

Declaration: Internationalist solidarity with the Syrian people is more necessary than ever!

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The Fourth International reaffirms its solidarity with all the bombed, massacred, tortured, starving and displaced civilians in Syria; its solidarity with the democratic and progressive forces that continue to defend the aspirations of a heroic insurrection. Seven years after the beginning of the Syrian popular uprising, it has been gradually transformed into a deadly war with an international character, the situation in the country is catastrophic at all levels.

Probably more than half a million are dead and missing, over 80% of whom were killed by the regime's armed forces and allies. More than 6 million people have fled across borders and 7.6 million are internally displaced, out of a population of 22.5 million in 2011. Over 80% of the population lives below the poverty line. The World Bank estimated in June 2017 that about one third of all buildings and nearly half of all school and hospital buildings in Syria had been damaged or destroyed.

Against the Assad regime and its allies, first component of the counter-revolution!

The Fourth International condemns once again the barbarity of the despotic regime of the Assad family and its allies, symbolised at the beginning of 2018 by their offensive on Eastern Ghouta near Damascus. Military offensives and bombardments against civilians, including the use of chemical weapons, continue in various areas outside the control of Bashar al-Assad's regime. Since 2015, the latter, which was in desperate straits at the time, seems to have continued to strengthen itself and to increase the territory recovered by relying on its Russian and Iranian allies, as well as on Lebanese Hezbollah. Today, Damascus controls almost 60% of the territory and over 80% of the population.

It is in this context that state actors with very diverse and even contradictory political and economic agendas but which all bombed and participated to the destruction of Syria, are now raising the question of reconstruction, whose costs are currently estimated at more than 350 billion dollars. For Assad, his relatives and the businessmen linked to his regime, reconstruction is seen as a means of consolidating the powers already acquired and re-establishing their political, military, security and economic domination, also with the forced resettlement of populations. This process would also reinforce the neoliberal policies of a heavily indebted regime that does not have the capacity to

finance reconstruction on its own.

At the same time, the countries allied to the Syrian regime, in particular Russia and Iran - after their direct participation in the worst crimes against the population - but also China, are in the front line to benefit economically and strategically from the reconstruction.

Jihadists and Islamic fundamentalist forces lose ground but retain the ability to harm

The jihadists of the Islamic State (EI or “Daesh”) have lost the vast majority of Syrian and Iraqi cities and urban centres they occupied. Only isolated border regions between Iraq and Syria currently remain under EI control, in addition to a few pockets on Syrian territory. Other Jihadist and Salafist organizations - sometimes opposing Assad regime while fighting democratic forces - have also lost ground.

However, the loss of vast territories by these organizations does not mean the end of their existence and their ability to strike by terrorist attacks.

The Fourth International reaffirms its opposition to these ultra-reactionary organizations, which constitute another side of the counter-revolution. We must never forget that their rise to power against the democratic forces of the insurgency is as much due to the manoeuvres of the Syrian regime seeking to justify its unlimited repression in the eyes of the world as to the intervention of financiers and advisers from other states in the region. We must stress the need to tackle the sources of their development: the authoritarian regimes in the region that repress all forms of democratic and social resistance, regional and international foreign interventions, neoliberal policies that impoverish the popular classes.

PYD attacked, Kurds threatened

In January 2018, the Turkish army, assisted by Islamic and reactionary militias of the Syrian armed opposition, launched a massive air and ground offensive against the north-western Syrian province of Afrin, with the majority Kurdish population controlled by the Democratic Union Party (PYD) and its People’s Protection Units (YPG). This region is now occupied by forces of the Turkish army and Syrian militias in its pay, who are continuing human rights violations and forced displacement of the population.

The Turkish military operation against Afrin in Syria and the rejection by the Iraqi government of the result of the referendum on independence organised by the Barzani leadership. in Iraqi Kurdistan in October 2017, show once again that the international and regional powers are not prepared to see Kurdish national or autonomist aspirations come true. It is clear that Moscow and Washington’s support to YPG at different times, such as YPG’s support to the Russian military and air campaign alongside Assad’s regime launched in late September 2015 around Aleppo, did not prevent Ankara’s military aggression against Afrin. In his rush to dictatorship, Turkish President Erdogan wants to crush the Kurdish people like any democratic aspiration in his country.

