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A Letter to North American Anarchists

Radical Beirut

17 May 2013

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Retrieved on 6th March 2021 from tahriricn.wordpress.com

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Comrades,

The Arab uprisings and Occupy Wall Street and the rest of global uprisings since 2011 have opened more doors for us to communicate and realize more than ever how our struggles against the state and dominant power structures are interconnected and the same. Our fight against the beast is one; we are informed and inspired by your past and current struggles, as well as we know that you are informed and inspired by our struggles, yet we still have a long way to go to understand one another and scale up our common fight.

Our collective is a small group of radicals, deep ecologists, anarchists, and feminists, and we haven't done much compared with the great sacrifices of many of our comrades elsewhere. Yet we know we also speak the mind of many of our comrades in the Arab world from Morocco to Syria, who encountered the same dilemmas while communicating with their Western counterparts.

We know that there are a lot of good actions carried out, and honest efforts in all directions, and lives being put on the line, but we also realize that the radical non-authoritarian scene in the West,

and especially in North America, is dominated by the strict boundaries of a single “politically correct” ideology. It’s fine if the ideological and tactical parameters you chose work for you, but it doesn’t work for everyone, and it definitely doesn’t work for us. So it’s unfortunate that during many exchanges with North American anarchists (and to a less extent European anarchists), some of our comrades were always trying to impose their politically correct ideology on us.

It’s also unfortunate that many of our comrades in the West have digested the patronizing tone of their imperial governments, and use it unconsciously with their comrades from the third world. Too many times, we found our comrades dictating with whom we should ally ourselves with, or how should we deal with our own causes like political Islam, the Syrian revolution, anti-government tactics, and radical environmental and feminist organizations.

We appreciate the feedback and the exchange, and we think it’s desired and needed, but we feel that there are a lot of subtle expectations that we should become another version of you. And we don’t want to. Being on the other end of the equation, the one that has been getting drone missiles, uranium depleted shells, and imperialism for decades, we can honestly tell you that whatever you tried, it didn’t work well for us, and it seems it didn’t work for you as well.

Living under authoritarian regimes for decades, a lot of us are radical anti-authoritarians by instinct; students and factory workers and artists and fathers and mothers and young and old. Almost all of us had to personally experience and survive state repression in the past couple of years, yet most of us do not identify as anarchists, especially that anarchism is still for many of us a closed white euro-centric ideology with a post-modernist core.

The more we communicate we discover that a lot of words dear to our hearts are confined in narrow definitions, and subject to endless semantic wars among you. And we’re not interested in semantics or winning the war over words, we’re interested in dis-

mantling the real physical conditions of oppression and injustice, and we want to experiment beyond the boundaries of classical politics and classical “isms” that dominated both Western and Eastern radical scenes for decades.

When we learn of your struggles there are a lot of things that inspire us, and there are a lot of things that we don’t want to replicate. Even while observing from another continent, it’s clear for us that the radical movement in North America (and to a lesser extent in Europe) is highly sectarian, divided, distracted by identity politics and in-fighting, and in a state of constant horizontal hostility with itself and other movements.

We see a recurrent process that constantly breaks up your leaders, isolate your movements, leaving you with pseudo-leaders and limbed collectives, then we read you complaining about the absence of vision and direction in the movement. We see hostility toward all forms of organization, a nearly religious reverence for structurelessness and a dogmatic belief in one form of decision making (consensus). We see rampant identity politics and great energies squandered over theoretical arguments that no one gives a damn about, and we honestly don’t understand it as the smokes from the burned body of the world obscures our sight.

We see a lot of misogyny, drug abuse, violent, abusive, and horrible behaviors, going unchallenged and unattended in many of your spaces.

We see an aversion against strategy, leading radical communities to smash the same window year after year without long-term tactics. We see a lot of energy spent fighting non-essential elements in the system like Fast Food chains and sports shoes corporations leaving aside the three basic structures that keep the system alive, and we mean the structures that ensure the flow of **money**, **information**, and **energy** to those in power. If you’re lacking ideas, there’s a drone testing facility somewhere in the desert of Arizona if you want to pay them a visit.

All that is not to dismiss your efforts or undermine your work, but just to caution against the tendency we see among our Western counterparts of flattening radical movements under one politically correct ideology, greatly diminishing the vitality of the radical movement. The plurality of opinions, approaches and tactics is needed and desired, and no matter which label we use, or which tactic we prefer, as the world burns, those of us who dream of a livable planet and a just humanity are together in the same fight, against the same enemy.

Love & Rage

Radical Beirut's Team