

**SOLIDARITY SCREENINGS GLASGOW &
SCOTTISH KURDISH SOLIDARITY PRESENT:**

BERXWEDAN JIYANE

المقاومة هي الحياة

**RESISTANCE
IS
LIFE**

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Images in this booklet shared for educational and archival purposes only.

About Scottish Solidarity with Kurdistan

Stephen Smellie, UNISON South Lanarkshire

Scottish Solidarity with Kurdistan (SSK) was formed in 2014 when the Kurdish population in North East Syria/Rojava were on the frontline of the struggle against ISIS. The group brought together Kurds living in Scotland with trade unionists and others to raise awareness of the struggle against ISIS. The Kurdish fighters, men and women organised in the YPG and YPJ were successful in defeating ISIS and SSK continued to highlight the cause of the Kurdish Freedom Movement building support within trade unions and the Scottish Parliament.

SSK has raised funds for medical aid and education in Rojava as well as organised delegations to Kurdistan and hosted visits to Scotland of Kurdish politicians, human rights activists and trade unionists.

SSK can be contacted at **scottishsolidaritywithkurdistan@disroot.org**.



Solidarity Screenings Glasgow Manifesto

This manifesto is a guiding document that outlines Solidarity Screenings Glasgow's objectives, principles and strategy. It is aimed at our audience, team and collaborators.

Solidarity Screenings is a film screening initiative based in Glasgow, Scotland. Re-building genuine solidarity through the medium of film is our contribution to the cultural front. We hope to further the growing revolutionary movement in Glasgow. Presentations, booklets, the Solidarity Book Exchange, shared meals and discussions accompany our screenings. The screenings are free of charge to remain accessible to our audience.

Our work is an act of solidarity with liberation struggles internationally. It began in response to Al-Aqsa Flood in October 2023 in support of the Palestinian struggle for national liberation. Initially our primary focus was Arab cinema. We have since broadened our programming, although Palestine always remains our compass. We uphold Al-Thawabet, the fundamental principles of the Palestinian struggle.

The aim of our work is to confront our audience with educational and agitational screenings that move us towards liberation. Glasgow has a rich history of solidarity with movements worldwide. By highlighting under-recognised struggles, we want to build on this history - celebrating with and learning from them. Capitalism instills a pervasive nihilism in every facet of society. We oppose this. We are revolutionary optimists who are guided by anti-imperialist feminist working-class principles.

Solidarity Screenings is rooted amongst its audience. Our programming is oriented around what educates and agitates the people - rather than the curators' subjective ideas of 'taste'. Moreover, we aim to create a space that fosters transformative and revolutionary discussion. Guiding questions inform the free-flowing dialogue post-film. The films are only the first step; we must release them from the confines of the screen. Ultimately, our audience teaches us how to continuously improve each

event through active engagement and constructive criticism.

A few things remain pertinent in our practice: Each screening comes with a particular purpose and theme. The presentations are the medium that conveys this most clearly. Accordingly, it is crucial to orient ourselves around liberatory and revolutionary movements. We recognise colonialism as an ongoing reality, rather than an evil of the past. We must expose it and uphold the right to resist by all means necessary. Through this we oppose imperialist narratives and disinformation that attempt to put a wedge in our solidarity.

Solidarity Screenings is a collective effort. Collaboration is an essential pillar of the project. We are always keen to have more people involved, whether as a volunteer or guest curator.

If you align with this manifesto and would like to join our efforts or collaborate organisationally, please contact us at solidarityscreeningsglasgow@gmail.com.

Solidarity Screenings upholds the The Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of 'Israel' (PACBI). We urge our collaborators to join us in amplifying and publicly endorsing PACBI. For more information please see: <https://tinyurl.com/45ybcnyk>.



Welcome Note

Jenni Keasden

The Kurdistan Freedom Movement has become a beacon for revolutionaries across the world. Spanning decades of struggle, its example and inspiration is a spark that has lit many fires. The movement has come to be organised far beyond Kurdistan itself, among the widespread Kurdish diaspora but also with thousands of internationalists who have become a part of it.

Recently, the social project in Rojava, North and East Syria, based on women's liberation, ecology, and direct democracy, has been the best known example of putting the movement's values into practice. Hundreds of internationalist volunteers have flowed to and from Rojava, to see the real lives behind the chants and the daily life behind the struggle. The slogan *Berxwedan jiyne e*, 'Resistance is life', expresses how these are woven together. In the world we face today - to truly live and devote ourselves to life - becomes an act of resistance. And resistance breathes life into us when the system around us pedals death.

Internationalist in spirit, the Kurdistan Freedom Movement invites us to be a part of it, never just to observe. Like any truly mass movement, it is full of complexities, contradictions, and problems. It is far from perfect. But for internationalists, our role is not just to assess, to take notes, to consume the movement as a product. Instead, it is to step into it, walk alongside, affect it and be affected by it - to live the resistance as life.

The documentary *Berxwedan jiyane e: the resistance of Tishreen* shows the incredible courage and organisational skills of ordinary people facing an existential threat. In the movement's principles of revolutionary

people's war, all parts of society and communities take part in their own self defence. It shows us a moment when communities refused to back down and refused to wait around for anyone to save them.

And they held the line. In the months around the time of the documentary, the area around Tishreen dam was not lost. Of course, there are dozens of reasons for this. But the civilian protest and resistance was one of them, and should not be underestimated or forgotten when history is only told in terms of heavy war or negotiation.

Of course, one small victory is never the whole story. Since the time the film was made, things have changed a lot in Syria (and the wider Middle East) and continue to every day.

In this booklet we will attempt to give an introduction to the situation and background before, during, and after the time of the film. We will show the context that the struggle in Rojava takes place in, but more importantly the story of that struggle itself, which will continue regardless of the conditions around it.



A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF NORTH AND EAST SYRIA

1 1960's onwards

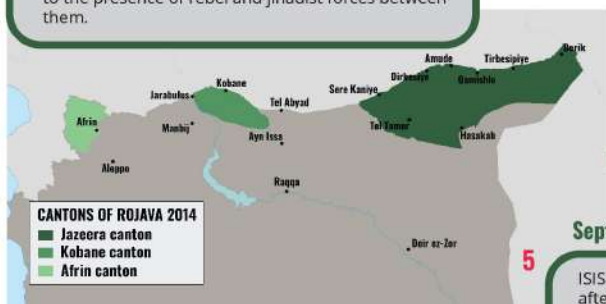
No autonomy for the Kurdish region in northern Syria, Kurdish language banned.
1962 Syrian government census leaves 300,000 Kurds without citizenship.
1970's Ba'ath regime settle Arab populations in traditionally Kurdish areas to create an "Arab belt."
 People organize underground, holding secret meetings and celebrations of Newroz.
 The PYD is created in **2003** as a mobilizing force in the early developments of autonomy.
From 2004, women organize secretly through the Yêkitiya Star network.

