

WESTERN BOMBS WON'T EASE SYRIAN SUFFERING

The civil war – born out of the brutality with which Assad repressed the 2011 revolution – has so far killed over 400,000 and displaced a further 11 million. Extending western bombing campaigns will only inflict more death and misery on the 12 million Syrians living in territory controlled by the Assadist regime and will bring no respite to those in rebel held areas. There is no reason to doubt that chemical weapons were used by pro-government forces in Douma – but escalating western intervention will only prolong the war in order to improve the negotiating position of the US and allied states.

EXPLOITING THE SYRIAN CIVIL WAR

Under the guise of the “war against ISIS”, different imperialist states have manoeuvred to secure their positions in a post-war Syria. The Russian government, supported by Iran, continues to give full military backing to the regime’s war against both rebel – and ISIS-controlled areas. Finding itself short of reliable allies, the United States has given support to the Kurdish forces controlling the North East of Syria, who in turn provided ground troops in support of the US-led bombing of Raqqa, a bombing campaign which killed hundreds and displaced thousands more. Turkey’s subsequent invasion of Afrin has displaced a further 100,000 civilians in an attempt to weaken the movement for Kurdish independence and establish an area of influence. While the Syrian regime now controls around 75% of the population, the fragile balance between these three blocks is primarily maintained by the military patronage of the various imperial powers operating in Syria.

With the final defeat of ISIS imminent, the longstanding policy of the US and Russian militaries of avoiding any interaction is becoming untenable. As this phase of the conflict draws to a close both are manoeuvring to strengthen their hand when the last ISIS enclaves fall. Be this through Assad’s move to crush the remaining rebel areas, or with Western attempts to exploit Assad’s brutality to boost their own involvement any further escalation, from either side, can only bring more death and destruction

down on the Syrian people. No foreign power, be it the “liberal” west or authoritarian Russia, has any interest in a just solution for the Syrian people. All are only interested in avoiding a further collapse of the Syrian State and increasing the influence of their allies in any future settlement.

THE MEMORY OF HOPE

In this situation we must build opposition to any further intervention from the UK, debunking the myth that “humanitarian” justifications are anything more than a mask for imperialist brinkmanship with Russia. But we must also call for an urgent end to all foreign interventions – rejecting any attempt to whitewash the crimes of the Assadist government or rival imperialist powers.

The hopes of the Syrian revolution have long been replaced by the horror of civil war, with the assault on Eastern Ghouta being only the latest deadly attack against a rebel-held population. But while the civil society that birthed the revolution may have been destroyed, the memory of the popular revolution has not. The legacy of the heroic early days of the mass protests and popular committees fighting for democracy live on in the vast documentation of the struggle and the scattered activists of the Syrian diaspora.

It is in demanding a peace that guarantees the democratic rights of civilians within Syria and the right of return for refugees that we can help create the potential for that movement to be reborn. As socialists in the UK our primary influence is in opposing further escalation and calling for the opening of our borders to all Syrian refugees. We must support the call for an immediate end to the war without legitimising the Assadist state.

The only hope for Syria rests with the Syrian people who if freed from the intervention of all foreign powers, they are capable of toppling the Assad regime and fighting for the ideals that inspired the uprising in 2011.