





# Mobilization Against War & Occupation-MAWO

## Open Letter to Stopwar.ca & the Canadian Peace Alliance (CPA)

To Stopwar.ca and the Canadian Peace Alliance (CPA),

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We in Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO) are sending you this open correspondence to express the grave concerns we have with your organizing of the April 9th demonstration in Vancouver. Your approach and politics on this day were without a doubt against the spirit of building an antiwar, anti-occupation movement not only in Canada but throughout the world. Imperialist countries and their military fronts such as NATO are beginning to sink their teeth into Libya while continuing the brutal wars and occupations in Afghanistan, Iraq, Haiti, Ivory Coast, Somalia, Sudan, Palestine and beyond. This is a crucial time for the antiwar movement and we need an open and honest discussion or risk seeing further capitulation to the pro-imperialist political and military campaign against Libya.

The CPA's cross-Canada participation in the April 9th International Day of Action called by the United National Antiwar Committee (UNAC) in the U.S. was a breakthrough in cross-border unified action. We have been advocating for years that working with U.S. groups and coalitions is an essential aspect of a strategy to build a broad, united and effective antiwar movement.

Thousands rallied in New York and San Francisco, while coordinated rallies were held in 10 Canadian and 6 Pakistani cities, as well as demonstrations in Iraq on April 9th. These mobilizations built on the momentum of other successful coordinated rallies called by the ANSWER Coalition on March 19th. This broadly coordinated action has been missing for too long from the antiwar movement in Canada, and we fully endorse its continuation on a hopefully increasingly frequent basis. However, based on the events during the rally organized in Vancouver by Stopwar.ca and the CPA's public statements regarding the current crisis and NATO bombing in Libya, we are concerned that the political direction of these actions in Canada is unclear at best, and could even be understood at worst as pro-war.

At the Stopwar.ca rally in Vancouver we saw that two speakers invited by Stopwar.ca spent 15 minutes justifying and advocating IN FAVOUR of the current NATO bombing of Libya. Do the following quotations from the Stopwar.ca rally really have a place at an antiwar rally occurring in the midst of a bloody imperialist campaign to intervene in a civil war and overthrow the independent government of Libya?

- **"If you don't want war on Libya, what is your alternative?"**

- **"He [Gaddafi] has an unbelievable media machine, he spends billions and billions that tries to paint the picture that NATO is bombing Libyan people. NATO is not bombing Libyan people!"**

- **"This [the bombing of Libya] is not like Iraq, this is not like Afghanistan, this is not a foreign occupier coming onto our land!"**

- **"If you don't want those people [foreign forces] to get inside of Libya and you want to stop them you are saying, 'Let Ghadafi kill us!'"**

- **"You are giving us the wrong message. You are saying its okay for civilians to get killed but it is not okay for NATO to help us!"**

- **"Do you have a heart?!" (shouted at someone speaking against the bombing of Libya from the crowd)**

At least 10 people in the crowd responded to these pro-war speakers by shouting, "Stop bombing Libya!" while one of the more vocal critics of the pro-war speakers who is a long-time social justice organizer was surrounded and closed in on by three Stopwar.ca marshals. Even after it was clear to everyone involved what these pro-war Libyans were advocating, the Stopwar.ca MCs invited yet another one to speak!

Stopwar.ca and CPA co-chair Derrick O'Keefe spoke at the end of the rally to confirm that

they had invited these speakers knowing full well the pro-war message they were going to put forward. He said, "We invited the Libyan speakers who we've been in touch with even though there's a difference in opinion about NATO's intervention, we thought it was important for them to have their say." In fact, Derrick O'Keefe, and both of the Stopwar.ca MC's tried to justify this position to the rally, as if the pro-war position on Libya is somehow being unfairly under-represented. When Derrick O'Keefe said "We know its our job to stay on the streets and to bring the truth," this shouldn't mean the so-called "truth" that the government of Canada is putting forward by participating in bombing the Libyan people! Though Derrick O'Keefe mentioned that Stopwar.ca as a coalition had voted to oppose imperialist intervention in Libya, the time given to this supposed position was nothing compared to what was given to the pro-war Libyans. We must ask how Stopwar.ca can justify writing a statement which says they are "absolutely opposed to the NATO bombing of Libya, which is a shocking violation of the UN Charter and an act of war against a sovereign country" and

then give such a huge amount of space to a pro-war message we can all hear 24/7 if we turn on CNN, FOX News, BBC or any of the other advocates of imperialist wars and occupations.

