

A Way Forward for Americans?

Remembering Omar Aziz and the Necessity for Local Councils

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It feels everyday like the United States is approaching rapidly closer to collapse. With never-ending imperial wars, rising AI-fueled fascism, ICE executions and kidnappings, general unaffordability, and the rest of the giant laundry list of bad shit; communities are being torn apart by a fascist state, and the corpse of “social democracy” has long run stagnant.

Conversations about solutions can get trapped in dead end binaries: either an “it’s so over” cynicism, or re-investing in turning the clock back ten years to an Obama era breeding the same conditions that got Americans there to begin with.

Despite all the horrible shit, there is a real potential for Americans in this moment. Everytime a civilian barricade or checkpoint is erected in Minneapolis this potential makes itself more realized. I want to talk about the potential Syrian anarchist Omar Aziz tapped into, for us to remember him and the revolutionary organizing that unfolded in the often ignored by Westerners: the Syrian Revolution in the 2010s.

In 2011, Omar Aziz returned to Damascus, Syria from self-exile when he saw his people rising up against the Assad dictatorship. He noted that while Syrians were risking their lives resisting the regime, many still depended on state and capitalist structures as the hands that fed them. He wrote a manual, *The Formation of Local Councils*, which quickly gained traction on Syrian Facebook.

In a preface, he described this contradiction as the limbo between two overlapping paradigms: “authority’s time,” where the state still regulated and controlled daily life, and “revolutionary time,” where people broke freely to claim their own governance. For the revolution to emerge victorious, it would have to break free from the domination of the authorities and become involved in every aspect of people’s lives, not just in demonstrations and political activism. This meant building new social relationships with people in the present, not awaiting for a fantasized future or another Party replacement.

His answer was not in states, not in parties, but in *Local Councils*: decentralized spaces where people collectively managed their own lives outside the bureaucracy and brutality of the state. These councils provided housing, food, education, and healthcare through voluntary cooperation. They supported families of detainees, coordinated with community defense groups, protected land from the state trying to claw territory back, built local economies, and linked horizontally with other councils.

Aziz didn't just write abstract theory. He wrote instructions. His *Local Councils* shows that he wrote a detailed, practical guide for how ordinary people could build them under repression, siege, or collapse. Aziz explained councils can and must begin, even with the most minimum resources necessary. They remained accountable to the immediate needs of the people while staying flexible enough to adapt. Leaders weren't meant to be elites or political figures, but community members respected for their social, organizational, or technical skills who were willing to work with and for each other voluntarily.

Aziz outlined concrete responsibilities Syrians had to each other: providing safe housing for displaced people, offering psychological and material support to families of detainees, distributing food and medical aid, ensuring education continued even in areas where the state completely withdrew, and coordinating media work. These Councils were also meant to be democratic forums where people discussed daily problems of water, electricity, trade, and social harmony, devising solutions collectively in assemblies.

The Assad regime repeatedly tried to isolate communities, and so councils had to innovate: finding independent power sources, maintaining services under siege, and sharing their knowledge with other councils.

At the time Al-Nusra, which would later become Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham or HTS, (now comprising much of the Syrian Transitional Government) also tried to encroach on several Local Councils in Salqeen, Kfar Nubul, and Saraqib City, to assert its authority over them. Aziz insisted they defend their communities from Jihadist militias and statist aspirations by emphasizing consensus decision making, reviving the commons, and coordinating with civil militias. These militias were formed not to dominate over civilian life, but drawn up of regular people made to ensure supply lines and gatherings were protected.

Aziz believed the most powerful form of resistance wasn't seizing the state, it was refusing it by building an active alternative. And this wasn't just happening in the areas influenced by Aziz.

In North-Eastern Syria, Kurdish communities were experimenting with their own forms of self-administration through assemblies, communes, cooperatives. These structures faced enormous pressures: war, embargo, internal political rivalries, and the constant temptation for armed groups to centralize power "for security." Early reports from the region describe a constant struggle between grassroots councils trying to preserve horizontal decision-making and emerging authorities, including Kurdish parties, that tried to consolidate control.

And now, the people within the Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria are fighting to defend their communal system.

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February 16 2026: Internationalists in Rojava commemorate Omar Aziz with a mural, drawing the clear connection between the early years of the Syrian revolution's neighbourhood councils echoing in Rojava's communes of today.

The United States today is vast amount of occupied territory where social fabric is tearing, infrastructure is failing, social safety nets breathe their last breath, white border nationalism tears families apart, and trust in traditional Politics is quickly deteriorating. Some people now suggest that we couldn't possibly organize a better society in these conditions. But we can. Anywhere.

The Syrian Local Councils weren't built in stability. Syrians were built under siege, bombardment, and starvation by Assadist and ISIS forces. And yet they organized their own medical care,

food distribution, education, media, conflict resolution mechanisms, community defense militias, women's centers, trade unions, and even underground libraries.

They did this without waiting for permission. They weren't specialists, they weren't city-planners or professionals with anti-oppression certificates, they were just average people.

If Syrians under bombardment could build functioning, democratic, horizontal structures, Americans facing infrastructural decay and regime terror can build concrete localized power-hubs of mutual aid, sanctuary, and autonomy.

An Aziz-inspired approach in the U.S. might look like something akin to what the Black Rose / Rosa Negra anarchist federation has been calling for:: neighborhood level assemblies coordinating needs like food distribution, emergency housing, childcare, medical support, transportation, and legal aid. It might look like sanctuary networks protecting targeted immigrants, community-run clinics, shared resources during sieges, and local defence against exploitation, sexual assault and abuse. These councils could link horizontally across cities, sharing resources and information.

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Still from SubMedia's *Support Anarchists in Sudan* (2026)

In Sudan, anarchist comrades have been involved in very similar Resistance Committees during a brutal civil war. They are building revolutionary power from below through the same structures of food redistribution and medical clinics. You can also support their struggle from afar.

As Omar's surviving daughter Jwana Aziz writes, people are not pawns: they are capable of organizing their own lives, even under the worst conditions imaginable. She explained that unless a community can determine its own way of life, it lives in a kind of prison. Many of us are in that prison.

Omar Aziz believed freedom wasn't something granted to us, but something we had to take. The councils he helped inspire proved it as a realistic possibility. The lesson for us facing a moment of impending fascism bares the same lesson many Syrians already lived through. A revolution is born when people refuse to be governed by fear, and prefigure it in the present.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20250118085411/https://rememberomaraziz.net/index.php/the-Aziz-said-to-his-friends>]: *'If the revolution fails, my life and that of my entire generation would be meaningless... Everything we dreamed and believed in would have been an illusion.'* He died before seeing the triumph of the revolution and reaping the fruits of his work. The Syrians who are still alive owe a huge debt to Omar Aziz and the tens of thousands of Syrian martyrs. It is a debt that cannot be repaid with tears and moving tributes. Nothing else would suffice but to fight for a free Syria. [**and world.**]

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