

Stephen Harper Promotes War in Syria as a “Solution to the Refugee Crisis”: Canadian Government Is to Blame for the Death of Aylan Kudri

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NDP leader Thomas Mulcair stated that yesterday was not the time to allocate blame for the death of Aylan Kurdi, his mother and brother, and thousands of other Syrian refugees. Actually, while the boy's tragic death, his small body washed up on a Turkish beach in his family's desperate attempt to escape the war against Syria, is fresh in the minds of Canadians, yesterday was actually a good day to do so.

That blame should squarely fall upon the government of Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper. According to NDP candidate, Fin Donnelly, the boy's family tried unsuccessfully to apply for refugee status in Canada. (1)

We agree with the statement of Aylan's aunt, Fatima Kurdi, a resident of Coquitlam, BC, who told CBC radio news today that the war in Syria must end. It is precisely the undeclared western aggression against Syria, using terrorist mercenaries as its foot soldiers, that has produced today's refugee crisis in which Aylan Kurdi is the latest victim.

In December 2011, Harper's government instructed its ambassador to Tunisia to organize a pre-conference for the founding conference of the so-called "Friends of Syria" Group (FSG). The FSG was formed in Tunis in 2012 at U.S. instigation illegally to overthrow the Syrian government and organized a covert war of aggression using supposedly "moderate" Syrian mercenaries. Over the course of this five-year war, the mercenaries, mostly non-Syrians, morphed into the Nusra Front and ISIS, both al-Qaida affiliates, and drove more than 10 million Syrians from their homes.

In addition, in June 2013, Harper's government chaired the FSG's Working Group on Sanctions at a conference in Ottawa and made life for Syrian civilians even more unbearable, causing many more to flee the country.

With its further commitment to the U.S.-led military mission to Syria and Iraq, Harper's government might accurately be placed in the thick of the regime-change operation in Syria, and is responsible in large part for the refugee crisis. As a consequence, the very least Canada could do now is to open its doors wide to Syrian refugees.

In responding to media questions about the death of Aylan Kudri, Harper deflected criticism of his government's deplorable record on resettling Syrian refugees in Canada by claiming that Canada has the most generous immigration policy in the world, a claim completely

unsupported by the facts.

Canada's deplorable track record Re Syrian refugees

At the FSG founding meeting in Tunis, the great powers of the world, minus Russia and China, agreed upon a division of labour in this illegal war. The USA officially agreed to supply non-lethal aid to the so-called "moderate Syrian rebels" such as satellite communications and night-vision goggles. In reality, however, as is now well-documented, it shipped thousands of tons of armaments to the mostly foreign mercenaries in Syria from the armouries of defeated Yugoslavia and Libya. The British and French agreed to provide training for the "insurgents" in training camps conveniently provided by Turkey and Jordan. The Arab monarchs reached into their deep pockets to provide the funding for the terrorist mercenaries. The commitment by the Harper government to this nefarious plot was to provide for Syrian refugees. Specifically, it was to provide some \$600,000,000 in humanitarian aid and to repatriate some of the refugees to Canada.

\$600 million may sound like a lot of money. And obviously the FSG didn't expect the war to go on for four and half long years because there are now some 4 million Syrian refugees living outside of Syria and another six or seven million internally-displaced Syrian refugees (that is to say, Syrians who have been driven from their homes by the foreign mercenaries to seek shelter in government-held areas). So, altogether, there are about 10 million Syrian refugees - almost half the total population of Syria - in theory to share \$600 million (CAD) which works out to \$60 each over 4.5 years. That's less than \$15 each for each refugee per year. And, of that \$60 m. CAD, not all of it went to humanitarian aid. Some of it, as is also well-documented, went to fund the foreign mercenaries. (2)

The other commitment made back in 2012 by the Harper government of Canada was to bring 1300 Syrian refugees to Canada. 1300 of about 4 million external Syrian refugees, a paltry commitment indeed, given the magnitude of the tragedy.

