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Kurdish struggle

**Open letter to the signatories
of the declaration “Let us
mobilise against dictatorships,
imperialist aggression and
Daesh. We reject the politics of
“national security”, racism
and austerity”**

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This open letter to the signatories of the declaration “Let us mobilise against dictatorships, imperialist aggression and Daesh. We reject the politics of ‘national security’, racism and austerity” is being published by *International Viewpoint* with some delay. We have been hoping to receive a response from the signatories (all or some) of the original declaration. As soon as we receive such a statement we will publish it.

Solidarity with Rojava, with the Kurdish revolution and with the liberation struggle of the PKK!

An international statement on the situation in Syria in Iraq “Let us mobilise against dictatorships, imperialist aggression and Daesh. We reject the politics of ‘national security’, racism and austerity” published by [International Viewpoint](#) on 11 December, has now (as of 4 January 2016) been signed by over 40 revolutionary socialist organizations spanning five continents. [1]

We very much welcome the emergence of such broad joint statements from the Left! As individuals who feel closely tied to the revolutionary Left and its fortunes, we hope to see more international initiatives of this type in the future, as they can contribute to an intensification of international coordination between the forces of the revolutionary Left, thereby helping to make us a more visible social and political force. We’d like to thank the comrades for taking the initiative for this international statement, and we share the analysis and the demands of the statement.

We are deeply disappointed, however, to see that the statement says absolutely nothing about the Kurdish revolution or the specific democratic experiment in Rojava, nor does it proclaim solidarity with them. In our view, this is symptomatic of the difficulties that some parts of the revolutionary Left have concerning solidarity with Rojava, the Kurdish revolution and the PKK (Kurdish Workers Party). Thus we have taken this opportunity to author an open letter to the organizations that have signed this statement in hopes of beginning (or intensifying) an international discussion on the questions raised here.

The Arab Spring has slipped into the long night of an Arab Winter. The only instance in which the democratic revolts of the Arab world have not been crushed by reactionary forces but instead led to the establishment of a new democratic polity is Rojava, the Kurdish territory in northern Syria in which the dynamic of the Syrian revolution has connected with the Kurdish liberation movement encompassing the Kurdish populations in all of the countries of the region. Under the leadership of the PYD (Democratic Union Party), the people of Rojava are experimenting with a democratic, secular and multi-ethnic social model that proclaims gender equality, social justice and respect for the environment. Certainly, the revolution in Rojava is not a socialist one, even if its leading forces describes themselves as such. But it is nevertheless a democratic revolution, a revolution against national oppression and a feminist revolution – and thereby the most hopeful and inspiring event in a region fraught with jihadist terror, civil war and imperialist intervention. Nowhere else have the democratic revolts of the last few years – from Tahrir to Occupy and the movements of the squares in southern Europe – condensed into an alternative social model as they did in Rojava. It could become an alternative role model for other parts of the region, it might inspire other struggles, and the dynamics of democratic Revolutions always might have a potential to lead to a socialist Revolution. It is precisely because of this, however, that Rojava has become the target of Daesh terror and Turkish sub-imperialism – as well as the most important point of international solidarity with progressive and Left movements in the region.

The PYD is the Syrian sister party of the PKK. The PKK has undergone a considerable transformation over the past years, moving away from its Stalinist and nationalist roots towards a libertarian socialist-inspired model of ‘democratic confederalism’ beyond the confines of the nation-state, inscribing the liberation of women as a central objective. In the last several decades the PKK has built a transnational, mass revolutionary organization with millions of supporters. It is undoubtedly the most important Left force in the entire region. In Turkey, the PKK and its sister organizations fight Erdogan’s neoliberal despotism; in Syria, they oppose the Assad regime and they’ve forced it to retreat from Rojava (after uprisings across Syria had already put the regime under considerable pressure) and have now become Daesh’s greatest enemy; in Iran they oppose the dictatorship of the Mullahs; in northern Iraq they fight Daesh and they stand in Opposition to the corrupt and pro-imperialist Barzani regime. In Turkey the HDP, an alliance between the Kurdish movement and the Turkish radical left, the Gezi Park movement and women’s and LGBT movements, has revitalized the Left and passed the 10% threshold – the first Left party to do so in the country’s history. The struggle against Erdogan led by the PKK in the Kurdish areas of Turkey has meanwhile taken the form of open popular uprisings for ‘democratic autonomy’.

In response to the growing strength of the PKK and its sister organizations, NATO member state Turkey launched a new war against the Kurdish movement last June and began brutally repressing the popular uprisings in northern (Turkish) Kurdistan, while PKK positions in northern Iraq are being bombed and the danger of a military invasion of Rojava by the Turkish state persists.

Although the PKK fights on the front line against Daesh (and opposes Erdogan, Assad, the Mullahs and Barzani), it is still regarded as a terrorist organization and banned by the US, the EU and many other states. Few examples demonstrate the hollowness of the West’s ‘war against ISIS’ better than its ongoing persecution of ISIS’s most militant adversary, the PKK. In this situation, the international Left is tasked with concrete anti-imperialist solidarity with the most important Left force in the Middle East by building a powerful campaign against the persecution of the PKK, particularly in the imperialist centres.

We expect this solidarity also from the signatories of the statement referred to above!

For revolutionary socialists, solidarity with liberation movements should never be uncritical. There is much to criticize with regard to the PKK and PYD in terms of its past, and also of its present, such as its rejection of the working class as the central actor of socialist transformation, its mainly ethical understanding of socialism, the historical foundations of Abdullah Ã–calan’s theories, the personality cult surrounding him, attacks on oppositional demonstrations in PYD-controlled areas, etc. The PKK’s constant manoeuvring between the region’s shifting constellations of imperialist interventions must also be viewed critically.

Nevertheless, we consider it unacceptable for revolutionary socialists to not even mention Rojava, the Kurdish revolution or the PKK’s struggle in a statement on the situation in the Middle East. It demonstrates a political blindness with regard to the most important Left force in the Middle East. Solidarity with their fight should instead become a unifying strategic perspective for Left solidarity with the progressive forces in the region.

We demand (complementary to the demands contained in the above statement):

* A public debate about the significance of Rojava, the Kurdish revolution and the PKK’s struggle among revolutionary socialist forces

* Active support for the revolution in Rojava and the uprisings in northern Kurdistan

* To start an international revolutionary socialist campaign against the illegalization of the PKK, or revolutionary

socialist participation in existing campaigns

First Signatories:

Michael Prütz (NaO - Neue antikapitalistische Organisation [New anticapitalist Organization], Germany; has joined the GIM - Gruppe Internationaler Marxisten [Group of international Marxists] in 1970)

Angela Klein (isl - international sozialistische linke [international socialist left], Germany)

Dr. Florian Wilde (Die Linke; from 1993-2002 Member of IST-Groups, Germany)

Erkin Erdogan (DS?P - Devrimci Sosyalist ??çi Partisi [Revolutionary Socialist Workers' Party], Turkey / Marx21, Germany)

Tino Plancherel (ex-member of SAP - Sozialistische Arbeiterpartei [Socialist Workers Party], Switzerland)

Michael Schilwa (NaO, Germany; has joined the GIM in the 1970s)

Michael Eff (NaO, Germany; founding member of KJO Spartakus in 1969)

Mark Bergfeld (Cologne/London)

We'll collect and publish further signatories. If you'd like to sign, please write your name (and, if possible, the organization you're belonging to) to rojavasolidarity@gmx.de

[1] The declaration was initially published on the Lebanese website [Al Manshour](#).