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Canadian warships should get out of the Middle East, says peace activist

(Halifax) – A local peace activist is denouncing the deployment of the HMCS Toronto on Monday. The Canadian frigate left the Halifax port for a 6-month deployment to the Persian Gulf. “There should be no Canadian warships in the Middle East,” says Tamara Lorincz, a member of the Halifax Peace Coalition and the Canadian Voice of Women for Peace.

Lorincz believes that the HMCS Toronto will only add to the instability in the region and will worsen Canada’s reputation. She argues Canada’s reputation in the Middle East has deteriorated over the years because of the federal government’s pro-Israel stance, its bombing of Libya, its lack of support for the Arab Spring, and its long war and occupation of Afghanistan.

“The HMCS Toronto will be under the command of the US Navy when it arrives and will be using the American naval base in Bahrain, a country that has been repressing its people,” Lorincz says.

Lorincz is concerned that the Canadian navy’s use of the base indicates our tacit support for the brutal Bahrain monarchy. “The Harper government has not condemned the Bahraini monarchy for its violent suppression of the popular uprising for democracy,” Lorincz says. This past November, Amnesty International released a report entitled “Bahrain: Reform Shelved, Repression Unleashed” documenting human rights violations by the Bahrain government.

Lorincz explains that the Canadian navy uses the American naval base in Bahrain. The base is the home of the U.S. Navy 5th Fleet Command, which occupies 62 acres of the country. Over the past decade, the U.S. military has used the base to conduct bombing missions of Iraq and Afghanistan. The U.S. naval base is also located across the Strait of Hormuz from Iran. In December, the Canadian government introduced new unilateral sanctions against Iran.

The Canadian navy is claiming that the warships are protecting shipping lanes in the gulf, but Lorincz believes that the warships are protecting the illegal plunder of natural resources, such as oil and gas, from countries such as Iraq. “The HMCS Toronto is not protecting Canadian interests but aiding and abetting American control of region,” says Lorincz. At her weekly protest, Lorincz will be holding a new sign with the message “Canadian warships out of the Middle East.”

In December, Lorincz started a weekly protest in December outside the Irving Shipyard against the \$25 billion construction of new warships for the Canadian navy. She is maintaining a web site and blog to track the National Shipbuilding Procurement Strategy that she believes will spiral out of financial control like the stealth fighter fiasco. More information can be found at www.demilitarize.ca

Background:

“Amnesty condemns Bahrain's 'spiralling repression” (2012)www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-20401228

Canadian Government: Iran Sanctions: <http://www.international.gc.ca/sanctions/iran.aspx?view=d>

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