

Final Statement of the Balkan Anarchist Bookfair 2024

Balkan Anarchist Bookfair

07/07/2024

From the 5th to the 7th of July, Prishtina, Kosova, transformed into a hub of anarchist thought, coordination, and solidarity as it hosted the 16th edition of the Balkan Anarchist Bookfair (BAB). This first-ever anarchist gathering in an Albanian-speaking locality brought together over 250 participants from 29 countries, spanning from Chile to Azerbaijan. A total of 32 collectives and initiatives exhibited books and zines, and 18 discussions and events were organized, showcasing the movement's all-encompassing diversity. In the true spirit of collectivism and mutual aid, participants got engaged in the organization, making this event a remarkable demonstration of what can be achieved through collective effort.

Having such an event in Prishtina is of particular importance. Since the end of the war, Kosova has remained ensnared in a perpetual state of conflict, leading to an enduring atmosphere of tension between the state of Kosova and Serbia. The elites on both sides have highly capitalized on this situation, ensuring and thriving on division among the societies. The mere fact that comrades from all over the Balkans, including Kosova and Serbia, stood side by side, denouncing nationalism and state politics, is a powerful testament to our collective commitment to solidarity, resistance, and collaboration across the artificial borders and state politics that aim to divide us.

The urgency of this gathering cannot be overstated. At a time when the fires of war are ravaging the world and the specter of overt fascism is spreading, states are becoming increasingly militarized, and repression is ever-increasing. During BAB, we shared the experiences of our localities and analyzed how Balkan states are ramping up their nationalistic rhetoric while simultaneously amassing weapons and initiating discussions to reinstitute mandatory military service. These actions feed into each other's narratives, which are used as justification for the latter and instill fear among societies. We find it imperative that the people of the Balkans, and beyond, as anarchist collectives and individuals, deepen the coordination and strengthen the networks of resistance against the resurgence of nationalism and militarism. Failing to do so will inevitably lead to war.

War is an intrinsic part of the capitalist system. Whether low-intensity or full-blown, it serves as an important tool for the expansion of capitalism by opening new sources for exploitation, such as land, sea, minerals, all living beings, or the production and sale of weapons as capital.

We don't fall into the trap of considering a conflict as a binary between nation-states, although we do accept its nuances and contexts of how they happen; we see it as a war of capital against societies. Wars in Ukraine, Sudan, Syria, Myanmar, Sub-Saharan Africa, cartel wars in Mexico, and others all share the same logic of domination and expansion of capital, which only brings death and destruction.

We recognize that the states of the Balkans are not mere sideline spectators to the spectacle of war but an intrinsic part of it; from hosting major world military installations, provide training grounds for armed forces, offer logistics and corridors for arms and troop transfers, contribute technical know-how, playing a significant role in global war maneuvers and producing and selling weapons around the world, thus, with being part of and enabling murder and genocide. While private and state sectors work hard, hand in hand, to develop even the smallest Balkan countries into serious arms-producing and/or purchasing region, we see increasing pressure on local societies to accept a new, ever more militarized reality under the pretense of fear and uncertainty for the future.

Perhaps the most vile and evident example of war logic is the genocide happening in Gaza and the attacks in the West Bank against the Palestinian people, with tens of thousands of civilians dead and the whole region destroyed, in continuous broadcast on our screens; all these supported by world imperialist powers and the military-industrial complex, including Balkan states, which provide political and military support. The genocidal war of annihilation in Gaza serves as both a reminder of the West's colonialist ability to conduct wars of extermination and as a thanatopolitics laboratory, showcasing what the ruling classes currently want and are able to do to entire populations.

We stand in solidarity with the Palestinian people and call for resistance in each Balkan locality to disrupt the political and military support provided by the Balkan states to the state of Israel. We recognize that the enemy is not only war itself but also the states and capitalist systems that perpetuate it.

With all the above in mind, we call for transnational days of action against militarism and nationalism in the first week of October (October 1-10, 2024). During this period, we invite everyone, in their own locality and in their own way, to organize actions against the conditions of war: nationalism, militarism, patriarchy, politics of exclusion, etc. We call for actions against the arms industry and the transport of weapons, against all national military apparatuses, multinational military coalitions, and the increasing militarization of our societies. As in previous years, we emphasize our solidarity with all deserters, war resisters, and conscientious objectors.