However, the Harper government could not even manage to achieve this miniscule goal in two and a half years. On June 11, 2014 - a little over a year ago - in an interview with the CBC's As It Happens radio show, Immigration Minister Chris Alexander was embarrassed by the radio show's host. The minister didn't even know how many Syrian refugees his department had admitted to Canada in the previous two years and he tried to fudge the numbers with refugees from Iraq. He was so embarrassed that he ended up hanging up the phone on his radio host. As a result, a few days later in Parliament, he was forced to admit that his department was way below the quota of 1300 and promised to do better. And so, by the end of 2014, Citizenship and Immigration Canada managed to finish the paperwork to admit 1285 Syrian refugees to Canada, though about 200 of these refugees are probably still not here and many will have to be privately sponsored. In January of this year, after being pressured by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Alexander made another paltry commitment to resettle 10000 more Syrian refugees within three years, again with many of these to be privately sponsored. Alexander also promised another paltry \$90 million in humanitarian aid to refugees for all of Syria *and* Iraq. At the time, the opposition parties in Parliament were highly skeptical of the minister's promises given Chris Alexander's miserable track record.

In an interview yesterday on CBC radio, Alexander claimed his government had resettled about 2300 Syrian refugees in Canada. (3) Yesterday as well, after the untimely death of

little Aylan Kurdi, both the NDP and Liberals promised to vastly increase the number of Syrian refugees that they would admit to Canada if each formed majority governments.

Harper promotes war as a solution

At various campaign stops yesterday, Harper paid lip service to the tragic death of Aylan Kudri but mainly lambasted the Liberals and NDP for not supporting his war against ISIS in Iraq and Syria. Harper's position is consistent with that of Obama, Cameron, Hollande and other western leaders who have tried to rebrand a neo-colonial war of aggression against sovereign states as a "humanitarian" intervention. Western leaders know that there is no stomach for their military adventures in the Global South among the working people in their own countries. So they repackaged their regime change operation in Syria and their continuing attempt to balkanize Iraq into warring statelets by spinning them as an attempt to wipe out the bad guys in ISIS.

The truth is, of course, that ISIS is a US asset. The USA created it to destabilize Iraq and Syria as part of its plan to redraw all the borders of the Mideast which were established in the wake of WW1. The US and its coalition partners have no intention "to degrade and destroy ISIS." As in the former Yugoslavia and Afghanistan, terrorist mercenaries provide for the US coalition the expendable "boots on the ground" to attack its enemies and, at the same time, provide a pretext for the continuing US military presence in Iraq as well as for regime change in Syria. The immediate Western plan is merely to contain ISIS. The long term strategy of the US empire is hegemonic. Syria and Iraq are stepping stones to weaken Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Islamic Republic of Iran, objectives which coincidentally benefit the State of Israel. Hezbollah and Iran, in turn, are stepping stones to the subjugation of Russia and China.

While both the NDP and Liberals voted against the Harper government's decision to join the US-led coalition to wage war against ISIS in Iraq and Syria, and while Thomas Mulcair made a significant campaign promise to withdraw Canadian troops and warplanes from Iraq and Syria if he formed a majority government, there is much more that the opposition parties could do and say during the current election campaign. They could follow the example of other countries in reopening diplomatic relations with Syria. Such a move would indicate de facto recognition on their parts of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country of Syria. They could pledge to end Canada's participation in the FSG economic sanctions regime against Syria. They could promise to withdraw Canada from the FSG itself. And they could pledge the governments they plan to form after October 19 to support the renewed UN peace process for Syria in Geneva which has been recently strengthened by the appointment of a new UN special envoy for Syria and a flurry of diplomatic initiatives undertaken by Russia and Iran to promote a political, made-in-Syria solution to the humanitarian tragedy in that country.

To answer Harper in a few words, opposition politicians and Canadians in general could simply point out that war is not the answer to the refugee problem. In fact, wars create refugees. Most of today's refugees come from theatres of war - Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, and Libya - where western countries, led by the USA, have waged illegal wars against sovereign states.

If any of the opposition parties were to do so as a result of the current media focus on the Syrian refugee crisis, the death of young Aylan Kudri would not have been in vain.

Ken Stone is the treasurer of the Hamilton Coalition To Stop The War.

Notes

1. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/ndp-candidate-tried-to-help-family-of-drowned-syrian-boy-1.3213949>
2. <http://www.globalresearch.ca/canadas-harper-government-supports-covert-mercenary-war-on-syria-funds-al-qaeda-affiliated-rebels/5357781>
3. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/thenational/does-canada-do-enough-for-refugees-1.3215279>

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