

The possibility of breaking up Iraq

Kurdistan Anarchists Forum

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A few weeks ago, in one of our bulletins, we (the Kurdistan Anarchists Forum) expressed our opinions and attitudes regarding the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIS), its attacks on Iraq, and the religious and political struggle between the Shia and Sunni for domination. Here in this statement, we put forward our views about the political situation, the possibility of a divided Iraq, and the current war.

We believe, from 1991 until the present, Iraq has never been a unified country — or indeed, a unified land. This is the case following the collapse of Saddam Hussein's regime and the invasion of Iraq by the United States and its allies in 2003 — since that period, it has been divided into three regions: Kurdistan, where the Kurdish people, since the uprising of 1991, have had their own regional government; the Sunni region, where people have been continuously in dispute with the central Iraqi government due to being isolated, neglected, marginalised and deprived of government services; The third part, the Shia regions in the south and in the middle of the country, have seen its Shia factions ruling Iraq since 2003.

Regardless of the schemes and conspiracies set in place by political leaders and those hungry for power, Iraqis (ordinary, powerless citizens), from north to south, have had a good social relationship with each other, and live harmoniously together. In the meantime, we cannot deny that for over half a century, people — be they Kurdish, Arab or Turkish — have paid the price; violent skirmishes, the greed of narrow-minded politicians, prevailing wars, the Al-Anfal¹ Campaign, the use of chemical weapons against the Kurdish, their forced evacuation from their small towns & villages — almost everybody in Iraq has been a victim of various wars and the ruthless and destructive antics of Iraq's political parties. Despite this, Iraqis were happy to live together — until recently, to a certain extent.

The current military struggle for power has reached such a point that Iraq is either facing a terrible civil war or balkanization. Both possibilities — war or disintegration — benefit the powerful elite. In fact, ordinary citizens outside of influential political circles, and away from power-hungry aspiring elites, have nothing against each other and can manage to live together perfectly. They also can be united during day-to-day activities and in their shared interests, regardless of their differences in nationality, colour, religion, race and tribe.

For us as Anarchists, there is always a third way — a reorganization of society on the basis and principles of building liberated communes and free community-run cooperatives that are collectively owned by the people themselves, through the method of direct democracy. Unfortunately, at this moment in time, state forces and militias want to turn what is their war into everybody's war, and spread it to all of society's organs. At the same time, people are either unconsciously divided over political parties and militias, or desperately isolated and marginalised. If the problem is due to a lack of social consciousness, the best alternative is to leave the decision regarding the outcome of Iraq for the people themselves to decide, except for under one condition: by not standing in opposition to war and violence, they are then allowing themselves to be sacrificed for the sake of the capitalist imperialists and corrupt politicians. In this particular circumstance, anything that can prevent an outbreak of war and the slaughter of millions of people and genocide, is obviously the only viable path.

¹ Operation Al-Anfal, or simply Anfal, was a genocidal campaign against the Kurdish people in northern Iraq, led by the Ba'athist Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and headed by Ali Hassan al-Majid, in the final stage of the Iran-Iraq war.

The thirty-year-long war between different governments of Iraq and the Kurdish movement has caused the genocide of thousands of people, destroyed hundreds of villages under the name of the Al-Anfal Campaign in 1988, and deployed chemical weaponry in 1985 upon orders from the regimes, in addition to the burning down of marshes in Shia areas in southern Iraq. We witnessed all of these incidents. What is happening at present is the continuation of the past with the support of the government and the main political bodies in order to further expand their control. In order to amass power and influence, they use every trick, every violent method in order to spread hatred and murder innocent civilians for their own personal gain, and also to benefit neoliberal economic interests through enacting the economic policies of the IMF, WB and ECB.

Possibility of division or breaking up

There is some truth to this theory. Kurdish politicians, who are involved in the Kurdistan Regional Government and advocate an independent Kurdish state, or are in favour of a continuation of the current state, are still similar to the Iraqi government (or, the majority of governments worldwide) in that they continue to exploit the working class and underclass. At the same time, they represent the interests of powerful international corporations and organizations. Because of this, even despite the Kurdish people having their own government and state, both of these institutions are involved in the exploitation of workers and those living in poverty, and continues to do the same with economic support funded by influential nations.

