

# GLOBAL RIGHTS

INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE OCTOBER 2017 ISSUE #5



**KOBANÊ: LANDSCAPES AFTER THE BATTLE**  
JOURNEY TO THE CITY IN ROJAVA FREED  
FROM ISIS BY ITS CITIZENS



# con tent

GLOBAL RIGHTS INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE OCTOBER 2017 ISSUE #5

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# Kobanê:

The strategic battle of Kobanê took place in that important city of Rojava (the “Syrian” Kurdistan) between September 15, 2014 and January 27, 2015, when it was liberated.

The defeat of the forces of the Islamic State that had attempted to conquer that locality, was indeed a turning point in the long war being fought in the Middle East and it also marked the loss of the military initiative of the self-proclaimed Caliphate.

The liberation of Kobanê was followed by the liberation of Falluja and Mosul in Iraq, as well as by notable advances by the Syrian army in Damascus, and the launch of the operation to free Raqqa, the last major urban center still in the hands of ISIS.

By the time we wrote this, the city of Raqqa had just been liberated by the Kurdish-led SDF (Syrian Democratic Forces) fighters and their allies.

The decline of ISIS, with regard to the physical control of large, rich and highly populated territories in the region, will surely not mean the

“end of the war” but the beginning of a new, more dispersed and confused stage in this international and regional conflict, where many actors and multiple economic interests intervene.

Kobanê’s heroic resistance, led by its local self-defense organizations, composed of young men and women alike, was a top-notch information item for several months.

However today we want to address the reality of this city and its citizens from another point of view away from the headlines: What is left after the battle? What is the fate of the survivors? How can life be rebuilt in the midst of ruins and mourning? What is our responsibility to those who have suffered, and still suffer, the onslaughts of war and its terrible consequences?

The reason we write is also to give a serious follow-up to what appears now is “yesterday’s news” and so today is less important, this creates the obligation on us to put the focus on real human beings and their diverse realities:

which is why today we want to offer these “Landscapes after the battle”.

Fragments, interviews, figures, comments, requests, of those who returned to their homeland after the battle. Information and needs, that only appear distant, geographically speaking, from our everyday lives and yet so close if we understand these people’s legitimate aspirations to build a more just and livable society after the horrors of such a ruthless war.

In 1937 the Basque city of Gernika suffered a criminal bombing by the Nazi-Franquist forces. In the middle of the destroyed city stood, symbolically, a leafy oak tree, symbol of the liberties of the Basque people.

Gernika was reborn from its ashes and the oak tree of the Basque liberties is still in its place.

Kobanê is the Gernika of the Kurds, and its citizens are committed to remind their martyrs, to sow life in the midst of countless material and human losses.

In order to achieve this they need their efforts

to be known and to gather the support and solidarity of people from every place in the world.

Because this reconstruction for peace and coexistence deserves to be daily news and a central motivation in our life.

## THIS ISSUE

Thank you to: Suna Alan, Ekrem Hebdo, Azad Evdike, Mustafa Gundogdu and the administrations of Kobanê and Rojava. It is impossible to express with words our debt to Ednan, Cihan and Bêrivan Hesen. They allowed us to enter their pain, but always with a smile on their lips and with the enthusiasm for rebuilding their city which ultimately means rebuilding their future and that of many women and men who, everywhere, are fighting for a different society.

# rebuilding the dream



# Decisions are taken in communitarian assemblies

”

J.M. ARRUGAETA - O. CASAGRANDE

ROJIN MOHAMMED ALI IS 25 YEARS OLD AN A FORMER TOPOGRAPHY STUDENT.

IBRAHIM HAJ KHALIL IS 35 YEARS OLD AND A MECHANIC ENGINEER.

THEY ARE THE CO-MAYORS OF THE CITY OF KOBANÊ.

LIKE ALL INSTITUTIONS IN THE DEMOCRATIC AUTONOMY SYSTEM, CITY COUNCILS TOO ARE RUN BY CO-MAYORS, A MAN AND A WOMAN.

As established by the Democratic Autonomous System governing the region of Rojava, every leadership position is shared by a man and a woman.

During the long and uncertain days of the battle of Kobanê, both Rojin and Ibrahim remained in the city.

Robin, who is unmarried, was born in 1992 in Kobanê. She was a topography student before the war and was working as a volunteer for civil society organisations.

Ibrahim on the other hand was born in 1982. Single, he graduated in mechanical engineering from the University

of Damascus and before the war was working for the Syrian Atomic Energy Commission.

In this interview they provide us with details of the long list of needs that the city has.

“Kobanê is relatively safe now compared to other areas in Syria and currently there are not any attacks on the province”, says Ibrahim Haj Khalil, adding that around 40 per cent of the city has been reconstructed.

“What we need much more, at this point in time, in order to be self-sufficient” - says Rojin Mohammed Ali - “is, in order





## “Citizen have taken the self-government system into their hands

of priority: electricity, water, sewage, roads, building materials, machines, expertise and material/financial support”.

After the liberation of Kobanê, at the end of January 2015, most of its population - who had been forced to flee the city - returned home and have begun to rebuild their houses. Most of what has been done so far, says the co-mayors, goes right down to the citizens' own participation, citizens who have taken the self-government system into their own hands and have committed themselves to the service of the city and its new institutions.

“The society, the citizens,” - says Ibrahim - “share problems and solutions in communitarian assemblies that are regularly held. These assemblies are the space where decisions are taken”.

If the assembly system described by Ibrahim is one of the characteristics of the experience being lived and developed in the whole of Syrian Kurdistan, the other is certainly the prominent role played by women. “Women” - says Rojin - “represent half of our society and are represented in the institutions of the democratic autonomy in this proportion”.

The conversation moves on to the two areas of main concern in the difficult task of rebuilding not just the infrastructure but services as well: health and education.

“The education system in schools is carried out in accordance with the curricula of

the Democratic Self-Administration, which promotes education in the mother tongues spoken in the Canton” - says Ibrahim - “The education system requires kindergartens, extra schools and textbooks, modern scientific devices, printers and university education. The war has destroyed most schools. Pupils and students at the moment are going to schools on a pretty regular basis”.

As for health, “the war has destroyed its facilities” - says Rojin - “and the main problems are: lack of medicines and medical equipment, lack of medical staff, lack of hospitals (the current operating hospitals here are mere medical clinics)”.

The revitalisation of the local economy is yet another challenge in the difficult task of rebuilding life, and the co-mayors know this only too well. “We promote” - says Ibrahim - an economy based on the cooperative experience, through the articulation of a sustainable system rooted in communitarian work”.

Most of the people of Kobanê fled the city during the siege by the Islamic State and are now returning. The same is not true for the many displaced people who fled from other zones.

The Autonomous Administration is trying to provide and care for the newcomers although the limited resources have shown this to be a very difficult task.

“Refugees from outside the province” - confirms Rojin - are accommodated in the camps that were set up by the Autonomous Administration.





“

**The autonomous administration has set up camps for refugees but we have very little resources**

The situation in these camps is tragic” - adds Rojin bluntly - “The Administration provided all available resources to support these camps. However, the Administration is unable to support all the camps because of its limited financial resources”.

The same financial problems means that the Council cannot help the martyrs’ families the way it wanted. This is a big concern for the co-mayors, as everybody is very clear about the huge sacrifice and the enormous price paid by so many young men and women who stood up against the Islamic State during the siege of the city and finally defeated them, liberating Kobanê and ensuring people could return to their homes.

“We have to be incredible creative” - says Rojin - “to try to respond to all the different needs and necessities.” The heroic resistance of Kobanê hit the headlines around the world, but unfortunately ‘the lights went off’ soon after the liberation of the city.

The international community had promised help and said it would be there when the reconstruction began. Sadly, most of these promises turned out to be just empty words. The citizens, and their institutions learned pretty quickly soon after that not many would actually come and help in the rebuilding of the city with their resources.







# Rodî û Perwîn library: books to rebuild lives

J.M. ARRUGAETA - O. CASAGRANDE

MY NAME IS EDNAN OSMAN HESEN. I WAS BORN IN KOBANÊ ON 17TH OF FEBRUARY 1989. I WENT TO PRIMARY, SECONDARY AND HIGH SCHOOL IN KOBANÊ; AND IN 2008 I BEGAN TO STUDY IN THE FACULTY OF LAW AT THE UNIVERSITY OF DAMASCUS. WHEN I WAS STILL A UNIVERSITY STUDENT, THE SYRIAN REVOLUTION BEGAN. THE ROADS BETWEEN KOBANÊ AND DAMASCUS WERE CLOSED. FOR THAT REASON, I HAVE BEEN WORKING HERE ON THE KURDISH LANGUAGE AND ITS LITERATURE SINCE THE 19TH OF JULY 2012. I WAS BOTH MANAGER AND MEMBER OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE OF THE KURDISH LANGUAGE INSTITUTION AND THE LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE ACADEMIES HERE IN KOBANÊ FOR A WHILE. ALSO WITHIN THE LAST FEW YEARS SOME NEW INSTITUTIONS HAVE BEEN OPENED IN KOBANÊ. I HAVE WORKED AGAIN BOTH AS A TEACHER OF LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE AND I ALSO PARTICIPATE AS AN ACTIVE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEMBER.

AFTER THE ASSAULT BY DAESH ON KOBANÊ, BECAUSE MY SISTER SHIRIN HASSAN (VIYAN RUSTAM) WAS MARTYRED DURING THE WAR AND I BECAME DEPRESSED, I WENT TO AMED (DIYARBAKIR) AND I STUDIED LITERATURE AND LANGUAGE AT THE CEGERXWÎN ACADEMY THERE. I PASSED THE COURSE. THEN ON THE 25TH OF JUNE 2015 IN KOBANÊ THERE WAS A MASSACRE AND ALL MY FAMILY MEMBERS WERE MARTYRED. I RETURNED BACK TO KOBANÊ AND I HAVEN'T LEFT THE TOWN SINCE THE DATE OF THE MASSACRE. MY FRIENDS, WHO HELPED ME TO OPEN THE LIBRARY, AND I, WROTE A BOOK ON THE CIVIL WAR AND ITS FIGHTERS NAMED "THE SPARK FROM THE KOBANÊ RESISTANCE" (ÇIRÛSKEK JI BEXWE-DANA KOBANÊ). THIS BOOK WAS PUBLISHED BY ARYEN PUBLISHING IN ANKARA (TURKEY) AND SIMAV PUBLISHING IN ROJAVA.

*May we ask you if you were in Kobanê during the ISIS siege?*

During the war, I was in a house that we opened for the wounded. I was taking care of the records and the archives for those wounded. I was also helping to meet their health needs and other basic needs. But I was coming to and from Kobanê based on my work with the wounded or I was in between Suruç and Kobanê.

*Can you share with us some memories of those sad days, please.*

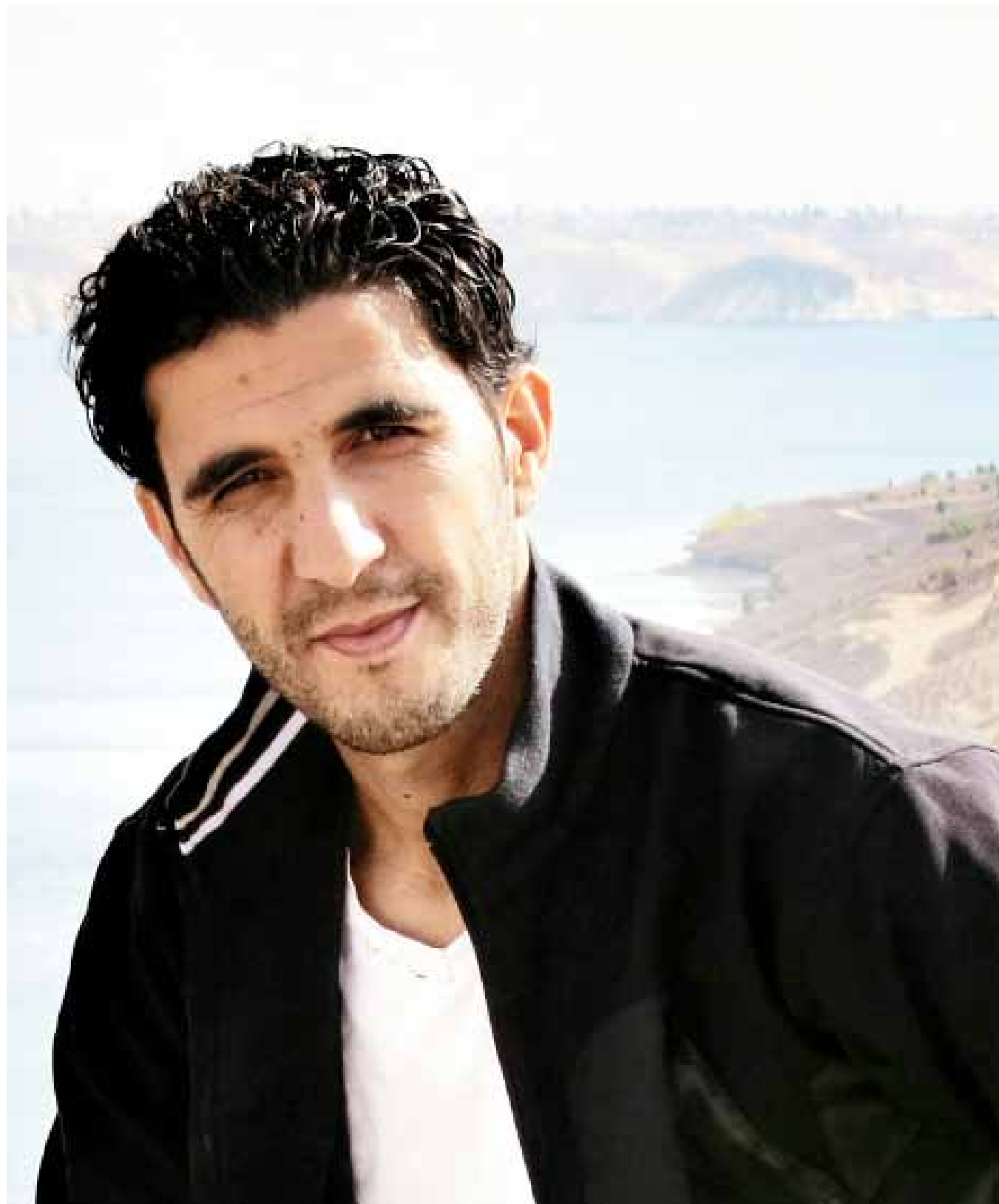
In fact the hurt from those days is so painful that I do not want to remember too much, but I can tell you about my sister's martyrdom. I've mentioned it before in the Guardian newspaper; the role my sister Shirin Hesen's played in my life was so different in that we were friends rather than sister and brother. She was at war and I had to go to Suruç on the 20th September 2014 with some of the wounded. Because their condition was serious, and the 10-day war in Kobanê was very hard, I was on the phone with Shirin daily. I phoned Shi-

rin on the morning of the 30th of September 2014; a Daesh gang member replied: "We executed your sister and if you want to see her, today we will share her photo on Facebook" he said. I was paralyzed, my mind froze, and I did not know what to do. The first thing I did was return to Kobanê.

I went to some high-level unit members and asked them where Shirin was, I told them that I wanted to see her. They told me that Shirin was a martyr and the Daesh gang had surrounded Kobanê that no one could go there and they were all martyrs. I asked where her body was. They said Daesh had it. This doubled the pain of Shirin's martyrdom. We found Shirin's body eight months after the battle of Kobanê in one of the villages. We could recognise her from what was left of her clothes, because only her bones were left. Sorry, but I am not able to say any more...

*You were out of Kobanê. Where were you?*

As I said previously, I left with the wounded in an ambulance. I went to



**“My mom and dad had a great love for their land. They also turned their home into a guest house and anyone could stay there, eat there or be able to hold meetings there.”**

Suruç but it was only temporary and I came back to Kobanê.

