

US-backed “rebels” carry out sectarian massacre in Syria

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At least 60 people, including women, children and the elderly, were killed in a massacre of Shia Muslims by US-backed “rebels” in eastern Syria Tuesday.

The sectarian slaughter in the village of Hatlah in the province of Deir Ezzor near the border with Iraq, was reported by both the Syrian government and the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a London-based group that supports the Western-backed militias trying to overthrow the government of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

A video posted online showed Islamist gunmen bragging about killing Shias and burning and looting their homes. A spokesman for the group, a Kuwaiti, declared that they killed for their religion and calling on Sunnis in Kuwait and elsewhere to do the same. Another exposed a covered corpse saying, “Look Shi’ites, this is how you will end up, you dogs.”

The killings came on the same day that a pair of suicide bombers blew themselves up in the busy Marjeh Square in the heart of Damascus, Syria’s capital, killing 15 people and wounding another 31. The terrorist attack took place near a police station.

The Deir Ezzor massacre, in which an estimated 1,500 gunmen took part, underscored the increasingly open sectarian character of the US-backed war for regime change in Syria, under conditions in which the so-called rebels have suffered a series of serious military defeats.

Al Qaeda-affiliated gunmen of the Al Nusra front and other Sunni Islamist militias have become the predominant forces in what pseudo-left elements in the West insist on calling the “Syrian revolution,” with many thousands of Islamist fighters having entered the country from neighboring Arab states as well as from as far away as Chechnya, the former Yugoslavia and elsewhere in Europe.

Particularly in the wake of the Syrian army’s retaking of Qusair, the strategically important town in the central province of Homs that served as a conduit for arms and foreign fighters coming into Syria from Lebanon, the “rebels” and their supporters have fomented increasingly rabid sectarianism. The pretext for this has been the aid given to the Syrian government forces by members of the Lebanese Shi’ite Hezbollah movement, who crossed the border to help retake Qusair from Al Nusra and its allies.

In the aftermath of the battle, the media and leading Sunni clerics—particularly in Saudi Arabia and the monarchical Persian Gulf Sunni petrol states that have provided much of the money and arms for the “rebels”—have cast the Syrian conflict as a virtual holy war against Shi’ites.

Well-known Sunni cleric Yusuf al Qaradawi, who is based in Qatar and enjoys the support of its monarchy, called for every able-bodied Sunni across the region to go and fight the Shias in Syria and declared that Iran was determined to “devour” the Sunnis.

Qaradawi’s sectarian fanaticism is a reflection of the increasing desperation of his patrons. Britain’s Channel 4 quoted Qatari Deputy Prime Minister Ahmas Bin Abdullah Bin Zaid al Mahmoud addressing the US-Islamic Word Forum in Doha this week as stating: “Should ... the United States fail to offer prompt and decisive assistance to the Syrian people to aid them in fulfilling their aspirations, we fear that the crisis at hand might have even more serious repercussions on neighboring states, the Arab region, and world peace.”

Having laid out an estimated \$3 billion to arm and pay mercenaries in Syria, Qatar’s royal house fears its efforts are going up in smoke and that defeat may undermine its own grip on power.

In the wake of the government’s regaining control

over Qusair, the Syrian military has begun to push into areas of the central city of Homs held by the Western-backed “rebels.” It is preparing a major offensive to regain full control of Aleppo, Syria’s commercial center near the Turkish-Syrian border.

The fear that the forces that the West and its allies among the Gulf State monarchies have fielded and armed as their proxies in the war for Syrian regime change are losing was also expressed in statements by French officials this week.

“We need to re-balance things because over the past few weeks the troops of Bashar al-Assad and especially Hezbollah and the Iranians, along with Russian arms, have gained considerable ground,” said Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius.

Fabius indicated that this “re-balancing” was to take place through a major escalation of the Western intervention, including France together with Britain and the US directly arming the “rebels.” Ostensibly, Washington and its NATO allies have, until now, supplied only “non-lethal” assistance, but in reality, the CIA as well as British, French and German intelligence have provided direct aid, including the CIA’s coordination of the arms flow paid for by the Saudi and Qatari monarchies.

“We shouldn’t arm them for the sake of arming them, but there has to be a rebalancing,” Fabius continued. “Nobody is talking about sending troops on the ground, but the resistance fighters must be able to defend themselves.”

Fabius said that he had discussed the issue Tuesday with US Secretary of State John Kerry and claimed that Paris would wait until August 1 before sending weapons. This was the date agreed to by the European Union, after Britain and France succeeded in overturning an EU arms embargo on Syria.

Meanwhile, British Foreign Secretary William Hague arrived in Washington Wednesday for discussions on Syria. White House officials have indicated that the members of the National Security Council are reviewing options for an escalation of the US intervention this week, including the direct arming of the anti-Assad militias and the imposition of a no-fly zone. That would entail a major US bombing campaign against Syria.

Other meetings on the crisis confronting Washington and its allies were scheduled elsewhere. The Turkish

media reported that Tamir Pardo, the director of Mossad, the Israeli intelligence agency, flew secretly into Turkey Wednesday to discuss the Syrian situation with his counterpart, Hakan Fidan, head of the Turkish National Intelligence Organization (MIT).

According to some reports, Pardo emphasized Iran’s role in the Syrian events and also apparently suggested Iranian involvement in the mass protests that have swept Turkey for the past two weeks. Turkey has been one of the main supporters of the so-called rebels, and Syria has repeatedly charged that Israel is giving them covert backing in a bid to overthrow Assad and undermine both Iran and Hezbollah.

British Prime Minister David Cameron also announced that Russian President Vladimir Putin would fly to London next week for talks on Syria.



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