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**Communist Party
of Great Britain
(Marxist-Leninist)**



**Hands
off Syria!**

**Victory
to Assad!**

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As the leaders of the Nato imperialist alliance meet for their Chicago summit, the question of how to step up the all but declared war against Syria and its progressive government is doubtless high on the agenda.

For 15 months, this heroic and dignified Arab nation has faced a relentless campaign of destabilisation, ranging from media demonisation and crippling sanctions to terrorist bombings that have targeted civilians and the military alike, backed by imperialist special forces and other foreign aggressors.

In the face of this onslaught, the latest instalment of the imperialist blitzkrieg that has already laid waste to Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and other states in the region, the Syrian people and their leadership have stood firm, combining commendable resolve with a magnanimous willingness to make sometimes painful concessions in order to bring about a peaceful solution and relieve the people's suffering.

Regime change or bust

Naturally such a peaceful solution, preserving Syria's independence and sovereignty, is anathema to the imperialist powers and their local stooges, such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey. Although forced to accept the 'Annan plan', which calls for an end to violence by all parties and for an "inclusive, Syrian-led political process", in words, they have been doing everything they possibly can to undermine and destroy it in deeds, precisely because such a plan, if sincerely followed, would torpedo their 'regime change' agenda.

Since the cease-fire envisaged in the Annan plan was due to go into effect on 12 April, the number of deaths has fallen, but this is entirely due to the extreme restraint being exercised by the government forces. Terrorist attacks have increased.

On 7 May, the Syrian people went to the polls in an election based on a new and more democratic constitution that was overwhelmingly endorsed in a February referendum. Despite the opposition boycott, the right-wing *Wall Street Journal*, no friend of Damascus, was forced to concede:

"Support for the ruling Baath Party remains strong. Of Syria's estimated 23 million people, some three million are Baath Party members ... Government loyalists compare that with a protest movement that, at its peak, was estimated to have brought fewer than a million to the streets." (8 May 2012)

Not daring to test their strength at the polls, the contras' answer to Syria's masses came two days later, when a roadside bomb hit a Syrian military truck, just seconds after the head of the UN observer team, as mandated by the Annan plan, and who the military was escorting, drove by.

The next day, Damascus suffered its worst atrocity to date, when twin car bombs killed at least 55 people and injured around 400. Packed with more than 1,000kg of explosives, the bombs were detonated at 7.50am, the peak time for government employees to arrive for work and for buses to ferry children to school.

Despite a few token words of condemnation, the imperialists and their local allies have used the atrocities committed by their hired hands as just another excuse to pile on the pressure. On 14 May, EU foreign ministers imposed new sanctions on Syria and openly expressed their determination to bypass and nullify the Annan plan, some weasel words of 'support' notwithstanding. The *Wall Street Journal* reported:

"The foreign ministers said the cease-fire plan wasn't an 'open-ended' offer ... Belgian Foreign Minister Didier Reynders said it was time to reopen the debate about a humanitarian corridor into Syria with some military presence. 'We support the mission of Kofi Annan but it has begun to be very long now without any cease-fire. And so I'm sure that we need to do more and maybe we'll go back to the humanitarian corridor,' he said before the ministers' meeting ...

"[UK Foreign Secretary William Hague] said that while the Annan plan ... is the best one available, the international community can't wait forever for it to succeed ..." (15 May 2012)

Upon its master's command, a well-trained dog will always bark. Hence, it was scarcely surprising to read in the Jordanian *al-Bawaba* newspaper:

"The Gulf countries are beginning to seriously question the likelihood of success of the peace plan for Syria by international envoy Kofi Annan. 'The confidence in the efforts of the international envoy begins to weaken rapidly and seriously,' said yesterday Prince Saud al-Faisal, Saudi foreign minister, speaking on behalf of the six Gulf monarchies gathered in Riyadh." (15 May 2012)

Justifying new US sanctions on Syria, Obama declared that Syria poses an "unusual and extraordinary threat" to US national security and diplomatic goals. Doubtless, this is exactly how imperialism views Syria's alliance with Iran and its staunch support for the Palestinian and Lebanese resistance.

StW still not stopping any wars

Support for Syria in its life-and-death confrontation with imperialism is an acid test for the working-class and anti-war movements. Yet in its call for an anti-Nato protest outside the US embassy, the ineffectual and rapidly declining Stop the War Coalition (StW) has once again avoided any mention of this frontline country.

This is because those who have hijacked the anti-war movement in this country – misleaders like 'left' Labourite Jeremy Corbyn and Trotskyite John Rees of Counterfire – actually support imperialism's aim of 'regime change' for Syria, differing only in the methods that should be used to bring it about, and the revisionist CPB cravenly goes along with them.

A principled anti-war movement is desperately needed – one that will organise workers in a mass movement of non-cooperation with imperialist war crimes and call for:

Hands off Syria! Victory to Assad!

19 May 2012

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