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Syria

Kobani, the Kurdish issue and the Syrian revolution, a common destiny

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The city of Kobani, which is in its great majority inhabited by Kurdish people, in Syria has been under direct threat for several weeks from the Islamic State (IS). Since the beginning of the IS offensive on 16 September 2014, more than 550 people have died, including 298 IS militants, 236 Kurdish fighters and around twenty civilians. More than 12 000 civilians still remain in some sections of the city of Kobani, while the IS offensive on Kobani and its surrounding villages has led to the forced displacement of about 200,000 people.

The city would actually have fallen long ago if it was not for the resistance organized by the Kurdish Democratic Union Party (YPD which is linked to the PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party), and its military forces, units of people's protection (YPG), and also the active participation of at least three battalions of Arab fighters in the city: the revolutionary battalion of Al Raqqa, the battalion of "the northern Sun" and the battalion of "Jirablis". On 4 October the Free Syrian Army (FSA) also decided to send a thousand fighters to defend Kobani.

The city Kobani is a strategic location for the IS. First the city lies between the cities of Cerablus and Tell Abyad, which are both under IS occupation, and its capture would allow a territorial continuity for the IS, and secondly the city is also a gateway to Turkey.

Kobani, a key city in the Rojava autonomous regions

The city of Kobani is the third Kurdish city of Syria and was the first Kurdish city to be liberated from the Assad regime on 19 July 2012.

Kobani is also the center of one of the three cantons (with Afrin and Cizre) that established themselves in "democratic autonomous regions" from a confederation of "Kurds, Arabs, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Turkmen, Armenian and Chechen" as stated in the Preamble of the Rojava (name of western or Syrian Kurdistan) Charter. Experiences of self-administrations in these regions are very interesting, particularly regarding the rights of women and religious and ethnic minorities. Some contradictions nevertheless exist, especially regarding the authoritarianism of the PYD forces that have not hesitated to repress activists or to close institutions towards them.

We should not forget that the PYD, like its mother organization the PKK, lacks democratic credentials in its internal functioning and in regards to other organisations considered as rivals or just, as we have seen, critical of it. We must remember for example the protest movements in late June 2013 in some cities of Rojava, such as Amouda and Derabissyat, against the repression and arrests by the PYD forces of Kurdish revolutionary activists. [\[1\]](#)

The PYD is however far from being the only organization in this case in Syria, and within the Syrian opposition.

That does not stop us from providing a full support to the Kurdish national liberation movement in its struggle for self-determination in Iraq, Syria, Turkey and Iran against authoritarian regimes that oppress them and / or prevent them from achieving their self-determination. It is also why we should demand the removal of the PKK of all lists of terrorist organizations in Europe and elsewhere.

We can indeed criticize the leadership of the PKK or the PYD for some of their policies, but as argued before, a fundamental principle of revolutionaries is that we first need to support all forms of liberation and emancipation struggle unconditionally, before we are entitled to criticize the way they are led.

The coalition and Turkey or the struggle against the Kurds

The bombings of the international coalition led by the USA and with the collaboration of the reactionary monarchies of the Gulf have failed to stop the offensive of the IS since September 23. At that period the IS was at 60 km of Kobani... today the IS has entered and occupied several districts of the city. The IS has also destroyed several houses and administrative buildings.

This military intervention shows once more that it is not designed to help the local populations in their struggle for freedom and dignity, but serve the objectives of Western imperialists, with the agreement of Russian imperialism, and of all the regional sub imperialists, participating directly (Saudi Arabia and Qatar) or indirectly (Turkey), or not opposing it like Iran. All these actors want to put an end to the revolutionary processes in the region and restore its stability with authoritarian regimes that serve their interests and not those of the popular masses of the region.

For its part the Turkish government of the Justice and Development Party (known as AKP) has once again demonstrated its opposition to any project of Kurdish self-determination that would challenge its political interests.