2 2011-2012: revolution unfolds

After months of protest against the Ba'ath regime, the population of Kobane (**19 July 2012**), followed by Afrin (**20 July 2012**) and Jazeera regions expel the Syrian army and administration from its territories. They start to organize themselves through communes, councils and cooperatives.
January 2011: TEV-DEM (Movement for a Democratic Society) is created to build up and coordinate the autonomous system.
July 2011: establishment of YPG (People's Defense Units).

4 January 2014

Independence declaration, under the name of Rojava, of the three cantons of Afrin, Kobane and Jazeera, organized through TEV-DEM.
 The cantons are geographically non-contiguous due to the presence of rebel and jihadist forces between them.



3

2013

April: YPJ (Women's Defense Units) established
July: Liberation of Sere Kaniye (Ras Al-Ayn) from Al-Nusra Front by YPG and YPJ.

6 2015

10 October: Creation of the Syrian Democratic Forces / SDF.
9 December: Creation of the Syrian Democratic Council / SDC.

5

September 2014 – January 2015

ISIS forces attack the city of Kobane, and after months of fighting, the YPG, YPJ and allies successfully repel the attacks in a victory that attracts global support.

7

March 2016

Proclamation of the Democratic Federation of Rojava – Northern Syria and beginning of the constitution writing process.

August 2016

8

Liberation of Manbij from ISIS by SDF. Establishment of communes and civil administrative councils in Manbij.

December 2016

9

The constitution is formally adopted under the name of the Democratic Federation of North-Eastern Syria, dropping the term 'Rojava' to be more inclusive of Arab-majority areas, particularly Manbij.

2017

10

SDF liberates Tabqa (May) and Raqqa (October) from ISIS. Civil councils established in liberated territories.

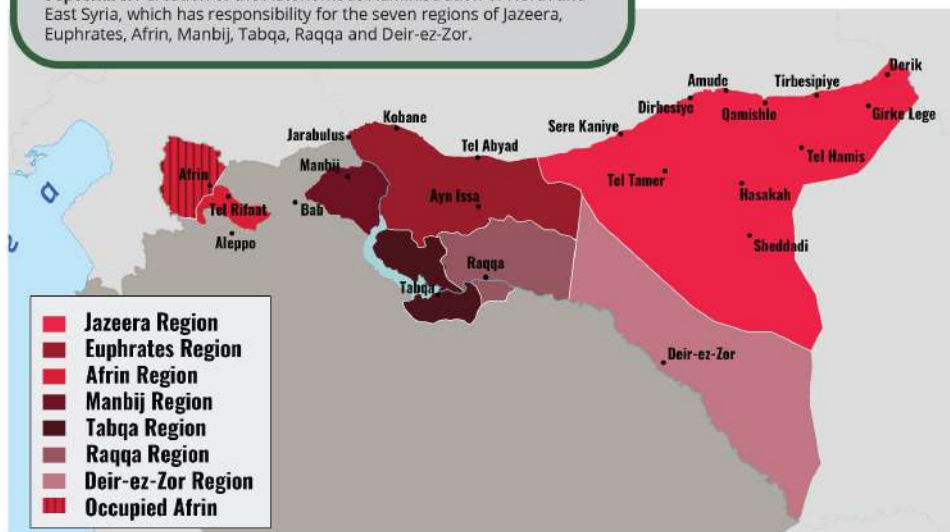
2018

11

January: Invasion of Afrin by the Turkish army and its proxy forces. Over 300,000 people are displaced, the majority of whom are Kurdish.

March: SDF withdraws from Afrin. Turkish-backed militias impose sharia law, kidnap, torture and execute civilians, and commit human rights violations and war crimes.

September: Creation of the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria, which has responsibility for the seven regions of Jazeera, Euphrates, Afrin, Manbij, Tabqa, Raqqa and Deir-ez-Zor.



2019

12

March: Military victory over the ISIS caliphate in Deir-ez-Zor under SDF leadership.

October: Turkish attack and invasion of Sere Kaniye (Ras Al-Ayn) and Tel Abyad (Gire Spi) cities in North and East Syria after the USA decides to withdraw their troops from Syria.

Over 200,000 civilians displaced so far; over 450 civilians killed; over 1,000 km² of land occupied; settlement of Turkish-backed fighters and their families in the occupied zone with a strategy of intentional demographic engineering.

Read our report to find out more:

BEYOND THE FRONTLINES - The building of the democratic system in North and East Syria

www.rojavainformationcenter.com/@RojavaIC

A People's Existence by Resistance: The Kurds

Zozan Sima

Sep 16, 2021

Our direct and participatory democracy is the fruit of a wide organisational network that allows for regional specificities and a diversity of languages and cultures, as well as autonomous women's and young people's structures.

These structures have managed to flourish despite the racist attacks on the Kurdish people that we have endured for millenia. Indeed, owing to our origins in Mesopotamia — the historic location of the world's first state civilizations — our identity is one forged by the need to defend ourselves against attacks from states that would refuse to recognize our culture. Now, thousands of years later, the people of Kurdistan continue to struggle for their existence and their freedom, guided by the leadership of women and the spirit of the women's revolution.

Despite our long history of existence, the most devastating violence that has taken place against the Kurds would take place only with the rise of Capitalist Modernity in the last two centuries. Though the enforcers of these policies in the region have been the states of Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria, it has been, first and foremost, the global imperialist powers, especially Britain and the USA, that have prepared the ground for these states, offering them support and guidance in committing massacres. This violence, at its core, is one of cultural racism.

[...]

From Being Ignored to Revolution: Rojava Kurdistan

Rojava Kurdistan was held under the rule of the Ba'ath regime that represented Arab-Alawi nationalism for years. In their policy towards the Kurds, the "Arab Syrian Republic" claimed that Kurds were migrants who came to these lands much later. In order to change the demography of the Kurdish region, with their project titled the Arab Belt, in the 1970's, Arab families were settled in villages in the Kurdish areas. A large part of the Kurdish population had their citizenship status revoked and were called ecnebi (foreigner) or mektum (fugitive).

Without documentation, Kurds did not have any citizenship rights

and could not benefit from public services. They were dispossessed of the opportunities to attend school, to find a job, or to own property. Nevertheless, Kurds were still forced to perform seven years of military service for the state. During different periods, some Kurdish revolutionaries and intellectuals such as Nuri Dersimi, Celadet Bedirxan, and Abdullah Öcalan came to Rojava to avoid the persecution of the Turkish state and to continue their struggle for the liberation and unity of Kurdistan and the Kurdish people. In every period, the people of Rojava supported and participated in the struggles in other parts of Kurdistan.

