



# **Anarchists in Rojava**

**Two interviews with the IRPGF**

**April – May 2017**

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Conducted by Insurrection News, text taken from *It's Going Down*, May 8, 2017.

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Conducted By Rojava Solidarity NYC, text taken from *It's Going Down*, 28 April 2017.

**This edition V1.0 (July 2017) by Bastard Press.**

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# Anarchist Armed Struggle in Rojava and Beyond: An Interview with the IRPGF

Conducted by Insurrection News, text taken from *It's Going Down*  
May 8, 2017

*1. First of all thanks for agreeing to this interview, it's most appreciated comrades! To start off with, how many comrades are in the IRPGF, and if you are comfortable answering this, what countries are you all from?*

Unfortunately, for security reasons, we cannot divulge the number of IRPGF members currently in Rojava taking part in operations nor the countries they come from, as this kind of information may be used by states to identify the members. However, we can say that IRPGF comprises revolutionaries from both the 'East' and the 'West'.

*2. Prior to the formation of the IRPGF were you all members of the International Freedom Battalion? If not how did you all meet up?*

The IRPGF is a project that was in development for months before its announcement. This development took place in and across several different countries. However, if one wants to also take into consideration the building of the necessary revolutionary relationships and connections that formed the foundation of IRPGF, one could say the development of the IRPGF actually dates back years. Many of these connections were made via meeting people in person, struggling shoulder-to-shoulder with them in their respective movements, and maintaining relationships of solidarity long after we were no longer in the same physical space, which ultimately led to the creation of a network of serious and dedicated anarchists hungry to advance the movement by any means necessary. So, while some of us were indeed members of the IFB prior to the formation of the IRPGF, the group itself has origins both in and outside the region.

*3. What inspired you all to form the IRPGF? What constraints did you experience as anarchists training and or fighting within a non-anarchist battalion prior to the formation of the IRPGF? What do you plan to do differently in the IRPGF compared to other volunteer groups in Rojava that are fighting the Islamic State?*

The formation of the IRPGF was inspired by various factors but two of the most important was the lack of an anarchist presence on the ground in Rojava and the desire to introduce something to the movement that has not yet been seen, which is a space, strictly for anarchists, to escape from the state, train in both guerrilla and conventional warfare for their respective struggles back home, and gain experience in how a revolution functions on a social level. While we have of course come across our fair share of anarchists that have refused to support the revolution because it doesn't live up to their romanticized, ideal commune, we are also aware of the fact that many anarchists have decided to hold back from going to Rojava because of the abundance of hammers and sickles and lack of circle A's. Thus, we saw it as imperative to change this political landscape and carve out a space for anarchism to not only exist but thrive.

This in turn makes our project fundamentally different than any other group here that exists solely to fight DAÎŞ. While we are obviously involved in operations against DAÎŞ, our aims go beyond defeating them, calling it a day, and heading home. We will indeed fight fascism in any shape it comes in, but we will do so while also building anarchist infrastructure in the region that makes it possible for anarchists to come, learn, and advance their respective struggles accordingly. In short,

we are thinking about the big picture, which is the revolution spreading beyond Rojava, and as such we are fighting just as much for anarchism as we are for Rojava and anti-fascism. As far as experiencing constraints training and fighting within non-anarchist battalions before the formation of IRPGF – let's just say that any international that didn't know about anarchism before they met us knew more about it than they would ever have wanted to after. However, our experiences with folks from the region have been very positive, with many explicitly describing their own politics as anarchist.

*4. What is your response to criticisms from some anarchists and leftists in the West that groups like the IRPGF, despite good intentions and practices, are comprised primarily of white activists who are basically seeking thrills or 'self-discovery'? As you are no doubt already aware, this has also been a dominant narrative that has featured in Western media regarding volunteers from the West who are fighting for Rojava.*

A question arises: What conditions and circumstances are required, for those who claim to be committed to fighting capital and the nation-state, those who live in safety and security, those often pursuing academic careers and individualist pursuits, to take the risks, make the sacrifices and give their lives to the struggle? It seems that many have a vision of a perfect revolutionary situation in which everything falls into place and they find themselves thrust into struggle, a struggle that fits into the continuity of their lives.

There are war tourists here. We have met them. They are largely ex-military who want a 6 month (or less if possible) adventure of killing the bad guys which their own governments couldn't give them, so they use YPG, disrespect YPG and the revolution for which they have no concern. They complain that the locals are not grateful when in fact it is them who should be grateful to the people who have given over their lives to fight for all of humanity, without the privilege or ability to retire to a comfortable life in the west.

