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Syria

ISIS (Islamic State in Iraq and Sham): An enemy of the revolution and an ally of the Assad regime

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The popular anger against ISIS authoritarian practices and reactionary ideology in the liberated areas of the Assad regime has been mounting for months because of their authoritarian and reactionary practices. In the eyes of the people from the liberated areas living under ISIS' domination, this latter was just another face of the Assad regime because of its authoritarianism, in addition to its reactionary ideology, like a banner in a demonstration on December 27 2013 in Maraath al-Numan in Idlib was saying "The majority of us have become wanted by two states (the Assad regime and ISIS)".

At the end of 2013 and beginning of 2014, the popular frustrations and anger exploded following new acts of violence from ISIS. On January 3 2014, demonstrations occurred in different locations where ISIS was present to demand its departure and overthrow. Chants: "Assad and D??ish (ISIS) are one" or " D??ish (ISIS), get out", which have become widely used for a while now in liberated areas of Syria, were heard everywhere. Military members of ISIS were arrested in some villages, while other ISIS battalions were kicked out after popular protest and military fights. ISIS had to leave many areas, killing often the people, including activists, women and children, who were held in their prisons.

Popular protests and military fights between FSA and Islamic Front battalions against ISIS are still happening as we speak. The pressure of the popular masses has pushed military battalions to act against ISIS, especially the Islamic Front recalcitrant in the beginning to engage military against ISIS.

Despite several setbacks, ISIS is still nevertheless occupying various regions, and notably the city of Raqqa. In this latter, ISIS imposed the burqa on all women, in addition to gloves, women are not allowed to raise their voices in the street or walk at a late hour without a male guardian, women were also deemed guilty of donning a face veil that was too transparent, having visible eyebrows or wearing a hair clip under her hijab, music and smoking have been banned, Internet cafes were frequently raided, the jiziya (Islamic tax on religious minorities) levied on Christian residents, they were also barred from building or rebuilding churches, wearing crosses or engaging in public prayer, etc... They arrested, kidnapped, tortured and assassinated civil activists, FSA soldiers and Kurdish individuals, while issuing a Fatwa against Kurds, allowing for their killing and calling Kurdistan "Kafiristan", the land of the infidels. Public executions take place for offenses including accusations of cursing the prophet Muhammad or God.

The occupation of Raqqa has a special importance because it was the first capital of province to be liberated from the Assad regime, and it was a living example of how people in liberated areas could self organize democratically and oppose both the regime and Islamist reactionary forces.

Raqqa was actually completely autonomous for few months and it was the local population that managed all the civil services for the collectivity. The popular organizations most often led by the youth developed importantly. They multiplied, to the extent that more than 42 social movements were officially registered at the end of May 2013. The popular committees have organized various campaigns. One example is the "revolutionary flag represents me" campaign, which consists in painting the revolutionary flag in the neighborhoods and the streets of the city, to oppose the Islamists' campaign to impose the black Islamist flag. On the cultural front, a play mocking the Assad regime was played at the center of the city and, in the beginning of June, the popular organizations have organized an exhibit of art and local crafts. Centers were established to take care of the youth and treat psychological disorders as a result of the war. The end of the year Syrian baccalaureate exams, in June and July, were entirely organized by volunteers.

These types of experiences of self-management are found in many liberated regions. It is worth noting that women

play a great role in these movements and in the protests in general.

For instance on 18 June 2013, in the city of Raqqa, a mass protest led by women was held in front of the Islamist group Jabhat al-Nusra's headquarters, which will later let its headquarters to ISIS in the city, where the protesters called for the liberation of the incarcerated prisoners. The protesters hailed slogans against Jabhat al-Nusra, and denounced their actions. The protesters did not hesitate to hail the first slogan used in Damascus in February 2011: "the Syrian people refuses to be humiliated." The group "Haquna" (meaning our right), of which many women are part of, have also organized many gatherings against the Islamist groups in Raqqa, hailing among other things "Raqqa is free, down with Jabhat al-Nusra."

During summer 2013, there were solidarity gatherings require the liberation kidnapped activists held in Islamist-held prisons. The protests enabled the liberation of some activists, but numerous others remain in jail to this day, like the famous Father Paolo, and others including the son of the intellectual Yassin Hajj Saleh, Firas. In September 2013, following the attack by the ISIS against the Church of Our Lady of the Annunciation in Raqqa end of September, youth popular groups and activists organized a demonstration to condemn ISIS actions, and in which they brandished a big cross in solidarity with the Syrian Christian community of the city. They also issued a statement saying that "they demand the respect for religions, Christian and Muslim are one, we have lived and will live as brothers. The people who practiced these action only represent themselves and the Islamic religion is innocent of such acts".

In the popular organizations resistance to the Islamists groups in the city of Raqqa, like elsewhere, women have played a leading role. Suad Nofal, a school teacher, for example has been protesting nearly on daily manner for months against the authoritarian practices of the ISIS and to demand the release of political prisoners imprisoned by the Islamist group.

ISIS's occupation of Raqqa and other liberated areas makes this group an enemy of the revolution by denying the Syrian people to establish a new democratic and social society and therefore an ally of the Assad regime that has the same objectives. Both are enemies of the Syrian revolutionary masses and it struggle for democracy, social justice and no to sectarianism.

A banner raised in the city of Kafranbel in December 2013 resumed very well the situation of the Syrian revolution "enemies are many ... the revolution is one... and continues" Yes the revolution continues, despite the difficulties, the multiple dangers and threats, the Syrian people continues its path towards freedom and dignity sweeping all oppressors.

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