

Hands off Afrin! Solidarity with the Kurds!

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"Operation Olive Branch", the Turkish incursion into the Kurdish held territory of Afrin, has been running since January 20th. Last weekend alone, the Turkish army flew over a hundred bombing missions. Already days before, heavy artillery had fired at the positions of the Kurdish self-defence forces YPG/YPJ (People's Defence Force / Women's Defence Units). Since Sunday, 21 January, tanks and infantry, often deployed by puppet troops of the Turkish-led FSA (Free Syrian Army), including numerous Islamist ultra-reactionaries, have penetrated into the Kurdish territory around Afrin.

The fight is between a highly armed NATO army with absolute air superiority and an army that is militarily inferior, despite US aid. Erdogan's war aim is clear: it is to destroy the forms of Kurdish self-determination and autonomy that have been established in recent years. He knows that he has the agreement of the Syrian government, the parts of the "opposition" that Turkey maintains and of Russian imperialism. They may formally express their "concern" but, more or less openly, they give Turkey and its ground forces a free hand in the reactionary redivision of the country after Assad's victory in the civil war.

The USA and the West, who used the Kurds as foot soldiers in the fight against the Islamic state, are now dropping them like a hot potato. Their announcement to create a 30,000-strong border force together with the Kurdish-dominated SDF (Syrian Democratic Forces) was later dismissed as a "misunderstanding". On 21 January, the US State Department tweeted: "We call on Turkey to exercise restraint in order to avoid civilian casualties in its military operations." What this actually means is: Dead fighters of the YPG/YPJ are acceptable collateral damage for a US policy that can hardly be surpassed in cynicism. However, the German Foreign Office is not much inferior to this when it calls for "both sides to exercise restraint" in this unequal struggle.

While Turkey wants to consolidate its influence as a regional power with this operation and at the same time uses it to repress internal "enemies", the Syrian government and all the other regional powers and imperialist actors obviously accept the invasion. Nobody wants to have their fingers burnt for the rights of the nationally oppressed Kurdish people. On the contrary, everyone is hoping that the Turkish offensive will run as smoothly as possible and that it will quickly produce results. The injustice to the Kurds may be regretted, but above all they should be "moderate" in their response, that is, they should not rebel against the cynical game.

With its invasion, Turkey has not only declared war on the people of Afrin. The war against the Kurdish people and their organisations in Turkey itself, such as the HDP and the PKK will also be intensified. The protests proclaimed by the HDP were nipped in the bud with brutal police violence. Erdogan blatantly threatens all opponents and every democratic protest with brutal oppression and annihilation: "In the spirit of national unity we are conducting an operation against those who threaten our national borders from abroad. And those who try to hit us from the inside? Just as we drag them out of their caves in the mountains, so we'll never leave the squares and streets to them." (Tagesschau ARD, January 21st)

The Kurdish resistance to the Turkish invasion is more than justified. Regardless of their attitude to the Kurdish leadership policy in Rojava and Afrin, all leftists, the entire international workers' movement, all anti-imperialists, must condemn the Turkish invasion and demand its immediate end.

However, appeals to the great powers or to the UN will not help. Revolutionaries support the legitimate resistance of the Kurdish people in Rojava and Turkey. We stand for internationalist help for the fighters, for their material support. The Kurdish region in northern Iraq must open its borders to Rojava.

We call on the workers' movement, all left-wing parties, the trade unions, all left-wing and anti-imperialist forces, to take to the streets in solidarity with the Kurds. We call for the opening up of borders to all Kurdish refugees and the lifting of the ban on their organisations, above all the PKK. We demand the cessation of all arms supplies and military aid to Turkey and the withdrawal of all imperialist troops from the region!

The invasion of Turkish troops threatens to be another reactionary blow in the redivision of Syria and especially against the Kurdish people. However, it will not bring "stabilisation" to the region. Rather, it will only reinforce injustice and oppression.

The only hope lies in the resistance, not only of the Kurdish people, but also of their brothers and sisters among the workers, the urban and rural masses throughout the Middle East; Kurds and Palestinians, Iranian workers and the truly democratic and socialist forces in Syria, Iraq and Turkey.

Such a policy, and this is a lesson not only of the Kurdish struggle but, even more so, of the civil war in Syria, must be pursued independently of all imperialist and reactionary forces. It must combine social and democratic issues, the fight for the right to self-determination with the fight for socialist transformation throughout the region. This requires a programme and a political organisation, a revolutionary workers' party and an International.

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