



Rojava Revolution

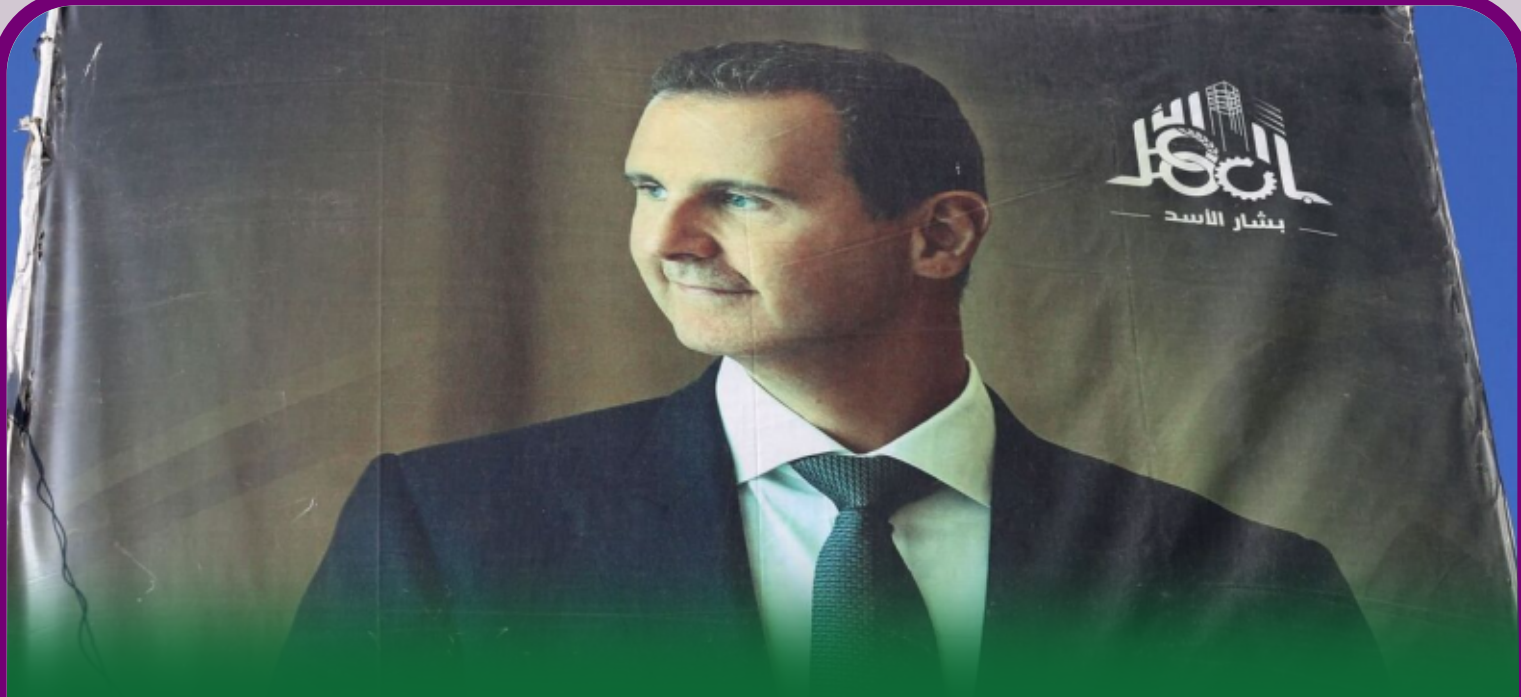


and the Dangers
it is Facing



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1. The situation before the revolution

the Ba'at regime end it's policies

Rojava is a Kurdish word meaning "west." Kurdistan refers to the western part of the homeland of the Kurdish people. It is located within the borders of the Syrian Republic, as laid out in the Sykes-Picot Agreement. Syria is a country with many different cultures, ethnicities, and peoples. The name itself comes from "Syriac," a group with its own language, culture, and alphabet. When the Ba'ath Party came to power, 16 different communities were present in Syria, including Kurds, Syrians, Turkmen, Armenians, Alewis, Circassians, and others.

Throughout Syria's history, before the Ba'ath Party came to power, the Kurdish people contributed to the construction and liberation of the country. But when the Ba'ath Party took power, it did not recognize the existence of any peoples or national groups due to its own definition of the Arab homeland. Any demand by peoples or minorities for democratic national rights was viewed by the Ba'ath Party as a colonial

conspiracy targeting Arab energies, and distracting them from their goal of Arab unity. The handling of the Kurdish issue, whether in Iraq or Syria, did not deviate from this general Ba'athist approach.