*When did you think about opening a library? Why a library?*

I just want to talk a little bit about my family here so that the story of the library can be fully understood.

Prior to the Syrian and Rojava revolutions, my family consisted of six brothers, five sisters and my parents. After the war escalated and Kobanê was surrounded from all sides, we all stayed in Kobanê and got involved in the civilian institutions and organizations.

Each of us, sisters and brothers, were involved in one of the institutions but as most of us liked the Kurdish language and its literature, Rodi, Shirin, Gulistan, Cihan and myself, we worked in the field of language and literature. My mom and my dad had a great love for their land. They also turned their home into a guest house and anyone could stay there, eat there or be able to hold meetings there.

They loved their guests very much, but on 26th of July, 2013, when our teacher Viyan Amara was martyred during the battle against the Cebhet el Nusra gangs, the situation in my family was now also changed and their own children began to participate in the revolution. After the martyrdom of Viyan

Amara, my sister Shirin left her language studies and she went to the military to become a freedom fighter and used “Viyan Rustem” as her code name there and she became a member of the YPJ, the Women’s Protection Units.

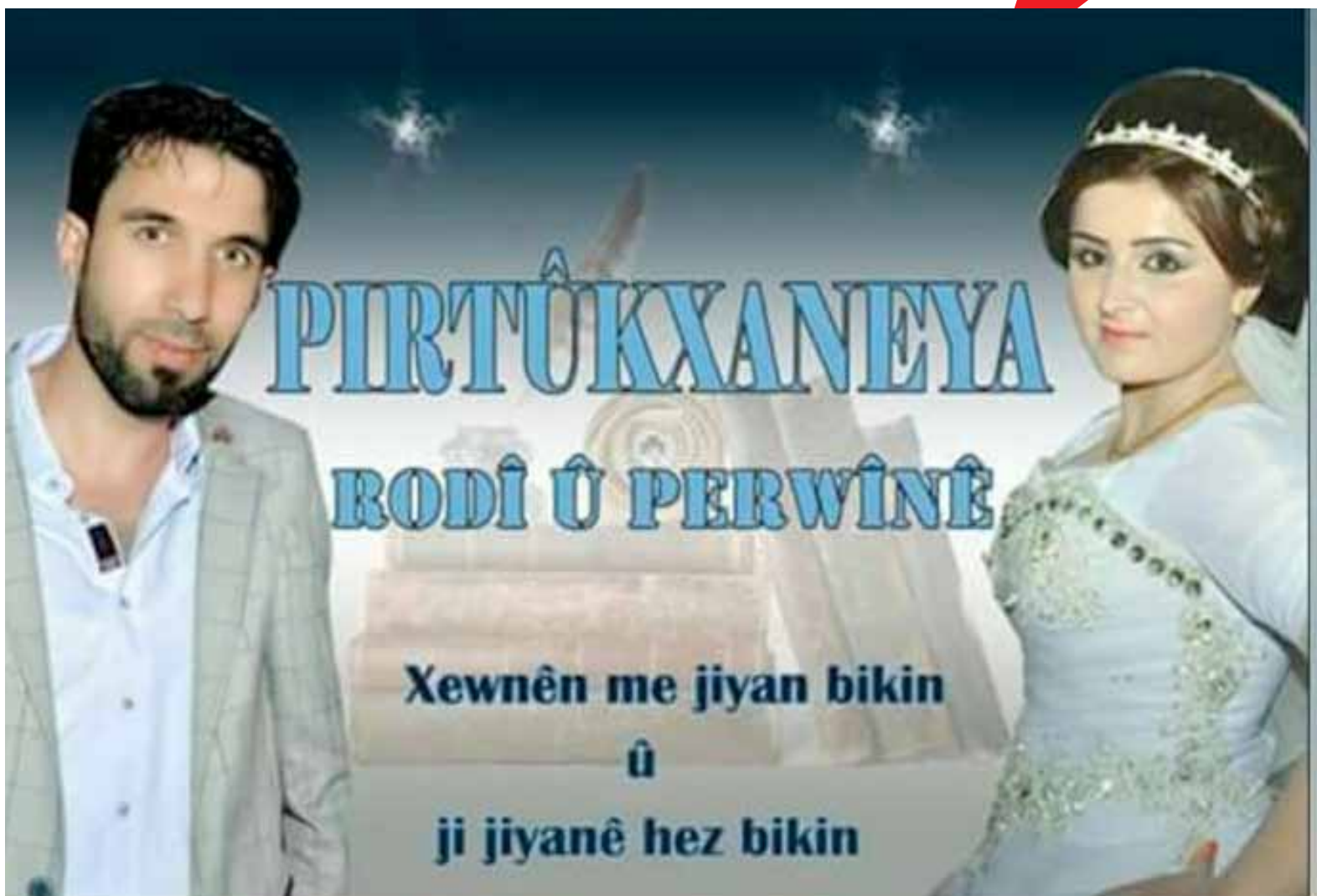
My mother was very upset about this decision but that was not all. After that date, a few months later on 11 November, 2013 an explosion at the Kurdish Red Moon occurred. My dad was very close to it and he was martyred in this explosion.

My family’s situation was once again turned upside down. The martyrdom of my father saddened us all. Also, the financial situation of our family was not good either.

My brother Rodi and my two other brothers went to Turkey to work in Istanbul in order to improve the financial situation of the family a little bit. Our situation was like this until the Kobanê War. Shirin (Viyan Rustem) was martyred in the war and the family fled to northern Kurdistan (the Turkish part).

After the liberation of Kobanê, my mother, sisters and I came back to Kobanê. We built our house once again because it was ruined by the war. Psychologically, I was very tired and so, once again, I returned to the north and I studied at Cegerxwin Academy in Diyarbakır.





During this time, Rodi returned to Kobanê and married his lover Perwin Hemo whom he had loved for 7 years. They were not even married 20 days when a massacre occurred on 25th of June 2015 and the 20-day-old bride and groom Rodi and Perwin were martyred in this massacre.

My mother was martyred.

My sister Gulistan Hesen was martyred. My elder brother Ehmed Hesen and his wife Rihane Hemo were martyred and their six children were orphaned. My uncle Mistefa Hemo, two of my cousins Os-

man and Ehmed and their mother Gule Evdi.

Two of my sisters Cihan and Berivan were also there during this massacre but they were able to hide themselves. They witnessed how their mother, sisters and brothers were slaughtered by barbarians.

After this last incident I returned from Amed and buried my family members. I witnessed the psychological state of my sisters Cihan and Berivan; that they could not go back to their house now

covered in blood and live there. Because before their marriage, Rodi and Perwin were planning to build a library in their home after their marriage and so that my mother's house would not be closed to guests, I decided to make the bride and groom's house, as well as my mother's house, into a library. I made plans for the establishment of the library for about a year, but Cihan and Berivan could not come. When I opened the library on 9 May, 2016, they did come to the opening of the library and they were there. We dedicated the library to our bride and groom and we named it the "Rodi and Perwin Library".

#### *What is your relationship to books?*

Since I have experienced loneliness many times in my life, the friends who slake my loneliness are my books, and I can even say that they are my closest friends.

#### *Why do you think books are important?*

The importance of books comes from their content. It is necessary to read the books of other nations to know the world and other nations. In this scenario, the Kurds have not gained enough recognition in the eyes of the world up to now because they have not written about themselves. That is why everyone understands the Kurds from the point of view of non-Kurds. So I am currently working on a novel about my family so that I can introduce my Kurdish family and the Rojava revolution to the world.

#### *Do you believe literature and culture could help people to understand each other better?*

Yes, I believe that from the beginning to the end we can understand each other

better through literature and culture, but culture and literature need to be understood well, it is necessary to get to the heart of it. I try to work as someone who fights against the oppression of 'assimilation politics' over culture and literature and I also want to promote Kobanê and my family through literature.

#### *How do you collect the books?*

Since there is no publishing house in Kobanê, I collect books from friends here and there, but the number of books that Rodi brought from Istanbul to establish a library before getting married are more than the others; and Perwin also collected books from some of her friends. After we decided to set up a library, my friends who were students in Amed started a campaign. Some of the publishing houses were visited and about 500 books were collected and sent to us. Now, when any book is published in Rojava, the Rojava Intellectual Union sends me a copy. Furthermore, anyone who visits the library, donates books to me if they have any with them.

#### *With whom are you running this project?*

This project is mostly run by my friends like Rodin Mihedin, Nesrin Kenan, Aras Hiso and my sister Cihan Hesen. However, as institutions and organizations, the Education Unit of Kobanê Canton and the Education Committee of Democratic Society (KPC Democratic) are helping financially and in some other ways.

#### *Tell us more about Rodî and Perwîn the young couple this library is named after?*

Rodi was my brother. He was two years



older than me. He was a teacher of language and literature at the Kurdish Institute in Istanbul and he received his Kurdish Language Teaching diploma from there. Perwin was my friend and she was Rodi's wife, who, along with Rodi, after 20 days of marriage, were both martyred on June 25, 2015.

***The Kurdish language was banned for a long time. What is the situation like now?***

In fact, just as you said, the Kurdish language was not only forbidden but it also ended up being so bad that speaking and writing in Kurdish became a major crime and a sin to the Ba'ath regime. A large number of people were imprisoned and some became martyrs as a result of torture. However, the situation changed with the Rojava Revolution, and with the opening of the Kurdish language institutions, the Kurdish people gathered around their mother tongue in Rojava and they decided to use their mother tongue as their main language, in daily life and in political and cultural life.

Because up until university level the schools in Rojava now are completely in Kurdish; there are Kurdish language academies and faculties alongside foreign languages and Arabic. Recently Rojava University in Qamishlo opened and Afrin University was opened in the Afrin Canton. However, due to financial problems and the fact that Rojava is surrounded, children's families are unable to afford the education costs. And since the administration is mainly preoccupied with the fight with Daesh, they channel all the resources to the military field. For this reason, there are many obstacles in the educational area.

***How is the situation in Kobanê now? How much of the city has been re-***

***built? What are its most urgent needs?***

The reconstruction of Kobanê has remained at the personal level. Many states and organizations promised to rebuild Kobanê, but they did not keep their promises.

Some individuals and families who have financial means have begun to rebuild to the extent of their own capabilities, but this is not sufficient in terms of the wider reconstruction such as parks, schools and so on.

***What is the relationship of the library with intellectuals, academics, students, authorities there? Do you plan to organise conferences, meetings?***

We have relationships with all authors and intellectuals in Kobanê, but we do not have relations with many of them in Rojava. As there is not always a round trip possible between Kobanê, Qamishlo and Afrin, we only go there when there is a duty or official business. As for holding conferences, the library is not very big, so we organize panels, seminars and night chats but we do not have the facilities for conferences.

***Do you have any relationships with the other cantons in Rojava? And with Northern Kurdistan?***

Yes there are relationships. As I said, there is little travelling unless it is on an official mission.

Right now our relationship is solely with the Canton of Cizre because the roads between ourselves and Afrin are closed. There are still gang members and Turkish soldiers between us. In the north, we have links with Aram, Aryen and some other publishing houses and organizations such as Cegerxwin Academy and Kurdish-Der and the Kurdish Institute in Istanbul.

***Are there any Kurdish publishers***



***now in Rojava?***

Yes, there is only one publishing house. It is Simav. It is in Qamishlo city.

***Is there anything in particular you would like to say to the international community?***

Yes, I have a lot to say to the international community.

First of all, I would like those states and the international institutions to keep the commitments that they promised for the reconstruction of Kobanê. Until now, some families have been involved in the reconstruction campaign in Kobanê. The majority of those families are also the families of those martyred who fought against Daesh, which is the enemy of humanity.

I also call on organizations such as UNESCO and UNICEF: children in Kobanê need help for their education. We want them to help with rebuilding the schools that were ruined in battle so that our children can go to school again. Currently, in Kobanê, there are 40 children

studying in each class. As everyone knows, there should be no more than 20 children in each class.

I am also calling on the international community. The Kurdish language and Kurdish language education should be recognized at the international level. Especially now that the diplomas we give to students at faculties and universities in Rojava are not recognized internationally. We hope that as Kurdish people who have sacrificed our young girls and our boys for humanity that they should recognise that and see us as a people with our own language, culture and literature.

For so many years our existence has been denied and we have had to live under colonialism. If we have now proved ourselves to the world in the military field, we can also prove it in literature, in art and in politics.





# REBUILDING THE CITY: A TRIBUTE TO THOSE WHO LOST THEIR LIFE IN THE WAR

THE MUNICIPALITY HAS ALREADY PROMOTED SOME 40 COMMUNITARIAN PROJECTS. DECISIONS ON THE CONTENT AND EXECUTION OF THE PROJECTS ARE TAKEN IN THE ASSEMBLIES AT LOCAL LEVEL. FIRST AN IDEA IS PROPOSED TO THE PEOPLE'S COUNCIL AND COLLECTIVELY DEBATED. ONCE APPROVED, THE PROJECTS ARE SELF-MANAGED AND RESPONSIBILITIES AND COSTS ARE DEFINED.

THE MUNICIPAL COMMITTEE HAS MANAGED TO REMOVE 2.5 MILLION TONNES OF DEBRIS IN THE FIRST SIX MONTHS SINCE THE LIBERATION, RECYCLING AN IMPORTANT PART OF THESE AS BUILDING MATERIAL. THE MOST AMBITIOUS PROJECT FOR THE REBUILDING OF THE CITY IS A NEW BOROUGH HALF A MILLION SQUARE METERS BIG, WHERE 18 HOUSING BLOCKS WITH A TOTAL OF 1,800 FLATS WILL BE BUILT. THE STRUCTURE OF EIGHT OF THESE BUILDINGS HAVE ALREADY BEEN BUILT.







### REMEMBERING THE DEAD WITH A PARK

The general plan has been drawn, shared and discussed among its future inhabitants, families who have lost their houses and family members in the fight zone. 40% of the area will be used for houses, shops, a hospital, four schools, a police station, and the municipality building. 60% of the area will be used for gardens and green areas.

The green areas are part of a park-district designed to serve as a tribute to the hundreds of men and women who died defending the city and the civilians who were killed during the war.

The idea is to transform the whole area into a sort-of open air museum

so that those who gave their life in the fight for freedom would never be forgotten.

## LETTERS FROM THE FRONTLINE

### KOBANÊ, SEPTEMBER 2014 - JANUARY 2015

Letter written by Narin, a YPJ fighter, to her mother.

#### I am ok mom

*Yesterday we celebrated my 19th birthday. My friend Azad sang a beautiful song about mothers, I thought of you and I cried. Azad has a nice voice and he cried too while singing.*

*Yesterday we looked after a wounded friend. He had been shot. He didn't realise he had been shot twice, he only showed me one wound, in the chest, he was also bleeding from the side and we stopped the bleeding. I gave him my blood.*

*We were on the East side of Kobanê*

*mom, there are only a few kilometers between them and us, we can see their black flags, we can hear their messages, sometimes we can't understand what they are saying because they speak in foreign languages, but we can feel their fear.*

*We are nine fighters, the youngest is Resho, he is from Afrin, he has fought in Tal Abyad before joining our group.*

*Alan is from Qamishlo, its best borough, he has fought in Serekaniye before joining our group. He has many scars on his body, he said they are from Avin.*

*The eldest is Dersim, he comes from Qandil mountains. His wife fell, a martyr in Diyarbakir and left him **alone***

with two kids.

We are in a house on the outskirts of Kobanê. We know almost nothing of the people who lived here, there are photos on the wall: an old man in one, a young boy with a black ribbon on the frame, I think he is a martyr. There are photos of Qazi Mohamad, Mulla Mustafa Barzani, Apo and an old map of Kurdistan.

We have run out of coffee and we have realised that life goes on, beautiful even without coffee. To be honest, I never had a nicer coffee than yours, mom.

We are defending a peaceful city, we never attacked anyone. On the contrary we have welcomed many of our Syrian brothers, the wounded and the displaced. We are defending a muslim city with dozens of mosques. We are defending it from barbarian forces.

