

**We should not let Kobane and the rest of  
Rojava to be defeated by the big corporations  
and the international financial institutions**

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First of all, I should mention a couple of issues in Kurdistan of Turkey (Bakur) that are strongly connected to the subject. Between 08/05 and 22/05/15 I visited a number of big towns in Bakur, including: Amed (Diyarbakir), Van, Colemerge (Hakari) and Gavar. Later I returned to Suruc and was hoping to cross the border to Kobane.

My main purpose for visiting there were three important points: first: understanding the similarity and differences between the Democratic Self Administration (DSA) in Bakur and Rojava. Second: Reconstruction of Kobane, and third the type of economy that Rojava can have in the future. Although the friends in Peoples ' Democratic Party (HDP) , other organisation and the Working Committees of Rojava in Amed and Suruc tried hard to arrange my trip to Kobane but it did not happen.

There are two important issues to talk about. These are:

### **First: The 07<sup>th</sup> June general election in Turkey:**

Turkey is facing an important election. It is historical, not just for the Kurds but the rest of Turkey. If president Erdogan and his Justice and Development Party (AKP) win, they will be able implement their hidden Islamic Democratic agenda. The human rights will suffer, the police oppression will increase, the prisons will be full of activists, the rights of individuals, women, ethnic minorities, and other religious almost will be disappeared and also will be a big setback for the peace process.. On the other hand If Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) passes the 10 % election threshold then AKP could be stopped from implementing its inhuman agenda. The HDP manifesto is very radical; even if only 50% of it is implemented Turkey's Constitution could be reformed unless the military Generals take over.

I met many people in Amed, Van, Colemerge and Gavar. Everybody was busy with election campaign for HDP. Everybody from candidates, the campaigners and the ordinary people who I asked believe that the election of this time is a major event and anxiously look forward to seeing the result of 07/06. Their reasons for that are the following which is very difficult not to agree with them:

- This is the first time that the Kurdish people enter the election having a political party, HDP. Previously individual Kurdish allowed taking a part in election as independent it is also the first time many non-Kurds are united with Kurds inside HDP and share its radical manifesto that reflecting and protecting the same interest of whole parties.
- It is quite clear that the AKP is not interested in a serious peace process with the Kurdish people. Erdogan has not taken a big practical step towards this goal. In fact AKP has been forced to agree to the peace process. Erdogan and his party are calculating that HDP does not get through the 10% threshold and does not become a major force in the Parliament to push the peace process seriously. So that wining this election will be a major achievement almost for everybody in Turkey.
- The HDP manifesto is strongly connected to the life of Kurdish and non-Kurdish people. It is a political, economical, educational, cultural as well as social manifesto. It aims at the equality between men and women, at reducing poverty, unemployment, homelessness and the power of the corporations. It deals with recognising Rojava's Cantons, the Cyprus

issue, tackling discrimination, recognising the right of the individuals, different cultures and different religions.

- To rebuild Kobane, humanitarian aid and materials have to enter through Syria or Turkey. So that reconstruction of Kobane whether thorough the big corporations or through the international solidarity, has to be through Turkey. At present Turkey only allows humanitarian aid and winning the election is extremely important for rebuilding Kobane.

Because of the above reasons there is no doubt that the Turkey election of 07<sup>th</sup> of June has got its own speciality that very much different from any other election in many countries.

## **Second: the DSA in Bakur and their differences with Rojava:**

There are many similarities of the DSA in Bakur and that of Rojava. What both experiments share are self-reliance and belief that things can be changed and done differently. Creating different radical local groups, committees, people assemblies and the House of People in the villages, on streets, neighborhoods and towns. In both experiments there are working voluntaries; making decisions collectively through the people assembly or the House of People. This resulted in bringing back decision making into the hands of communities. This also leads to decentralization and weakening the authority of the state.

In both experiments, the environment is a major issue and become an important part of people's agenda.

Making revolution from the bottom of the society is a core belief in both experiments. There is no promotion for religions or for nation state.

Naturally, there are many differences between the two experiments. This is due to a different socio-political climate; which gave the both experiments their separate characters. These differences might find themselves in:

- The DSAs in Rojava emerged through the current situation in Syria, withdrawing Assad's forces and the will and the determination of people in Rojava to do what they wanted to do. The one in Bakur have been the outcome of the long historical struggles of people under the PKK's influences.
- The DSAs in Rojava have been settled and are the main administration that people trust and use. These are independent establishments and have no opponents except in Aljazeera; where there is still some regime administration exist. So the DSAs in Rojava are free and have open hands. On the other hand the DSAs in Bakur and in many towns and villages have not settled completely yet. In the main towns, like, Amed, Van and Colemerg; people are in confrontation with the regime establishments. For example, in the town of Amed; there are no contacts between Municipalities and the governor, the head of police and the military forces. The same situation or even worse can be found in the town of Van. While I was there, I was told by people I had a meeting with that they turned into problems with the official authorities; when they wanted to change the names of their streets to Kurdish names.

