

After Assad Falls, Campists Sing Same Song

written by Stanley Heller | January 9, 2025



A video “pinned” proudly to the top to the Top of the “Bronx Anti-War Coalition” Twitter feed shows a march for Palestine with a large two-star Assadist banner waving behind the main banner. This was December 15, 2024 a full week *after* the collapse of the regime and the liberation of the political prisons. It was no mistake. If you hold your nose and take a look at the feed you see multiple tweets mourning the demise of the “Forever” Assad kleptocracy.

Was this die-hard embrace of the King of Sednaya an outlier? Unfortunately, the U.S. Left has been dominated by campist thinking, opposing the U.S. “camp” and then supporting the other camps, i.e. any state or movement that was in the bad graces of the U.S. empire. Call it a stunted, deformed anti-imperialism or better an “Anti-Imperialism of the Fools”.

Campism is a mutation of principled socialist thinking. Instead of standing with the working classes of all nations against exploiters and tyrants, campism says we should oppose the strongest group of capitalists but act in solidarity with nations run by governments shunned by the most powerful clique of billionaires. That those in the “out-group” may be vicious exploiters, religious extremists, beastly torturers or hereditary despots makes no difference to campist thinking. “Hands off them.” Elaborate geopolitical gamesmanship comes to the fore. Solidarity of all the mistreated and cheated classes gets mere lip service.

Last fall the Syrian HTS started an offensive. Assad’s Torture/Capitgon Empire was so rotten it fell without any significant battles. Did that wake up the campists? Short answer, not at all. If we can quickly and mercilessly expose their analysis they’re going to fade and class conscious ecosocialist thought can prevail

Here’s a brief survey of campist responses post-Assad.

Start things off with the **United Anti-War Coalition of the U.S.**

Their response to Assad's fall was to hold a conference "A Regime Change Operation & Israeli Occupation of Syria". They've actually toned down their home page. Right after the regime's demise the UNAC page was filled with links to articles show their "anti-imperialist" views about Syria. Each article was worse than the last.

Black Agenda Report

Its article can be summed up with this quote from it, "The forceful overthrow of the government in Syria represents a colossal defeat to the Pan-Arabists in the region and those who center the Palestinian national liberation cause." Nothing about Syrians, of course, not even the hundreds of thousands of Palestinians in Syria.

George Galloway

"The Arab World Is Dead To Me - Gaza Is Done For. Netanyahu Wins" That was the episode of his so-called "Mother of all Talk Shows" MOATS with George Galloway His remarks are actually breathtaking. He called the recent events an ISIS-Alqaeda takeover of Syria and said, "There were only 25,000 fighters in Golani's army and 5,000 of those were Chinamen. Chinamen, Uighurs, who don't even speak Arabic don't even know who the Arab music stars whose albums they're burning right now, don't even know who they are, never tasted Syrian humus or Shakshura, don't care for it, they eat rice for their breakfast. You see 5,000 out of 25,000 are Chinamen." Where to begin? "Chinamen" he says three times. Who in the last 50 years uses that term without being a racist? Does he know anything about all about Uighurs? Does he assume all one billion Chinese only eat rice? As the Uighurs (or Tukistani as some call themselves) are being forced to give up their religion and adopt Han Chinese ways on pain of torture isn't the whole matter in bad taste? And who is Galloway to bring up the question of "foreigners" coming from Idlib? Do the Russians eat humus? Do the Iranians (mostly Persians) eat Shakshura?

One would think after that rant leftists would drop Galloway like a hot stone, but on December 17 Chris Hedges appeared. He said, "Yeah, the regime was corrupt, its human rights abuses were real, but at the same time this [attack on Assad] was a Zionist project long in the making and that's why the Israelis have embraced the fall of Assad." He says "I worked in Syria during Hafez al-Assad. I don't want to pretend it was a flourishing democracy but at the same time I see what's happening as catastrophic for the Palestinians and for the region." What about for the Syrians? Hedges says "its human rights abuses were real". Wow, that's like saying, "Admittedly Hitler didn't like Jews." In the whole episode Hedges never talks about what Assad meant for Syrians, his totalitarian state, his prison gulag, his use of every weapon imaginable against protesters.

CodePink

In its statement after Damascus was conquered CODEPINK acted like they always supported liberation. A Palestinian staffer named Nour wrote, "Over the last few days, I've seen Syrian political prisoners run freely through the streets for the first time in decades as people celebrate the end of the Assad regime. Syrians in exile talk about returning home for the first time. I can't help but feel joyful with them. How can I not, when the right of return is something I wish for my people every day?"

