



**NOTHING LESS THAN LIBERATION:
SUPPORTING TUNISIA, EGYPT AND LIBYA**

Los Angeles Sentinel, 03-03-11, p. A7

DR. MAULANA KARENGA

Surely, we cannot pay too much homage to the people of North Africa and everywhere, who thru defiant determination, sacrifice and sustained struggle are paying an awesome price to push their lives and history forward, advance day-by-day down the rut-and-rock-strewn road to revolution and righteously remake their world. But if we are to really honor and support their struggles, we must not confuse revolution with rallies, no matter how large or seemingly successful. Nor can we confuse the removal of a dictator with dismantling the dictatorship itself. And we must not conflate cyberspace with social space, or the virtual reality of messages and pictures with the political reality of the revolutionary struggle that must be organized, waged, and sustained by the people. Or we risk settling for something less than liberation, regardless of what we call it.

Moreover, we must not confuse and conflate the aims and interests of the people of Tunisia, Egypt and Libya with those of the U.S. and its allies in these countries and elsewhere who have their own agenda of oil, natural gas and arms sales, bases, outposts, profits, canal passage, compliant governments and continuing control regardless. Indeed, although it played a relatively low background role in Tunisia and a more announced role in Egypt, the U.S. has opted for an open role in directing events in Libya. And already there is talk about establishing no-fly zones, invasion and “regime change,” a euphemism for the arrogant and most often racist assumption of the imperial right through might to invade and conquer a country whose value and vulnerability make it acceptable prey in the imperial mind.

Of course, those who are to be destroyed and defeated must first be demonized and Muammar Qaddafi, leader of Libya, comes

with flaws easily assembled and augmented with real and exaggerated claims. The U.S. went along with Britain in lifting the boycotts and arms sales ban against Qaddafi after his concessions, but it never fully accepted him as one of theirs. He was too much in the British corporate camp, giving them the lion’s share of access to Libya’s oil and natural gas (one trillion dollars worth).

Moreover, Qaddafi seemed erratic and unreliable in his commitments to the declared “war on terrorism.” Also, he allied himself with “enemies of the imperial realm,” like Venezuela and Cuba, and funded questionable causes and projects. And he is paying and pushing hard for an African unity that, if realized and rightly practiced, would prove problematic to the corporate fiefdoms many countries in Africa have become.

Then the revolt of the Libyan people emerged and Qaddafi responded wrongly with brutally repressive force, and the U.S. seized the opportunity to announce that it was “gravely concerned” about government violence and that it had “strong objections to the use of lethal force” against the resistance. However, there is something highly hypocritical and selective in this declared moral outrage towards violence against innocents. First, it is these powers that provided Qaddafi, as they provided the military regimes of Tunisia and Egypt, with high-tech arms, telecommunications and jamming devices, and taught them in military and CIA schools people-suppression strategies and practices, and tolerated and supported them for decades.

Secondly, such well-timed and orchestrated outrage doesn’t apply to the innocent civilians continually killed in Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine, Haiti and elsewhere who are called “collateral damage,” “unfortunate casualties” and “regrettable mistakes” or some

**NOTHING LESS THAN LIBERATION:
SUPPORTING TUNISIA, EGYPT AND LIBYA**

Los Angeles Sentinel, 03-03-11, p. A7

DR. MAULANA KARENGA

other euphemism for the immoral and illegal indiscriminate bombing, shelling and brutal attacks on civilian populations under the guise of some greater imperial cause and concern.

So now, the U.S. is in full dress rehearsal for the role as duly concerned supporter of the Libyan people in their rightful struggle for democratic rule, equitable enjoyment of the vast resources of their country and freedom from a repressive government. Thus, it has not only warned of having all options open, including invasion and assistance to the rebels, but also has frozen Libya's assets and convinced Britain and others to do likewise. And Italy, joining this selective morality play, has announced it is throwing out its non-aggression treaty with Libya, declaring strangely and imperially that the state of Libya no longer exists.

If there are any lessons to learn from the struggles in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, they begin and end with the need to realize that the struggle for liberation is a long, demanding and difficult one and as Amilcar Cabral taught, we must "mask no difficulties; tell no lies and claim no easy victories." In Tunisia and Egypt, the dictators were removed, but the system only sacrificed clear liabilities to sustain and strengthen itself. The military retains its power in both countries and in Egypt has become even stronger and more dependent on U.S. aid, investments, arms sales and political support. Thus, U.S. propaganda claims Egypt's army is its most "trusted institution," as if it were the center of civic life and democratic hope, rather than an entrenched and ever-present threat to both.

Indeed, the militaries in all three countries have been groomed to maintain what is

called "stability," i.e., a favorable condition for corporate operations and elite compliance with policies and projects of the countries concerned. Although Libya presents a different case in its regional, ethnic and elite diversities and is highly decentralized by Qaddafi's design, the U.S. will still try to centralize the rulership in the country and stress strengthening the military as the salvation of both the revolt and the country. And out of a problematic deference to Israel, it will mistakenly continue to work to deny the centrality and support of Palestine's liberation struggle in these interrelated waves of righteous resistance and revolt against injustice and unfreedom throughout the area.

Finally, the greatest challenge posed for both the revolt and the revolution is that of the political education, mobilization and organization of the whole people, i.e., a multigenerational, multiethnic, multicultural, multi-class solidarity that is sustained, deepened and expanded for the long difficult days, months and years ahead of sustained confrontation and radical transformation.

It is this kind of radical, sustained and transformative struggle that the activists in Wisconsin, who report being inspired by the current struggle in Egypt, should also support, if they appreciate the needs and the ultimate aims of the people. And if they are further inspired in their own struggle, maybe they and other progressives might also be inspired by the heroic, long-term and toll-taking freedom struggle in Haiti and Palestine and gain the moral courage to call the names Palestine and Haiti, and affirm the right of their peoples to self-determination, security, well-being and human flourishing also.

Dr. Maulana Karenga, Professor of Africana Studies, California State University-Long Beach; Executive Director, African American Cultural Center (Us); Creator of Kwanzaa; and author of *Kwanzaa: A Celebration of Family, Community and Culture* and *Introduction to Black Studies*, 4th Edition, www.MaulanaKarenga.org.