Then there are those who, in the same spirit as those who went to Spain during the civil war, have given their lives to struggle, risked their lives, for whatever amount of time, to support in anyway they can the political movement in Rojava. These are people who understand the Rojava Revolution as a regional manifestation of what is an international struggle; they see the fight in Rojava as waged against regional agents of otherwise global systemic oppression and exploitation. The western leftist who you refer to can tell us about "self-discovery" when they have given themselves up, when they are willing to risk everything, including the futures they imagine for themselves, with all their individualist interests and careers; I will listen to them when they are prepared to die for their convictions selflessly, to put the struggle before everything, even their own families and loved ones. One thing that must be very clear to everyone, here or staying home, is that the people of Rojava who fight, and the revolutionaries from elsewhere in Kurdistan who have dedicated themselves, they do not go home. We believe that serious revolutionary people who come here from abroad should do so with long-term plans, either to stay as long as possible or to bring training and knowledge back to their home countries in order to spread the revolution and continue to do revolutionary political work. But the idea that work done in earnest to help revolutionary struggle is wrong and should be abstained from is nonsense: Because one is from another country? This is internationalism. Because one is white? Because one has more privilege (safety, security, standard of living)? Patronizing people of color by fetishizing and othering their struggles is not solidarity. Solidarity is putting oneself at risk to support the efforts of one's comrade and fight together for an international cause, and it happens when there is mutual recognition of a shared movement, struggle or responsibility. This does not mean co-opting or asserting oneself or one's organization by undermining the leadership, autonomy, agency or political vision and organization of comrades outside one's own country. Those committed to struggle in Rojava are fighting, however indirectly or incrementally, for the liberation of humanity. It is our responsibility to do the

same in any of the possible ways we see fit.

It seems that in the minds of some armchair leftists actual revolutionary armed struggle is simply not real or genuine or serious unless it conforms to their perfect fantasy or it occurred in the distant past and can be safely romanticized. Although they will voice support, the idea of practical solidarity is silly or unrealistic to them. They will praise the revolution but treat it like it is another world, unconnected and irrelevant to our lives. They will say “but there is work to be done here! why go over there and get involved in that struggle when there is a struggle in your home?!” This is based on the unquestioned false assumption that there are different, unrelated struggles that should be prioritized based on geography or whatever other convenient reasons for avoiding risk and sacrifice; this is a convenient way to avoid recognizing a global context of historical events and responding according to a revolutionary sense of responsibility. Theirs is the idea that it is the place of leftists in western cities to talk, write and go to school, maybe organize a protest rally, but armed struggle is something for brown people far away; it is great when the other risks everything for humanity in a struggle that is on their doorstep, from which they cannot escape to security, but silly for us to volunteer and risk everything in solidarity, as part of an internationalist struggle. What they are saying is: if you believe in armed struggle against capital and the nation-state then the best thing you can do is stay home and dismiss, with unfounded criticism based upon unfounded assumptions, those who act and risk everything.

*5. And what is your response to criticism, again coming from some anarchists and leftists in the West, that groups like the IRPGF are tools or proxies of ‘US Imperialism’? I should point out that the Insurrection News collective completely rejects these kinds of criticisms by the way! We’ve also read criticisms from the same quarters that claim the YPG/J are in some kind of counter-revolutionary alliance with the Assad regime – what is the IRPGF’s response to these armchair critics from the West?*

When imperialist forces are finished with their current project in Syria, they will have time and opportunity to reorganize their alliances, their priorities will change, and the US and its friends will be sure to prevent any threat to capital and fellow nation-states. The Assad regime too would love to crush the revolution. But currently Rojava has the effect of complicating, destabilizing and at times neutralizing relations between other larger players. People tend not to fight each other so much when DAÎŞ is around, but as soon as they are no longer a priority, Rojava’s enemies will be united in their cause of crushing the revolution. The US has put on hold its decades old efforts, in collaboration with Turkey, Barzani and Israel, to defeat the revolutionary leftist movement in Kurdistan, and in particular eliminate the PKK. This is because the US, its NATO friends and its eastern antagonists are all involved in a web of contradicting alliances and oppositions while maintaining one thing in common: they each want to isolate and eventually eliminate Daesh while at the same time benefiting from (if not supporting) whatever damage the latter might do to their respective enemies. After all, the US is known to foster such groups for the purposes of disrupting and weakening other states and maintaining any instability that it can benefit from.