But then CodePink rationalized the fall of Assad by sponsoring an hour with their "anti-imperialist"

go-to person ... Vijay Prashad. He's a former Trinity professor and now a fellow at the Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies, Renmin University of China who for years has excused away crimes of non-Western empires and countries. Prashad says we shouldn't start understanding Syria by looking at the prisoners and prisoners. Instead, he says we need to go back to the U.S. war against Iraq and he starts a long geopolitical lecture. His description of 2011 in Syria? There are small groups that protest in Dera'a, the governor there acts "extremely harshly," Assad apologizes and replaces the governor, the US ambassador comes out into the street in support of the uprising, and al-Qaeda sends Jolani to Syria to set up a branch. For Prashad that sums up 2011.

At 35:13 Prashad says, "Netanyahu made a decision to go and pummel all the Syrian military bases along road number M5 that's the road that goes from Damascus all the way up to um basically to Aleppo through Hama, Homs and by bombing all these military bases, by bombing Iranian bases, by bombing logistical depots they basically destroyed the Syrian military effectively. The Israeli Air Force provided um air support for the former Al-Qaeda fellows that came down south and just walked into Damascus. It was a cakewalk."

As description that's rubbish. The Israeli Air Force has been bombing Iranian militias and Iranian troops and supply lines in Syria for years, but they it did not attack Assad's Syrian Army or bases. Only after the success of the HTS and other forces and the fall of Damascus did Israel destroy the Syrian navy and facilities all around the country. By featuring Prashad's mush, CodePink ignores the millions of Syrians hoping for liberation, and joins with other campists pushing the conspiracy theory that the overthrow of Assad was an Israeli, U.S., Turkish plot.

Stop the War UK

Stop the War UK had diminished over the years after its anti-Iraq war glories. It refused to be supportive of Syrians or Ukrainians. The genocide in Gaza has revived it.

This quote from a piece on its site from several years ago is instructive. "Nevertheless, it was clear quite early on in the war that some of the violence attributed to Assad was being deliberately exaggerated by the regime's opponents - both Syrian and non-Syrian, in order to justify another 'humanitarian intervention'." Yeah, Sednaya was just an exaggeration.

On Dec. 13 of 2024 it put out this statement called Israel, Syria and the peace movement: we must not be divided. It made no comment about the monstrous regime that had disintegrated, merely recognizing there were "differences" among the Left about Syria. "[British imperialism's] aim to exploit differences over events in Syria and the nature of the forces which have overthrown its state to split left opposition to imperialism and war....Our response must be to maintain our unity. Palestine is still the issue. British imperialism is still the enemy. We must not be divided." Syria is never the issue for these peace lovers.

Communist Party (USA)

On December 13 published an article entitled "Peace and self-determination for the people of Syria." It illustrated the piece with children holding two-star flags of the Assad regime. From the piece, "Beginning with the public demonstrations against the Assad government in 2011, NATO and the United States have continuously interfered in the affairs of the Syrian people.... These efforts culminated in the displacement of millions of Syrians...Brought about by sectarian and jihadist forces, many of which are under the influence of U.S. and NATO imperialism, the collapse of the Assad government will not resolve ..." So according to the CP it was the US that caused the mass

displacement. Assad had no role.

Democratic Socialists of America

In 2018 on its “Democratic Left” site there’s a piece entitled “DSA Must Reject Regime Change Rhetoric in Syria” during a debate over a resolution professing opposition to Assad. It’s unclear if any resolution on Syria was passed. In 2020 the site did recommend a couple of good books for “further reading.” That seems to be it on Syria for a group who international view on Ukraine and Venezuela is notoriously campist.

Green Party USA

During Trump’s first term the GP USA did comment on Syria. After Trump sent missiles after an Assad chemical attack the GP launched a petition that started with these words, “Far too often, the victims of US military intervention have been innocent civilians. Already, over 400,000 have been killed and millions more have been displaced in one of the worst humanitarian crises since World War II.” Staggering. We’re to believe the US and not Assad was responsible for the killing.

It also called for an “impartial probe of the Idlib gas attacks and emergency negotiations are necessary to stop further bloodshed.” It deliberately ignored the fact that the UN’s OPCW was an impartial agency and constantly did investigations. Not a bit of sympathy for Syrians being ground under Assad’s boot.