Mom, I will come to see you when this ugly war imposed on us will be over. I will come with my friend Dersim who must go back to Diyarbakir to be reunited with his kids. We all miss our homes and we all want to return, but this war does not know what to miss something means.

Perhaps I won't come back mom, and if this is the case, be sure that all this time I have dreamed of hugging you but I had no luck.

If I won't come back, I know you will some day visit Kobanê and you will look for the house that has been a witness to my final days. This house on the East side of the city, half destroyed.

It has a green door that has been shot many times. You will see three windows: next to the one looking east you will see my name written in red.

Behind this window, mom, I have been waiting, counting my last moments, looking at the light of the sun entering from the holes made by the bullets. It was behind this window that Azad sang his beautiful song about mothers. His voice was so nice when he was singing "I miss you, mom".

**I miss you, mom  
your daughter Narin**

#### **Suphi Nejat Airnaslı**

The last letter written by Suphi Nejat Asırnaslı – also known by his code-name Paramaz Kızılbas – has been read out-loud at a memorial for Nejat at his Alma mater, Bosaziçi University. Nejat, who was a member of the Marxist-Leninist Communist Party of Turkey (MLKP), is reported to have left the letter for his family and friends before leaving for Kobanê. Nejat lost his life fighting alongside the YPG in the defense of the city on October 5th.

I have lived life and learned much from those who have been a part of my life. I made a choice with what I have learned and I became a witness to the truth, or to truths. Within life's dialectic I have passed to the other side and hope that it will all be for the good. I was born an ordinary person and I am saying goodbye to you as an ordinary person as well. I know that I often left you halfway down the road,



that I sometimes acted clumsily and was sorry for it, and that I had become sad. Forgive me now for the last time. I have made a choice as an ordinary youth and from nothing but ordinary contradictions. Above all else I made this choice for myself. I haven't set out for some lofty belief. All I wanted to do is bring some spark to the lives of simple people, to a world without a spark, to a world which has become reified.

I have learned that I will not get past my own contradictions, and that in so far as these are social, they map out the contradictions of people only. And I have learned to be able to work toward socializing them to a higher degree. This is the closest point in my life that I have come to the truth.

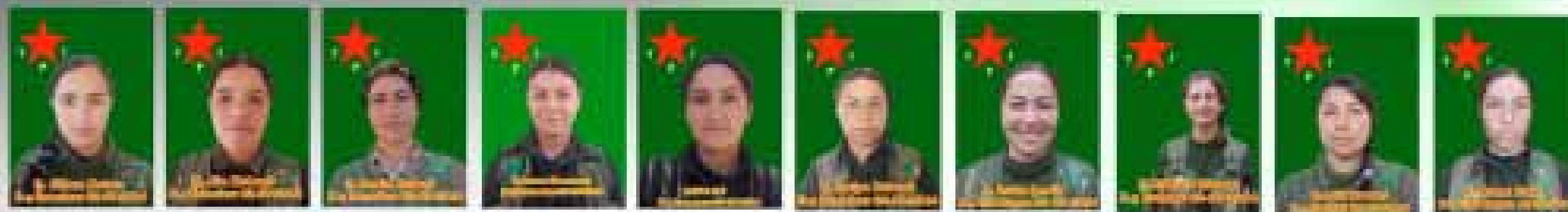
I was born a fugitive in Söke. Anyhow, as for it being Turkey I have no regrets.

Every calamity in life is in fact supposed to be an opportunity which can contribute in some way when one seeks to gain from it. My only concern was never to grow up, to never be a part of the world of grown-ups, to remain a child forever now just like Peter Pan I am going off to Neverland, never to grow up. There is nothing that could have made me happier.

With the wish that you lay the seeds for the emergence of ordinary heroes that will bring a spark to the lives of ordinary working people in the west of Turkey, and that you create a vanguard and rearguard organization that will be devoted to the search for truth.

Every heart is a revolutionary cell!  
Power to the imagination!

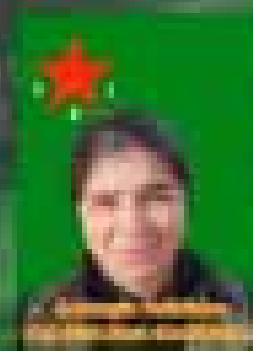




# ŞEHİDÊN BERXWEDANA KOBANÊ 2014



## 2014



# Radio Kobanê

## A poetry of suffering

SEAMAS CARRAHER

DILOVAN KÎKO:

"MY CHILDHOOD FRIEND SHIRIN HASSAN FELL INTO THE HANDS OF TERRORISTS, THEY CUT OFF HER HEAD AND HUNG IT IN THE SQUARE OF JARABULUS. HUMANITY DIED FOR ME THAT DAY ON THE SQUARE."

Watching *Radio Kobanê* is an intense experience...if only for the depiction of these brave people in victory and defeat, in 'happiness' and in sorrow and all the more so because my only available copy of the film, originally produced in Kurdish and with Dutch subtitles, far as I know, was, in both of these languages, far from the refined-working-class Irish-English I speak and shape thoughts of what the future could be in... And what the future could be is maybe all that is left for some of these brave Kurds who despite betrayal after betrayal keep offering their sons and daughters to the struggle for liberation and freedom and the right of a people to sing and dance and write and do whatever-the-fuck they want, in their own language, with their own identity and to hell with what anyone else - even if they have heavy artillery and even heavier swords and car-bombs - thinks or does...

Written, Produced and Directed by Director Reber Dosky, a Kurdish-Dutch filmmaker living in The Netherlands since 1998. Dosky studied film direction at the Netherlands Film Academy and has won several awards at international film festivals. With

*The Sniper of Kobanê* (2015) he achieved international recognition, winning awards in Canada, Brazil, the Netherlands, Egypt, Italy, Japan and Mexico among others. Travelling to the city of *Kobanê*, on the border between Turkey and Syria he meets twenty-year-old reporter Dilovan Kîko, just when Kurdish fighters are about to recapture the border town from its Islamic State occupiers. Initially he made the short film, *Sniper of Kobanê* about it, then, following his encounter with **Dilovan Kîko**, he began recording her work, interviewing the survivors of the ISIL/ISIS/Daesh occupation. **Dilovan**, a 20 year old Kurdish woman, has set up a radio station in the devastated town and she now interviews survivors, returning refugees, fighters and poets; she also tells her own story in a communiqué to the child she may have one day. Reber Dosky recorded his footage over a period of three years of both war and reconstruction in **Kobanê**.

**RADIO KOBANÊ:** you should watch this documentary film. The world should watch it, if only to wake from the sleep of our desperate ignorance, here in 'the West', about what is going on in this part of our forgotten planet.

## On September 30, 2014 ISIS laid siege to both the city and the surrounding canton...they initially captured village after village

So watch **RADIO KOBANÊ**, watch it and weep. Watch it and understand how much our world needs to be changed...

**Kobanê** is a place of hope today but its hope is surely based only on what it has paid out time after time in blood and tears...

In an early scene, as *Radio Kobanê* (93.4FM) begins to broadcast, and from the perspective of a bird-heading-in-to-exile and gliding across a surreal landscape, we see block after block of destroyed buildings that were once homes to the men, women and children of **Kobanê**...

On **September 30, 2014**, ISIS laid siege to both the city and the surrounding canton...they initially captured village after village, destroying and killing as they moved. Thousands of displaced Kurds fled across the border into Northern Kurdistan, currently a province in south eastern Turkey, alleged friend to the Islamic State jihadis, and another oppressor of the Kurds with the blood of children and old men and women on its hands as well as the young fighters of the PKK, who, since the cynical collapse of the peace talks two years ago, have waged an equally ruthless war against a state that uses heavy artillery against civilian targets and is currently undergoing investigation by a number of international human rights bodies for potential, and more than likely actual, crimes against humanity. By **January**

**2015** almost half a million Kurds had been forced to abandon their homes. On **26 January 2015**, the Kurdish YPG, (Kurdish People's Defense Units) supported by US-led airstrikes, began to retake the city. **Kobanê** was fully recaptured on **27 January**. By late **April 2015**, Daesh had lost almost all of the villages it had captured in the Canton; however in late **June 2015**, they launched a new offensive against the city, killing another estimated 233 civilians.

*And so we get to walk the same streets now to be called as witness to this cruel destruction, the product of war but also of the survival of a people under impossible conditions... these women chopping cucumbers together in a symbol that life will continue no matter what evils descend like a plague or lurk festering in the demented minds of no-matter-which religion or ideology... streets also frequently thrust into darkness by power outages... and all the while **Dilovan Kiko** **Radio Kobanê** broadcasts and the people on street corners and in cafés and from the back of trucks listen...*

The work of rebuilding **Kobanê** is underway despite what Ednan Osman Hesen, from the Rodî û Perwîn Library, in Kobanê says elsewhere about the betrayal of the international organisations (*"The reconstruction of Kobanê has remained at the personal level. Many states and organizations promised to rebuild Kobanê, but they did not*



*keep their promises.")* - they, who promised the world and delivered fuck-all of course, as if there is anything new in that for a people who don't offer celebrity or oil or power; probably one of the most 'forgotten' of peoples, but more importantly a community of souls on the borders of possibly, now, one of the greatest social experiments since the Paris Commune (**18 March to 28 May 1871**), and one who so far with a wing and a prayer has lasted longer... **Rojava-Democratic Federation of Northern Syria**.... the undreamt dream of Murray Bookchin, American post communist, post Trotskyist, post anarchist post everything probably now but nonetheless a scientist of dreams who decided we need to start from scratch having been witness to the

regimes of coercion and terror erected by the so-called liberators of the 20th century and built on the bones of the great philosopher-conspirators Marx and Engels as well as the dreams of more than one committed communist...Also factor in here Abdullah Öcalan, currently *possibly* still alive *maybe* and held incommunicado certainly on the Turkish Prison island of Imrali in the Sea of Marmara, terror of the 'terrorist' Grey Wolves of the nationalist right-wing Turkish state and now prophet of peace who no one wants to listen to but still a hero to his people and to the experiment called democratic confederalism, a working of Bookchin's theories to fit the work-in-progress jigsaw pieces of the post colonial world of Kurdistan... this banished Homeland of





these modern revolutionaries, now on the march once again...

*And the radio continues to broadcast and people listen...* there is more to life than comfortable lies and lawns and public concert halls, though you might not be able to tell your middle class friends that with their object disdain and contempt for any radical plan to redistribute this planet's enormous wealth so we can all live in a state of basic comfort, knowing our children have clean water and medicine and maybe, on a Sunday, a pair of shoes on their feet on their way to church or mosque or council meeting...

**Kobanê** is being rebuilt... what it takes a few seconds to destroy can take days and weeks and years to put together again, if ever, and the work and sweat of a people and resources and money...

But there are wounds here that may never go away, *even as the rubble is removed by mechanical diggers*. Dead animals or is it human bodies, almost unrecognisable now after rocket fire or machine gun fire or other hot sharp metal so that you would want to take the perpetrators by the scruff of their bearded necks and shake them and say "*look what you did*" until they would see sense...as if that is ever likely to happen in an environment

where war often makes more sense than peace because of the appalling inequality that goes under the name of a global economic system that has come to appear all the more natural now when held up to the light of the catastrophes of socialist planning, state capitalism...Year Zero...etc. etc.; no matter because the dead stay dead and the very posture they assume in death seems to make an absurdity of every philosophy, let alone this lunatic economics of inequality.

But there is still a music to this film within its grim silences, even if it is only in the business of the people moving from one act to the next in a long history that has now arrived and become manifest where there are no simple truths left... and where the future always remains profoundly uncertain. ISIS/ISIL/Daesh may be almost defeated in the cities and the alleys of Raqqa or Mosul but the Islamic State of the Heart, this shrill sectarian hysteria of the fanatic heart seems to be harder to erode from the human landscape...and like the same economic system that makes inequality seem so natural, it somehow seems to be becoming a more normal way of being than one where solidarity, support, nurture and common care predominately shape human bonds beyond the basic biological



reproduction of this slightly-crazy species we have become on our journey to construct this so-called "human family": we who are nevertheless tasked with the responsibility of being the guardians of a creation we are on the verge of destroying...

*In the rubble of a destroyed Kobanê are the bones and the bodies of the dead.* It might be acceptable if those bodies were the bodies of fighters, perpetrators, military personnel, those for whom to 'live by the sword' might mean 'to die by the sword' but that would probably be a very naive way of looking at a war that is increasingly becoming more universal - where there are - no innocent - no combatants - no civilians - no rights, no wrongs distinguishable, in this fog of total war and exploitation, no Geneva Convention and in the end, no fucking humanity, even...All these sacred cows are left sitting on some nice bourgeois mantelpiece in the Latin Quarter maybe of a mythical Paris frozen like a fossil in the 1920's (when we had the audacity to believe war was the aberration and not the norm) or a leafy suburb in contemporary Dublin or Dubai...the real world of **Kobanê**, of Diyarbakir, of Cizre, can no longer make those distinctions...though in this oasis of the West, temporary as

it probably is, it is comforting to believe that wars have rules and as Walter Benjamin wrote so painfully and contrarily at the end of his own short life: history is sure-as-shit not about progress...take a bird's eye view of the planet...not with the impartial wings of a bird...but merely with eyes opened far enough to see war, squalor; or drought, famine and the many other murderous horsemen of the apocalypse; not this refined bullshit of these western diplomats and politicians for whom language is just another commodity when he or she or they already know they already control the market, even from behind their fortified bunker or now guarded by the mother-of-all-fucking-bombs: MOA(F)B...

But images are a lot cruder... *that really is a body...* a once-human-body now long dead and decomposed in the mud... you would have to be numb to embrace that... and alongside the photograph of the girlfriend that survived both fire and rain and just lies there waiting, in amid the rubble and the trash, to be picked up and placed on some shelf in a house you know no longer exists, belonging to a family that has now become extinct for all time, who no one can bring back thanks to some black-bearded black-caped death-cult religious-thugs with a weapon instead of





a heart...a picture like we all possess, but this one has no owner, not any longer, instead it waits...and waits...and waits.... waits to be recognised, reclaimed, redeemed...only now it can only spark even more grief (if you are lucky enough to be able to experience grief)...but images are also more evocative at the same time...*the JCB uncovers another body*, almost lifts it tenderly but then, a bit like life itself, crudely tosses it to the side so we can get on with what we are doing... nothing can stand in the way of progress. Or destruction... or inhumanity. It seems...

And all this in a few short minutes *walking down a few streets in a town* that the world only heard of a short few years ago. And who, we all know, the world is planning to forget about, once the men and women of the YPG and YJA have done what the 'powers'-that-be want and push back the jihadis, the so-called warriors of Islam, bullies that they are...You might need to wear a mask to protect yourself from the smell of that one...not decaying flesh from a brutalised corpse but betrayal and the lies and cynicism of these same 'powers' who don't know their own days are numbered but are sure to feed off the last drop of blood they can get their vampire teeth into even as they sink into the mud of history...this same mud that opened its arms for the murdered of **Kobanê**...Benjamin again...this time with the Redeemer in demand. And why not...we have been betrayed by the rest..."*It is well-known that the Jews were forbidden to look into the future. The Torah and the prayers instructed them, by contrast, in remembrance. This disenchanting those who fell prey to the future, who sought advice from the soothsayers. For that reason the future did not, however, turn into a homogenous and empty time for the Jews. For in it every second*

*was the narrow gate, through which the Messiah could enter."* (Theses on the Philosophy of History, 1940)

Of course it is interesting to see bodies without their heads, even if we have been blunted to the shock by Hollywood's special effects departments...but it surely takes the words right out of your mouth because what can you say to that...?..what meaning can be left in the container of words confronted with this...?..I thought...realising in the midst of a million neural synapses firing...the 'truth' is nothing complicated like life: death is a lot cruder than we like to imagine...and no harm there, for the dead sleep whether they rest in peace or in turmoil; it is the life and the living that forces you to go silent, because you can only imagine what the living was like in this freak show...this war-crime called war...brought to you by these callous and heavily armed pornographers who make reality more unreal than the Hollywood smoke-and-mirrors cigar-chewing producers...and on and on and on as we continue to wander these streets; boulevards where no respectable 20th century poet would have hung out on or lingered long, but now, a century later, almost, everyone, meaning those of us who survive, is a poet, here is where we belong (whether we know it or not!), and the song? Only this relentless poetry of suffering...

