

Mass anger builds in Libya after US Special Forces raid

By Thomas Gaist
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The Libyan government demanded an audience with the US Ambassador Deborah Jones this week in response to Saturday's raid, led by US Special Forces, to capture alleged Al Qaeda planner Anas al-Liby. At least ten attackers surrounded al-Liby outside his Tripoli residence, where they disarmed him and forced him into a vehicle.

Al-Liby is currently being held in the brig of a US naval vessel in the Mediterranean, where he has reportedly been denied his Miranda rights and is likely being subjected to torture. He previously resided in the UK and had been living in Tripoli since 2011, without making an effort to conceal his identity or whereabouts.

Speaking on behalf of the US National Security Council, Caitlin Hayden touted the operation to capture al-Liby as the product of "months of operational planning."

In response, the Libyan government has sought to balance between appeasing popular outrage against the kidnapping and maintaining good relations with US imperialism, which installed it during the 2011 NATO war to topple Colonel Muammar Gaddafi. Speaking at a press conference in Rabat, Libyan Prime Minister Ali Zeidan mildly protested the snatch-and-grab operation, while affirming that good relations will continue between the US and the Libyan "revolution."

"We emphasize that Libyan citizens should be judged in Libya, and Libya does not surrender its sons," Zeidan said. "The US was very helpful to Libya during the revolution and the relations should not be affected by an incident, even if it is a serious one."

There is anxiety in establishment circles that the kidnapping of al-Liby will provoke an explosion of outrage against the neo-colonial Libyan regime. The US-backed government is in a state of desperate crisis,

facing threats of armed Islamist militias, demands from workers for better pay and more employment, and cities requiring reconstruction as a result of the devastation caused by the 2011 war.

The *New York Times* wrote that the raid to seize al-Liby "tests the ability of the fledgling Libyan government to weather the furor. Indeed, American officials said the Libyan authorities, in a shift, were willing to support the raid as long as they could protest in public. But it may have also represented a recognition that the interim government was already losing control over the country."

While the posturing of the Libyan regime against the seizure of al-Liby is cynical, the growing anger of masses of people in Libya and throughout the Middle East against neo-colonial war is deeply felt.

In anticipation of mass protests which could potentially threaten the US embassy, 200 US Marines are preparing to fly to the US embassy in Tripoli.

During the war dubbed "Operation Freedom Falcon," initiated in March of 2011, the US and its European allies launched over 26,000 sorties against targets inside Libya, including the savage carpet bombing of Tripoli and Sirte. The US-led war—fraudulently presented by the US government and various pseudo-left parties as a continuation of mass working class struggles against dictatorship in Egypt and Tunisia—relied on Islamist and Al Qaeda elements as proxies to help conquer Libya.

After the war, the US and NATO oversaw the installation of a weak Libyan government run by Islamist militias and US intelligence assets that has done nothing to resolve the ever more desperate situation facing the population as a result of the US bombing. Claims that the 2011 war was fought to support a democratic revolution to overthrow

Gaddafi—advanced by US officials and pseudo-left forces like the International Socialist Organization—now lie in tatters.

The US-NATO war against Libya has produced a social catastrophe in the country which is worsening with each passing day. The streets of Tripoli are patrolled by Islamist thugs, and the US-backed government is chronically unable to provide basic services to the population, including water and electricity.

The reactionary militias employed by US imperialism during the war systematically terrorize the population and, in September of last year, even mounted an assault on the US consulate in Benghazi, killing US Ambassador Christopher Stevens. A UN report last month showed that thousands of individuals are being held in Libyan prisons and other secret sites controlled by armed gangs and militias. Many of these have been detained arbitrarily and subjected to torture.

Protests and strikes have broken out across the country during the past few months, especially in the oil sector, with workers demanding unpaid wages, jobs, and reconstruction of social infrastructure destroyed during the US-NATO bombing campaign. Islamist militias now command many oil fields and export facilities. Oil exports, the mainstay of Libya's economy, have been slashed.

According to Libya's *Al-Nabaa*, scores of government soldiers staged an unarmed occupation of Ali Zidan's office beginning on Monday, demanding their salaries, which they said have not been paid for months.

The "democratic" legislative body established after the war—the General National Congress (GNC)—is little more than a consortium of Islamist forces, ex-Gaddafi regime elements, and criminal gangs, penetrated by the US and its military and intelligence agencies. Only candidates selected by the NATO-installed National Transitional Council (NTC) were eligible for election to the GNC.

The current conditions in Libya refute the empty proclamations made by the political and media establishments in 2012, when the Libyan government was formed. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said at the time, "Last year, thousands of Libyans sacrificed their lives or suffered lasting injury in order to win the right of the Libyan people to build a new state founded

on human dignity and the rule of law."

As in the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq, the imperialist war in Libya has produced an outcome which can be described as sociocide. A society which had been capable of providing modern conditions of life for broad sections of the population has been turned into a cauldron of violence and oppression, evoking deepening opposition from the workers and oppressed masses against the US-backed regime.

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