

# **‘What can we learn from the ongoing revolution in Rojava?’**

**A letter from an anarchist revolutionary in northern Syria**

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*A revolution is taking place in Rojava as we speak. It might not be perfect, nor the utopia we dream of as we read Bonano while sipping coffee on our couches, nor the spontaneous insurrection against all authority that the invisible committee talks about, nor the epic revolution that we imagine when we speak of the 1936 Spanish Revolution. But it is happening here and now, and it is the closest to a revolution that we can experience nowadays. It is up to us that it goes down in history as such.*

What is happening in Syria is a popular movement; organized and armed. A movement fighting to exist and administer a territory against forces which wish to occupy it. They are defending a massive revolutionary process through collective action in which people organize from the bottom up under the principles of democracy, pluralism and women's liberation.

A movement in the midst of a bloody war raging on in Rojava. A war fought on various fronts, in which the enemy is not only ISIS or the Turkish state. The war takes place in cities and rural areas, seeking to build an economic system which will stop capitalism from destroying society and the land that sustains it. But the war is also fought inside families and communities, aiming to put an end to the patriarchal system that oppresses women and the gerontocratic system that denies the youth's potential, striving to build a communal and self-organized society. But the battle also takes place in the institutions, seeking to build a democratic system in which people can govern their own lives and their land, establishing and consolidating communal councils in order to manage and solve people's problems from a collective standpoint.

The war is also an ideological war that goes on in the minds of those involved. Struggling against the individualist, capitalist, liberal and patriarchal mindset. Above all, it is a struggle that goes on inside people's minds. The form it takes is collective and popular education and co-existence, so as to learn to distinguish between what we need to live and that which the system tries to impose on us as necessities to survive.

In Rojava we can learn how power perpetuates itself by keeping us isolated, pitting us against each other, so it can later present itself as our savior that – through the use of the states' monopoly and centralization systems- manages to have influence society, making it seem as though they are solving our problems. We can learn that statistics, which we are presented with, telling us we have moved past the crisis are nothing else but numbers and graphics which aim to convey their own history, the history of power. This is how they make us believe that it is only thanks to them that the nation is safe and that they have managed to avoid same disaster they have caused. We can also learn that they have not only managed to perpetuate their system of exploitation and pillage but also they have managed to consolidate and strengthen it. It might not be necessary to travel to Rojava to learn these aspects of political life, but it is here that you can see them as clear as day and that we should not expect states, parliaments, nor even local institutions that are now claiming to bring about change, to come in our aid. The solution must come from the people themselves, as only the people can save the people.

This isn't to say that any effort invested in penetrating their institutions is in vain. Institutions themselves are tools that must be used appropriately, but not only state institutions. The PAH (*Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca*, a platform fighting against evictions and for housing rights in the Spanish state) for example, has been able to provide solutions for people facing eviction more so than the Housing Ministry. The appropriate way to understand and use the institutions is analyzing when they are useful to free oppressed people from their oppressors and when they are not. This is something we can also learn from Rojava. Reaching state institutions

can be useful when behind the institutions it is the people themselves that occupy them through a popular revolutionary organization willing to force upon said institutions to do what is right and to put a solution to the problems they have caused. If not, they are only a demobilizing tool, betraying the hopes that the people placed on empty speeches, sowing mistrust and discord.

## **State, Colonialism and Revolution**

What is happening in Rojava is the result of more than 4 decades of experience and revolutionary organization. The social model being built is possible because of the tens of thousands of people, women and men, armed and trained to defend themselves. It is this experience that has enabled the people to face the forces of oppression that fight to invade their homes. The expulsion of the Islamic State from their land has laid bare what lies behind them; the Turkish state has opted to continue its bloody war in Afrin with its own soldiers this time around. The Turkish state, like all other states, needs war in order to survive. War is its reason to exist, its means to prevail. When military conflict is not effective or profitable, the state uses all means possible to subdue its enemies (democratic society): economic war, media manipulation or environmental aggressions. But when all these fail, its last resort will always be the use of brutal force, military violence. This is a valuable lesson to be learned from the Rojava experience.

Western states are not so different from states in the middle eastern region, with the difference that those of us classified as its citizens possess numerous commodities and privileges. These privileges serve as a buffer to suppress resistance, to prevent a revolutionary movement from gaining foothold and question its hegemony. It is important to keep in mind that these commodities and privileges, come mainly from the exploitation and pillage of what we have arrogantly named the third world.