It is correct that breaking up Iraq makes the class struggle of exploited people more difficult. Despite the struggle of the Gawrbaghy² and the cooperation of the working class in their struggles during the fifties and sixties, working class unity was thereafter challenged by political turmoil, exploitative political leaders, religion and intermittent periods of war. Due to current societal turmoil, this is still the case for the working class at present. The possibility of further conflict involving so many different factions in future is particularly foreseeable at this time. We must also remind people, here, that at the end of the Iraq-Iran war, a network of international spies and agents succeeded in creating bands of mafias, terrorist groups, ultra-radical politicians and fanatical religious sects in order to stimulate a situation for further hostility.

In situations like this, there is further likelihood of brutal civil war than unity of powerless communities. The referendum regarding independence may be the best and most wise action to be taken, although it is not our desire or our demand, as we are in favour of any decisions to be put forward by the masses outside of guided suggestions and manipulative strategies put forward by politicians. In the last nine years we tried, and we were ready, to support the call for an independent mass struggle in order to establish people's cooperatives and free federations, and to connect them to one and other in a regional confederation of districts. But at present, because current fears and threats are bigger and more possible than the hopes, it may be the only option- the direct decision would be made by the people themselves about their future in Iraq.

² Gawrbaghy was a big strike by the oil worker in Kerkuk started on 03-13/07/1946, the worker had 14 demands. The oil company and the Kerkuk governor did not meet all the demands. The strike, therefore, continued. On 13/07/1946 in a demonstration by the workers the police attacked them and killed many people including women and children and many were injured as well.

Even in the situation as explained above, we do not expect that the people's decision, influenced by poisonous publicity put forth by manipulative and toxic political factions seeking to widen their authority, can ultimately be a healthy decision; we therefore cannot be silent. In fact, in the first instance, we believe that it is our duty in regards to the propaganda spread by neoliberal, nationalist and fanatical Islamic organisations, to work and struggle for independent organisation, local groups, mass movements and self-managing communities created by people themselves based on the principals of direct democracy. We try to create all of these to be used as the tools of future struggles and as a strategy against current or further political oppression that could occur.

Obviously, if anything were to occur outside the will of the vast majority of people, it does not mean we are to be contented with that. Indeed, our struggles will still continue against the hierarchal system, state oppression, any government yet to arise and systematically exploitative organisations.

If Iraq is breaking up into different states, we are likely to still continue our activities, wherever we have the solidarity of our comrades, our fellow working classes, be they Arab, Turkish, Persian or other, within the principal of 'work and be active locally and think globally', as we struggle for a world free of borders, inequality and corruption.

Free Referendum

We are positive that in class society there will never be a 'free' referendum, as before the decision on the referendum has taken place, the upper classes have already laid the terms of the referendum and its aims will therefore be set according to the interests of the elite and authoritarian ruling minority, and will have nothing to do with the daily necessities, demands and needs of ordinary people. An honest referendum can only be set in mention when society is economically independent, equal and autonomous, and when people can make their own decisions without state interference or being manipulated by media, the media being removed from the hands of the ruling elite and state.

Any referendum to be carried out in the Kurdish regions, or any other Iraqi area, cannot be free and honest, and will not take place outside of the decisions of the dominant classes and powerful foreign nations. In the last couple of decades in Iraqi Kurdistan, referendums have taken place, but the results were not beneficial for the Iraqi invading forces and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and were therefore not finalized by parliament.

This does not mean that socialists, libertarians and anarchists cannot change this outcome. In fact, if these political factions can organize for the principles of independent struggle, revolutionary mechanisms against the current system, struggles and campaigns against oppression, things can be changed. We can mobilise, influence societal opinions and work on encouraging class consciousness of individuals, communities, organizations and groups. For example: if the aims of the referendum go against the people's will and do not fulfil the needs of the masses, then people can boycott or spoil their white ballot papers. This just one of the ways that the ruling class's disgusting attempts of imposing their own objectives can be rejected and defeated.