How did the Ba'ath Party deal with the Kurdish issue in Syria?

The Ba'ath Party strengthened the central institutions of the nation-state, using "the nation" as a slogan with glittering terms that deceived the masses. This distanced the people from democratic politics and the ancient social

ethics deeply rooted in the plurality of peoples and cultures of the region.

As a result, the concept of the nation-state dominated at the expense of marginalizing society's role and diminishing collective rights. It turned the individual into a tool within the



Map of Sykes-Picot agreement (1916)

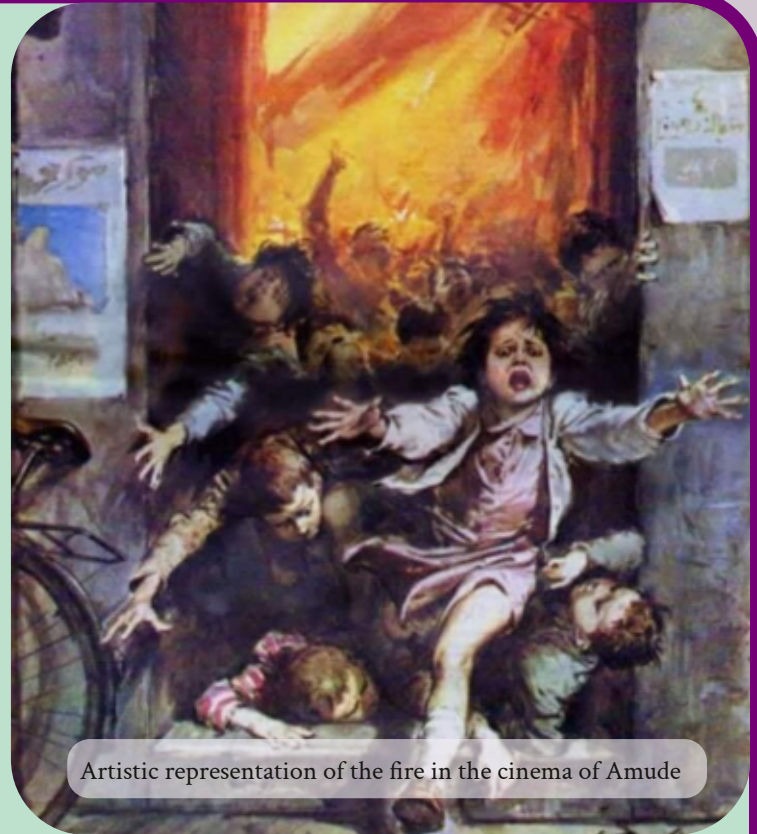


gears of power, far from their own nature, lacking self-confidence, and morally detached from their reality.

Hostile sentiments emerged among all communities of Syrian society, especially between Kurds and Arabs, as the regime incited hatred against the Kurdish people, saying that they had negative and inappropriate characters. The regime controlled all cultural and media institutions, exploiting them to serve its chauvinistic policies.

Therefore, Syria was transformed into a desert, barren in political, economic, social, and cultural aspects. The policy of genocide and systematic chauvinistic denial reached its peak. Domestically, the regime intensified Arabization, intimidation, arrest, killing, starvation, exceptional laws, and adopted a policy of hostility particularly towards the Kurdish people.

Abroad, the Ba'ath government entered into regional treaties with Turkey, Iran, and Iraq that posed serious threats to the existence of the Kurdish people. In a racist conspiracy Ba'ath forces on November 13, 1960, burned down a cinema in Amuda under the direction of the military intelligence officer in Qamishli, Hikmat Matini. This led to the death of more than 283 Kurdish children. All of them, primary school students.



Artistic representation of the fire in the cinema of Amude

"Syria was transformed into a desert, barren in political, economic, social, and cultural aspects. The policy of genocide and systematic chauvinistic denial reached its peak."

This was not a trivial incident or a personal decision. Rather, it reflected a general trend within the Ba'athists — a rejection of the real existence of the Kurdish people in Syria. Consequently, the Kurds' situation worsened. They were dubbed "the second Israel," accused of infiltrating Syria, and racist plans were drawn up to eliminate their presence.

The architect of this policy was Lieutenant Muhammad Talab Hilal, head of the Political Security Division in Hasakah. He conducted a comprehensive study of the situation in al-Jazira Governorate, addressing what he called the "Kurdish threat." Based on this, the Ba'athist regime in Syria revoked the citizenship of 150,000 Kurds in 1962 — a number that had grown to over half a million by 2000.