The Spanish state knows colonial exploitation very well. The brutal incursions and conquests of Latin America, which began 5 centuries ago looting and massacring the indigenous population, brought vast wealth to the kingdom. In this way, monopolies were created that allowed a certain degree of hegemony against the capitalist industrialism, that was being born in England. This system of colonial imperialism, of which the Spanish and Portuguese states are two of its precursors, was later extended through Africa, Asia, and the Middle East by other European states. And this is precisely what is being fought against in Rojava, with the experience of more than 4 decades of revolutionary movement for the liberation of Kurdistan, and with the heritage of centuries of anticolonial movements throughout the world.

## **An Internationalist Struggle**

From the beginning of the 2012 revolution, Rojava has risen as an internationalist revolution. Hundreds of people — mainly western, truth be told — have answered the calling to defend the revolution, and many of them have been martyred while fighting against those who aspired to end it. In Rojava, we can learn about the great sacrifice undergone by those who have given their lives to defend the revolution, not only the Rojava Revolution, but all revolutionary movements that keep up the fight for a more humane and fair world.

The revolution which took place in the Spanish state in 1936 is, to this day, one of the milestones for internationalist revolutionaries. Tens of thousands of socialist militants, from over 50

countries, left their homes to face fascism that had taken up arms. They knew that if fascism was not stopped in the Spanish state it would come knocking at their doors. More than a third of those international brigades were martyred in combat, and we must salute and honor their memory and their struggle along with the local militants that, while belonging to different revolutionary organizations, joined a popular front to confront fascist barbarism, dressed as national-catholicism.

In Rojava, the reaction presented itself as an islamic caliphate, channeling the hate and frustration accumulated after years of imperialist intervention. The brutal invasion of Iraq in 2003, led by the USA, with the Spanish state as an accomplice, has been one of the main causes of terror and resentment, which has prepared the terrain for the emergence of the barbaric Islamic State and its temporary consolidation. But, unlike 1936, in Rojava the revolutionary movement has been able to defeat the enemy.

The end of the war in 1939 was the spark that ignited the second world war when Hitler managed to grasp complete control of the German state and extended his reign of terror in Europe. Today, Erdogan follows his footsteps and the brutal geostrategic tensions accumulated in Syria in the last 7 years of war can easily lead to a war of similar or even bigger proportions.

## **If not you, who? If not now, when?**

Fascism advances if it is not fought against, and the invasion of Afrin has been the terrible reminder that the peace attained in Rojava, after the defeat of ISIS, does not mean anything as long as Erdogan remains in control of the Turkish state.

The fascist uprising lived in the Spanish state in 1936 was met with a popular and revolutionary uprising to put an end to it. Faced with such an extreme situation, dozens of socialist organizations – coordinated by the efforts of the international workers' congresses- called upon all its members and freedom loving people. A calling that resonated throughout the world, a calling to put an end to fascism in the Spanish state. However, fascism is also capable of having an international approach when it needs to, in the same way that Germany and Italy came to Franco's help, thousands of jihadists have heeded the call of the caliph Al Bagdadi.

Now islamic fascism in Rojava has taken on a new flag. Erdogan has renewed the pact with the militias born out of Al Qaeda to occupy Afrin. Today they threaten Manbij, and they will not stop if not confronted. The Socialist International Organizations are nothing but ashes these days, but ashes from which we must be reborn to face the fascist threat. Anticolonial struggles and anti-imperialist struggles, as well, must heed the call and respond with might against this brutal aggression to the Syrian land carried out by Turkey, an army which, must be noticed, is a key component of the bloodthirsty military alliance known as NATO.

Rojava is ready to receive all forms of support from internationalists around the world. This revolution can be the rearguard that we need, a rearguard for all revolutionary movements around the world as Palestine once was. To stand up against global capitalism, we need to develop a global revolutionary movement that can face the enemy wherever it may attack. We must do everything in our hands to defend this revolution, let's not reduce solidarity to mere words. If not us, then who? If not here, then where? If not now, then when?

Long live internationalist solidarity!

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Internationalist Academy şehîd Hêlîn Quereçox  
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