

ROJAVA: BUILDING AN ECOLOGICAL SOCIETY



“The connection between the market economy, exploitation, destruction of nature, war and migration show what the result is when centralist and hierarchal systems try to subject nature. A solution that ignores these relationships, a solution within the existing system, is not possible.” -**Internationalist Commune of Rojava**

WRESTLING WITH A CLIMATE CRISIS

The facts of the planetary climate crisis are fairly well known: we must reach net zero CO₂ emissions by 2050 to remain under 1.5C° of warming, or suffer even more disastrous consequences than we’ve already seen — catastrophic weather events, reduced crop yields and millions of new climate refugees. We’re also in the midst of a mass extinction, in which human activity is wiping out species at 100 times the normal rate. It is estimated that 1 million species are likely to go extinct in the next few decades.

The causes are clear. The capitalist need for unending growth has led to human consumption at an ever-accelerating rate. The extraction of raw materials and exploitation of nature in pursuit of profit has polluted our air, poisoned our water, and chemically changed our atmosphere.

UNEQUAL EFFECTS

While the ecological crisis is taking place on a global scale, the effects are starkly unequal. Our “advanced” capitalist countries are the main culprits, but it is the poor, oppressed, and often indigenous populations who suffer the harshest consequences of climate catastrophe. Rojava, a victim of colonial, extractivist policies of its surrounding states exemplifies the reality of this dire situation.

ECOLOGY IN ROJAVA

Until its de facto autonomy in 2012, Rojava was trapped in a colonially-dependent relationship with the Syrian state and restricted to performing agricultural production for Damascus and foreign export. The accompanying deforestation and mono-cropping of wheat and other cash crops degraded its soil, while pesticides “dumped” on Rojava by the regime caused cancer in its people.



“It is necessary to combine the fight for the environment with the struggle for a general social revolution.” -Abdullah Ocalan

The ecological well-being of Rojava also suffers from the hostile policies of the Turkish state. In addition to the environmental destruction caused by its invasions of Northeast Syria, Turkey has for years used environmental means to undermine Rojava’s revolution, exhausting the whole region’s common water resources with massive groundwater extraction and hampering the flow of river water into Syria with dams. The Turkish military and its jihadist proxies have also burned crops and forests and cut down olive groves.

Despite economic embargoes, devastated infrastructure and the constant threat of violence from ISIS and Turkey, the people of Rojava have joined internationalists to address the many ecological crises of the region with bottom-up, anti-capitalist, environmentally-sustainable alternatives. Similar communal means of organizing ecologically conscious economies are being put to use by other global liberation movements, such as Cooperation Jackson in Mississippi and, for decades, by the Zapatistas.

DEMOCRATIC RESPONSES AND ONGOING PROJECTS

Through a process of bottom-up democratic decision making, the people of Rojava are tackling their ecological challenges together. While the region holds most of Syria’s oilfields, it lacks access to modern, state-of-the-art oil refining equipment. War and the Turkish occupation have destroyed its vulnerable energy infrastructure and reduced its access to clean water sources. Waste presents another problem, as the region lacks both municipal waste separation and recycling. The Rojava self-administration plans to build a paper recycling plant, but lacks the funds.

Current ecological efforts focus on the diversification of crops and the use of agroforestry to rejuvenate the soil. Food production has been decentralized and reoriented toward local use in an effort to increase food security. With water a major concern, irrigation alternatives are being sought, including the recycling of grey and black wastewater for crop fertilization. In addition, a major reforestation campaign launched by the Internationalist Commune has now planted more than 10,000 fruit and nut trees in an effort to “make Rojava green again”. For further reading, check out the book [Make Rojava Green Again](#), by the Internationalist Commune of Rojava.

For more information, visit our website at defendrojava.org
To join our advocacy and education efforts, contact us at info@defendrojava.org
Follow us on Facebook: facebook.com/defendrojava and Twitter: [@DefendRojava](https://twitter.com/DefendRojava)

