

No rest ‘till the last dictator dies

Solidarity Collectives

February 18, 2023

“Solidarity Collectives” (former “Operation Solidarity”) is an anti-authoritarian volunteer network formed before the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine to help comrades on the front line and civilians affected by the war.

“Collectives” isn’t merely a name but the essence of our initiative which was joined by various organizations and groups from Ukraine, Germany, Poland, France, US, Netherlands, Canada, and many other countries.

None of it would be possible without a huge number of people united by the idea of helping the Ukrainian resistance movement. The ABC network (especially ABC Dresden, germany – ABC Galicja, poland), No Borders team poland, 161crew poland, XVX Tacticalaid, The Antifa International from US, Yellow peril tactical from US, Ecological Platform from Lviv, and many others- they all made it happen. And without our friends in Labour initiatives, we wouldn’t have a beautiful office/warehouse in Kyiv.

Based on our anti-authoritarian values, we decided to actively resist Russian aggression. We support the right of the Ukrainian people to self-defense and consider the Russian invasion an imperialist act. Despite the multidimensional characteristics of any global event, the key reasons for this war are the imperial policy of the Russian Federation, the belief in the historical mission of the Russian elites, and an attempt to establish control over what they think is their sphere of influence. The reasons should not be sought neither in the economic interests of the Russian oligarchy nor in “Russian security precautions”, and especially not in NATO’s scheming. Full support of the Ukrainian people in their struggle (which doesn’t necessarily mean supporting the government’s policies) is the only consistent stance for anarchists and leftists worldwide.

Ukrainians wage an armed struggle against Russia because there is no other way of effective resistance now. Classic pacifist recipes don’t work here because the sides of the conflict aren’t equal. If the Russian army surrenders, the war will end. If Ukrainian soldiers lay down their weapons or “turn them against their government”, as some ‘experts on Ukraine’ suggest, the Russian army will occupy more territories and commit more war crimes. Both solutions are equally unrealistic though. And reality requires practical answers and specific actions.

On a big scale, Ukraine has no choice other than to defend itself with weapons. However, on the individual level, many Ukrainian men and women, including our comrades, joined armed units voluntarily and consciously.

So what do we do? We've created a volunteer team of very different people and initiatives, managing to maintain its work despite crises and reformatting. We've established a logistics network and strong partnerships with many anarchist and left-wing initiatives in Europe and beyond. Domestically, we cooperate with anti-authoritarian groups, labor unions, local activists, and institutions in areas near the front line.

The soldiers we support are activists of various convictions: anarchists, human rights defenders, trade unionists, eco-anarchists, anarcho-feminists, punk-rockers, political refugees from Belarus and Russia, etc. Many of them would not agree with each other's vision and ideas before the war. There are also people of various political views, and members of different organisations and movements, who oppose the Russian aggression today.

Most of the fighters are regular workers of different professions without political parties or foundations to back them. That's why we in Solidarity Collectives try to support trade unions whose members have been mobilised or have volunteered to go to the frontline. First of all, these are the unions of railway workers, construction workers, and miners. We also stand in solidarity with them in the fight against the passing of the anti-social laws pushed by some odious politicians under the pretext of war necessity.

All those we support, however, are united by a common enemy, because the Russian imperial machine will not allow any of us to exist.

Here some presentation of different comrades we are supporting:

- We are members of the Bread for life cooperative. Before the invasion, we were popularising the ideas of freeganism and DIY. We were freelancing, cooking, feeding at local events, squatting and building open workshops on the squat. In February, part of the group decided that we would stay here in the South (of Ukraine) in case of invasion to fight back. At the beginning of March, we joined one of the armed groups to form our medico-evacuation crew on its base. At that stage, we were supported with equipment by comrades from Operation Solidarity, and now we continue to be supported by Solidarity Collectives. Currently, we are working in different directions, no longer in the same group. But united by a common idea — the idea of freedom, equality, sisterhood, fraternity and everything that can only be achieved through fighting.
- Our friend Oleg: he's a political scientist, musician, photographer, animal rights advocate, and activist. And now he serves in the 72nd Brigade which is fighting in the east of Ukraine. Among other things, they've been holding the Lysychansk — Bakhmut road. We've been supporting Oleg for quite some time now.
- The resistance committee was born as an initiative a few weeks before the full-scale invasion of Russian forces started. Its purpose was to coordinate efforts of different anarchist/antiauthoritarian groups and individuals in the military field. Now it is more coordination than organisation. It corresponds to its original task then. Our common ideological grounds are defined in our Manifesto. Our immediate enemy currently is Russian imperialism. However, we oppose authoritarianism and oppression in general. From the very start and up to now, anarchists from Belarus and Russia who survived in Ukraine from political repressions in their respective countries actively participated in the Resistance Committee along with Ukrainian comrades. We define the Resistance committee as antiauthoritarian