One consequence of this revocation was that more than 100,000 young Kurds were denied access to



Newroz celebrations in Kobane: before the revolution was forbidden.



universities, educational institutes, or employment, as they were considered foreigners and stateless. Other episodes that happened in the same period confirm what we had been written until now:

The fertile lands in the Kurdish regions were converted into public property of the state under the pretext of agrarian reform.

The Arab Belt Project in 1967 built dozens of Arab settlements in the Jazira region and pursued a policy of land confiscation. An area estimated to be 375 km long and 10 km wide – was stripped from farmers along the northern Syrian border with Turkey and Iraq, forcing those living there and the original inhabitants to leave the area.

Kurdish cities and villages had their names changed to ones with no connection to their history or culture. The primary goal was to Arabize the region and alter its features. The Kurdish language and culture were considered threats to state security. Systematic security measures were taken, including banning Kurds from speaking their mother tongue in public places, schools, and universities.

A policy of neglect was imposed, depriving Kurds of the necessary means to live, forcing them to abandon their homeland and be replaced by Arabs. Kurds were prevented from practicing their national traditions and celebrating their national holiday, known as Newroz. The

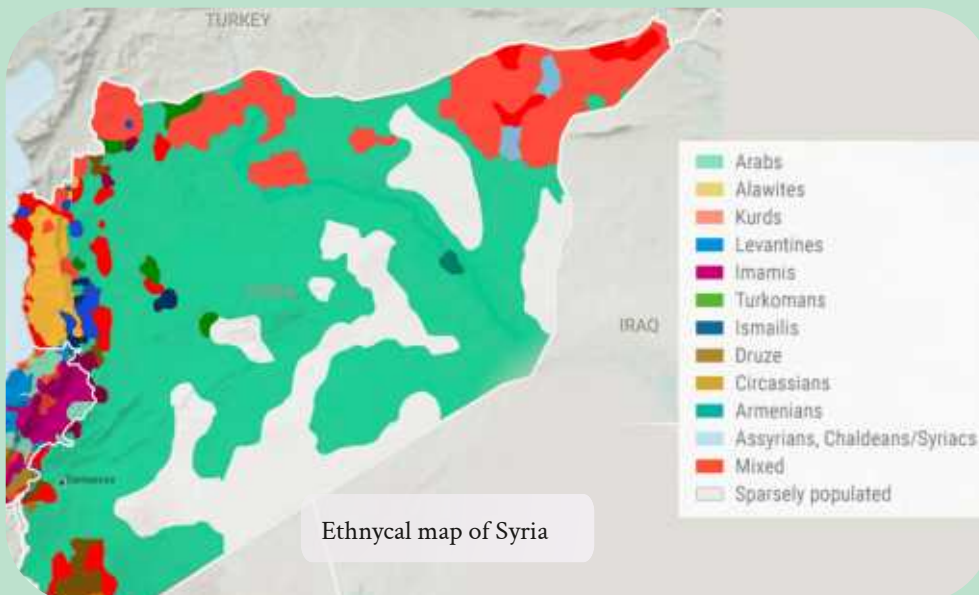


Protests in Qamishlo 2004

regime then escalated its anti-Kurdish activities, directing false accusations against Kurds such as secession.

In this period, the regime committed very heavy crimes, such as the premeditated fire against detainees in Hasakah prison after the Newroz celebrations of 1993. Here approximately 60 Kurdish detainees - who were not under arrest before the fire - were killed in the premeditated prison fire by the Ba'athist state.

This episode was not the first Ba'athist injustice aimed at sowing discord between Kurds and Arabs. In 2004, live ammunition was used against Kurdish youth in Qamishli, who were defending themselves against the regime's thugs armed with knives and stones inside a football stadium. The uprising then spread to all cities and villages west of Kurdistan, as well as Aleppo and Damascus. Its suppression resulted in the deaths of 36 Kurdish youth and hundreds wounded.



Ethnical map of Syria



2. Principles of the Rojava Revolution

Öcalan's perspectives, the women's revolution and its principles

The oppressive and authoritarian regime's practices against the Kurdish people, along with its economic policies, laid the groundwork for the Kurdish people to launch a revolution demanding radical change.

During meetings at that time, the people's leader Abdullah Öcalan emphasized three principles for undertaking the revolution:

- *Community organization and self-administration*
- *Community diplomacy, meaning solidarity and consensus among the components present in the region*
- *A strong defense mechanism to protect the region from potential attacks*

Accordingly, the People's and Women's Protection Units (YPG - YPJ) were established in Rojava. This was the core of the Democratic Nation project, and it's first practical steps.

