

# WORLD APPROACH TO “PEACE” IN SYRIA: ARM BOTH SIDES

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The carnage in Syria continues unabated, with government forces shelling citizens, especially in the city of Homs. Qatar’s minister for international cooperation described Sunday’s veto of the UN Security Council resolution by Russia and China in this way:

Khaled al-Attiah, Qatar’s minister for international co-operation, said the vetoes sent “a very bad signal to Assad that there (is a) license to kill.”

Russia claims they are working for a peaceful settlement in Syria, with Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in Damascus now to speak to Assad:

Lavrov told Assad, according to Russia’s RIA news agency: “Every leader of every country must be aware of his share of responsibility. You are aware of yours. It is in our interests for Arab peoples to live in peace and agreement.”

Lavrov, whose government wields rare leverage in Syria as a major arms supplier to Damascus, said Assad assured him he was committed to halting bloodshed by both sides and that he was ready to seek dialogue with all political groups in Syria.

But the arms that Russia has been supplying to Assad are still being put to use against Syria’s citizens. From the same Reuters article:

Opposition activists said the fresh assault on Homs came after 95 people were killed on Monday in the city of one

million, Syria's third biggest. More than 200 were reported killed there by sustaining shelling on Friday night.

"The bombardment is again concentrating on Baba Amro (district of Homs). A doctor tried to get in there this morning but I heard he was wounded," Mohammad al-Hassan, an activist in Homs, told Reuters by satellite phone. "There is no electricity and all communication with the neighborhood has been cut."

A further 19 people were killed and at least 40 wounded in Tuesday's barrage, activists said. Some reported fighting between army defectors and government forces trying move into areas the rebels hold in Homs.

Reflecting the total failure in what passes for world "diplomacy", the response from the West is to arm the citizens of Syria to fight back against government forces who were armed by Russia. The approach starts out positively, as an attempt to prevent the arming of the Syrian government, but by the time Joe Lieberman gets involved, it goes terribly astray:

The United States has vowed to block funding and arms supplies to Syria after Russia and China vetoed a UN resolution condemning the government's crackdown on dissent.

"We will work to seek regional and national sanctions against Syria and strenghten the ones we have. They will be implemented to the fullest to dry up the sources of funding and the arms shipments that are keeping the regime's war machine going", US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton told journalists in Sofia on Sunday.

That part is fine. Working to stop the arming of Syria is a fine effort. But then Lieberman shows

up:

Senator Joe Lieberman, a former Democratic presidential candidate, went further than Clinton and talked of the military option.

"If Russia and China don't change their minds about the veto ... then the world will not allow us to say there's nothing we can do about it," Lieberman said.

"So we should begin thinking about what we can do, particularly with the Arab League," he said. "I think it begins with support for the Free Syrian Army."

The senator said a "range of support" could be given to the rebels, from medical supplies to intelligence and reconnaissance surveillance.

"And then ultimately it is providing them with weapons," he said during a panel discussion on the Middle East.

But if a report from PressTV today is true, Lieberman's "warning" about arming the Free Syrian Army has proceeded all the way to action:

Lebanon's security officials say a suspicious cargo containing huge amounts of US dollars, guns, special passports and credit cards have been seized upon arrival in the Lebanese capital, Beirut, from the US and Brazil.

The items, packed in a number of chests and delivered via airmail, were discovered at Beirut's airport, the Lebanese security officials said.

The chests also contained a list of both well-known and ordinary Lebanese citizens including a figure related to Salafi extremist groups. The security officials have summoned a number of the individuals, whose names were on the list, arresting some of them.

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Over the past few months, reports have circulated that caches of weapons have been smuggled to armed gangs in Syria through the Lebanese border.

I realize that I'm an idealist, but I can't stop wondering what the world would be like if "diplomacy" put as much effort into preventing the arming of nations and dissident groups as it now puts into arming them. The current situation in Syria has one side much more strongly armed than the other, so there likely is no solution that doesn't involve more violence and more weapons, but when will weapons stop being the currency of diplomats? And when will the diplomats realize that their current concentration on weapons always results in the deaths of innocent civilians?