The Green Party USA apparently hasn’t made any comment since the fall of Assad.

Veterans for Peace

There doesn’t seem to be any statement since 2017. In that year their resolution included this gem:

Working with Russia in Syria, President Obama secured an agreement where the Syrian government willingly gave up its stockpile of mustard gas and nerve agents, a task that was completed in the summer of 2014. Syria also signed the international Chemical Weapons Convention. Diplomacy can work.” Realize they wrote this resolution **four years after** the sarin gas attack in Ghouta which killed 1,300 people.

In 2016 VFP Vice-President Gerry Condon took part in delegation to Syria where he and some Peace Council members and others met with Bashar Assad. Upon returning he said, “Almost everything we read about Syria in the media is wrong, the reality is that the U.S. government is supporting armed extremist groups who are terrorizing the Syrian people and trying to destroy Syria’s secular state.” In August 2018 Condon, then VFP President, said “There is no proof yet of a Syrian government gas attack, only a video made by a fundamentalist rebel group that wants more U.S. intervention.” Except that the UN’s Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons had found that the Syrian army had used chemicals months earlier.

Condon remains on the VFP Executive Board.

Jonathan Cook

He writes, “The narrative of Syria’s ‘liberation’ currently dominates western coverage. But so far the takeover of Damascus by HTS appears only to have liberated Israel, leaving it freer to bully and terrorise its neighbours into submission.” So there were no prisoners liberated? No families were free to try to find out what happened to the hundreds of thousands of missing? No chance for democratic politics opened up? Tens or hundreds of thousands of refugees aren’t on their way home?

Common Dreams

There was a notable article on the Common Dreams site about Syria entitled: “How the US and Israel Destroyed Syria and Called it Peace”. It was written by one Jeffrey Sachs (whose “shock therapy” gave us the Russian depopulation of the 1990’s).

In the article “The fall of Syria this week is the culmination of the Israel-U.S. campaign against Syria that goes back to 1996 with Netanyahu’s arrival to office as Prime Minister.”

“Fall of Syria”?? How awful. It *fell* to its own people.

The Nation magazine

The post-Assad *The Nation* magazine had a piece about Syria. No Syrian was asked to write the column, instead a former US diplomat Chas Freeman and Pascal Lottaz penned it.

It was named “The Fall of Syria Changes Everything.” Once again with “The Fall of *Syria*.” The writers say, “Basically, the big winner from this is Israel and the Netanyahu government.” That’s a completely wrong analysis. The big winners were the Syrian people who overthrew a grotesque government which had killed and tortured them for 50 years.

Tariq Ali

In his *New Left Review* geopolitical speculation Ali writes, “We are witnessing in Syria today is a huge defeat, a mini 1967 for the Arab world.” The “Axis of Resistance” is mourned. It never occurs to him that Hezbollah (and Palestinians) might have been much stronger if Hezbollah had never joined in the ransacking of Syria. About the magnificent liberation of the thousands of prisoners Ali sniffs, “Even if the rebels have freed some of Assad’s prisoners, they will soon replace them with their own.” Not one bit of hope that Syrians freed from Assad’s boot might revive the democratic impulses of 2011. Not one mention of “class” from this New Left Marxist.

The Grayzone Syndicate

Twitter influencer Dan Cohen 3000 is a Max Blumenthal associate with tens of thousands of human and bot followers. He writes, “There is no evidence of mass graves in Syria, let alone the outrageous

'estimate' of 100,00 to 150,000 human remains, as I've already demonstrated ... This is how fake narratives are created by a cottage industry of NATO-friendly 'genocide experts.'" He says, "It's absolutely fascinating how the pro-Palestine crowd that supports the Syrian "revolution" is completely ignoring this video exposing their beloved "rebels" as tools for Israel. They'll sympathize with Gaza but are objectively allied with Israel.

Speaking about the White Helmets he writes, "This is the group that is participating in exhuming bodies from alleged mass graves in Syria. They're funded by the US, UK and Qatar, and have long worked with Al-Qaeda and ISIS. Do you trust them?"

