

Interview with the Internationalist Commune in Rojava

Facing the Threat of Invasion

CrimethInc.

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As Turkey begins its attack on Rojava, the autonomous region in Northern Syria, we are calling for people all around the world to mobilize to impose consequences on Turkey and the Trump administration for this senseless atrocity. We present the following short interview with participants in the Internationalist Commune, one of several projects in Rojava that involves participants from around the world, to offer visibility to some of the many people who may be murdered in a Turkish offensive and to the worthwhile projects they are undertaking. The interview was conducted after Trump gave Turkey permission to invade Syria two days ago, with death's scythe hanging in the air.

A revolution began in Rojava in 2012, radically changing the lives of millions of people in northern Syria. The Kurdish people joined with several other peoples in the region, organizing themselves into autonomous councils, communes, and cooperatives, in the vacuum created by the withdrawal of the authoritarian Assad regime at the beginning of the Syrian Civil War. Women's self-organization has been a driving force in this social and political revolution. A unique multi-ethnic and multi-religious project has emerged, which today provides for the peaceful coexistence of millions of Kurds, Arabs, Assyrians, Yazidis, Armenians, Christians, and Muslims. At the same time, people in Rojava have been at the forefront of fighting the Islamic State (ISIS), sustaining casualties well into five figures.

For months now, Turkey has threatened to attack the Democratic Federation of North-East Syria. The government of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has announced that it is determined to invade Rojava, which will inevitably result in the ethnic cleansing of Kurdish groups, the resumption of jihadist violence from ISIS and others, and the rekindling of civil war in the country.

After the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) achieved victory over the last territory remaining to the Islamic State, the US government tricked the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) into dismantling defenses along the border with Turkey, promising to secure peace in the region and discouraging them from seeking other international allies. As soon as they had done this, Trump gave Turkey permission to invade.

In the midst of this terrifying situation, our comrades Façção Fictícia conducted the following brief interview with the Internationalist Commune, a revolutionary enclave in Rojava that welcomes volunteers from all over the planet interested in ecological, horizontal, and communal practices.

Describe the work of the Internationalist Commune of Rojava. Where are you located and what is your relationship with the surrounding communities?

The Internationalist Commune is a place of communal living and learning situated near Derik, in the Cizre canton of North-Eastern Syria. Its aim is to be a place where internationals first learn the bases of the revolution, such as Jineolojî and the history of Kurdistan and Middle-East, as an introduction to the activities in which they will participate then in other places. This educational aspect is organized through the Internationalist Academy Şehid Helîn Qereçox, which is located inside the commune. This is one of the main activities of the Commune. But it is also a place that serves as a base for internationals involved in variety of activities, where we can discuss our experiences, exchange on ideological topics and further our understanding of the revolution. Practical activities are also carried out with the Make Rojava Green Again campaign, which implements ecological projects.

What are the main principles and values of the commune? How is it connected in people's daily lives there with other forms of struggle such as anarchism, Zapatismo, feminism, and ecology?

One ongoing discussion at the Commune is—what does it mean to be an internationalist? So we can say that it is behind this word that a lot of our values are placed, such as international solidarity, remembering our şehids [martyrs], and the desire to learn from this revolution as well as from all revolutionary history.

The internationals here come from very different backgrounds, which cover said topics, so we can say that these struggles are part of this new internationalism, and we learn from all of them every day through discussion. More concretely, here, women have their own space and are organized autonomously. People who want to take part in ecological activism can do so through Make Rojava Green Again, but also everyone at the Commune is involved in the ecological works. Our connection to anarchism and Zapatismo is expressed by the portraits of figures from these movements that hang on the walls, such as Comandanta Ramona or Federica Montseny, and their achievements are discussed in education or more informally. Also, through our media projects, such as the Internationalist Commune website and the RiseUp4Rojava campaign, we share information and perspective on radical movements around the world and maintain solid bonds with them.

What has changed in the context of daily life and grassroots organizing since the collapse of ISIS as an organization that controlled territory?

The fall of ISIS has made it possible to go further in organizing society in a communal way and with a longer-term perspective than we could while facing the constant threat they posed. But some hidden cells still exist and terrorist attacks are happening regularly. In addition, the presence of many members of ISIS in the region, for whom it is unclear whether they will be judged in their home countries, poses a serious security threat.

Turkey has openly declared itself the chief enemy of the achievements of the revolution in Rojava. How does this impact the region and the politics there? Is this threat indeed the greatest so far?

Right now, as we write these lines, we are facing the threat of an immediate invasion, as Erdoğan has announced that Turkey is about to attack and the USA is removing its troops from the region. These threats have been made several times, with increasing intensity over the past year, peaking before in December/January and July/August, when we thought a war could start any time—possibly as a total war, since we know what Turkey has been capable of in the past. Indeed, they've been announcing it: they want ethnic cleansing, they want genocide.

So yes, Turkey is the greatest threat in the region since the beginning of the revolution. In such times, when we have to freeze our projects to think about our security, it impacts all aspects of society. Everyone asks themselves: what do we do if war starts? So a lot of our activities are undertaken in relation to the context of war, and our politics become focused on finding a democratic [sic] solution to the Turkish threats and post-ISIS situation.

We communicate more about the achievements of the revolution, to show what is in danger. But we also try to keep life going as it should, and somehow this pushes us to be even more democratic, go further in the revolution, as a response.

What is your perspective regarding the future for the revolution and the legacy of the Internationalist Commune for revolutionaries around the world?

The moment we are living now is historic: the revolution will either grow stronger or be annihilated. What is at stake is not only the revolution in North-Eastern Syria, but the possibility of a revolution in the whole Middle-East and worldwide. We hope the seriousness of the situation will push people around the world to express solidarity, rise up, and maybe come and join us. The Rojava Revolution should illuminate and inspire other revolutionary movements. The Internationalist Commune will keep on providing news and perspective on the situation here, with an international focus, and welcome expressions of solidarity from around the world.

Thank you very much for taking some time in this delicate moment. We hope this interview will convey to people around the world why it is important to support to the people in Rojava. Any final considerations?

The Rojava revolution is a women's revolution and it's everyone's revolution. Everyone should be concerned about what's happening here because what is threatened is the possibility to live a free life, a democratic and communal life, with grassroots, feminist, and ecological principles. So talk to your neighbors, to your colleagues, to your grandmother about it!

Thank you for your solidarity. Down with all fascists!
From the Internationalist Commune of Rojava

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