

Syria/Rojava - Kobani liberated! Kurdish forces push ISIS out of town

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After 134 days of resistance, the Kurdish forces of the YPG/YPJ have finally pushed IS out of Kobani. While the battle is won, the struggle continues.

Today, the resisting Kurds and their comrades in Kobani achieved the unimaginable: they managed to expel the fighters of the Islamic State (ISIS) from the city.

After 134 days of fierce battles between the Kurdish forces of the YPG and the YPJ (People's and Women's Defense Units), Peshmerga troops and elements of the Free Syrian Army on the one hand, and ISIS on the other, it appears that the last neighborhoods of the city that were under control of the jihadist militants have finally been liberated.

While the official spokesman for the YPG, Polat Can [1], announced the complete liberation of the city via Twitter, social media are buzzing with images of celebrating resistance fighters, burned-out ISIS tanks and of course the iconic red-yellow-and-green flag of TEVDEM, the Movement for a Democratic Society, waving on top of the strategically important Mishtenur hill overlooking the city.

ISIS' advance on Kobani started in mid-September, when their forces managed to conquer the countryside surrounding the city in a matter of days before marching on the urban center itself. In the process, hundreds of thousands of people were forced out of their homes, fleeing in terror before the heavily armed jihadists who left little but carnage and destruction in their wake.

Approximately 260,000 people sought refuge across the border in Turkey, but several hundreds of resistance fighters remained behind to protect the city. With little else but their AK-47s and a firm determination to halt ISIS' advance into Kobani, the men and women of the YPG/YPJ managed to prevent ISIS from adding yet another town to their long list of military victories in recent months.

The resistance of the Kurdish fighters against ISIS was hampered by the policies of neighboring Turkey [2], which kept its border with the besieged town hermetically sealed, preventing any aid from reaching the resistance. At the same time many sources and observers have made mention of its supposed military, logistical and medical support for the jihadists.

In the past few months, the Kurdish fighters and their supporters from across the region and across the globe have gathered at the Turkish side of the border to express their support and solidarity with the resistance. The battle in Kobani not only highlighted the effectiveness of the Kurdish militias as one of the few armed forces in the region able to combat ISIS, but, more importantly, it brought global attention to the plight of the people of Rojava and their social revolution focusing on direct democracy, gender equality and environmental sustainability.

While the victory in Kobani is undoubtedly of crucial importance for the war against ISIS and a major reason for celebration, it has to be stressed that the struggle is far from over. The majority of the more than 300 villages that are part of the Kobani canton remain under the control of ISIS, and

as long as this remains the case the great majority of refugees in Turkey will be unable to return to their homes.

Moreover, the liberated city of Kobani now lies in ruins. The continuous mortar shelling, heavy artillery fire and car bomb (VBIEDs) attacks by ISIS in combination with the aerial bombardments by the US-led coalition targeting ISIS positions in the city have destroyed entire neighborhoods.

The liberation of Kobani is of military strategic importance, but more importantly it is a symbolic victory of democracy over authoritarianism; of pluralism over fascism; of freedom over repression — and most of all a victory that has shown the world the true power of those fighting for genuine liberation as opposed to the fanaticism of those who fight for little but fraudulent beliefs.

While Kobani was under siege, in the neighboring cantons Afrin and Cezire the revolution continued [3]: people's councils were set up, workers' cooperatives were developed and women actively started to engage in the decision-making processes that are laying the foundations for a new society where power rises from the bottom-up, rather than from the top-down.

The major challenge for the people of Kobani, and possibly a crucial test for the strength of the revolution, lies ahead: not only a city, but an entire society will have to be rebuilt almost from scratch.

The people of Kobani have proven their strength on the battlefield, and their heroic resistance against all odds has become a beacon of hope for all those believing that the fight against the repressive forces of fascism, in whatever form, can be won.

The international attention the battle of Kobani has received can now be used to show the world that the people of Rojava are not only leading the way in battling the extremism of ISIS, but also in fighting against the forces of imperialism, capitalism and patriarchy that have given birth to so many of the evils currently plaguing societies across the globe — and in the Middle East in particular.

Bijî Berxwedane Kobani!

Bijî Berxwedane YPG!

Bijî Berxwedane YPJ!

Bijî Berxwedane Rojava!

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P.S.

* <http://roarmag.org/2015/01/kobani-liberated-ypg-is/>

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Footnotes

[1] <https://twitter.com/polatcano/status/559721755976400897>

[2] <http://roarmag.org/2014/12/isis-attacks-kobane-from-turkey/>

[3] <http://roarmag.org/2014/07/rojava-autonomy-syrian-kurds/>