The streets of **Kobanê**...this city 'Ayn al-'Arab'...*The Spring of the Arabs*, where animals were once brought by the nomads to be watered...a spring, a street, a dead lake, a mountain of bones. And a people...and from afar the curse of either the Ottomans, the French or the Syrian oligarchy with a basement full of chemical weapons in case they run out of bullets...



The Buddhists have a practice where they meditate on life and on death in the presence of a corpse; in the old days it was easy because they were left in a 'charnel ground' outside the town or village; not like today where we hide our death behind curtains or walls or cosmetics or massive doses of painkillers or other mind numbing drugs...but **Ra-dio Kobanê**, not being a pornographer's dream but a work of documentary integrity, becomes this modern reflection on death - this *Marana-sati* - mindfulness of death: that corpse there, without a head, with one arm missing, *that too will be me*...after the next jihadi attack or the next Turkish military assault with heavy artillery. *That will be my child, my lover, my parents* after they incinerate them in basements where the people are trapped by curfews and trained snipers with high caliber weapons...*that too will be me*. The Buddhists believe this process will help us detach from our enormous attachment to the concept of me, and mine and self...I don't know what effect this reflection might have on the people of **Kobanê**...for our friend, Ednan Osman Hesên, of the Rodî û Perwîn Library, it was to open a library and people it with the friends of his own lonely hours - the books (*"Since I have experienced loneliness many times in my life, the friends who slake my loneliness are my books, and I can even say that they are my closest friends."*) ...and hopefully there will always be books until we humans develop sufficiently to grow wings: though the jury is still out on that one...

From **13 September 2014**, to the Islamic State car bombs almost a year later, in a recaptured **Kobanê** that launched their vindictive counterattack that wiped out most of Ednan Osman Hesên's family - (*"During this time, Rodî returned to Kobanê and married his*

*lover Perwin Hemo whom he had loved for 7 years. They were not even married 20 days when a massacre occurred on 25th of June 2015 and the 20-day-old bride and groom Rodî and Perwin were martyred in this massacre. My mother was martyred. My sister Gulistan Hesên was martyred. My elder brother Ehmed Hesên and his wife Rihane Hemo were martyred and their six children were orphaned. My uncle Mistefa Hemo, two of my cousins*

*Osman and Ehmed and their mother Gule Evdi. Two of my sisters Cihan and Berivan were also there during this massacre but they were able to hide themselves. They witnessed how their mother, sisters and brothers were slaughtered by barbarians."*) - the people of the city and the people in the villages were left to the mercy of a god who has obviously abandoned her followers. Now comes what is left of prayer: the time for renewal...

Scenes of fighting...no shortage of bullets...This is nothing like the movies. Nothing like John Wayne, nothing dramatic, nothing heroic...*no more heroes anymore*; Instead: *crude hot metal and lots of it tearing through stone and flesh equally, ripping tearing maiming destroying...and here are the Kurdish fighters...who smile because they know they have their Kurdish identify and their homeland on their side...thousands of years of it...to support them in this brief hiccough of an Islamic-Jihad-taken-shape-and-falling-apart equally as swiftly...*

*...the women fighters of the YPJ...you would think they were dancing instead of weaving from building to building in-between bursts of machine gun fire. The YPJ...The Kurdish Women's Protection Units, 20,000 strong by **November 2016**, these militants who terrorise the*

religious jihadis, ruthless military operatives as well as being the commissars of Abdullah Öcalan's Democratic Confederalism (*"Democratic confederalism is open towards other political groups and factions. It is flexible, multi-cultural, anti-monopolistic, and consensus-oriented. Ecology and feminism are central pillars. In the frame of this kind of self-administration an alternative economy will become necessary, which increases the resources of the society instead of exploiting them and thus does justice to the manifold needs of the society."* Abdullah Öcalan) and their own, Jineology - "a form of feminism also known as the 'science of women'" - (*"The extent to which society can be thoroughly transformed is determined by the extent of the transformation attained by women. Similarly, the level of woman's freedom and equality determines the freedom and equality of all sections of society. . . For a democratic nation, woman's freedom is of great importance too, as liberated woman constitutes liberated society. Liberated society in turn constitutes democratic nation. Moreover, the need to reverse the role of man is of revolutionary importance"* Abdullah Öcalan).

*...and death everywhere...new death (as if there was anything new about death)...because now you know the newness is signified by the image you see and understand, because there are still heads and arms and legs attached...but still a bit unreal like a shop window dummy maybe placed there for effect...and af-*

ter the director's "cut" he or she will get up and head off for cocktails..

...in **Kobanê** no one who is down gets up again...

...In **Kobanê** the Dead are not resurrected on the last day...

...In **Kobanê** the Dead stay fucking dead...

...In **Kobanê** there is no alternative to grief and grieving...

...In **Kobanê** life is the answer to death...

...In **Kobanê** dead flesh rots and the rotten flesh decomposes...

...and History stinks.

because they know they have their Kurdish identify and their homeland on their side...thousands of years of it...to support them in this brief hiccough of an Islamic-Jihad-taken-shape-and-falling-apart equally as swiftly...

...but the people don't, why? Because as human beings we have survived all evil, all desperation, all hopelessness and, of course (tongue in cheek) we don't know the meaning of despair...

Dante Alighieri got it wrong with his depiction of the entrance to Hell **ABANDON HOPE ALL YE WHO ENTER HERE**..hell is of course right here...in Syria...In Cizre...in the Sur district of Diyarbakir...but nobody abandons hope...not even after every single promise of the 20th century turned to shit...not even after the revolution and the wars the people won hurt more than the those we lost...no despair...



*¡No Pasarán! They shall not pass!* ("The whole country cringes in indignation at these heartless barbarians that would hurl our democratic Spain back down into an abyss of terror and death. However, **THEY SHALL NOT PASS!**" La Pasionaria, **18 July 1936**) - the communards of Madrid said...(yet they passed)...*the military will respect the rule of law*, the Chilean socialist Allende said and they bombed him, tin helmet and all, before bludgeoning Victor Jara's hands to pulp...but in this human heart and this Kurdish soul of a planet, in a corner of revolutionary Rojava, let us be sure of one thing, as long as we hold breath in our militant lungs, our working class dreams, our humanitarian beliefs:

*...they will never fucking pass!*

...that's both the meaning and the message of humanity...born out of the ruins and the rubble of the worst of all possible worlds...over and over...day after day...atrocities after atrocities...massacre after massacre, heartbreak after heartbreak...Benjamin again:

*"A Klee painting named 'Angelus Novus' shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresist-*

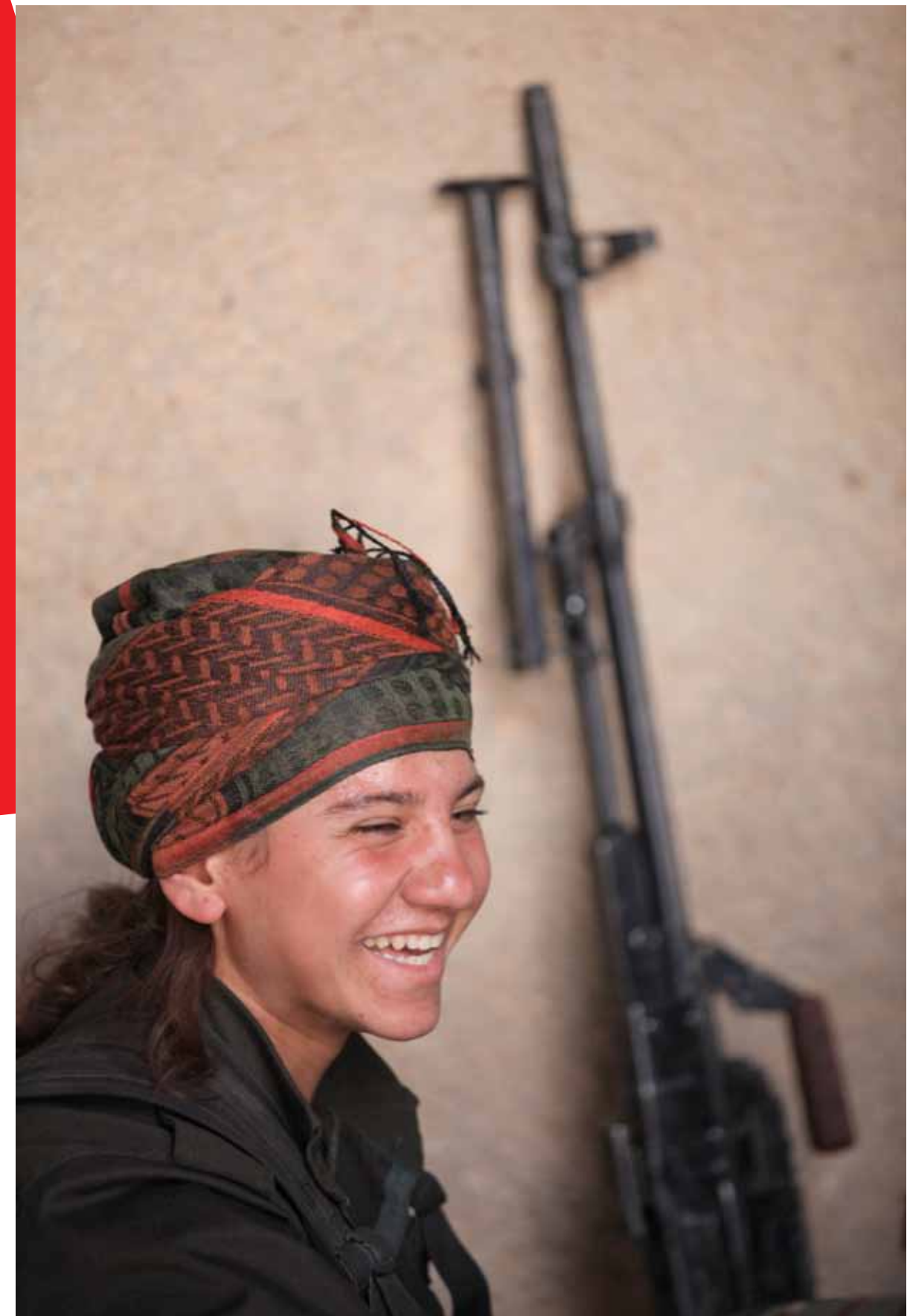
*ibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress."* (Theses on the Philosophy of History)

*...they will not pass...not ignorance nor those blinded by dogma or cruelty or greed...they shall not pass...that's what the smile of the women fighters of the YPJ in the streets of Kobanê or on the road to Raqqa tells the rest of us in the comfort of our European ghettos, they shall not pass - ¡No Pasarán..!*

*Then the F16 bombers leave a cloud of smoke and from high up into the sky you know nothing, not an ant not a cockroach, could survive that, fire and fury...*

*Finally: the children.* The children would break your heart if you had a heart left to break and the message as far as one can see is: you better find one because it is the heartless and the arrogant who perpetrate these crimes against humanity called "war"...it is the heartless who torture and maim, plant bombs in crowded bus stations...bomb burn brutalise...it is the heartless and if it takes a child or the look of fear or loss on a child's face to teach you to find a heart, well, that is your price and everyone has a price to pay...because know it or not, believe it or not, we are all in this shit together...

But this is the end. Not just of the film...the end of civilization more likely, *as we know it*, and hopefully so, if the revolution in Rojava survives...if the human race, as well as the people of a collective Kurdistan, have a future...



...more streets not Bruce Springsteen's streets of south Philadelphia but there might be similarities because we know now that war is waged in different ways by different perpetrators and if it's one way in **Kobanê** that doesn't mean that the Reagans and the Bushes and the Trumps with their rich friends now abolishing Medicaid don't know how to wage war on their own kind; war is war is war, meaning it's total war, it's all war now... Syria has taught us that...

...Colombia...Mexico...Belfast...Kurdistan...Palestine...Afghanistan...Yemen...Somalia...Darfur...Libya...until we have peace...

...and we will have peace...the people of **Kobanê** and Rojava are optimistic, that is why they have started rebuilding... that is why the Rodî û Perwîn Library was opened even with fuck-all books left in town, that is why universities are opening in Rojava and cucumbers are grown in the refugee camps...take a look for yourselves...

When you sit with the extent of the destruction of Kobanê for over an hour (68 minutes) you are left wondering how anyone could survive such a hostile world? And so many did not...but the casualty figures only conceal the devastation and the desolation of the survivors...so to wonder how anyone could survive is fundamentally to bear witness to the fragility of an individual life in amidst the machinery that we humans have developed, (not least our own killing brains), over the course of millennia...the fragility of an individual life, the fragility of a species that shows little respect for other species...and so hangs by a thread...yes, we are hanging by a thread. That is what fragile means, that is what vulnerable means...we all hang to life by a thread...

...despite all that the shops open... maybe there is little on the shelves but

at least they are open...selling shit and buying it even as a game, must be, by now. almost a biological trait among humans...the barber is back in business... snip snip...a shave and a haircut 5 cents maybe...but surely you must know by now that the price of a haircut or a shave or a can of coke is not the raw currency you barter with but the recognition that you still own your own life...?..if life could soon be recognised as a vital - *THE* vital - currency (in the face of death that is, as well as its inevitability) maybe we could reform or transform this economic and social system from one where insanity and greed dominate to one where human need becomes genuinely human, meaning heart-felt..?

If life is the currency then death is the market within which it trades, its inevitability...(Life is a wound on the body of death, Charles Haldeman's rabbi, Isaac Golden, said in the Auschwitz of 'The Sun's Attendant': "Look at death as a body, your body, and your life as a wound upon it. That body does not know you, it knows only that the wound is causing it pain.")...not believing that we die we create all these war games to hide out in until we recognise it is too late...nothing is a game. It is all literally deadly serious, at least in a town or a time such as **Kobanê**...

Finally what does the future hold? A dance...a fire...is it the corpse that is burning..?.or is it one more fanatical religion that will, in the end, eat itself alive no matter what it has destroyed...all its so-called enemies, apostates...the fires of Newroz, the Kurdish symbol for life, the image that is called on to symbolise *Angra Mainyu*, the battle between good and evil...transformation within destruction.....a dance a dream a funeral...a field filled with graves...with grief...a young girl buries her heart in among clay and stone and all the rubble left lying among the ruins...

No more "Allah is groot" then...it's a new day...fresh bread from the ovens...the butcher sharpens his knives...the sun lifts its weary head from the swamp it has been sleeping in...the smell of the decaying corpse is almost washed away...the sound of human pain almost faded...it's a new day... you can almost hear Nina Simone singing in the background over the shattered roofs between the wall-less houses where the wind plays its fingers through the strings of shattered doorways and partition-walls like a young man might run his hand through his beloved's hair on a warm summer's evening that never heard of war nor of religion...a birthday party the other side of the coin...the young girls laugh and eat cake...sunrise sunset...a young girl has her hair braided....

"My child...  
I hope you will enter our beautiful world with joy...  
and that you will have a happy life."