The Turkish government has also accused the PKK of being terrorists similar to the IS. The Turkish government, through these accusations, wants to harm the Kurdish organisations operating on its territory or at its periphery, or at least co-opt some of them.

The main objective of the Turkish government is actually to prevent the establishment of a Kurdish autonomous zone along its border with Syria. This is why the government in Ankara has made the creation of a buffer zone in Syria one of its main demands to the coalition and the international community, and not as the Erdogan government claimed to protect the areas held by the Free Syrian Army, which are now fighting alongside Kurdish forces against the IS.

In the same context, the Turkish government has also prevented and continues to prevent fighters from the PYD to cross the border to join the city of Kobani to help the their Kurdish comrades in their fight against the IS. The Turkish authorities imposed a curfew for the first time since 1992 in six provinces the country populated mostly by Kurds after large demonstrations by members of the Kurdish community against the government's policy of not wanting to help the city of Kobani and of refusing the crossing of Kurdish fighters to Syria.

After four days of rioting, the Interior Minister Efkân Ala presented a very heavy first official report which reported 31 dead and 360 injured, over a thousand arrests and impressive damage, mainly in the southeast Kurdish majority in the country. The victims, injured and arrested were in their far majority Kurds.

The leader of the PYD, Salih Muslim, urged Turkey to let the crossing of fighters and weapons for Kobani, while adamantly opposing he intervention of the Turkish army in the city, which according to him would be similar to an "occupation".

On its side, the imprisoned leader of the PKK Abdullah Â-calân also warned that the fall of Kobani would mean the end of all peace efforts that have been going on for the past two years between Turkey and the PKK.

As a reminder there are still more than 8,000 Kurdish political prisoners in Turkish jails accused of terrorism.

Kobani and the Syrian revolution

The fall of the city of Kobani and its occupation by the IS would represent a double defeat: for the self-determination of the Kurdish People and for the Syrian Revolution. Although let be clear not the end of both processes.

The autonomous self-administration of Rojava is a direct and positive result of the Syrian revolution and would never have been allowed or able to exist without the popular and massive movement from below of the Syrian People (Arabs, Kurds and Assyrian together) against the criminal and authoritarian Assad regime. These same popular forces also united against the Islamic reactionary forces that attacked in the past and continue to attack nowadays the Rojava regions. Today the FSA and the Kurdish forces are fighting side by side against the IS in Kobani, while we have also seen demonstrations of support in other liberated areas of Syria in solidarity with Kobani.

The revolution from below of the popular masses of Syria, Arab and Kurds, is the only solution against sectarianism, racism and national chauvinism.

The self-determination of the Kurdish people has been strengthened by the Syrian revolution and this has to continue. It is a dialectical relationship and both are linked.

A defeat of the Syrian revolutionary process and of its objectives would mark most probably the end of the Rojava autonomous regions' experience and of the hopes of the Kurdish people to decide their own future in the face of the opposition of multiple actors : Western and Russian imperialisms, Arab and Turkish nationalist chauvinisms and Islamic reactionary forces. On the other side the Syrian revolutionary process would not be complete without the possibility of the Kurdish people to decide freely of their own future: separation or participation and struggling with the democrats and progressives for a Democratic, Social and Secular Syria with its national rights guaranteed.

This is why we have to oppose all the attempts to undermine both the Kurdish self-determination and the Syrian revolutionary process because their destinies are linked, whether from the Assad regime, the Islamic reactionary forces, the various imperialisms (USA and Russia) and sub Imperialisms (Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar).

All the counter revolutionary forms must be opposed because they want to divide the popular classes through sectarianism and racisms.

Viva the Syrian Revolution

Viva the self-determination of the Kurdish People

Viva the brotherhood of the people in struggle for Liberation and Emancipation

People in struggle are one!

Republished from [Syria Freedom Forever](#).

[1] See [Statement by the Kurdish youth movement](#).