

ISIS, Kobanê, and the Future of the Middle East

January 22, 2015

As we write on Sunday, October 19, it appears that ISIS [Islamic State] forces have begun to retreat from their vicious assault on the Kurds in Kobanê. We hope that this is a resounding defeat for ISIS, and that it inspires a wave of grassroots resistance to ISIS throughout Syria and Iraq.

At the same time, and despite the role of U.S. bombing in driving ISIS out of Kobanê, we strongly believe that a democratic and peaceful future for Syria and Iraq cannot be built through U.S. military intervention, with bombing that kills innocent civilians; sordid alliances with authoritarian, reactionary regimes in the region like those led by King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, Abdel Fattah el-Sisi in Egypt, and Recep Erdoğan in Turkey; and, as always, Washington's overarching imperial agenda. It should never be forgotten that the exercise of American power directly fuels the growth and power of violent, retrograde groups such as ISIS and al-Qaeda. Nor is there any prospect for a free and decent life for the Syrian and Iraqi people as long as Syria suffers under the wanton, murderous rule of Bashar al-Assad and while Iraq is ruled by a sectarian and murderous anti-Sunni government in Baghdad.

The hope for real regional peace rests on a rebirth of the Arab Spring that can depose dictators and authoritarians throughout the Middle East, and on justice for the Palestinian people who have been repeatedly betrayed by the world's great powers. As Americans, we are committed to solidarity with movements for democracy, social justice, and self-determination in the Middle East and around the world, and to challenging our own government's domestic and international neoliberal economic policies, militarism, and persistent support for dictators and anti-democratic regimes.

Footnotes