**Dilovan Kîko**

...if life is a dream then we have all been haunted by its failure so far, by the nightmare it has become, despite all our theories, our monuments, our endurance...And **Kobanê** is this, if only symbolically, in a world fast running out of meaning, both our graveyard and a womb...and this song, of course, that joins them (and us!) like an umbilical cord: a poetry of suffering:

Nina Simone ..."Feeling Good"

*Birds flyin' high, you know how I feel  
Sun in the sky, you know how I feel  
Breeze driftin' on by, you know how I feel  
It's a new dawn, it's a new day, it's a new life for me.  
Yeah, it's a new dawn, it's a new day, it's a new life for me, ooooooooooh...  
And I'm feelin' good.*

*Fish in the sea, you know how I feel  
River runnin' free, you know how I feel  
Blossom on the tree, you know how I feel  
It's a new dawn, it's a new day, it's a new life for me,  
And I'm feelin' good.*

*Dragonfly out in the sun, you know what I mean, don't you know,  
Butterflies all havin' fun, you know what I mean.  
Sleep in peace when day is done: that's what I mean,  
And this old world is a new world and a bold world for me...*

*Stars when you shine, you know how I feel  
Scent of the pine, you know how I feel  
Yeah, freedom is mine, and I know how I feel..  
It's a new dawn, it's a new day, it's a new life for me  
.....*

And I'm feelin'... good.

Links:

<https://www.journeyman.tv/film/6957/radio-kobani>  
<https://www.journeyman.tv/film/6957/radio-kobani>  
<https://www.journeyman.tv/film/6957/radio-kobani>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=00zfXh5xnqs>

Theses on the Philosophy of History  
<http://www.globalrights.info/2016/09/the-concept-of-history-walter-benjamin-download-book/>

Transcript:

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# Education in three languages

## this is how we build a plurinational society

EDNAN OSMAN HESEN

WE ARRANGED AN INTERVIEW WITH THE CHAIR OF EDUCATION BOARD OF KOBANÊ CANTON AND WE ASKED ABOUT THE SITUATION OF THE CHILDREN OF KOBANÊ AND THE SITUATION IN THE CITY.

NISRÎN KENAN IS 27 YEARS OLD. BEFORE THE ROJAVA REVOLUTION, SHE WAS STUDYING BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION. FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE REVOLUTION, SHE STARTED WORKING AS A TEACHER AND AN EXECUTIVE MEMBER OF THE KURDISH LANGUAGE ORGANIZATION. FOR THREE YEARS SHE TOOK PART IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE KOBANÊ KURDISH LANGUAGE ORGANISATION. DURING THE KOBANÊ WAR, SHE WENT TO NORTHERN KURDISTAN WITH HER FAMILY. THERE, IN THE PIRSÛS (SURUC) CAMPS, SCHOOLS WERE OPENED IN TENTS FOR THE CHILDREN OF KOBANÊ. AFTER KOBANÊ'S WAR, SHE WAS ELECTED HEAD OF THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT. SHE LOVES ORAL LITERATURE AND COLLECT DENGBEJ (STORYTELLERS) STORIES.

*How is the situation in Kobanê , in terms of security?*

Because the local protection forces and the security forces protect the city 24 hours a day and the people have also learnt how to protect themselves; and everyone now accepts it is their own responsibility for the protection and the security of the city in their own way

And since the combat zone between ourselves and the ISIS gangs has been extended, there is no gang in the surrounding area. In general, the security of Kobanê is very good. There are some attempts by the state of Turkey but as you also know, the Turks will not readily decide to take on Kobanê. It is generally good and the proof is that the people have begun to rebuild their own homes and everyone contributes to the rebuilding of Kobanê within their own means.

*As for schools, how much reconstruction work was done?*

Indeed, after the war in Kobanê all the

schools were destroyed. Out of 18 primary schools, we first started rebuilding 3 schools and then in 2016-2017 7 other schools were also rebuilt and the rest had been totally destroyed. After the war 3 schools were refurbished and opened and all the students had the opportunity of an education there. But later some other schools were also refurbished and opened and it became 12 schools. There are 6 schools now that need to be rebuilt from top to bottom because they were totally destroyed in the war.

*How many students are there?*

The number of students in the city of Kobanê is fifteen thousand (15,000). It should be noted that due to the lack of classrooms and the increase in the number of students, there are 35 to 40 students in each class. As you also know, according to basic education standards there should only be 12 to 15 students in a class. The number of the teachers in the city is 500. The villages of Kobanê are bigger





than the city center. The number of Kobanê's villages and the villages surrounding Kobanê is 660. But we weren't able to visit all these villages, because many of the schools there were burnt down and some of them were destroyed and it is going to take a long time to rebuild them; we have been able to visit around 400 villages and have opened some schools there with our own resources.

The number of students in Kobanê's villages is 28,662. The number of teachers is 1,412.

In total in Kobanê together with its villages, the number of students rises to 43,662; and the number of teachers rises to 1,912.

It is important to know that in Kobanê many schools now are in tents and barns. That is because during the Assad regime, there weren't schools in every village and in the autonomous administration processes there were no opportunities to build. If you would like to see photos of those schools, we can send them to you.

#### ***What are the most important needs of children?***

In fact, this is the most important question: everything is important for the children of Kobanê. For example, after the war and the return of the people to Kobanê, it has been two years since the Education Committee and the Education Board began to open schools. But they still could not provide all of the required needs of children. There are books but their numbers are very limited. Because there are no publishing houses available. But we can say that one of the most important things is to build the school.

Because the number of people and children are increasing and as I mentioned above, the existing schools are not enough for the number of children we have. On the other hand, the children's playground project took up a lot of our attention. If you are able to build a small playground for each school, or send us the tools, it would be very good.

As a result, there are many places where we need to build and open schools according to the city's municipality. And also there are schools which were destroyed during the war. Now when you decide to start the process, we can choose a place together.

***Culture, Language and Education are the main pillars of Democratic Autonomy. This makes this model so progressive and new, if we consider that culture in western democracies it is considered at best as a hobby (and often a very expensive one). And education suffers from cuts and shortages every year from State budgets. Why are culture and education are so important in the building of a new model of governance?***

Each people, community and nation exists within their own language and culture. They express this existence with their morals, their traditions, with memory, beliefs and etc. Language is an identity; it contains both the history and the remembrance of the social and national aspects of society. So each people and each nation have a different culture. They each have a different spirit and mind. What is left when the spirit and the mind of a man is taken from his possession? A body without a soul! Culture and language are also shaped by education and developed. Those who occupy Kurdistan always forbid education, culture and language as a whole and thus they wanted to destroy us. The basis of our philosophy includes accepting each other, strengthening each other, completing each other, raising, growing, developing and improving, not destroying.

***Related to this, can you tell us how is the education system working? Is there a ministry of education? Who elects the minister? How people and students participate to the building of a new education system?***

Our education system has been orga-

nized as a committee of the Democratic Society for Education (KPC-Democratic). The committee is supervised by the coordination of 13 people. It is also the coordination of the educational board at the same time and is organized by the co-chair of the education board. In this coordination, the representative of the teachers' union, the representative of the students' union, the representative of the school administrations, the representative of the institutions and the academies takes part. In school administrations, the representatives of the students and their parents take part. Coordination is administered by the teachers. One conference is organised once a year; and every 2 years the congress of the committee is organised. All the basic decisions regarding education policy are made at the conference and congress stages.

***The model of education you favour is one of multi-language and multiculturalism. How is the school system in different languages working?***

We have three official languages. Education has been prepared in each of the three languages. Each child studies until year 3 with his/her own mother tongue. In year 4, every child learns other languages, beside their mother tongue. In year 5, they also learn a foreign language.

***Kobanê became the living proof that resistance is not only possible but that it's winning as well. There was much international solidarity during the resistance, what about now? Is the international community keeping its word in terms of helping the reconstruction of the city?***

What you say is true. Unfortunately, we want to apologise but we still have say the following: everyone told us something and promised a lot, when they came to see the situation in Kobanê. Some people even went further with

their promises, but, ultimately, they did not keep their promises. Some organizations and activists helped as best they could, but that was not enough according to the situation and the needs of Kobanê.

***Any other thing you want to talk about?***

To understand the situation of the children of Kobanê, people should look at the children's education process. Until 19 July 2012, Kobanê's children were educated in the Arabic language under the Ba'ath system and speaking in Kurdish was forbidden. But after the 19 July revolution and the departure of the Ba'ath regime from Kobanê, the situation was changed slightly. But many difficulties have also emerged. A nation that has survived both cultural, spiritual and material genocide has been offered a historic opportunity to rebuild itself, to take responsibility for its own management, its defense and education. This, simultaneous with embargo and war, was very difficult. That's why the initial steps were taken giving priority to the military side because of the assault on the people's security. In this way, first steps for Kurdish language education were started in Kurdish language organisations and some small schools until 2014.

After 2014 the autonomous administration was established. Some of the new steps have taken place in the education system and the academy was opened for teachers to graduate and for teachers to go to Kobanê and educate children in the Kurdish language. But along with the opening of schools on the 15.09.2014, ISIS gangs attacked Kobanê and the people mostly went to northern Kurdistan and to Turkey; and the rest, who stayed in the city, became freedom fighters and fought. In this war, many people, who were high up in the field of education, were martyred; and all the institutions and civil organisations that were built were destroyed. And many cadres and social leaders left Kobanê and did not return

due to security and economic reasons.

Also, in the process of migration, many schools were opened at the tents of Pirsus camps (Suruc) and the children were educated there. After cleaning the gangs from Kobanê, life once again resumed in Kobanê and the institutions and organisations became active. In the field of education, schools which weren't damaged too much were opened. Currently, children in Kobanê have their education in their mother language from year 1 to Prep until year 12. And there are 5 institutions where teachers are being educated and prepared for the schools. There is a board of education who, together with the autonomous administration, organises education work. Also, there is the committee of education of democratic society together with the democratic society movement TEV-DEM. It organises management of schools and education field.

But lots of difficulties and obstacles occur during the reconstruction of Kobanê, both economic and technical. The promises of both governments and the human rights organizations to our people and the Kobanê administration must be kept if they want to support us. How much they support us, only that much of this city and its people will then return to a normal life and the children of this country will write of the resistance of Kobanê; and will show the world that how we fought against ISIS when everyone else failed to fight - only Kobanê fought on and fought for victory.

And for the sake of humanity this city sacrificed itself and its victory was won with the blood of its daughters and its sons. **to fight against ISIS as everyone failed to fight, only Kobanê won for the victory.**

And for the sake of humanity the city sacrificed itself and won the victory with the blood of its daughters and his sons.















# Women of Rojava:

## Meryem Kobanê - YPJ

DURING THE 1925 SHEIKH SAID AND 1938 DERSIM RESISTANCE MOVEMENTS AGAINST THE TURKISH REGIME, WOMEN ARMED THEMSELVES AND FOUGHT ALONGSIDE MEN. TELLİ XANIM, A GUERRILLA AND THE WIFE OF THE KURDISH GENERAL YADO, A COMMANDER OF THE 1925 SHEIKH SAID RESISTANCE, IS AN IDOL OF FEMALE KURDISH FIGHTERS TODAY. SIMILARLY, ZERÎFE XANIM, THE WIFE OF ELÎSÊR, A KURDISH POET AND POLITICIAN WHO COMMANDED THE 1938 DERSIM RESISTANCE, FOUGHT AND DIED ALONGSIDE HER HUSBAND. AMONG OTHER LEADING SYMBOLS OF KURDISH NATIONAL FEMALE HEROISM ARE MARGARET SHELO, WHO AT THE AGE OF 20 JOINED THE RANKS OF THE PESHMERGA IN THEIR FIGHT AGAINST THE IRAQI BA'ATH REGIME, AND LEYLA QASIM, A KURDISH FREEDOM FIGHTER WHO WAS HANGED BY THE IRAQI BA'ATH REGIME AT AGE 22 WHILE STUDYING AT BAGHDAD UNIVERSITY.

J.M. ARRUGAETA - O. CASAGRANDE

*We republish here an interview we made with Commander Meryem Kobanê in November 2014, two months into the battle to free the city under siege by ISIS militants.*

*As a female commander in the Kobanê battle, can you talk about the development process of the YPJ [Women's Protection Units] and its current role in the ongoing resistance?*

Women across the world and in countries claiming to have democracy are yet to be witnessed participating in the life who claim to have democracy are yet to be witnessed participating in the life of society of their own free will, while the dominant force, this male-dominant character has always

endeavoured to rule all areas of life in all eras.

When we look at the history of women, we see clearly that women in Latin America, in Vietnam and in many other regions all around the world have waged very important struggles up to date. However, we also see that women were left disempowered in all these struggles.

When the Rojava revolution materialized, we, as women, made a decision, on this basis, to form a separate organisation with the aim of enabling women to take their place in this revolution as a distinctive force in the Middle East. A founding committee with five members, including myself, thus founded



the YPJ [Women's Protection Units] in Rojava.

Visiting every single house and street, we organised women until we reached this point of being an army. The women's army YPJ now has a leading role in both the defence of Kobanê and across the entire Rojava territory.

I am taking part in this resistance not only as a Kurdish woman named Mery-

em Kobanê but as an African, Vietnamese, Latin American, European woman, they are all represented here.

I am here on behalf of all the women of the world, and I am a part of them

***Kobanê has been under siege for a month. Your resistance has shown the inactivity and falsity of those who say they are waging a war against ISIS. Can we repeat for those who seem to***

***have only 'a deaf ear' why and for what reason you are defending Kobanê?***

Those claiming to be fighting ISIS surrendered to the gangs in cities such as Deyra Zor and Mosul, which could resist for only one night. Kobanê is no larger than a neighbourhood in Mosul. Deyra Zor, Minbic, Raqqa and Jarablus, all cities in Syria, were taken by ISIS from the FSA [Free Syrian Army] in only one day. As a matter of fact, Kobanê had been anticipated to fall within a week but it is now resisting for nearly one month and a half and the ISIS gangs are unable to capture Kobanê, despite having both technical superiority and superior numbers. They advanced on Kobanê with 40 tanks and with reinforcements they had seized from the Syrian regime and in Mosul.

I had identified Kobanê with Stalingrad when the battle first began here, as we have been defending Kobanê by putting up a resistance similar to that in Stalingrad for 40 days now. Kobanê is not fighting for itself alone. Kobanê is fighting terrorism in the name of humanity. Kobanê is fighting against a mindset that disregards a woman's identity and perpetrates savagery against women. We are actually fighting in the name of humanity against a mindset that recognises no religions, no races, no languages. We have lost our most prominent commanders in this fighting. We have lost our comrades and many brave young women.

The defence of Kobanê stands in this regard as the defence of humanity and the defence of Kurdistan, the Kurdish people's nation.

***In the YPG there are mainly Kurds, but also members of other communities and religions. How are relations between the different communities in the daily struggle?***

There is no difference between the fighters of the YPG and YPJ who are all engaged in a struggle for a democratic Syria and Middle East. In our ranks, we have fighters from all communities and all religious groups. Our fighters establish relationships with each other based on a democratic philosophy. We respect each other's language, culture and faith. In any case all the fighters here are involved in the struggle to protect diversity and for gender liberation. Because of this, differences do not result in any negative attitudes.

***Men and women fighting together. Another "strange" thing for those, especially in the West who think Kurdistan is a reactionary society and also for ISIS. How do you organise yourselves?***

As a matter of fact, we faced many difficulties. At the start the men expressed a lack of confidence in women, with some voicing concerns over "how can women ever hold positions and fight?". Women, however, demonstrated great self-sacrifice in this process. They used their last bullet on themselves in order



## Women fighters have not only waged a war against ISIS, they have also resisted to the male-dominant mindset inside ourselves, and have demolished taboos

not to give up their positions, they placed bombs on their bodies and blew themselves up among the ISIS gangs. They used heavy weaponry in battle which I can now say is being led by women. The two major commanders of this battle are female. A number of new fighters greatly impressed by this determined resistance have now joined our ranks where the male fighters have started to serve under the command of female fighters.

In this regard, women fighters have not only waged a fight against ISIS, they have also put up a resistance to the male-dominant mindset inside ourselves, and have thus broken through many taboos. The resistance in Kobanê is now being led by women, who, whilst fighting the ISIS gangs, are also demolishing male-dominant values and enabling a libertarian mindset as regards women attain its place in society.

