

Why Socialists Should Support the Syrian Revolution

By Denis Sokolov, *Communist Tendency (RCIT Section in Russia)*, 8 December 2024, www.thecommunists.net

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What is the Syrian Revolution?

The Syrian Revolution, which began in the spring of 2011 as part of the pan-Arab anti-government uprisings known as the Arab Spring, was a popular uprising against the tyranny of the Assad family and the Alawite sect. Under the Assad regime, whose rule has lasted more than 40 years, the majority of Syria's population has been oppressed along religious and national lines, because the Alawite sect has a privileged position over the Sunni majority and other religious groups in the country. But most importantly, the entire population of the country, with the few exceptions of the ruling class and groups close to it, has been in a severe state of poverty for the past decades, which is also aggravated by the absence of any democracy in the state.

The revolution that developed out of the popular uprising was represented on the ground by the Free Syrian Army, which was an umbrella, partly horizontal, largely decentralized structure that included many different factions and organizations. Now we will not consider in detail what was the army of the revolution, you can do it yourself in the corresponding section of the RCIT website. [1]

In more than a decade of struggle, the opposition forces in Syria have changed a lot since the armed uprising began. The starting point for the beginning of these changes can be considered 2013, when Iran intervened in the Syrian civil war as a regional power on Assad's side. The changes are largely due to the fact that the popular rebel forces, which previously received only moderate diplomatic support from Western countries and partial assistance from Turkey, began to fall under the influence of Saudi Arabia and Qatar on the one hand, and Turkey's influence began to increase on the other. This led to several splits and confrontations even among themselves. For example, during the battle for Aleppo in 2016, part of the rebels did not take part in the defense of the city, "sitting back", away from the city, while the other part fiercely resisted Assad's forces, Russian Federation and pro-Iranian groups.

In 2015, Russia intervened in the war and with the help of multiple technological superiority, defeated the rebels head-on, lifting the siege on Damascus and winning a number of crucial battles. In the course of this, the Saudis and Qatar completely refused to support anyone in Syria, and the Turks concluded a number of separate treaties with the Russian Federation (the Sochi agreements, the Astana agreements), thus “freezing” the conflict. At the same time, quite a few FSA units were reformatted by the Turks in 2017 into the Syrian National Army, which in 2019 also included the National Liberation Front, created in 2018. This formation is closely allied with Turkey and participates with it jointly in the battles against Rojava.

It is also important to note the role of Rojava in the Syrian civil war - the Syrian Democratic Forces never advocated independence from Assad, did not actively fight him, helped him in the capture of Aleppo, also fell under the complete dependence on the US and the Western coalition, becoming in fact the guards of the oil fields for the US from the ISIS (all the victories of the YPG/YPJ over the ISIS are the work of the US-led coalition aviation).

After the “freezing” of the conflict in Syria, the SDF entered into a close alliance with Assad [2], thus most of Rojava is jointly controlled by the YPG/YPJ and the Syrian Arab Army. When the SAA entered Manbij, locals began organizing strikes against it, which were suppressed with violence by SDF. [3] Also, most of the areas under SDF control are not Kurdish [4], and the Arab population there has been subjected to mass repression and expulsion from their homes on false accusations of links to ISIS. [5]

Why do we consider what happened in Syria a revolution?

Revolutions are divided into two types: political revolutions and social revolutions.

A social revolution is one in which the masses of people overthrow a social order while changing the social economic formation to a more progressive one. This is accompanied by the destruction of outdated forms of property and production relations and their replacement by more progressive ones.

Political revolution is such a revolution, such an uprising of the masses that aims at destroying the reactionary political regime and state system and replacing it with more democratic forms.

The common goal of the entire Syrian opposition was a political revolution, even if they do not use such a definition in their speeches and statements.

The classics of Marxism, such as Leon Trotsky, believed that any social revolution begins with a political revolution. The expectation of social revolution “here and now” is nothing more than idealistic children's romantic dreams of a “bright future” that is given to us from heaven. With the grave crisis of revolutionary communist leadership throughout the world, the masses are forced to go through a series of national and democratic revolutions.