Once again, many western leftists have a fantastic vision of revolutionary struggle that is cleanly cut out along the lines of pure principle, without any murkiness or necessity for pragmatic decision-making. They will not act until everything is convenient and two-sided. Many have misconceptions and a lack of understanding for the complexities involved with the revolution and the task of defending it. There is purity in theory. There is no purity in war. And there is a world of difference between military cooperation and political alliance; the conflict in Syria is one of the greatest examples of multi-sided complexity in war. Today you may be clashing with those whom tomorrow you will have to make a deal with in the midst of a mutual enemy, and the situation changes every week. The lives of the people and the survival of the revolution are at stake.

Any revolutionary force, if it is to be successful, must maintain a confluent balance and integration

of principle and pragmatism. In the case of imperialist, nation-state and counter-revolutionary forces generally, there is little to be said about principle in any genuine or pure sense anyway; they are purely opportunistic according to their basic interests. The forces of the Rojava revolution may be the only players in the region who are not motivated by opportunism as the US, its allies and its capitalist nation-state enemies so thoroughly are.

*6. What have been the IRPGF's observations regarding some of the volunteers who come to fight in Rojava for 'adventurist' kinds of reasons and, to put it bluntly, have really shitty politics? How are these types of volunteers viewed by both your Kurdish comrades and also your comrades in the IFB? There is a narrative that we read quite a lot in Western media that says that these types of volunteers often end up being politicized in quite a radical way due to their experiences in Rojava. Based on your observations, is this a truthful narrative?*

While the number of adventurists / war tourists and those that in general have 'really shitty politics' is definitely on the decline, due to a purposeful reworking of the application process on the part of YPG International, it is an unfortunate reality that a large number of them are still here and are still coming here. If we are talking about people not with just a lack of strong political lines, but with explicitly shitty ones, then the narrative that these types often end up reevaluating their shittiness and become more radicalized (in a good way) is false in our experience. In fact, we have mainly seen the opposite, which is that they come already with a chauvinistic and orientalist view of the area and these views only become further entrenched as they stay here. This has often been a direct result of an inflated sense of self worth and entitlement, which takes a heavy hit when they arrive here and are not catered to nor fawned over like they thought they would be, being the Western heroes that they are (sarcasm). For example, we've actually heard volunteers state, after six months of being here, that they deserve special treatment and favors because they have 'done their time.' One could write a dissertation addressing the amount of problems just in that statement alone; indeed, these types of volunteers are very problematic for many reasons. As for those with a lack of strong / coherent political lines, as one would expect, we have seen mixed results: some have developed a nuanced critique of capitalist modernity, the State, and patriarchy, while others have rejected any type of political engagement, as they view war and politics as something completely separate and unrelated (you'd be surprised how many ex-military types don't agree with Clausewitz).

While these types of volunteers, both the apolitical and shitty-political types, don't find themselves mixing with the IFB too much (as one would expect, they tend not to express a desire to fight with explicitly communist and socialist groups), they do unfortunately often end up in Kurdish taburs. From our experience, at the end of the day, as long as the things they do and say are not too egregious, they are generally accepted and treated more or less like family, as that is the culture of the region. In general, we have seen that it takes quite a lot of ignorance and acting out to be forced out of a tabur and this is something that as anarchists is difficult to accept / agree with. It is also true, however, that the Westerners tend to also flock together and again, as one could imagine, many of them actively seek to not engage with the Kurds at all. In fact, we're aware of some Westerners even wanting to create an explicitly all Western tabur (no Kurds, Arabs, Assyrians, etc. allowed). While fortunately that would probably never be allowed to happen, it is a testament to the type of seriously problematic people that have shown up to this Revolution thinking they can also take it over.