***There is a lot of news about you lacking weapons, food and reinforcements. What do you really need to defeat ISIS?***

The world may not believe the brave resistance we are mounting now but we will tell the story of this resistance to the whole world if we manage to stay alive. We are doubtlessly in need of many things

as we are using kalashnikov rifles against tanks and heavy weapons. We need the world's support as we definitely need to be provided with military aid in order to respond to and resist the technical superiority of the ISIS gangs. We need ammunition and moral support. ISIS have detonated 14 car-bombs during the fighting in Kobanê. They possess heavy weapons. All we need in order to defeat ISIS is adequate armaments and the opening of a corridor into the city.

***Damascus, Hewler (Erbil), Washington, Brussels are showing some "admiration" for your resistance but in reality are doing nothing to help while you fight street to street, house to house. They don't trust Kurds who claim their autonomy. Do you feel Kobanê could be the open door to Kurdistan (and the Middle East)?***

It's not sufficient to just admire the resistance we are putting up or to just send supplies. This resistance will be told in books perhaps but this is not enough though. Everyone should participate and join the ranks of this resistance.

Kobanê is not a television item nor an ordinary story. Kobanê is an epic. While our fighters are challenging death here, fight-



ing and dying for humanity, the powers that be who are admiring the resistance are not providing us with any sort of assistance. We want autonomy for all peoples.

To us, this is the way leading to the liberation of all peoples and a glimmer of freedom for all of the oppressed in the Middle East.

***For the Turkish state you are a much bigger threat and danger than any ISIS. Why this "hatred" against Kurds?***

The Turkish state is closely related with ISIS despite the fact that the repression we are facing today may also constitute a critical threat to our neighbour Turkey tomorrow. In all phases of our history, Kurds have stood by Turks and helped them whenever they went

through a tough situation. Today, we have difficulty in understanding the Turkish state's attitude towards the Rojava cantons and our identity.

Turkey is taking a side not alongside but against us. We want the Turkish state to abandon its hostile attitude towards us. The reason for this hatred against Kurds is the fact that the Kurds are the only power standing against the authoritarian mindset and structure of the Turkish state and demanding democracy.

***The Democratic Autonomy project is seen as dangerous by many including in the West. Why?***

We also have difficulty in understanding why the self-governance of a peo-

## “The Confederation of Women Associations in Rojava, Kongra Star, organises various activities and works with women in the reconstruction of the city

ple is considered to be so dangerous. While there are already similar models in Switzerland and other European countries, you must ask them why they see our model as dangerous.

### ***How many people have died in Kobanê? Both armed and civilians?***

There are no accurate verified figures available. We have lost many of our fighters in this enormous battle which we are waging openly and transparently, not hiding any information from the public. Figures, as far as can be ascertained, are already being shared with the public regularly.

### ***The resistance of Kobanê has already changed the balance of the region. How would it affect the process of dialogue in Turkey? And the relations with the Kurdistan Regional Government? (especially after Sinjar)***

After Sinjar, our relations with the South reached the point of further co-operation. Our resistance in Kobanê might have an impact on the Turkish state's approach towards us. However we don't know yet what kind of an influence it could have on the process of dialogue. The Turkish state might adopt a much more aggressive attitude in the face of the Kobanê resistance. In this regard, we will need to see what steps need to be implemented in line with

developments in the coming days. The impact Kobanê will make on the Middle East will be similar to that made by Stalingrad on the balance of power in the world. This resistance has brought status to the Kurdish people. We could even say that it has made room for the Kurdish people in the new world.

### ***Did you have any contact with the so called "Syrian opposition" at political level? And with the government of Bashar al Assad?***

We have no relations with the Syrian regime. As to the opposition, we are fighting in an alliance with the Burkan Al Firat unit we established together with a part of the FSA. We have no other relations or alliances.



## WOMEN AND RECONSTRUCTION

The Confederation of the women associations of Rojava Kongra Star, organise various activities and work with the women in the reconstruction of the city.

They say there is an urgent need for a sheltering house for women victims of domestic violence, a very sensitive issue the Association SARA deals with.

Kongra Star has a new office with an active archive, a help center, press office, canteen and conference hall.

A public space in the city centre has been renamed Women's Park and the association take care of it. In the park there is a restaurant, managed by a women cooperative and food is sold to people.

The Women Confederation also managed to build a sewing and textile center, also run as a cooperative. The wom-

en said there are many difficulties, especially when it comes to obtain material.

Kongra Star has asked the Committee for The Reconstruction of Kobanê to help them in establishing a training Academy for women.

In the meantime, the Women's House, a three-story building, is used also as training centre and presents projects of alternative economy. The house is being built thanks to the support provided by the Province of Bolzano (Italy), the Valdese Church and the Council of Durango in the Basque Country.



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# Notes on the War in Syria and the Revolution in Rojava

THE FIRST SYRIAN PROTESTS WERE HELD IN FEBRUARY 2011 IN SEVERAL CITIES, BUT THEY WERE SMALL AND HAD LIMITED IMPACT. THEN IN MID-MARCH IN DARA'A, IN THE SOUTH, TWO YOUTHS HAD ALLEGEDLY SPRAYED SLOGANS ON A WALL. SYRIAN POLICE ARRESTED THEM, AND SOME SOURCES REPORT THAT WHILE IN CUSTODY, ONE YOUTH WAS FATALLY TORTURED. STRONG PROTESTS AND DEMONSTRATIONS BROKE OUT, DEMANDING NOT ONLY THE RELEASE OF THE YOUTHS BUT ALSO POLITICAL REFORM AND AN END TO CORRUPTION.

Police attacked the demonstrators, opening fire and killing several. The next day's funeral was accompanied by an even larger demonstration, and protests then spread to other parts of the country.

The regime tried to calm the situation, but the protest wave could not be contained. People from all strata of Syrian society, even from within the Ba'ath Party, took to the streets to express their outrage at what had occurred in Dara'a. The shootings by the security forces finally drove people in most Syrian towns to armed revolt.

In late 2010 and early 2011, popular uprisings challenged the ruling dictatorships in Tunisia and Egypt, as opposition groups campaigned for a democratic transformation.

Their actions inspired opposition groups in neighboring countries, opening the

door for change across the region, in what became known as the "Arab Spring."

In the spring of 2011, the protesters won several concessions. In June, the state of emergency that had been in place since 1963 was ended. And in April, a Syrian ministry announced that the stateless Kurds would finally receive Syrian citizenship, and the next month they were told they had the right to work. But this policy affected only those who were registered as "foreigners," the *ajanib*. The "hidden," the unregistered *maktoumeen*, would not. Many Kurdish activists interpreted this sudden concession as an attempt to induce Kurds to support the regime.

## KURDS AND THE THREE-STAGE STRATEGY

Throughout the conflict in Syria, the Kurds have both continued their resistance to the regime and also refrained from get-



ting involved in the dirty war. During this period, they have tried to develop their own independent politics, and on 19 July 2012, the people of Western Kurdistan implemented a 'revolution within a revolution' and took control of the cities they were living in.

The Kurdish movement devised and followed a three-stage strategy where they began by capturing villages and the outskirts of cities, then took over civil-service and state-owned institutions and finally aimed to capture all of the cities.

On July 18 in Damascus, Syria, an explosion took place at the building where the Government held most of its effective crisis management meetings, consequently killing the majority of those associated. On the evening of July 19th the Free Syrian army seized control of the cities of Minbic and Cerablus located between Kobane and Aleppo. These developments gave rise to an opportunity and obligation for the Kurdish movement to implement the third part of their strategy.

There was a popular uprising on July 19 against regime forces where they were overthrown in the cities of Kobane, Efrin, Serekaniye, Dirbesiye, Amude, Derik, Girke Lege, followed by Tirbespiye and Tiltemir. In addition, within 2-3 months regime forces were ousted from the Kurdish neighbourhoods of Aleppo, Rakka and Heseke. In the meantime in Qamislo, the biggest city in the region, even though regime forces haven't been overthrown completely,

the people have taken control of the city apart from a few public buildings. Kurds have also developed their resistance to an advanced stage by integrating other ethnicities and religions, constructing associations and institutions of defence, politics, justice, the cultural, social and economic fields, women's justice and other walks of life. In other words, the movement is slowly building the foundation of the system they regard as 'democratic autonomy.'

#### ESTABLISHMENT OF THE KURDISH SUPREME COUNCIL

All these developments strengthened the search for unity between different political formations in Western Kurdistan. After several discussions in this direction, more concrete developments occurred in July. The region's largest social and political power, the 'People's Assembly of Western Kurdistan' (MGRK), which PYD is also a part of along with 16 Kurdish parties built the Syrian Kurdish National Assembly (ENKS).

They came together in the City of Hewler (Erbil) under the leadership of the local Government (KRG). As a result of this meeting, both assemblies came to a decision 24 July 2012 to act together, and also declared the establishment of the Kurdish Supreme Council. As a result of these developments, masses of people in all the cities of Western Kurdistan came to the streets to assert that the Supreme Council of Kurds was their legitimate voice and that they would support its decisions. In this era of the Su-



preme Council, work was carried out within three committees which were the "Diplomacy Committee", "Social Services Committee," and "Defence Committee."

#### DIPLOMATIC VICTORY

Whilst these interior developments echoed in the regional and international arena, the special representative of the Arab League, El Exder Ibrahim and representatives from the United Nations (UN) met with high officials of the Kurdish Council. In addition, council members were also invited to various European countries and were given the opportunity to consult officials and express themselves to the public.

The most important development in the field of diplomacy took place in 2013. In May, the Kurdish Council invited Russian representatives and as a result of the negotiations, agreed to a proposal to participate in the second international meeting of Syrian opposition forces in Geneva. For the first time Kurds, whose existence was questioned in the past, were now recognised to join an international platform.

As a result, Turkey who continually tried to suppress the resistance and

gains of the Kurds in Rojava decided to formally invite the co- chair of the PYD Mr Salih Muslum to Turkey for a meeting. On 10 August 2013 Salih Muslum visited the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran, Tehran, as a formal guest to hold official talks.

#### PUBLIC DEFENCE FORCES –YPG AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

Amid these developments in politics and diplomacy, the YPG (People's Defence Forces), created to protect the gains of the Kurds, organized at Brigade and Battalion level in Western Kurdistan and various Syrian cities such as Aleppo and Heseke.

The YPG, who play a significant role in the defence of the region, showed great resistance with thousands of its fighters against both the regime and foreign backed armed groups in Aleppo, Afrin, Serekaniye, Amude and Haseki.

The YPG lost dozens of its fighters during this struggle and showed commitment to protect all people of the region without distinction. With this stance all people of the area have embraced the YPG as a national defence force for the entire region.

An important pillar of autonomy is its systems defence, and as such, a law enforcement organisation was built.

These legal institutions of law were first put into operation in Kobane and then in turns spread to all Kurdish cities and the Syrian city of Haseki. Academies were established in Cizre, Afrin and Kobane where law enforcement officers were trained and sent out to enforce their responsibilities in the fields of family issues, theft, extortion, kidnapping, murder and so on. They have so far developed solutions for most problems.

In the meantime, Assyrian, Syriac, Arabic, Chechen, Chaldean and Armenian communities cautiously approached this new system to begin with. However after observing the practical approach and seeing the positive results, the public began to take part in the assemblies and in the defence forces.

Especially in the People's Assembly for the city of Tiltemir, it is remarkable to see the representation of all ethnic groups. Again, members of the sixth battalion of Tiltemir named "martyr of Meter Ebd El-Henan Meter" consists mainly of Arabs from the tribes of Serabi and Siyad.

There are also people from Arab villages and tribes resisting along with Kurds in Girk Lege and fighting against Al Nusra in Cerablus.

*[Information compiled from the Dossier on Rojava published by the PYD.]*

# The Autonomous

## Kobanê Canton

In Arabic, Ayn Al-Arab. is economically significant for grain cultivation. The Euphrates, which provides most of Syria's water, marks the canton's western boundary; its waters reach their highest levels in April and May, after the North Kurdistan snowmelt. Due to its border location and its rich freshwater resources, Kobanê canton is of great strategic importance.

Its capital, Kobanê city, was founded in 1892 as a company town during the construction of the Berlin-Baghdad Railway. The name Kobanê is thought to be a corruption of the German word *Kompanie* (company).

While Kobanê was under Syrian occupation, it had an Arabic name, Ayn Al-Arab, which means "spring" or "eye of the Arabs."

Kurdish *asîret* (clans) long lived in the Kobanê region. Many of them were nomadic.<sup>15</sup> During the twentieth century, Kurdish refugees fleeing persecution in Turkey made Kobanê their home. Turkmens also live in Kobanê, and Armenian refugees settled here as well, fleeing persecution by the Ottoman Empire, but most left in the 1960s for Aleppo or Armenia.

At the time of the 2011 Syrian uprising, an estimated 200,000 people lived in Kobanê region.

During the Syrian civil war, the massive migrations within Syria expanded the population of the Canton to around 400,000.

On July 19, 2012, Kobanê city was the first in Rojava to expel the Ba'ath regime. Kobanê canton declared autonomy on January 27, 2014.

# Region of Rojava

## Cizîrê Canton

in Arabic Jazirat Ibn 'Umar, and in Aramaic, Canton Gozarto, situated about 30 miles (48 kilometers) east of Kobanê canton, is the largest of the three cantons, stretching 174 miles (280 kilometers) along the Turkish border."

Cizîrê is dotted with 1,717 villages, of which 1,161 are predominantly Arab—the Ba'ath regime settled Arabs here during the 1960s [see 2.2], and Arabs now make up 54 percent of the population. Kurds make up 42 percent of the population, and 453 villages are predominantly Kurdish.

Fifty villages are mainly populated by Syriacs, who are 2.9 percent of Cizîrê's population.

Forty-eight villages are inhabited equally by Arabs and Kurds, while three have

equal populations of Arabs and Syriacs, and two, Syriacs and Kurds.<sup>2</sup>

## Qamislo District

The Qamislo district includes the city of Qamislo and the towns of Til Hemîs (in Arabic, Tall Hemis), Amûdê (in Arabic, Amuda), and Tirbêspî. The French Army established Qamislo city in 1926 to serve as an administrative center and military garrison; it also served as a home for Christian refugees from Turkey, and many Syriacs still live there today. The Syrian-Turkish border divides the city—the part located on the Turkish side is called Nisêbîn.

In 2004, Qamislo city had 184,231 inhabitants; together with its 557 surrounding villages, Qamislo district had 423,368 inhabitants.<sup>22</sup> Due to the many refugees,





Three cantons conform Rojava: all languages, cultures and traditions have the same importance

these numbers are larger now—in April 2013, some 800,000 people lived in the city and its surroundings.

#### Serêkaniyê District

The city of Serêkaniyê (Kurdish for “At the Source”; in Arabic, Ra’s al-Ain; in Syriac, Res Ayna) was established in 2000 BCE, it is said, under the Mitanni empire. It too is divided by the border: the northern part (today Ceylanpınar) is occupied by Turkey.

The Serêkaniyê district is home to Kurds, Arabs, Syriacs, and Chechens. In 2010, its population was estimated at 55,000; the current population is unknown. Kurds and Arabs are approxi-

mately equal in number. The district’s 279 villages are mostly Arabic, and a smaller number are Kurdish; there are also Syriac and some Ezidi villages. From January until July 2013, Islamists of Jabhat Al-Nusra as well as FSA units occupied Serêkaniyê

#### Hesekê District

Hesekê, settled by Syriacs fleeing the Ottoman Empire, was established in the 1920s and 1930s by the French Mandate. In 2011, the city’s estimated population was 188,000. Among the 595 villages in the region are a number of Syriac villages. The Hesekê district includes the cities of Temir, Hol, and Al-Shaddadî.

#### Dêrîk District

is a city of 75,000 in the northeast, near the borders with Turkey and Iraq. In 2004, about 189,634 people were living there.

The majority of Dêrîk’s inhabitants are Kurds, followed by Syriacs, Armenians, and a few Arabs. Other cities in the Dêrîk district are Girkê Legê, Çil Axa, and Til Koçer.

Cizîrê Canton declared the Autonomous Administration on 21 January 2014, electing a Legislative Assembly from the 4 ethnic communities of the territory.

