

An Interview with Anarchists in the '48 Area

The Commoner

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This interview was conducted with several members of the Israeli anarchist group, anarchyin48. We have edited their responses and, where possible, merged their replies to get a general overview of the plurality of backgrounds and perspectives within the organisation. The group would also like to note that their name may only be temporary.

You can find the group on Instagram.

Tell us a bit about anarchyin48 and how your group got started.

We are still not an official sort of group. For now, we are just a few anarchists with hopes and dreams of creating something like [the anarchist communist group] “Ahdut” that was in Israel/Palestine a couple years ago.

One of our comrades created this Instagram page along with another anarchist memes page. They started uploading pics of them from demos waving ancom [anarcho-communist] flags with some other individuals. We also participate in other leftist groups like Food Not Bombs, Standing Together, and even the Fauda movement in Palestine.

We met some friends, some of whom either were or are already in radical movements, and we decided that anarchists in Israel should unite and work together. That’s why we decided to start publishing anarchist content in the media and to come to demonstrations with flags. Little by little, other small groups of activists are forming.

In response to this answer, we asked the group how they felt about calls to boycott Standing Together as an organisation that promotes the “normalisation” of Israel.

To which they responded: It is really a problem that Standing Together does not have a clear position on Zionism. This is part of their want to be a popular organisation. It is a shame that this had led to the “normalisation” of Zionism. People abroad do not know that there is also post-Zionism and not just Zionism or anti-Zionism, many on the Israeli left are post-Zionists, meaning they want Israel to exist but not as a Jewish state. In my opinion, post-Zionism is trying to eat cake and leave it intact because to be “a different Israel” it cannot be Israel, since the essence of Israel is Zionism.

How would you describe the ethnic and religious background of the folks who make up anarchyin48? How do these backgrounds influence your activism?

We're mostly atheists; we have Mizrahis and Ashkenazis. Many of us are Jews from post-USSR countries, so they are familiar with communism and anarchism. We also have some Palestinian comrades who oppose Zionism and authoritarianism and think this region must have something new which is not fundamentalist or statist.

[One member speaks personally]:

I grew up in a religious Jewish home and after a while I left the religion. I grew up in a religiously conservative and fascist environment, and this influenced me and shaped my views, which are very much against this way.

What does day-to-day organising look like? What are your priorities?

For now we just go to protests against the genocide in Gaza, wave anarchist flags together, and photograph ourselves with our faces censored. But we do have plans for when we have more people, like making our own bloc at protests and communicating with more anarchists and anti-authoritarian leftists in the land.

For now, the idea is to succeed in reaching as many organisations/individuals as possible and to cooperate with them, invite them to demonstrations against the occupation and the war, and thus establish contact with them and organise actions. We are also working on a Telegram channel called *mash'hirot* through which we distribute radical content and expose the public to anarchist views.

What is the landscape of anarchist groups around Israel? Are you networked with anarchist groups like Radical Haifa?

We are not connected with Radical Haifa, but one of us knows the founder who states it is not active anymore (though they are still doing what they can as an individual). For now we are just bringing flags and are coming to protests organised by the radical bloc, "Looking the Occupation in the Eye" and Standing Together. We're also in contact with Kompas.

Most of the anarchists here are unfortunately not activists because they are very tired and depressed and usually have their own personal issues, but there are still some anarchist activists among the radical left here, which is also very sparse. I would say 1% of Israelis are non-Zionists, and that is very bad, even though we have our own organisations like the Communist Party and some NGOs like Zochrot. There's also the local punk scene, which is affiliated with anarchism and anti-fascism.

Are you in touch with any Palestinian groups, anarchist or otherwise?

Yes, we have many Palestinian comrades and friends. Some of us are even members of Palestinian organisations that accept anti-Zionist Jews, like Fauda. [Fauda is] the anarchist movement in Palestine, which is more insurrectionary than communist.

