



While much of the media presents an unquestioning, sanitized version of the war - cable news hosts more focused on interviewing retired generals about America's fancy killing machines than the actual, bloody facts on the ground - the truth is that wars, even liberal-minded "humanitarian" ones, entail destroying people and places. Though cloaked in altruism that would be more believable were we dealing with monasteries, not nation-states, the war in Libya is no different. And innocents pay the price.

If protecting civilians from evil dictators was the goal, though - as opposed to, say, safeguarding natural resources and the investments of major oil companies - there's an easier, safer way than aerial bombardment for the US and its allies to consider: simply stop arming and propping up evil dictators. After all, Libya's Muammar Qaddafi reaped the benefits from Western nations all too eager to cozy up to and rehabilitate the image of a dictator with oil with those denouncing him today as a murderous tyrant, and just a matter of weeks ago selling him the very arms his regime has been using to suppress the rebellion against it.

In 2009 alone, European governments - including Britain and France - sold Libya more than \$470 million worth of weapons, including fighter jets, guns and bombs. And before it started calling for regime change, the Obama administration was working to provide the Libyan dictator another \$77 million in weapons, on top of the \$17 million it provided in 2009 and the \$46 million the Bush administration provided in 2008.

Meanwhile, for dictatorial regimes in Yemen, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, US support continues to this day. On Saturday, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton even gave the US stamp of approval to the brutal crackdown on protesters in Bahrain, saying the country's authoritarian rulers "obviously" had the "sovereign right" to invite troops from Saudi Arabia to occupy their country and carry out human rights abuses, including attacks on injured protesters as they lay in their hospital beds.

In Yemen, which has received more than \$300 million in military aid from the US over the last five years, the Obama administration continues to support corrupt thug and president-for-life Ali Abdullah Saleh, who recently ordered a massacre of more than 50 of his own citizens who dared protest his rule. And this support has allowed the US to carry out its own massacres under the auspices of the war on terror, with one American bombing raid last year taking out 41 Yemeni civilians, including 14 women and 21 children, according to Amnesty International.

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