



Bethlehem, 2 September 2013 – Once again, the drums of war are sounding in our region. Once again, the US is leading the campaign for this war, this time on Syria. And once again, the US and some European and Arab countries are justifying it in the name of democracy, human rights, and humanity itself.

We have heard all this before... Many American and European-led wars have been waged in these lands, and are still being waged, under the same pretexts. All of these wars have failed to bring about peace, security, and democracy. On the contrary: they have sowed political and social instability and encouraged more extreme movements to flourish and expand their reach.

The anticipated but dreaded war on Syria, being justified on the grounds that the Syrian regime has used chemical weapons, will only intensify the suffering of the Syrian people. Kairos Palestine that stands against injustice is horrified by and concerned about the use of chemical weapons in Syria, as we await the UN investigation committee's conclusions on the perpetrators of this crime. However, we are certain that any military response will merely escalate the situation and increase civilian disaster?

We must remember the tragedy of Iraq and the war launched against it in 2003. The US initiated this war under the pretext that the Iraqi regime possessed weapons of mass destruction – which, as former US Secretary of State Colin Powell has since admitted, was utterly false, and was used to justify the overthrow of Saddam Hussein and the occupation of Iraq. The ensuing war killed, injured and displaced millions of Iraqis. More than a million Iraqi Christians left the country. From all perspectives, the tragedy is far from over.

If the US, in conjunction with any or several European countries, proceeds to fight this war, it will be no better than NATO's intervention in Libya: an intervention that destroyed state infrastructure and helped unleash a civil war, the full consequences of which are still inconclusive for Libya and the region as a whole. We cannot see how a military assault on Syria – a nation already heavily fragmented and besieged by violence – will bring about anything different. Indeed, war will only worsen their plight. US President Barak Obama has cynically described the intended assault as "surgical strikes," but recent history proves this concept to be impossible. Calamities spiral out of control as soon as the missiles are fired and we fear the repercussions that will affect the whole region and even further.

The people of Syria deserve better, safer and more just lives based on more respect for their human rights – but these must be brought about, by Syrians themselves, within their own context. External intervention will cause further destruction and push the Syrian people further into relentless civil war.

Kairos Palestine condemns the calls for war, and we urge countries around the world – whether Western states or regional ones – to help Syria maintain itself, broker peace among all Syrian parties involved, and stop supporting any armed groups entering from outside the country.

We call upon churches worldwide, as well as other civil society organizations and networks, to take a stand in opposition to this intended war which will not herald any just peace.

We commend the UK House of Commons' decision to refuse participation in the possible war on Syria, and we urge the US Congress to do the same.

We all face, today, a way that is blocked and a future that promises only woe...,
(A moment of truth 5:1), so let us continue to act in concord with God and God's will building, resisting evil and bringing closer the day of justice and peace.

Kairos Palestine