Anticipating the fascist military coup in 1980 in Turkey, Abdullah Öcalan arrived in Syria together with members of the newly founded Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK). For years, Rojava was a ground for educational and organisational works of the Kurdistan Freedom Movement. The society, militia, sympathisers, and people's committees in Rojava have a 40-years-history of struggle. Since the beginning, women's participation has been very strong. Women have tried to solve their social problems by both joining the guerrilla ranks or establishing committees.

Clandestinely, women organised cultural works, political education, and Kurdish language classes at their homes. By working in a communal manner, women played an active role in raising awareness, organising material resources in support of the struggle, and creating social solidarity. Families even encouraged their children to join the guerrilla forces. From the 1980's onwards, many women from Rojava Kurdistan joined the guerrilla and became martyrs in the struggle. In 2005 the first autonomous women's organisation was established under the name of Yekitiya-Star. With the Rojava revolution it started to organise on a wider scale and changed its name into Kongra Star.

With the popular uprisings and rebellions in the Middle East starting in 2011, the Rojava revolution was successful in establishing structures of people's self-administration based on radical democracy, ecology, and women's freedom. The role of women has been decisive in the realisation of democratic autonomy in Rojava. The armed resistance that developed under the leadership of the Women's Defence Units (YPJ) against ISIS gangs both in Rojava and Shengal in 2014 had a worldwide impact. Due to their organised will, women achieved equal representation and the implementation of a co-chair system in the political sphere and all institutions.

Kurdish women have established autonomous organisations in every field of life: from defence units to civil organisations, culture and arts councils, communal economy institutions, and even the women's justice council. Many principal decisions concerning women can only be taken by the women themselves. Crimes against women are dealt with according to women's laws which were initiated by the women's movement and have been approved by the constitutional assembly of the democratic autonomy. Along with these, common councils have been established together with Arab, Syriac, Armenian, Circassian, Chechen, and Turkmen people as well as people of Ezidi, Christian, and Muslim beliefs. Women as well as people from all national, religious, and social groups are guaranteed participation in this system through their own self-organisation.



Rojava and Syria at War - a political assessment

Ali Cicek

Jan 2026

Since the beginning of the year, events in Rojava and Syria have escalated dramatically. In view of the rapid developments, there is an urgent need for a thorough analysis of the current situation and the goals and interests of the actors involved in this complex web of political relationships.

In order to understand the main dynamics of the current situation, the background to the latest developments in Syria and their impact on Rojava, it is therefore necessary to analyse the comprehensive upheavals in the Middle East in more detail. A historically grounded understanding of these political processes is crucial for democratic forces to assert themselves against appropriation by capitalist modernity and to develop an independent, emancipatory perspective.

A new stage in the Third World War

The conceptual and theoretical framework of the 'Third World War' coined by Abdullah Öcalan in his works "Manifesto for a Democratic Civilization", provides a central orientation for an appropriate assessment of current developments in Syria.

This term, which has been used by the Kurdistan Freedom Movement for over two decades, describes the global process of realignment of hegemonic forces and zones of influence that began with the collapse of the Soviet Union. The years 1989-90 marked the end of the bipolar world order, which divided the world between the Soviet bloc and the capitalist bloc, and led to the breakdown of former power balances, especially in the Middle East. In this chaotic phase, the goal of the forces of capitalist modernity is the complete integration of the region into capitalist hegemony.

In this context, three central groups of actors can be distinguished in the Middle East, each acting with different interests and objectives; First, the international actors, led by the USA, form a dominant bloc. Since the early 1990s, the United States have pursued the goal of restructuring

the region as part of the so-called 'Greater Middle East Project' (GME) with the aim of dominating the region's resources and trade routes. The GME was developed in response to the power vacuum following the collapse of real socialism and aims to transform the Middle East in line with neoliberal ideas. A look at the bloody consequences of this policy over the past thirty years in countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and Syria illustrates the devastating effects on societies in the region. The US strategy is based primarily on three pillars: eliminating potential threats to the US and the West, controlling energy resources and energy corridors, and ensuring Israel's security and capacity to project war towards the region. In this context, both the dismantling of Iran's Shiite crescent project and the establishment of a so-called "Arab NATO" play a central role. The latter manifests itself, among other things, in the Abraham Accords, which aim to strategically unite Sunni states – in particular Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states – with Israel.

The second group of actors consists of the existing nation states in the region, which are attempting to resist the Greater Middle East Project's efforts to reshape the region and impose their policies of domination, dismantling the 20th century order of Sykes-Picot. Instead, they insist on the state order established around a hundred years ago by the Sykes-Picot Agreement.

The third actor is represented by social forces. Today, these are primarily represented by the Kurdistan Freedom Movement, which, with the development of the model of Democratic Confederalism and the democratic nation, is formulating an alternative to both the nation-state order and the Greater Middle East Project.

From October 7th 2023 to the fall of Syria's Baath regime

With the Palestinian genocide that began on October 7th 2023, the process of reshaping the Middle East gained considerable momentum. The existing status quo was seen as an obstacle to Western hegemony and was therefore deliberately broken up in order to establish new power relations. In this context, Iranian influence in Palestine (Hamas) and Lebanon (Hezbollah) was weakened, while the change of power in Syria broke another central pillar of Iran's regional hegemony. Iran is thus faced with the alternative of undergoing regime change or submitting to the existing hegemonic order.

Within this restructuring of the Middle East, Israel is assuming the role of the hegemonic centre. A new regional security architecture is being built around Israel. The Abraham Accords mark a process of gradual integration of Arab nation states into this system, with Israel as the central actor and representative of Western hegemony. At the same time, the Sunni bloc, which was significantly shaken by the Arab Spring, is being reformed. In this context, there are increasing calls for a strategic encirclement of Iran. Beyond the security policy dimension, the transformation of the Middle East region in line with the new world order also aims to control energy reserves and new energy routes, secure the unhindered movement of capital, dominate the Eastern Mediterranean, and establish political regimes that limit and contain the scope of action of Russia and China.

The fall of the Baath regime on December 8th 2024 after 62 years of rule represents a continuation of this policy and ushered in a new phase of uncertainty in Syria. When Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), which has its roots in al-Qaeda, recently developed from a previously small Islamist emirate in the Idlib region and was under the patronage and supervision of the Turkish state, took power, it became clear that the Syrian crisis was not over. HTS, which now forms the transitional government, marks the beginning of a new phase of instability.

HTS's Syria as a new proxy force of the West

With the fall of the Assad regime and the takeover by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), the network of relationships in Syria has changed qualitatively. A new balance of power has emerged that must be understood in order to correctly assess current developments. The developing situation should be analysed primarily from the perspective of the US and the Western bloc.

Since the beginning of the Syrian civil war in 2011, the goal of the US and its allies has been to overthrow the Assad regime and install a pro-Western government – a goal that has effectively been achieved with today's transitional government. This put the US in direct opposition to Russia and Iran, which were the central pillars of support for the Assad regime during the war. Until Assad's fall, Russian policy was aimed at stabilising Syria's existing nation-state system by keeping him in power.

