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Denmark

The RGA against Danish fighter jets in Iraq

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On 1 October, the Danish parliament approved with a huge majority to send F16 fighter jets and almost 300 military staff people to Iraq to participate in the US-led bombing campaign against ISIL. Only the Red Green Alliance and one unaffiliated MP voted against.

Back in September the RGA supported the decision to deploy one military Hercules aircraft to Iraq with the task of supplying Kurdish forces fighting ISIL with arms.

The two different votes are in line with the basic approach that the RGA want to support local progressive forces fighting ISIL or other reactionary armies, but that the party opposes US, UK or Danish direct military intervention whether is bombing campaigns or ground forces.

That is also the reason that the RGA – also on 1 October - tabled a proposal in parliament that Denmark help to supply weapons and humanitarian aid to the beleaguered Kurdish/multi-ethnic areas in Northern Syria. A few days later the RGA itself started collecting money for weapons to the Kurds.

Tail-ending big powers

During the debate in Parliament, Nikolaj Villumsen, MP for the RGA said:

“The government is proposing a bombing campaign that may last more than a year according to the prime minister. These bombings may very well lead to a strengthening of ISIL and of creating even more chaos. When civilians are killed and foreign military again is bombing Iraq, it may increase the recruitment of ISIL.

Many hidden agendas are involved in this alliance that the government want Denmark to join. It is a 100 percent certain that Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states do not want democracy in Iraq. Likewise, Turkey does not want Kurdish self-government anywhere inside or outside Turkish borders. I fear that Denmark just will be tail-ending the interests of big powers in the region.

“What we ought to have learned from the previous wars that Denmark participated in, is that we should rather support those local forces on the ground that fight for democracy and human rights. That is why the RGA proposes direct support for the Kurdish militias in Syria. They have defended themselves against Assad and ISIL for three years. But now ISIL have conquered heavy American produced weapons from the Iraqi army in Mosul, and they are launching an offensive against the Kurdish territory around the city of Kobane. The Kurds have real problems in resisting them.

“Turkey is a close ally of Denmark in NATO, and they are closing their borders for arms supplies to the Kurds, while they for years have accepted ISIL-soldiers to pass this border. Official Danish policy towards the Kurds is defined by the government in Ankara. Right now the victims are the people living in the Kurdish areas in Syria. Here, Kurds, Arabs and Christians need our support. We want Denmark to supply weapons to the secular Kurdish forces to make them able to defend themselves against ISIL – plus humanitarian aid so that the civilians can survive.”

Solidarity

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Of course, the proposal for arms to the Kurds was defeated with only the RGA voting for. Two days later, on 3 October, at a press conference the RGA handed over 40,000 DK (5,500 â,-) to Saleh Muslim, a representative of PYD, the party of Kurds in Syria that works closely together with the PKK of the Kurds in Turkey. The money is earmarked for weapons.

At the press conference, Nikolaj Villumsen said:

“Since the offensive of the jihadists against Kurdish areas in Syria began, we have tried to convince the government and the other parties to supply the Kurdish defence forces with weapons and humanitarian aid, with no effect at all. Now, ISIL is just outside Kobane, and 400.000 civilians are in danger.

That is why we have collected this amount of money among the local branches of the RGA at only a few days’ notice. It is only a symbolic amount, but we will continue collecting money. We call on all democratic and progressive forces in Europe and the rest of the world to support the fight against ISIL.”

Since then the RGA has repeated its call to the government for arms to be supplied to the Kurds several times and used all parliamentary options for raising the question. As of 8 October the only result has been that the Socialist People’s Party (SF) now also supports the proposal.