

IADL CONDEMNS MILITARY INTERVENTION IN SYRIA

The International Association of Democratic Lawyers, a non-governmental organization founded in 1946, with member associations throughout the world and with consultative status in ECOSOC, condemns the April 13, 2018 airstrikes by the United States, the United Kingdom and France in Syria.

The war in Syria has entered its seventh year with the continued suffering of the Syrian people. The production and use of Chemical Weapons violates a *jus cogens* norm of international law and those proven to have used them should be held accountable for the commission of war crimes. However the United States, France and the UK do not have the right to usurp the role of the Chemical Weapons Convention's Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) inspectors and take unilateral action which itself violates international law.

The United Nations Charter requires all States to refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State, or in any other manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations. The Charter requires States to settle their disputes peacefully, and permits States to use military force only in self-defense after an armed attack or with the approval of the UN Security Council. Syria had not attacked any other State and the Council had not given its approval to military strikes in Syria.

It is hypocritical that the United States would claim it was engaging in an action to uphold international law when the United States and its allies have continuously violated international law by arming and supporting those who sought to engage in regime change in violation of the Charter and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. It is also hypocritical that the United States would speak self-righteously about chemical weapons when it has yet to take responsibility for its massive use of chemical agents such as Agent Orange in Vietnam, which continue to poison the people and lands of that country.

UN General Assembly Resolution 2625, the "Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Co-operation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations," states:

"No State or group of States has the right to intervene, directly or indirectly, for any reason whatever, in the internal or external affairs of any other State. Consequently, armed intervention and all other forms of interference or attempted threats against the personality of the State or against its political, economic and cultural elements, are in violation of international law....Also, no State shall organize, assist, foment, finance, incite or tolerate subversive, terrorist or armed activities directed towards the violent overthrow of the regime of another State, or interfere in civil strife in another State. "

Indeed, in the 1986 *Nicaragua Case*, the International Court of Justice reprimanded the United States for arming and supporting *contra* militias and combatants, and for mining Nicaragua's harbors, as violations of the UN Charter and international law. Perhaps the Syrian crisis would

look differently today if the United States and its allies had consistently respected law for the last several years. They have not.

Furthermore, the United States has violated the Charter by promoting the sales and distribution of many armaments in the region. Such support discourages the peoples of the world from settling their disputes by peaceful means and promotes the notion that there are “military solutions” to political and economic problems. The hyper militarization of the dispute in Syria has led to a monumental refugee crisis but the United States refuses to accept Syrian refugees.

IADL calls on the international community to condemn the aggression of the US, UK and France in Syria and to seek to promote a diplomatic and political solution to the crisis in Syria.