With HTS taking power, this balance of power has entered a new

phase. With HTS, a force that was built up with significant preparation by the United Kingdom, there is now a government in Damascus that is integrated into the US and Western-led reorganisation project. HTS accepts the rules of capitalist modernity, is economically integrated into the Western camp, de facto recognises Israeli hegemony and remains silent on the Israeli occupation of parts of southern Syria.

For America, this shift in alliances is nothing new. When the US allied itself with the Kurds, they were under attack from IS, Assad was in power in Syria, and the US was opposed to Assad. Considering the support they gave to the YPG and later the SDF, there was a serious change in relations with the SDF after the regime change in Syria as the US began to support the new Syrian regime. Previously, the US tried to control its predominantly tactical-military relations in Syria from east of the Euphrates, but now it is trying to implement its political and diplomatic strategy through Damascus.

This new strategy was formally sealed at the meeting in Paris on January 5th and 6th 2026, where Syria and Israel agreed on a joint communication mechanism under US supervision. However, this meeting was not limited to that. At the same time, an alliance was formed against the DAANES. It is no coincidence that Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan was also present in Paris on that day. This alliance against Rojava, supported by the US, France, Britain and Turkey, is also backed by the EU. This was clearly demonstrated during the visit of EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen to Damascus, who pledged political support for the new regime, while a war of annihilation was being waged against Kurdish settlements. In this sense, the attack on Rojava is not an isolated event, but part of a coordinated approach between the al-Sharaa regime and the West.

To achieve more concrete interests, the victorious forces in Syria are now fighting amongst themselves and the project of a democratic Syria has no place in this. Israel genuinely wants Syria to remain fragmented. Turkey, meanwhile, wants a Syrian administration loyal to it and implement Neo-Ottomanism throughout the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean. The Gulf states and Britain want to establish a sphere of influence in the Eastern Mediterranean through HTS. The most influential of all these powers, the US, wants to establish a balance among these countries, all of which are its allies, and will most likely ultimately take a position

close to Israel's arguments. Turkey's project is, in fact, to revive a period similar to the Assad regime under different names; at this point, it is automatically antagonising the people of the region. This means, that they are pushing for a centralist nation-state power on the fundament of ethnic-based division and oppression. Israel, on the other hand, is taking a purely tactical approach to the region. Having secured all the short-term concessions it wanted from the HTS leadership after the Paris agreement, the Israeli government appears set to wield the HTS groups like the sword of Damocles over the rest of Syria for a long time to come. Note that Israel is merely observing HTS's massacres after the Paris agreement. Turkey, on the other hand, will constantly provoke HTS against SDF, attempting to minimise the gains of the Kurds.

US pragmatism towards the Kurds

The pragmatic policy of the US towards the Kurds before the fall of Assad was primarily due to the fight against the Islamic State (ISIS). From the US perspective, this 12-year tactical alliance was driven by three key motives: firstly, cooperation with the YPG offered the most effective way to gain military prestige in the fight against ISIS. Secondly, the US pursued the goal of bringing the revolution under control, limiting its socialist or 'Apoist' (a term used for the supporters of Öcalan's political line) orientation and steering it into a nationalist, nation-state direction. Thirdly, the Kurds served as a means of exerting pressure on the Assad regime and the Russia-Iran bloc.

With the new balance of power in Syria and the establishment of a pro-Western regime in Damascus, these tactical interests have shifted fundamentally. The former arguments and constraints have lost their significance. Against this backdrop, the US is now attempting to put the Kurds under massive political, military and economic pressure in order to force them into a de facto 'voluntary' integration into the Syrian state. At the same time, Turkey is being given greater leeway to limit the influence of the Kurds and push them further towards Damascus.

The US has made no secret of this position. On January 20th 2026, the US Special Envoy for Syria, Tom Barrack, openly expressed this tactical approach to the SDF in his statement: "Today, the situation has fundamentally changed. Syria now has an acknowledged central government that has joined the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS (as its





90th member in late 2025), signalling a westward pivot and cooperation with the US on counterterrorism. This shifts the rationale for the US-SDF partnership: the original purpose of the SDF as the primary anti-ISIS force on the ground has largely expired, as Damascus is now both willing and positioned to take over security responsibilities, including control of ISIS detention facilities and camps.”²

The US has brought the new Syrian regime under al-Sharaa together with Israel (for the first time in the history of both countries), and continues to try to strengthen this regime and build a new Syria through al-Sharaa. In this context, the relationship between al-Sharaa and Israel is of utmost importance to the US. This also included al-Sharaa establishing a relationship with Israel in which he submits to its hegemony in the region, which he ultimately did at the Paris meeting. In a second step, the US is now trying to somehow “integrate” the Kurds, with whom it has had a military alliance for over ten years, into the new regime.

This is where the breakdowns and difficulties have arisen. Negotiations have been ongoing since March 10th 2025, and the regime in Damascus has largely turned a deaf ear to the SDF’s demands. Whenever an agreement with the SDF seemed within reach, Turkey intervened directly. On January 4th, immediately prior to the attack on Aleppo, negotiations between the SDF and the Damascus delegation were initially going well, according to press reports, and it looked as if an agreement would be signed. But then the Turkish-friendly Foreign Minister al-Sheibani entered the negotiating room and declared the negotiations over. A day later, negotiations on a security agreement with Israel began in Paris, and on January 6th, an agreement was reached. On the same day, the attack took place in Aleppo. Turkey was involved in the attack on Aleppo with all its might, and continues to be so now. From planning to implementation, Turkey has been involved militarily, diplomatically, in terms of intelligence and technically. This is an operation carried out jointly with the government in Damascus and the armed groups acting on behalf of Turkey. The attacks were essentially aimed at breaking the will of the Kurds in the negotiations between the SDF and Damascus, undermining their demands for recognition, forcing integration by weakening their military strength and weakening the SDF’s negotiating position in order to achieve complete capitulation.

With regard to relations between the Kurds and the US, a certain division

between international and regional actors along the western and eastern Euphrates has emerged in recent years. Until the current turning point, the US had signalled to the Kurds that it would not interfere in matters west of the Euphrates. On this basis, the US did not oppose Turkish military operations in Afrin (2018), Manbij (2024) and Till Rifaat. Nevertheless they withdrew their troops and remained silent when Turkish army attacked and occupied Till Abyad and Ras Al-Ayn in 2019, both lying east of the Euphrates.

Now, again, we are witnessing a huge military offensive east of the Euphrates: cities such as Tabqah, Raqqa and Ayn Issa are now under the control of the Syrian regime, while Haseke and Kobane are under siege. The division between west and east, previously considered an imaginary 'red line,' has lost its validity in this new phase. The US's silence on these developments is effectively tantamount to supporting Ahmed al-Sharaa's claim to establish state sovereignty over the whole of Syria. The current situation shows that the US's fundamental concept is no longer to negotiate the division into a western and an eastern Euphrates region, but rather to weaken the SDF as much as possible.