There is no justification for having pro-war speakers at an antiwar rally. There is no space for presenting such confusion in a public action that is supposed to be about taking a stand against war and occupation.

Unfortunately we have seen examples of this kind of behavior from Stopwar.ca over the past several years and in the weeks leading up to the demonstration. For instance, Stopwar.ca has invited speakers who advocate the overthrow of the independent government of Iran in the midst of an imperialist campaign demanding the same. They have also promoted other speakers who have compromised antiwar, anti-occupation political principles. Most recently, leading up to April 9th Stopwar.ca played an active role in weekly demonstrations organized by pro-war Libyans. In supporting these demonstrations Stopwar.ca showed a complete indifference and lack of responsibility for their actions as an antiwar coalition in the midst of a new war opening against the people of Libya.

Because of our experience in Vancouver we are concerned that similar events played out in other demonstrations across Canada. Did these other rallies also have pro-war speakers? The CPA, as an umbrella antiwar organization in Canada, has the responsibility to provide leadership and a clear political direction to its membership organizations, especially at such a crucial time.

We have read the statement released by the CPA "Support the Libyan people. Yes to freedom and democracy across the Arab World! No Military Intervention in Libya." The confused position that was presented at the April 9th demonstration reflects this confused statement, which concludes, "The best way to help the people of Libya is to show our solidarity with their struggle." Our role as antiwar coalitions is not to take sides in a civil war in an independent country under attack by imperialists, but to clearly oppose any form of foreign imperialist intervention which has never, and will never, benefit the people of that country. You can't have it both ways at once - to join in the imperialist campaign used to justify the bombings while saying that you oppose the bombings at the same time.

There is much to be learned from the coalitions that have organized rallies in the US since the imperialist campaign against Libya began. Through statements, as well as the March 19th, March 26th and April 9th mobilizations, organizations such as ANSWER, the International Action Center (IAC) and UNAC have taken a strong position against the current war on the people of Libya. The difference is that, in contrast to what we observed in Vancouver, in the US the actions of these antiwar and social justice organizations match their words. From the lead banners to the signs and rally speakers, to the UNAC report from NYC which stated, "The new war in Libya has given rise to a new movement, as the largest anti-war demonstration New York has seen in years took to the streets of Manhattan." There was no contradiction or confusion as they had the leadership to take a strong stance against imperialist intervention in Libya. This is an example for all of us to follow.

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MAWO has been participating in the same efforts, in the spirit of anti-imperialism, cooperation, and antiwar movement building. Starting from even before the bombing of Libya began we have organized 5 forums and 3 rallies, as well as produced 2 buttons and launched a petition campaign, all against foreign intervention in Libya. We have also produced 3 antiwar newsletters filled with news and analysis to counter the lies being spread by imperialist media on Libya and the uprisings and mass movements in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Within this newsletter are ideas and statements we think are crucial at this time and are much more appropriate be said at antiwar rallies:

"There is no saving of human lives or any humanitarian intervention on behalf of the Libyan people that can be performed by imperialist powers. Indeed, this is such an obvious hypocrisy by these war mongers because none of those precious human values mean anything to them. One, we haven't forgotten the killings of millions of people in Vietnam, more than a million people in Rwanda, killings of more than one million people in Iraq just from 2003 until now, as well as hundreds of thousands of innocent people in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Congo, Nigeria, Sudan, Somalia and many other poor and sovereign countries by the very same imperial powers."

"This is a time to abandon all illusions that there might be anything progressive and human to overthrowing the Libyan government or helping the opposition in Libya through imperialist intervention such as sanctions, a no-fly zone or military attacks... The unfolding mass revolutionary movement and ousting of Mubarak and Ben Ali in Egypt and Tunisia have been a fresh struggle for anti-imperialist movements in the region. It certainly reversed the setback imposed on the working and poor people of the world through the occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq. What the great masses of North Africa and

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# U.S. HANDS OFF IRAN!