#### Afrîn Canton

In Arabic, Afrin, the westernmost canton, is bounded by the Turkish provinces to the north (Kilis) and west (Hatay) and is made up of 8 cities and 366 villages.

Afrîn, the capital developed in what was an important junction of trade routes. Before the war the canton had some 400,000 citizens.

Many refugees from Aleppo immigrated to Afrîn, boosting the population to 1.2 million.

The canton declared Democratic Autonomy on January 29, 2014.













# Social Contract of Rojava

ON 6 JANUARY 2014 THE DEMOCRATIC AUTONOMOUS ADMINISTRATION OF ROJAVA MET IN CITY OF AMÛDÊ AND APPROVED THE SOCIAL CONTRACT OF ROJAVA PUBLISHED BELOW.

## Preamble

We, the people of the Democratic Autonomous Regions of Afrin, Jazira and Kobane, a confederation of Kurds, Arabs, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Arameans, Turkmen, Armenians and Chechens, freely and solemnly declare and establish this Charter, which has been drafted according to the principles of Democratic Autonomy.

In pursuit of freedom, justice, dignity and democracy and led by principles of equality and environmental sustainability, the Charter proclaims a new social contract, based upon mutual and peaceful coexistence and understanding between all strands of society. It protects fundamental human rights and liberties and reaffirms the peoples' right to self-determination.

Under the Charter, we, the people of the Autonomous Regions, unite in the spirit of reconciliation, pluralism and democratic participation so that all may express themselves freely in

public life. In building a society free from authoritarianism, militarism, centralism and the intervention of religious authority in public affairs, the Charter recognizes Syria's territorial integrity and aspires to maintain domestic and international peace.

In establishing this Charter, we declare a political system and civil administration founded upon a social contract that reconciles the rich mosaic of Syria through a transitional phase from dictatorship, civil war and destruction, to a new democratic society where civic life and social justice are preserved.

## I General principles

### Article 1

The Charter of the Autonomous Regions of Afrin, Jazira, and Kobane, [hereinafter "the Charter"], is a renewed social contract between the peoples of the Autonomous Regions. The Preamble is an integral part of the Charter.

### Article 2

a- Authority resides with and emanates from the people of the Autonomous Regions. It is exercised by governing councils and public institutions elected by popular vote.

b- The people constitute the sole source of legitimacy all governing councils and public institutions, which are founded on democratic principles essential to a free society.

### Article 3

a - Syria is a free, sovereign and democratic state, governed by a parliamentary system based on principles of decentralization and pluralism.

b - The Autonomous Regions is composed of the three cantons of Afrin, Jazirah and Kobane, forming an integral part of the Syrian territory. The administrative centres of each Canton are:

Afrin city, Canton of Afrin; Qamishli city, Canton of Jazira; Kobane city, Canton of Kobane.

c - The Canton of Jazirah is ethnically and religiously diverse, with Kurdish, Arab, Syriac, Chechen, Armenian, Muslim, Christian and Yazidi communities peacefully co-existing in brotherhood. The elected Legislative Assembly represents all three Cantons of the Autonomous Regions.

## The Structure of governance in the Autonomous Regions

### Article 4

1- Legislative Assembly  
2 - Executive Councils  
3 - High Commission of Elections  
4 - Supreme Constitutional Courts  
5 - Municipal/Provincial Councils

### Article 5

The administrative centres of each Canton are: Qamishli city, Canton of Jazira; Afrin city, Canton of Afrin; Kobane city, Canton of Kobane.

### Article 6

All persons and communities are equal in the eyes of the law and in rights and responsibilities.

### Article 7

All cities, towns and villages in Syria which accede to this Charter may form Cantons falling within Autonomous Regions.

### Article 8

All Cantons in the Autonomous Regions are founded upon the principle of local self-government. Cantons may freely elect their representatives and representative bodies, and may pursue their rights insofar as it does not contravene the articles of the Charter.

### Article 9

The official languages of the Canton of Jazirah are Kurdish, Arabic and Syriac. All communities have the right to teach and be taught in their native language.

### Article 10

The Autonomous Regions shall not interfere in the domestic affairs of other countries, and it shall safeguard its relations with neighboring states, resolving any conflicts peacefully.

### Article 11

The Autonomous Regions have the right to be represented by their own flag, emblems and anthem. Such symbols shall be defined in a law.

### Article 12

The Autonomous Regions form an integral part of Syria. It is a model for a future decentralized system of federal governance in Syria.

### Artículo 13

## II Basic Principles

**Article 13**

There shall be a separation of powers between the legislature, executive and judiciary.

**Article 14**

The Autonomous Regions shall seek to implement a framework of transitional justice measures. It shall take steps to redress the legacy of chauvinistic and discriminatory State policies, including the payment of reparations to victims, both individuals and communities, in the Autonomous Regions.

**Article 15**

The People's Protection Units (YPG) is the sole military force of the three Cantons, with the mandate to protect and defend the security of the Autonomous Regions and its peoples, against both internal and external threats. The People's Protection Units act in accordance with the recognized inherent right to self-defense. Power of command in

respect of the People's Protection Units is vested in the Body of Defense through its Central Command. Its relation to the armed forces of the central Government shall be defined by the Legislative Assembly in a special law.

The Asayish forces are charged with civil policing functions in the Autonomous Regions.

**Article 16**

If a court or any other public body considers that a provision conflicts with a provision of a fundamental law or with a provision of any other superior statute, or that the procedure prescribed was set aside in any important respect when the provision was introduced, the provision shall be nullified.

**Article 17**

The Charter guarantees the rights of the youth to participate actively in public and political life.

**Article 18**

Unlawful acts and omissions and the appropriate penalties are defined by criminal and civil law.

**Article 19**

The system of taxation and other fiscal regulations are defined by law.

**Article 20**

The Charter holds as inviolable the fundamental rights and freedoms set out in international human rights treaties, conventions and declarations.

**III Rights and Liberties****Article 21**

The Charter incorporates the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, as well as other internationally recognized human rights conventions.

**Article 22**

All international rights and responsibilities pertaining civil, political, cultural, social and economical rights are guaranteed.

**Article 23**

a - Everyone has the right to express their ethnic, cultural, linguistic and gender rights b - Everyone has the right to live in a healthy environment, based on ecology balance.

**Article 24**

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; including freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

Freedom of expression and freedom of information may be restricted having regard to the security of the Autonomous Regions, public safety and order, the integrity of the indi-

vidual, the sanctity of private life, or the prevention and prosecution of crime.

**Article 25**

a- Everyone has the right to liberty and security of person.

b- All persons deprived of their liberty shall be treated with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person. No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

c- Prisoners have the right to humane conditions of detention, which protect their inherent dignity. Prisons shall serve the underlying objective of the reformation, education and social rehabilitation of prisoners.

**Article 26**

Every human being has the inherent right to life. No one within the jurisdiction of the Autonomous Regions shall be executed.

**Article 27**

Women have the inviolable right to participate in political, social, economic and cultural life.

**Article 28**

Men and women are equal in the eyes of the law. The Charter guarantees the effective realization of equality of women and mandates public institutions to work towards the elimination of gender discrimination.

**Article 29**

The Charter guarantees the rights of the child. In particular children shall not suffer economic exploitation, child labour, torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, and shall not be married before attaining the age of majority.

**Article 30**

All persons have the right  
1. to personal security in a peaceful and stable society.



2. to free and compulsory primary and secondary education.
3. to work, social security, health, adequate housing.
4. to protect the motherhood and maternal and pediatric care.
5. to adequate health and social care for the disabled, the elderly and those with special needs.

**Article 31**

Everyone has the right to freedom of worship, to practice one's own religion either individually or in association with others. No one shall be subjected to persecution on the grounds of their religious beliefs.

**Article 32**

a)- Everyone has the right to freedom of association with others, including the right to establish and freely join any political party, association, trade union and/or civil assembly.

b)- In exercising the right to freedom of association, political, economic and cultural expression of all communities is protected. This serves to protect the rich and diverse heritage of the peoples of the Autonomous Regions.

c)- The Yezidi religion is a recognized religion and its adherents' rights to freedom of association and expression is explicitly protected. The protection of Yezidi religious, social and cultural life may be guaranteed through the passage of laws by the Legislative Assembly.

**Article 33**

Everyone has the freedom to obtain, receive and circulate information and to communicate ideas, opinions and emotions, whether orally, in writing, in pictorial representations, or in any other way.

**Article 34**

Everyone has the right of peace-

ful assembly, including the right to peaceful protect, demonstration and strike.

**Article 35**

Everyone has the right to freely experience and contribute to academic, scientific, artistic and cultural expressions and creations, through individual or joint practice, to have access to and enjoy, and to disseminate their expressions and creations.

**Article 36**

Everyone has the right to vote and to run for public office, as circumscribed by law.

**Article 37**

Everyone has the right to seek political asylum. Persons may only be deported following a decision of a competent, impartial and properly constituted judicial body, where all due process rights have been afforded.

**Article 38**

All persons are equal before the law and are entitled to equal opportunities in public and professional life.

**Article 39**

Natural resources, located both above and below ground, are the public wealth of society. Extractive processes, management, licensing and other contractual agreements related to such resources shall be regulated by law.

**Article 40**

All buildings and land in the Autonomous Regions are owned by the Transitional Administration are public property. The use and distribution shall be determined by law.

**Article 41**

Everyone has the right to the use and

enjoyment of his private property. No one shall be deprived of his property except upon payment of just compensation, for reasons of public utility or social interest, and in the cases and according to the forms established by law.

**Article 42**

The economical system in the provinces shall be directed at providing general welfare and in particular granting funding to science and technology. It shall be aimed at guaranteeing the daily needs of people and to ensure a dignified life. Monopoly is prohibited by law. Labor rights and sustainable development are guaranteed.

**Article 43**

Everyone has the right to liberty of movement and freedom to choose his residence within the Autonomous Regions.

**Article 44**

The enumeration of the rights and freedoms set forth in Section III is non-exhaustive. The Democratic Self-rule Administration Project IV Legislative Assembly

**Article 45**

The Legislative Assembly in the Autonomous Region, is elected by the people by direct, secret ballot, and the duration of the course is four (4) years.

**Article 46**

The first meeting of the Legislative Assembly shall be held no later than the 16th day following the announcement of the final results of elections in all Autonomous Regions. Such results will be certified and announced by the Higher Commission of Elections.

The President of the Transitional Executive Council will convene the first

meeting of the Legislative Assembly. If compelling reasons dictate that its first meeting cannot be so held, the President of the Transitional Executive Council will determine another date to be held within fifteen days. Quorum is met by fifty + one (50+1%) percent attendants of the total. The oldest member of the Legislative Assembly will chair its first meeting at which the Co- Presidents and Executive Council will be elected.

The sessions of the Legislative Assembly are public unless necessity demands otherwise. The movement of the Legislative Assembly into closed session is governed by its rules of procedure.

**Article 47**

There shall be one member of the Supreme Legislature Council per fifteen thousand (15,000) registered voters residing within the Autonomous Region. The Legislative Assembly must be composed of at least forty per cent (40%) of either sex according to the electoral laws. The representation of the Syriac community, as well as youth representation in the election lists, is governed by electoral laws.

**Article 48**

1- No member of the Legislative Assembly may run for more than two consecutive terms.

2 – The term of the Legislative Assembly may be extended in exceptional cases at the request of one quarter (1/4) of its members or at the request of the Office of the President of the Council, with the consent of two-thirds (2/3) of the members of the Council. Such extension shall be for no longer than six (6) months.

**Article 49**

Every person who has reached the age of eighteen (18) years is eligible to vote. Candidates for the Legisla-

tive Assembly must have attained the age of twenty-two (22) years. Conditions for candidacy and election are stipulated by electoral law.

#### Article 50

Members of the Legislative Assembly enjoy immunity in respect of acts and omissions carried out in the function of official duties. Any prosecutions require the authorization of the Legislative Assembly, with the exception of flagrante crime. At the earliest opportunity, the Office of the President of the Council shall be informed of all pending prosecutions.

#### Article 51

No member, during his term of office, is permitted any public, private, or other profession. Such employment is suspended once he makes the constitutional oath. He has the right to return to his job, with all its rights and benefits, once his membership ends.

#### Article 52

Local Councils in each province of the Autonomous Regional shall be formed through direct elections.

#### Article 53

The functions of the Legislative Assembly are to:

- Establish rules and procedures governing the work of the Legislative Assembly.
- Enact legislation and proposed regulations for the Local Councils and other institutions, including permanent and ad hoc committees, under its purview.
- Exercise control over administrative and executive bodies, including use of powers of review.
- Ratification of international treaties and agreements.
- Delegate its powers to the Executive Council or to one of its members and thereafter to withdraw such powers.
- Declare a State of war and peace.

- Ratify the appointment of members of the Supreme Constitutional Court.
- Adopt the general budget.

- Establish general policy and development plans.

- Approve and grant amnesty.

- Adopt decrees promulgated by the Executive Council; and

- Adopt laws for the common governance of the Provincial Councils of the Autonomous Regions.

#### Part V Executive Council

##### Article 54

##### Canton Governor

A- The Canton Governor, together with the Executive Council of the Autonomous Regions, hold executive authority as set forth in this Charter.

B- The candidate to the post of Canton Governor must.

- 1- Be over thirty-five years of age;
- 2- Be a Syrian citizen and a resident of the canton; and
- 3- Have no convictions or cautions.

C- The procedure governing the candidacy and election of Canton Governor:

1- Within 30 days of the first session of the Legislative Assembly, its President must call for the election of the Canton Governors.

2- Requests to nominate candidates for the position of Canton Governor must be made, in writing, to the Supreme Court which shall examine and accept or reject not later than ten (10) days after the close of nominations.

3- The Legislative Assembly shall elect the Canton Governor by a simple majority.

4- If no candidate receives the required simple majority, a second electoral round is initiated, with the candidate receiving the highest number of votes, being elected.

5- The term of Canton Governor is four (4) years from the date of the taking of the Oath of Office;

6- The Canton Governor makes the

Oath of Office before the Legislative Assembly before commencing official duties.

7- The Canton Governor appointed one or more Deputies, approved by the Legislative Assembly.

The Deputies take an Oath of Office before the Canton Governor, after which specified functions may be delegated to them.

8- Should the Canton Governor be unable to fulfill his official functions, one of his Deputies shall replace him. Where the Canton Governor and the Deputies are unable to fulfill their duties for any reason, the tasks of the Canton Governor will be carried out by the President of the Legislative Assembly; and

9- The Governor must address any letter of resignation to the Legislative Assembly.

D- The powers and functions of the Canton Governor:

1- The Canton Governor shall ensure respect for the Charter and the protection of the national unity and sovereignty, and at all times performing his functions to the best of ability and conscience.

2- The Canton Governor shall appoint the President of the Executive Council.

3- The Canton Governor shall implement laws passed by the Legislative Assembly, and issue decisions, orders and decrees in accordance with those laws.

4- The Canton Governor must invite the newly elected Legislative Assembly to convene within fifteen (15) days from the announcement of the election results;

5- The Canton Governor may grant medals.

6- The Canton Governor may issue amnesties as recommended by the President of the Executive Council.

E- The Canton Governor is responsible to the people through his representatives in the Legislative Assembly. The Legislative Assembly has the right to bring him before the Supreme Constitutional Court for charges of treason and other forms of sedition.

#### The Executive Council:

The Executive Council is the highest executive and administrative body in the Autonomous Regions. It is responsible for the implementation of laws, resolutions and decrees as issued by the Legislative Assembly and judicial institutions. It shall coordinate the institutions of the Autonomous Regions.

#### Article 55

The Executive Council is composed of a Chairman, representatives and committees.

#### Article 56

The party or bloc winning a majority of seats in the Legislative Assembly shall form the Executive Council within one month from the date of assignment, with the approval of the simple majority (51%) of the members of the Legislative Assembly.

#### Article 57

The Head of the Executive Council shall not serve more than two consecutive terms, each term being four (4) years in length.

