



Contacts

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OPEN LETTER FROM YASSAMINE MATHER TO ANDREW MURRAY

Comrade Murray

I was amazed to receive your email in response to the affiliation of Hands Off People of Iran as a national organisation to Stop the War Coalition (Friday, October 12).

You write that, "The officers of StWC have received your application to affiliate to the coalition and have decided to decline it." This is despite the fact that Hopi supporters had been in contact with your centre as late as yesterday, October 11, to confirm Hopi's status as an affiliate. Of course, we recognise that the officers have now taken a *political* decision to disbar our campaign, not an administrative one.

It is the politics of this exclusion that I wish to take up with you, even though your letter contains simple assertions and unfounded accusations against Hopi rather than solid argument. However, there is an agenda being heavily implied here.

For example, you write that, "A study of statements and articles issued by your organisation show that you are entirely hostile to the Coalition, its policies and its work. Nor is there any record of your supporting our activity and initiatives. Under these circumstances, it is impossible to regard your application as in any way supportive or sympathetic."

You have obviously failed to consult our website or our articles, let alone made a careful "study" of them. Let us just draw you attention to the most recent front page contributions on the Hopi site:

- **War with Iran: Probable (& Disastrous)** (<http://blogs.britannica.com/blog/main/author/eabrahamia>)
- **U.S. Ramps Up Threats Against Iran** (<http://rwor.org/a/103/iran-alert-en.html>)
- **Senator and filmmaker open campaign against Fox News Channel** (http://www.boston.com/news/local/vermont/articles/2007/08/22/senator_and_filmmaker_open_campaign_against_fox_news_channel/)
- **Sociology, Science and Nuclear Weapons.** Bridget Fowler paper FAB 2.doc Faslane Academic Blockade

Now these are from a range of political opinions within the broad front of opposition to the war on Iran, but I am sure all Hopi activists as well as the specific authors of these articles will be very interested to hear from you which ones can be judged "entirely hostile to the Coalition, its policies and its work".

You also refer to the objectionable "statements" of our campaign. Rather than bald assertions, perhaps you and the other StWC officers could draw out what you find so "hostile to the Coalition" in our founding statement, also featured on the front page of the Hopi website?

This founding statement has two core elements to its political platform:

a) Unconditional opposition to any imperialist military attack/sanctions against Iran and the demand for the immediate withdrawal of all imperialist troops from the Gulf region. Surely there can be no objection to this, comrade? We assume this is a position we share with all the officers of the StWC, the steering committee and the vast bulk of its membership.

b) Opposition to the theocratic regime and solidarity with and practical aid to grassroots movements - of women, workers and students - fighting for democracy and freedom in Iran.

Now, none of us are political naives and we have already had some experience of how leading members of the StWC have characterised this second strand of the Hopi platform. But does that mean, as far as you are concerned, that it is a decided fact that the StWC's 'policy' is that the theocracy must *not* be opposed by people who are simultaneously against the imperialist war?! And on pain of excommunication?!

Are you seriously saying that there is no place in this broad movement against imperialist war for comrades who say we should support grassroots movements for democracy and socialism in Iran? And what about the brave activists of these movements - the women beaten and arrested on International Women's Day; the 100s of Tehran busworkers arrested for going on strike; the 1000s of workers in the car industry or the Hafte sugar cane plant; the students who protested against the presence of the barbarian Ahmadinejad on their campuses? Are they to be left to stand alone against this regime; is the anti-war movement in this country telling them that they have to abandon their struggles and get behind 'their' government?

This would be a betrayal not only of these people, but of the cause of peace and anti-imperialism itself.

However, if this is what is being implied, I am puzzled - where and when was this approach debated and

democratically agreed by the StWC as a whole? I am aware that there certainly are political trends within the leadership of the Coalition that adhere to this shameful position, but that is not the stated position of the StWC as a national body.

So where, comrade, has this been debated and voted on?

Indeed, our exclusion is all the more frustrating (and suspicious, quite frankly), given that - according to the Coalition's email bulletin of September 19 - the steering committee "agreed to make opposing any attack on Iran *the central theme* of the Stop the War annual conference ... [and] an opportunity to deepen and extend our discussions on building the movement at this critical moment" (my emphasis).

