



#### Media contacts

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October 15 - press release for immediate use

## CONTROVERSY AT STOP THE WAR COALITION AGM

● **Stop the War Coalition claims the “central theme” of forthcoming conference is opposition to “any attack on Iran”. But officers try to silence voices who are critical of the Iranian regime. Hands Off the People of Iran and Communist Students have their affiliations to STWC rescinded.**

● **“Crude political censorship”, claim spokespeople for two disbarred organisations**

Preparations for the Stop the War Coalition’s annual general meeting on Saturday, October 27 have run into controversy with the exclusion of two newly-affiliated organisations - Hands Off the People of Iran<sup>1</sup> and Communist Students<sup>2</sup>.

On the day of the final deadline for motions and nominations for the Coalition’s leadership (October 12), both organisations were sent emails from the StWC chair, Andrew Murray, tersely informing them that they were barred because “you are entirely hostile to the Coalition, its policies and its work” (full letter below).<sup>3</sup>

**Yassamine Mather**, a prominent exiled Iranian socialist, a member of Workers Left Unity Iran and founder member of Hands Off The Peoples Of Iran, commented on the supposed ‘hostility’ of her organisation (and CS, an affiliate of Hopi) to the StWC:

“What is being implied here? Hopi’s founding statement has two core elements. First, total and unconditional opposition to any imperialist attack on Iran. No doubt, the StWC officers have no problem with that.

“Second, we are clear that this implies no support or softening of our attitude to the Ahmadinejad regime. We make no apology for telling the truth that Iran is a foully oppressive society. We are totally opposed to Bush-style regime change - but we are positively *for* democracy from below, for the working people of that country to take the running of their society into their own hands!

“Is it this that makes us ‘hostile’ organisations in the eyes of some StWC officials?”

This decision was agreed at the StWC officers meeting on the morning of October 12 and communicated to Hopi and CS later in the day. Both organisations had submitted motions, made nominations to the steering group, had previously been in contact with the StWC office and had their affiliated status verified. Thus, neither realistically had any time to challenge this bureaucratic exclusion before the guillotine fell.

**Ben Lewis** of Communist Students commented:

“Clearly, this is a political attack on one point of view in the anti-war movement, timed to ensure that we had no time to properly respond. Communist Students has been very active in its support for Hopi - that’s why we have been branded as a ‘hostile organisation’”.

Hopi demands that Andrew Murray and his fellow officers are explicit in what is being stated:

● Is any criticism of the Islamic regime in Iran at present “entirely hostile to the Coalition, its policies and its work”?

● If this is so, what about those leading supporters of the StWC who have already signed up to Hopi - Caroline Lucas MEP, John McDonnell MP, Ken Loach, Mark Steel or John Pilger (more supporters below)? Will they now be purged? If Hopi’s views are incompatible with StWC affiliation, what about those supporters of Hopi who are in StWC?

● How do the exclusions of Hopi and CS square with the stated aims of the StWC that “Supporters of the Coalition, whether organisations or individuals, will of course be free to develop their own analyses and

organise their own actions”; and “We call on all peace activists and organisations, trade unionists, campaigners and labour movement organisations to join with us in building a mass movement that can stop the drive to war”?

The motions from Hopi plus the nominations of Ben Lewis and Yassamine Mather have now been resubmitted by StWC affiliate, the Communist Party of Great Britain. **Mark Fischer** of the CPGB underlined that “we are determined to see the politics of Hopi on the floor of this conference, despite the best (or rather worst) efforts of the Coalition’s officers”.

## ENDS

### Material on this controversy is available on the following websites:

Hands Off the People of Iran - [www.hopoi.org](http://www.hopoi.org)

Workers Left Unity Iran - [www.etehadchap.org](http://www.etehadchap.org) (Statements in English and Farsi)

Communist Students - [www.comuniststudents.org.uk](http://www.comuniststudents.org.uk)

Communist Party of Great Britain - [www.cpgb.org.uk](http://www.cpgb.org.uk)

### Supporters of Hopi include (for a full list, visit [www.hopoi.org/supporters.html](http://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

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 Phil Taylor - University of Strathclyde

Professor George Joffe - King’s College, London & University of Cambridge

Peter Jowers - University of the West of England

Professor Guy Julier - Leeds Metropolitan University

Victor Kattan - Research Fellow, British Institute of International & Comparative Law

Dr Gerry Kearns - University of Cambridge

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

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Hopi is a campaign established eight months ago around the central slogans, ‘No to imperialist war! No to the theocratic regime!’ As well as British activists, the organisation centrally involves a large number of UK-based Iranian organisations and individuals who have been forced into exile to avoid arrest and imprisonment.

<sup>2</sup> Communist Students was set up in December 2006. It is an autonomous organisation for revolutionary-minded students that has been heavily involved in anti-war campaigning work with Hopi.

<sup>3</sup> From: “[office@stopwar.org.uk](mailto:office@stopwar.org.uk)” <[office@stopwar.org.uk](mailto:office@stopwar.org.uk)>

To: [yassamine\\_mather@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:yassamine_mather@yahoo.co.uk)

Sent: Friday, 12 October, 2007 11:46:27 AM

Subject: Your application to affiliate to StWC

Dear Colleagues

The Officers of StWC have received your application to affiliate to the Coalition and have decided to decline it.

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. Your will therefore not be able to send a delegation to our annual conference, nor will any resolutions or nominations for office you may have submitted be valid. We will refund any monies that may have been paid in respect of affiliation as rapidly as possible. This decision will be reported to the next meeting of the Steering Committee.

Yours

Andrew Murray, National Chair StWC