*7. How is anarchism viewed by other combatants in Rojava, particularly among the foreign volunteers? It is our understanding that the IFB and its member organizations are predominantly communist groups, have there been any difficulties or disagreements due to your ideological differences with these groups? Is there much time in between training and operations etc for political and ideological debate among comrades from the different volunteer battalions and*

*organizations?*

As has been discussed elsewhere already, foreign volunteers that are not a part of the IFB vary drastically ideologically and their responses to anarchism vary accordingly. In regards to the IFB, you are correct that the majority of its member organizations (and in turn, its members) are some flavor of communist (Marxist-Leninist, Hoxhaist, Maoist etc.). However, some anarchists have also joined these groups due to the previous lack of a strong militant anarchist presence on the ground. Additionally, all member groups of the IFB must work together in some capacity, either during operations or away from the front, and as such we are in rather continuous contact with one another. Thus, there have been plenty of opportunities for political discussions / disagreements / debates to arise and we are happy to say that not only have we welcomed these moments but we have agitated to specifically create such moments. Nothing warms our hearts more than the look of shock (and sometimes horror) when communist comrades learn that anarchists do not form parties nor implement central committees. While most that we engage in debate hold steadfast to the claim that 'every car needs a driver', we have surprisingly had great and productive political discussions with our friendly neighborhood reds. Most importantly though, they have respected our autonomy and have largely treated us as fellow revolutionary guerrillas, rather than pawns to put to play in a chess game, which has made partaking in armed struggle together relatively smooth. This is not to say the anarchists haven't caused some trouble and made some parties upset. This is also not to say that we wouldn't immediately become enemies once more if they tried to consolidate power. However, for now, we have recognized that it is mutually beneficial for us to fight fascists together by day and argue about democratic centralism by night.

*8. Recently you posted a photo on your Twitter and Facebook accounts that showed members of the IRPGF and another group, RUIS standing in front of a wall with a slogan spray-painted in Greek that expressed solidarity with the squats in Athens that have been under attack by the state. This is the first time we had heard of RUIS. What can you tell us about them? Are they also an anarchist volunteer combatant group?*

The Revolutionary Union for Internationalist Solidarity (RUIS) is one of the founding members of the IFB and was organized by a dedicated group of militant Greek anarchists. They have sent members to fight in Rojava but have remained focused on the practical side of the struggle, and like many of our Greek comrades, they do not have a social media presence nor intend to have one. Additionally, they have written only one text which was about the announcement of their group and all other theoretical discussions and criticisms have been kept to the group members and other anarchist groups they are in solidarity with. To read their statement and see some pictures of their members in the IFB, check out: <https://asmpa.espivblogs.net/revolutionary-struggle-in-rojava-kurdistan-syria/>

*9. What is the position held by the IRPGF and other groups and comrades you fight alongside in Rojava regarding the recent US airstrikes that targeted the Assad regime's Shayrat air base in central Syria? Do you think this action by the US is going to alter how the war in Syria will play out, and if so, what do you think it might mean for the future of the Rojava project?*

We can only speak for ourselves but we think it would be obvious to most that the US striking Shayrat air base is nothing more than a political move by Trump to distract from his train wreck of a first 100 days in office, rally his neocon fans, win over some democrats, show that he doesn't have any intimate connections with Moscow, and convince people that he (sometimes) has human emotions. We don't believe that the action will alter how the war in Syria will play out because we don't believe that it was much more than geopolitical theater. Russia was warned ahead of time before the strike and in turn Assad was warned, which allowed risk to Russian and Syrian personnel at the base to be minimized. To that end, we really don't see the Rojava project being affected by

Trump's antics, this time around at least.

*10. Have the IRPGF been involved in any military operations since its formation? Will the IRPGF be participating in the operation to liberate the city of Raqqa from Islamic State control?*

Yes, the IRPGF is involved in the liberation of Raqqa and we will be announcing more details about this soon!

*11. How do the IRPGF feel regarding the possibility of armed struggle / guerrilla warfare in the West? In Greece for example there are the armed revolutionary anarchist organizations such as Revolutionary Struggle and the Conspiracy of Cells of Fire, and throughout Europe and other parts of the world there have been mostly small-scale sporadic attacks / actions for some time now by anarchists operating under the banner of FAI-IRF (Informal Anarchist Federation-International Revolutionary Front). Do you think that at this point in time armed struggle is a realistic option in say a European or US context?*

We believe that the possibility of effective armed struggle is highly specific to the environment that the general struggle itself is being waged in. Throughout the 70s and 80s especially, we saw groups in both the US and Europe attempt to wage war against their respective States only to be brutally repressed. In the US alone there was the Weather Underground / Weathermen, United Freedom Front, George Jackson Brigade, Black Liberation Army, Fuerzas Armadas de Liberacion Nacional, and more. While it is clear that these groups all had an impact on revolutionary struggle and their legacy is one we are proud of and stand in strict solidarity with – we should not fool ourselves into thinking any of these groups were on the path to enacting a full on revolution in the US (indeed, we should also note, that not all of these groups even declared this as a goal), nor that they weren't all eventually brutalized and shut down by the State via intimidation, shackles, and/or murder. How the State was able to do so was different for each case but we do believe that most armed struggle groups missed a key component that is necessary for a successful armed movement.

