



DON'T LET ROJAVA BECOME ANOTHER YEMEN

URGENT STATEMENT FROM THE EMERGENCY COMMITTEE FOR ROJAVA

Dec. 19, 2018

With reports of the Trump administration planning to withdraw U.S. troops from Syria, along with disturbing [new documentation](#) released [today](#) about Turkey's war crimes in Afrin, we are writing to alert our elected representatives and the public to the dire consequences should Turkey attack Rojava (the Kurdish majority region in northeastern Syria) east of the Euphrates, as it has promised. Turkey appears poised to attack whether or not American troops are stationed there. On Dec. 12, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan made a speech saying a [Turkish offensive is imminent](#). The Pentagon command responded that such a "unilateral action" would be "unacceptable," but the US has warned Turkey similarly in the past with no real consequences. Turkey has already been signaling its intentions by sniping at civilians across the border and bombing Kurdish areas in Iraq including the Makhmour refugee camp and Mount Shingal, home to the Yazidis.

A year ago, without any provocation, Turkey crossed the border into Syria to invade and occupy Afrin, driving out its Kurdish citizens, looting and confiscating their property, taking hostages, and repopulating the area with jihadis and Arabs from other parts of Syria in a demographic change that amounts to [ethnic cleansing](#). The U.S. ignored Kurdish appeals for help despite the coalition's reliance on Rojava and the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) to defeat ISIS. Now the Trump Administration says it will withdraw troops from Syria.

We call on Congress and the American people to make sure this betrayal is not repeated and that Rojava's extraordinary but fragile democracy is not endangered. It is critical that the U.S. take this stand because:

- Rojava is the only democratically-run part of Syria based on secular, feminist, and ecological principles.
- Its values oppose both fundamentalism and dictatorship.
- Its pluralism and federalist vision of the future of Syria are a model for the entire region, as is the Kurds' integration of other ethnicities and women into positions of power throughout society.
- The SDF have consistently proven to be the only reliable US ally in the war against ISIS. Now that they have almost finished the job, and taken immense losses, it is essential that we honor our moral obligation to the people who fought ISIS by helping them realize a peaceful co-existence with all regional powers.

Rather than deserting Rojava, the U.S. must commit to giving the Democratic Federation of Northern Syria (the official name of Rojava), economic and political as well as military assistance, and should put all possible pressure on Turkey to reopen peace negotiations with its own Kurds. As Aliza Marcus said recently in the [New York Times](#), "The only way to build an alternative to the chaos and repressive dictatorship in the rest of Syria is through recognition of the Kurdish-led administration and active political engagement."

The U.S. has faltered in Syria too many times in the past. It can prevent a bloodbath and the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people, if it demands Erdogan stand down. It can press Turkey to reopen peace negotiations with its own Kurdish population, stopping the endless cycle of violence. We urge the Trump Administration and Congress to act to defend Rojava before it is too late.

— Emergency Committee for Rojava [Steering Committee](#)

The U.S.-based Emergency Committee for Rojava was formed in March 2018 after the Turkish invasion of Afrin and is supported by prominent American [academics and activists](#).

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