At that time, it was imperative to move toward establishing an intellectual, political, social, economic, and cultural system that would create harmony and balance among all communities of society — men and women from various social classes, ethnicities, and groups. It was imperative to provide a safe and dignified life for all.

Öcalan emphasized the need to preserve ecological

balance and natural resources, and to implement real democracy in order to build a free society composed of free individuals.

To live in a free land, the people living here put the Democratic Nation Project into practice. People sought to build a just system based on democracy, women's freedom, and ecological society and a democratic confederal system.

The women's revolution, which began on July 19, 2012, in Rojava (northeastern Syria), came as a prelude to implementing the Democratic Nation and building an ecological society.



Women's Revolution

Women in Syria have always played an important and effective role in Syrian society. They have never been far from the path of societal development and struggle, from the founding of the Syrian state to the present day.

From this fertile ground brimming with resistance, the voices of the women of Rojava and North and East Syria rose to demand freedom and reject slavery and injustice. The Arab Springs that started in other countries of the Middle East and North Africa in 2011, arrived in Syria. But because of external intervention, the revolt became an armed one. For this reason the Ba'athist regime left from the areas of Rojava: leaving the defence of those areas to the local population. In the vacuum they left, women and society organized themselves, and the uprising started calling for dignity and democracy.

The communities of society began to organize themselves, drawing on their long-standing experience



Women and society learn how to defend themselves

"Women's liberation is not just a social issue or a legal demand—it is a necessary condition for the true liberation of all people and societies."

in struggle and organization—and inheritance from the Kurdish liberation movement. They extended a helping hand to women from other groups and together, they wove a strong social women's network that became the main carrier of democracy and the demand for women's rights and liberation.

The Women's Revolution was about life and freedom. Women engaged in political, defense, economic, cultural, and other fields—and excelled in all of them. From the perspective of the democratic nation, the Women's Revolution is considered a fundamental and essential part of the broader societal liberation project.

Women's liberation is not just a social issue or a legal demand—it is a necessary condition for the true liberation of all people and societies. According to the democratic nation, women are considered the first colony. The first form of slavery in history began with the enslavement of women by the patriarchal system, which arose also with the emergence of class society and the



Women took a forefront role in politics



state system. This system established control over women, paving the way for other forms of slavery such as the enslavement of other people and poor classes.

From our philosophical perspective, we cannot speak of true freedom or democracy without the liberation of women. Women are not only half of society—they are the creative force behind life, culture, and society. Therefore, any political or social project that does not place women at its center is missing a fundamental part and cannot be victorious. Women's liberation is a basic condition for the liberation of society.

It is essential to break the authoritarian male mentality, which is seen as an extension of the nation-state mentality and central authority. Women's liberation in this context does not only mean freedom from physical violence; it also includes their mental, cultural, and political liberation.

Women are a crucial driving force of the revolution. They have become its vanguard, especially through the formation of social,



The co-chair system is one of the pillars of the women revolution

"Women are a crucial driving force of the revolution. They have become its vanguard, especially through the formation of social, political, and military organizations."

political, and military organizations such as Kongra Star, the Zenobia Association, and the Women's Council of North and East Syria, as well as military groups like the Women's Protection Units (YPJ).

Thus, the women's revolution has transformed into a comprehensive revolution for all society. Women's mental liberation is evident in their transcendence of the stereotypes imposed by male culture. Their social liberation is realized through active engagement in community work and the re-creation of life from a liberating women perspective.

Military and political liberation have also been achieved through the formation of effective female leadership, which is central to decision-making in all fields. In the Democratic Nation project, women play a fundamental role in managing local communities within the model of self-administration and popular councils, with women's participation no less than 50% in all the structures and institutions.



Art and culture take a revolutionary role.



Principles of the Women's Revolution:

A democratic nation is based on the recognition, appreciation, and protection of all identities, beliefs and cultures, guaranteeing women's freedom.

Equal, participatory living and free life together (hevjiyana azad): building relations between the men and women on foundations of freedom and equality. Combating all forms of domestic violence, forced marriage, and the exploitation of women.

The co-chair democratic system: in positions of responsibilities there must be a man and a woman, who share equally decision-making and leadership, working together to ensure balance and break male dominance.

The struggle against violations of women's rights and combating violence: Rejecting and addressing all forms of violence against women is achieved not only through legal means but also by building community awareness that restores women to their natural place in society.

Perwerde and Jineoloji recognized as basis for the liberation of women and society.