If this is so, comrade, how on earth can you and your fellow officers justify the exclusion of the voice of Hopi, an organisation with significant support from the exile Iranian left across Europe and a very wide range of comrades in the left, workers, progressive and arts movements? (For a full list of Hopi supporters so far, see www.hopoi.org/supporters.html and for a small selection see the end of this letter.)

As for your laughable suggestion, "nor is there any record of your supporting our activity and initiatives", I am not sure if you or anyone else in the StWC had taken the time to actually look at the impressive list of those who have joined our campaign and signed our founding statement, you would have seen that many are also active members and supporters of the Coalition and will find this justification for rejecting Hopi's affiliation very insulting, put frankly.

For my part, I have been invited to and spoken on a number of occasions in StWC meetings in Glasgow (both in the city branch and at the two University StWC meetings), receiving a very warm welcome from StWC activists. In the eight months since Hopi was founded, our activists (Iranian and British) have organised over 40 meetings against the imperialist sabre-rattling against Iran, in cities such as Sheffield, London, Leeds, Edinburgh, Belfast, Cardiff, Manchester and Dublin. I suggest that - quite apart from the direct practical links and material aid Hopi comrades have organised for activists in Iran itself - this is a proud and impressive record of activity that is fully in the spirit of the StWC's opposition to this looming new tragedy in the Middle East.

(Indeed, we are the *only* solidarity campaign in direct, daily contact with anti-war and anti-imperialist activists in Iran. As Hopi supporter Ben Lewis has put it in his supporting statement for the elections to the StWC steering committee, our campaign is uniquely placed "to give these comrades a voice at the very centre of the anti-war movement in this country - against any imperialist attack on their country; but, at the same time, against the theocratic regime").

In all these meetings, our speakers have spoken primarily about imperialism and the threat it presents in our region. I suspect you would have had no arguments had you attended any.

But, of course, they have also targeted Iran's Islamic regime as a neo-liberal capitalist theocracy, a regime that supported the military invasion of Iraq and successive Shia governments imposed by US-UK occupying military forces. We make no apology for telling the truth that Iran is a country where workers protest against privatisation, job insecurity, non-payment of wages and that they deserve solidarity. A country where women, youth and gays are foully oppressed. A regime that deserves to be overthrown - *but only by its own people, only by the masses imposing democracy from below!*

Andrew, you really should be explicit about this. Are you and your fellow officers saying that any criticism of the Islamic regime in Iran at present is "entirely hostile to the Coalition, its policies and its work"? Is this what is being suggested, comrade? If so, I suspect that this will come as news to many the vast bulk of StWC members and supporters.

Again, I refer you to a few of our supporters listed below that I have picked from a much longer list. Let me assure you that they - and all Hopi supporters, StWC branches and sponsors, tens of thousands of activists across Europe and the Middle East - will be getting a copy of this open letter and the rest of the protest material Hopi will be producing in the very near future.

And they also may be rather bemused by your attitude, to say the least.

Yours against imperialist war and in solidarity with the people of Iran

Yassamine Mather

Hands Off the People of Iran

Supporters of Hopi include (for a full list, visit www.hopoi.org/supporters.html):

Diane Abbott MP - Labour
Harry Cohen MP - Labour
John McDonnell MP - Labour
Caroline Lucas MEP - Green Party
Dr Derek Wall - male principal speaker, Green Party
Tommy Sheridan - Solidarity
Cllr Rania Khan - Respect, Tower Hamlets
Cllr Fozol Miah - Respect, Tower Hamlets
Mark Steel - columnist and comedian
Billy Bragg - comedian
Bill Bailey - comedian
Haifa Zangana - writer
Ken Loach - film maker
Naomi Klein - author

Peter Tatchell - human rights activist
Professor Alan McFarlane - University of Cambridge
Professor Moshé Machover - King's College, London
Professor John McIlroy - Keele University
Professor Bridget Fowler - Glasgow University
Professor Christin Cooper - Strathclyde University
Dr Terry Brotherstone - University of Aberdeen UCU
Dr Adam Swift - University of Oxford
Professor Jeremy Keenan - University of Exeter
Dr Andrew Cumbers - University of Glasgow
Dr Rolf Czeskleba-Dupont - University of Roskilde
Professor Bill Bowring - Birkbeck College
Professor Hamid Dabashi - Columbia University
Professor Moataz Fattah - Cairo University