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Syria

From Aleppo: ?No one is legitimate but the people - Without the people there is no legitimacy

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Once more the Syrian revolutionary process is betrayed by a figure of the international left. The article of philosopher Slavoj Zizek published in the Guardian on September 6 2013, entitled “Syria is a pseudo-struggle” ([here](#)) was unknown to me until very recently, actually yesterday. As this article came out from an important figure of the international left, I believe it is necessary to answer and contradict them and for others also on the left to show that this is not an opinion shared by all comrades. This is why I will deconstruct the article of Slavoj Zizek and demonstrate not only his wrong analysis and information on the Syrian revolution but his elitism as well.

“Demorcratic secular resistance drowned in the mess of fundamentalist groups”

“OK, there is a bad dictator who is (allegedly) using poisonous gas against the population of his own state – but who is opposing his regime? It seems that whatever remained of the democratic-secular resistance is now more or less drowned in the mess of fundamentalist Islamist groups supported by Turkey and Saudi Arabia, with a strong presence of al-Qaida in the shadows.”

Firstly, I think the use of allegedly, even in brackets, is misdirecting, not to say anything else, because we can say now with certainty that most of the research has proven that it is the Syrian regime that attacked with chemical weapons and toxic gas the region of Eastern Ghouta, a suburb of Damascus, on August 21, 2013 killing more than a thousand people including a large number of women and children. Medecins Sans Frontieres issued a statement saying that hospitals it supports in Syria treated about 3,600 patients with “neurotoxic symptoms”, of whom 355 have died. It said the patients had arrived in three hospitals in the Damascus governorate on 21 August – when opposition activists say chemical attacks were launched against rebels. This statement provided more evidence of chemical weapons use.

This last massacre, that comes after many other massacres committed by the Assad regime, and the American-Russian agreement of September 14 to remove the chemical weapons of the Syrian regime in a process that should end in mid-2014, did not stop the continuous war launched by the regime for more than two years and a half against the Syrian revolutionary masses. Indeed while US Secretary of State John Kerry was saying that Syrian President Bashar al-Assad could take “credit” for quickly starting the process of destroying his government’s chemical weapons arsenal and thanked Russia for its help, civilians trapped in the besieged West Ghouta town of Moadamiyyat Ash Sham – the site of one of the August 21 chemical weapons attacks – did not know how they will survive the winter. Moadamiyyat Ash Sham has been under almost total siege since November 25, 2012. Town’s food supplies had run out three months ago, and the regime has prevented aid agencies from bringing in emergency food and medical supplies, stopping aid trucks at the checkpoints that surround the town. Just as the Palestinians from Yarmouk in Damascus have demonstrated on numerous occasions to break the siege imposed by Syrian regime forces on the area (see video <http://youtu.be/rlq7fMCRiM8>). The security forces did not hesitate to repress violently these demonstrations, killing and wounding some protesters.

Now on the main issue of “the democratic secular resistance drowned in the mess of fundamentalist groups” argued by S. Zizek, it enters the same propaganda of some so called “leftists” currents saying that between two evils, the regime and the jihadists, we should stand with the lesser evil, which is considered by many as being the Assad regime. As argued before and on many occasions by the Revolutionary Left Current in Syria (see previous articles and declarations on this blog), we refuse this dichotomy on a principle stand and we do not have to choose between these two evils. Our role as stated on many occasions is to participate in the revolutionary process on the side of the revolutionary masses and radicalize as much as possible the movement to allow the victory of the

objectives of the revolution: democracy, social justice and no to sectarianism.

But more importantly, this position is based on material facts and analysis, on the reality of the ground in Syria where the far majority of the mass popular movement refuses and struggles against these two evils, particularly in the liberated areas. This is what I am going to show through numerous examples (see also previous articles on the resistance and the self organization of the masses).

In this perspective Raqqa, liberated city since March 2013 from Assad forces, has been a very good example of this continuous resistance against both the islamists and jihadist forces on one side and the regime on the other side.

Following the attack by the "Islamic State of Iraq and Syria" (ISIS) against the Church of Our Lady of the Annunciation in Raqqa end of September, youth popular groups and activists organized a demonstration (see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6JVJGIZ-mZI>) to condemn ISIS actions, and in which they brandished a big cross in solidarity with the Syrian Christian community of the city. They also issued a statement saying that "they demand the respect for religions, Christian and Muslim are one, We have lived and will live as brothers. The people who practiced these action only represent themselves and the Islamic religion is innocent of such acts" (see <http://syriafreedomforever.wordpress.com/2013/09/25/statement-of-the-revolutionary-left-current-in-syria-on-the-even-ts-of-raqqa/>).