Protection and Legitimate Defense: Women have the right to organize themselves into self-defense groups, and self-defense is achieved through women's empowerment in various fields.

Ecology and Respect for Nature: The call to build a social system in harmony with the environment and nature, rejecting greedy industrial policies that destroy nature.

Peace and Nonviolence: Rejecting war as a tool for solving problems and encouraging dialogue and democratic struggle as means to achieve justice and freedom.

The women's revolution, has therefore, planted hope and restored women's self-confidence. It has become a pivotal stage in the struggle of women's resistance here in Kurdistan, as well as a global heritage of the history of the women's struggle for liberation worldwide.

Despite all existing challenges — including sieges, wars, displacement, and regional pressures —

women did not back down from their project. Instead, they affirm that true change is born from the womb of suffering.

This is a message to all those living under authoritarian or extremist religious regimes, or suffering from the marginalization of women's voices. It is a message to all those also, who aspire to build a just and free political model.



3. What happened in Rojava?

How people organized

In Rojava, in November 2011, the Movement for a Democratic Society (TEV-DEM) was established. This organization, brought together all the institutions and structures in Rojava under a coordinated umbrella. It played a key role in many different activities, expanded its scope, and progressed into various fields, including education and self-defense. The People’s Protection Units (YPG) – were a key defence unit, also founded in 2011. Together these steps paved the way for the revolution.

On July 19, 2012, the first spark of this revolution ignited in Kobani. It then spread to Afrin, Serêkaniyê, Darbasiyah, Amuda, Derik, Girkê Legê,

Tirbespiye, Qamishli, Til Temr, and Hasakah.

Cantons and Interim Administrations:

Later, on January 21, 2014, the Interim Legislative Council of the Democratic Autonomous Administration convened in the city of Amuda and announced the Interim Administration of Jazira Canton. It then declared the Autonomous Administration in Kobani on January 27, and in Afrin on January 29 of the same month. Later, in 2016, the Cantons Coordination Council was established.

Federation of Northern Syria:

With the strengthening of the self-defense system, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) were formed in 2015 and began liberating areas occupied by mercenaries. These forces liberated Girê Spî in 2015, Manbij in 2016, and Tabqa and Raqqa in 2017. To achieve harmony and coordination between these regions, the Federation of Northern Syria was declared in 2017. In this context, three regions (al-Jazira, Euphrates, and Afrin) and six cantons were defined: Qamishli and al-Hasakah in al-Jazira, Girê Spî and Kobani in the Euphrates region,



Fourth Tev-Dem congress



and Afrin and al-Shahba in Afrin.

In Manbij, Raqqa, and Tabqa, Civil People's Councils (civil administrations) were also established. Later, in 2019, Deir ez-Zor was cleared of ISIS mercenaries, and the Deir ez-Zor Civil Council was established.

Declaration of the Autonomous Administration:

On September 6, 2018, the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria was declared. Before this, a social alliance had already been formed including Afrin, Jazira, and Kobani in 2014. And in 2017, the democratic confederation system had been approved, with two phases of the elections completed. The third phase of elections had been halted, due to the Turkish occupation of Afrin.

Approval of the Social Contract:

In 2021, meetings were held with the participation of the region's people, and the issue of drafting the social contract for the Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria was put on the agenda. After two years of work, a draft contract was prepared and submitted to the General Council of the Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria. The General Council approved the draft social contract on December 12, 2023.

Administrative Correction:

According to the new contract, which consists of four main chapters and 134 articles, changes were made to the autonomous administration system.



Emblem of the Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES)

The region's name was changed to the Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria, and the previous system of the Jazira, Euphrates, and Afrin regions was removed and replaced with a canton system. Thus, the region was organized into seven cantons: Afrin-Shahba, Jazira, Kobani, Manbij, Raqqa, Deir ez-Zor, Tabqa.

Guaranteeing Peoples' Rights:

The social contract, based on democratic confederalism, takes women's freedom as its foundation. It builds on concepts of an ecological democratic society, and establishes equality between men and women as fundamental. This nation does not discriminate or differentiate between nations, races, religions, or sects, but is based on standards that respect the mother tongue of all peoples and protect the demographic characteristics of the region as their heritage. The social contract of North and East Syria represents Kurds, Arabs, Assyrians, Syrians, Turkmen, Armenians, Circassians, and Chechens; it guarantees the rights of all sects and peoples, including Muslims, Christians, and Yazidis.



Meeting with Afrin refugees in 2018.



