

On the Alliance of Syrian & Iranian Socialists - Responses to Radio Zamaneh's Question

Wednesday 8 June 2016, by [AFARY Frieda](#), [DAHHER Joseph](#), [Zamaneh](#) (Date first published: 23 May 2016).

Responses to Zamaneh's Questions Concerning the Alliance of Syrian & Iranian Socialists

Zamaneh- Your site is a link between the Other Syria and the Other Iran. How would you define this "Other?"

Joseph Daher and Frieda Afary - In one sense, this "Other" includes all individuals and groups who are for democracy, social justice, equality, against racism and sectarianism, and not affiliated with any state powers. It includes working people who are struggling to survive and suffer from unhealthy and alienated conditions of labor, women's right activists, members of oppressed ethnic, religious or sexual minorities, oppressed national minorities such as Kurds who want self-determination, student youth who reject the suffocating educational system, political prisoners. These sections of society are not given a voice in the mainstream media in Syria and Iran. They try to organize and resist despite the difficulties and campaigns of harsh repression.

In another sense, this "Other" includes socialists who reject the Stalinist systems that existed in the Soviet Union and China and their satellite countries as well as authoritarian regimes and parties in the Middle East that have claimed to be socialist. Instead, we argue that socialism is a concept of human emancipation that has yet to be realized. As part of this "Other," some of the endorsers of the Alliance are Marxists and some consider themselves socialists in a more general way.

We acknowledge that according to the second definition of the "Other," we are a minority in our societies, but this is not a reason to remain silent about our vision of a future society or avoid engaging in a struggle to develop a humanist alternative to capitalism.

The "Other" is usually absent in mainstream media. What plans do you have for introducing it?

To begin with, our goal is to make the "Other" in Iran aware of the struggles of the "Other" in Syria and vice versa. We aim to offer analyses that deal with the complexities of issues and go beyond the simplistic reactions that large sections of the Left is known for. What happened to the Syrian revolution demands a serious analysis: Why was Bashar Assad's fascistic regime able to stay in power despite a mass uprising of the majority of Syrians who wanted democracy, social justice and equality? How have the governments of Iran, Russia, China as well as Western governments supported Assad's regime in direct or indirect ways? How did ISIS arise? What role did the Kurdish movement for self-determination play in the revolution? How has Turkey's brutal war against the Kurds affected the situation in Syria? It is necessary to challenge the lie that the Assad regime will be able to stop ISIS and other Salafi Jihadists from growing. There can be no long-term solution to the problem of 12 million plus refugees inside and outside Syria so long as the Assad regime and the Salafi Jihadists who feed on the brutality of this regime continue. Analyzing these questions is needed to begin to create solidarity between the Other Iran and the Other Syria, toward the aim of finding real solutions. Iranians need to know that their silence on their government's support of the Assad regime will allow the Iranian government to suppress Iran's democracy and labor activists

even more.

Secondly, the structure of our website also pinpoints the topics that we think are the burning issues of the region. We have a separate page devoted to each of the following issues: 1. Women's Emancipation, Gender and Sexual Minorities. 2. Oppressed Nationalities, Ethnic and Religious Minorities. 3. Labor and Alternatives to Capitalism. In each of these pages our goal is to offer analyses and not simply news. Articles on these topics are also welcome from those who are not directly affiliated with this Alliance.

We will try to use this website as a platform to develop and spread ideas and positions, and will try to organize conferences and other activities if possible. But we are still in the process of building this Alliance and still need to collectively work out our objectives, demands and the ways we can work together.

Introducing oneself as the "Other" always faces the danger of isolation and intellectual sectarianism. How do you plan to avoid this?

We do not claim to be a substitute for social movements but hope to create a dialogue on crucial issues.

Our site is trilingual (English, Arabic, Persian) because our aim is to create a dialogue between Persian speakers, Arabic speakers and English speakers. Even when an article in one language is not translated into the other two languages, its title and abstract are available in all three languages.

We are contacting anti-Stalinist socialists from other parts of the Middle East. We welcome articles from others and also actively search for, translate, and reprint articles by Middle Eastern socialists as well as Western and other international socialists that might illuminate the questions that this Alliance aims to address.

Some of us are active in labor, feminist and anti-racist struggles in the countries in which we live. We want to speak to and engage in discussions with large sectors of society, and are ready to work and collaborate with other groups based on common objectives to enhance democratic and progressive values in our societies. At the same time, we believe that dogmatism and sectarianism cannot be overcome so long as the logic of capital determines our lives.

Joseph Daher and Frieda Afary

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We welcome new participants and writers. Please contact us at info.allianceofmesocialists.org

P.S.

* Posted on June 2, 2016. Syria Freedom Forever:

<https://syriafreedomforever.wordpress.com/2016/06/02/responses-to-zamanehs-questions-concerning-the-alliance-of-syrian-iranian-socialists/>

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