In the popular organizations resistance to the islamists groups in the city of Raqqa, like elsewhere, women have played a leading role. Suad Nofal, a school teacher, for example has been protesting nearly on daily manner for months against the authoritarian practices of the ISIS and to demand the release of political prisoners imprisoned by the islamist group as we can see in this interview (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gFpViPfrPhs&feature=youtu.be> "â€" or see this article <http://www.syriauntold.com/en/story/2013/10/17/5811>). She actually compares the authoritarian practices of the ISIS with the ones of the regime, opposing both of them (<http://www.all4syria.info/Archive/103006>).

It was also the women of Raqqa that condemned the instrumentalization of religion for the purpose of oppression in the previous months by Jabhat al-Nusra front, which notably replaced the revolution flag, and practiced arbitrary detentions and murders. "Safeguard the state's capabilities," "Respect freedom," "Respect civilians," and "Do not to humiliate" were some other slogans that were repeated as a warning to those trying to steal the revolution.

In other parts of Syria we have also witnessed popular resistance against the ISIS and similar groups. In beginning of October, ISIS shot demonstrators in the city of Aazaz, North of Syria, opposing their rule. ?One of the slogans people were chanting in the demonstrations were notably: "One, one, one; the regime and al-Qaeda are one" (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9463MXrNEh8>). This slogan has actually spread to throughout Syria increasingly. Following this violent repression from the ISIS, The people of Aazaz staged a general strike the days after, in addition to several protests, demanding an end to continued military presence in their city by militants from the ISIS, calling on them to leave civilians to govern the city, and go fight against the regime on the fronts. A statement released by activists vowed that the people of Aazaz would continue the strike until all of their demands are met (see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3IL-Py-bl9U>)

Beginning of October and in September, different FSA brigades voted to expell ISIS from the city of Homs and Idlib. Joint Command of the "Free Syrian Army and the forces of revolutionary movement" issued a statement few weeks ago asking all foreign fighters in Syria to leave (pro-regime and Al-Qaeda sisters), and promises to work on the revolution's values of "freedom, dignity and social justice" and to "retain the independent Syrian decision" from foreign states (http://www.all4syria.info/Archive/102268?wpmp_tp=1). Fights between FSA batallions and ISIS have actually increased these last couple of weeks.

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The Council of Salah Eldeen Quarter, in Aleppo, signed a placard on September 27 2013, saying in opposition to ISIS: "Take Your Islam and Leave Us Our Islam – Islam conquered hearts before lands".

Coordination committees such as the Kurdish Fraternity Committee have accused ISIS of "occupying cities and terrorizing citizens", equating them to pro-regime group Hezbollah, which has been ruthlessly targeting civilians. They did a demonstration in Ashrafiya, Aleppo, on September 20, 2013 against the ISIS and we could see banners notably saying ""Syria will be free, free; ISIS, get out" and "We Syrians Reject Masked Fighters in Our Country," "ISIS is the Regime's State of Iraq and Syria", and "Our Syria is colorful. No to ISIS and its black flag."

All this popular resistance has been translated on a national scale on several occasions through the declaration of the Local Coordination Committees. On September 20, 2013, the LCC declared that « Despite the brutality of the Syrian regime and the weakness of the international community the insistence of the Syrians has increased day by day to go in the revolution so they come out in Friday they named "Only Syrians will liberate Syria" to prove that the will of the Syrian people will remain the most powerful weapon in the face of tyranny. Activists of the committees in Douma, Zabadani and Madaya in Damascus Suburbs, Tafas and Mizeireeb in Daraa sent messages that rejected to replace tyranny with another, especially the practices of "the State of Iraq and the Levant," which it does not differ from the practices of the Syrian regime in repression and suppression of expression freedom, and also they emphasized the legitimacy of the revolution People and proceed with the revolution until victory, refusing half-solutions which do not satisfy the aspirations of the Syrian people, and whatever the difficulties revolutions can make the impossible becomes real. » (see pictures and video against ISIS <http://syriafreedomforever.wordpress.com/2013/09/20/???-?-?????-??-????????-??-????-???????/>).

In earlier September, eleven civilian groups representing the organized structures of the Revolution in a broad area outlying Damascus, rallied strongly around Razan Zaitouneh, a key figure in the grassroots of the Syrian Revolution. The 36-year-old lawyer was threatened and harassed by members of armed Jihadist factions in eastern Ghouta of Damascus, for no other reason than "being an independent and unveiled woman who is among the grassroots leadership cadres of our Revolution," as one activist put it.