This component is the above-ground, social political wing that can continue to operate and provide for people while the underground, militant wing attacks the State by any means necessary. If either wing is missing from the equation, it is much easier to crush a revolutionary movement. Clearly, a solely above-ground group that organizes around social issues will only be allowed to take the movement so far and will remain helpless without an armed, underground unit to terrorize and preoccupy the State. Likewise, a solely underground group of armed revolutionaries only lasts as long as they can evade the State, which is a time that is severely decreased when there is no complimentary above-ground group to garner support, educate, revolutionize social relationships, fundraise, recruit, and so on. Note that the term 'above ground group' here is just a symbolic term that may literally refer to a single group or to the entire public revolutionary political infrastructure, spanning from coast to coast. Regardless, it is safe to say that at this point, while there are definitely small pockets of revolutionary activity within the US that have done great work in the social sphere, there is not a cohesive, serious movement with a clear and relevant revolutionary horizon (vision / aim / goal) that can address and attack State-caused trauma while also supporting an underground, militant group.

However, the question now should not be 'Okay, not now, so when?'. Rather, we should be asking ourselves, 'What can we do to make such revolutionary infrastructure a reality and are we ready to do what is necessary to truly advance the movement?' If the answer is 'no', then why not? These are important questions, as they may reveal both the issues that are stagnating the movement and a path forward. This is what we think must be done before armed struggle can be waged with any kind of substantial effect. Of course, if a group of revolutionaries or even an individual fed up with the capitalist nightmare decides to arm themselves tomorrow and start putting bullets in cops and



bombing financial institutions they will have our full support and we will raise our kalash's in solidarity with them wherever we are. It would be ridiculous if we didn't, especially considering we aim to train anarchists to specifically carry out such attacks! However, we do so knowing full well that if there is no serious social counterpart to accompany their armed struggle, their overall impact on the movement may be minimal to none.

*12. Finally, is there anything that you would suggest that anarchists around the world can do in their own countries to support both the IRPGF and the Rojava Revolution in general? And is there anything else that the IRPGF would like to communicate to anarchists around the world regarding Rojava, or anything else for that matter?*

If anarchists are unable to physically come to Rojava, they can organize with or create a local Rojava Solidarity group that spreads information about the Revolution, carries out practical acts of solidarity, organizes fundraisers, etc. Also, another easy way to help IRPGF out specifically is to simply donate (bitcoin: 1HZHrCynsSdJdCKz9SSnncXZo4YdfNYZtR), as like many units here we are in constant need of decent medical supplies and other materials. Ultimately though, we want you to join us out here, to train, to learn and to build the future network of groups and movements that will cooperate and eventually have the capacity to challenge the systems of oppression that dominate us all.

Silav û Rêzên Şoreşgerî,  
IRPGF

# Building Anarchist Forces: The IRPGF and the International Struggle

By Rojava Solidarity NYC, text taken from *It's Going Down*

28 April 2017

The first anarchist battalion has been launched in Rojava, and with that a new call for revolutionary anarchists from around the world to join them. Rojava Solidarity NYC (RS NYC) conducted an interview with the members of the International Revolutionary People's Guerrilla Forces (IRPGF) about how they got started, how they have experienced revolutionary life and the possibilities for anarchists when an autonomous region supports the movement.

*RS NYC: What made you decide to come to Rojava?*

IRPGF: We decided to come to Rojava to defend the ongoing social revolution unfolding here and in the broader region. We wanted to support the revolution not only with words and with solidarity events but with our physical presence and our lives. The revolution's primary focus on women's liberation and ecology are vital to any liberatory revolution and thus something we not only support and defend but also seek to spread. Additionally, we wanted to learn as much as we could about tactics and practices from the various militant Apoist and communist parties as well as create a space for anarchist militants in the revolution.