coordination, so a little bit broader than just anarchist. The exact number is both not secure and not that easy to specify since there is no fixed membership in the RC. It is not that big, and we can't say that it's growing, even though since the full-scale invasion had started, more anarchists have joined the fight. Currently, we have several small groups of anarchist and antifascist comrades integrated into territorial defence, regular army and volunteer units."

- In 2013, our comrade «Swallow» was a member of the anti-authoritarian self-defense group of Kharkiv's Euromaidan, then participated in creating the «Autonomia» squat in Kharkiv, organized a social and cultural center, and was an active participant in several activist initiatives. On the morning of February 24, Swallow was already performing air reconnaissance on the frontline using ordinary civilian drones.

Currently, "Solidarity Collectives" have three main areas of work:

MILITARY FRONT

From the onset of the war, our primary task has been to provide the anti-authoritarian activists who joined military units with everything they needed. Thanks to donations, we purchased and handed over a hundred bulletproof vests (4th protection standard), dozens of helmets, night vision devices, thermal imagers, rangefinders, drones, tactical medicine, military uniforms, shoes, clothes and much more – both special and everyday equipment. Today, Solidarity Collectives regularly supports up to 80 fighters, many of whom are on the front lines.

HUMANITARIAN FRONT

Thanks to the logistics network we built that includes 4 warehouses and cars, we have been receiving and transporting humanitarian aid to where it is most needed since the beginning of the war. To date, we have organized our own humanitarian convoys or delivered cargo to Bucha, Bilohorodka, Chernihiv, Kryvyi Rih, Mykolaiv, Kramatorsk, Malyna, Kharkiv and other cities. These transports consist of medicines, clothes, food, sleeping bags and mattresses, gas bottles with cylinders, and electronic equipment.

MEDIA

People discuss the "Ukrainian question" all over the world. Explaining why all anti-authoritarian forces, despite everything, should support the Ukrainian resistance movement is our primary task today. Therefore, we are always ready to take part in conferences, debates or share our vision with journalists.

We work daily collecting fighters' needs, making purchases in Ukraine and abroad, organizing humanitarian trips to war-affected regions, communicating with friendly initiatives, and publishing the results of our work. For many, this is the most important part of our lives now.

Practice is one of our founding principles. We came together to help the Ukrainian resistance fight off Russian aggression. But we aren't just against something, we also stand for. Our goal is a free and just society, our main values are social, economic, and gender equality.

We believe that the Ukrainian reconstruction which politicians and diplomats already discuss should benefit the people. It shouldn't be based on neoliberal dogmas that the authors of the reconstruction plan are trying to include there.

We think feminism today should be based on a proactive position. Now, female activists of the anti-authoritarian movement bravely fight the aggressor, head military units, and provide medical aid on the battlefield. Also, most of the 'Solidarity Collectives' members are women, and they do most of the work in the military direction.

We support anti-authoritarian and anti-colonial movements around the world. Today, anti-authoritarian activists in Ukraine acquire experience which might be useful to topple dictators and authoritarian regimes both in post-soviet countries and other regions.

We support animal rights movements and fight against climate change. We pass vegan food to vegan fighters and advocate for the shift from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources. It's not just about preventing climate disasters in the distant future but also about reducing the dependency on the resource-oriented Russian economy.

Our goals are incompatible with Putin's authoritarian regime. But we're ready to fight for them in post-war Ukraine too opposing authoritarian tendencies in our society.

We're grateful for the support to everyone who's been working with us through all these months. To those who help raise money, transfer vehicles, organize public events, or come to Ukraine with humanitarian aid. Today, we feel the strength of international solidarity which is capable to do great things, despite the international left's split on the 'Ukrainian question'. We realize this solidarity isn't easy but we call for you not to give in to the war weariness, especially now when your support is crucial to us.

We are also ready for open dialogue with those who still hesitate but are ready to hear the position of the Ukrainian anti-authoritarian community. We want to see you on our side of the barricades!

Meanwhile, our work continues.

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