breakdown of Syria is imminent. What is needed now by the western powers is the head of Syria, nothing less!

When seeking to understand what is going on in this country, one should be aware that there is no one single player on the field, and that trying to match the Syrian with the Egyptian experience is a mistake, if not an attempt to exploit an ambiguous moment in order to gain legitimacy and create more confusion.

And the confusion here may be authentic or supposed. It is authentic because the Syrian people's aspirations for freedom and democracy are authentic and real, just like the similar aspirations and demands of hundreds of millions of Arabs. In this sense the intersection of the Syrian peoples movement with the Arabs' one becomes both logical and positive. The problem starts, however, when the confusion becomes "supposed", a planned policy laden with hidden agendas, goals and purposes in order to step over or to go beyond the goals or purposes of the Syrian popular movement. The Syrian movement certainly has real and serious internal motivations. The people are calling for democracy, political and social freedom. Yet this should not be manipulated for the goals of external intervention. To exploit the slogan of "freedom and democracy" to justify external intervention is a way to punish Syria for its role and steadfast policies, as in the past decades Syria has represented the cornerstone of Arab resistance. Syria backed the opposition toward American and Israeli interventions in Lebanese internal affairs and opposed the Saudi Arabia-supported Al Hariri government, and in this context the use of the international trial on the Hariri assassination gains a new meaning. Assad supported the Lebanese resistance during the 2006 Lebanon war, playing a central role in defeating the Israeli army. The Syrian government also supported the Palestinian organizations (Hamas, Al Jihad, PFLP, DFLP and others) that reject the peace process based on the American – Israeli conditions and contradict the political performances of the Ramallah-based PA; concerning the question of the occupied Syrian Golan, Syria is unshakable in its position: No peace without full Israeli withdraw to the 1967 borders. More recently, Syria opposed the 2003 war against Iraq and supported the Iraqi resistance. Even if some people may have short memories in this regard, the memory of the United States, Israel and other colonial forces is still

sharp. The approach here is not to defend the mistakes of the Syrian regime or to justify its internal policies. On the contrary, Assads regime can be criticized from various aspects. The goal here is to determine the limits and nature of the current developments such that the real, authentic, politically and socially popular demands do not become an instrument for colonial forces to settle accounts with Syria. One who does not see this equation with all of its consequences will, whether consciously or not, send Syria to the guillotine. All speeches and slogans about freedom, democracy and human rights would then become meaningless.

Is this fear reasonable or is it an attempt to escape from the challenges? Following a quick look at evolutions in Libya, we will realize how serious the “game” is, and will recognize that the colonial powers are not joking. It is under the legitimacy of “freedom, democracy and human rights” that Libya has been bombed by missiles and aircraft. Yet intervention under these slogans has nothing to do with freedom, democracy and human rights as they are in the minds of the Arab peoples, best expressed in Cairo’s Tahrir Square, in Damascus and other Arab cities.

The Libyan people, for example, paid a high price to escape the Italian colonial yoke after their defeat under the leadership of the heroic fighter for the Libyan independence Omar Al-Mukhtar. The tragedy nowadays is to see the colonial flags raised in Benghazi squares while destruction and military intervention are going on, aimed at subjugating and re-colonising the country and its resources. The comic thing is that this happens by demand of the “Libyan revolution”! Does the Gaddafi regime bear responsibility for this? Certainly, but this does not diminish the horror of the tragedy, which becomes even more complicated and frightening when the popular revolts become a tool and means to plunder the nation and people’s freedom and dignity, relying on the colonial powers’ intervention. So if the dictatorship and its repression are the expression of a social dilemma, then the foreign intervention pretending to face this dilemma on behalf of anyone else will reveal itself as an historical catastrophe. The Libyan people, sooner or later, will pay its high price for many long decades.