*RS NYC: How do you see your role in Rojava? And has it changed over the course of each member's involvement, from arriving to forming this collective?*

IRPGF: Our role in Rojava is first and foremost to help defend and ensure the success of the revolution on both a social and military level. Secondly, our role includes spreading anarchist principles and theory through education programs and exchanges with local communes and collectives. We see ourselves here in Rojava as a constitutive part of the project of democratic confederalism and we carry out whatever work is necessary to achieve the project's revolutionary goals and aims. While we all came here with these ideals and principles, the longer we have stayed the more we have seen and understood the richness and complexity of the revolution and the people, not only in an analytic sense but also in an emotional sense. For example, here we have gained a new understanding of comradeship that would have never developed in individualistic societies. This has allowed our understanding of the revolution to be much more nuanced and comprehensive than any armchair revolutionary attempting to critique from afar.

*RS NYC: What are the characteristics or practices you've found in Rojava that exemplify the revolution for you?*

IRPGF: One of the main characteristics and practices that exemplify the revolution and its ideals include the Tekmil, which is the term for the revolutionary practice of criticism and self-criticism implemented into the PKK by Öcalan and now used in revolutionary institutions in both the social and military spheres. The teknil is used for several purposes: to ensure that people are continuously improving themselves and their relationships with those around them, as a means of resolving differences and tensions in a healthy and effective way, to keep the goals of a shared revolutionary

horizon at the forefront of the struggle, and to restrict hierarchical relationships from forming within autonomous groups. Other main characteristics include collective life, women's empowerment and defense, people's defense, pluralism (religious, ethnic), efforts to bridge ethnic conflicts (reconciliation), and politics being an integral part of life for many. All of these characteristics have worked together to enable a heterogeneous population of human beings to not only liberate and defend themselves but also confront and work to reconcile conflicts that threaten their own solidarity. To us, this type of continual struggle to advance the emancipation of all is what it means to be revolutionary.

*RS NYC: How do you see the Rojava Revolution in relation to anarchist struggles around the world?*

IRPGF: The Rojava Revolution, much like the revolution in Chiapas in the 90's, is one of indigenous peoples not only standing up against colonizers and imperialists, but also seeking to transcend capitalism and the nation-state. The Rojava Revolution and its principles are in line with those of anarchism and provides hope to other indigenous communities around the world who are co-struggling against their oppression and for their liberation. For example, Şehîd Kawa Amed was a native american and NoDAPL activist who traveled to Rojava to show his solidarity with the revolution and ultimately give his life for the cause. It is people like this who reveal the interconnectedness of indigenous and anarchist struggles around the world and fill us with the inspiration and determination to keep the struggle alive.

*RS NYC: What are the larger goals of this organization?*

IRPGF: Beyond supporting and defending the revolution in Rojava, we as IRPGF seek to advance the cause of anarchism around the world and continue the armed struggle until world revolution. In the meantime, we aim to create a training base in the region explicitly for anarchists to come, train, and prepare for the revolution both here and on their home fronts. We hope that this base will serve as a collective space where anarchists can come to learn a variety of revolutionary skills, spanning from the social to the guerrilla. Additionally, with the creation of this group, we aim to inspire more anarchists to come to the region and show physical solidarity for the revolution. For those anarchists that are unable to come for reasons outside their control, we hope that they can still support us and the revolutionary movements around the world through local solidarity actions and other creative means.

*RS NYC: What would be the ideal outcomes for IRPGF?*

IRPGF: Ideal outcomes first include the success of the revolution in Rojava and the spread of anarchist revolution and insurrection in every neighborhood around the world. Additionally, an anarchist base that can act as a center for revolutionary living and training for the foreseeable future would also be ideal. See you all in Rojava.

*RS NYC: How did you come to the conclusion to make this group?*

IRPGF: During the Spanish Civil War, tens of thousands of international volunteers and revolutionaries traveled to Spain from as far as China to show their solidarity and give their lives for a revolution that unfortunately proved to be unsuccessful. During the Syrian Civil War today, less than a thousand international revolutionaries have come to support and defend the ongoing

social revolution in Rojava. We asked ourselves – how could it be that in the age of the Internet, air travel, and a thus vastly interconnected world was there such a lack of substantial international solidarity. We have heard criticisms from those who pay lip service to the Spanish Civil War, yet attempt to shame those that travel to Rojava with terms such as adventurists, imperialists, racists, and more. However, it is precisely those who level such critiques and do not show their physical solidarity here in Rojava who are the real racists, islamophobes, and imperialists. Instead of risking their comfort, privilege, and craft beer, they remain on their cushions, enjoying the material comforts provided by the imperialist and colonialist powers that have created the fascist monsters in this region. Thus, we came to the conclusion to make this group in order to fill the vacuum left by the anarchists who had yet to do so.