More recent examples can be shown as well, such as the Statement of the Civilian Movement in Syria Regarding the Remarks of Mr. Zahran Alloush, Commander of the Army of Islam on October 14, 2013 (<http://syriafreedomforever.wordpress.com/2013/10/16/statement-of-the-civilian-movement-in-syria-regarding-the-remarks-of-mr-zahran-alloush-commander-of-the-army-of-islam-on-october-14-2013/>) in which groups and members of the Syrian revolutionary process stated their rejection « of any attempt by any party to impose authoritarianism upon decision-making and upon the work of citizens. We also reject that compliance with any institution not elected by the people, no matter how powerful or wealthy the institution, be rendered a benchmark for the public good or a gauge of patriotism or an indicator of the ability to perform civic duty today ». This statement was issued after Mr. Zahran Alloush (Commander of the Army of Islam) deemed the establishment [of the expanded Douma Civilian Council] to be divisive of unity because it ought to have taken the Consultative Council that is associated with him as its sole reference point.

Many other examples can be shown of the popular resistance opposing both the regime and the islamist reactionary forces, which is based in their will to pursue the original objectives of the revolution as explained above and on the high level of self organization of the Syrian revolutionary masses (see previous articles on self organization notably <http://syriafreedomforever.wordpress.com/2013/09/08/self-organization-of-the-popular-struggles-in-syria-against-the-regime-and-islamist-groups-yes-it-exists/> and the recent excellent article of our comrade Yasser Munif on the city of Minbej <http://www.socialistreview.org.uk/article.php?articlenumber=12410>). In mid October, following a conference in the neighboring city of Rihanya in Turkey was established the Free Union of Syria composed of more than a hundred military and civilian organizations and formations vowing for a Free and Democratic Syria (<http://www.all4syria.info/Archive/104569>) in which all sects and ethnicities would be treated equally. Although having limits in some of its aspects (the name Syrian Arab Republic is maintained or return to the liberal Constitution of

1950), it can clearly be included in the democratic sectors of the revolution.

« no signs of a broad emancipatory-democratic coalition, just a complex network of religious and ethnic alliances overdetermined by the influence of superpowers »

Following the examples shown above, we directly can say that the affirmation of S. Zizek regarding that there is no sign of a broad emancipatory democratic coalition is wrong, and that the original demands of the revolution are still present in the far majority of the popular movement until today.

Then, it is also wrong to try to resume the revolutionary process and its actors as a « complex network of religious and ethnic alliances overdetermined by the influence of superpowers ». As shown above, the real power in this revolution does not come from foreign powers, on the opposite fearful of its victory and therefore wishing whether to reach a political agreement saving the structure of the regime or regarding Gulf monarchies to transform it into a sectarian war, but from the revolutionary masses solely and only.

In addition these foreign countries have not even been able to provide the basic necessary assistance to the Syrian people such as France and Qatar. This latter Qatar has just committed just three percent of what would be considered their fair share for the humanitarian effort, while France is struggling to reach half of its fair share (47 percent) (<http://zamanalwsl.net/en/readNews.php?id=1620>). Turkey has on its side started the building of a two-metre high wall along part of its border with Syria near an area of frequent fighting to try to stop people from illegally bypassing its checkpoints and prevent smuggling.

Ethnic and sectarian minorities have been involved in the revolutionary process and have paid also a number of martyrs. Signs of fraternity and solidarity between Kurds and Arabs (see <http://syriafreedomforever.wordpress.com/2013/09/08/self-organization-of-the-popular-struggles-in-syria-against-the-regime-and-islamist-groups-yes-it-exists/>) have multiplied these few last months with the rise of military combats between some islamists and Kurdish militias from the PYD. Assyrians, a christian community, have also been participating importantly in demonstrations and in the popular resistance since the beginning of the revolution.

A Church in Yabroud, close to Damascus, brandished a placard wishing a happy Eid to its Muslim Brethers and to the Revolution of Dignity and to a Free Syria (<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=609567875749306&set=a.237085119664252.58257.234091963296901&type=1&theater>). The popular reaction against the attack on the church by the ISIS in Raqqa showed the existence of solidarity between the sects. It is the regime that has destroyed more than 44 churches since the beginning of the revolution. In addition, in a recent communiqué in September, Syrian Christians for Peace (SCP) expressed their deepest concerns about the manipulation of the international community by the Assad regime, which is using the Christian community as well as other minorities in Syria in order to maintain its power (see <http://www.all4syria.info/Archive/99416>).

This does not mean that sectarianism does not exist in Syria, actually from both sides of the counter revolution: the Assad regime (see <http://syriafreedomforever.wordpress.com/2013/04/04/sectarianism-and-the-assad-regime-in-syria/>) and among jihadist and islamist groups such as ISIS and sister organizations.

But it should be reminded that it is the Assad regime that is the main and the most important actor responsible for the rise of sectarianism by particular policies encouraging this evil, notably:

– violent and targeted massacres and repressions on some popular Sunni population, numerous examples exist

(Houla, Baniyas, etc...)