US attempts to unite Damascus, Turkey, and Israel

From the US perspective, the underlying logic in Syria is to bring Israel and Turkey into alignment. On the one hand stands Israel, the West's closest ally in the region; on the other hand stands Turkey, a NATO member whose relationship with the West has been marked by tensions but remains strategically indispensable. Washington seeks to encourage Turkey and Israel to identify shared security interests, coordinate their approaches, and present a joint framework for Syria. Ultimately, this strategy points toward the formation of a broader alignment linking Damascus, Turkey, and Israel.

Strategically, Turkey and Israel pursue divergent objectives in Syria. Turkey is determined to prevent the Kurds from establishing political, administrative, or military autonomy and has shown little willingness to compromise on this issue. Accordingly, Ankara favors the emergence of a strong, centralized Syrian leadership under al-Sharaa that would consolidate all levers of power. Israel, by contrast, despite having enforced certain demands on al-Sharaa, does not trust either the regime or the power bloc surrounding him. From Israel's perspective, this leadership

could pose a challenge to its security in the medium to long term. It is therefore not in Israel's interest for Syria to become overly powerful or to significantly expand its military capabilities. Instead, Israel favors a more fragmented, decentralized, and flexible political structure—one in which Kurds, Druze, Alevis, and other social groups are represented—thereby limiting Damascus's ability to project power and preserving Israel's own room for influence. The reason for this is not an interest in democracy, but rather a desire to maintain their own hegemony and influence. In addition, it is essential to Israel and Western powers to be able to use the HTS against Iran and Shiite militias, like Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Popular Mobilization Forces in Iraq. Despite these fundamental differences, efforts to identify a shared middle ground between Turkey and Israel continue. The United States is actively attempting to bring Damascus, Ankara, and Tel Aviv to the negotiating table.

[...]

The ideological essence of the attack

The attacks on Rojava are not only political and military in nature, but also have a profound ideological dimension. With the current pressure, the US is attempting to liberalise the revolutionary achievements and strengthen nationalist forces. On the one hand they want to push nationalist agendas, on the other hand they continue to try to divide the Kurds into good (KDP, etc.) and bad (PKK, etc.) in order to weaken the unity of the Kurds. At the heart of this is an attack on the idea of the democratic nation – the core of the revolution. Kurds are to be played off against Arabs and the project of coexistence undermined. Accordingly, the attacks were directed in the beginning of the war particularly against regions with a majority Arab population, such as Raqqa, Tabqa and Deir ez-Zor. The aim is to make division based on ethnic lines and from there to either force capitulation on the Kurds or to crush their political will by brute force, which would open the way for ethnic cleansing, massacres and systematic demographic change. So the current situation is intended not only to destroy the achievements of Kurdish society in Syria, but also to fuel hostilities between peoples. Weakening the Kurds in order to dominate the Middle East is a 200-year-old policy of 'divide and rule.' It is a new version of the imperialist policy of 'divide and rule' that has maintained the hegemony of capitalist modernity in the Middle East for the past 200 years.

At the same time, Kurdish nationalist forces such as ENKS and KDP are being specifically promoted, as was recently evident at the meeting in Erbil on January 17th 2026. For years, these forces have been propagating a discourse that seeks to reduce self-government to a purely ethnic-cultural agenda. The decree issued by al-Sharaa on January 17th recognising the Kurdish language and making further concessions should also be understood in this context as a tactical manoeuvre intended to give impetus to this nationalist line. The decree has no constitutional binding force, while the regime itself is based on denial, division and massacres of Alevi, Druze and Kurds. The simultaneous continuation of military attacks by HTS makes it clear that what is sought for ultimately is complete submission to Damascus.

At this point, two different strategies towards the Kurds are evident. On the one hand, the Turkish state and the Syrian regime are pursuing a policy of crushing revolutionary achievements, which extends to genocidal practices. On the other hand, the US strategy is aimed less at physical destruction than at liberalising and depoliticising the revolution. Support for this plan aims to distort and channel the revolutionary-democratic potential of the Kurds. The policy of 'divide and rule' is implemented primarily through support for nationalist Kurdish elements. In particular, the revolutionary, radical democratic and socialist forces in Kurdistan are to be neutralised in this way. One of the main goals in this context is to isolate the PKK and the line of freedom. International support for this plan aims to distort and channel the revolutionary-democratic potential of the Kurds and finds broad support in the international diplomatic arena. This promotes a nation-state line that is limited to certain Kurdish rights and demands, and that subordinates itself to the US-Israeli project for the Middle East. At the same time, a weakened Kurdish minority remains a potential instrument for the forces of capitalist modernity to be used again as leverage in conflicts with Damascus.

In this context, there can be no talk of a 'betrayal' of the Kurds or Rojava by the US or the EU. Betrayal can only exist where there is a strategic partnership or a joint political project for the future. At most, those actors who have consciously tied their future to the US and placed their bets on a strategic alliance can be said to have been betrayed.

However, this does not apply to Rojava. At no point has there been a common ideological or political project between the Democratic

Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria and the US. From the outset, relations have been purely tactical in nature, dependent on a specific geopolitical constellation and strictly limited to the joint fight against the so-called Islamic State.

The US, as an imperialist power and hegemon of the capitalist world system, pursues the goal of exploiting the achievements of a society's struggle for freedom for its own interests. Against this backdrop, the current attacks must be understood not only in political and military terms, but above all, in terms of their ideological depth. The forces of capitalist modernity have coordinated their efforts to increase pressure on the Kurds, to contain them and to instrumentalise and exploit them in accordance with their own strategic plans. These attacks have once again shown that the forces of capitalist modernity are capable of trampling on all values in pursuit of their own interests.

In contrast, the strategic line of the Kurdistan Freedom Movement is clear: its partners are not imperialist states, but global democratic forces, social movements and anti-systemic actors who advocate self-determination, equality and an alternative social order.

[...]

International plan to destroy a democratic model for the region

On this basis, the attack on Rojava is not solely aimed at destroying the achievements of Kurdish society. Rather, the goal of this international plan, which is supported by regional actors such as Israel and Turkey as well as international forces – above all the US and European states – is to destroy the project and idea of a democratic Syria and a democratic Middle East.

The attack is directed against the principles of local democracy, women's liberation, equal rights for ethnic and religious communities, and the idea of a 'third way.' It is intended to demonstrate that alternatives beyond the nation state, nationalism and power politics are not possible. The Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria is therefore being forced into either total surrender in order to return to the order that existed before 2011 or complete physical annihilation.