- The DSAs in Rojava have been recognized to great extent in the world. They have received a good attention, solidarity and support from leftist, communists, trade unionists, socialists, anarchists and libertarians. In contrast the DSAs in Bakur have been recognized as a work of PKK and PKK, which for the US, Turkey and the Western countries is a terrorist organisation. Their poisoning propaganda has even affected the value and importance of the DSAs there.
- The continuation of ISIS war in Rojava is costing many lives, the stability of the region. This war also affects very badly the financial position of this area. The situation is paralyzing most of the economics, politics and social future planning. Furthermore, there is a continues threats from other terror forces, like Syrian free army and the Assad's forces as well. Whereas, in Bakur and until now, there has not been any war.
- Rojava is an agricultural region and it is very rich in oil, gas and phosphates. Equally, Bakur is a very fertile land and ample source of water. The river Tigris is going through this region along with some other rivers. In addition the Van Lake is in the heart of Kurdistan. The area with it's high and snow covered mountains can be a tourist attraction too. With all these resources the area can be self-sufficient, without a need from the central government.
- Capitalism has not been developed in Rojava yet. There are no big corporations, companies or factories. Therefore, the ugly face of capitalism cannot be seen here. In contrast in Bakur there is some form of undeveloped capitalism. This is as a result of a deliberate racist policy from the regime, to exclude Kurdistan from major developments.
- The trade unions in Bakur are very strong and play a big role in Municipalities, the radical groups, people assembly, House of People and also in the work places as well. They have good relations with the three main Turkey trade unions. Obviously emerging the unions there relate to the industrialization of Bakur although not as advance as in the rest of Turkey. On the other hand the number of the trade unionists and unions in Rojava are very small; therefore, they have a very little role to play.

In one of my meeting with people in Van they talked in details about the situation there. They talked about the heavy present of police and military forces in their area. These forces put a lot of pressure on people; harassing, humiliating and the threat of arrest. Despite of all these, the activists there continue to further their course to progress there DSA. They work in variety of groups; such as political, language, health services, women, environment and agriculture. It is estimated that DSAs can manage to 80% of Van. In 1056 villages there are people assemblies and in 40% of the area there has been some form of self managements. What is worth mentioning here is women's 50% participations in these self management organizations.

In addition of the agricultural nature of Van; the region has a great potential to become a great tourist attraction. The House of people in Van has future plans to make it more attractive for tourists and have Eco-tourist projects to protect people and the environment.

One of the other problems facing people is the poor production up to 50% less than expected. This is due to the distraction activities of the regime's forces. There is also the culture of lack of confidence among people and unwillingness of sharing, lack of freedom and political problems.

However, I was told by people there; that they face a mammoth task. It is not easy to overturn 500 years influence of the Turkish authority. Throughout of these years people have been

marginalised, isolated and treated with utter disrespect. To change all these require a lot of work on the ground and on the individual level as well. But what is promising is the zeal and determination of the activists in the area.

In my meeting with co-president of HDP, another party chief and co-leader of Colemerg Municipalities, it became apparent that DSAs in the region are facing major problems. The situation gets worse more you get closer to the boarder. In fact there are areas are restricted by the military and people are not allowed to enter.

Despite all this; the Municipalities in Colemerg are determined to implement their main Ecology plan. They have agreed that Colemerg to be the Ecology Pilot. It has also been decided to work on this project as soon as the election is over.

## **Kobane and its Reconstruction:**

After defeating Isis and Turkey's regime in the war, Kobane could manage to pass the first test successfully. The USA and its allies took part in the war because they realised that either Kobane cannot be defeated or if it goes down it will take everything else with it. The first possibility would deprive the big corporations from rebuilding Kobane. The second would add another black spot to the history of so-called "international community".

The war and the sanction indeed made life in Kobane and the rest of Rojava miserable for a long time but in my opinion both factors played a major role in surviving the whole of Rojava.

The war there introduced Rojava to the world and particularly the leftists, communists, socialists, trade unionist, anarchists and libertarians.. It brought love, support and solidarity to Rojava and its people. Hundreds of people from different countries travelled there to be in the front line against Isis and a few of them lost their lives. Hundreds more went there as journalist and aid and community workers to show their support and solidarity.

Using sanction against Rojava by Turkey, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and the regional countries all also played a role in surviving Rojava. It prevented corruption, entering money, capital and hindered exploitation by businessmen and landowners. The simple life of the region managed to go on. People had to rely on themselves, work voluntarily and collectively. The true natural relation between the people continued.

Now Kobane and the whole of Rojava enter the economic test which is difficult indeed. Many countries can resist military occupation but cannot survive an economic one. Launching an economic war by the big corporations and the international financial institutions can be devastating.

This may start with the reconstruction of Kobane. Rebuilding it could bring death or the survival of Rojava as a whole by initiating its social revolution.

In my opinion rebuilding Kobane may take one of the following roots:

- Either through the work of big corporations and financial institution, like IMF, WB and ECB. This will no doubt benefit the big corporation in particular and the capitalist system in general as happened, by imposing so many dramatic conditions, in Africa and South America.
- Or through international support and solidarity of the leftists, communists, trade unionists, socialists, anarchists and libertarians. This of course is a slow process but it is the only way that Kabana can be rebuild solidly and avoiding the influence of the big corporations.

- It could also be done by contracting out some of the projects to some companies to supply materials and expertise but the actual work to be done collectively by the people. This is provided a close watch and scrutiny of the DSAs and the Tev-Dem. Could be imposed.

There is currently a big discussion among the politicians, academics and economists about the rebuilding Kobane and the future economy of Rojava. In fact a big conference was held in Amed in early May regarding rebuilding Kobane but so far no decision has been taken. While I was in Bakur I spoke to many people in important position. They all rejected the big corporations and explained that this is their own official and firm view.

Making no decision in rebuilding kobane through the big corporations and the international financial institutions is excellent decision against the interests of US and the Western countries and keeps their powers out. In the meantime it is our duty all to help and support whatever we can to participate in reconstruction of Kobane in order to protect this shiny experiment. We should not let the blood of thousands of people who scarified themselves to liberate Kobane and protecting the social revolution in Rojava to go in vain.

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