

# Statement of Purpose for the Alliance of Syrian and Iranian Socialists

April 27, 2016



Five years after the beginning of the popular Syrian Revolution which demanded democracy and human rights, the Syrian revolutionaries have been decimated through the combined military force of the Assad Regime, the Iranian regime with its sectarian militias, Russian air strikes and military assistance on the one hand, and the ultra-terrorist ISIS and other Salafist - Jihadist organizations on the other hand. Nevertheless a partial reduction of airstrikes by Russia and the Assad regime in early March led to an immediate revival of mass protests of the democratic opposition across the country with banners such as the following in Idlib: "Our peaceful revolution is still in progress until toppling Assad and imposing justice all over Syria."

Almost half a million people, mostly Sunni Arab Syrians, have been killed mainly by the Assad regime. The population faces a situation that is worsening daily. Russian air raids, Hizbullah and Iranian supported ground forces as well as the December 18, 2015 United Nations Security Council Resolution backed by the U.S., Russia, China, France and Britain have all given new life to the Assad Regime.

At the same time, the Saudi monarchy and the Iranian regime are intensifying their competition for control over the region by fanning the flames of religious sectarianism. The Turkish government has in turn intensified its attacks on and repression of the Kurds in Turkey and northern Syria and also plays a role in promoting religious sectarianism in the region. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has praised Hitler's "presidential system" as a model of "efficiency."

The Syrian refugee crisis, with over 8 million refugees inside and over 4 million refugees outside Syria has become a much larger version of the Palestinian al-Nakba. The European Union is setting refugee quotas, closing its gates and implementing an agreement with Turkey based on which Turkey would take more refugees in exchange for 3 billion Euros and a possible future membership in the European Union. This is clearly not a solution. Neither Turkey nor any other country in the Middle East region is willing to admit over 12 million refugees and give them the possibility of a decent life.

As Syrian and Iranian socialists, we call on you to join us in taking a stand against this inhumanity and for finding real solutions:

First, we refuse to accept the myth that the Assad regime is the lesser of the two evils and that stabilizing it will end the war in Syria or stop the rise of ISIS and other Jihadists. On the contrary, the Assad regime is responsible for the majority of the deaths which are now estimated at half a

million. This regime's destruction of the democratic forces embodied in the Syrian revolution has created a fertile ground for the rise of ISIS and other Salafist-Jihadist groups.

Secondly, given the fact that both the Assad regime and ISIS are capitalist, racist, misogynist governments, no viable alternative to them can be shaped without tackling the class/ethnic/religious divisions and gender discrimination that are present in the Middle East.

Thirdly, while we insist on upholding a principled position of support for the Kurdish national liberation movement and its struggle for self-determination in Iraq, Syria, Turkey and Iran, we think it is also necessary to challenge many of those on the left who separate the struggle for self-determination of the Kurdish people in Syria from the dynamics of the Syrian revolution. It was the 2011 Syrian revolution that made it possible for the autonomous cantons in Rojava to come into existence. Without a Syrian revolution there can be no democratic Rojava. The latest evidence of the coordination and collaboration between the Syrian Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD), the Syrian regime and the Russian air force is alarming and does not bode well for the Kurds. The liberation and emancipation of the Kurdish people is linked to the liberation and emancipation of the people of the region.

It is time for Syrian and Iranian socialists to work together to challenge class, gender, ethnic and religious prejudices and speak to the struggles of women, workers, oppressed nationalities such as Kurds and Palestinians, oppressed ethnic and religious minorities, and sexual minorities. It is time for us to restate socialism as a concept of human emancipation not only opposed to the regional and global capitalist-imperialist powers but also as an affirmative vision distinguished from the totalitarian regimes that called themselves Communist in the former Stalinist Soviet Union and Maoist China.

Toward that aim we are asking you to join us by collaborating with the forthcoming trilingual (Arabic, Persian, English) website of the Alliance of Syrian and Iranian Socialists. Our goal is to promote solidarity between Syrian and Iranian socialists on the basis of addressing some very specific questions, both through articles and through joint activities such as conferences. Questions such as the following:

1. How can we challenge Shia and Sunni prejudices that promote hatred in the region?
2. What will happen in Syria if Iranian and Russian support for the Assad regime end?
3. How will Syrian and Iranian socialists answer the criticisms/concerns of Kurds and other nationalities who want self-determination?
4. Do Syrian and Iranian socialists think that federalism can be an initial solution?
5. What is your vision of social justice when it comes to class and gender struggles?
6. What does socialism mean to you and how do you distinguish your concept of socialism from the totalitarian regimes that existed in the Stalinist Soviet Union and Maoist China?
7. What appropriate joint actions of Syrian and Iranian socialists would you suggest in order to help us express our opposition to the Assad regime as well as ISIS and other jihadist organizations, and engage in solidarity with the Syrian democratic opposition?

If you would like to participate in this effort, please contact us.

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