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The “Ceasefire” Is a Deadly Fraud

A Message from a Comrade in Rojava

CrimethInc.

October 19, 2019

The supposed ceasefire announced by US Vice President Mike Pence is a deadly fraud. Its only purpose is to enable the Trump administration to wash its hands of the bloodshed that the Turkish military is perpetrating while shifting the discourse to blame the victims for continuing to resist. If anything, this fake ceasefire is a greater betrayal than Donald Trump’s original decision to give Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan the green light to invade Rojava and carry out ethnic cleansing against the Kurdish people there in the same way he has in Turkey.

The terms of the agreement between Turkey and the US follow this text as an appendix.

By declaring surrender unilaterally on behalf of the people who have been defending themselves against Turkey’s invasion, Trump and Erdoğan are trying to force them to give up the territory that Turkey hasn’t yet been able to occupy by force. The Islamic State (ISIS) and the other jihadi groups that have taken advantage of the Turkish invasion to resume activ-

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ity won't respect the ceasefire in any case. The US has pulled its forces out of the area and has no intention of monitoring Turkish aggression, let alone discouraging it. The fact that Trump has used the supposed ceasefire as an excuse to suspend the economic sanctions that other members of the US government demanded he impose on Turkey confirms this clearly enough.

In fact, Turkey has explicitly denied that this represents a truce and the Turkish military and its Syrian mercenary proxies are already violating the ceasefire with impunity. In addition to reports that have reached us direct from the YPJ (Women's Protection Units), various corporate media sources have reported that the ceasefire has not stopped Turkish forces from continuing to fire on parts of Syria held by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). The SDF commander in Serêkaniyê reported Friday that more than 40 of their positions had been attacked since the declaration of the so-called ceasefire.

So the ceasefire is a lie.

We fear that as soon as the designated time period expires, Turkey will escalate its attacks on civilians and resistance fighters in the so-called "safe zone." To the dictionary of Orwellian doublespeak in Syria, alongside "Peace Spring" and "ceasefire," we can add "safe zone" as a word for killing fields. It's hard to imagine anything more brazen than killing thousands of people, displacing hundreds of thousands, and enabling jihadis to resume their activity throughout the region and justifying all this on the grounds that it is necessary to defend Turkey from "terrorism."

As we emphasized last week,

A free Rojava doesn't threaten the Turkish people; it threatens Erdoğan's regime and the oppression that Kurdish people face in Turkey. This is an ethno-nationalist war, pure and simple.

Trump is determined to abet all this at any cost in corpses. A Turkish official told CNN, verbatim, the "military operation

paid off.” A US government official, speaking more frankly than usual, admitted:

“This is essentially the US validating what Turkey did and allowing them to annex a portion of Syria and displace the Kurdish population... This is what Turkey wanted and what POTUS green lighted. I do think one reason Turkey agreed to it is because the Kurds have put up more of a resistance and they could not advance south any further as a result. If we don’t impose sanctions then Turkey wins big time.”

Russia and Assad also want the Syrian Democratic Forces of Rojava to withdraw from the area along the border in order to extend their control into the region. After bombing hospitals and gassing civilians, this imperialist international power and the local tyrant it props up are thrilled to pretend to be peace-makers and to defend “the territorial integrity of Syria.” From the perspective of Russian imperialism, this entire tragedy is simply an opportunity to put all of Syria back under the authority of Assad, a petty despot that tens of thousands have already given their lives in hopes of toppling.

We received the following message from an anarchist in the middle of the war zone in Rojava. It offers a piercing insight into the so-called ceasefire and the consequences this now double betrayal by the United States will have for the embattled fighters and civilians in Rojava.

18th of October, 13:51 local time. Last night, we heard of the breaking news about the vice president of the US meeting with Turkey and deciding that over northeastern Syria there would be a so-called “ceasefire,” a winning agreement that’s a “great day for civilization,” in Trump’s own words.

To me, it reminds me more of what happened in Czechoslovakia in 1938: the Munich Agreement, when Adolph Hitler from Nazi Germany, Benito Mussolini from Fascist Italy, Neville Chamberlain from Great Britain, and Eduoard Daladier from France met over the table in Munich in 1938 and agreed to give Germany the Sudetenland, a 30- to 50-kilometer zone around the border of what used to be Czechoslovakia. According to the agreement, some small parts of territory went to Poland; Slovakia was cut off and became its own fascist republic run by Jozef Tiso; and the rest of what was left of Czechoslovakia, Bohemian Moravia, would be occupied by Germany as something like a protectorate, but not formally annexed as a part of Germany.

What I see happening here is you have Erdogan as Hitler, you've got Trump as, say, Chamberlain—or perhaps more like Mussolini, actually, the high capitalist/clear fascist asshole running his country. The Bashar al-Assad regime is kind of like a stronger Slovakia, leading the fascist section of what will form another part of the “secured” Syria; and the Sudetenland is like what Turkey is claiming for their “safe zone.” But instead of calling it the Munich Pact, they call it a ceasefire. It means that the local people, unless they are jihadist Arabs or Turks, will be moved out or “cleansed.” Or, if not, they will live under extremely terrible conditions and many of them will be killed. There will be atrocities, as happened in Afrin and in many places before.