The clearest example of a progressive political revolution that did not change the social economic formation is the February Revolution in Russia in 1917. Of course, communist forces should not

advocate this kind of “development through stages”, supporting republican parliamentary forms of government until “the country is sufficiently developed for the dictatorship of the proletariat” (the Mensheviks in Russia and the Stalinists in China, France, and Spain suffered from this “disease”), but in the absence of communist influence on the masses, we are forced to proceed from what is.

Why are we in favor of the victory of the Syrian revolution over the imperialist forces?

In order to understand why the victory of anti-imperialist forces and movements in the modern world opens new chapters in history for humanity and gives it a chance to win progressive achievements, we need to look at a vivid example from the recent past.

The victory of the Taliban over the US in Afghanistan led to the fact that from that moment, from 2021, we can say for sure that the US lost the status of the sole world hegemon. And this, in turn, has led to the following:

1. Competing imperialists have become bold enough to challenge Western imperialism directly in those zones of influence which they formally consider their own - Russia in Ukraine, China in Africa
2. Since 2019, and especially since 2021 - because the fall of the US as the world hegemon did not happen overnight and not in one year - the number of just popular uprisings, revolutions, riots, protests, strikes, etc. has increased dramatically in the world. This happened because the grip of the strongest world imperialist as a policeman who benefits from the status quo and absolutely predictable order, weakened, which, in turn, gave the masses the opportunity to take up arms against their reactionary governments, which previously existed at the expense of US support.

That is, the “what did the Taliban's victory give to the workers of Afghanistan” discourse is both a national limitation and a dogmatism that demands a social revolution “here and now” or never. The Taliban's victory over the US in Afghanistan opened a new epoch in modern history, one marked by the rise of wars both reactionary and just, progressive. The defeat of the imperialist is the destruction of the status quo over a vast area of the world. The victory of the imperialist is the consolidation of the status quo and the enslavement of a larger area of the world.

From all the duality of certain events and phenomena, we must be able to recognize their main characteristics and isolate their progressive elements. In the case of the defeat of US imperialism in the Middle East and Central Asia, we are most interested in the fact that the oppressed peoples have been given a chance for liberation.

The same logic works in the case of the Syrian rebels who are fighting Russian imperialism and Iranian destructive influence in the region.

The very revival of the Syrian Revolution was made possible by the fact that the Russian armed forces prioritize the fighting in Ukraine, during which their credibility in the world has been severely shaken, while Iran and its allied groups are distracted by the fight against Zionism, during which Hezbollah, having defeated Israel politically, is unable to operate militarily outside Lebanon.

Consequently, the defeat of Russian imperialism in Syria will weaken its grip on the entire Middle East region and beyond. The defeat of the Iranian intervention will weaken its “police” grip in Iraq. All this will give the subjugated peoples of the East the opportunity to raise their heads and push their way to freedom.

On the prospects for the Syrian Revolution

Based on what RCIT has described in previous articles about what is happening in Syria and throughout the region [6], we can hypothesize a further scenario.

To begin with, we must speak out about what the socialist movement in Syria and throughout the world should strive for: socialists advocate the establishment of workers' and fellah councils; any future government must be based on such councils. In fact, the only guarantees against the degeneration of the revolution are:

- a) the creation of workers' and fellah councils and militias,
- b) the creation of a workers' and Fellah government based on them.
- c) the creation of a strong revolutionary party that can lead the masses.

Let's turn to the prospects in post-Assad Syria.

The opposition has overthrown the tyrannical regime of Bashar al-Assad and is taking control of much of free Syria.

Here, we may argue that a military dictatorship and/or an Islamic fundamentalist regime may now take over. But, first, to refuse to support the anti-imperialist forces because of this, one must, in the apt expression of Leon Trotsky, “have a very bad head” [7].

Secondly, for any of the Syrian opposition groups to establish their dictatorship of different nature, it is necessary for one of them to completely dominate politically, economically and militarily. However, the situation is such that the Syrian opposition is represented by a whole spectrum of different factions with different ideologies and views on the future of Syria, and the largest of them control their own separate governments. For example, the SNA claims allegiance to the Syrian Interim Government (SIG), while the HTS acts on behalf of the Syrian Salvation Government. None of them is dominant enough to subjugate their “competitors” within the opposition.