Freedom and democracy are not just words or intellectual discourses on the margins of western societies or universities; we saw their authentic manifestations in the awareness of the Arab peoples, as freedom and democracy are linked with the rejection of dependency, subservience and politics dictated by external forces. The freedom and the democracy the people in the Arab streets are asking for are first and foremost a request of freedom and national self determination from the colonial forces. It should not be forgotten that these colonial forces are the ones which divided the Arab world and then supported, protected, armed and trained most of the Arab dictatorship regimes; and they are still backing the same regimes who looted the wealth of the Arab peoples and subsidizing with all means the Zionist occupation in Palestine.

Awareness of these dimensions is necessary for any deep analysis of what is currently happening in Syria. This of course does not exempt anyone from responsibility: The Syrian regime certainly bears its share, as does President Bashar Al-Asad, as much as the Arab people might remember and respect his steadfastness in the past years, while Syria was standing almost alone in the “battle field”, representing the strongest voice to back the Arab resistance movements in Lebanon, Palestine and Iraq. In those difficult years no one dared to raise a voice against the external invasions and colonial destructive wars, and in those years the majority of the Arab regimes and media were besieging Syria and the Arab resistance movements. Whoever does not want recognize this context, is simply supporting the external and internal forces trying to spread confusion in order to destroy that experience and liquidate its positive results, and ultimately punish Syria for its positions.

With these premises, describing the confusion created around the developments in Syria as a conspiracy is not a matter of propaganda, since the external interventions in Syria are de facto

pushing the country to the edge of the abyss. The risk of a breakdown is serious and real, as the Syrian popular anger that moves spontaneously and is connected to the revolutions in the Arab world has been used brilliantly to push it far away from its original objectives. We can say that the popular movement in Syria is now facing a piracy process run by many pirates from near and far, supplied with all means including arms, money and media in order to play their role. The objective seems to be very clear: Not to seize the ship but to capsize it. The collapse of Syria would weaken Syrian-Iranian relations, perceived as a threat to American regional strategy and would prevent a strong alliance between Egypt and Syria following the Egyptian revolution. It will not be strange, therefore, if Barack Obama will stand in the White House - as he did some days ago with regard to Bin Laden - to demonstrate with a smile: We told you! Who is not with us will, sooner or later, pay the price!

What is happening in Syria is sad and painful, and it is a tragic paradox that while the Arab people are happy about having gained back Egypt, they are now fearful of losing its twin Syria. It has to be clear that one who does not want the wellbeing and strength of Syria as a country contradicts the interests of the Arab people. One who does not want freedom and dignity for the Syrian people is not on our line, exactly like those who do not protect and appreciate the national role of Syria, begging Washington, Paris, London, Rome, and NATO to intervene and help the Syrian people to achieve the so-called "democratic change", thus covering the political agenda of these colonial powers.

This clear warning should not be understood as a green light to continue the oppression of the Syrian people, nor does it mean to bypass or ignore the demands of the Syrian people for freedom and democracy. It is all the more necessary to understand the threats to Syria by the piracy of the colonial powers, as well as to clearly push the Syrian regime to meet the demands of Syrian people and to force it to surrender without any compromises to their demands. This includes real political and social reforms and to fight corruption, which are the preconditions to immunize Syria from external colonial interventions and to gain the trust of millions of Syrians who will be ready to struggle in order to protect Syria, once the respect of their dignity and freedom in all aspects of their life has been acknowledged.

We conclude by finding that there are reasons to have confidence in the awareness of the Syrian people. Through its historical experience, the people learned to be prepared to pay a high price to protect their principles, independence and freedom. Therefore, it is not easy to deceive or to drag the people into a trap of self-destruction, as they certainly understand what is behind this scramble coming from every direction. Surely it is not love for Syria, nor the willingness of the Western colonial forces and the Arab reactionary regimes to see a free, democratic and strong Syria. The final goal is clear: what they want now is the head of Syria and the country to be weakened, to no longer have a substantial role or influence. One not aware of this fact should look to the East to see what is happening in Iraq and then have a look to the West to see Libya under the Western bombs. After all, who cares about the Syrian or Libyan people!

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P.S.

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