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Syria

# Long live the Syrian revolution - Build international solidarity

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**On March 15, 2011, a few dozen young Syrians dared to demonstrate right in the centre of the old city of Damascus, infected by the spirit of hope that had been ignited throughout the Arab world by the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions; a small demonstration of courageous young people demanding freedom for the Syrian people, who had been subjected to a regime of terror for more than 40 years**

Three days after this event, the town of Deraa in the South of the country rose up following the savage repression of children who had written political slogans on a wall. A great mass demonstration was repressed in blood by the security forces of the regime. Starting from that day, the revolution set every town and city in the country alight.

As a result of the totalitarian nature of the oligarchy in power under the leadership of the Assad family, independent political life was almost banished in Syrian society. Generations of militants, in particular those on the left, had for decades been severely repressed, were imprisoned, died under torture or were driven into exile. Trade-union activity was and remains under the control of agencies linked to the various security services and to the party in power, the Baath Party, thus prohibiting any independent trade union movement.

This monopoly on political and trade-union activity, associated with ruthless repression, made it possible for the regime to implement over the last fifteen years one of the most aggressive neoliberal policies in the region. It drove increasingly broad layers of the population into the direst poverty - workers, those in precarious work, the unemployed, peasants deprived of their land, those who are today the driving force of the Syrian revolution. This explains the profound social nature of the revolution and its heroic combativeness, but it also explains why it terrorizes the local big bourgeoisie, and why it worries the reactionary Arab countries as well as the Western governments.

Systematic shooting of demonstrators demanding the end of the regime has given way to bombardments, to the encirclement and destruction of neighbourhoods and cities in revolt, such as Homs, resulting in thousands of deaths, tens of thousands of wounded and prisoners, who were generally tortured. But every time that the armed forces, the security services and the bloodthirsty militias moved into a neighbourhood or a city, the following day peaceful demonstrations began again. Despite all these atrocities, the regime is losing more and more ground in the face of the popular insurrection. Its manoeuvres aimed at dividing people along religious lines have fortunately been thwarted. And the two biggest cities, Damascus and Aleppo, are now seeing more and more protests, in particular Aleppo which has become the centre of student protests. The Syrian revolution is now striking at the heart of the regime.

## **Solidarity without armed intervention**

The Syrian people finds itself alone in the face of a machine of death and destruction. It is calling for international assistance, while refusing foreign military intervention on its territory. The regime accuses the opposition of being in favour of such an intervention, but if there is foreign intervention, it is in favour of the dictatorship - for example the military and technical aid and information provided by the Russian and Iranian governments to subdue the revolution. Furthermore, the majority of the economic sanctions affect above all the people and are used by the regime as pretexts for a policy of shortages, rationing and huge increases in the prices of essential products, in order to weaken even more the insurgent masses. In any case, we cannot have in confidence in the manoeuvres of the world or regional powers, which defend their own interests.

## Long live the Syrian revolution - Build international solidarity

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The general strike and the actions of civil disobedience which have lasted since December 11, 2011, with daily demonstrations, form the principal character of this revolution. The armed resistance by deserting soldiers and some civilians is a comprehensible reaction in the face of the unrestrained brutality of the regime and its dreadful exactions against the civilian population, but it remains limited. For a year already, millions of Syrians have taken to the streets to demand freedom, equality, social justice and a free and independent country. Today they are even more determined to put an end to the Assad regime, but they need the international solidarity of the peoples. The working-class and democratic movement and the Left have remained much too hesitant, and even blind, faced with the legitimacy and the heroic scale of this insurrection. It is more than time to build this international solidarity at the base, an essential contribution for a progressive future for the Syrian people.

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