## A JOINT STATEMENT FROM MOBILIZATION AGAINST WAR & OCCUPATION (MAWO) & IRANIAN COMMUNITY AGAINST WAR (ICAW) February 1, 2012

Once again the United States and its little imperialist stooges like the UK, France and Canada are about to create another bloodbath in the Middle East, as they prepare for war and destruction against Iran. Iran is an independent sovereign country, whose heroic people have stood up for more than three decade against the U.S. and other imperialist countries' aggression and intimidation. The Iranian people have been targeted simply for exercising their inalienable right to self-determination and living with dignity by rejecting imperialist bullying and domination. For more than thirty years, the U.S. and its allies have imposed all kinds of sanctions, war, sabotage and terror on the people of Iran, but they have never been able to force them to accept the terms and rules of imperial powers.

Iran is the most important target of the U.S. in the Middle East and North Africa. Without bringing Iran to its knees it is not possible for imperialists to roll back the dynamism of growing anti-imperialist sentiment in the whole region. The United States' fundamental goal is for regime change in Iran. With a politically independent Iran, a powerful country in the Middle East, imperialists are not able to bring back their total hegemony to the Middle East, like they had before the great Iranian revolution of 1979. That revolution changed the relationship and balance of forces, if not completely, than indeed significantly, in favour of oppressed and working people of the Middle East, South Asia, as well as East, West and North Africa. Today, the message of the Iranian people to all oppressed nations of the world is much more powerful than anytime before. If thirty years ago the message was that it is possible to overthrow imperialist domination and get rid of puppet regimes; today the message is that countries under all kinds of imperialist pressure can advance independently in medicine, higher education and all practical and theoretical fields of science. This is what is frightening imperialists the most: that we do not need them for our development. Waging war with Iran is not only for restoring imperialist hegemony in the region and/or paving the road for the grand strategy of the US and Europe to move and isolate their powerful rivals, China and Russia. It is also to make sure the message of the Iranian people does not become a further aspiration for all oppressed nations to confront imperialist domination like we saw in last year in Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan, Yemen, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, Morocco and Algeria. Today imperialists are frightened and shaken to their bones!

In order for the U.S. and other imperialists to conduct a bloody war against Iran, they need to manipulate and shape public opinion in their respective countries and around the world. The ugly and completely deceptive campaign against Iran has moved from a hideous campaign to a tragicomedy. For decades Western powers filled our ears with how important and decisive it is to fight Iran, as the so-called centre of training and exporting terrorists, and put Iran with North Korea and Iraq in an "Axis of Evil". For a decade now they have been drumming up fear about the danger of Iran's peaceful nuclear activities. Ignoring that even if Iran somehow obtained an atomic bomb, how could

the Middle East need to see is not another Iraq but rather another Egypt."

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Since our founding on October 29, 2003 MAWO has always endorsed and supported Stopwar.ca, the CPA and other groups whenever they have organized antiwar work. However, we are also clear that we don't feel that bringing occasional celebrity speakers and holding sporadic events not connected to consistent campaigns is enough to even begin scratching the surface of building a strong antiwar movement. This is unlike what we have seen in the U.S. where there is a constant effort by different political tendencies to improve and build new fronts against imperialist aggression. We have rarely spoken out publicly about the huge blocks and slander we have faced for years in our efforts to work in a united way either with Stopwar.ca or the CPA, but now is not the time to remain silent. Now is not the time to remain divided based on petty or sectarian differences, now is the time to learn from the people of the Middle East and North Africa as they rise up and counter the imperialist domination they have faced for decades. Interestingly and ironically, as a Canadian-based coalition, more so than in Canada, our efforts for unity have had a great welcoming by U.S. coalitions and social justice groups such as ANSWER, UNAC, IAC, the Stop War On Iran coalition, IFCO/Pastors for Peace and others.