On another day he wrote:

In the coming hours and days, we will be subjected to horrific images of bones and skeletons dug up from graves of all sizes in Syria. All of it will be pinned on the former regime, and little to none will be attributed to HTS (Al-Qaeda), ISIS, or the other numerous militant factions armed to the teeth by the West, Turkey and the GCC that terrorized the country

About him Idrees Ahmed tweeted:

It's hard to even get angry at these losers any more. But just because they are pathetic doesn't mean they aren't harmful. When my friends were under siege in Eastern Ghouta, this douche used his *Russia Today* platform to try to get them killed by planting false stories about them

Aaron Mate also of the Grayzone

As of December 24, Aaron Mate was still maintaining that Assad did not use chemicals on "his" people.

He writes, "Three medical workers are now claiming that the Syrian government pressured them to say that there was no chemical attack in Douma in April 2018. Let's assume they're being truthful that the Syrian gov't tried to coerce them. That doesn't change the fact that, as leaked documents prove, the OPCW's own investigation of Douma did not find evidence of a chemical attack - and was censored."

If you want to go into the weeds on this, one or two chemical weapons UN researchers doubted whether Assad forces used poison gas in Douma in 2018. Their views were considered by the OPCW and were not found persuasive. Mate/Blumenthal and the rest of the *Grayzone* crew have been whining about this minority view ever since as some incredible coverup that their masterful skills revealed.

Roger Waters

Roger Waters hasn't said boo about Syria since the fall of Assad. He supports Palestinian rights but only between the river and the sea. About the Palestinians in Syria he's never said anything, but he

said plenty about Syria, dismissing and slandering anti-Assad forces.

Do remember his hideous FB post on May 16, 2019 about the chemical attack mentioned above. It included these words: "The White Helmets probably murdered 34 women and children to dress the scene that sorry day in Douma, and ...[he mentions writers and governments who protested what was done in Douma] who bought into the White Helmets callous and murderous fairytale are suitably haunted by the indelible images of those lost innocent Syrian lives. How do they sleep?"

Scott Ritter

At the bottom of the heap is Scott Ritter, a former military officer who had a few years of deserved glory opposing Bush's Iraq invasion but who for decades now has been an apologist for Iran, Russia and Assad. On Dec. 11 he tweeted, "For all the Palestinians and their supporters who are crowing about how Assad betrayed your cause, understand that Assad's Syria was the linchpin that held the Axis of Resistance—the only support of consequence your cause had—together. Assad's downfall is, therefore, your downfall, once again underscoring the reality that the greatest threat to a Palestinian state are the Palestinians themselves."

Here Ritter echoes the Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban's nasty quip of yore, "The Arabs never lose an opportunity to lose and opportunity."

In a reply to Ritter "Assaf_MD" responds: Palestinians don't need Syrians living under the boot of a deranged leader to achieve freedom. Ritter replied:

Talk to me in three years. When Gaza has been depopulated. The West Bank cleared of Palestinians. When Greater Israel is re-embraced by those 'friends of Palestine' who proclaim their support today. When Iran has been pushed by geopolitics in a direction that does not include Palestine. I'll repeat myself: Palestinians are their own worst enemy.

Finally on December 29 Ritter in a tweet called for the mass murder of thousands of Muslims, in fact all Muslims who support "what is going on in Syria today." Ritter, a non-Muslim, declared them "kafir" and said they were "Apostates who should be eradicated with extreme prejudice. And the non-Muslim world should line up to help in this extermination." Deranged.

All in all a pretty dismal swamp. Since it's free let me quote Talleyrand, "They learned nothing and forgot nothing."

But there is a bright spot [so far], *Democracy Now!* It's not been uniformly campist but it's been decidedly mixed over the years. It had on excellent Syrian voices like Razan Zeitouneh, Zaher Sahloul and Yasser Munif, but it also featured the analysis of Medea Benjamin, Vijay Prashad, Patrick Cockburn, Seymour Hersh and Stephen Cohen. Since December 8, *DN!* had on mostly Syrians to talk about Syria, notably the excellent Yassin Al-Haj Saleh and Joseph Daher. Hopefully they'll continue down that path. Why not make suggestions to them for Syrians and others to interview. Write to them at producers@democracynow.org.

With the campists going down with the ship we the fully anti-imperialist Left have a big opportunity. Let's work with the remnants of the Syrian Left in exile or on their way home. Publicize and join in solidarity with the democratic struggles that are sure to come, like the rights of Syrian Kurds, separation of religious and state, equality for women, LGBTQ, union struggles and the need for abandonment of neoliberalism in favor of ecosocialism. Push the US and the "West" to revoke the sanctions and expedite string-free aid.

This winter, push for a new ecosocialist “spring”.