Today, especially under conditions of war, it is essential to make clear to the world who is truly defending freedom. This struggle cannot be carried out through states or governments; it must be rooted in society itself, in the streets. Genuine legitimacy and lasting power emerge only through mass solidarity. When such collective strength exists, it becomes far more difficult for states to sustain violence and repression. Otherwise, decisions are made from above, and people are reduced to passive spectators. There is no reason to place trust in governments. They shift positions overnight when their interests change. History is filled with examples of this, and we continue to witness it today. For this reason, the form of engagement we need is not official diplomacy, but people's diplomacy. People must be able to understand one another directly, across borders. What is happening must be explained openly and without mediation to societies themselves. This is not only a moral necessity but also a powerful geopolitical force. The responsibility to communicate the reality of the world cannot be left to states alone. Every state is willing to abandon its principles the moment its interests are threatened. That is why the only sustainable source of pressure lies in the shared awareness and solidarity of peoples. Explaining the realities of the world to societies everywhere is the foundation of a durable and effective people's diplomacy. If this does not happen, plans will continue to be made from above, and once again, people will be left watching from the sidelines.

The Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria and the Kurdistan Freedom Movement have now called for the expansion of resistance against the attacks and are counting on total resistance. The benchmark for this is the resistance in Kobanê in 2014–2015. It was not only the fighters of the YPG and YPJ who defeated ISIS, but also the broad support, moral backing and solidarity of societies, democratic and socialist forces worldwide. In this sense, it is now time to once again provide such support to the resistance fighters in Rojava-Kurdistan. Against the united forces of capitalist modernity, the forces of democratic modernity must unite to create a second Kobanê and prove that the resistance of the peoples remains unbroken and that the idea of democratic socialism lives on as an alternative to the existing system of exploitation and oppression.

Kongra Star and the commune system within the DAANES

Women Defend Rojava

April 2026

One of the five principles of the Ideology of Women's Liberation is Organisation. According to this principle, organisation is what connects individuals with the collective, ideas and objectives. Organising means taking responsibility for one's individual life, but also for the life of the collective, as both are closely interlinked and cannot be separated. Our comrades have understood that without organisation, systems of oppression cannot be overcome.

It was on this principle that Kongra Star was founded in 2005 (at that time known as Yekitiya Star). Kongra Star was established with the aim of raising awareness, organising and mobilising women in Rojava, the predominantly Kurdish region within Syria, and served as the cornerstone that drove the early stages of the Kurdish women's revolution in 2012. Later, it would also become the driving force behind the liberation and self-organisation of all women, regardless of their community, within the territory of the DAANES. Kongra Star served as an example and inspiration for the creation of Arab women's organisations (Zenobia), which struggle for the self-determination of Arab women.

Kongra Star began its work during the Ba'ath regime, organising Kurdish women in towns and villages, working from the grassroots up, visiting every home and every family. Many women in the organisation were imprisoned, fined and assaulted during this period; yet they did not abandon their goals. When the revolution broke out in Rojava in 2012, the women of Kongra Star took on a leadership role, driving the takeover of institutions and the self-organisation of resistance committees. After the revolution was consolidated, Kongra Star has continued to work towards the establishment of Democratic Confederalism and the advancement of women's liberation in the region. One of the main methods for achieving these goals is through the women's communes and committees in the region.

The organisational foundation of the DAANES (Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria) system is the commune. These

are the guarantors of grassroots democracy. A commune is made up of residents from the same street, neighbourhood or village, depending on the area and the population. The members of a commune discuss and make decisions collectively to improve their living conditions in line with the community's needs, whether material or intellectual. Several communes come together to form a municipal assembly; several municipalities form a province; several provinces form a canton; and several cantons form a region. In this way, the system can grow without being constrained by state borders, but rather by adapting to social and geographical realities.[1]

The autonomous women's communes replicate the general mixed-gender system, but focus their efforts on developing rights, freedoms and opportunities for the emancipation of women in their community. They participate, on the one hand, in women-only meetings and, on the other, in the women's committees of the general communes. Kongra Star plays an important role in these assemblies, organising and connecting the interests and needs of women across different villages, towns and regions. This dual role ensures, on the one hand, the participation and development of proposals from a women's perspective and, on the other, that women's positions and needs are heard and taken into account. Furthermore, for this very reason, another important aspect of the organisational system in Rojava is the co-presidency model, which is implemented at all levels of administration and ensures that all representative positions are always held by one woman and one man.

The practical work of the communes is organised into committees covering different areas of life; these are set up according to the needs of the community. The committees cover Politics, Social Justice, Education, Self-Defence, Local Government and the Environment, Economy, Diplomacy, Art and Culture, Health, Media, and Social Affairs. Kongra Star, in turn, also replicates these same committees to strengthen and support those in the communes from a women's perspective.

The commune system, like that of the entire DAANES, is a living, evolving entity. On the one hand, it is shaped by events in the region, particularly attacks, the economic and political blockade, land invasions and the environmental crisis. On the other hand, the system is evolving and changing through practice itself, via the method of criticism and self-criticism, and the tekml [2] is adapting to the current and social needs

of the moment they are going through. The structure of the communes is the main political and organisational commitment of a revolution that challenges the nation-state system and promotes the autonomous and responsible lives of its individuals.

Current situation: the dismantling of women's structures and grassroots democracy

With the takeover by the Syrian interim government, led by Ahmed Al-Shaara and the HTS factions (Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham – the renamed branch of Al-Qaeda in Syria), the commune structure in the Arab regions has been dissolved. Most women's communes, committees and institutions have been shut down. Office buildings and premises associated with women-only organisations have literally been destroyed. Slogans proclaiming women's equality and freedom have been erased from the streets. The few organisations that have survived are operating under severe repression.

In the case of the predominantly Kurdish territories, these bodies continue to operate, but it remains to be seen under what conditions they will be able to continue their work and to what extent they will be recognised. Among Kongra Star's demands are the preservation of the co-presidency system and women's institutions, meaningful participation by women at all levels, and the recognition of women's rights in the new constitution. These demands by Kongra Star stand in stark contrast to the stance of this interim government, which systematically excludes women from positions of responsibility and has failed to include gender equality in the provisional constitution.

For all these reasons, the support of women's organisations around the world is crucial in defending the gains of the women's revolution and pressing for the respect of the rights and freedoms of women in Syria.

[1] *Andrea Wolf Institute; Woman, Life, Freedom, Volume 2; p. 177*

[2] <https://rojavaazadimadrid.org/tekml-un-instrumento-de-reflexion-de-rojava/>

Call to join the campaign: “We are all YPJ! – Self-defence is our natural right.”

