

Denounce Assad's butchery of the trapped people of Ghouta –

Support the Syrian people against imperialism and tyranny!

Inspired by the other Arab Spring uprisings, seven years ago the people of Syria began demonstrating against tyranny. When Bashar Assad's Ba'athist dictatorship responded with bullets, arrests and torture this soon became a movement of millions. In it, everyday people united with army defectors to take up arms, and during the next years they liberated large parts of the country, which the local people then ran. But first with the help of Iran, then Hezbollah (entering in 2012), and then imperialist Russia (entering in 2015), Assad was able to stalemate the uprising and go on a brutal counter-offensive in which Aleppo fell over a year ago. By that time close to 500,000 people had died as a result of Assad's fight to maintain power, and half of Syria's pre-war population was either internally displaced or refugees abroad. But Assad continues the bloodbath.

Idlib Province and eastern Ghouta

The northwestern Idlib Province is the last major rebel stronghold. It has an estimated population of 2.5 million, including more than a million people who've fled other parts of the country or were evacuated there as part of deals with the government, and who are often packed into camps. The Syrian and Russian air forces savagely attack them, with hospitals, markets and schools being favorite targets, and White Helmets and other first responders then being "double-tapped" as they try to save people.

Meanwhile, nearly 400,000 people have been under starvation-siege in the Damascus suburb of eastern Ghouta for most of the time since the

end of 2013. Ghouta was where Assad murdered some 1,400 people with nerve gas in August 2013, and it was supposed to be a "de-escalation" zone where supplies could get through to the masses. But since November the dictatorship and its foreign allies have ratcheted up their attacks, and this week they launched some of the worst air, missile and artillery assaults of the entire war in order to bring the people to their knees. In one period of just 48 hours 250 men, women and children were murdered in this most cowardly way. Doctors report that 12 medical facilities have been bombed – most of them severely damaged – in the past three days alone. And the rain of death continues. Working and oppressed people everywhere are appalled and outraged.

The United States and Turkey also have Syrian blood on their hands

Under Bush, CIA "war on terror" prisoners were tortured in Bashar Assad's dungeons. Then after a brief falling out among thieves, Obama was in midst of re-establishing even better ties with the dictatorship when the people's uprising broke out. So the U.S. went over to talking about a reformed regime with Assad personally gone, and it trickled a little aid to some rebel groups. But this was *never* because it wanted a democratic victory. Instead, the bloody aim was to balance the rebel and Assad forces in order to weaken both sides, and then be in the position to dictate a solution from abroad that would leave the old state in place. Moreover, it *actively blockaded* the rebels from getting anti-aircraft and other

weaponry they probably could have won with.

But with the rise of ISIS in Syria, the U.S. shifted its focus and intervened to fight it. To do this it built a coalition of outside powers to attack and bomb from the skies, while forming an alliance with various Kurdish groups to fight on the ground, as well as buying off several rebel groups to fight only ISIS and not Assad. It sent U.S. troops and set up airfields in the Kurdish controlled north. It bombed schools and mosques and eventually leveled Raqqa. According to Airwars.com, the U.S. coalition killed over 10,000 civilians in 2016 and 2017 alone, and an estimated 2000 U.S. troops remain in Syria.

NATO-member Turkey had established extremely close ties with the Assad dictatorship before the uprising, including holding joint Syrian-Turkish military exercises. Nevertheless, it opted for aiding the rebels but later made agreements with Assad against their interests. However, Turkey views the Kurdish YPG forces as the main danger in northern Syria, and for this reason it started an operation to smash Syrian Kurdish autonomy in the northwestern Afrin region, and now it is talking about resettling many non-Kurdish refugees there. The Kurds are justly fighting back, and many

hundreds have already died in this Turkish aggression.

Solidarity!

With magnificent heroism, beginning in 2011 the people of Syria rose in the most powerful democratic uprising the world had seen in a long time. But now, with all the military might being used to mercilessly slaughter them as free areas of the country are one by one taken back by the dictatorship, new forms of struggle are going to have to be found. Their defeats are our defeats too, and they're being meted by the likes of Assad, the Iranian mullahs, Putin, Erdoğan and Trump no less. This means that here, in the United States, we should build solidarity with the Syrian people with work to further develop all of the movements of the exploited and oppressed people against one of our shared enemies, the U.S. imperialist ruling class. We should bring a working-class viewpoint into these movements, which includes preaching solidarity with our struggling comrades in Syria, Palestine and the world over. And we should join in the Ghouta solidarity protests now taking place.

Seattle Communist Study Group
February 23, 2018

Demonstrate! Lift the siege of Ghouta!

Saturday 1:00 PM

Victor Steinbrueck Park 2001 Western Ave. (north end of the Pike Place Market)

Called by Americans for Refugees & Immigrants

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