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Syria

Solidarity with KobanÃª - an urgent task

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Latest reports are that ISIS fighters are entering KobanÃª. [The Guardian](#).

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Update

The situation in Kobane is getting tougher by the hour - fierce fighting around the outside and in the outskirts between the defenders of the Kurdish town and ISIS forces. Protesters are still contesting the border held by the Turkish army, the Kurdish leadership has called for millions of Kurds from Turkey to go to the border. Kurds are protesting all over Europe. [1]

People on the net keep predicting the fall of Kobane -of course Kobane might fall quickly, but the resistance has been astonishing so far, and there must be quite a few thousand fighters in there, plus the whole remaining population is mobilised. They are preparing to fight street by street, ISIS won't find it easy.

So it is very important for us not to take the fall of Kobane as a foregone conclusion, but to keep making protesting and demanding weapons for the defenders. The more protests there are, the more pressure there is on the coalition to restrain Turkey and provide effective military assistance to Kobane, and the longer it goes on, the more people support the Kurds and understand how disgusting the coalition tolerance of Turkey's behaviour is, so the higher the price the coalition countries will pay whatever the upshot in Kobane. Foreign Minister Davutoglu has said they don't want Kobane to fall (not) - but nothing is being done to stop that by Turkey or its allies, in fact the opposite, as Turkey is more and more blatantly supporting ISIS, moving in new weapons, treating wounded fighters in Turkish hospitals.

Millions of people are seeing the battle on TV - anyone who has Hotbird satellite can watch it. If there is a terrible massacre, millions of people will know that this has been tolerated by the coalition because they politically support Turkey against people who want independence. Six months ago nobody had heard of Kobane, but now half the world is watching and seeing that the coalition is doing nothing to assist Kobane against ISIS. This will not be forgotten, by the Kurds or by other people. If you don't have Hotbird, you can find footage on the Kurdish TV websites - Google Med Nuce, Sterk, Ronahi, Newroz. The BBC and Al Jazeera can get live stream and pictures from the Kurdish channels that are there, even if there are no foreign correspondents there.

People should be joining Kurdish demos, posting stuff, as you are, writing to MPs and councillors, whatever is possible. There are thousands of people in Kobane, and if the town fell, who is to say that Turkey wouldn't also fall back a bit and let ISIS loose among displaced people and refugees who are inside Turkey and not far from the border. Anything to justify Turkish army action when it suits them.

Today's news is that PYD leader Salih Muslim was in Ankara for talks with security officials and requested that Turkey open the border to allow the passage of Kurdish fighters and weapons into Kobane - quite a good move since it puts Turkey and the coalition and indeed the South Kurdistan peshmerga forces on the spot. Presumably he is asking for PKK, KDP and PUK forces to be allowed to come through - hard to imagine Turkey will agree to PKK, but KDP and PUK have been feebly saying they would send people but cannot because of the security situation. It would give them a chance to put their money where their mouth is and, in the case of the KDP, recover a bit from the disgrace of telling people in Shangal and the Plain of Mosul that they would protect them and then abandoning them

to ISIS.

Lastly, if Kobane falls, ISIS will be free up more forces to take more of Syria and Iraq; while doubtless leaving Assad free to reassert control of Aleppo.

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The city of KobanĀ in Aleppo province, northern Syria, is being heroically defended against ISIS by local people and by the People's Protection Units (still mainly Kurdish but including Arabs and Assyrians). A high proportion of the fighters are women, mainly young but also middle-aged, and some Free Syrian Army forces who have moved to KobanĀ are also fighting there, but the defenders have no heavy artillery and only a few home-made armoured vehicles, while ISIS have all the heavy weaponry and vehicles they captured in the summer from the Iraqi army and possibly from the KDP (Kurdistan Democratic Party), as well as weapons and vehicles given them by their sponsors. ISIS is able to shell heavily from great distances, and have concentrated most of their Syrian forces round KobanĀ, so for some days the situation has been critical, although the defenders are very determined and seem to be just about coping.

Since 15 September ISIS has been staging its heaviest attack so far on 3 sides of KobanĀ, one of the Kurdish three autonomous regions in Syria (the fourth side is partly covered by Turkish army). ISIS is receiving ever more blatant assistance from Turkey, which the US and its allies seem to be doing nothing effective to hinder. Recent More than 100 and villages in the enclave have had to be evacuated to reduce the number of civilian casualties and to allow the self-defence forces a clear run and by now more than 130,000 non-combatants have fled into Turkey. The remaining population, normally 200,000 but doubled in size by refugees from Sinjar and Aleppo and elsewhere in northern Syria are at risk of massacre if KobanĀ falls.

Mass protests by Kurds on the border at KobanĀ have been taking place, and sometimes people have managed to rush the border at Pirsus /Suruç to go into KobanĀ to aid the defence effort. One report from villagers who came through to KobanĀ said that they had seen about 3000 men escorted over the border into Syria in the middle of the night by Turkish soldiers, presumably to reinforce ISIS. This follows previous reports that the old Berlin-Baghdad railway line is being used by the Turkish army to resupply ISIS. Protesters, some having travelled from distant parts of Turkey, are patrolling the border, watching out for Turkish soldiers helping ISIS recruits to cross the border. Some clashes have broken out, including near the Iraqi/Turkish border in Kurdistan. So the Turkish army does not have full control of the border, which means there is some hope that people can get in with ammunition and more weapons.

YPG forces from the next autonomous canton along to the east, Jazira, are also fighting ISIS around Serekani to try to get through to the west relieve the siege of KobanĀ. On 30 September news agencies reported fighting around Rabia in Northern Iraq; it sounds as if peshmergas and YPG (Kurdish People's Defence Forces) have jointly driven ISIS out of Rabia, which in theory will make it easier to clear ISIS out of the rest of Shengal and to allow Kurdish fighters to go from Iraq to Syria, into the Jazira autonomous area. This will allow reinforcements to Jazira, which will make the task of breaking through to the west more likely.

Public and diplomatic pressure on Turkey is key to restraining its actions around KobanĀ. Far left leaders from Turkey including leaders of ODP (Freedom and Solidarity Party), EMEP (Labour Party) and HDP (People's Democratic Party) visited a couple of days ago. Kurdish politicians from Turkey have visited several times. The Kurdish PYD (Democratic Union Party) leaders in Syria, in the Qandil mountains in Iraq, and in Turkey are calling for actions to demand that NATO restrain Turkey from helping ISIS in KobanĀ. Kurds have been stepping up their demonstrations throughout Turkey and all over Europe, including occupying Schipol and Frankfurt airports, and increasing numbers of hunger strikes, including outside the European Parliament, where Salih Müslim, co-chair of the

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PYD in Syria, is holding meetings with European politicians this week to ask them to put effective pressure on their governments to push Turkey to change its lethal support for ISIS. We need to support the Kurdish actions, as the situation in KobanĀ^a is extremely serious, and predictably a deafening silence is coming from governments and most politicians around the coalition, as Turkey is a key ally, and imperialism does not like the radicalism of YPG in Syria or its ally PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party).

1 October 2014

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[1] Oxford Circus was closed this afternoon by Kurdish protestors demanding assistance for Kobane: [Huffington Post](#).