The Fourth International reaffirms the right to self-determination of the Kurdish people, a right which can take various forms in the different countries of the region (such as independence, federalism or recognition of the Kurdish people as an entity with equal rights within a State). We welcome the heroic commitment of the forces that are leading this struggle against the obscurantist

forces, even if we can express more or less strong criticism of their leadership, particularly in Iraq concerning the Barzani leadership, but also in Syria concerning the tactics of the PYD - while welcoming the emancipatory experiences it has attempted in Rojava. In any case, the widest solidarity with the Kurdish people is necessary against the fierce repression they suffer in Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran, which is also reflected in the practices of European countries.

Internationalist solidarity with the Syrian people in all its components!

All the counter-revolutionary forces, despite their rivalry, acted simultaneously to defeat the Syrian revolution.

- Whether they are those who support the Bashar al-Assad regime (Russia, Iran and their militias) and who are involved in serious war crimes;
- the American and European imperialists who made declarations of principle about democracy but refused to allow the democratic components of the uprising to defend themselves, and also bombed civilian populations in the name of the fight against terrorism;
- the Turkish regime which used the Syrian revolution to appear as the leader of the “peoples of Islam” and transformed itself into an occupier of part of northern Syria, and bombed cities to fight Kurdish organisations;
- or the Gulf States which financially support all ultra-reactionary movements and militias as long as they serve their objectives;
- and finally Israel which, by carrying out targeted bombardments in Syria in order to weaken Assad and prevent the military expansion of Iran and Hezbollah, in fact strengthens them politically.

In this context the Fourth International calls:

- for the cessation of all military offensives. This means that all means of pressure must be used to sanctuarise the last regions that have escaped the regime and where hundreds of thousands of displaced civilians have taken refuge.
- to continue to denounce all foreign military interventions, that oppose aspirations for democratic change in Syria, whether in support of the regime (Russia, Iran, Hezbollah) or by proclaiming themselves “friends of the Syrian people” (Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey, United States, etc.). The Syrian popular classes struggling for freedom and dignity have no friendly state in their struggle... even if they may seek to take advantage of inter-imperialist rivalries to advance their own interests while maintaining political independence and autonomy.
- to reaffirm the opposition to the Assad regime, to refuse its re-legitimation internationally, not to forget the war crimes, the tens of thousands of political prisoners still tortured in the regime’s jails , the disappeared, the refugees, the internally displaced, etc. A blank cheque given today to Assad and his crimes would be a further abandonment of the Syrian people and their heroic revolt, and would inevitably increase the sense of impunity of all authoritarian states, allowing them in turn to crush their populations if they were to revolt. Similarly, all actors who have committed human rights violations against civilians must be punished for their crimes.

The memory and political experiences of the Syrian revolutionary process must now be used to (re)build resistance, in which the many activists in exile will have a role to play and the internationalist solidarity movement has the responsibility to support the development of these

networks. We must recall the original objectives of the Syrian popular uprising for democracy, social justice and equality, against all forms of racism and religious confessionalism.

In this perspective, it is urgent to strengthen all the efforts throughout the world aimed at recreating genuine internationalist and progressive solidarity, denouncing all the international and regional imperialist powers without exception. At the same time we must oppose neoliberal security policies, racist and Islamophobic policies. In particular we struggle against the criminal policies of closing the borders of the European states that have turned the Mediterranean into a vast cemetery for people fleeing wars, dictatorships and misery. Syrian refugees have the right to be welcomed in conditions of dignity in the countries they choose.

Internationalist solidarity with the Syrian popular classes is more necessary than ever!

Adopted unanimously

Fourth International Bureau, 3 June 2018

P.S.

* <http://www.internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article5550>