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Climate, oil and death of soil

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Desert like view of sunny Syria

Most likely all of us have heard or read about the war in Syria that started around 10 years ago. It has been the bloodiest war in recent times. UN said the body count to be over 350 000 and the amount of refugees because of this war is something like 12 million. The area is suffering from extreme drought, poverty and corruption. It sure sounds hopeless. Bit less know but still relatively well known is the stateless state, the autonomous administration that was born in the area in the middle of all those mentioned horrors. Revolution that carried the Kurdish name Rojava was set up in the midst of those drying lands. People trying to build an area with freedom of women, peaceful co-existence with all ethnicities, direct democracy and ecology. Who would ever oppose such things? Well surely there are many who do, but I mean that most of us people who believe in humanity and such, would not oppose stuff like that. It also got me interested and like many anarchists alike, I traveled to Rojava. To see it myself, to live through it. To learn and share, to be part of something that is changing history.

I guess learning good things always requires of learning bad things as well. And I assume that revolutions are never just smile and sunshine. Sunshine on the other hand is something that Rojava surely isn't lacking. I came on early summer and was aware of that Middle East is hot. But I really didn't think it to be that hot. Endless amount of sunbathing and exhausting heat. I've only lived in North America and and Northern Europe and this was something I couldn't imagine beforehand. And it was not only me who couldn't take the heat, most of people were not outside during the daytime. Temperature was over 40 for months. Nights were not much better. People said it is like this nowadays. That it gets worse every year. The lack of electricity was making it even worse. Some places had shortage of water for weeks at the time. Loud generators were spitting black smoke while trying to transform the dirty diesel into electricity. Motorbikes, cars, pickups, trucks, spitting also black smoke in the air. Clouds of pollution that are not really moving anywhere but was just standing still. Soil turned into dust and when there is wind that sand dust flies around and gets deep into your skin, inside your laptop, your clothes, your lungs. Black shoes were not black after walking just few steps outside. I felt being on some desert but this area was not suppose to be desert. Us humans just made it that way. The climate change didn't wait until we got some agreement on the carbon cuts. That fact really slaps you in the face here.

The region is facing the worst drought in years. Some say in 25 years. Numbers don't really matter anymore as the soil is just vanishing with the wind. Disappearing from an area that is suppose to be the breadbasket of the country. In worst case that will lead to famine. Last summer there was already a shortage on bread. And this is the Rojava. The place where people try to manage stuff so that there would not be famine. Unlike the neighboring country, Assad's Syria, which is way worse. There is the same drought and besides that the corruption on all levels of society. Then there are neighboring countries like Iraq

and Iran where people and students protest heavily against the corrupt leaders that cannot manage in any way the problems that climate change has brought. There is Turkey, a country that is putting more effort on sabotaging Rojava's water supplies than putting down forest fires and disappearings of lakes inside their own region. This area is surely drying out faster than it should. Studies show that global warming happens in this part of the world faster than in other places of the world.

One big problem is oil. There exists a theory that where is oil production there will be destruction of the area, both environmentally and socially. Middle East is like the oil pump of the world. Endless lines of oil trucks on the highways that go through fields turned into desert was a horrifying sight. Trucks on the asphalt roads that the burning sun had softened. Looking at those trucks in lines and few times losing count after seeing 40 of them, it really made me think is this really worth it. How many places we still are going to turn into Mad Max style deserts before we start to think there is something fundamentally wrong in our lifestyles in the western world. Literally, we suck the life out of these places and burn them into ground. Sure this was not a new thing for me, but seeing it in front of my very own eyes, well, it just feels more raw. Feels more brutal and touches you deep. And then there is the war. Drones and jihadists make things really hard here but still people try.

The problems I've seen here were not so much about people, but it more about the states everywhere. The colonialist and imperialist states that still play around here their power games and resource wars. Other states continuing to destroy the climate and the biggest bill to pay is here where the climate has warmed so rapidly. States really prevents the best potential to come out of people here.

When Noam Chomsky was asked earlier this year in an interview what he sees as the greatest obstacle in solving the climate crisis, his answer was similar as my observation here: Two major obstacles. One is of course the fossil fuel companies.

Second is the governments of the world, including Europe and the United States.

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During the Christmas time 2021 in Rojava.