#### Article 58

The Head of the Executive Council may choose advisers amongst the newly elected members of the Legislative Council.



**Article 59**  
Each adviser shall be responsible for one of the bodies within the Executive Council.

**Article 60**  
The work of the Executive Council, including the Departments, and their relation to other institutions/committees is regulated by law.

**Article 61**  
After the formation and approval of the Executive Council, it shall issue its prospective Programme for Government. Following its passage through the Legislative Assembly, the Executive Council is obliged to implement the Programme of Government during that legislative term.

**Article 62**  
Senior civil servants and Department representatives shall be nominated by the Executive Council and approved by the Legislative Council. Provincial Administrative Councils [Municipal Councils]:

1- The Cantons of the Autonomous Regions are composed of Provincial Administrative Councils [Municipal Councils] and are managed by the relevant Executive Council which retains the power to amend its functions and regulations;

2- The powers and duties of the Provincial Administrative Councils [Municipal Councils] are founded upon an adherence to a policy of decentralization. The Canton's supervision of the Provincial Administrative Councils' [Municipal Councils'] authority, including its budget and finance, public services and mayoral elections are regulated by law.

3- Provincial Administrative Councils [Municipal Councils] are directly elected by the public, using secret ballot.

## Part VI The Judicial Council:

### Article 63

The independence of the Judiciary is founding principle of the rule of law, which ensures a just and effective disposition of cases by the competent and impartial courts.

### Article 64

Everyone charged with a criminal offence shall be presumed innocent until and unless proved guilty by a competent and impartial court.

### Article 65

All institutions of the Judicial Council must be composed of at least forty per cent (40%) of either sex.

### Article 66

The right to defense is sacred and inviolable at all stages of an investigation and trial.

### Article 67

The removal of a Judge from office requires a decision from the Judicial Council.

### Article 68

Judgments and judicial decisions are issued on behalf of the people.

### Article 69

Failure to implement judicial decisions and orders is a violation of law.

### Article 70

No civilian shall stand trial before any military court or special or ad hoc tribunals.

### Article 71

Searches of houses and other private property must be done in accordance with a properly executed warrant, issued by a judicial authority.

### Article 72

Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal,

in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him.

### Article 73

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention. No one shall be deprived of his liberty except on such grounds and in accordance with such procedure as are established by law.

### Article 74

Anyone who has been the victim of unlawful arrest or detention or otherwise suffered damage or harm as a result of the acts and omissions of public authorities has an enforceable right to compensation.

### Article 75

The Judicial Council is established by law.

## VII The Higher Commission of Elections

### Article 76

The Higher Commission of Elections is an independent body competent to oversee and run the electoral process. It is composed of 18 members, representing all cantons, who are appointed by the Legislative Assembly.

1. Decisions in the Commission require a qualified majority of eleven (11) votes. 2. Member of the Higher Commission of Elections may not stand for office in the Legislative Assembly.

3. The Higher Commission of Elections determine the date on which elections are held, the announcement of the results, and receive the nominations of eligible candidates for the Legislative Assembly.

4. As stated in paragraph 51, the Higher Commission of Elections verifies the eligibility of candidates seeking election to the Legislative Assembly. The Higher Commission of

Elections is the sole body competent to receive allegations of electoral fraud, voter intimidation or illegal interference with the process of an election. 5. The Higher Commission of Elections is monitored by the Supreme Court and may be monitored by observers from the United Nations and civil society organizations.

6. The Higher Commission of Elections, together with the Judicial Council, shall convene a meeting of all candidates seeking election to the Legislative Assembly to announce the names of eligible candidates.

## VIII The Supreme Constitutional Court

### Article 77

a)- The Supreme Constitutional Court is composed of seven (7) members, all of whom are nominated by the Legislative Assembly. Its members are drawn from Judges, legal experts and lawyers, all of whom must have no less than fifteen (15) years of professional experience.

b)- No member of the Supreme Constitutional Court shall not be eligible to serve on the Executive Council or in the Legislative Assembly or to hold any other office or position of emolument, as defined by law.

c)- A member's term of office runs for four (4) years. No member may serve more than two terms. The functions of the Supreme Constitutional Court

### Article 78

1. To interpret the articles and underlying principles of the Charter.

2. To determine the constitutionality of laws enacted by the Legislative Assembly and decisions taken by Executive Council.

3. To judicially review legislative acts and executive decisions, where such acts and decisions may be in the

conflict with the letter and spirit of the Charter and the Constitution.

4. Canton Governors, members of the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council may be brought before the Supreme Constitutional Court, when alleged to have acted in breach of the Charter.

5. Its decisions are reached through simple majority vote.

#### Article 79

A member of the Supreme Constitutional Court shall not be removed from office except for stated misbehavior or incapacity. The provisions and procedures governing the work of the Supreme Constitutional Court shall be set out in a special law.

#### Article 80

Procedure for determination of the constitutionality of laws as follow: 1- The decision for the non-constitutionality of any law will be as follow:

a)- Where, prior to a law's enactment, more than twenty per cent (20%) of the Legislative Assembly objects to its constitutionality, the Supreme Constitutional Court is seized of the matter and shall render its decision within fifteen (15) days; if the law is to be urgently enacted, a decision shall be rendered within seven (7) days. b)-Where, following the rendering of the Judgment of the Supreme Constitutional Court, more than twenty per cent (20%) of the Legislative Assembly still objects to its constitutionality, an appeal may be lodged.

c)- If, on appeal, the Supreme Constitutional Court rules the law to be enacted as unconstitutional, the law shall be considered null and void.

2. If an argument is raised in a court concerning the constitutionality of a law as follow:

a)- If parties to a case raise a challenge to the constitutionality of a law and the court so holds, the matter is stayed while it is referred to the Supreme Constitutional Court b)- The Supreme Constitutional Court must

deliver its judgment within thirty (30) days.

#### IX General Rules

##### Article 81

The Charter applies within the Autonomous Regions. It may only be amended by a qualified majority of two-thirds (2/3) of the Legislative Assembly.

##### Article 82

The Charter shall be laid before the Transitional Legislative Assembly for review and ratification.

##### Article 83

Syrian citizens holding dual nationality are barred from assuming leading positions in the Office of the Canton Governor, the Provincial Council, and the Supreme Constitutional Court.

##### Article 84

The Charter sets out the legislative framework through which laws, decrees, and states of emergency shall be formally implemented.

##### Article 85

Elections to form the Legislative Assembly shall be held within four (4) months of the ratification of the Charter by the Transitional Legislative Assembly. The Transitional Legislative Assembly retains the right to extend the time period if exceptional circumstances arise.

##### Article 86

The Oath of Office to be taken by members of the Legislative Assembly

"I solemnly swear, in the name of Almighty God, to abide by the Charter and laws of the Autonomous Regions, to defend the liberty and interests of the people, to ensure the security of the Autonomous Regions, to protect the rights of legitimate self-defense and to strive for social justice, in accordance with the principles of democratic rules enshrined herein."

#### Article 87

All governing bodies, institutions and committees shall be made up of at least forty percent (40%) of either sex.

#### Article 88

Syrian criminal and civil legislation is applicable in the Autonomous Regions except where it contradicts provisions of this Charter.

#### Article 89

In the case of conflict between laws passed by the Legislative Assembly and legislation of the central government, the Supreme Constitutional Court will rule upon the applicable law, based on the best interest of the Autonomous Regions.

#### Article 90

The Charter guarantees the protection of the environment and regards the sustainable development of natural ecosystems as a moral and a sacred national duty.

#### Article 91

The education system of the Autonomous Regions shall be based upon the values of reconciliation, dignity, and pluralism. It is a marked departure from prior education policies founded upon racist and chauvinistic principles.

Education within the Autonomous Regions rejects prior education policies based on racist and chauvinistic principles. Founded upon the values of reconciliation, dignity, and pluralism.

a)- The new educational curriculum of the cantons shall recognize the rich history, culture and heritage of the peoples of the Autonomous Regions.

b)-The education system, public service channels and academic institutions shall promote human rights and democracy.

#### Article 92

a)- The Charter enshrines the principle of separation of religion and State.

b)- Freedom of religion shall be protected. All religions and faiths in the Autonomous Regions shall be respected. The right to exercise religious beliefs shall be guaranteed, insofar as it does not adversely affect the public good.

#### Article 93

a)- The promotion of cultural, social and economic advancement by administrative institutions ensures enhanced stability and public welfare within the Autonomous Regions.

b)- There is no legitimacy for authority which contradicts this charter.

#### Article 94

Martial law may be invoked and revoked by a qualified majority of two-thirds (2/3) of the Executive Council, in a special session chaired by the Canton Governor. The decision must then be presented to and unanimously adopted by the Legislative Assembly, with its provisions contained in a special law.





### The Executive Council Bodies

#### Article 95

1. Body of Foreign Relations
2. Body of Defense
3. Body of Internal Affairs
4. Body of Justice
5. Body of Cantonal and Municipal Councils and affiliated to it Committee of Planning and Census
6. Body of Finance, and affiliated to it a)-Committee on Banking Regulations. b)- Committee of Customs and Excise.
7. Body of Social Affairs
8. Body of Education
9. Body of Agriculture
10. Body of Energy.
11. Body of Health
12. Body of Trade and Economic Cooperation
13. Body of Martyrs and Veterans Affairs
14. Body of Culture
15. Body of Transport

#### 16. Body of Youth and Sports

17. Body of Environment, Tourism and Historical Objects
18. Body of Religious Affairs
19. Body of Family and Gender Equality
20. Body of Human Rights.
21. Body of Communications
22. Body of Food Security

#### Article 96

The Charter shall be published in the media and press.





**ENKS (Encûmena Nîtimanî ya Kurdî li Sûriyê)**—the Kurdish National Council in Syria. Founded in October 2011, this coalition of Syrian Kurdish parties is dominated by the KDP-S and the PUK-S.

**FSA**—Free Syrian Army. A loose coalition of armed groups, originally made up of deserters from the Syrian Army. It is the military arm of the SNC, based in Turkey.

**GORAN** - A political party in South Kurdistan. It was founded in 2009 to oppose the two-party KDP and PUK governing coalition.

**Hewlêr Agreement.** An agreement between the PYD and the ENKS, signed in Hewlêr (Erbil) on July 12, 2012, to cooperate and share power in Rojava through the Supreme Kurdish Council (SKC).

**HPG (Hêzên Parastina Gel)**—People's Defense Forces. Founded in 2000, the HPG, the successor to the ARGK, is the guerrilla army of the PKK and a force for legitimate self-defense.

**Jabhat Al-Akrad, Kurdish Front.** A Kurdish defense force that aims to protect Kurdish people outside Rojava. It has worked with the FSA, among other things on the expulsion of IS from Azaz. On August 16, 2013, it was excluded from the military council of the FSA of Aleppo because of its presumed connection to the PKK.

**KCK (Koma Civakên Kurdistan)**—Union of Kurdish Communities. A supranational coalition of Kurdish communities that brings together radical democratic self-governing institutions. Originating in the PKK, it seeks to implement Democratic Confederalism and defend the Kurdish people.

**KDP (Partîya Demokratiya Kurdistanê)**—Democratic Party of Kurdistan. The ruling party in the KRG (in Northern Iraq/South Kurdistan). Founded in April 1946, it has been led by Massoud Barzanî since 1979.

**KDP-S (Partiya Demokrat a Kurdî li Sûriyê).** The Syrian sister party of the KDP.

**KNK (Kongreya Neteweyî ya Kurdistanê)**—Kurdistan National Congress. An alliance of Kurdish parties, civil society associations, and exile organizations founded in May 1999 and headquartered in Brussels.

**KRG, Kurdish Regional Government.** The government of South Kurdistan (Northern Iraq). The four parts of Kurdistan are: North Kurdistan, in southeastern Turkey (Bakur); West Kurdistan, in northern Syria (Rojava); South Kurdistan, in Northern Iraq (KRG); East Kurdistan, in Northwestern Iran (Basur).

**Medya Defense Zones.** Located in the mountains of northwestern Iraq, the zones encompass Qandil, Xinere, Xakurke, and Behdinan, bordering Iran and Turkey. Controlled by the PKK since the 1990s.

**MFS (Mawtbo Folhoyo Suryoyo)**—Syriac Military Council. A Syriac defense force associated with the YPG/YPJ.

**MGRK (Meclîsa Gela Rojavayê Kurdistanê)**—People's Council of West Kurdistan. The council structure in Rojava and Syria, founded in the summer of 2011. It comprises four levels of councils; TEV-DEM is its board at the two upper levels.

**NC, National Coalition of Syrian Revolutions and Opposition Forces.** A Syrian opposition group comprising 60 representatives of various groups, including two women. It was founded in November 11, 2012, in Doha, Qatar. In the executive committee are, among others, Abdulhakim Bashar of the KDPS.

**PKK (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan)**—Kurdistan Workers Party. Founded on November 27, 1978. Has fought ever since for the self-determination and democratic rights for Kurds everywhere. Since August 15, 1984, it has been in armed struggle against the Turkish State. Its leader is Abdullah Öcalan. In the 1990s and 2000s, it developed the concepts of Democratic Autonomy and Democratic Confederalism, which are the foundational concepts for Rojava's self-government.

**PUK (Yekîtiya Nîtimanî Kurdistan)**—Patriotic Union of Kurdistan. A Kurdish party in South Kurdistan led by Jalal Talabani. It shares power with the KDP. Its power base is in the Soranî-speaking area around Sulaimaniya.

**PUK-S (Partiya Demokrat a Pêşverû ya Kurdî li Sûriyê).** The Syrian sister party of the PUK.

**PYD (Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat)**—Party of Democratic Unity. Founded in 2003, the largest political party in Rojava. Advocating Democratic Autonomy, it is based in the council system. By its charter, it is a member of the Union of Kurdistan Communities (KCK Rojava).

**SDF (in Arabic, Qwt Sriy ad-dmuqrya; in Kurdish, Hêzên Sûriya Demokratîk)**—Syrian Democratic Forces. A military alliance, founded on October 10, 2015, comprising Kurds, Arabs, Syrians, and others, with the goal of liberating Syria from IS and establishing a self-governing democratic Syria. Among its thirty forces are the YPG/YPJ, the Syrian Arab Coalition, the Al-Sanadid Forces, the Syriac Military Council, and the Burkan Al-Firat Operations Center.

**SKC (Desteya Bilind a Kurd)**—Supreme Kurdish Council. Created by the Hewlêr Agreement of July 12, 2012, a governing board for Rojava comprising equal representation for the PYD and the ENKS.

**SMC, Supreme Military Council.** The successor organization of the FSA, founded in December 15, 2012, in Turkey as a result of the Doha Conference.

**SNC, Syrian National Council.** A council that considers itself a Syrian government in exile. It is tied to Turkey and the Gulf States and is dominated by the Muslim Brotherhood.

**TEV-DEM (Tevgera Civaka Demokratîk)**—Movement for a Democratic Society. The coordinating organ of the MGRK, existing at the upper levels of the three cantons' council system. Includes the supporting political parties, diverse NGOs, social movements, and professional and trade organizations.

**Yekîtiya Star, Star Union of Women.** The umbrella women's organization in Rojava that has established women's councils, academies, and other institutions in Rojava. Star is a reference to the goddess Ishtar. In early 2016, its name was changed to Kongreya Star.

**YJA Star (Yekîtiya Jinên Azad)**—Ishtar Unit of Free Women. The women's guerrilla army in North Kurdistan, founded as YAJK in 1993.

**YPG (Yekîneyên Parastina Gel)**—People's Protection Units. The main defense force of Rojava. It was formerly mixed gender but after the split-off of the YPJ in 2013, it is all male.

**YPJ (Yekîneyên Parastina Jinê)**—Women's Protection Units. The women's defense force of Rojava, created in 2013





KOBANÊ: LANDSCAPES AFTER THE BATTLE  
JOURNEY TO THE CITY IN ROJAVA FREED  
FROM ISIS BY ITS CITIZENS