The referendum that the politicians now pose is not for reorganising society by changing the relationship of the means of production, it is not for the self-governance or autonomy of the masses, it is not for building communities and co-operatives in a free society; it is for establishing

borders created by the bourgeoisie, further economic gains and political influence for politicians, for domination over the Shia, Sunni and the Kurdish — regardless of whoever has the power and authority over class society. Control exerted by a corrupt and exploitative elite means work slavery and oppression for the vast majority of Iraqis.

The state: regional, central and world

We certainly reject the Kurdistan state — and the idea of a Kurdish state — that is now being formulated, not simply because of its name — the “Kurdish State”. We believe this is nothing more but yet another ploy to deceive the Kurdish people. In fact, the State can never ever be truly Kurdish, Arab, English or any other nation. It does not matter how the media portrays the state: the reality is that it is not there for protection, nor does it bring freedom, social justice or any intuitive guidance. In fact, the state is generally a tool and administrates the suppression and oppression of the majority of its citizens. We can see this reality in our daily life, in our experiences, in the common history of our class. State protects the interests, wills and demands of the capitalist and politician elite, and at the same time, suppresses any rebellion which can emerge from the exploited class and the poor.

Because we reject the state regardless of their colours, we are instead in favour of a free society formed on the basis of social cooperatives, an independent economy, power equality, social justice, unity of the proletariat and international solidarity. Unity between individuals is crucial; whatever the state or nation they may live in. Also paramount is the freedom to make decisions within non-hierarchical organisations in federations and confederations which rely on direct democracy, individual dependency and the formation of communes. All of the aforementioned assets are extremely important for us.

In view of the above, we are always against the state. If at the moment people cannot abolish and dismantle the state, we would desire the following list of fundamental rights and principles to be achieved:

- Equality and human rights for all ethnicities and religions in a provisional Kurdish state.
- Racial and gender equality as well as children’s welfare, and for religious and political factions to refrain from infringing on people’s individual rights.
- Freedom for individuals and their political movements, such as the freedom to organise independently, freedom to establish cooperatives, freedom for people to make life choices without these being encroached upon by the state or religious bodies. Freedom to express opinions, write, criticise, demonstrate.
- The right for movements and communities to organize autonomously and independently.
- Uncorrupt, free and open elections, and for mother tongues and native languages to be spoken freely in schools, universities, workplaces and communities.
- Secure the right for regions and localities to have more independence.
- The right of communities to be self-managed by both people in the communities themselves and in society, based on the principles of autonomy.

- Abolishing all of the expenses and wages paid into the pockets of politicians and religious governors and their administration, cutting their budgets which have been funded by public money.
- Abolition of economic privileges, private pensions (in Kurdistan many people who were an ardent supporter of a political organization, or at some stage a freedom fighter, have retired with a very good salary despite the fact the vast majority of them are not of retiring age, and the privileges of the president of the KRG).
- Taking back the mountains, the valleys, the hills, the lands and sectors from private ownership and bringing them back to the hands of public ownership.
- Ending contracts enforced by global corporations such as the IMF, WB and ECB.
- Securing and guaranteeing the right of asylum for anyone of any race, gender, ethnicity and religion. Abolishing the law of first- and second-class citizenship and banning the deportation of any of refugees.
- Equality in rights, wages and employment opportunities for the country's workers and immigrant workers.

As we previously mentioned, we are in favour of a socialist or anarchist society, and reject hierarchy and the dominant political system. We are also in favour of living together and for unity in struggle. However, when ethnic divisions, the threat of war by nationalist factions, fanatical religious organisations and tribes, actively remain and continue to operate, we concur with the rest of the Iraqi people that we do not want to follow the same historical trajectory as Rwanda, South Sudan, Bosnia, Sri Lanka and others. We argue that the only beneficiaries in this war are: multinational corporations, influential financial institutions, the mafia and the capitalist elite.

No to the state and the political system.

No to class society and war.

Yes to class struggle and the class war.

Yes for people of all ethnicities, religions and classes, living together.

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