Women Defend Rojava

3 May 2026

In various statements the YPJ declared its commitment to the future of a democratic and free Syria, to securing its existence and the defence of all women and society within the integration process and negotiations, and called for support for this struggle. On 26 April 2026, women's organisations from Rojava launched the global solidarity campaign “We are all YPJ” to give a strong international voice to this demands:

- 1. Recognition of the Women's Protection Units (YPJ) within the Syrian Ministry of Defence.**
- 2. The preservation of the Women's Protection Units' structure in the Rojava regions.**
- 3. Protection and consolidation of women's achievements in Rojava**
- 4. Release of detainees, return of the bodies of martyrs, and revealing the fate of the missing women**
- 5. Support Women's Protection Units' integration by relevant international actors**
- 6. Strengthening women's participation in military and security institutions**

As the “Women Defend Rojava” campaign, we stand behind the demands of the women's movements from Rojava and Syria and heed the call to defend the existence of the YPJ. We are declaring our participation in the campaign and are calling on all democratic forces, particularly women's movements and organisations worldwide, to join us in this effort.

Self-defence is our natural right and it is all the more necessary in a world increasingly driven by patriarchal wars over power, resources, and economic, military and ideological dominance. We women, our societies and our children are the ones who lose the most in these wars. We are made into victims and burdened with the heaviest consequences, yet our perspective is not included in political and military decisions, nor are our voices and strength recognised in the creation of peace, democracy and healthy societies within peace and justice processes.

Over the past decade, the YPJ Women's Defence Units have demonstrated through their struggles, sacrifices and victories that women have the power to stand up for themselves and their society. They have successfully fought against jihadist forces such as ISIS and their misogynistic ideology. They have raised awareness and boosted confidence within their society, demonstrating that women are the strongest force in military, political and social spheres when it comes to building democratic structures. They have upheld ethical and moral standards in war and set benchmarks for ethics and justice in their society. They have transformed themselves as women, moving from the position of an oppressed nation to becoming pioneers of a social revolution. In doing so, they served as an example for many women in Kurdistan and the Middle East, inspiring them to fight persistently for women's liberation with confidence in their own strength, their own consciousness, education and organisation.

They became our idols, inspiring us to be tenacious and strong in our own struggles. Today, it is our duty to stand by them. Not just in solidarity. For defending ourselves against the daily violence and sexist attacks in our everyday lives, in the family, at work, and in the media, and for protecting the social significance of women and the achievements of the women's movement's struggles over the past centuries. This is today a bitter necessity and the task of us all.

On the occasion of the YPJ's anniversary, we send our warmest and most solidarity-filled greetings to all female fighters. We remember and pay tribute to all female martyrs, particularly the internationalist martyrs such as Anna Campbell and Ivana Hoffmann, as well as all the women worldwide who have given their lives in the struggle for their own and their society's rights and freedom. Following in their footsteps, keeping their dreams alive and continuing their struggles is a constant source of motivation and a mission for us. In this spirit, we are calling on all women's movements, organisations, and democratic forces worldwide to stand firmly and in diverse ways alongside the Women's Protection Units (YPJ).

We are all YPJ! Self-defence is our natural right!

How can you participate in the campaign?

- Send us a short video stating your support for the campaign to weareallypj@disroot.org
- Join the #WeAreAllYPJ hashtag campaign on 09.05.2026 starting at 7:00pm CET.
- Share the campaign through your networks and social media. Use the published spots and materials or create your own.
- Use the campaign slogan, as well as the WomenDefendRojava logo.
- Use YPJ symbols such as flags, scarves and braided hair.
- Organise events, seminars and actions in your cities and regions, and let us know about them.
- Spread knowledge of the history, struggles and significance of the YPJ, as well as the achievements of the women's revolution.
- Focus in particular on topics such as self-defence.
- Form your own self-defence units and announce this publicly.
- Write to us about the significance of the YPJ for your struggles.
- Organise film screenings. You can find suggestions for films below.
- Initiate or develop artistic actions, theatre performances or songs.
- Participate in online events, share them or organise your own.
- Meet with local politicians, members of parliament, human rights advocates, lawyers, academics or public figures, and encourage them to support the campaign and its demands through their work or by lending their name.
- Inform local and national media about this campaign. We will connect you with interview partners.
- Follow our media channels and stay informed about upcoming events in your region.

Point in Time

Editor's Note

The war waged by the US and "Israel" against Iran evolves from declared objectives of regime change and nuclear disarmament to control and disruption energy flows in the Strait of Hormuz, one of the most critical chokepoints in the global economy. This reality has led to a reordering of priorities extending beyond direct military confrontation to a matter of economic risk rather than solely ideological choice. Gulf states benefit from this sustained economic pressure on Iran because it protects their control on global energy markets.

Meanwhile Hezb continues to valiantly resist Zionist aggression, with targeted attacks against soldiers, the destruction of tanks, and the attacking of "israeli" defence targets. The Islamic Resistance in Lebanon has shown that all claims of it being weakened and destroyed following 2024 was mere bluster.

The land struggle in Latin America heats up. On the 5th of May, the peasants of Cesar occupied state land that has been left unused for over 20 years! The peasants of Colombia show us that we have the power in our own hands to transform the world. And on the 21st of May, peasants, mining unions, teacher unions, transport unions from Beni and Pando mobilisations against property marketisation that benefit agro-industrial sectors, from protests in the capital of La Paz in Bolivia to blockages on strategic routes within the capital and border crossings to Chile and Peru.

The old Philippine state has massacred 19 people in Toboso last month. We grieve the families and friends of those murdered. Among those killed were fighters of the New People's Army, a journalist, a student leader, peasant organisers, overseas human rights workers and local residents, including two children. As the Communist Party of the Philippines states: "The New People's Army stands unwavering in its determination to deliver revolutionary justice to all victims of the Toboso massacre. The flames of the people's war will rage on and spread across the country, as the Filipino people's aspiration for national freedom and genuine democracy burn strongly in their hearts."

We take a moment to honour May anniversaries, beginning with International Working People's Day on the 1st of May. This year saw combative demonstrations across the globe. In Glasgow, the Village Hotel workers led our rally. There was a cultural workers bloc, linking economic and cultural struggles closer together. On the same day, the Anti-Fascist Internationalist Front (AIF) in Myanmar released videos of revolutionary forces in the Chin Hills of Myanmar striking critical targets of the military junta with self-made technology.

May 14 marked 50 years since the demand for an independent Tamil Eelam was democratically declared through the mandate of the Tamil people, including the restoration of Tamil sovereignty, recognition of Tamils as a nation, the right to self-determination, and the creation of Tamil Eelam. May is also a month of mourning as May 18 is the 17th anniversary of the Mullivaikkal Genocide, commemorated globally as Tamil Genocide Remembrance Day.

The 15th of May is Charu Majumdar's birthday, the martyred founder of the Naxalbari movement in India. The Indian state declared its intention to wipe out the revolutionary movement in India by the 31st of March - it has decisively failed. In fact, on the second of May this month, four paramilitary forces were eliminated.