*RS NYC: Have there been any particular scenes or anecdotes that have reaffirmed your impressions of or commitments to the revolutionary project in Rojava?*

IRPGF: One of the most vivid scenes occurred when one of our comrades was staying with a family and a woman of the family began to tell our comrade about her experience with receiving education from and getting involved with the Mala Jin. She related how it changed her life, how she was able to revolutionize her perception of herself as a human being, and how a world of possibilities had opened up for her. Her eyes while discussing this are something that our comrade will never forget. Still, our comrade notes that one mostly experiences the revolutionary spirit in day to day life and those moments of true liberation don't come from the institutions that have been set up but from the cultural changes that have occurred, which are almost impossible to capture with words.

Another event occurred on the eve of Nevroz. During the night, the city streets were full of fires usually consisting of burning tires. People were gathered around them chanting, singing and dancing. This was the day that for decades had been repressed and forbidden for Kurds in Syria and Turkey. Now it was celebrated openly as a day of cultural expression and liberation with great joy and excitement. While we were riding around the city in our pick up truck waving, shouting and occasionally shooting off AK's with our comrades, a large convoy of cars appeared. They were packed with people who were hanging out the windows and even on the roofs of the vehicles waving flags, chanting and shouting. Some were shooting tracer rounds from their weapons since there were no fireworks for the festivities. We quickly pulled into the convoy and drove around the city for hours honking the horn, waving to the people gathered on the streets or looking from their balconies and windows and blasting revolutionary music. During the evening we stumbled upon a large fire with many young children holding hands, jumping up and down while singing and dancing. In front of the fire was a group of young girls of all ages holding their hands up in the victory symbol and jumping up and down shouting "Jin, Jiyan, Azadî!" or "Women, Life, Freedom!" Some of our comrades got emotional as the girls shouted with such joy and freedom. One comrade looked over and said that even if the revolution is defeated, it would not have been in vain for this was the revolution victorious.

Lastly, a scene that cannot be left unmentioned is that of one of the şehîd ceremonies (essentially a funeral) for one international and two local comrades. Even though it was just two people from the region that had passed, the entire village and surrounding villages came to the ceremony. All of the people came with their various YPG, YPJ, and related flags, all while yelling powerful chants of 'Şehîd Namirin! (Martyrs don't die!) and 'Bi can, bi xwîn, em bi te re ne ey şehîd! (With soul, with

blood, we are with you şehîd!’ They came together, cried together, and experienced the death of a loved one together. This is due to the fact that death is still a very communal event here; people know that a death in the community does not just affect the individual, rather it affects everyone as each individual makes up part of the whole. Further, they understand the need for physical solidarity with each other, which was thoroughly exemplified by the attendance of the HPC, or the community defense militias – consisting mainly of women ready to help defend their community from anyone that attempts to infringe on its autonomy, whether it be daîş, the asayîş, or even the YPG. Scenes and anecdotes such as these not only remind us why we fight and but also fill us with hope that the revolution will both continue to flourish in the region and spread to the rest of the world.

*RS NYC: What do you see as the greatest threat to the revolution?*

IRPGF: The greatest threats to the revolution comes from various fronts: counterrevolutionary forces; imperialist forces and/or colonial forces such as Turkey, USA, Assad, Russia, Iran, and Barzani – KDP/ENKS; religious/ethnic sectarianism; and a liberal, statist outcome of the revolution. As individual anarchists and as a collective under the name IRPGF, we will combat these threats and do everything possible to ensure their destruction if they take a strike at the revolution. For any anarchist interested in becoming a part of IRPGF, this is a prerequisite.

*RS NYC: How would you like to position IRPGF in relation to struggles internationally?*

IRPGF: From Chile to Greece, anarchist groups have risen and answered the call of armed struggle. In other areas where armed struggle is not yet possible, anarchists have creatively developed infrastructure and projects that truly address social issues when no one else would. We see ourselves as a part of these larger anarchist movements and we extend our support and solidarity to the anarchists who currently struggle both in and outside of the confines of the state. We also honor and praise the brave anarchists around the world who have given their lives to defeat oppression in all of its forms. In the long term, we hope to create a network of armed anarchist groups around the world who can jointly struggle against capitalism and the state.