In this case, we see the following scenario: opposition Syrian groups unite into a single interim government, which will have representatives from all forces that are important in the anti-government struggle. And this, in turn, means that they will have to negotiate among themselves, negotiate and once again negotiate, while relying on the opinion of the masses, being directly dependent on it. So, in a nutshell, the victorious opposition will have no other option but to form a democratic government with the support of the Syrian masses.

The fact that the Syrian masses are united by a common demand to overthrow Assad and build a new, democratic Syria may prevent these opposition groups from starting a war among themselves, but the people are skeptical of the leaders of the victorious opposition, to put it mildly, and therefore these leaders will have to go at least partially at the mercy of the masses in order to maintain their influence. [8]

It should be borne in mind, however, that the pressure of the masses cannot last forever unless it is organized in the people's councils. Otherwise this pressure will lose its force.

Of course, a split between rebel factions is possible. We can be more specific: in our opinion, those factions that depend on Turkey (the SNA groups) are the most dangerous. Turkey is interested in appeasement and may try to use the SNA to sabotage the revolution and drive out the HTS and its allies.

Another possibility is that Jolani will form a government and try to consolidate power. It is unlikely that it will be an "Islamic caliphate" - at least not in the first period. It is more likely to be a coalition government that will provide some democratic freedoms, but a very unstable situation will remain. ISIS will try to cause trouble, Turkey will try to regain and/or increase its influence, the remaining Assadist elements will certainly not sit on the sidelines either.

In any case, a petty-bourgeois nationalist or Islamist movement, once in power, will sooner or later develop in a bourgeois direction and create a capitalist regime. The pressure of the masses can stop this process to a certain extent. But unless the masses replace such leadership with their own government, the process will go in a bourgeois direction. Of course, this process can be strongly influenced by a revolutionary party, but such a force, as we know, does not yet exist.

Does this mean that a political revolution that overthrows Assad but moves in a bourgeois direction is completely useless and socialists should therefore not support the current revolutionary process? Of course not!

The reasons are as follows:

1. The outcome described above is not guaranteed, and the inevitable process after the fall of Assad will provide different possibilities.
2. Revolutionaries support the struggle even if the obstacles are enormous. Can you imagine a socialist not joining the strike because the bureaucrats might sell out the struggle at some point!
3. Even an aborted and obourgeois revolution can bring some gains (like winning more democratic rights). And even the destruction of Assad's state apparatus is a huge achievement in itself, and it will take a long time for a new bourgeois government to recreate such a monster.
4. The international consequences of overthrowing Assad could be a) loss of prestige and regional influence for Russian imperialism and b) inspiring consequences for the Arab masses who despise their own tyrants (e.g. Sisi in Egypt, the king in Saudi Arabia, etc.)
5. And above all, such a revolutionary process provides the masses in Syria and around the world with invaluable experience. And it also allows revolutionaries to discuss with the vanguard the

lessons of such struggles and demonstrate the difference between Bolshevism on the one hand and centrism and reformism on the other.

Conclusions

The Syrian revolution, which began as a popular decentralized uprising of the masses with an umbrella structure, has undergone a series of metamorphoses, but can and should still be considered progressive, despite and in spite of the petty-bourgeois religious leadership. Without politically aligning ourselves with the ideology of the rebel groups, we continue to support the just demands of the Syrian people for the expulsion of all foreign oppressors from their country once the goal of overthrowing the murderous tyrant Bashar Al-Assad has been achieved.

The Syrian people had no choice but to submit to the Alawite dictatorship and continue to wallow in poverty, hunger and devastation for the benefit of imperialist and regional powers, or to stand up for their freedom in arms.

The socialists of the world should not have given up supporting this struggle, but should advocate deepening it to social revolution, which is only realizable with the replacement of the petty-bourgeois leadership with a socialist leadership, which cannot happen without the participation of socialists in a just struggle.

