

Democratic Socialists of America “International Committee” denounces “reckless” withdrawal of US troops from Syria

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On October 24, the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) published a statement on its website, “International Committee Statement in solidarity with Syrians.” The statement was in response to the Trump administration’s decision to withdraw troops from Syria a few days earlier.

Trump’s decision set off a firestorm in Washington, with the Democratic Party and dominant sections of the military and intelligence agencies vehemently opposing the troop withdrawal. The DSA’s statement fully backed the Democratic Party line, denouncing Trump’s “reckless” withdrawal of troops.

Days later and without any explanation, the DSA removed the statement from its website. (It is included below for reference).

The statement is the first to be published (though only for a few brief days) on the official DSA website from a group calling itself the “International Committee.” However, dozens of statements on international developments over the past year have been published on the committee’s own website, officially recognized by the DSA national leadership and linked on the national page.

The “International Committee”—in fact, an internal “working group” of the national DSA—is co-chaired by two individuals, Ethan Earle and Carrington Morris. Morris is best known as the managing editor for *Edible Manhattan* a food magazine in New York. Ethan Earle is a regular writer for the *Nation* and, more importantly, is a project manager for the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation in New York City. The Rosa Luxemburg Foundation has close ties to the Left Party (Die Linke) in Germany, which plays an important role in the German state. It is intimately integrated into the state apparatus with its representatives traveling with the German military and offering its full support for German remilitarization.

After a brief introduction reducing all of Turkish history and contemporary politics to genocide, Islamic extremism and chauvinism, the DSA statement gets to the heart of the matter: “The chaotic and unstable situation in Syria, created under the

careless watch of the United States and now dramatically worsening owing to the reckless decision to abruptly withdraw from the region, has provided a window for Turkey to invade, and raises the spectre of ethnic cleansing and occupation.”

Trump’s “reckless decision” to “abruptly” withdraw from Syria ... We have heard such language before. They are the sound bites taken from CIA memos and Democratic Party press statements.

In the hours after Trump’s announcement on the Syria withdrawal, Senate Democrats tweeted: “President @realDonaldTrump’s reckless decision to withdraw U.S. troops from Northern Syria has put our country in danger.”

Democratic Senator Cory Booker wrote, “This was only a matter of ‘when’ after Trump’s reckless decision to abruptly withdraw troops from Syria.” Democratic Congressman John Sarbanes from Maryland, adding his own flair, called the decision “breathtakingly reckless”.

Former vice president Joe Biden wrote of “Trump’s reckless decision to withdraw our troops from northern Syria.” Kelly Magsamen, vice president for National Security and International Policy at the Center for American Progress, issued a statement calling the decision “reckless and impetuous.”

Only the most politically naïve would believe that the Democratic Party has suddenly become concerned for the “stability” of a country which they have spent the better part of a decade destroying.

The real motivation behind the Democrats’ opposition to Trump’s troop withdrawal is quite the opposite of their humanitarian posturing. They seek the continuation and escalation of their CIA-instigated war for regime change that has to date killed roughly half a million Syrians, while turning millions more into refugees.

The DSA statement completely glosses over the history of the Syrian conflict. The language, like the evocation of the undefined “Syrian people,” is carefully selected. They state that the conflict was created “under the careless watch of the United

States.”

“Careless watch”? As if the CIA-instigated regime change operation in Syria, which is itself part of the broader catastrophe unleashed by American imperialism in the Middle East over the past quarter century, is a matter of inattentiveness. If only the American military and intelligence agencies had been more careful!

It was, in fact, the Obama administration that initiated the CIA-led war for regime change in Syria. Codenamed Timber Sycamore, the CIA operation was formally launched in June 2013, though the agency had been active in Syria for years. In the wake of the toppling of the Libyan government by US-NATO-led forces and the assassination of its leader Muammar Gaddafi, the CIA created a program to funnel both arms stockpiles and Islamist fighters into Syria to launch a vicious sectarian war.

The formal, and illegal, occupation of Syria began in October 2015, still under the Obama administration, without authorization from either the United Nations or the Syrian government. At its high point, the US military and its proxies controlled over roughly a third of the country, including, most crucially, Syria’s oil and natural gas fields as well as its eastern border with Iraq.

Today, the same CIA-backed Islamist militias—then hailed as pro-democracy “rebels”—are fighting alongside the Turkish army against the Kurdish militia.

The war has killed roughly 500,000 Syrians, displaced half the country’s population, reduced the city of Raqqa to rubble, and sent millions into exile.

The conflict in Syria did not simply “happen” under the passive “watch” of the US, as the DSA statement asserts. Rather, it is the direct product of the conscious intervention of the US military under the direction of the Democratic Party.

After a year in office, Trump announced the end of the CIA program in Syria—part of the administration’s effort to focus greater attention on the US conflict with China. The first troop withdrawal took effect in July 2017. The decision produced a flurry of opposition in Washington among sections of the CIA aligned with the Democratic Party, most notably John Brennan, Obama’s last CIA director.

Further opposition came from figures like former Defense Secretary James “Mad Dog” Mattis, former National Security Advisor John Bolton and former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Joseph Dunford, who long advocated a strategy based on an open-ended US military presence in Syria aimed at overthrowing Assad and imposing a more pliant puppet regime in Damascus.

All three figures have since been removed from, or quit, their positions in the Trump administration. Exactly because of their militant pro-war stance, these same figures have been praised by the Democratic Party as great defenders of democracy in the fight against Trump.

The final paragraph of the statement reads: “We stand with

all those resisting the chauvinism, nationalism and Islamist violence perpetrated by the Turkish state and military, and call on people everywhere to demand boycott and divestment of Turkish companies and to disrupt Turkish events everywhere.”

Who is the “we” who stands against chauvinism, nationalism and Islamist violence? This sweeping statement includes whole sections of the military and intelligence agencies and virtually the entire Democratic Party. Does the DSA “stand” with General “Mad Dog” Mattis in its opposition to “Islamist violence?” Does their alliance include CIA-backed militias? Or perhaps the CIA itself?

The character of an organization is defined above all by its position on international issues. If an organization accepts the prerogatives of imperialism abroad, it will accept them at home. The DSA’s support for the operations of the US in Syria brands it as a pro-capitalist appendage of the Democratic Party. It speaks not for the working class, but for privileged sections of the middle class that support imperialism and are thoroughly integrated into the apparatus of the capitalist state.

Democratic Socialists of America “International Committee Statement in solidarity with Syrians” October 24, 2019

The Democratic Socialists of America stand in solidarity with the people of Syria as they face an egregious military incursion by Turkey.

Turkey was founded on the genocide of Kurds, Assyrians, Armenians and Greeks, and the ideology that led to that genocide continues to thrive in modern Turkey. The Turkish state and government is defined by highly reactionary and oppressive politics, combining Islamist extremism with nationalist chauvinism. This policy is evident in its highly oppressive treatment of ethnic minorities, activists and dissidents in Turkey today, which has seen thousands of journalists, teachers, judges and others persecuted.

The chaotic and unstable situation in Syria, created under the careless watch of the United States and now dramatically worsening owing to the reckless decision to abruptly withdraw from the region, has provided a window for Turkey to invade, and raises the spectre of ethnic cleansing and occupation.

We stand with all those resisting the chauvinism, nationalism and Islamist violence perpetrated by the Turkish state and military, and call on people everywhere to demand boycott and divestment of Turkish companies and to disrupt Turkish events everywhere.



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