– Few months after the beginning of the revolutionary process, the regime decides to accelerate the release of two types of prisoners : 1) common criminals , thieves, petty drug dealers , smugglers , but also criminals authors of violent crimes ; 2) but above all others numbers of jihadists that Syrian intelligence services had imprisoned after having collaborated with them for few years by facilitating their entry in Iraq. These latter have not been the primary target of the Assad regime in combatting the revolution, on the opposite the regime has left them expand while focusing on the democratic sections of the revolution.

– importing sectarian “Shia” militias (Hezbollah, Iraklis, Houtis from Yemen) to fight on the side of the Syrian regime

This responsibility of the regime in the rise of sectarianism does not mean that we do not condemn the sectarianism and crimes committed by reactionary elements, the jihadists and islamists, such as in the beginning of August with the massacre committed by islamists against Alawite population in the Lattakia region.

To struggle against sectarianism, you cannot but struggle against the regime that has nurtured this evil constantly through its policies. The overthrow of the Assad regime will be the first big blow against sectarianism, but it will be with the continuation of the revolution that we can defeat it, because just as explained by Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci: “subaltern groups are always subject to the activity of the ruling groups, even when they rebel and rise up: only permanent victory breaks their subordination, and that not immediately”.

– And this brings us back to Syria: the ongoing struggle there is ultimately a false one. The only thing to keep in mind is that this pseudo-struggle thrives because of the absent third, a strong radical-emancipatory opposition whose elements were clearly perceptible in Egypt

I have tried to show that the radical emancipatory opposition is still present in Syria and constitutes the far majority of the popular movement in the revolutionary process. It is not because it has not formally organized under a single umbrella just as in Tunisia with the Popular Front or in Egypt with the Revolutionary Path Front that it does not exist. We cannot understand the recent refusal by the Syrian National Council to go to the next Geneva Conference called by the imperialist powers and its more aggressive tone against islamists and jihadist forces, while it defended them few months before, if we don't take into account that these are the direct consequences of the pressure from below, from the popular masses. These latter refuse any agreement that could save this regime, while opposing reactionary elements that want to put an end to this revolution and transform it in a sectarian war.

The third voice is present and growing everyday in Syria, and can be symbolized notably by slogans such as “ people still want to overthrow the regime ” (<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=529877313771003&set=a.529876763771058.1073741862.291990414226362&type=1&theater>), “ No one is legitimate but the people! Without the people there is no legitimacy” and “One, one, one; the regime and al-Qaeda are one”.

And as long as the popular movement exists and its will to pursue the objective of the revolution (democracy, social justice and no to sectarianism) does as, the Revolutionary Left Current in Syria will continue to struggle among and with them, because as said by Russian revolutionary and Marxist, Vladimir Lenine : “ The Marxist is therefore the first to take the path of direct revolutionary struggle... the Marxist is the last to leave the path of direct revolutionary struggle, he leaves it only when all possibilities have been exhausted, when there is no shadow of hope for a shorter way, when the basis for an appeal to prepare mass strikes, an uprising, etc... is obviously disappearing. Therefore a Marxist treats with contempt the innumerable renegades of the revolution who shout to him: “We are more progressive than you, we were the first to renounce the revolution! We were the first to submit to the monarchistic

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constitution.” The late Tony Cliff, leading member of Socialist Workers Party in England until his death, added to this citation that a revolutionary cannot accept the defeat of the revolution until objective facts leave no room for doubt. The revolutionaries are the last to leave the battlefield.

Objective factors showing the continuing of the revolution in Syria still exist and are very far from turning to an end. We, the Revolutionary Left Current in Syria will not leave the battlefield and join the opportunists who have withdrawn, whether in Syria or abroad, in their support for the Syrian revolutionary masses. We chant with the people “Rather death than humiliation” and “people still want to overthrow the regime”.

In conclusion, Syria is not witnessing “nothing special” or a “pseudo struggle”, as described by S. Zizek, Syria is witnessing a revolutionary process involving millions of people issued from the popular classes in their far majority who have been organising and struggling against the criminal dictatorship of Assad and also increasingly against reactionary jihadists and islamists groups. The revolutionary struggle of the Syrian people, which has cost more than 100 000 martyrs and millions of refugees and displaced persons, has the potential to not only change the country but the region and the whole world, and this is why all the imperialist powers, whether USA and the West on one side and Russia and China on the other side, and regional states, Saudi Arabia and Iran, do not want to see this revolution succeeds.

Dear S. Zizek, learn from the REAL STRUGGLE of the Syrian revolutionary masses, and abandon your pseudo struggle to show that nothing is happening in Syria. We have a revolution in Syria.

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