We are making a strong call to Stopwar.ca and the CPA:

**1- Stop taking the unclear middle of the road path and arm yourselves with a clear antiwar, anti-occupation platform by rejecting saying one thing and doing the opposite.**

**2- Organize an open, inclusive, broad and well organized public discussion on how to build a united and effective antiwar movement in Canada and world-wide.**

We believe these are the only serious options in

they possibly use it against the 400 Israeli and 2,000 American nuclear warheads and their sophisticated nuclear defence technology? However, apparently this manipulation is not enough, now we have very recently learned from Mr. Panetta, the U.S. Secretary of Defence, that the United States is under threat of attack from Iran! So we are seeing the victimizer trying to paint itself as the victim and turning the victim into a menace. Ironically and hypocritically Israel, who is warning other countries of the region and the whole world about the dangers of Iran, is not a signer of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which does not seem to matter to any of its allies. Shouldn't we be more concerned about a heavily nuclear-armed Israel, which has established itself as an aggressor and war monger against Palestinian and Arab countries for more than 6 decades?

We need to realize by now that the U.S. and other imperial countries' ugly and untruthful campaign against Iran, is precisely the same as their world wide racist campaign of Islamophobia. It is all about domination and imperialist hegemony for the elimination of all resistance against imperialism that is gaining popularity in countries with Muslim populations. We have to be vigilant about imperialist tricks and manipulation while we are fighting back against war mongers. The focus today is not the nature of this or that regime, in this case namely Iran, but to oppose an immanent imperialist war drive against Iran. Like their campaigns against Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, as well as Syria, the U.S. policy of "regime change" can only bring devastation to the people of oppressed nations. To call for a dictatorial regime to be condemned or for regime change in Iran, from outside that country, is against the principal of self-determination of sovereign nations. Self-determination means it is up to the Iranian people to decide how to conduct their internal affairs including the form of government and social order. For those who are, out of naivety or desperation, focusing their campaign against the government of Iran- we must remind them that true regime change from outside of Iran is only possible through imperialist military intervention, period. Therefore no matter what nice words they use against sanctions and military intervention as soon as they are distracted from the main focus against foreign intervention, and begin talking about regime change, they are willingly or unwillingly on the same side as the imperialist campaign for the destruction of Iran.

Iran is not a threat to anyone. Iran is simply the target of imperialist powers because of its independence, geographical importance and political weight and influence in the whole region and beyond. Iran is surrounded by dozens of U.S. military bases all for their preparations to attack Iran. We must demand unconditionally that the U.S., UN Security Council, and EU end their sanctions on Iran. Stop assassinations of Iranian scientists and stop intervention in Iran. We must demand U.S., NATO and all imperialist out of the Middle East and North Africa and as well as an immediate end to the occupation of Afghanistan, Iraq and ending of interference in Pakistan, Libya and Syria.

**U.S. Hands Off Iran! U.S. Out of the Middle East and North Africa!**

response to the current situation. Today in a joint letter the presidents of the United States and France and the prime minister of Britain declared, "there can be no peace in Libya while Muammar Gaddafi stays in power," "Libyans in cities like Misrata and Ajdabiya continue to suffer 'terrible horrors at Gaddafi's hands'," "it is impossible to imagine a future for Libya with Gaddafi in power," "To allow him to remain in power 'would be an unconscionable betrayal' of Libya's people," "So long as Gaddafi is in power, NATO and its coalition partners must maintain their operations so that civilians remain protected and the pressure on the regime builds," and finally "Then a genuine transition from dictatorship to an inclusive constitutional process can really begin, led by a new generation of leaders." All quotations are from the BBC, and the complete letter is in the Washington Post April 14, 2011. Isn't it clear what colonial powers are up to in Libya? Is this different than what the Libyan opposition or the pro-war Libyans that participated in your rally say? Where is this confusion of giving a big platform to pro-imperialist, pro-war Libyans coming from?

Let us discuss these issues out in the open. We cannot let the mistakes of April 9th keep us from moving forward. Those mistakes create confusion among the masses that we would like to take a stance against imperialist aggression around the world, and if continued they will indeed promote what imperialist countries are advocating. We must clearly oppose this new era of war and occupation which began in 2001 in Afghanistan, and do our part to counter it by organizing, educating and mobilizing masses with a clear antiwar, anti-occupation platform as the colonial powers continue on this bloody path today, in 2011, against Libya. We believe these politics, and this proposal for a public discussion, are the way to build a broad, united, and effective antiwar movement.

Mobilization Against War & Occupation (MAWO)  
April 14, 2011  
Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada