

THE NATIONALISTS AND THE JIHADISTS TOGETHER

Trump's betrayal of Rojava shows the complicity of far-right nationalists and tyrants like Donald Trump and Turkish President Erdoğan with groups like ISIS.

The people of Rojava in northern Syria—both Kurdish and Muslim—were at the front of the struggle to defeat the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), sustaining thousands and thousands of casualties in the course of years of warfare. As soon as ISIS was beaten, the US government tricked the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) into dismantling their defenses along the Syrian border, promising to secure peace in the region and discouraging them from seeking other international allies. Once they were defenseless, Trump gave Turkey permission to invade.

For all his talk about borders, Trump obviously doesn't care about respecting them—any more than he actually cares about fighting terrorism. With ISIS having lost all of its territory and tens of thousands of its fighters in detainment camps, Turkey's invasion of Syria is the only thing that could enable ISIS to resume its activities.

During the reign of ISIS, it was widely reported that Turkey tacitly permitted volunteers, weapons, and resources to reach the Islamic State across its territory. Even Trump's own former Envoy to the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, Brett H. McGurk, has argued that Turkey's invasion will likely enable ISIS to regroup and reemerge. One of Trump's stated justifications for permitting Turkey to invade Syria is that US taxpayers should not have to pay to keep ISIS fighters detained. In fact, the US has not paid a cent to detain captured ISIS fighters; that has been completely organized by the SDF. Trump's real agenda is to permit Erdoğan to carry out ethnic cleansing against the Kurds and to further destabilize the Middle East.

Demagogues like Trump and Erdoğan benefit from groups like ISIS; such groups are the only thing that can make their own authoritarian agendas look good by comparison. This latest tragedy fits into a long pattern. CIA funding helped equip al-Qaeda fighters in Afghanistan; George Bush's invasion and occupation of Iraq created the conditions for ISIS to arise, embittering the population and leaving a tremendous amount of military equipment available to insurgents.

Turkey's invasion of Rojava will set a new precedent for militarism, ethnic cleansing, and the repression of relatively egalitarian social experiments like the one in Rojava. It sets the stage for more massacres and oppression everywhere around the world. It implies a future in which ethno-nationalist autocrats like Trump, Erdoğan, Bashar al-Assad, Jair Bolsonaro, and Vladimir Putin will be in the driver's seat worldwide, conniving with each other to maintain power over their private domains, counting on groups like ISIS to scare ignorant people into running to them for safety.

It also shows that we cannot count on the United States, the United Nations, or other governments or institutions to maintain peace, let alone to protect us. Our only hope lies in grassroots organizing and international solidarity. No politician, party, or military has our best interests at heart.

In order to defeat an Islamist army equipped with all the weaponry the US abandoned in Iraq, the SDF were forced to depend on the United States military for air support. It was inevitable that once they had served their purpose, the US would betray them, but they felt that they had no other choice. If we don't want future popular movements against fascist and fundamentalist insurgencies to end the same ways, what do we have to do? How should we be organizing today?

All people of good conscience should mobilize immediately to impose consequences on Turkey for this hateful attack and to spread a vision of a future without tyranny or war. If we don't, more and more of the world will look like Syria does today.

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AND AGAINST THEM, ONLY AUTONOMOUS RESISTANCE

