

Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières > English > Europe, Great Britain > Eastern Europe & Russian Federation > Ukraine > **Ukraine: The Tragedy of Odessa - “we cannot allow the death of these people (...)**

Ukraine: The Tragedy of Odessa - “we cannot allow the death of these people to be used as a justification for military intervention or further killings”

Monday 12 May 2014, by [ILYAS Suhail](#) (Date first published: 7 May 2014).

Following the tragic events of 2nd May, we must stand with the people of Ukraine against their own government and oligarchs, against the machinations of the West, against the growing threat of fascism, and against the rising tide of Russian imperialism. Suhail Ilyas writes:

More than 40 people were killed in the southern Ukrainian city of Odessa on 2nd May, following fierce fighting and a deadly fire at the city’s Trade Unions House. Other cities, such as Slavyansk, have also seen lethal clashes. News sources differ on the sequence of events leading to the fire, but footage and photographs of the scene show that the victims died horrific deaths. There were undoubtedly fascists involved in the worst of the attacks, and the police clearly played a role, whether through inaction or by design.

There are many reports scrutinising the exact details of what happened on that day, but it is important to understand who benefits from this violence. The Russian government can use it as an excuse to escalate their military operations, as can the Ukrainian government and their supporters in the EU and the USA. Ukraine’s interior minister is claiming that pro-Russian “rebels”, who were the victims in Odessa, started the fire accidentally.

Neither side requires their version of events to be true, they simply need to entrench division and turn popular opinion against the other. In the meantime, the fascists are able to gain support and grow in numbers.

These consequences only deepen the tragedy of the Odessa killings. “Nationalism, both Ukrainian and Russian, is now celebrating over the bones of the young people killed in Odessa,” in the words of Andrei Ishchenko, a member of the Left Opposition in Odessa. Meanwhile, Russian socialist Ivan Ovsyannikov emphasises that “we cannot allow the death of these people to be used as a justification for military intervention or further killings”.

The ultimate provocateurs of violence and division across Ukraine, from Sevastopol to Kharkiv, from Donetsk to Odessa, are competing blocs of imperialists and oligarchs.

The USA and EU seek to consolidate the position of the interim government in Kiev, which intends to impose severe austerity measures on the population and suppress any further dissent of the kind that overthrew Yanukovich and provided them with a chance to take power in the first place.

Russia is expanding into eastern Ukraine, having already seized Crimea. This is of particular concern

to Crimean Tatars, some of whom have left the peninsula, and Jews in eastern Ukraine, who are emigrating to Israel in large numbers. Both groups are threatened by pro-Russian forces, who are supposedly “antifascist”. It should go without saying that the spread of the Svoboda and Right Sector threatens them also.

Socialists do not need to choose between imperialists or make apologies for their actions. Opposition to Russian imperialism does not mean support for Western neoliberalism, and is not a surrender to fascism. It is a grave mistake to pretend that Russian intervention allows meaningful self-determination for Crimea or eastern Ukraine, or that the actions of the Russian state are in any way antifascist. A successful Russian takeover of the east will strengthen Putin’s hand in the oppression of other victims of Russian imperialism, such as in the North Caucasus, as well as against ordinary Russians who will find that dissent is even more fiercely suppressed.

It should be absolutely clear that we stand with the people of Ukraine against their own government and oligarchs, against the machinations of the West, against the growing threat of fascism, and against the rising tide of Russian imperialism. There can be no compromise on any of these matters.

Suhail Ilyas

P.S.

* <http://rs21.org.uk/2014/05/07/the-tragedy-of-odessa/>