4. Defending Rojava Revolution

The enemies we faced and how we defended ourselves

When the Kurdish people, together with the components of the region, were forming institutions responsible for administration, public services, and defense despite limited resources, Jabhat al-Nusra launched an attack on the Serekaniya area near the Turkish border. Because there was no Syrian regime forces there, it was very clear that the Turkish state was behind this attack: they were trying to prevent the Kurdish people from establishing an administration and to stop them being a key part in any future regime change. At that time, the Kurdish citizens of Rojava—especially the People’s Protection Units (YPG)—were forced to fight in defense of their land. With limited means and light weapons, they managed to liberate the city from one of the most notorious terrorist organizations in Syria, considered an arm of al-Qaeda: Jabhat Al-Nusra. Jabhat Al-Nusra was founded by Abu Muhammad al-Jawani, known as Ahmed al-Sharaa, who is the current leader of the transitional government in Syria. The Kurdish people and other communities of the region

rejoiced at this victory, and it strengthened confidence in their defense forces. This was the first attack on the region in 2012. But armed groups, whether Jabhat al-Nusra, or later ISIS and Turkish mercenary factions, have not stopped targeting Rojava and later northern and eastern Syria in the years since.

In 2014, the terrorist organization ISIS took control of Raqqa, its capital, and turned life for the people there, into an unbearable hell. Their first step in Raqqa was to expel Kurdish families and displace them from their homes. At that time, waves of Kurdish families fled to other areas like Kobani and al-Jazira. From the capital, ISIS did not stop attacking Syrian Kurdish areas. Kobani

was the first target, with fierce battles taking place between ISIS and the People’s Protection Units (YPG), Women’s Protection Units (YPJ), and later many other people from the four parts of Kurdistan, who came following the general mobilization call than was issued by the people’s leader Abdullah Ocalan from



Ahmed Hussein al-Sharaa, founder of Al-Nusra and actual president of Syria



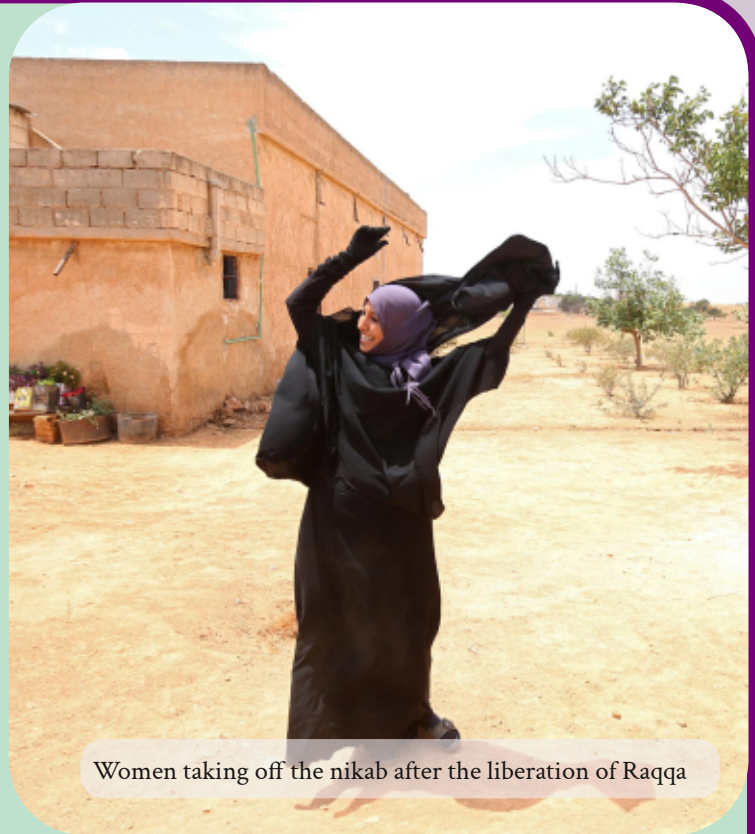
his prison in Imrali (2014). In the final stage, international pressure led to the intervention of the international coalition against ISIS. After battles lasting more than a month, the city of Kobani was liberated (January 2015). Kobani became a symbol of popular resistance against the world's most dangerous terrorist organization.

Following that, residents of Manbij, Tabqa, Raqqa, and Deir ez-Zor appealed to the Syrian Democratic Forces to liberate their cities from the filth of terrorism. Based on this, a campaign was launched to liberate these areas one after another, with the last battle being at Baghouz. A joint declaration between the international coalition forces and the Syrian Democratic Forces announced the end of the Islamic State geographically, in 2019.