That is what's going to happen, what this glorious ceasefire supposedly “saving civilization” is about.

8. Both countries reiterate their commitment to the political unity and territorial integrity of Syria and UN-led political process, which aims at ending the Syrian conflict with in accordance UNSCR 2254.
9. The sides agreed on the continued importance and functionality of a safe zone in order to address the national security concerns of Turkey, to include the re-collection of YPG heavy weapons and the disablement of their fortifications and all other fighting positions.
10. The safe zone will be primarily enforced by the Turkish Armed Forces and the two sides will increase their cooperation in all dimensions of its implementation.
11. The Turkish side will pause Operation Peace Spring in order to all the withdrawal of YPG from the safe zone within 120 hours. Operation Peace Spring will be halted upon completion of this withdrawal.
12. Once Peace Spring is paused, the US agrees not to pursue further imposition of sanctions under the Executive Order of October 14, 2019, *Blocking Property and Suspending Entry of Certain Persons Contributing to the Situation in Syria*, and will and consult with Congress, as appropriate, to underline the progress being undertaken to achieve peace and security in Syria, in accordance with UNSCR 2254. Once Operation Peace Spring is halted as per paragraph 11 the current sanctions under the aforementioned Executive Order shall be lifted.
13. Both parties are committed to work together to implement all the goals outlined in this Statement.

It legitimizes the Turkish invasion from NATO. Basically, the proposal we rejected a week ago, and what we are fighting for and people are dying on a massive scale to defend, is now being given to Turkey by the US. That means that we can either accept this and lose, or we can keep fighting, but now the fight will now be even harder. It was already nearly impossible in my eyes; but it was a fight for dignity, for the resistance, for the future generations, if not for winning. You know, as they are always saying, “This is for the spirit of struggle, not for the spirit of victory.” And this might be an exact example of this sentence in practice on a big scale.

So we, the people and the fighters here, can either give it to them or we can fight—but this time, not only against Turkey and the jihadists, but also against the whole world, because they’ve made this agreement. The problem—and this is why I’m referring to Munich in 1938—is that in that agreement, no one asked Czechoslovakia what they thought about it; no one brought them to the table. Not that I agree with representation in the first place, but even for the majority of people who recognize democracy as the legitimate representative order or system—even the democratic representatives of Czechoslovakia weren’t brought to the table in Munich, just as they weren’t brought to Ankara yesterday. No one from the Kurds or the Syrians, Armenians, Assyrians, or other people living here was consulted at all.

[Interruption.] They brought another dead body from the front. [Shouts in the background.] This

one has clearly been hit by an airstrike... OK, it was a comrade. This was not the first one today, nor the second.

So, coming back to an analysis of the situation: I see a very direct connection to these events in history, with the people who are the most affected and actually living in these areas having no voice and not even having any means of resistance in their hands. None of the means we had until now were great in the first place. To consider this so-called ceasefire as any kind of progress is really exaggerated and hypocritical.

All this tragedy only confirms that no government—neither the US nor Russia, neither Syria nor Turkey nor any state government that might have come to power had the Syrian revolution been successful—can be trusted to look out for the human beings who always suffer most as a consequence of politics and militarism. Autonomous social movements grounded in principles of self-determination and solidarity are the only reliable way to oppose military aggression and support struggles for liberation worldwide. We need to make our movements powerful enough to be able to leverage a real threat to governments and corporations that are complicit in invasions like the one that Turkey is carrying out. Developing international connections with social movements on the other side of the battle lines in Turkey and Russia, and everywhere else around the world from Ecuador to South Africa, is an essential part of this. This is not just a question of long-term outreach, but also of doing everything we can to carry out disruptive solidarity actions right now.

Appendix: The Text of the Agreement between Turkey and the US Regarding the Supposed “Ceasefire”

17.10.19–19.38

October 17, 2019

JOINT TURKISH-US STATEMENT ON NORTHEAST SYRIA

1. The US and Turkey reaffirm their relationship as fellow member of NATO. The US understands Turkey’s legitimate security concerns on Turkey’s southern border.
2. Turkey and the US agree that the conditions on the ground, northeast Syria in particular, necessitate closer coordination on the basis of common interests.
3. Turkey and the US remain committed to protecting NATO territories and NATO populations against all threats with the solid understanding of “one for all and all for one”.
4. The two countries reiterate their pledge to uphold human life, human rights, and the protection of religious ethnic communities.
5. Turkey and the US are committed to D-ISIS/DAESH activities in northeast Syria. This will include coordination of detention facilities and internally displaced persons from formerly ISIS/DAESH-controlled areas, as appropriate.
6. Turkey and the US agree that counter-terrorism operations must target only terrorists and their hideouts, shelters, emplacements, weapons, vehicles and equipment.
7. The Turkish side expressed its commitment to ensure safety and well-being of residents of all population centers in the safe zone controlled by the Turkish Forces (safe zone) and reiterated that maximum care will be exercised in order not to cause harm to civilians and civilian infrastructure.