

Rojava : Let's break the silence

« *Above all, there was a belief in the revolution and the future, a feeling of having suddenly emerged into an era of equality and freedom* », George Orwell wrote in his *Homage to Catalonia*. All around the world, social justice promoters keep honoring the memory of progressist Spain, defeated in the late 1930's by European fascisms. The memory is ours, but now we are the ones who, armed with this renewed and reignited memory, need to fight the Rojava battle in Syria.

A will for emancipation

Yes, civilians *must* be taken into account, whether they are being bombed in Afrin by the Turkish state and its jihadist allies or by Assad's regime and its supporters, as in the Ghouta. Yes, the « humanitarian disaster » brought by the Turkish invasion in Rojava *must* be condemned; yes, the International Red Cross Committee *must* be heard when stressing the « needs » of families, and so is Kurdistan's Red Crescent when launching its « call for help ». But these crucial appeals are not enough : we *must* protect the emancipatory political alternative which Rojava has been proposing since 2012, and which has been spreading through Northern Syria.

Let's break the silence in response to these partisans' call, let's do justice to their singular perspective: trying to invent a new way, in a country devastated by a seven-year war which also affects Europe, between the ethnical autocratism of a Syrian Arab Republic and a theocracy celebrated by too many of its opponents. An anti-fascist alternative supported by the Movement for a Democratic Society (TEV-DEM) and protected by the self-defense units of YPG/J and their partners in the Syrian Democratic Forces. Assisted by two social contracts endorsed in 2014 and 2016, Rojava (and its three self-administred counties: Afrin, Kobane, and Djezireh) and the Northern Syrian Democratic Federation are advocating social justice, individual and political liberties, direct democracy, freedom of faith, equality of the sexes, and ecology; and torture as well as the death penalty have been banned.

This is a Syrian alternative equally involving, Kurds, Arabs, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Turkmens, Armenians, and Chechens — whether they are Sunni Muslims, Alawites, Christians, Yezidis, or atheists — in full respect of all Middle-Eastern borders.

Let's break the silence so that the defence of the Kurds isn't left to a small number of essentialist media darlings, who are mysteriously crusading for « our values », for the variegated population of Rojava and Northern Syria are definitely *not* fighting for our liberal « democracies ».

Of course, this is not to say that a miracle is happening, or that a territory has at long last, emancipated itself from powers which exist in that part of the world as well as everywhere else: contradictions abound. One can only describe it as an ongoing process – a very real experience, « very different from everything else in Syria » according to Noam Chomsky. But any hope for this revolution will definitely be crushed if the Turkish government and its theocratic allies (armed Syrian rebel groups, various leftovers of Daech and Al-Qaida) are permitted to prevail in the months to come.

Power to the people

President Erdoğan was invited by president Macron in early January 2018. Let's not forget that Erdoğan is currently bargaining for the mass incarceration of three millions refugees by

threatening to open Turkey's borders; that he is filling up his prisons with journalists, with writers, with artists, with pro-democracy, pro-feminism, and pro-LGBT activists, and is constantly updating his war criminal record; and he is now talking about a "crusade", supporting jihad in Northern Syria and announcing that he is there to stay. Then he goes on mocking Kurdish fighters who have allegedly "fled Afrin with their tails between their legs": nothing could be further from the truth; the city was deliberately evacuated in order to protect its inhabitants, as the Turkish state had already murdered over 500 civilians since "Operation Olive Branch" started two months ago. Still, the Kurds are holding out: their withdrawal guarantees the resistance's strategic reorientation.

When in France, Erdoğan has asked for trade exchanges to be pushed up to \$20 billions (as opposed to the current \$13,4 billions; he has placed an order for twenty-five Airbus aircrafts, and ratified an air- and anti-missile defence contract. Emmanuel Macron talked of "*a unity of views and strategic interests*" and went on to advocate (in "*Le Figaro*") a vibrant call for "*precaution and restraint*" as regards the invasion of Rojava, appropriating his counterpart's partial vocabulary in labelling YPG/J units "*possible terrorists*".

Spain fell, Chile's Popular Unity fell too; Rojava still stands. Let's break the silence, let's build concrete solidarities here, let's give voice to these populations' demands: a humanitarian corridor and a no-fly zone. Because if we don't, once again this story of hope will have to be told in the past tense.

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