While speaking about ISIS, we should also remember that Turkey was providing logistic, economical and in some cases military support to this organisation. When ISIS was defeated, Turkey itself in many ways, was also defeated.

In response to this defeat, the Turkish state began mobilizing mercenaries and pushing them towards Rojava. In 2018, the Turkish state attacked Afrin by air and ground forces.

Until this time, Afrin had enjoyed security and stability. After a resistance lasting more than 52 days, Turkish state forces took control of the city, displaced its original inhabitants, and spread corruption. Trees and people could no longer save themselves. The perpetrators committed horrific crimes against the locals: kidnapping, torture, seizure of property, and imposing tributes on residents. The Turkish government was not satisfied with this and launched attacks on Serekaniya and Tal Abyad the same year the Autonomous Administration of



Women taking off the nikab after the liberation of Raqqa

North and East Syria was declared, with a clear aim to undermine local people gains -specially Kurdish gains- and destroy the democratic project. Its aerial bombardments displaced the populations of these areas and, with great resistance but also international neglect and collusion with Turkey, these areas became occupied. Throughout the path of the Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES), the biggest challenge to stability and democracy in northern and eastern Syria was this, the Turkish government's attacks. Turkey has bombed vital infrastructure and civil resources, including power plants, oil wells, factories, and targeted vehicles.

Despite these challenges, the DAANES has remained steadfast, and has continued its struggle to protect the region, develop institutions, and preserve civil peace. In doing so, the democratic administrative model stands as an example to follow. This model demands that revolutionary movements—especially women—and countries protect democracy from all possible attacks. Today, protecting the gains of this revolution means protecting all human and democratic values.