The militarization of the Balkans has inadvertently led to the militarization of state borders, which have become death sentences for migrants using the Balkans as a route to reach European cities. Portrayed as the frontier of "Fortress Europe," Balkan countries have assumed a role of control over movement, meaning pushing backs, robbing, beating, detaining, and even murdering migrants, all covered in the technocratic language of migration management. Hundreds of millions in funds have been donated to Balkan countries, equipping them with state-of-the-art technology for border militarization and surveillance, all while hosting Frontex forces, in a concerted effort to safeguard "Fortress Europe." Now, not only do Balkan countries act as a deterrent for migrants coming to Europe, but they also take an active role in "processing" migrants through the establishment of centers in Albania on behalf of Italy, or through the renting out of 300 prison cells from Kosovo by Denmark to be used for foreigners to be deported. Understanding our own experience as coming from societies shaped by migration (or being one), we stand in solidarity

with migrants coming to and passing through the Balkans, and emphasize the need to strengthen transnational anarchist initiatives to provide support to people on the move.

The agonizing existence of women, trans, gender non-conforming, and queer people under patriarchal capitalist societies, is further exacerbated by neoliberal reforms, reactionary clerical-conservative forces, and dehumanizing state politics. In increasingly nationalistic and militarized states, the rhetoric of demographic decline is used to justify more restrictive policies regarding the autonomy of birthing people. Bodies become reduced to mere vessels for reproduction, both in terms of birth and care, which are exploited by capital as closely controlled labor through direct control over the bodies. Thus, the anarchist struggle for freedom and equality is inherently a feminist struggle. We affirm our commitment to the struggle against patriarchy in all its forms of exploitation and inequality, as well as our commitment to the struggle for reproductive justice, safe and self-managed abortion.

Furthermore, we emphasize that our anarchist movement must be a safe space for everyone, fostering environments that encompass the ideal of equality, free from machismo, misogyny, homophobia, transphobia, and queerphobia. Understanding that there is still work to be done in this regard and in order to foster this culture, we commit to transformative justice within our communities.

Fighting capitalism means combating its logic and grip on multiple fronts. Thus, our struggle is an integral part of the multitude of struggles within society, with each locality experiencing a different context. Therefore, the anarchist struggle against capitalism is also a struggle against all state violence and destruction. This BAB reaffirmed our commitment to the abolition of prisons and emphasized our public support for anarchist prisoners in the region and beyond. As anarchists, we must also be at the forefront of the fight against environmental destruction. Thus, we must develop strategies that not only address immediate crises (which often overstretch our capacities) but also create long-term multi-layered analysis as well as structures of resistance against capitalism. This can be achieved only by recognizing the interconnectedness of our struggles, which must be reflected in all aspects of our organizing and actions.

During this BAB, we also discussed the importance of further expanding and establishing our own autonomous infrastructure. Squats and autonomous social centers are of significant importance in this infrastructure, providing spaces for organizing, community building, and resistance. However, these spaces face significant challenges, from state repression to internal contradictions. We confirmed the necessity of fostering these initiatives, recognizing their role in the movement and the communities we live in.

On the same note, we emphasized the importance of establishing our own printing initiatives and anarchist media, such as radio projects, which are crucial for spreading news and experiences about the struggle of our movement, as well as for the society at large. On the same note, we also recognize the need to take care of our own history through archival projects. These projects can serve not only as platforms for recording and writing history through our own narratives but also as sources of knowledge on tactics, practices, and analyses that we can still put to good use.

The 2024 Balkan Anarchist Bookfair reaffirmed our collective strength and commitment to building a world free from oppression, highlighting our dedication to resistance on one hand and solidarity on the other. As we look to the future, we must continue to build networks of support and develop strategies for confronting the capitalist system and the state that guards it. We must expand our networks and reach Balkan cities where there are no anarchist initiatives, supporting them to be established and thrive. Coordination and solidarity are the pillars upon

which we will build our resistance and create a future based on mutual aid, freedom, radical empathy, and equality.

We must emphasize once more the importance of holding this bookfair in an Albanian-speaking locality, marking it as the first anarchist gathering ever in these lands. The collectives, groups, and individuals who came from all over the world had the chance to learn about the context of the local struggle and share their experiences with the people of Prishtina. For many people in Prishtina visiting the bookfair, as well as for the collectives and individuals who supported it, this was a learning experience that demonstrated the power of non-hierarchical organizing based solely on solidarity and mutual aid. It also highlighted the relevance of anarchist analysis and organizing within both local and regional struggles.

Finally, we are very pleased to announce that the next Balkan Anarchist Bookfair is going to be held in Thessaloniki, Greece.

Participants of the Balkan Anarchist Bookfair 2024

7th of July, Prishtina.

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