*RS NYC: Did coming to Rojava change how you see the nature of the anarchist struggle?*

IRPGF: Anarchist struggle without praxis is not struggle. Therefore, with a unified understanding of theory and praxis necessary for revolution, we have seen how taking up arms changes the struggle and our relationship to it and to one another. The severe lack of international anarchist support is both shameful and indicative of a larger problem within the anarchist movement – the unwillingness to truly put one’s life on the line for the struggle. Thus, beyond all the self deception, delusion and congratulatory anarchist politics is the very truth of the struggle; that in order to change the world one must be willing to risk their lives, their comfort and their privilege. What this entails is of course relative to the area you are organizing in. For example, if people in your area are experiencing heavy ICE raids, begin sabotaging these raids by any means possible. If mosques are being attacked by far right extremists, form groups to help prevent such attacks and expel fascists from the area. Pick up a gun if necessary. Stand in front of a gun if necessary. If one is not ready to do this, they, in our opinion, cannot call themselves a revolutionary.

*RS NYC: What sorts of skills and practices would you recommend anarchist revolutionaries develop to help them further the struggle?*

IRPGF: Considering that revolution will contain both social and military aspects, we suggest that to prepare adequately and further the struggle, people must learn to live communally and develop the skills to carry out armed struggle. This is precisely the reason we see it as imperative that we create a base in the region for anarchists to travel to and do just that.

*RS NYC: There are many groups around the world right now hoping to bring the practices of the Rojava Revolution back home. What sort of advice would you give them?*

IRPGF: First, some advice is to be aware of the local contexts and develop programs specific to not only the current but historical local contexts. Second, to defeat the imposed alienation of both the State and Capital, it is important to find a way to develop means of spending time with each other that create and maintain truly revolutionary relationships. Experiencing life communally is an essential part of existing in Rojava and a key factor in the people's ability to continually rise up and defend each other when necessary. People here care about those around them in a much deeper sense than the capitalist concept of simply scratching each other's backs. To recreate this sense of community in Western societies we will first need to revolutionize ourselves and our relationships with each other. Call outs on social media need to be done away with. Baseless egos and smugness need to be done away with. Those attitudes have done nothing but further stagnate the movement. Bring yourself back down to the level of those around you, begin to perceive the movement as more than just something to boost your self-esteem, and struggle. Until this is done, a revolution will not be possible. So, spend time with each other. If you see problems in your comrades' behavior, address them as a group that cares about each other's improvement as revolutionary human beings, rather than taking it to Facebook and denouncing them publicly. Create groups that enable people to begin to rely on each other again instead of the State. Get to know your neighbors and their problems. Don't think of yourself as better or separate from the general populous, as a real revolution needs to flow up from the people. Hold neighborhood assemblies that allow for projects to develop around local needs and put your lives on the line for others. Develop decentralized defense militias that can go to war with the State and its lackeys (cops, boneheads, etc.). In short, this is a time in the West when anarchism may either succeed or fail completely and the path it will take is in all of our hands.

*RS NYC: What are the best ways for people back home to join in your mission and support your work?*

IRPGF: Of course, the best way for anarchists back home to join in our mission and work would be to come to Rojava and join the struggle directly. However, we are well aware that this is not possible for everyone and understand the need for ways to support us from afar. One simple yet crucial way to do so would be to join or create a local Rojava Solidarity group and help fund raise for our military and medical supplies. Bleeding out is the number one killer here and blood coagulates such as cellox are unfortunately in short supply. That and generally spreading awareness about the revolution and anarchist participation in it would be very helpful. Of course, continuing to advance the anarchist movement in your own neighborhoods and fighting shoulder-to-shoulder with the oppressed wherever you are will help the overarching mission and work of anarchism as well.





On April 1<sup>st</sup> 2017 the International Revolutionary People's Guerilla Forces (IRPGF) announced their formation as an anarchist combat unit fighting with the International Freedom Brigades in Rojava.

The group has kept a high media profile since their announcement, and have issued multiple statements regarding their position in the conflict, issues of international solidarity, the rise of fascism in Europe and United States, and the role of revolutionary anarchism in combating fascism.

This pamphlet collects two early interviews conducted by members of the IRPGF published on *It's Going Down* in 2017.

**Bastard Press**  
Est. Queensland, Australia 2005  
distributed by [www.bastardarchive.org](http://www.bastardarchive.org)