We are making connections with other organisations and groups. At the moment, because of the situation, there is not much anarchist activity in Israel, and especially not among Palestinians. The State keeps silent and persecutes them. Therefore, they are not so active these days. With those who we do make connections, we try to unite them all.

How has October 7 affected the conversations happening in radical circles around Israel? Has it strengthened or weakened the movement?

The attack by Hamas made it so awful. The country's general political opinion shifted to the right a lot, and it broke the "resistance" that was here against the government. (Those were mostly liberals, so I do not know if it really counts). Still, the real ones are still as always anti-Zionist and anti-war.

The uprising from Gaza could be so good if they did not involve such war crimes. Today, it is harder than ever to convince Israelis to stop believing in Zionism. We lost people who died in this attack, and we also lost people ideologically. Once all of them were so radical and revolutionary in mind, and now many have become like the average Zionist right-wingers. Of course, we who have not changed our views blame everything on the Israeli entity and decided that we as anarchists should be united today more than ever.

It is difficult for anyone who does not support the war, but for us it was just the beginning. Because of this situation, we decided it was time to act and unite. Therefore, we started to initiate meetings and actions, and that is how the group started.

How widespread do you believe non-Zionist or anti-Zionist sentiment is in Israel, and how are these opinions suppressed by the government?

Anti-Zionism is really, really unpopular. We are literally the minority of minorities. We are barely a thousand people, and we are also very, very weak. The Zionist regime is so dictatorial, so it always sanctions us. I do not think that in the next few years Israeli police will tolerate any explicitly anti-Zionist demonstration. People who speak out publicly against Zionism face troubles when trying to find a job.

The government is chasing Facebook or Instagram accounts and even firing Palestinians who express sorrow for the killings in Gaza. Of course, they also try to silence and deplatform anti-Zionist Jews. This has become an illegitimate opinion for most people in Israel.

What do you think about those who, like Tal Mitnick, refuse to fight in the Israeli Defence Force?

We have a lot of respect for him and other refuseniks.

Some of our members might disagree with their pacifist leanings, but still really respect them, especially these days because the consensus here is to “defend the Fatherland.” The refusers at least have a conscience, while most Israelis support a genocide.

How do you hope to see the conflict resolve, both in the short term and the long term?

Members have different opinions. Some believe in a short term ceasefire and a long term joint anarchist revolution in Israel, West Bank, and Gaza. One noted they think we need to form a joint popular militia for both peoples to protect them from the Zionists and Hamas instead of the continuing bloodshed.

As anarchists, what is your vision for the future of the region for both Palestinians and Israelis?

We wish for a multicultural, decentralised space in Palestine like there is in Rojava (Syrian Kurdistan/Northeast Syria).

We want Arabs and Jews to live here together in solidarity, but because the Palestinians live under an oppressive regime that takes everything from them and expels them, the struggle becomes more complex.

Some members might say we need to allow Palestinians to establish their own state or live in a binational state. It is complex, because as anarchists, our overall vision is that of a shared society based on solidarity that exists without the need for government. But right now, the Israeli regime is committing so many injustices and murders that we have no choice but to cooperate in the Palestinian struggle as it exists and to hope to create more Jewish-Arab anarchist movements later.

How can anarchists abroad support your goals and those suffering in Gaza and the West Bank? Are there organisations you think people should be donating funds to?

Anarchists around the world can help us by spreading our messages and the struggles we participate in. Share about anti-war protests in Israel (specifically, organised by The Radical Bloc) and follow our account, like our posts, and share them. The anti-war protests in Israel are barely known internationally, while literally no one knows about the existence of anarchists here.

It is really important to us that people abroad see our struggle against colonialism, just as there were white South Africans who opposed Apartheid even though they were settlers. There are a lot of white American leftists who oppose colonialism while they're actual settlers just like us, but lots of them really hate us [because some of us are Israeli] and we just don't get them, because there's no difference between [settlers here and in the US].

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