May 15th also commemorates the 78th anniversary of the Nakba and saw demonstrations across the world, from Quezon City, Philippines led by the Philippines-Palestine Friendship Association (PPFA) to Hamburg, Germany with the Red League. Meanwhile closer to home, the British state has ramped up state surveillance with helicopters, drones, police dogs, and the first use of live facial recognition as part of its policing operations on Nakba Day.

Yet, history is not written by the whims of dominant states. The revolutionary resistance and liberation movement from Rojava to Palestine to the Chin Hills reminds us that we must continue to confront and challenge our oppressors, by any means necessary.

Glossary

Who are the Kurds?

For thousands of years, the Kurdish people have lived in an area of land in the Middle East home to the ancient valley of Mesopotamia — the so-called cradle of civilisation. Kurdistan is spread across the borders of the modern states of Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran.

The Kurdish people have been resisting genocide and occupation by Turkey since 1923. Abdullah Öcalan, the leader of the Kurdish Freedom Movement, was kidnapped by Turkey in 1999 and has been held in solitary confinement ever since.

What is Rojava?

In 2012, during the chaos of the Syrian civil war, the Kurdish people overthrew the forces of Bashir Al-Assad's regime. They declared the area along the border with Turkey the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES) — or Rojava.

What is Democratic Confederalism?

Rojava is founded on the ideology of Democratic Confederalism: a system built on the three principles of Direct Democracy, Women's Liberation, and Ecology. It's a new way of thinking about power and governance that puts local people at the heart of decision making.

In a Democratic Confederation, decisions are made at the local level and a trusted delegate is chosen to share this with the next level of the Confederation — for example, a city-wide Assembly. This is different from an MP or Councillor: in our representative 'democracy' we only vote every 5 years, and whoever wins the election can vote against our interests with no accountability.

The most local unit is the Commune, a grouping of families who meet regularly. The equivalent for us would be the street or neighbourhood Assembly. There are also regional and national Assemblies, to enable cooperation at scale, but decisions flow upwards from the Autonomous cities and communes, rather than being imposed by the state.

What is Jineology?

Jineology — or women's science — is central to how the Kurdish Freedom Movement understand history. They argue that patriarchy is the foundation of other forms of oppression, and it must be dismantled to achieve a free society. The Women's Defense Forces (The YPJ) played a critical role in defeating ISIS and liberating millions of women from slavery.

How are Rojava and Ecology intertwined?

In Rojava, ecological sustainability is a principle of life. The aim is to heal the land while supporting communities, by setting up worker's cooperatives that plant trees and grow food locally. Domination of nature is understood as a symptom of our dysfunctional society. In order to protect the Earth, we must build a democratic society that values all life.

Terms by Cooperation Hull



Solidarity Screenings Glasgow:

Instagram: @solidarityscreeningsglasgow

Telegram: @SolidarityScreenings

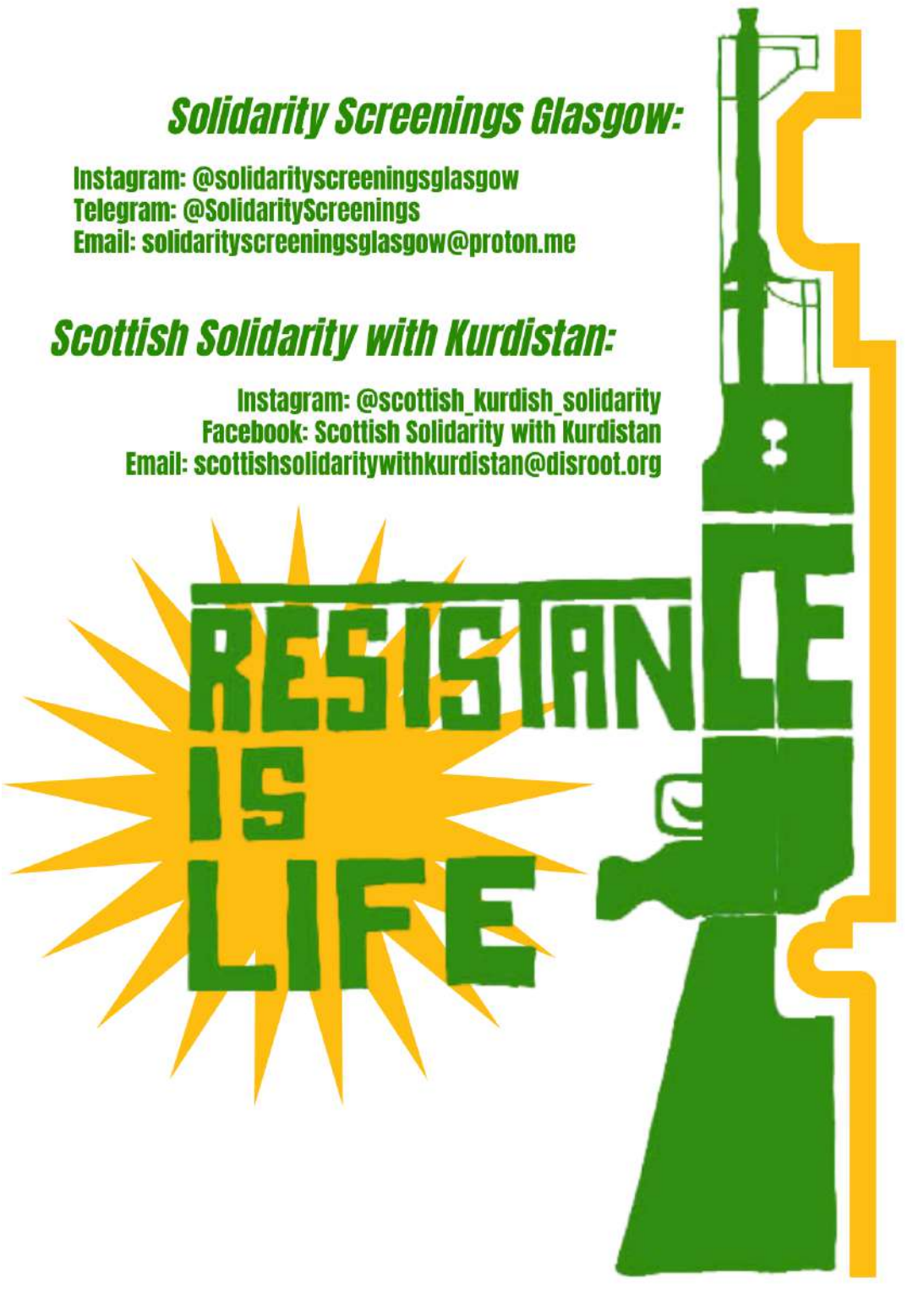
Email: solidarityscreeningsglasgow@proton.me

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**RESISTANCE
IS
LIFE**