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Syria

The Assad regime has fallen, long live the Syrian people's revolution!

- Features -

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After 14 years of revolution and war, the tyrannical and bloodthirsty regime of Bashar al-Assad fell on 8 December 2024 at the end of a politico-military phase that began just twelve days earlier. Armed opposition groups such as HTS (Levant Liberation Front - Islamists) and the Syrian National Army (SNA - supported by Turkey) launched an offensive in Aleppo that set off a chain reaction: pro-Assad militias and forces rapidly collapsed, fled or surrendered to the rebels, town by town, region by region. Towns and villages emblematic of the revolution were liberated one after the other, sometimes by local popular uprisings: Aleppo, Hama, Deraya, Deraa, Homs, Kafranbel... Everywhere in the country, forces rose up, civilian and armed, against the regime which was retreating visibly.

Everyone was surprised by such an advance and such a combination of forces: Sunnis, Druze, Christians and Kurds joined the movement against the Assad regime. The flag of the revolution, historically carried by the Free Syrian Army, spread across the country. On the night of 7 to 8 December, Assad was nowhere to be found in Damascus: he had clearly sought refuge in one of the regime's partner states. Damascus and the whole country exploded with joy: countless videos of popular celebrations invaded social networks, even among the Syrian diaspora in Europe, particularly in Germany. And with good reason.

This regime was the continuation of the dictatorship of a family that ruled the country for more than half a century. It was a regime that was opportunistic in its dealings with the international powers, which could combine a discourse on so-called "resistance" with participation in the "war on terror" allied to George W. Bush. A regime that claimed to resist Israel but never lifted a finger, even in the face of the genocide of Palestinians in Gaza. A regime guilty of multiple crimes against humanity against its own population: whether the massacre of over 30,000 people in Hama in 1982, the chemical bombing with sarin gas that killed over 1,400 civilians in Ghouta (a suburb of Damascus) on 21 August 2013, the famine caused by the siege on the Palestinian refugee camp of Yarmouk between 2013 and 2015, or the torture on a mass scale in prisons such as Sednaya (nicknamed "the slaughterhouse"). Bashar al-Assad's systematic bombardment of hospitals, schools, markets and all civilian infrastructure in areas beyond his control was on a par with the crimes of the United States in Mosul or Raqqa, Putin in Mariupol or Netanyahu in Gaza. It fanned the embers of religious sectarianism and released the most radical Islamists from its prisons at the start of the revolution, at the same time as it locked up non-denominational, pro-democracy revolutionaries en masse. In the end, it led to the deaths of more than half a million Syrians and the exile and forced displacement of more than half the country's population.

The regime was on the verge of collapse in 2013 and only held on thanks to its sponsors: Putin and the Iranian mullahs. Unable to rebuild Syria in the areas controlled by his armed gangs, Assad had turned his country into a nerve centre for the production of captagon, a synthetic drug. For several years, he had been seeking normalisation with the countries of the region, in particular the Gulf petro-monarchies.

Assad has benefited from the invasion of Hezbollah militias and numerous Shiite militias sent and directed by Iran, as well as from the Russian air force, which helped crush the insurgency in Aleppo in 2016. It has also benefited from the indulgence of the Western powers, first and foremost the United States under Obama, who despised the Syrian revolution. The United States was only interested in limiting the expansion of jihadist forces such as Daesh, and prevented the rebellion from receiving anti-aircraft weapons to defend itself. The Syrian revolution and insurrection have been hijacked by reactionary powers such as Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the United States, all seeking to use their support to win the loyalty of local armed groups to their own interests: The United States to arm the Kurds of the PYD (and their coalition of Syrian Democratic Forces or FDS) against Daesh, Turkey and its "Syrian National Army" of paid Arab volunteers to push back the Kurds, Saudi Arabia and Qatar to support various local reactionary

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forces. In addition, sectors of the international left have committed themselves to supporting the regime and its propaganda directly or indirectly. It is impossible to forget the positions taken by Mélenchon or the PTB in support of the repression of Syrian insurgents, and in so doing relativising the massacres of civilians at decisive moments such as the battle of Aleppo in 2016.

This regime has fallen like rotten fruit, because no one was prepared to die to defend it, and because its sponsors are too busy killing Ukrainians or reorganising themselves in Lebanon and Iran. The fall of the Assad regime is an important and historic victory. The happy Syrian people are not mistaken. The doors of the regime's prisons are open, allowing thousands of prisoners of the dictatorship to leave, and refugees are beginning to talk about one day being able to see their country, their family, their friends, their martyred town or village again, or even being able to mourn their loved ones, many of whom have disappeared. Now that Assad's jails have been opened, the time has come for justice and truth for tens of thousands of missing people.

The message we are sending to people around the world is that no bloodthirsty tyranny is indestructible. Even when so many regional and international powers are trying to crush a people. It is also a message for global and regional imperialism and all the reactionary forces throughout the world.

However, while this major victory is the precondition for everything to become possible again, the country's political future is not yet settled and we need to remain clear-sighted and vigilant in our solidarity. Indeed, the aims of the Syrian revolution go beyond bringing down the regime: they involve building a democratic society with social justice. So the future lies in the broadest possible political participation, not in fundamentalist and authoritarian politico-military leadership. Similarly, everything must be done to guarantee the inclusion and respect of all the country's cultural, ethnic and religious components, against any form of chauvinism. We must therefore oppose and denounce the operations of the ANS, which is pursuing the objectives of the Turkish regime against the areas controlled by the FDS in the north of the country, in towns such as Tel Rifaat or Manbij, operations which are accompanied by human rights violations (kidnappings, assassinations) and which have already caused the displacement of more than 150,000 civilians. In this respect, it is remarkable that Salih Muslim, leader of the PYD, welcomed the fall of the regime and publicly called for dialogue with HTS to build a new Syria for all.

This question of minorities brings us to another danger: the regional and international powers have not said their last word in Syria. Be it Turkey, Iran, Israel, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and perhaps soon Trump's United States, these reactionary regimes will each try in their own way to make the best of what happens next. None of them wanted to see the triumph of an armed opposition based on popular discontent. Given the authoritarian past of HTS and the ANS, who are also trying to reassure the various powers, we must bear in mind what happened in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia (and even before that in Iran in 1979), where revolutionary processes, even after the dictator has been ousted, see the forces of counter-revolution reorganising themselves in other forms. Moreover, Daesh still exists in a desert pocket in the east of the country and could try to take advantage of the situation.

The Gauche anticapitaliste welcomes and supports the orientation of our comrades of the revolutionary left in the region: only the self-organisation of the working classes in struggle for their democratic and social demands can create the democratic space for real liberation and a political alternative. To achieve this, they will have to overcome the obstacles of weariness after so many years of war and exile, poverty and social dislocation. Rebuilding civil society and mass grassroots organisations (trade unions, feminist organisations, local associations, etc.) will be essential in this struggle. This is the price of a democratic and social future.

In Europe, it will be in the interests of the peoples in struggle to allow themselves to be inspired and to learn from the Syrian revolutionary process, and to stand alongside it in the new period that is opening up, fraught with opportunities but also with dangers.

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- Long live the Syrian people's revolution!
- It's up to the people of Syria to manage their country together: down with the international reactionary powers, stop the Turkish regime-led offensive against the Kurds!
- Freedom and justice for all the Syrian people!
- For a democratic and social Syria!

8 December 2024

Translated by **International Viewpoint** from [Gauche Anticapitaliste](#).

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