One of the aerial attacks to infrastructures from the Turkish State



5. The dangers today

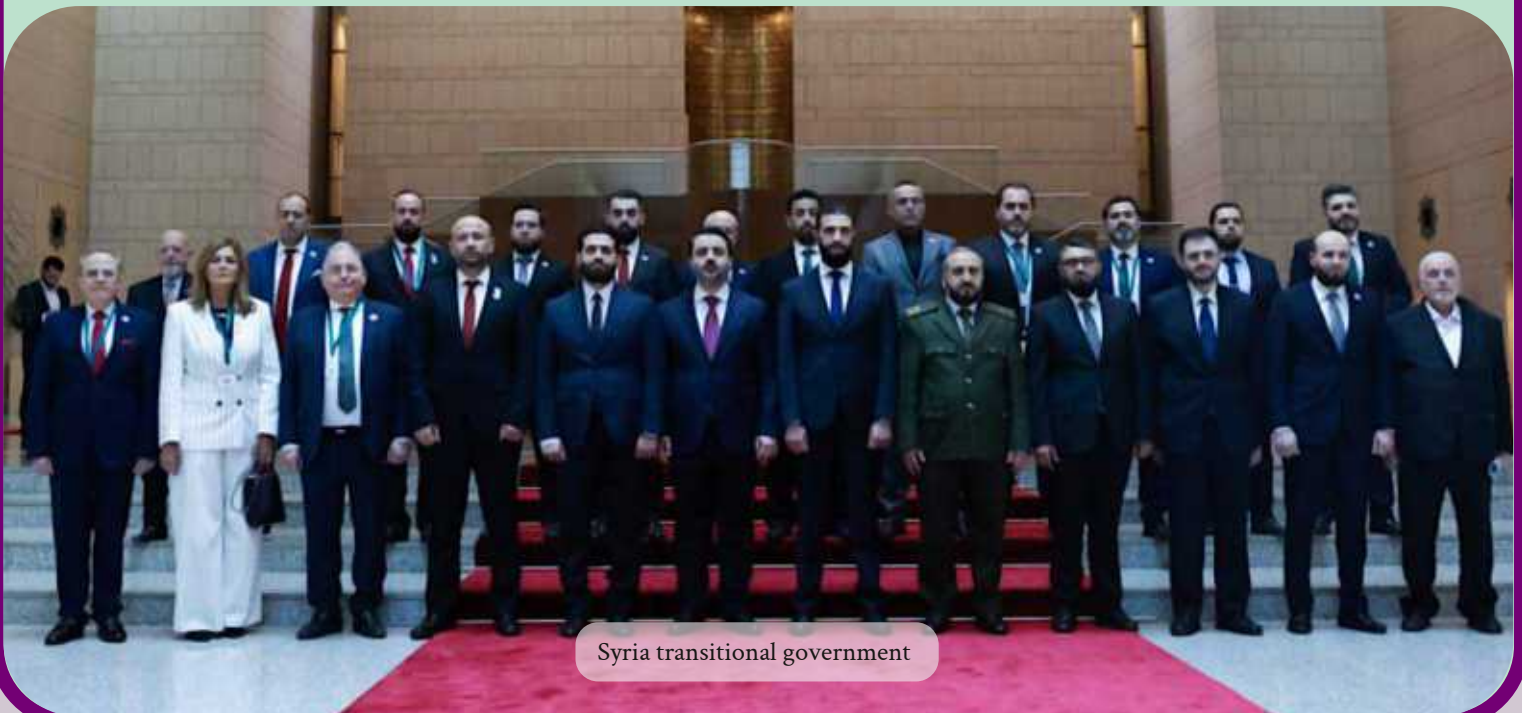
The HTS government and it's policies

Democratic forces have been proposing a new culture since the old regime - one of constructive criticism, a culture of dialogue, and seeing differences as a richness. This was needed for advancing society, and overcoming crisis. But the old regime kept refusing it. And because of this refusal, and the general intellectual and ideological stagnation at the time, the authoritarian regime ultimately collapsed.

The rise of a radical Islamic group to the helm of power was the result of various regional and international

agreements. This underscores Syria's strategic importance, occupying a central position in the Middle East for global powers. First and foremost among them the United States, which seeks solutions serving its strategic interests in the region.

In the current provisory government of Damascus, 8 people were part of HTS or of the Salvation Government (set up by HTS in Idlib) and among them 3 were also former members of the terrorist group, Al-Nusra. At the same time, Hatim Ebü Şeqra and Haris al-Ribah, both



Syria transitional government



responsibles of the killing of the leader of the future Syria Party Hevrîn Xalef, got appointed respectevly as commander in charge of Raqqa, Tabqa and Deir Ezzor and as digital media responsible for Deir Ezzor.

The transitional government in Damascus, also faces major challenges. The first is its inability to control extremist factions within the army, like the ones who, at the beggining of March 2025 have committed massacres on the Syrian coast against civilians from the Alawite sect killing between 1624 -7500 people (according to different sources). Still there are daily ongoing violations and threats against other sects and Syria's indigenou communities, including the Kurds, Druze, Alawites, and Christians. Tens of Alewi women had been kidnapped, dangerously reminding us of the fate of thousands Yazidi women sold as slaves from ISIS. Secondly, the transitional government is failing to adopt democratic standards in setting up state institutions. It has, for example, excluded genuine representatives in the national dialogue and neglects to consider the ethnic and sectarian diversity in ministerial appointments.



Alawites mourning some victims of the massacre

"The transitional government fails to adopt democratic standards in all its steps towards forming state institutions"

Moreover, the unilateral constitutional declaration lacks recognition of the rights of Syria's diverse communities and fails to safeguard women's rights, instead asserting a nationalist and fundamentalist religious perspective which contains provisions that pave the way for a totalitarian system, no different from the defunct regime that ruled for 52 years.



Women protests agaisn the Damascus interim government.



6. Conclusion

It is unlikely that the transitional government can continue its current policies without undertaking radical transformations in line with the wider global system. If the global order does not accept a government it will seek to impose changes, as many countries saw in changing their regime after the Arab Springs.

If this government fails to take adequate measures—either by adapting to the policies of the global system or by activating internal social change based on more radical democratic values—then its failure is inevitable.

All political observers concerned with the current Syrian situation know well that finding a realistic and democratic solution, or failing to do so, is a fundamental and decisive factor in the future of the current transitional government.

A just democratic solution that fulfills the aspirations of the people would represent a major step in rescuing Syria from the chaos it currently endures, allowing a peaceful and democratic model based on constructive dialogue with the communities of the Syrian people.

Conversely, ignoring the desires of Syria's communities will only deepen chaos and divisions, further weakening the country's ability to face external pressures, as it will find itself confronting the most dynamic and effective social groups. This will negatively affect the social and political situation throughout the country.

Without doubt, in all its segments and political forces, Syrian society represents the most organized and effective democratic power, influencing and being influenced by developments on the Syrian scene. Underestimating this fact is one of the gravest political mistakes.

The people of North and East Syria have fought against different organizations globally understood as terrorists, like Al-Nusra and ISIS, which were a global danger with their attacks. At the same time the project of the democratic nation that here is taking practice is representing a concrete hope for all the oppressed people and women. Defending Rojava revolution continues therefore, to be - in this sense - a global responsibility.

*"The culture of defending society
has been developed around women"*

A. Öcalan



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