** Glory to the Syrian Revolution!*

** For the expulsion of all foreign oppressors!*

** For international solidarity with the victorious masses!*

** For the power of the workers' and fellah councils!*

[1] Since its inception in March 2011, RCIT has published a number of pamphlets, statements and articles on the Syrian revolution, which can be found in a special subsection on this website: <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/collection-of-articles-on-the-syrian-revolution/>

[2]



Yellow shabiha YPG (PYD) in Afrin





Assad's troops enter Kobani in 2019 at the invitation of the SDF:

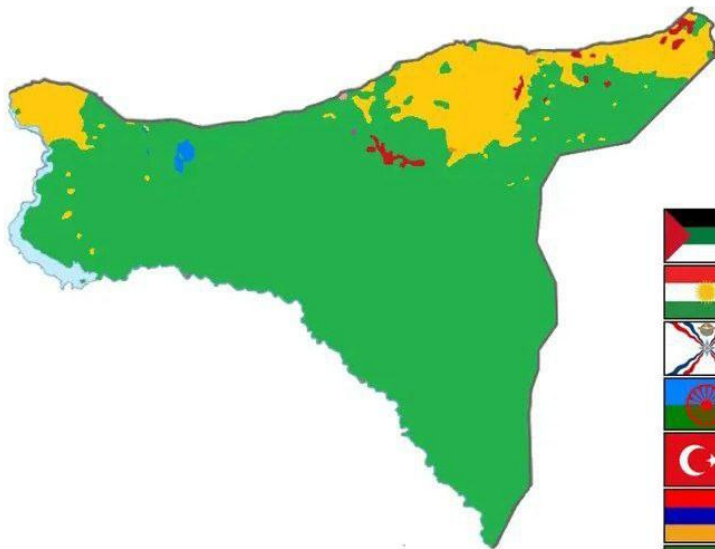




[3] <https://syrianobserver.com/refugees/general-strike-in-manbij-against-forced-conscription-and-sdf-violations.html>



North and East Syria Ethnic Composition



	71.7%	Arabs
	20.4%	Kurds
	5.8%	Assyrians
	0.9%	Gypsies
	0.5%	Turks
	0.4%	Armenians
	0.2%	Circassians
	0.1%	Chechens

[5] <https://syriaifreedomforever.wordpress.com/2015/12/16/%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%A7%D9%86-%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%AC%D9%85%D8%B9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B4%D8%A7%D8%A6%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B1%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A8%D8%B1%D9%8A%D9%81-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B1%D9%82%D8%A9/>

[6] <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/rebel-offensive-in-syria-the-fear-of-the-regional-powers/>

[7] *"I will take the most simple and obvious example. In Brazil there now reigns a semifascist regime that every revolutionary can only view with hatred. Let us assume, however, that on the morrow England enters into a military conflict with Brazil. I ask you on whose side of the conflict will the working class be? I will answer for myself personally—in this case I will be on the side of "fascist" Brazil against "democratic" Great Britain. Why? Because in the conflict between them it will not be a question of democracy or fascism. If England should be victorious, she will put another fascist in Rio de Janeiro and will place double chains on Brazil. If Brazil on the contrary should be victorious, it will give a mighty impulse to national and democratic consciousness of the country and will lead to the overthrow of the Vargas dictatorship. The defeat of England will at the same time*

deliver a blow to British imperialism and will give an impulse to the revolutionary movement of the British proletariat. Truly, one must have an empty head to reduce world antagonisms and military conflicts to the struggle between fascism and democracy. Under all masks one must know how to distinguish exploiters, slave-owners, and robbers!" (Leon Trotsky: Anti-Imperialist Struggle is Key to Liberation. An Interview with Mateo Fossa (1938); in: Trotsky Writings 1938-39, p. 34)

[8] The ECHO Research Centre at [Laurentian University](#) conducted an [opinion poll](#) on 4,858 residents in several areas of Syria between 10 July 2017 and 28 July 2017. According to the poll's results, 77% of those surveyed disagreed with the Salafist ideology that Tahrir al-Sham and other Salafist groups promote in Idlib, 73% rejected HTS-affiliated local councils in Idlib, 66% thought that HTS is part of al-Qaeda in Syria, and 63% claimed that the dominance of HTS in Idlib could lead to a "second [Tora Bora](#)". Of those who participated in the poll, nearly all of them (close to 100%) considered HTS to be contrary to the goals of the [Syrian opposition](#), although they were split in its extent. 51% of them considered HTS to be contrary to the opposition since its inception, 42% considered HTS to be previously consistent with the opposition, but is no longer so, and 7% considered HTS to be a [counter-revolutionary](#) organization.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tahrir_al-Sham